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From Acculturation to Adaptation: Defying Overseas Filipino Junior High School Completers' Struggles in an International Setting

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ABSTRACT

Background: Shifting from one educational setting to another has exposed the Filipino junior high school completer to the struggles that accompany acculturation and adaptation. Research has shown that this transition has significant consequences on the students' learning and functioning. *Method:* This qualitative study deployed a phenomenological design to analyze human behavior relative to the central question: "What are the common struggles encountered by Philippine School Doha Junior High School completers regarding their acculturation and adaptation?" In this context, a twenty-five semi-structured interview was utilized for the data gathering, and a logical approach in theme development was applied for the data analysis. *Findings:* The data gathered in this study will be utilized in the identification of academic, social, and cultural challenges that may be faced by the participants. *Conclusion:* Analysis of the responses indicates that the experiences and perceptions of the respondents' struggles are centered on four new areas, namely: adaptation styles, literacy and diversity, organizational support, and adjustment, where apparent struggles in acculturation and adaptation arise. *Recommendation:* The researchers propose that potential researchers expand the range of participants to other nationalities. Furthermore, narrowing the topic for this study is a way to derive specific experiences that could lead to more novel studies instead of concentrating on a broader scope.

Keywords: Acculturation, Adaptation, Transitional Difficulties, Educational Setting, Junior High School

INTRODUCTION

Education has been perceived as a significant pathway that individuals utilize to achieve economic success and upward mobility. Specifically, education may help an individual improve his/her skillset, which potentially might lead to higher income earning (Waiwaiole & Elston, 2017). However, how education is acquired is not a lockstep process. Filipino students are set to complete their junior high school program and then face the decision of which educational path to take next, which some are set to transfer to an international school. According to a 2015 report from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, students made 2.4 million transitions from one institution to another over six years between 2008 and 2014. With this rapid increase in the number of students who choose to continue their higher studies in an international school instead of a Philippine-curriculum school, it is essential to understand the academic and social experiences, and struggles of transfer students at the transferred school. There is also a need to comprehend better the choices transfer students have made about both their original and transfer institutions (Collins, 2018).

With this, specific difficulties and adjustments are set to be encountered due to significant differences among these students in terms of their culture, religion, ethnicity, and language (Holt, 2015) between the two schools. Existing research on international students has identified several variables that play a vital role in academic adaptation. These variables include, but are not limited to, English language proficiency and classroom learning styles (Leong, 2015; Li et al., 2016). This diverse experience can have a positive or a negative impact on transfer of students' personal development, vocational preparation, intellectual development, and diversity competence (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2014). It has also been documented that transfer students who have more frequent interaction with diverse peers would have a greater openness to diversity and willing to challenge their own beliefs (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015).

Incidentally, the transitional process of one student from one school to another works hand in hand with the necessary experience of adaptation and acculturation. By definition, Cole, N. L. (2019) stated that acculturation is a process whereby a person or group from one culture adopts the practices and values of another culture while retaining its own distinct culture. This process is most frequently discussed as a minority culture that embraces elements of the majority culture, as is typically the case with immigrant groups that are culturally or ethnically distinct from the majority where they have immigrated.

In this study, pieces of evidence of acculturation were analyzed, and four wide overarching themes emerged: (1) ways of adaptive participants that affected their desire to study and live abroad; (2) connections between the academic participants and non-academic support systems; (3) difficulties experienced by the said transferees; and (4) obvious differences encountered in both the social and cultural lifestyles, and in the academic system used in the school. The study revealed that the students: were positive about the socioeconomic prospects of studying in international schools, enjoyed their contact with teachers, had insufficient relationships with supervising professors, engaged in limited social engagement beyond academic settings and adapted to family relationships.

The immediate significance of the current study might be to assist Filipino transfer students by supporting and encouraging them to seek out relationships with peers, faculty, and advisers inside and outside the normal scope of actions, which might further increase their awareness of the value of class preparation (Yuyang, 2017). It might particularly help parents of transfer students by re-enforcing their ability to advise and support their children to adequately prepare for class, seek out opportunities to work with faculty and peers, and take advantage of college advisement personnel. Moreover, the current study might help college personnel, including administrators, faculty, and advisors, better assist transfer students. (WholeRen Education LLC Research Center, 2014). This study also explored the importance of communication about teaching styles and the students' cultural adaptation on a sample of Filipino junior high school completers in Doha, Qatar. The first goal of this study was to evaluate how their upbringing and cultural adaptation skills relate to their academic struggles and experience after they have transferred to an international school. The second goal of this research is to investigate the relationship between academic experiences or conflicts and cultural adaptation and differences. The third and final goal is to identify the correlating factors underlying the students' acculturation and adaptation by their experiences in differences in culture and curriculum, students' learning and the schools' teaching styles, and the transferred school's procedures and its effects to the transfer students learning.

In a world that continues to change, create, and innovate, becoming a transfer student as a possibility for development to emerge is quite common when living abroad. Time spent in another part of the world is an enriching experience for anyone, regardless of their age. Students can learn about topics relevant to their chosen field of study in new and beautiful places. However, they also draw up additional knowledge just by being in a foreign place and extend their experience in ways they might not have anticipated (University Wire, 2016). Thus, this research investigated the relationship between academic and social experiences, together with cultural adaptation amongst Filipino transfer students in an international setting. The result of the research could better inform groups working with international transfer students, such as parents, educators, professors, counselors, and their foreign friends and companions (Yuyang, 2017).

METHOD

Research Design

This research study is qualitative in orientation. The research method is a process that attempts to understand the societal occurrence within a particular setting. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), the use of qualitative method and analysis are extended almost too every research field and area. The method generally includes data sources with observation and respondent observation, interviews and questionnaires, documents, and the researchers' impression and perception. The goal of the researchers is to understand a specific event and recognize the perspective of a participant or respondent. This study encompasses a phenomenological research design used to describe a phenomenon and analyzed human behavior. The researchers employed a phenomenological approach in order to understand the experiences and perceptions of the research respondents regarding the struggles of the Overseas Filipino Junior High School Completers' in an international setting.

