Does a Perceived Cross Cultural Differences influence level of Conflict and intention to leave?
A Cross-Sectional Study on African Students in Malaysia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is identifying the impact of cross cultural differences on student’s satisfaction and intention to leave the institution in future. A conceptual framework comprises of four (4) factors that are originally developed by Hofstede (1986) and further enhanced in 2001 by adding fifth dimension of Confucian dynamism was used to examined the impact of cross-cultural differences on level of conflict experienced by African students and their intention to leave the institution in near future. A multivariate likert-scale questionnaire (scale from 1-5) has been developed. Samples of 250 respondents were used from four private institutions in Malaysia to collect the data using random probability sampling method. Simple linear regression and correlation analysis was conducted using SPSS 22. Regression beta coefficient and correlation coefficients were generated to test the hypotheses and to establish the causal effects of collectivism, power distance, Masculinity and uncertainty avoidance. The research shows no significant influence of cross cultural differences on both student’s perceived level of conflict experienced inside and outside of the academic institution. Also this research found no significant impact of cross-cultural differences on student’s intention to leave, except power distance. This study shows that as student’s perceived differences in power distance increases, the intention to leave also increases. Similarly this research found that perceived level of conflict has a significant and positive impact on student’s intention to leave Therefore this study concluded that cross-cultural differences do not have any significant impact on perceived level of conflict and student intention to leave except power distance. Power distance has significant and positive impact on student intention to leave. However if students experience more conflict, it may strongly influences students intention to leave. Therefore managers at education sector should take initiatives and pay more attention to reduce level of conflict that may arise between students and management, teaching staff and among students. This might help the institution to retain the students in long-run or until they complete the study. Also it is important that government of Malaysia to take initiatives to aware general public and relevant authorities in dealing with African students to reduce the level of perceived conflict in order to attract more students. Future research should be undertaken on different context or by increasing the sample size by widening the research context to ensure validity and reliability of the results.

Key Terms: cross-cultural differences, Power distance (PD), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UA), Collectivism (Collect), Conflict, intention to leave, African students, Malaysia

1. Introduction

The research began to study cross cultural differences as an important element because it connects people from distinct background with different cultural beliefs, values, meaning and
attitudes, and perceptions under one umbrella (Fordham, 1988, p. 55). Various theories of culture such as Hofstede's Geert cultural dimension (1983), Trompenaars dimensions (1996), Chinese cultural connection (1987, p150) and Schwartz (1994, 1999) cultural dimensions were introduced. These theories are the most well-known and acceptable theories of cultural differences. Some scholars defined cultures as the way people think, feel and act based on the values and norms dominant in that specific society (Jones and George, 2003).

Today the number of African student's experienced severe growth in Malaysian higher education as the country is open up for international students to flourish within the country for the purpose of studies (Khamal, 2012). This fact is in away interesting but dealing with people from different cultural background can be sources of conflict (Pheng and Yuquan, 2010). As indicated by the CEO of Coca-Cola, as cultural barriers exist, presenting new challenges (Javidan and House 2001, p.291). Malaysian higher education providers are aiming to increase number of students studying with them over the next five to ten years (Hassan and Diallo, 2013). Foreign students in Malaysia represents an important source of foreign income, although creates challenging teaching environment due to the different learning styles, different cultural backgrounds and attitude differences causes many leadership issues for lecturers (Salvarajah, 2006, cited in Hassan and Diallo, 2013).

The situation is becoming critical as the higher education ministry reports that the number of African students reaches 999,769 between January and October this year compared to only 798,667 last year. The reports also indicate that the ministry of higher education is targeting 200,000 international students by 2020 (Khamal, 2012, 13). This has increased students and educators that are frequently from different societies with different cultural believes and values. Hence, lecturers from high power distance society talk in a high commanding tone to students (Hofstede's, 1997). While in most of the African students are from high power distance culture where lecturers are tactful and polite to students, they may find coping with the lecturers challenging. The challenge might lead to conflicts and students might decide to leave (Holland, 1997). However, international students in Malaysia represent an important source of foreign income, although cross cultural differences can also become an issue due to the fact that the number of international students is quite increasing especially African. As argued by (Hofstedes, 1986, cited in Ahmad et al, 2007) that combining two or more cultures in the same organization can be a medium of conflict. In addition, the number of African students has increased to 999,769 therefore, this study will shed light on educational institutions to understand the impact of cultural differences and set up educational environment sensitive to diversity of the cultures by enabling African students to have smooth academic and personal experience, which may contribute to school withdrawal reduction (McKenna, 2010).

