

## **PREDICTORS OF THE ENJOYMENT AND MISSING EXPERIENCES OF MALAYSIAN STUDENTS IN HOME COUNTRY AND OVERSEAS**

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this longitudinal study was to identify the predictors of the adaptation experiences of Malaysian students in home country and overseas, from two perspectives: missing and enjoyment experiences. At Time 1, 2090 responses were collected from a group of students who were enrolling at various overseas preparatory studying programmes (later termed as *overseas students*) and also first year students who were continuing their education at a public university in Malaysia (later termed as *home country students*). At Time 2, 628 of the participants were retained. The predictor variables were Time 1 well-being indicators (i.e. life satisfaction, positive and negative affect), importance and satisfaction of conservation and self-transcendence values, perceived success (measured by the Malaysian Certificate of Examination results and perceived English language fluency), personality, and parents' level of education. The findings showed that overseas students who had a low level of English language fluency and a high level of importance of conservation and satisfaction of self-transcendence values tended to miss home. Similarly, overseas students who were less fluent in English were less likely to enjoy their life abroad. Whilst for the home country students, the high level of negative affect predicted their missing experience, and none of the predictor variables were found to be significant in contributing to enjoyment experience.

**Keywords:** Adaptation Experience, Overseas Students & Home Country Students

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of Study**

It is common to hear that one who has just arrived at a new place will experience homesickness to some point in time (Furnham & Bochner, 1982). For the immigrants, being in a foreign country makes them realise how different life is as compared to the conditions in their home country (Furnham, 2004). They may also experience a sense of loss which may trigger the urge of going back to the affectionate memories of home and deepen their homesickness level (Suanet & Van de Vijver, 2009).

Adaptation of immigrants however, is a multifaceted process that could as well be explained by the balance of perceived gains (positive outcome of migration) and losses (negative outcome of migration) (Maydell-Stevens, Masgoret & Ward, 2007). Being at a new place may also mean a new discovery of joyful life, which may override the pain of missing home that some may experience. For the new university students, there could be a lot of opportunities for growth and self-development offered by the university and the supporting communities, which may also be another type of enjoyment they could treasure. Undergoing a non-ordinary life far away from home may be a rewarding experience for one who looks at it as a challenge (Compton, 2005).

Various factors have been found to predict international students' adaptation (Duru & Poyrazli, 2007). Personality traits, for example, may also contribute to the adaptation process. People who are highly extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, and opened are more likely to enjoy life at a new place than those who have lower degree of these traits (Furnham, 2004). Neurotic individuals may as well less likely to enjoy life being away from the significant others (Ward & Chang, 1997) as they are prone to be panic-stricken if things are not going their way; thus, bringing them closer to suffer from high negative emotions.

Immigrants who tightly cling to their values that are opposed to the values of the immediate environment or culture of host society may not get on easily with life (Bardi & Goodwin, 2011). High cultural discrepancy may put people into longing for things that they used to have which are hard to fulfil in their current lives (Ward & Searle, 1991; Joshanloo, 2010). These

people may encounter missing home more than others, and may not put themselves easily in treasuring the excitement of the new experience in life.

International students who are proficient in the native language of host society could boost their well-being to a higher level. Swami, Arteche, Chamorro-Premuzic, and Furnham (2010) reported that Malaysian students who are fluent in English are better adapted in Britain. Apart from that, previous academic achievement may boost the confidence feeling for being academically competent or skilful predicts a substantive level of happiness (Cheng & Furnham, 2002), which is particularly important for the overseas students as it contributes to the adaptation process in the foreign place (Mohd.Yusof & Chelliah, 2010).

Past studies have also indicated that there is a relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and well-being. Those who come from a well-off family will have a better opportunity for self-growth and development than those who have lower SES. In the case of immigrants, higher SES individuals are believed to adjust better than those with lower SES (Van Geel & Vedder, 2010). Individuals who have already been overwhelmed by negative experiences in the past are potential to have problems in future life adjustment (Ying & Liese, 1990). Longitudinal studies on international students have shown that the students' level of subjective well-being at the time before migrating or at the beginning of their studies in the new country can serve as a predictor of their well-being a few months after settling abroad (e.g. Ying & Liese, 1990, 1991).