Research Locus and Sample



Figure 1 Map of Qatar

Source:
<https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/country/s/asia/qatar/qalatlog.htm>

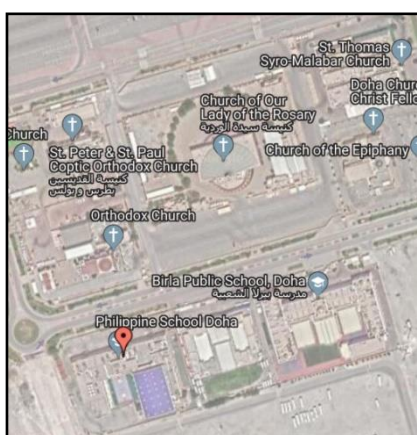


Figure 2 Location of Philippine School Doha at Al Messiah, Doha, Qatar

Source: <http://psd.sch.qa/contact-psd/>

This research study was conducted in: (1) *Philippine School Doha* (PSD), a leading learning institution in Qatar; (2) *Little House of Latte*, a coffee shop with a cozy and relaxing atmosphere; (3) *Caribou, Al Sadd*, an American coffee company, and coffeehouse chain; (4) *McDonalds Matar Qadeem*, an American fast-food company; and (5) *Cafe 999*, an oldest fire truck that offers international cuisine.

The chosen participants of this study were the Junior High School Completers' who transferred to an international school. The selection for the six participants was made through selective sampling. The researchers chose their respondents considering their struggles in terms of adapting and coping in an international setting and considering the school that they have graduated from.

Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

The researchers have collected and gathered data through a semi-structured interview and guide instruments, which include a robotfoto and the twenty-five semi-structured interview guide. As explained by De Guzman ,Largo, Mandap, and Muñoz (Posted on January 23, 2014; published on April 14, 2014), it is a Dutch term that describes a photo-like picture drawn by police to describe a suspect from a witness's illustration.

For data gathering, researchers interviewed with their respective respondents and sought permission through written consent, validated by three professionals. The data gathered from the research respondents were transcribed verbatim, and the researchers ensured that their responses would be confidential to its extent.

Data Analysis

In this study, the researchers have followed a thematic approach in identifying and analyzing the congregated data in this study: (1) reviewing of the transcribed data to ensure appropriate responses; (2)

formulating thought units from the language of the participants to the interpretation of the researchers; (3) organizing the formulated units into themes through a dendrogram; (4) performing member checking procedure to ensure credibility and validity; (5) creating a simulacrum that represent the themes and findings.

FINDINGS

This study encompasses a phenomenological research design used to describe a phenomenon and analyzed human behavior relative to the central question: "What are the common struggles encountered by PSD Junior High School completers in regards to their acculturation and adaptation?" Furthermore, this study focused on the specific question: "In what way did the Filipino Junior High School completers adjust in a new learning environment?" The researchers employed a phenomenological approach in order to understand the experiences and perceptions of the research respondents regarding the struggles of the Overseas Filipino Junior High School Completers' in an international setting.

Figure 3 shows the simulacrum, which takes in the shape of a circle. This represents inclusivity amongst the students. It is centered on four major themes: adaptation styles, literacy and diversity, and organizational support, and adjustment struggles. This highlights the points given the study and showcases the subthemes under each thought. The simulacrum takes in the shape of a circle, wherein this represents inclusivity amongst the students. It is divided into four themes: adaptation styles, literacy and diversity, organizational support, and adjustment struggles, where they are placed in the arrows in the form of a cycle with hands that symbolize unity and how each theme is interdependent to one another. The theme's arrows and the hands are clockwise, for it constitutes how the respondents are moving forward through adaptation and acculturation with their lived-experiences. Each theme has its own color: adaptation styles is represented as red, where it stimulates action and enthusiasm; literacy and diversity is green, where it aids communication and socialization; organizational support with the color yellow means warmth and increases mental activity and muscle energy; and adjustment struggles is blue, where it deals with the inflexibility to acquire change.

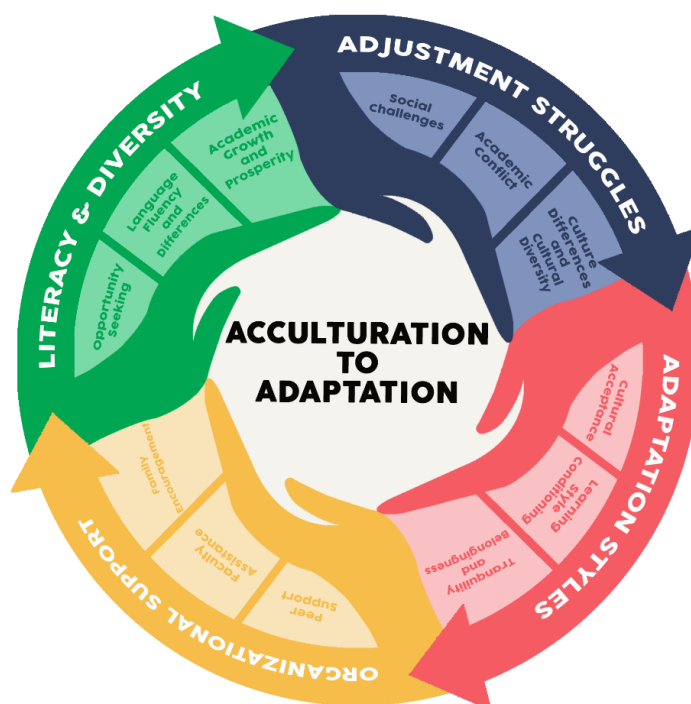


Figure 3 Simulacrum
From Acculturation To Adaptation: Defying
Overseas Filipino Junior High School Completers'
Struggles In An International Setting

Adaptation Style

The learning style conditioning of a student may describe their capability to absorb and acquire knowledge in the process of learning, especially when they are exposed to a new environment surrounded by different cultures. As already noted, learning style conditioning may depend on one's strategy to adapt. In this study, there may be various factors that can positively affect the rate of adjustment of a student and at the same time have negative factors that may affect them otherwise. Students have attested:

"I did not have a hard time catching up since it is only difficult at the beginning. Once you grasp how the curriculum works, how the teachers want you to perform and how they work, you can kind of get the whole of it, and it will be easier. You can go with the flow, then." P4

There are several key differences when transferring from one environment to another, which involves adjustments for students who may be beneficial or detrimental. In some situations, teachers usually let their

students study and understand their lessons on their own. Students tend to balance their time and responsibilities, which makes them more independent and self-contained. As stated by the students:

"Academically speaking, studying in a Philippine school for 11 years has prepared me for the worst. I remember the times when my teachers had stated that, "In college, the professors won't spoon-feed you. They won't hold your hand." But now in college, I experience my professor being caring with me. That's an excellent experience for me to be prepared for the worst." P6

In these situations, the change in curriculum is one factor to be considered from studying in a Philippine school to an international setting. As added by the students:

"Academically speaking, it was not bad. As I have said, you mostly struggle during the first month since you are still new and adjusting to how things go around. It did not take me a long time to fully adjust and to fully adapt to the culture they had in the international setting with a Canadian curriculum. I would say I maintained my grades. In the Philippine school, I was part of the achievers and had honors but when I went to a school with a different curriculum, I feel like it did not change as I was able to maintain a GPA of 4.0 which was the highest in our school, with the highest honor. "P4

In a positive aspect, according to this student who had mentioned that,

"I believe that studying in a Philippine School here in Qatar has encouraged the familiarities with the English Language, so studying in an international school does not make it hard for you to adjust well. "(P2)

Philippine schools in Qatar make use of the English Language regularly as a means of communication, which has been a massive help in a student's adaptation in an international setting. Philippine schools tend to have more activities than focusing entirely on academics, which does affect a student's capability to learn effectively without getting overwhelmed with the amount of work to do. These students have indicated that:

" Compared to my old school, the lessons we have here dwell on more. Every topic is focused on, no matter the difficulty. If it is written on the syllabus given, it will be taught. No item in the exam isn't taught to us." P1

All schools offer different curriculum and have different teaching styles. This may help a student shape his or her adjustment or transition to an international school through academic processes. As testified by the students:

"In the curriculum of our school, we usually submit our projects online, and we do not usually use textbooks like in a Philippine school where there are a lot of projects and quizzes. In my school right now, I'm doing an International Baccalaureate Program where we do not care about quizzes, projects, and effort grades since what they only care about are the grades that you get in tests. "P3

Furthermore, being transferred from a Philippine school to an international setting has greatly affected the comfort zone that the students had to sacrifice in order to adjust. The students have stated how cultural acceptance is a necessity to be able to work well with people from various cultures and to have the chance to mingle with. It takes the will and initiative for an individual to get to know other people of varied cultures. Adapting to a new setting also takes effort and these students have testified that:

"I had to put in mind my purpose of being in an international school, to gain more opportunities. With this in mind, I made sure I have a strong mind and work ethic. I also tried to open up to other people and get to know them. In this way, I was able to gain new friends who helped me adjust to this new environment." P3

Adjusting to a new school environment is also a process of transforming a student's character into different aspects and features. School adjustment may vary and shift after years through different factors and circumstances. Students have explained:

"It did not take me a long time to adjust. It is just a matter of habit and being accustomed to it. In the beginning, it was hard and challenging. However, as time goes by, I became comfortable with other people, especially with other nationalities, as I got to know them and understand their culture as well." P4

"When it comes to the curriculum, I just did my best, studied hard, and learned as much as I could. I mostly used online sites because they have a lot of information of how British curriculum works especially with regards to IGCSEs, which are exams that each level takes. When it comes to the cultural aspect, I just did my best to be myself and just let my actions happen naturally." P5

One student had even stated that,

"It comes naturally when you open yourself up to them. They will be open to you as well, and it will make your stay fun." P6.

It takes the will and initiative for an individual to get to know other people of varied cultures. In addition to that, students tend to rely on their peers when faced with hardships, so an individual need to be open-minded and, most of all, be accepting of all kinds of people with varied political, religious, and social thinking. Students have expressed:

"One of the main challenges is being vocal for what I want and for my ideas and learning about myself. In the Philippine school, academics wise, it is all laid out and planned for me by the school and the curriculum. But when I transferred to an international school, you need to decide on which path to take. I overcome these hardships with the help of my friends. Being open-minded and culturally diverse had taught me how to be open to the possibility that anything might happen." P6

At some point, a student's cause of struggle whenever one moves to a new environment may originate from the behavior of his/her instructor. According to one student, this person needed to strengthen his/her psychological state and stability in order to deal with his/her problem with the said professor. As stated:

"There were many challenges, but I will cite one to be specific. There was one Chemistry professor or instructor I had. He was a doctor from another country. What I did not like about him is that he takes credit for the work of the students. It was unfair, but I could not do anything about it since he was my instructor. For me to overcome those challenges, it took me a lot of patience. Every time I criticize my professors and state bad things, I go back to the roots as to why I am doing this and why I am studying. It was for my parents. I wanted to help and to work for them. Most of all, I did not forget to lean onto God at those moments." P4

On the one hand, being with instructors of the same nationality can be a source of comfort for the student, but on the other hand, not being able to speak in your native language can be quite challenging. One student has asserted that:

"Honestly, there are a lot of Filipino workers in my college but I feel like I'm the one helping to overcome the language barriers. Being put into an environment that you do not have to talk in your native language pushes you to go out of your comfort zone. It strengthens you to overcome it with the help of your confidence." P6

Another struggle to be considered in adapting would be having the cope with the differences in language between the people you get to be with. As explained:

"I just learned to accept that they have their language, and I have my language as well, so I just have to respect that that is their way of communicating with each other. Moreover, sometimes, they are sensitive enough to translate what they're saying with one another. Sometimes, I adjust for them and go out of my way, then try to learn what they are saying so little by little, and I try to learn new words so sometimes I get to join them, and I can say what they are saying." P3

"I coped up with the struggle of having to adjust by simply enjoying it as well. I believe that is how I coped up with the struggles for I like challenging myself—not a masochist in any way—but simply, I like working hard for

the things I do and with the language barrier present, that drove me to study more and explain further. To also try and communicate in other ways, not just through language and your own voice but also with your actions. By learning other ways of communicating with other people, especially with the difficulty of the language barrier, I was able to cope up and overcome the struggle." P4

There may be struggles encountered upon moving to a new setting from an environment that you grew used to, but these students have found the essence of cultural acceptance and have said that:

" I just keep in mind that the people around me also go through the same struggles because, in the end, we understand each other." P5

" You have to deal and live with it. While living with it, you are also learning from it. You do not have anyone to guide and protect you from all the bash and negativity thrown out to you." P6

Belonging is primal to humans to achieve one's happiness and welfare. It is also known as an emotional need to associate with the members of an association. This may comprise the need to be a part of a group in school. In school, students desire stable social ties. When students feel that they are accepted and understood by the authorities and their peers, they are more likely to engage and in all academic and non-academic activities. Thus, it frees them from worrying and overthinking. It gives them a sense of peace of mind, hence, achieving a state of tranquility. The students stated:

" Actually, it was fast for me since I was transferred to college—in an international environment, most of my batch mates from the Philippine school were also with me when I transferred schools, so it did not feel like I moved into an international school completely. At some point, I felt that I still had a comfort zone—seeing other Filipino students, meeting them, talking to them, and studying with them, made me feel comfortable. Therefore, it did not take a long time for me to be comfortable in that new environment." P4

" At first, I was agitated and nervous, but a month in, I started to be comfortable, and for about 2 or 3 months later, I was already used to live there." P5

Being able to belong is one of the most significant challenges for all students. The students can become proficient and persistent in their learning activities if they are comfortable to work with the people around them. A student articulated,

"I was able to cope and adjust because I was with people who I was comfortable with. Whether it be your friends or your instructors, a huge majority of studying in an international school is to make sure that you are comfortable with your instructors to lead you throughout your journey in a new environment."