Therefore the aim of the research is to view what are the cross-cultural factors contributes the perceived level of conflict and intention to leave. This means this study has formulated the following objectives:

(i) To examined the influences of cross-cultural differences on perceived level of conflict and intention to leave among African Students studying in Malaysia
(ii) To determine the impact of perceived level of conflict on student's intention to leave

This paper is divided into four sections: first, it discussed the existing literature regarding cross-cultured adjustments and expatriates job performance. Second, it described a methodology employed for this study. Third, it presents the results and findings of the research and discussion. Finally the conclusion and future research.

2. Literature Review

Culture as a concept has been used in various studies, ranging from educational institutions, sociology, psychology and management. There are still heated debates among
various scholars on what is the correct definition of culture. It was defined by (Triandis, 1996) that culture can be considered as being part of the human part of the environment, whilst (Kluckhohn, 1951, p.86) defined cultures as the patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting. Another widely used definition given by (Hofstede's, 1980, p.43) defined culture as the software of the mind and as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the inhabitants of one country from another. The cultural definition given by (Hofstede's, 1980, p.43) means that countries which share similar languages or are within the same geographic boundaries do not necessarily have similar cultural values and thus cultural clash may arise. Indeed, there is growing number of studies within this field. Some of these studies were summarised below

2.1 Schwartz (1994, 1999) Cultural Dimensions

Still building on the prominent work of Hofstede, (1980, 1991), Schwartz (1994, 1999) surveyed value preference of some 60,000 individuals in 63 countries. Based on the findings, separate individual level and country level data analysis were conducted. The findings also suggested that cultural differences emerged, however, the level of conflict is much compromised. He identified seven country level values orientation and it was classified as: conservatism, intellectual autonomy, affective autonomy, hierarchy, egalitarianism, mastery and harmony. In relation to the cultural dimensions identified by (Schwartz, 1994) we can conclude that some of his findings correlated more or less with the dimensions conceived by Hofstede 1994.

2.2 Chinese Cultural Connection (1987)

In a study undertaken by the Chinese Cultural Connection (1987, p150) which involved students from 22 countries, they found that cultural differences exist that lead to conflict. The findings showed high frequency of competitive and complexities of conflict among project managers in France and UK. And also the results indicate high level of assertiveness, cooperativeness and miscommunication conflict. A closer analysis of those dimensions can be related to cultural dimension identified by Hofstede (1980).

2.3 Trompenaars 7 Dimensions (1996)

Trompenaars (1985, 1993, and 1997) studied the values of people in different cultures from over 50 countries. The participants worked in local subsidiaries of a multinational corporation, IBM and universities. The findings showed that the process of communication and conflict is very complex. And also, the conflict erupted in a gun battle in Empangeni, which resulted in 11 people being shot and 24 wounded. However, the research has suggested that some non-Western countries such as Iran have experienced conflict with westerners due to political, cultural differences and religious belief (Trompenaars, 1985, 1993, and 1997). On the other hand, the findings of this study indicate that the barriers of communication come from the national culture’s influence on the workplace and behaviors of people with different identities (Trompenaars, 1985, 1993, and 1997). Similarly, a thorough analysis of (Trompenaars, 1985, 1993, and 1997) which presented a seven dimensional model of national culture differences argued that those dimensions are particularly relevant to the conduct of cultural differences, which are potential sources of cross cultural differences (Trompenaars, 1985, 1993, and 1997).