In light of the literature reviews above, this study was designed in order to investigate the extent to which each types of adaptation experience – Missing and Enjoyment, is predicted by well-being indicators, personality traits, importance and satisfaction of conservation and self-transcendence values, perceived success, and parents' level of education amongst undergraduate Malaysian students after being approximately six months in their studies (later termed as Time 2). As overseas and home country studying may offer two different learning experiences, it is important to explore the adaptation experiences in each group of the students. These predictor variables were measured at the beginning of the term time for the home country students, and at a pre-departure level for abroad studies for overseas students (later termed as Time 1).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study design**

The study had been designed as a quantitative survey using paper-based and online survey methods.

### **Sampling**

In the follow-up study, 30.05% of the previous samples were retained. Six hundred and twenty-eight (628) of them turned up for this follow-up study, comprising 244 overseas students and 384 home country students. The home country students answered the paper-based questionnaire, whilst the overseas students answered the online questionnaire. Among the 1118 overseas students, 1062 of them provided their email addresses at Time 1. After sending the email to the respective students, 189 of the email were bounced back, leaving 873 of them being successfully sent. In the end, only 21.82% ( $n = 244$ ) of the overall overseas students responded to the online questionnaire.

For the home country students, the questionnaires were distributed in the classes of which were assumed to have high possible number of students who had responded to the first questionnaire (at Time 1). Out of the 650 questionnaires collected, only 384 were found to match with the previous responses, which was approximately 39.51% of the return rate of the home country students.

Gender distribution showed that 208 (33.12%) of the participants were males and 420 (66.88%) were females. Overall, almost 36% of them reported that they had been travelling abroad. In comparison to the home country students, more than 60% of the overseas students claimed that they had been to overseas before. In terms of parents' educational level, the overseas group had the highest number of fathers with a degree qualification, whereas for the home country students, the highest number of the fathers' academic qualification fell in the category of secondary education. Both of the groups had the highest number of mothers with secondary education background. Table 1 shows further descriptions of the socio-demographic distribution. The overall mean for the duration of enrolment at the university was about 6.5 months.

**Table 1: Socio-Demographic Distribution Between the Overseas and Home Country Populations**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Home country</b>	<b>Overseas</b>	
Gender			
Males	108 (28.1%)	100 (41%)	(N= 628)
Females	276 (71.9%)	144 (59%)	
Travel to overseas			
Yes	63 (16.5%)	161 (66.3%)	(N= 627)
No	319 (83.5%)	82 (33.7%)	Missing data = 1
Father’s education level			
Not attending any education	20 (5.3%)	2 (0.8%)	(N= 624)
Primary school	83 (21.8%)	29 (11.9%)	Missing data = 4
Secondary school	211 (55.5%)	61 (25%)	
Diploma	29 (7.6%)	46 (18.9%)	
Bachelor degree	20 (5.3%)	72 (29.5%)	
Postgraduate degree	17 (4.5%)	34 (13.9%)	
Mother’s education level			
Not attending any education	32 (8.5%)	3 (1.2%)	(N= 619)
Primary school	112 (29.8%)	32 (13.1%)	Missing data = 9
Secondary school	186 (49.5%)	83 (34%)	
Diploma	25 (6.6%)	49 (20.1%)	
Bachelor degree	18 (4.8%)	57 (23.4%)	
Postgraduate degree	3 (0.8%)	20 (8.2%)	

**Measures**

The measure for this study can be divided into two different phases. In the first phase, participants were asked to complete a set of questionnaire, containing a 20-item Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), a 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), a 44-item Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991), a 10-item Schwartz’s Short Value Scale (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005; Schwartz, 1992), whereby each scale measures the importance and satisfaction of values, an academic performance report based on the results of the Malaysian Certificate of Education (which is equal to the General Certificate of School Education (GCSE)), a question on perceived English language fluency, and demographic background of the participants.

In the second phase of the study or the follow-up, the same measurements were conducted on the same participants; however, it excludes personality and some information of the demographic background. At this time round participants were also asked to complete a self-developed scale for adaptation experiences, known as the Adaptation to Life Index.

## **Subjective Well-Being Indicators**

Two measurement tools were used to measure subjective well-being explained as follows:

### ***Positive and negative affect scales (PANAS)***

These 10-item scales (Watson, et al, 1988) measure the extent to which positive affect (PA) and negative affective (NA) states are generally experienced, rated from 1 (*‘very slightly or not at all’*) to 5 (*‘extremely’*). Positive affect score is made up by summing up responses to items 1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, and 19, and items 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, and 20 for negative affect score. Higher scores indicate greater positive and negative affect respectively.