Also, their teachers and classmates assist them to excel in their academics and ensure that they fully understand the lessons and discussions. The students enunciated:

" No, it was not difficult to approach teachers, especially when it concerned academics and studies. The challenge only comes when you are trying to make a point but do not get to relay the message, for there are language barriers properly." P4

Professors can have a considerable influence on a student's adaptation. The instructor may either be a positive or a negative effect on a student's school life, especially on the process of adjusting. A teacher's guidance is quite essential for a student who requires help. With this, a student has testified that:

" The teachers were approachable because they always say that if I needed help with anything, then I could approach them, so I did not have any difficulties in that area. Though for my peers, I was just unsure of exactly how to start a conversation or what I should say because they may find things I said to be offensive and such." P5

" There was not a time I felt like I did not fit in, for I was an introvert. It was fine by me as long as other students would not touch my things for school. I did not feel out of place within the classroom with different students. I

mind my own business, at that time. As long as I felt satisfied with how I performed in my academics and how I had food to eat; that was fine by me." P4

Literacy and Diversity

Growth is subliminal, and one becomes appreciative of it through the changes that happen, which allows room for prosperity to foster. The Filipino Junior High School students align their growth in academic performances with their successes in it. Having to come from a school with an entirely different curriculum, the students experience the distinct levels of competitiveness present in the two environments. Competition increases a student to be academically pressured, and academic performances may change once a student is exposed to a less competitive environment, which is neither bad nor good. As one student enounced,

"My academics performance changed. I excelled in my previous school but it was more competitive there. I felt less pressure switching to an international school, which made my performance better." P2

Academic excellence deals with the ability to excel in scholastic activities with high grades and superior performance. Furthermore, students still excel despite having a competition or not. It matters less once a student commits and knows the goal and purpose of his or her studies, two students of which stated:

"My academic performance did not change. As I said a while ago, I always get it in my mind that I am doing this for my parents and not for myself. Whether I was in a Philippine school with a Philippine curriculum or not, that was my encouragement and motivation to continue to study and to really work hard. Your academic performance stays the same as long as you work hard and do your best to get what you want with your studies, and I believe that actually drove me to want to also work in a school eventually." P4

"Honestly, I do not think my academic performance changed. I cannot compare myself because all I know is that I am doing my best. The only thing that changed is that I don't give much importance to the grades get because in college, all you need is to do and hope for the best. During my stay in Philippine school, I always aim to get a 90 and get perfect in all my activities. Nevertheless, in college, it does not matter." P6

Moreover, hardships in academics distinguish the ability of a person to grow in regards to even the slightest changes and differences between the two schools, Philippine and international. These permit students to mobilize their reactions to a particular situation. A student affirmed:

"I guess since, the way our school presents its tests is not identification, enumeration, nor multiple choice. It is kind of out of the book. That is why you need to understand the lesson because if you do not, you will not be able to answer the questions. The questions are not from the book, so because of this, our curriculum allows us to think deeper and outside of the box and become critical thinkers when it comes to taking tests." P3

With the transitions from a Philippine school to an international school, not only are those types of situations are put into place, but language barriers are commonly encountered hardships of students as well. Most of the students uttered:

"I have experienced language barriers." P2 "Yes, I have experienced language barriers in my school, since most of them are Arabs, so they can speak Arabic, and there are not a lot of Filipino students in my school." P3

"Yes, I had experienced language barriers, even up until now." P4

"When it comes to the language barrier, it was a struggle for me to express what I feel." P6

The challenge in language barriers extends to approaching peers and teachers. Insecurity in the English Language, mostly in speaking it with an accent, inaugurates the students to have difficulty and struggle. Not being able to express oneself as well as how one would with his or her first language opens a challenge in communicative competence. The lack of confidence in socialization also hinders and adds up to the barrier between different nationalities in terms of communication. Students have verbalized:

"I am still shy in opening up my ideas because I am kind of insecure with what other people may think of my accent, so usually, I would just keep quiet and not engage in group discussions." P3

"It was challenging to approach them. First of all, we did not know how to. It would be easier to speak to a Filipino because we both know the same language. It would be easier to be with someone from the Philippines compared with other nationalities even if they were kind. It was more of a struggle on my side than their side." P2

Though the lack of confidence in socialization and insecurity in the English language are evident to the language hurdles, students find a way to cope with this barrier and overcome it. One student has ratified,

"I was not that confident with my English communication or social skills and I did not know how to ask questions properly. Usually, before I ask the teacher about my questions, I would rehearse it to myself and repeat them over and over again before I say them." P3

Consequently, the influence of the language barrier reposes to the students' academic performance. The level of competence and exposure to the English Language weighs variously to the students' academics. As one student professed,

"I agree more than disagree. If you struggle with English, then studying in an international school whose main Language is English, then it would be difficult to transfer and receive the message. However, if you are someone who's well trained with the English Language, then it would not be difficult." P2

The Philippine curriculum provides a training ground of English proficiency, and it provides an advantage to overcome the language barriers. The three students have corroborated:

"Language barriers do not affect my academic performance since there is a presence of none. I could easily understand the lessons." P1

"Language barriers did not affect my academic performance, but it did affect my social interactions with other people. However, other than that, since our curriculum requires English as a medium of speaking and writing, it did not affect my academic performance." P3

"For the most part, my teachers spoke English fluently and were easy to understand, so there were not any challenges with regards to that aspect." P5

Regardless, the respondents have a mechanism to combat these language barriers. Adaptation and acceptance of their perceived environment manifest how to get through the barriers of communicating with their peers and teachers. Gaining new knowledge as well as learning the mannerisms of their social environment, certainly gives the students an aid to cope up with their struggles. They verbalized:

"I guess, over time, my brain has learned to adapt to this way of speaking. So sometimes even if they speak so fast, even my teachers, I'm able to understand and communicate with them now. With the students who are speaking Arabic with one another, I just go with the flow. I learned to accept it because that is how it goes. I have to accept that they have their own Language and I have my language, and I do not understand. However, sometimes, I learn new words, which is nice because they teach me new words every day and so sometimes, I can understand them." P3

"The language barrier that I still experience is that when they are talking in Arabic and you are the person who will ask yourself what is happening, whether they are talking about you, or if they are talking about something else. But I learned how to cope up with and let go of the negativity that they might be talking about me. After all, they are still my friends." P6

Discernibly, the Filipino junior high school completers' struggles in a new learning environment branch out through literacy and diversity. Their lived experiences disclose how transferring to an international setting contributes to their academic growth, language fluency, and opportunities have been affected both negatively and positively. The respondents' testimonies give a better perspective on how Filipino transferees experience on an international setting and their struggles concerning literacy and diversity.