2.4 Hofstede's model under five dimensions (1986, 2001)

Power Distance: Research conducted by (Triandis et al., 2000) found that autocratic and paternalistic management approach were more prevalent across high power distance countries whilst democratic approach were more widely present across low power distance cultures. In this case, conflict may arise when low power cultures attempt to project their structures and behaviors’ upon high power cultures and thus students may decide to leave.
Individualism versus Collectivism: Research identifies several areas of potential conflict in the classroom for instance, differences appear with regard to independence, personal achievement, self-expression, and personal choice (Appelbaum and Shapiro, 2005). In line with the individualistic orientation of society, encourage children to become independent thinkers and doers who focus on their own achievement and on fulfilling their own individual needs. In contrast, children raised in collectivistic communities form a sense of self from recognizing their place in the community hierarchy and from affiliation with the group (Appelbaum and Shapiro, 2005). This suggest that students from collectivist countries travel to individualistic countries may find it more difficult to interact with fellow students which lead to frustration and thus, student may decide to leave.

H2: We expect that the cultural indices of individualism and collectivism to be associated with conflict.

Uncertainty Avoidance: It is reported that in societies with high uncertainty avoidance, students are more comfortable with structured learning situations and concerned with specific correct answers. Such cultures value the information and knowledge delivered by the instructor and considers it the best explanation to the problem. However, low uncertainty avoidance societies prefer open ended and abstract learning situations with formless objectives, broad assignments and less structured schedules (Hofstede, 2001, Minkov, 2011). On the other hand, (Ary and Razavieh, 2010) found that in high uncertainty avoidance countries there is more focus on offering lifetime employment whereas in low uncertainty avoidance countries there are higher job mobility. This is because they cope with stress and anxiety more effectively and tend to exhibit less extreme responses to reduce it (Alder and Gundersen, 2008). A conflict may arise when students from high uncertainty avoidance travel to low uncertainty avoidance countries because of the fear of ambiguous situations and unfamiliar risk and thus, may force students to leave (Ary and Razavieh, 2010).

Masculinity/Femininity: According to (Tina et al., 2008) masculinity is associated with big power, often forceful, result-oriented and competitive whilst femininity is related to personal connection and collaborative work. On the other hand, (Tina et al., 2008) found that in femininity cultures, teachers were more prone to display behaviors which emphasized cooperation and good working relationship whereas in masculine culture, there was higher emphasis on promoting an assertive, challenging and highly ambitious working environment. In this case, students from femininity travel to masculine society may experience difficulties and thus, may lead to conflict and student may decide to leave.

But interestingly, there is lack of research which has considered the cross cultural differences and perceived level of conflict by African students in Malaysia and intention to leave. This fact further increased the curiosity and interest to contribute in this area. However, the cultural dimension identified by Hofstede (1986), Trompenaars 7 Dimensions (1996), Schwartz (1994, 1999) Cultural Dimensions and Chinese Cultural Connection (1987, p150) can therefore, affect the level of conflict and thus is applied in these studies.

3. Conceptual framework

Based on the previous research findings, this study proposed the following conceptual framework as a basis of analysis.
4. Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Research design

For this study, exploratory study approach was deemed to be appropriate. As argued by (Kerlinger, 1973) that cross sectional approach allows the researchers to collect data from many organizations. In relation to this study, cross sectional approach was deemed to be appropriate because the study will carry out at four academic institutions namely FTMS College, APIIT, Sunway College University and Linton University in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. These academic institutions have large number of foreign students representing diverse cultural backgrounds.

4.2 Research method

In order to achieve the main objectives of this study, primary data was collected. As argued by (Flick, 2006, p.288) primary research help the researchers gain deeper understanding of history as a series of human events. Thus in relation to the purpose of this study, primary research has been deemed to be more relevant as the study aim to provide illumination and understanding of cultural differences and how these cultural differences affect level of conflict.

5. Data collection Tool

Questionnaire surveys are very widely used as a data collection method in cross cultural research (Bowling, 1997, Lister-Sharp et al., 1997, Scott and Usher, 1999). For the purpose of this study, multicultural experience questionnaire was used to collect data to identify cross cultural differences and level of conflict experienced by African students. Consequently, this approach will provide culturally diverse participants the opportunity to evaluate their thought on cross cultural differences (Flick, 2006, p.288). As argued by (Sauders et al., 2009, p.53) that the various cultures have different response patterns when responding to questionnaires. Thus, the presence of these different response patterns will help to answer the research question.

