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Research article

Components of emotional intelligence: The impact on social and psychological adaptation of students in a foreign language environment

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Abstract

Introduction. Today studying abroad is increasingly available to young people in different countries. However, not all young people are prepared to face the unfamiliar world and its challenges without the protection of their parents. Many young people encounter difficulties of social and psychological adaptation in a foreign language environment. Though personality traits are considered to be one of the most important factors influencing the social and psychological adaptation of students in an unfamiliar environment, there are few studies that specifically focus on the direct impact of personality traits on the social and psychological adaptation of students in a foreign country. As a personal resource, emotional intelligence regulates the attitude of students to others in a foreign cultural environment and makes it possible to build interpersonal relations in the educational sphere despite the language barrier. Emotional intelligence also determines the academic and professional success of students. The article studies the impact of emotional intelligence components on the effectiveness of social and psychological adaptation of students studying in a foreign language environment. **Materials and Methods.** The sample consisted of 90 Chinese students studying at Russian universities. The following methods were used to determine the students' levels of emotional intelligence, agency, and sociocultural and interpersonal adaptation in changing circumstances: MSCEIT v 2.0, the Test of Individual's Adaptation to New Sociocultural Environment by L. V. Yankovsky (adapted by V. V. Konstantinov), the Method for Studying Social and Psychological Adaptation of an Individual in a Small Group and an Informal Subgroup (A. V. Sidorenkov, E. S. Koval) and the Questionnaire of Life Orientations (E. Y. Korzhova). The simple regression analysis was used to analyze the data obtained.

Results. The simple regression analysis identified significant positive influence of emotional intelligence components on social and psychological adaptation of students in a foreign language environment. Specifically, 'understanding and analyzing emotions' and 'managing emotions' have a significant impact on 'adaptation to informal relations in the group'. Further, 'managing emotions' is also a predictor of the 'transsituational locus of control'. Finally, 'adaptability and involvement' in the sociocultural environment to a significant extent depends on 'identifying emotions'.

Conclusions. The success of social and psychological adaptation of student youth in a foreign language environment is to a significant degree determined by various components of emotional intelligence.

Keywords: social and psychological adaptation, emotional intelligence, foreign students, personal resources, foreign language environment

Научная статья

Компоненты эмоционального интеллекта, влияющие на социально-психологическую адаптацию студенческой молодежи в иноязычной среде

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Аннотация

Введение. В современном мире учеба за границей становится все более доступной для молодежи в разных странах. Однако не все молодые люди оказываются подготовленными к незнакомому миру и его вызовам вне защиты родителей. Многие из них сталкиваются с трудностями социально-психологической адаптации в иноязычной среде. Несмотря на то, что личностные черты считаются одними из наиболее важных факторов, влияющих на социально-психологическую адаптацию учащихся в незнакомой среде, было проведено мало целенаправленных исследований, доказывающих их прямое влияние на социально-психологическую адаптацию студентов, обучающихся за пределами родной страны. Эмоциональный интеллект как один из личностных ресурсов регулирует отношение студентов к окружающим в инокультурной среде и позволяет выстраивать межличностные отношения в учебной сфере несмотря на языковые барьеры, а также определяет академическую и профессиональную успешность студентов в учебной среде. Целью исследования является изучение влияния компонентов эмоционального интеллекта на успешность социально-психологической адаптации студентов, обучающихся в иноязычной среде.

Материалы и методы. Выборку составили 90 китайских студентов, обучающихся в российских вузах. Были использованы следующие методики для выявления уровней эмоционального интеллекта, а также социокультурной, межличностной адаптации и субъектности в изменяющихся ситуациях: «MSCEIT v 2.0», «Адаптация личности к новой социокультурной среде» А. В. Янковского в адаптации В. В. Константинова, «Методика изучения социально-психологической адаптации индивида в малой группе и неформальной подгруппе» (А. В. Сидоренков, Е. С. Коваль) и «Опросник жизненных ориентаций» (Е. Ю. Коржова). Для анализа полученных данных был использован простой регрессионный анализ.

Результаты исследования. По результатам регрессионного анализа было обнаружено значимое положительное влияние компонентов эмоционального интеллекта на показатели социально-психологической адаптации студенческой молодежи в иноязычной среде: «понимание и анализ эмоций» и «управление эмоциями» оказывают значимое влияние на «адаптацию к неофициальным отношениям в группе»; «управление эмоциями» так же является предиктором «транситуационного локуса контроля»; «адаптивность и сопричастность» в социокультурной среде в значительной степени зависит от способности «идентификация эмоций».

Заключение. Результативность социально-психологической адаптации студенческой молодежи, которая обучаются в иноязычной среде, в значительной степени определяется разными аспектами эмоционального интеллекта.