Organizational Support

When students are to be put in an unfamiliar setting, the situational problem paves the way for these people to lean on familiarity for the sake of faster adaptation and opens up new revenues on why these people, in this situation, these students, are transferred into international schools after completion. Some experience this situational commonality, and according to two students, the reason as to why they are transferred into international schools after their completion of the tenth grade involves parental/familial decisions. The students have attested:

"My parents. That is because I was born here, and I knew that they wouldn't allow me to study in the Philippines." P2

"First of all, my parents did not allow me to move back to the Philippines to finish my schooling. What influenced me to study in an international school is my desire and passion to not leave my parents here in Qatar. What's important for me is that we're together here as a family." P4

Furthermore, these said students' tendency to depend on familiar encouragement for support does not end in the aspect of parental/familial needs but also support coming from mature figures leading the unfamiliar locale. In order for the students to be able to completely adapt and adjust, and to create relationships with teachers and fellow classmates, impartial and just treatment is needed. Four (4) students have expressed:

"In terms of teachers, they are approachable: by just one email, you can reach them, and they will immediately reply to you. In terms of the students, there are some friendly ones and there are some who are not: they like to ask a lot of questions and I would do the same. Everyone is approachable; that's why I did not have a hard time making social relationships." P1

"I feel like I receive fair treatment. There is no evident favoritism." P1

"Yes, I felt I did receive fair treatment. What I learned and admired about international school settings and curriculum, was that they were not biased. I have experienced before in a Philippine school that the teachers would favor you because of reasons, such as your nice personality or you are the top of the class and I do not think that is fair to the other students who also strive and do their best but then, they do not meet the expectations of their teachers. You would always have that one person in the entire world that you would be annoyed at, without them, doing anything wrong, yet in an international setting, they see us fair and square. They did not pinpoint our differences with our nationalities—we were all seen as students who must treat each other and the teacher with the utmost respect." P4

"I think I am receiving fair treatment because there is not any bias that I experienced against my classmates and me. The teachers grade us based on our performances, and they do not have any prejudices against anyone." P5

"Yes, because I believe that the faculty and staff treat the students equally no matter what their nationality or grade is. They give equal opportunities to all students, and that is what I love about international schools." P6

Also, creating associations and forming relationships within near age-groups are beneficial in terms of adapting to a new environment. With the help of peers and newly-made acquaintances, the rate of the students being able to adjust faster is higher than usual. One student has indicated,

"What made it easier for me as I had friends who were in the same batch as I was. They were the support system that was encountering the same struggle." P2.

This just shows that support coming from peers that experience the same problem and are also in the same situation build not only self-confidence within the students, but also the ability to feel belongingness and normalcy. The students have added:

"I already knew someone in my current school when I transferred, so s/he introduced me to her/his friends. That is how I found a friend-group and how I managed to adjust." P1

"Since I can talk to my new classmates and I can still talk to my old ones, I do not feel like I do not fit in." P1

"I never felt that I did not fit in, in an international school. That is because we had our informal groups, and no one ever felt left out." P2

"It was not difficult because we were all in the same place. We are all first years and freshmen, so we were all adjusting in the same way." P2

Negatively speaking, there are many cons in creating new relationships and joining different social groups. There may be new problems face upon moving to a different setting from an environment that one has grown accustomed to, but some students have seen the brighter side in this situation. They have articulated:

"It is kind of a yes or no. Yes, because people did not have any pre-set perceptions of who I am. I was just a new student and I could have built myself in a new light or how I want it to. However, no, because at the same time, the people in my previous school are the people I have been with for many years, so it was not hard to build a relationship with them." P5

"There is no difference when it comes to social relationships because, in Philippine school, they were my childhood friends. We grew up since we were in preparatory. It was not hard to accept new friends that come and go each year. In an international school, it was hard to push yourself into their zone. I was the one entering their friendships, it was not complicated to join them, but I have a feeling that it was difficult on their part." P6

Consequently, the responses of the students have shown a great range on the expansion of support. It shows the different possibilities and aspects experienced by each student coming from a familiar setting and moving to a completely different environment; aspects such as familial support, academic support or mature support, and associative support. They have shown the defiance of struggles in terms of organizational encouragement and how important it is in adapting and adjusting to an international setting.

Adjustment Struggles

A student's culture and upbringing have an insightful impact on how he or she sees the world and processes information. They may approach education in different ways; hence, a sudden switch from a Philippine school to an international may result to struggles in adjustment. Filipino Junior High school completers' faced differences in their educational environment, particularly in culture and curriculum. As students have attested:

"There is a noticeable change in the language, curriculum, teaching, and the whole environment itself." P1

"There is many differences with the curriculum and environment, especially seeing different nationalities that you encounter every day. It is not something you usually see every day in a Philippine school." P4

"The difference I was able to encounter was a lot of cultural differences and how the way people interacted." P5

"As I said earlier, the curriculum is different between the Philippine and British curriculum, and they do not have that many similarities to one another. Also, the culture itself, where I interact with people of different nationalities, was quite interesting to see." P5

"The classmates you were with were different nationalities. They were not all Filipino. They had different personalities and humor, yet I believe that fun and adventure experiences are what give life to the students." P4

Moreover, language plays a significant role in the communication processes of students as they interact with their environment, and individual differences due to transferring have become a problem for students who may face difficulty in speaking the language, the school is adhering or used to. This condenses their confidence to speak up in the classroom as a result their uncertainties do not get clarified, this affects their academic performance. These students even face problems in communicating with their peers as they feel uncomfortable to speak to them. This problem does not give every student the chance to meet their full potential. As the students have said:

"On the scale of 1-10, probably 8, since it was really hard for me to adjust because first of all there is a language barrier, I'm not really that fluent in speaking in English when I first transferred to an international school, and it was really hard for me to communicate with people in this school. It took me around six months before I started to become comfortable in this new environment." P3

"You do not speak the same language as them, and there is a lot of pros and cons with it as well." P4