6. Sampling techniques

In relation to the purpose of this study, a probability sampling has been to be more relevant as it provides the most valid and credible results (Malhotra, 2007). Indeed as argued by (Marshall, 1999, p.253) that a probability sampling is reasonably when the choice is for quantitative approach and thus, is suitable for this study. In addition, a simple random probability sampling method was used to determine individual from each category. Researcher intended to distribute a total of 350 questionnaires among the four institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Estimated number of African Students joined in last three years</th>
<th>Number of students selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Subjects

350 questionnaires were distributed and a total of 290 questionnaires were returned. The response rate was 96.6%. The 13 surveys were incomplete and omitted in the study. This means the study only used 221 completed questionnaires, where 184 respondents were male (83%) and 37 respondents of the sample of 221 were female (16.7%). In this study majority of the participants were from College Z 73 (33.1%), College Y 60 (27.1%), College W 52 (23.5%) and College X 36 (16.3%) universities and college.

Majority of the respondents were bachelors 177 (80.1%), 5 (2.2%) were diploma, 8 (3.6%) were PhD, 31 (14%) were master’s students. These respondents were distributed to various programs such as 97 (43.9%) of respondents are IT students, 78 (35.5%) business related, 21 (9.5%) accounting, 19 (8.6%) electronic and electrical engineering, 3 (1.4%) political science, 1 (0.5%) of the respondents were perusing mathematics and 27 (9%) of the respondents are accounting students.

8. Procedure

In order to get different opinion from the respondents, the researcher independently contacted the students using a random sample based on the approximate numbers of students studying in the chosen four educational institutions. It is worthwhile to note that the researcher was keen to develop the kind of reports with relevant to student’s opinion and attempting to be non-directive and showed some kind of respect when approaching. This manner has helped maximized questionnaire acceptability and completion. Participants were selected from each data collection point using a systematic random probability sampling. Every 14th African student in each institution was used near the main entrance or gate. This is referred as Gate-Survey Concept. If the participant declined the researcher’s request, then again the whole process starts. However, (July to October 2013) a time period of 6 hours were spent for four (4) months on data collection process. The completed questionnaires were collected by the researcher and a follow up were made on the following week during the same hours before the classes were started and during the break-hours.

9. Reliability of the Scale items

In this research reliability is measure by using Cronbach’s Alpha. Cronbach’s Alpha measures internal consistency or how the items are closely related as a group. It may be mentioned that its value varies from 0 to 1 but, satisfactory value is required to be more than 0.6 for the scale to be reliable (Malhotra, 2002; Cronbach, 1951). Its value is estimated to be 0.783. If we compare our reliability value with the standard value alpha of 0.6 advocated by Cronbach (1951), a more accurate recommendation. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) or with the standard value of 0.6 as recommended by Bagozziand Yi's (1988) we find that the scales used by us are highly reliable for factor analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>No of items</th>
<th>Cronbach’s alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross cultural differences</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0.835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power Distance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty avoidance</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confucism dynamism</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.914</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Reliability Test

As the five variable used to measure Confucism dynamism are eliminated from the analysis as Cronbach Alpha is less than 0.6, where the score of Cronbach Alpha for this dimension was 0.23

10. Validity of the dataset

10.1 Factor Analysis

To assess the dimensionality of cross cultural differences (collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, Masculinity scale) associated with the perceived level of conflict among African students in Malaysia, factor analysis (principle component) was conducted on the items listed in Tables 4. The table shows that the scale items are unidimensional.

Principal Component communalities are above 0.5 ranging 0.505-0.843. Most of the variance of these variables was accounted for by this five dimensional factor solution. The descriptive statistics shows that the average score for all the items is similar. Also all the items have analogous spread. The ten items had eigenvalues over 1.00 and together explained 69.1% of the total variability in this data. It was concluded that solution with the ten factors would be appropriate.