Ключевые слова: социально-психологическая адаптация, эмоциональный интеллект, иностранные студенты, личностные ресурсы, иноязычная среда

Introduction

At the backdrop of globalization, international mobility is an important tool for university students. Among international migrants, foreign students enrolling in secondary vocational schools and universities represent a new and a little studied group. Foreign students are often described as visitors who have come for a short stay to obtain academic diplomas and certificates. Foreign students obtain a range of benefits from staying in a foreign country. Among them is improving their knowledge of culture and development of self-awareness. However, a stay in a different country may be filled with difficulties related to personal finances, social integration, etc. Experiences of a new culture may cause adaptation difficulties. Students often experience homesickness, boredom, anxiety, disappointment and academic challenges. These issues were found to be the root cause of insufficient engagement and low performance leading to low attendance and subsequent expulsion from the university. This explains the need for a more substantive analysis of issues related to student adaptation in a foreign language environment. The reported study explores the impact of emotional intelligence components on the effectiveness of social and psychological adaptation of students to a foreign language environment.

Emotional intelligence and social adaptation of foreign students: State of the art

Sociocultural theories highlight complex interaction patterns between individuals and their 'built-in' sociocultural background. Conceptually, the theory states that 1) international students' experiences are shaped by the external environment, including institutional environment and, in a broader sense, dominant social and cultural milieu; 2) students' attitudes, behavior and participation may change across social and cultural contexts (Heng 2019).

On the one hand, students' social relations, prospects and external social attitudes influence their quality of life abroad. Thus, prior research consistently points out the relationship between race-based, ethnic and social stressors (Xie et al. 2021), subtle microaggressions and discrimination (Wei et al. 2012) and disrupted intercultural adaptation, reduced academic engagement (Yeo et al. 2019) as well as low level of psychological adaptation due to high stress (Pei 2018) and low self-esteem (Wei et al. 2008) of Asian international students.

At the same time, social and cultural adaptation to the complex foreign language environment fosters young international students, as an active and vibrant community, to acquire potential resources that encourage self-actualization and personal development. In this case, the new environment may lose dominance against the backdrop of dynamic students' agency (Tolochek 2013). Russian and international research shows that such personal resources as agency (Tolochek 2013), cultural intelligence (Rana et al. 2020), self-efficacy (Long et al. 2009), positive affect (Tseng, Newton 2002), etc., are crucial for social and psychological adaptation of young students in a foreign language environment. Hence, it is important to identify internal resources that determine the effectiveness of social and psychological adaptation of international students in a foreign language environment.

One of the resources of social and psychological adaptation of student youth is emotional intelligence. Emotions are adaptive responses. They facilitate qualitative specificity of actions and an effective choice of coping strategies (Tarabakina, Van 2018), while intellectual resources promote effective adaptation in difficult situations. In an unfamiliar environment, intellectual resources are responsible for information processing and application of intellectual activity outcomes (Rean et al. 2022, 35–36). Emotional intelligence as a resource that embraces both intellectual and emotional resources is in the focus of research on the predictors of social and psychological adaptation (Lin et al. 2012; Reid 2010; Shemyakina, Bogomaz 2006). It is still a question, however, how emotional intelligence contributes to social and psychological adaptation of student youth in a foreign language environment.

Research design and methods

Sample profile. The sample consisted of 90 Chinese students on bachelor, master and doctoral programs studying at Russian universities. The average age was 23 years (SD = 4.04). The sample included 39 male (44 %) and 51 female (56 %) respondents.

Research methods. The following methods were used to determine the students' levels of social and psychological adaptation: the Questionnaire of Life Orientations (E. Y. Korzhova), the Test of Individual's Adaptation to New Sociocultural Environment by L. V. Yankovsky (adapted by V. V. Konstantinov), the Method for Studying Social and Psychological Adaptation of an Individual in a Small Group and an Informal Subgroup (A. V. Sidorenkov, E. S. Koval). The MSCEIT 2.0 (The Mayer-Salovey-

Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test) was used to determine the level of emotional intelligence.

The simple regression analysis was used to test the predictive power of the components of emotional intelligence in the system of sociocultural, interpersonal and agency-related parameters related to social and psychological adaptation of student youth in a foreign language environment.

Results and discussion

We obtained a simple regression relationship between the indicators of social and psychological adaptation to a foreign language environment and components of emotional intelligence in student youth (see Table).

‘Adaptability and involvement’ depends on one emotional intelligence component, namely, ‘identifying emotions’. This component is an important predictor that explains 3.9 % of the ‘adaptability and involvement’ dispersion. A one-point increase in ‘identifying emotions’ leads to a 0.224 increase in ‘adaptability and involvement’.

