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　　　　　　　　　　：　　9.6%、　　37.5%、　　10.6%、　　25%、　　25%。
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37.5%、　12.1%、　30%　　28.1%。
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An evaluation of acculturation stress mental health issues and adaptation difficulties of international students in China

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【Abstract】Objective　The purpose of present study was to determine the prevalence of acculturative stress mental health issues and adaptation difficulties among international students in China. This study was also aimed to understand the physical social and psychological interaction of international students in the host culture. **Methods**　A total of 100 international students from nine countries completed the self administered questionnaires which were Depression Anxiety Stress Scale -21 (DASS -21) Revised Socio Cultural Adjustment Scale (SCAS - R) and Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS). These different scales were used to evaluate acculturation stress mental health issues and adaptation difficulties respectively. **Results**　Results showed that 32

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percent of students were facing acculturation stress in new culture. The main stressors were homesickness and food problems. International students were also experiencing the stress depression and anxiety. 9. 6 percent students in 1st year 37. 5 percent students in 2nd year 10. 6 percent students in 3rd year 25 percent students in 4th year and 25 percent students in 5th year were with stress. 28. 6 percent students in 1st year 12. 5 percent students in 2nd year 5 percent students in 3rd year 40 percent students in 4th year and 31. 2 percent students in 5th year were depressed and 52. 3 percent students in 1st year 37. 5 percent students in 2nd year 12. 1 percent students in 3rd year 30 percent students in 4th year and 28. 1 percent students in 5th year were with anxiety. The top barrier in socio - cultural adaptation was language. International students were also facing difficulties to maintain their hobbies and personal interests in the host community. **Conclusion** It is very important for Chinese university authorities to conduct research in this area in order to facilitate the adaptation and academic learning of international students in China.

【Key words】 Acculturation stress; Mental health issues; Adaptation difficulties; International students

1 Introduction

International students got to know well about China for education purposes in the last decade. According to U. S. NEWS & World Reports China has become the third most popular destination for international students after UK and USA. According to records of MOE of China it had 265 090 international students in 2010 from Europe America Africa Oceania and Asia [1]. Living in a host country becomes challenging due to cultural differences and language barriers. The stress experienced by the international students from the differences between their native culture and the dominant host culture is commonly referred to as "acculturative stress" [2]. This cultural transition leads to acculturative stress and adaptation difficulties accompanied by psychological disorientation. Adapting to new environments may be stressful for international students who experience accumulated pressure to adjust to a new language cultural values as well as to social norms. The pressure may put a significant demand on the individual increasing their feelings of stress or fear [3]. Yang [4] described the psychological problems due to internal and external factors effecting the international students. When acculturative stress accumulates or fails to find a way to be released it may exert an adverse effect on one´s psychological well - being [5] These psychological or mental health problems may include depression anxiety and perceived stress.

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Depression is often listed as one of the top presenting symptoms of psychological problems that international students may have when they experience a high level of acculturative stress [6]. Adjusting to life in college can be stressful for any student but for international students this stress is often multiplied [7]. In the host country international students meet a lot of stressful situations such as language barriers academic demands homesickness lack of social support [8]. High acculturative stress often leads to more difficulty in adapting socioculturally [9] It is very important to analyze the levels of acculturative stress adaptation difficulties and mental health problems among international students so that the cultural transition process can be understood and facilitated. A lot of research has been done in western countries to evaluate the prevalence and causes of acculturation stress mental health issues and maladjustment among international students. The purposes of all these research and studies were to understand the problems of international students in the host country from all aspects to facilitate the acculturation process and to help the international students to adjust to the host culture successfully. In China this kind of research is at its beginning phase as China has become known to international students for just a decade. The main purpose of this study was to evaluate and understand acculturation stress mental health issues and adjustment problems among international students studying in China. Other purposes were to study physical social and psychological interaction of international students to the host culture.

2 Methods

2.1 Subjects This was a cross sectional self administered questionnaire survey. This study was done on

international medical students studying in Luzhou med-ical college Sichuan province China. General demo-graphic details e. g. Age Gender Country and Grade were obtained in the first part of the questionnaire.