10.2 Sample Adequacy

After checking the reliability and validity of scale, we tested whether the data so collected is appropriate for factor analysis or not. The appropriateness of factor analysis is dependent upon the sample size. A study conducted by MacCallum, Windaman, Zhang and Hong (1999) have shown that the minimum sample size depends upon other aspects of the design of the study. According to them, as communalities become lower, the importance of sample size increases. They have argued that if all communalities are above 0.5, relatively small samples (less than 300) may be perfectly adequate. It is clear that a sample size of 221 as is used in this current research is good for a suitable factor solution because all communalities are 0.5 and above.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is still another useful method to show the appropriateness of data for factor analysis. The KMO statistics varies between 0 and 1. Kasier (1974) recommends that values greater than 0.5 are acceptable. Between 0.5 and 0.7 are mediocre, between 0.7 and 0.8 are good, between 0.8 and 0.9 are superb (Field, 2000). In this study, the value of KMO for customer perceived value or the whole construct is 0.865 suggesting that the factor analysis is good and statistically significant (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin = 0.882, Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant at p = 0.000 level).

| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy | 0.882 |
| Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 5392.033 |
| | Df | 780 |
| | Sig | 0.000 |

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett’s Test

11. Results and Findings
11.1 Mean and Standard Deviation

The mean or central tendency of the data and standard deviation can help to give an overview of the way respondents answered the questions (Bryman and Bell, p.360). The table 2 below shows the statistical mean and standard deviation for each dimension of cross-cultural differences along with level of conflict and intention to leave.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Kurtosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Statistic</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.6416</td>
<td>.92249</td>
<td>.339</td>
<td>.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONFLICT</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.6389</td>
<td>.84516</td>
<td>-.765</td>
<td>.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTLEAVE</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.4335</td>
<td>.64819</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UA</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>.934</td>
<td>-.555</td>
<td>.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASC</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.6670</td>
<td>1.26830</td>
<td>-.003</td>
<td>.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLLECTIVISM</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>3.6389</td>
<td>.94516</td>
<td>-.765</td>
<td>.164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Valid N (listwise) | 221 |

Table 4: Descriptive means

Over the 40 items the average means value of 5 elements, the means ranged from 2.6461 to 3.95 indicating that the perceived level of cross cultural difference experienced by African students in Malaysia is moderate. However the level of conflict experienced by African students seems quite high during their study in Malaysia with a average mean score of 3.6389. In terms of cross-cultural differences, uncertainty avoidance has the highest mean value of 3.95 indicating that there is strong uncertainty avoidance among African students in Malaysia. The lowest mean score is 2.6416 attributed to power distance indicating that perceived level of power distance among African students is low.

UNIVARIABLE ANALYSIS (t-test, one-way ANOVA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- College W</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3.1 (1.0)</td>
<td>0.027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- College X</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>3.8 (0.81)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- College Z</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.53 (0.79)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- College Y</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>3.71 (0.73)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Female</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.5 (0.89)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Male</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>3.67 (0.83)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Study level
Data was explored and cleaned. Variable Level of study were categorized into PhD, Master’s, Bachelor’s, Diploma and Certificate. Categorical variables are described with frequency (percentage) and numerical variables with the means (SD). Independent t-test and one-way ANOVA applied to determine the difference in mean cross cultural difference, level of conflict score between the groups.

Several significant differences on conflict score based on different factors were found (Table 5). Colleges significantly differ (p<0.001). There was significant difference on cross cultural difference between College W and other colleges. College W students has statistically significantly lower mean cross cultural difference score compared to College X -0.48 (p=0.005), and College Y -0.40 (p=0.02). It might be due to College W have flexible and smart policies, which meets the needs and expectations of the majority from national and international culture perspective.

Fields of studies were not significantly different in cross cultural conflict score (p-value =0.44). Also no significant difference in conflict was found based on gender (p=0.27), level of study (p= 0.16) (Table 5).

### 11.2 Correlation Analysis

In the second stage of analysis, stepwise a correlation analysis was done on all constructs to determine Pearson’s Correlation Coefficients with a Two-tailed significance test. Cross-cultural differences elements are considered as independent variables and student satisfaction is considered as dependent variable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Correlation with Perceived level of conflict</th>
<th>P &lt;0.05</th>
<th>Correlation with intention to leave</th>
<th>P &lt;0.05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power distance (PD)</td>
<td>0.234**</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>0.377**</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty avoidance (UA)</td>
<td>0.016*</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculinity (MAS)</td>
<td>0.440**</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>0.106</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivism (Collect)</td>
<td>0.440**</td>
<td>Significant</td>
<td>0.360**</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.461**</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**.Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Table 6: Relations of Cross-cultural differences, level of conflict and intention to leave

With reference to the above table 6, the result shows that all the cross-cultural dimensions are significantly correlated with perceived level of conflict. Similarly this study found that power distance, collectivism and level of perceived conflict are significantly correlated with student’s intention to leave except uncertainty avoidance and masculinity.