### ***Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)***

This 5-item scale (Diener, et al., 1985) assessed life satisfaction, with items rated from 1 (*‘strongly disagree’*) to 7 (*‘strongly agree’*). Higher scores indicate greater life satisfaction.

### **Schwartz’s Short Value Schedule (SSVS)**

There were two sections of this inventory. The first one was the short version of Schwartz Value Scale (SSVS) (Schwartz, 1992, 1996) containing a single item that measured each of the following 10 values; Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-direction, Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, and Safety, as a guiding principle in life (adapted by Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005). For example, the participants were asked to rate the importance as a life-guiding principle of *“Power that is, social power, authority, wealth”* and *“Achievement, that is, success, capability, ambition, and influence on people and events.”* A similar phrasing was used for all 10 values. Hence, the SSVS includes 10 items, each of which indicates one original value and the related original value items as descriptors. The 10 value items were rated on a 9-point scale ranging from 0 (*opposed to values*), 1 (*not important*), 4 (*important*), to 8 (*of supreme importance*). Higher scores on this scale indicate greater importance of values.

Based on the SSVS, following the same sequence and structure, another value scale was developed in order to measure the satisfaction felt when the goals related to these 10 values were achieved. This scale was named

*Value Satisfaction Scale (VSS)*. Answers were scaled on a 9-point scale, ranging from 0 (*‘not relevant to my values’*) to 8 (*‘completely satisfied’*). Higher scores on this scale indicate greater satisfaction of values.

According to Schwartz’s value theory (Schwartz, 1992), the value structure can be seen in a circumplex model, characterized by two theoretical underpinnings i.e. Self-transcendence vs. Self-enhancement, and Conservation vs. Openness to change. Aligned with Lindeman and Verkasalo’s (2005) study, two dimensions of value in this study were identified as Self-transcendence and Conservation. Based on previous studies, Lindeman and Verkasalo (2005) had developed an equation formula in measuring the degree of importance for each dimension, which was then adapted and used further in this research. The equation formulas are as depicted in Figure 1.

<p><i>Self-transcendence importance/ satisfaction</i></p> $= -.60 - (.19x \text{ Power}) - (.14 x \text{ Achievement}) - (.09 x \text{ Hedonism}) - (.11 x \text{ Stimulation}) + (.01 x \text{ Self-direction}) + (.10 x \text{ Universalism}) + (.13 x \text{ Benevolence}) + (.07 x \text{ Tradition}) + (.06 x \text{ Conformity}) + (.02 x \text{ Security})$
<p><i>Conservation importance/satisfaction =</i></p> $.82 + (.05 x \text{ Power}) + (.06 x \text{ Achievement}) - (.04 x \text{ Hedonism}) - (.09 x \text{ Stimulation}) - (.18 x \text{ Self-direction}) - (.16 x \text{ Universalism}) + (.03 x \text{ Benevolence}) + (.16 x \text{ Tradition}) + (.18 x \text{ Conformity}) + (.11 x \text{ Security})$

Figure 1: Equation Formulas to Calculate Scores of Each Value Dimensions

**Big Five Inventory (BFI)**

This 44-item inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991) assessed the Big Five personality factors i.e. Extraversion (E) 8 items, Conscientiousness (C) 9 items, Openness (O) 9 items, Agreeableness (A) 8 items, and Neuroticism (N) 10 items. Cronbach’s alpha for this inventory ranged from 0.55 to 0.76, indicating that the scale was adequately reliable to be used. An exploratory factorial analysis was run on the data to determine the structure of the inventory as previous studies had shown different results of the underlying personality factors or traits.

**Adaptation to Life Index**

Adaptation to Life Index is a self-developed questionnaire which was based on the themes that emerged from an interview and the literature reviews. It consists of two independent scales, namely; 'missing experience', and 'enjoyment experience.' This index had been pilot-tested on 100 international students throughout the UK, and was found to have high internal consistency of items (i.e. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.90 to 0.94 for both scales), indicating that the Adaptation to Life Index is a reliable instrument. Principal component analysis (PCA) confirmed that the instrument consists of two independent scales.

In order to help the overseas participants, respond to the questionnaire, some wordings related to the experiences in the UK were amended so that the items would be more general and relevant to the overseas participants from other countries. For example, item 11 in the original Enjoyment scale; "*Opportunity to learn about the UK's culture and norms*" was changed to "*Opportunity to learn about the host country's culture and norms*".