As a result, we obtained two simple regression models based on the dependent variable ‘adaptation to informal relations in a group’. Here, the predictors are such components of emotional intelligence as ‘understanding and analyzing emotions’ and ‘managing emotions’. ‘Understanding and analyzing emotions’ is responsible for 3.2 % dispersion of ‘adaptation to informal relations in a group’ as a component of social and psychological adapta-

Table. Regression analysis of the relationship between components of emotional intelligence and indicators of socio-psychological adaptation of students in a foreign language environment

Indicators of socio-psychological adaptation	Components of emotional intelligence		
	Identifying emotions	Understanding and analyzing emotions	Managing emotions
Adaptation to informal relations in a group	–	F = 3.988 P = 0.049 < 0.05 β = 0.208 R ² _{adj} = 0.032	F = 4.144 P = 0.045 < 0.05 B = 0.212 R ² _{adj} = 0.034
Adaptability and involvement	F = 4.635 P = 0.034 < 0.05 β = 0.224 R ² _{adj} = 0.039	–	–
Transsituational locus of control	–	–	F = 5.05, P = 0.024 < 0.05 β = 0.238 R ² _{adj} = 0.046

Табл. Регрессионный анализ связи между компонентами эмоционального интеллекта и показателями социально-психологической адаптации студенческой молодежи в иноязычной среде

Показатели социально-психологической адаптации	Компоненты эмоционального интеллекта		
	Идентификация эмоций	Понимание и анализ эмоций	Управление эмоциями
Адаптация к неофициальным отношениям в группе	–	F = 3,988 P = 0,049 < 0,05 β = 0,208 R ² _{adj} = 0,032	F = 4,144 P = 0,045 < 0,05 β = 0,212 R ² _{adj} = 0,034
Адаптивность и сопричастность	F = 4,635 P = 0,034 < 0,05 β = 0,224 R ² _{adj} = 0,039	–	–
Трансситуационный локус контроля	–	–	F = 5,05, P = 0,024 < 0,05 β = 0,238 R ² _{adj} = 0,046

tion, while 3.4 % of its dispersion is down to 'managing emotions'. A one-point increase in 'managing emotions' increases 'adaptation to informal relations in a group' by 0.212. However, multiple regression analysis did not return a significant regression model due to highly multicollinear parameters of emotional intelligence ($r = 0.526, P = 0.000 < 0.001$).

As the table shows, we obtained a simple regression model of 'managing emotions' — 'transsituational locus of control'. The model is based on 'managing emotions' component of emotional intelligence that explains 4.6 % dispersion of 'transsituational locus of control'. The latter shows how fast the adaptation is. A one-point increase in 'managing emotions' leads to a 0.238 increase in 'transsituational locus of control'.

The simple regression analysis of the total sample revealed that the ability to identify emotions is a predictor of adaptability and involvement. It indicates that the ability to perceive, evaluate and express emotions in a foreign language environment encourages acceptance, the feeling of personal satisfaction, greater feeling of physical and social security, development of a positive attitude to others, and a feeling of belonging and involvement with the foreign language community.

Besides, the simple regression analysis of the total sample showed that the ability to understand, analyze and manage emotions is a predictor of adaptability to informal relations in a group. These results suggest that the better the students are at understanding, analyzing and managing their and other people's emotions, the higher their adaptability to informal relations is no matter the language they use. The ability to understand how emotions replace each other, to identify complex and mixed emotional responses and to manage emotional reactions in terms of empathy and expressiveness will allow students feel support and accept partners' advantages and skills in informal settings. This, in turn, will make their interaction with others more effective. Another insight from the simple regression analysis of the total sample is that the ability to manage one's emotions is also a predictor of transsituational locus of control. This finding suggests that a higher level of conscious control over one's emotions means more agency in handling different circumstances in life. The ability to consciously manage one's emotions means that a student in a foreign language environment is able to raise self-confidence, to find excitement in everyday life, to openly engage in social interaction, to show confidence when dealing with strangers, to respond enthusiastically to what is happening around, to be positive about oneself and new circumstances

in life. In other words, the ability to control one's emotions enhances agency in the course of social and psychological adaptation of students in a foreign language environment.

Conclusions

The study produced the following conclusions:

1. The regression analysis shows that student youth with high emotional intelligence are more capable of social and psychological adaptation to a foreign language environment.
2. The adaptation of student youth to informal relations in a foreign language environment depends, to a greater extent, on their ability to understand, analyze and manage their emotions.
3. The involvement of student youth with the new sociocultural environment is down to their ability to identify emotions.
4. Exercising agency to effectively handle new circumstances in life by student youth is significantly related to the developed ability of managing one's emotions.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests, either existing or potential.

Конфликт интересов

Авторы заявляют об отсутствии потенциального или явного конфликта интересов.

Ethics Approval

The authors report that the study complied with the ethical principles applicable to research involving humans and animals.

Соответствие принципам этики

Авторы сообщают, что при проведении исследования соблюдены этические принципы, предусмотренные для исследования с участием людей и животных.

Author Contributions

A. A. Rean — methodology approval, research management, formulation of conclusions, preparation of the final version of the manuscript;

Yuanyang Wang — preparation of survey instruments, analysis of empirical materials, data processing, formulation of conclusions, preparation of the first draft of the manuscript.

Вклад авторов

Реан Артур Александрович — утверждение методологии; научное руководство; формулировка выводов; подготовка окончательной редакции текста.

Ван Юаньян — подготовка инструментария опроса; анализ эмпирических материалов; обработка данных; формулировка выводов, подготовка начального варианта текста.

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