2.2 Measurements Acculturative stress: accultura-tion stress was measured using Acculturative Stress Scale for International students (ASSIS) by [10]. It is a 36 items scale in which responses are assessed in a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The total score for this scale ranges from 36 to 180 with higher score indicating higher ac-culturative stress levels.

Mental health problems: To evaluate the mental health status a new version of Depression Anxiety Stress Scale – 21 (DASS – 21) was used. This scale contains 21 items. There are 7 items for each subscale e. g. depression anxiety and stress respectively.

Socio – cultural adjustment: To evaluate the social and cultural adjustment a standard scale known as Re-vised Socio Cultural Adjustment Scale (SCAS – R) by Wilson & Ward was used. This revised scale consists of total 21 items. The higher score shows the higher levels of adjustment difficulties.

2.3 Analysis All the data was computed and ana-lyzed using SPSS (version 16.0). Further analysis was done by using descriptive statistics and t – test.

3 Results

3.1 General demographic information 150 question-naires were distributed out of which 100 question-naires were collected back successfully. General demo-graphic information were collected in the first part of the questionnaire. The age of the students ranged from 17 years to 25 years. Mean age was 21.5 years with (SD = 1.957). Out of total 100 students 68 were males and 32 were females. All the students were stud-ying in different school years. 21 students were in 1st year 8 students in 2nd year 19 students in 3rd year 20 students in 4th year and 32 students in 5th year. All the students were undergraduate medical students. Most of the students were from Asia and others were from Nigeria Ghana Somalia Canada and America.

3.2 Acculturative Stress Scale for International students (ASSIS): The range of scores for this sam-ple ranges from 42 to 145 with mean of 97.41 (SD = 22.08). The prevalence of acculturation stress among international students in this study is 32 percent. It means out of 100 students 32 percent of students are facing acculturation stress. There might be some im-portant stressors in host culture which can induce high-er levels of acculturation stress. The important stressors evaluated in this study were homesickness food prob-lems student's problems at campus cultural differ-ences and lack of understanding each other's cultural and religious values. The results of ASSIS are given in the table 1 below.

Table 1　The results of ASSIS

	Mean	SD	n/N(%)
I miss the people and country of my origin.	4.12	1.028	
I feel sad to leave my family and friends behind.	3.65	1.258	
I feel sad leaving my relatives behind.	3.58	1.273	
Homesickness bothers me.	3.79	1.373	
I feel uncomfortable to adjust to new cultural values.	3.04	1.230	
It hurts when people don't understand my cultural and religious values.	3.53	1.167	
I feel sad to consider student's problems here.	3.60	1.181	
I feel uncomfortable to adjust to new foods.	3.79	1.373	
Total scores of ASSIS	97.41	22.08	32/100(32%)

Note: SD means Std. Deviation

3.3 Depression Anxiety Stress Scale – 21 (DASS – 21) Depression: An evaluation of depression was done for all students from 1st year to 5th year. Results given in the following table were obtained. 28.6 per-cent students in 1st year 12.5 percent students in 2nd year 5 percent students in 3rd year 40 percent students in 4th year and 31.2 percent students in 5th year were depressend.

Anxiety: The percentage of students with per-ceived anxiety was calculated. 52. 3 percent students in 1st year   37. 5 percent students in 2nd year   12. 1 percent students in 3rd year   30 percent students in 4th year and 28. 1 percent students in 5th year were with anxiety. Length of stay was slightly influencing the presence of anxiety   showing higher anxiety in 1st year students and then decrease in the prevalence of anxiety with increase in time of stay in China.

Stress: The prevalence of perceived stress was also evaluated. The results are given in the following table 2. 9. 6 percent students in 1st year   37. 5 percent students in 2nd year   10. 6 percent students in 3rd year   25 percent students in 4th year and 25 percent students in 5th year were with stress. Prevalence of stress was lowest in 1st year students and was highest in 2nd year students.