For the home country participants, a similar questionnaire had also been developed based on the overseas adaptation questionnaire. In this questionnaire, the participants were asked to refer to the adapting experiences based on their lives at the university which they were attending. Original items were retained as much as possible and amended wherever possible so that the items would relate to the home country students. Three items for the Missing scale and six items for the Enjoyment scale were modified. For example, item 1 in the Missing scale; "Traditional food" was changed to "home-cooked food". Item 7 in the Enjoyment scale; "*An opportunity to get to know people from other cultures*" was changed to "*An opportunity to get to know people from other ethnic groups*". The index for the home country version was found to be highly reliable to be used as the Cronbach's alpha values were 0.95 and 0.94 for the missing and enjoyment scales, respectively.

### **Demographic Section**

For the demographic section, the participants were asked about their background, which includes the types of studying they are undergoing, the length of being at the university, and the educational background of their parents. Other information had already been provided at the Time 1 survey, including gender, ethnic groups, age, the institution they were

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enrolling in, overseas travelling experience, and whether or not they were the government scholarship holders. In order to link the data at Time 1 with the data from this follow-up study, under this section, they were again asked to provide the same email address and the unique code invented at Time 1.

### **Ethics**

The study had been granted the ethics approval by the Board of Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Science and Technology before the beginning of the first phase of this longitudinal survey. For the home country students, a letter was written to the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Students affairs, University Malaysia Sabah, in order to seek the permission for running the study amongst the students. A verbal consent was sought after shortly.

### **Procedure**

In January 2011, a follow-up study to the previous survey was carried out and it commenced with the control sample. The students who had been involved in the earlier research were tracked down based on which faculty program they were enrolling in with the help of the academic staff of the university. A paper-based type of questionnaire was prepared for the control group as some of the participants did not provide any email address in the first survey due to low accessibility to the Internet. An arrangement for administering the questionnaire was made first between the researcher, the program coordinators and the lecturers involved. The administration of questionnaire was done during the last 30 minutes of class, which was administered by the researcher herself with the help of the lecturer, whose class was involved in the study. A brief introduction to the study was given including anonymity assurance of students' identity and responses, their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and confidentiality of all the information given.

In order to match the data at Time 1 and Time 2, in the socio-demographic section, the participants were asked again to provide the code that they invented before and the email address that was given in the previous survey. The participants completed the paper-based questionnaire in about 20 minutes. All the questionnaires were collected immediately. However, some lecturers preferred to distribute the questionnaires to the identified students. They were asked to fill in the questionnaire at their own

convenient time before returning it to their respective lecturer in the following week. Before letting them administer the questionnaires, they were briefed first on the study and the questionnaire, and were asked if there were things unclear about the study. The administration of the questionnaire lasted for 3 weeks.

For the overseas participants, in March 2011, prior to the actual study, an email was sent to all the participants to announce the follow-up study and to invite them to participate again in the research. A week later, another email was sent to the participants, which provided a link to the online survey. Prior to this, the construction of the online questionnaire was done by a staff member of the technician office at the School of Psychology, Plymouth University, with reference to the original questionnaire developed by the researcher's team. In this survey, the participants were asked to click on the link in order to get access to the survey. Before answering the questionnaire, they were asked to read the introductory part of the survey. The introductory part informs the participants about the assurance of the anonymity of their identity and responses, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. They were also assured that all of the information given will be treated in the strictest confidence. In addition, they were asked to complete the special code that they had completed for their first questionnaire, namely; father's initials and the day of the month on which they were born, and also to provide again the email address to which they provided at Time 1. After that, they were asked to click on the button to show that they have understood the explanation clearly. In order to indicate the informed consent given, the participants were asked again to click on the button that says "Yes, I agree to participate in this research."

To guard against abuse by the participants or others, the survey was designed not to allow more than one answer in each of the questions asked. To reflect a research environment consistent with paper and pencil completion, the participants were given the option of answering or leaving any question unanswered before proceeding to the next section of the survey. The participants were not able to change their answers once they have clicked on the 'Finish' button. After clicking on the 'Finish' button, a page will appear which provides the access to the debriefing section.