Further, every school's culture is different, especially Filipinos, who are considered minorities compared to the other nationalities in international schools. The students and teacher's interactions may also be dissimilar between the two which may result to variations in teaching styles. The curriculum, which is the base of the type of education a student receives, also has a significant impact on the students' academic development, and an alteration in the curriculum may show significant changes in the students' experience in school. As the students verbalized:

"There are many differences like with the curriculum and especially with the teachers." P4

"The main difference between an international school from a Philippine school is that the students are more vocal and expressive than the teachers. I am not saying that it is wrong for the teachers, in the Philippine School, to have more authority over students. However, I have noticed that the students from an international school can say anything that they want. The students have the freedom to ask and have the ability to voice out what they want and what they want to do in life." P6

"The main difference is that in an international school is mere focuses on your opinion. They want your opinions, ideas, and creativity. They will also teach you basic steps on how to improve your ideas and skills. The concept is like you show them what you can, and they will mold you what you show them." P6

"It was very different. In Philippine schools, they make you work hard. They make you do a lot of projects and you really have to study a lot – study before you go to school and do your homework. It is very hands-on and academic. While in an international school when I went to one, it was very spoon-fed. You get everything that you need and you just have to do your part and listen. You do the work but that is it. They literally give you what you have to study for you to pass the test. You do not have to really work hard, unlike in Philippine schools, you still have to go through a lot of twists and turns for you to get the right answers for the test. So, for me, the teaching style was very different." P4

Alongside the impact of the sudden change of the cultural background of the school, variations in the curriculum objectives were also experienced by the participants who may have improved their learning experience depending on their abilities to cope. As proven witnessed by the response below:

"It was straight to the point (referring to an international school compared to a Philippine curriculum school). They would give the objectives for the day and would discuss it. Since we are a small group that makes it easier. If you struggle and make a mistake, they would notice that and would make sure that you get the point. The teaching is more catered to everyone does not matter where you are from." P2

As mentioned earlier, the curriculum has a significant impact on the students' academic development; therefore, it has a significant role in students' learning abilities and capabilities. Due to adjustments done,

hardships and struggles may have been experienced in the academic aspect of their educational experience in an international school. Teaching styles were also seen to be much different. As students stated:

"I wasn't used to the curriculum, and to seeing that the students' requests were followed rather than the teachers." P1

"During the first month of school, I felt many adjustments. First, with the language, when I transferred to CNAQ (College of North Atlantic), the teachers who taught us were from Canada and different Gulf countries. Canadian teachers were easier to understand compared to the other teachers from the Gulf countries since the English that they used were harder to understand. That discouraged me to be diligent in the first month of school since I had many complaints and questions as to why, even though I tried my best to understand them, I still couldn't, which leads to instances of me sleeping inside class hours but then after that phase of adjustment, it was fine." P4

Schools, especially of different curricula, have divergent approaches and procedures that they follow. Due to this, students may or may not have difficulty in adjusting from one curriculum to another because the latter may be more appropriate for them. However, struggles and distress were still experiences as they were coping with their new educational environment, as well as their adjustment to their school's teaching procedures. As stated by the students:

"It was tough to catch up because, like what I said earlier, I was used to having quizzes, assignments, projects, or artworks, but in my current school now. We would usually have just assessments or tests every now and then, but these assessments really count for the grade. They do not care about the quizzes or assignments that you do, because they only care about the test that you do in school. Moreover, this test is the most important." P3

"Well, I guess, one different thing is that, specifically in my school, they teach us and prepare us for college or university, so they treat us like college students already, so they do not spoon-feed us with information. They just present the information and it is up to us how we are going to study or understand the lesson at home. Usually, the books are just on the Internet, and we do not bring books to school, and it is up to us if we are going to use them at home. It was different because I got used to Philippine International School, but in my school now, I hardly use my textbooks at all." P3

"How I studied alone was hard for me. After classes, it would just be me studying, that is where it is different. Because everything is based on PowerPoints and presentations, so it is tough to adapt when you are alone." P2

"Honestly, coping up with the fast phasing in college was the most difficult for me. I experienced a really hard semester. To the point that in a semester, I continuously submitted a lot of essays which have different topics and that tempted me to skip from one topic to another. In high school, you know that everything is laid out, you know what will happen next, but in college, you will just have to cope with it." P6

Moreover, the grading system in these schools are also different so it was a shock to them to see that grades that used to be so high in number are now low despite giving similar effort. These changes contribute to the struggles of the students. As stated below:

"I am having a hard time since I am new to seeing my grades now, as I am in a new school. In my previous school, you would know if your grade is high or not if you got an average of 90 and above. In my current school, a grade between 50 and 60 is already a good mark, since it is the passing grade." P1

In addition, the social interactions of their students have a vital role in their adjustment to their environment. Differences in culture and language may contribute to barriers in their social life and belongingness to peer groups. As attested by the respondents:

"Yes, there were times where I felt like I didn't fit in with other students in my school, since I was a Filipino. In my school, there are only two students that are Filipinos. So I would usually feel out of place because most of them are Arabs." P3

"Sometimes the things they talk about and their perceptions or views on things are different. I dealt with it by just compromising and sharing my views like we don't have to agree on it but we can just respect each other's opinion." P5

"The only time I felt that I didn't fit in the group is whenever they talk about their possessions. In my current school, they're all Arabs and most of them are Qataris. As we all know, they are wealthy and are able to buy whatever they want because they can afford it. It was difficult for me to talk about the thing I have so I was more of a listener to them. But that didn't affect our relationship in a way because friendship is much more important than our possessions." P6

"At first, it was so difficult for me to build social relationships in college because I'm the type of person that wouldn't approach anyone unless they approach me first. Your goal is to build friendships in your new school. You do not have anyone that has the same culture and the same language as you. It is all about setting your mind on your goal to strengthen your companionship on your own." P6

Despite some of the respondents having an easier time socializing and communicating with their new schoolmates and peers, some of them admit to encountering difficulties in socializing and improving relationships with their peers as well as their teachers. As verbalized by the students:

"It was difficult for me to socialize, especially with different nationalities, even with other Filipino students. With other nationalities, I did not feel comfortable talking or conversing with them. I felt there was no common denominator or factor for us to click and build a relationship hastily. Up until now, it still feels a challenge for me to connect with other nationalities for they have different culture from us, but I am trying to slowly accept and go with the flow. You mind your own business and do not dictate what they need to do, so it would be easier for you to overcome the struggles." P4

"At first, it was difficult for me to approach my teachers because I grew up in an environment where teachers have much authority than students. It was hard for me to let go of the thought that they are the teachers and you have to treat them with respect while you hear your colleagues treating them like an ordinary person. It was hard for me to approach my teachers, but I've learned how to approach them in a way that I still respect them." P6

Nevertheless, the students have the ability to contest these social challenges. Through time, despite the cultural differences and language barriers, these students have learned to adapt and socialize with their peers and teachers. They verbalized:

"I was able to overcome the situation by not minding this, by just focusing on my studies, and focus on the friends that I have now. I just put in mind that it is not that important to make friends with a lot of people, as long as I have my own group of friends, and I'm focusing on my studies. That is my mindset." P3

"It is a bit difficult since I am not used to being in a school with diverse students in terms of race. But I got over it through time. I can interact with others now." P1

The Filipino junior high school completers' struggles in a new learning environment associate their adjustment struggles. Their lived experiences unveil how transferring to an international setting contributes to their cultural flexibility, social awareness, and academic prosperity. Their verifications provide an improved viewpoint on the adjustment struggles of Filipino transferees and their coping abilities.