Table 2   The evaluation of depression   anxiety   and stress of all students from 1st year to 5th year(%)

N = 100	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	5th year
With Depression	28. 6	12. 5	5	40	31. 2
No Depression	71. 4	87. 5	95	60	68. 8
With Anxiety	52. 3	37. 5	21. 1	30	28. 1
No Anxiety	47. 7	62. 5	78. 9	70	71. 9
With Stress	9. 6	37. 5	10. 6	25	25
No Stress	90. 4	62. 5	89. 4	75	5

3.5   Socio – cultural adjustment Scale (SCAS) :
An analysis of subscales of SCAS – R is given in the following table 3.

Table 3   The result of subscales of SCAS – R

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Language proficiency	100	1	4	2. 41	1. 006
Personal interests & community involvement	100	1	4	2. 05	. 936
Interpersonal communication	100	1	4	1. 88	. 782
Academic work and performance	100	1	4	1. 69	. 873
Ecological adaptation	100	1	4	1. 63	. 720

Results of this study show that international students are experiencing a lot of difficulty in learning Chinese language. Language is the most important fac-tor (mean = 2. 41) .

4   Discussion

In this study   the prevalence of acculturation stress among international students is 32 percent. And the homesickness was the top stressor for international students   whereas failure of adjustment to new foods was the second most important stressor. This result is the same as Bebe's study which BeBe [1] also describes language   food and cultural differences as highly dis-turbing problems for international students in China. According to Sandhu & Asrabadi [10]   stressors related with daily living   academics   language   and culture can be categorized under acculturation stress due to changed environment whereas stressors associated with interpersonal relations with local people may be de-scribed as perceived discrimination. Living in an en-tirely new culture can lead to culture shock or accultu-ration stress. Furthermore   stressors about family and loneliness can be defined by homesickness. These stressors are commonly experienced by international students and can affect their academics and satisfaction in living and studying in host country. Cultural differ-ences and poor understanding of host culture values was also a factor leading to acculturation stress. Home-sickness   food problems and cultural differences are the top factors which are playing the key role in the ac-culturation stress among international students in host culture.

International students were also experiencing the stress   depression and anxiety. In this study   an eval-uation of stress   anxiety   and depression was done for all students from 1st year to 5thyear. And the anxiety was higher in 1st year students which could be aassoci-ated with the length of stay in the host culture. Accul-

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turation stress or acculturation shock can lead to poor performance and psychological problems in international students. Acculturation shock often leads to mental health problems like depression anxiety and stress. Depression and anxiety have strong association with culture shock. Failure of adjustment to new culture also leads to depression and anxiety.

Results of this study show that international students are experiencing a lot of difficulty in learning Chinese language. Language is the most important factor (mean = 2. 41) which leads to successful socio – cultural adjustment if it is learned and understood. Failure or difficulty in learning and understanding of language of host culture leads to great levels of adjustment problems. International students are also facing difficulties in maintaining their hobbies and personal interests in the host community. It is also difficult for them to involve with in the community socially and psychologically as well as challenging to interact with Chinese people because of cultural barriers and poor understanding of each other´s emotions. Students face moderate levels of difficulties in adjusting to new learning style and education system. It has also found that length of stay was slightly facilitating the adaptation but it has no significant effect on socio – cultural adjustment. It was different from other studies which stated that the longer individuals reside in the foreign country the better the adjustment process to the new environment will be. For instance Wilton and Constantine [11] found that greater length of stay in the U. S. was associated with lower levels of psychological distress among Asian and Latin American international college students. It was also difficult for students to maintain their hobbies and interests in the host society. International students were also facing lack of social support and social interaction with the host community. It is also found that length of stay has its effect on the process of adaptation. A student with increased length of stay has more successful adaptation in host society but this study does not support this effect at significant levels.

As now China is going to be a popular destination for international students so there is a need to do research in this area. University authorities should appoint experts in this field in order to understand the social psychological and academic problems of international students. This not only would improve academic performance of international students but also help to attract more students to Chinese universities.

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