
Oral Presentation 9

Analysis of Challenges Faced by Japanese Short-term Exchange Students after Studying Abroad: A Focus on the Reverse Culture Shock

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Purpose of the Study

According to Hasegawa (2000), Japanese adult women who returned to Japan after receiving higher education in the U.S. experienced conflict upon reentry, and most of them also experienced a reverse culture shock. Hasegawa's (2000) focus was on long-term sojourners; however, sufficient research has not explored the psychological issues that short-term sojourners face upon reentry. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the challenges faced by Japanese short-term exchange students in terms of maintaining good health and support for growth. The means through which such support can be provided is also discussed on the basis of the difficulties they face and their need for support.

Methods

Participants The participants in this study were 5 undergraduate students (hereinafter referred to as A, B, C, D, and E) from Z University in Japan. The university sent each participant to one of 4 foreign countries as an exchange student for a period of 9 to 12 months, and 2 to 9 months had passed since they had returned to Japan. Procedure In 20XX, the authors sent the participants questionnaires via email, and collected the completed questionnaires either via email or mail according to the participant's convenience. The questionnaire comprised 3 parts, life during the study abroad period, life after the study abroad period, and reflections on the experience of studying abroad; students could either select an option or write a response, depending on their preference.

Results

First, when asked whether they enjoyed studying abroad and whether the experience was meaningful, all of them answered that it was enjoyable and meaningful. They also regarded their study abroad experience positively, and they stated that they gained confidence, friends/friendship, and varied experiences by studying abroad. However, they explained that they encountered differences in both (1) academic aspects and (2) human relationships. Next, responses that appeared to reflect reverse culture shock were classified as follows. Three participants (B, C, and E) stated that they felt out of place after reentry, and 2 participants (B, C) stated that they wished to go back to where they studied. B said "everyone must look for a job at the same time," and C said "when the members of the university club drank and made merry, I felt bored, different, and thought they were childish." In order to cope with the reverse culture shock, B and C tried to talk to their friends who had studied abroad and communicated with friends they met when they were studying abroad. Regarding support on their return, they stated that they wanted to discuss their job search experiences, but as E said "there is no support resource," and B and C expected support from the university. Finally, 2 participants (D, E) stated that they worried more before they studied abroad than after the experience, and the others (A, B, and C) stated that they worried more after they studied abroad than before the experience.

Conclusion

The results of the analysis indicate that while participants regarded their study abroad experiences positively, they experienced differences and problems generically known as the reverse culture shock, even though they stayed for less than one year abroad. Upon reentry, they felt out of place because they were accustomed to the socio-cultural environment of the place where they studied. Thus, they suffered mental distress and faced problems such as getting information on prospective jobs. Here, these are regarded as their challenges upon reentry. Upon reentry, they not only face the immediate challenge of maintaining harmony with the people around them but they also face future challenges in converting their fruitful study abroad experiences into new values and the achievement of new goals. Thus, it is important to examine methods of providing support to students who return in terms of psychological stability and career development.