DISCUSSION

Adaptation Style

Individual differences in learning styles and preferences are often encountered and analyzed in order to discover one's capability to learn and adapt to a hidden curriculum effectively. It is important to consider the learning styles, navigation behaviors, and social and environmental factors gone through by each individual. By utilizing these characteristics and preferences, the instructor and the students may work together, which can greatly help the learners in the process of adapting constructively. (Benedetti & Christopher, 2015)

For instance, international students who have moved from one place to another have gone through an overwhelming life and cultural transition. It is given that there are learning styles that are influenced by heredity, culture, age, profession, previous experiences, and present everyday demands. (Yael, 2015)

Additionally, these difficulties include, but are not limited to, language difficulties, difficulties adjusting to the academic culture, misunderstanding, and complications in communication with faculty and peers; stress, anxiety, feeling of isolation, social experiences, culture shock, financial hardships, lack of appropriate accommodation, isolation and loneliness, and any adaptation in their daily life. In line with this, Probertson et al. (2015) have surveyed some staff in the field of education and had concluded that language is considered as one of the most significant academic issues hindering smooth adjustment for international students. In the same way, culture influences environmental perceptions, which, in turn, to some degree, determine how information is processed and organized. The storage, processing, and assimilation methods for information contribute to how new knowledge is acquired. This influence plays a role in conditioning and reinforcement learning styles. It partially explains why teaching methods used in certain parts of the world may be ineffective or less effective when blindly transplanted to another locale (Rassin, 2015).

Hence, tackling a change in setting can be imputed to the acculturation process. These changes occur across physical, biological, cultural, social relationships and psychological (behavior and mental health status) domains. A transactional model of stress and coping has been proposed in which he assumes that psychological health and adjustment is influenced by the acculturation experience of an individual, the assessment of cultural stressors, and the coping skills used. (Wu, et al., 2015)

It was then further discussed by Garza, et. Al (2015) that the factors that affect or influence the adaptation styles of students, who have gone from one setting to another, maybe positive or negative in the majority of the dominant culture, enhancing one's life chances and mental health. Due to the inherently challenging nature of change and adaptation to new cultural and social expectations, the negative part of the acculturation process can occur.

Likewise, in psychological literature, the performance of a stay or temporary stay in a new culture is often described in terms of change, which occurs in two ways, namely psychological and sociocultural adjustment. (Garza, et. al, 2015)

Moreover, Guzman et. Al (2015) stated that psychological adjustments are defined as pertains to mental health and overall well-being, while the sociocultural adjustment is defined as pertaining to behavioral and cognitive factors associated with the practical performance during cross-cultural transition.

As studied by Ford (2016), the Grasha Riechmann model addressed individual teaching and learning styles. It had the structure of the model which allows researchers to account for how individual preferences, prior experiences, curriculum design or the learning environment may create learning preferences, approaches or styles that vary from situation to situation

Accordingly, Wise (2016) asserted that in an education setting, a teacher might have some students who prefer to learn didactically and others who are visual or hands-on learners. In these instances, a good teacher will modify their approach to help all students learn the content. Given that individuals from the same organization learn differently, the inherent challenge for developers of a QIC is to determine how to integrate the different learning profiles to promote active learning and knowledge acquisition. (Robinson, 2016)

Additionally, belongingness is viewed as an effectual factor in finding their value and uniqueness as a person and as a student. (Hasanvand, 2017) It is referred to as one of the most significant needs of the students for exhibiting proper execution and fulfillment in their learning environments. In this stage, students can feel venerated and appreciated by their teachers and peers.

Being able to have strong social support offers encouragement and positivity in life, and it is one of the basic needs of a human being. It is essential to have people share their difficulties in life, for it enables them to handle different circumstances, which helps them heighten and prosper one's self. These secure relationships allow students to take part in different school performances with motivation and incitement to achieve a specific goal. Peer support involves the development of emotional health and the welfare of the student at school. (Cowie Helen. 2014)

Moreover, the school is an important setting where a student can feel associated and connected to others. Students having a positive relationship are said to have outstanding performance and interest in learning, which amplifies their educational and personal development. Belongingness encompasses the student's relationship with their teachers, peers, and the school, which gives importance to the welfare and development of a student. (Hussain et al., 2018)

Associating oneself with good people, ignoring negativities, and attaining happiness enable a person to achieve the state of

being tranquil. Tranquility is being able to feel satisfaction and contentment in our lives. A solution for successful teaching and learning is through having peace and tranquility. (Abdullahi & G.A, 2014). For a student, being able to belong and affiliated in school is a way to obtain contentment, harmony, affirmation, and tranquility.

Literacy and Diversity

On the one hand, literacy is the ability of a person to read and write, further stretched into how a person is able to use it as a means of communication and expression with the involvement of learning progression concerning enabling one to achieve goals, cultivate knowledge, and contribute to the community and reach a wider audience in the society (UNESCO, 2017;2018). This encompasses the aptitude of comprehension, composition of ideas, experiences, and knowledge with the usage of the physical symbol system to decode and analyze texts to engage in meaning-making and to appreciate its purpose as a shared collective communal, and cultural practice among members (Hobbs, 2016, p.1).