Due to the low response of the overseas participants (91 or 37% of the Time 2 overseas participants), a second reminder email was sent out to remind the participants of the study, i.e. about two months after the online survey was launched. About seven weeks later, another 153 participants (63%) responded to the survey, making all together 244 participants.

## **RESULTS**

### **Multiple Regressions on Adaptation Experiences for Overseas, and Home Country Students**

The following adaptation experiences, namely, missing and enjoyment, were regressed on six groups of predictor variables, which are described in each of the following general equations:

$$\text{Missing experience} = b_0 + b_1\text{Well-being}_{1i} + b_2\text{Personality}_{1i} + b_3\text{V}_{1i} + b_4\text{V}_{5i} + b_5\text{Perceived Success}_{1i} + b_6\text{Parents' educational level}_{1i} + \varepsilon_i$$

$$\text{Enjoyment experience} = b_0 + b_1\text{Well-being}_{1i} + b_2\text{Personality}_{1i} + b_3\text{V}_{1i} + b_4\text{V}_{5i} + b_5\text{Perceived Success}_{1i} + b_6\text{Parents' educational level}_{1i} + \varepsilon_i$$

### **Missing Experience for the Overseas and Home Country Students**

Two separate analyses were conducted for the overseas and home country students in order to see whether the predictors for missing experience were different in the two populations. The first regression analysis was conducted on the overseas students only. The results showed that the well-being indicators at Time 1 contributed 7% of the variance in missing experience. Personality and value importance at Time 1 did not contribute any change to the variance. The following two predictors, namely, Time 1 values satisfaction and perceived success, accounted for an additional of 3.2% and 4.1% of the variance. When perceived success at Time 1 was entered into the model, the variance rose to 24.6%. In the final model, parents' educational level at Time 1 did not leave any effect on missing experience. However, high self-transcendence satisfaction, conservation importance, and low level of perceived English language fluency at Time 1 remained as significant predictors to missing experience amongst the overseas students. The results are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Results of Predictor Variables on Missing Experience in The Overseas Student Population**

Predictor variables	Standardized coefficients (Beta)					
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
<i>Wellbeing indicators at time 1</i>						
Life satisfaction	.17*	.15	.13	.16	.12	.11
Positive affect	.06	.02	.02	.00	.03	.04
Negative affect	.24**	.22	.18	.13	.13	.12
<i>Personality</i>						
Extraversion		.07	.05	.04	.08	.08
Agreeableness		.15	.13	.07	.10	.10
Conscientiousness		.05	.03	.05	.02	-.00
Neuroticism		.13	.15	.15	.19	.19
Openness		.00	.02	.05	.07	.08
<i>Value Importance</i>						
Conservation importance			.20*	.16	.19*	.19*
Self-transcendence importance			-.10	-.14	-.15	-.13
<i>Value satisfaction</i>						
Conservation satisfaction				-.01	-.01	-.00
Self-transcendence satisfaction				.23**	.21*	.19*
<i>Perceived success</i>						
English language fluency					-	-.28***
GCSE result					.29***	-.01
					-.01	
<i>Parents' education level</i>						
Father's education level						-.04
Mother's education level						-.10
<i>R square</i>	.070	.097	.129	.170	.246	.261
<i>Adjusted R square</i>	.052	.048	.070	.101	.171	.177
<i>R square change</i>	.070	.027	.032	.041	.075	.016
<i>Sig. F change</i>	.011	.488	.070	.031	.001	.230

\*p≤.05, \*\*p≤.01, \*\*\*p<.001

A second regression analysis was conducted for the home country students. The results indicated that the well-being indicators at Time 1 explained 8.9% of the variance in missing experience. Personality traits at Time 1 also contributed an additional of 6.5% of the variance. None of the subsequent variables contributed to the change of the variance. In the final model, only negative affect at Time 1 remained as the significant predictor to missing experience amongst the home country students. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Multiple Regression Results of Predictor Variables on Missing Experience in The Home Country Student Population**