11.3 Regression Analysis

For this study, regression analysis was performed to predict the perceived level of conflict and intention to leave when there is significant cross cultural differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Durbin-Watson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.511</td>
<td>.261</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td>.73475</td>
<td>15.217</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.838</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), MASC, COLL, PD, UA  
b. Dependent Variable: CONF

Table 7: Model 1 Summary-Cross-cultural differences and level of Conflicts

In model 1 (table 7) of regression analysis dependent variable was CONF and independent variables MASC, COLL, PD and UA were entered. R=0.51, R²=0.261 and Adjusted R²=0.24. This means that 24.4% of the variance in perceived level of conflict can be predicted by independent variables of cross-cultural dimensions. Durbin Watson test is acceptable 1.838 suggesting there is no serial correlation. F statistics is high 15.2 and significant (p<0.001). However the model is consider as poor fit as it adjusted R square do not reach or exceeds 0.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant) 1.602</td>
<td>.352</td>
<td>4.544</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>.062</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.188 .851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASC</td>
<td>0.245</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.227</td>
<td>3.771 .000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLL</td>
<td>0.291</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>.436</td>
<td>6.446 .000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UA</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>1.537 .126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Beta coefficient of Cross-cultural difference and level of conflicts

The result of regression analysis shows that is significant and positive influence of cross cultural dimensions of MAS and COLL on perceived level of conflict as shown in table 8. However the research study shows now significant influence of PD and UA on perceived level of conflict as all the factors significant level is above 0.05.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Durbin-Watson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>.457</td>
<td>.209</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>.61476</td>
<td>11.338</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.801</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), MASC, COLL, PD, UA  
b. Dependent Variable: INTLV

Table 9: Model 2 Summary-Cross-cultural differences and intention to leave

In model 2 of regression analysis dependent variable was INTLV and independent variables MASC, COLL, PD and UA R=0.457, R²=0.209 and Adjusted R²=0.19. This means that 19.1% of changes in INTLV is predicted by changes in the perceived level of cross cultural dimensions. Durbin Watson test is acceptable 1.801 suggesting there is no serial correlation. F statistics is high 11.338 and significant (p<0.001).However the model is consider as poor fit as it adjusted R square do not reach or exceeds 0.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>(Constant) 1.937</td>
<td>0.295</td>
<td>6.567</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>0.198</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.267</td>
<td>3.803 .000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASC</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.546 .586</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results shows that out of the four factors the three variables are significant and strongly influences INTLV such as -PD (p<0.000), COLL (p<0.000) and UA (p=0.033) in predicting African students intension to leave. There is no autocorrelation and Durbin Watson test is acceptable as the value is 1.80. Therefore PD, UA and COLL are strong predictors of INTLV.

Table 10: Beta coefficient of Cross-cultural difference and intention to leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Durbin-Watson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.461</td>
<td>0.212</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>0.60776</td>
<td>58.987</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1.802</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Predictors: (Constant), CONF
b. Dependent Variable: INTLV

Table 11: Model 2 Summary-Cross-cultural differences and intention to leave

In model 3 of regression analysis dependent variable was INTLV and independent variable was CONF. R=0.461, R²=0.212 and Adjusted R²=0.209. The model predicts only 20.9% of changes in intention to leave is attributed to the changes in perceived level of conflicts is consider to be a poor fit as it does not reach 60%. Durbin Watson test is acceptable 1.802 meaning there is no serial correlation. F statistics is high 58.98 and significant (p<0.001).

Table 12: Beta coefficient of perceived level of conflict and intention to leave

The table above suggested that there is a significant and positive influence of perceived level of CONF on African student’s intention to leave (P<0.05).