Predictor variables	Standardized coefficients (Beta)					
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
<i>Wellbeing indicators at time 1</i>						
Life satisfaction	.14*	.11	.10	.11	.10	.11
Positive affect	.17**	.02	.01	.01	-.01	-.01
Negative affect	.16**	.21**	.21**	.20**	.21**	.21**
<i>Personality</i>						
Extraversion		.13	.13	.13	.17	.17
Agreeableness		.19*	.18*	.18*	.15	.15
Conscientiousness		.05	.05	.05	.04	.04
Neuroticism		.11	.11	.12	.12	.12
Openness		.05	.06	.06	.07	.07
<i>Value Importance</i>						
Conservation importance			.05	.02	.02	.02
Self-transcendence importance			-.03	-.04	-.05	-.05
<i>Value satisfaction</i>						
Conservation satisfaction				.07	.07	.06
Self-transcendence satisfaction				.03	.02	.02
<i>Perceived success</i>						
English language fluency					-.09	-.09
GCSE result					-.09	-.09
<i>Parents' education level</i>						
Father's education level						-.02
Mother's education level						.00
<i>R square</i>	.089	.153	.156	.161	.182	.182
<i>Adjusted R square</i>	.077	.124	.119	.116	.131	.123
<i>R square change</i>	.089	.065	.002	.005	.021	.000
<i>Sig. F change</i>	.000	.004	.729	.502	.057	.968

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01

**Enjoyment Experience for the Overseas and Home Country Students**

The results showed that the final model accounted for 12.9% of the variance in overseas students. Each of the predictor variables did not contribute to the change of variance in enjoyment experience. However, students who rated themselves to be fluent in the English language prior to the undergoing overseas studies were likely to enjoy their overseas life. The results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4: Multiple Regression Results of Predictor Variables on Enjoyment Experience in The Overseas Student Population**

Predictor variables	Standardized coefficients (Beta)					
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
<i>Wellbeing indicators at time 1</i>						
Life satisfaction	.15	.14	.12	.12	.15	.15
Positive affect	.00	-.07	-.06	-.07	-.08	-.08
Negative affect	-.02	-.01	.05	-.05	-.03	-.04
<i>Personality</i>						
Extraversion		.06	.04	.02	-.00	-.00
Agreeableness		.08	.05	.05	.02	.03
Conscientiousness		.12	.11	.10	.11	.10
Neuroticism		.08	.10	.09	.07	.08
Openness		.08	.11	.12	.11	.11
<i>Value Importance</i>						
Conservation importance			.19*	.14	.12	.13
Self- transcendence importance			-.01	-.01	-.00	.01
<i>Value satisfaction</i>						
Conservation satisfaction				.10	.11	.11
Self- transcendence Satisfaction				-.02	.00	-.01
<i>Perceived success</i>						
English language fluency					.17*	.18*
GCSE result					-.08	-.07
<i>Parents' education level</i>						
Father's education level						-.03
Mother's education level						-.05
<i>R square</i>	.025	.056	.087	.094	.124	.129
<i>Adjusted R square</i>	.009	.012	.034	.029	.050	.044
<i>R square change</i>	.025	.031	.031	.006	.031	.005
<i>Sig. F change</i>	.211	.347	.057	.560	.058	.617

\*p<.05

A second regression analysis was conducted for the home country students only. The results showed that, in Step 1, well-being indicators at Time 1 significantly attributed 15.7% of the variance in enjoyment experience through the contribution of Time 1 life satisfaction and positive affect. The remaining of the predictor variables did not contribute any change to the variance in enjoyment experience. However, father's educational level at Time 1 showed a significant contribution to enjoyment experience amongst the home country students. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Results of Predictor Variables on  
 Enjoyment Experience in The Home Country Student Population

Predictor variables	Standardized coefficients (Beta)					
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
<i>Wellbeing indicators at time 1</i>						
Life satisfaction	.14*	.12	.11	.11	.10	.09
Positive affect	.23**	.13	.13	.14	.11	.11
Negative affect	-.033	-.02	-.02	-.02	-.01	-.01
<i>Personality</i>						
Extraversion		.05	.06	.06	.07	.08
Agreeableness		.12	.11	.11	.10	.10
Conscientiousness		.02	.01	.02	.01	.02
Neuroticism		.09	.08	.08	.07	.08
Openness		.07	.07	.09	.09	.08
<i>Value Importance</i>						
Conservation importance			.03	.03	.03	.02
Self- transcendence importance			.04	.04	.03	.04
<i>Value satisfaction</i>						
Conservation satisfaction				-.02	-.03	-.01
Self- transcendence satisfaction				-.03	-.03	-.03
<i>Perceived success</i>						
English language fluency					.05	-.00
GCSE result					-.13	-.13
<i>Parents' education level</i>						
Father's education level						.15
Mother's education level						-.01
<i>R square</i>	.091	.120	.121	.122	.134	.154
<i>Adjusted R square</i>	.080	.089	.082	.076	.081	.094
<i>R square change</i>	.091	.029	.001	.001	.012	.020
<i>Sig. F change</i>	.000	.190	.883	.860	.200	.074

\*p≤.05, \*\*p<.01

## DISCUSSION

Although it is well-documented in previous research that overseas students suffer from homesickness more than the local students (e.g. Hechanova-Alampay, Beehr, Christiansen & Van Horn, 2002; Jose, Ward, & Liu, 2007), negative affect at Time 1, surprisingly, predicted missing experience for the home country students. The data for home country students were collected in the Malaysian public university in the city of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah (which is located in Borneo). These students came from different regions and cultural backgrounds of Malaysia and may have never been to any parts of Borneo or interacted with people in that region. They may have inadequate knowledge about the diverse culture of Borneo and the kind of university life they would lead, which contributed to the anxious feelings amongst the home-country students, especially for those who were from the Peninsular Malaysia. A majority (more than 80%) of the home-country students had no experience of being abroad; thus,

adapting themselves to independent living in a new place which is miles away from family may not be easy. Such an anxiety may not be faced by the Peninsular students only, but also by some local students from rural areas of Sabah. Those who come from this area would have to deal with the poor transportation system which makes the accessibility to a big city like Kota Kinabalu a painstaking experience. Hence, limited interaction with outsiders is likely to occur, which may cause a lot of anxieties when meeting with new people in the future and slow down the process of adapting to the university's multicultural life later on.

Compared to the overseas students, the home-country students could be left with limited opportunities for pleasure-seeking activities at the university, which may result in a less exciting life. Furthermore, they may also easily fall into boredom with their surroundings, which may prompt them to miss home. On the other hand, the overseas students may perceive the experience of being abroad as one of the priceless moments in their lives, which only comes once in a life time. They may miss home, but the excitement upon experiencing life abroad may have superseded the feelings of missing home.

This result found support from Jose et al.'s (2007) study that the Western international students reported less psychological adaptation compared to their domestic New Zealand peers. The researchers suggested the exposure to the Kiwi culture prior to the studies might have prepared the students for the cultural expectations in New Zealand. Moreover, being in a country (New Zealand) that has already won the hearts of many of these students may keep their stress levels down and lead to relatively lower incidence of psychological problems in comparison with domestic peers.

In this study, overseas students who place more importance to conservation values and being satisfied by self-transcendence values at Time 1 tend to miss home. Being selected to a government funded overseas studying program, these students are always being reminded of their ultimate goal in coming abroad, which is to produce an excellent academic attainment. Living in a Western culture that promotes individualistic values has probably moved them more into "the need to achieve" so as to ensure their survival in the community. These students may isolate themselves from others as a way of keeping themselves focused.

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This strategy may not be suitable for those who used to be satisfied by self-transcendence values and held tightly on conservation values. Isolation may bring more deficiency effects on them. Loneliness might be one of them, which makes them vulnerable to missing home. So far, to the authors' knowledge, there is no study that directly supports this view. However, the findings of Arbona et al. (2010) that the positive associations between adherence to traditional values related to home country, and occupation and immigration-related stress among Latino immigrants in the United States, may provide the nearest support to this.

Fluency of the language is vital for overseas survival, which is indeed shown in the overseas students' samples that the more the students were believed to be proficient at English, the less likely it was for them to report missing home. For the overseas students, English language fluency at Time 1 was the most significant predictor of the enjoyment they experienced whilst being abroad. Being proficient in the host society's language is essential for them to adapt well in the new country. This finding is well-supported by some previous studies. Amongst the studies, Yang, Noels and Saumure (2006) came out with an interesting finding that individuals who had high confidence in using the host society's language would adapt better than those who did not, regardless of the actual linguistic competence.

### **Recommendations**

For future studies, it is recommended that the two self-developed subscales of Adaptation to Life Index - Missing and Enjoyment experience, can be used further in measuring the adaptation experiences of other sojourner groups.

### **SUMMARY**

For the home country students, missing experience is predicted only by the negative affect at Time 1. Whilst lack of the English language fluency and high degree of satisfaction of self-transcendence, as well as importance of conservation values significantly predict missing experience in the overseas students. Being fluent in the English language serves a better opportunity to the overseas students in enjoying their life abroad.

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