12. Discussions and Conclusion

As discussed earlier the study's domain of research, cross cultural difference and level of conflict experienced by African student and their intension to leave is a new topic in developed and underdeveloped countries especially in Malaysia, thus, its impact on international students deserves investigation in its own right. Although academic research of cultural differences and level of conflict in education sectors or among public and private colleges especially in Malaysia is limited, this study contributes to the field understanding by adding an important new insight. One of the important implications of the educational institution is that overall cultural dimension has become a significant predictor of African students level of conflict. This suggests that cross cultural diversification could influence students to engage in conflicting situations related to both academic and non-academic matters, experience disagreement about assessment done in originality reports of Turnitin, experienced disagreement with lecturers and with classmates and this may finally increase chance of the student’s level of conflict and intension to leave. In addition, this study has endeavor to brought significant insights to the educational institutions in Malaysia to minimize its negative impact in order to retain African students.

The findings are consistent with other studies. A research was undertaken by (Pompei and Hannsen, 2007) on impact of cross cultural difference among college and universities. However, the schools were mixed national and branches of international schools. Results shows that national universities had higher cross cultural difference compared to the international branches. It is because the national universities in the study had less experience in dealing with the students from diverse backgrounds. The cross cultural difference impacted and increased
international student's intention to leave. When college and universities in this study are compared in terms of cross cultural difference and it impact on African student in College X, College Z and College Y had higher cross cultural difference score which had impacts on African student’s intension leave. It might be due to less international teaching staff, which are by cultural dimensions in the study are not close and match with African students. Findings are consistent with Parsons and Shills (2010). The study reported that when there is a mixture of cultures from diverse backgrounds and nations there will be high risk of the conflict to rise regardless of their relation to the ways students assessed and marked by lecturers or non-academic matters. Similarly, Paul Pedersen, (2006) conducted research on cross cultural difference and its impact on Chinese and American students at University of Maryland College. Results show that Chinese students experience greater problems with learning barriers in association with cultural dimensions such as individualism, uncertain situation and masculinity.

The findings are in line with previous studies showing that challenges occur in the US in terms of group works and the ways the paper works assessed and marked by lecturers (Chang, & Cheng, 2007). Such barriers caused lack of effective team performance which leads to conflict and thus, had negative impact among students. Also this study concluded that out of the five predictors of conflict and intension to leave, PD, COLL and UA has a significant impact on African student’s intension to leave. However, this study finds that when each dimensions of cross cultural difference is segregated to find the impact of PD, COLL, MASC and UA on African student’s intention to leave, the results found that there is significant influence of MASC on African student’s intension to leave. The most surprising results were that COLL, PD and UA are positively associated with conflict which had impact on African students' intension to leave.

As the study results show cross cultural differences impact intention to leave among African students. Cross cultural differences power distance, collectivism/individualism and uncertainty avoidance are significant and strong predictors of intention to leave. These patterns of the study findings are consistent with the previous studies. The researchers argue that three significant dependent variables can predict the study outcome (Singh, 2011, Diener, 2010, McSweeney, 2002). The results of this study show that out of the four dependent variables in predicting African students' intension to leave, PD, COLL and UA are highly significant. This means that the cultural dimensions have negative impact and influence African students’ intension to leave. Similarly, (Zhen Xiong Chen et al., 2009) conducted a research on cross cultural differences using power distance in China. According to them students from low power distance society were willing to leave due to China’s high power distance culture. In this study, PD, COLL and UA were positively significant and influenced African students' intension to leave. Therefore, UA has negative impact on level of conflict and African student's intension to leave. Overall, this study proved to be important and fulfilled its objectives to shed light and identify cross cultural difference and level of conflict experienced by African students and its associated factors (power distance, collectivism, intention to leave, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance) in Malaysian universities and colleges.

In conclusion increased in perceived cross-cultural differences could affect the perceived level of conflict and intention to leave the educational institution in short term and as well as long-term. Further research of a similar topic should include more participants from both private and public institutions, focusing on the students of other cultures as well and also put emphasis on identifying the cross cultural difference and perceived level of conflict between current African students and those who had quit Malaysia due to cross cultural difference. Then, the knowledge about cross cultural differences and perceived level of conflict and its impact on students would be further updated and extended.

Reference