Literacy is segmented into types; some names are computer, vernacular, digital, visual, school, media, health, emotional, cultural, and moral (Kapur, 2019). To which literacy extends, adolescents are exposed to a diverse range of skills, experiences, exceptionalities, and upbringings; they are progressively immersed in multimodal experiences with the use of technology with means of digital tools—these explain how multimodal, out-of-school literacies vary from the more dominant, academic literacies in school—and complex interactions that allow meaning-making about life to develop (Lewis, 2016, p. 3). In adolescent literacy, collaborative inquiries exemplify collaborative textual responses, including research reports, oral presentations, artworks, websites, and videos. These provide close attention to students' and teachers' cultural backgrounds and hermeneutic experiences they carry in class (Simon & Campano, 2015, as cited in Simon & Kalan, 2016). On the other hand, diversity is referred to as the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies and its concept encompasses acceptance and respect, where each individual understands that each and every one is unique, and recognizes their differences. (Pantaleo, 2019). Specifically, the growth of diversity in academic institutions has grown significantly and continues to be a focal point in higher education (Mangan, 2017). Schools are continually changing by including students of different races, backgrounds, and religions (Moore and Hansen, 2012, as cited in Smith, 2017).

Moreover, diversity in education roots out culturally, linguistically, and academically. Cultural diversity in education includes students from various races and genders, students who speak various languages, students from different socio-economic, ethnic origins, and cultures (Rengi & Polat, 2019). Rew, Becker, et al. (2014) stated that nursing students had shown a significant improvement in socially adapting to tend to their patients through cultural competence, where it begins with cultural awareness, which may be defined as the process of first examining one's own culture. As for linguistic diversity, it has been defined in a broad sense as the 'range of variations exhibited by human languages' (Terralingua, 2019). It is a common and increasing phenomenon in present-day society, which can be studied from different perspectives (Gorter et al., 2019). Spencer & Dauber (2019) expressed that research in the intercultural diversity field indicates that two foundational elements are required for this stimulation. These simulations are as follows: (a) positive attitudes (e.g., openness and curiosity) towards diversity and motivation to learn about/engage with it and (b) experiences of difference that challenge people's viewpoints, ideas, and ways of doing things. With both literacy and diversity, extensive reach to students, academic growth and prosperity, language fluency and differences, and opportunities arise.

Academically, the students excel whether situated in both environments—an international setting or to their previous school. In relation, the students who are confident in completing their academic programs have greater confidence in their academic ability. In contrast, those with low confidence in the completion of their academic programs have less confidence in their academic ability (Telbis, Helgeson, & Kingsbury, 2014) as stated by the Director of Internationalization of the Anahuac Quetaro University which then was translated by ContentEngine LLC (2017), academic growth results to actions that can impact positive changes to society. As students who know how to use their stay in an international setting can gain more knowledge of his or her profession by having a complete understanding of how content and subject of the matter is imparted, become engaged with faculty, ask questions, inquire and explore. International students must learn and understand the social and cultural norms of a new environment imperative to success in navigating a foreign academic context. Understanding of behavioral norms, language competency, and the capability to thrive in a classroom environment are outcomes of sociocultural learnings. Hence academic adjustment measures and GPA—to ascertain for academic success, which is a vital academic adjustment constituent—are determinants in sociocultural learning (Bastien, Seifen-Adkins, & Johnson, 2018).

Furthermore, student experience language barriers in an international setting which lead to difficulties and adjustments, not just academically but also socially. As Leong (2015) conferred, a lack of American English fluency impaired the capacity of the students to interact with peers and others, sometimes contributing to miscommunication and misunderstandings, as well as the inability to form relationships. Some of the academic success of the students also influenced the language barrier. As indicated by Tridinanti (2018), speaking in a foreign language can be influenced by

anxiety and self-confidence as psychological aspects for students with a high level of anxiety, concern, fear and low level of self-confidence in foreign language classes may find it difficult to develop their ability to speak.

Students took upon the decision to study in an international setting for better opportunities paved their way. In a study conducted by Nilsson & Ripmeester (2016), he detailed that one of the reasons students opt for an international study is the access to broaden their experience and quality of education, further improving one's career prospects and increasing the parameters of one's horizon. Unconsciously, international students contribute to opportunities for higher education to attain a strategic goal of global engagement and internationalization while positively perceiving and achieving their higher education experience (Urban & Palmer, 2014). As indicated by Kim, Collins, Rennick & Edens (2017), taking advantage of diverse learning experiences as an essential component of the learning environment would theoretically recognize the value of culture and provide all students with learning benefits.

Organizational Support

Antecedently, it is evident that the issues experienced by transfer and exchange students involve challenges and situational struggles due to not only environmental adaptation, but also an academic adjustment. In order for students to accommodate in new surroundings adequately, there are different aspects of encouragement, which may range directly from familial support to faculty assistance. The term 'organization' is not exclusive to professional jargons and could also be used in other collective terms. Organizational support refers to the aid given by environmental features such as peers, family, teachers, and others. By definition, perceived organizational support is the extent to which peers perceive the organization values fellows' contributions and cares about their well-being.

Transfer students face many challenges, especially when put in an unfamiliar setting; challenges such as language barriers, cultural shock, academic troubles, and a lot more. As indicated by Lee, J. (2017), these students addressed the same, four significant challenges: personal-psychological problems, issues of general living, sociocultural issues, and concerns of the Japanese language. However, coping mechanisms are defined as helping the community, positive attitude, contact with international friends, financial support, and useful learning techniques. The findings will have consequences in a higher education system for international students as well as language teachers and curriculum coordinators to better assist international students.

Additionally, the critical challenge encountered by transfer students was their understanding and comprehension of the transfer process. Notwithstanding these difficulties, as a result of three support networks, somehow, these participants successfully transferred to an international academy. The main contributors to their transition experiences included: (1) the faculty in the given campus, (2) the academic advisers and peers, and (3) their own families (Zhang, Y. et al. 2015).

Furthermore, the aforementioned support systems have been expanded on by more researchers; explaining the theory of organizational support, which in fact indicates that workers develop a subjective understanding of how much the company respects their efforts and cares for their well-being (perceived organizational support or POS) (Kurtessus, James N. et al 2017). Regardless, the said researchers developed six themes on how these students have undergone successful transfer: institutional support, student transfer experience, integration approaches, financial support, master's degrees, and family support as key factors for academic success. These findings would be significant in community colleges for student development specialists. Therefore, these results can be used to help the movement of students when they move to different campuses (Harris, Linwood N. 2017).

In a study conducted by Linda Whang, et al. (2017), their initial interviews with transfer students and selected staff members who support the former highlighted a number of recurring themes, including the desire of students to have previous experiences recognized and acknowledgment as a separate group from other new students entering directly from high school; the need to quickly identify resources and sources of support; the inevitable culture shock experienced from transferring schools; and the significance of peer familiarity inside the campus. In line with this, the participants, a set of junior high school completers and coming from Filipino schools, have indicated the same need for organizational assistance for further and quicker adjustment in an international setting, and also for the cessation of experienced transfer shock, which is analyzed as a potential risk that has a negative impact on transfer students from community college. There are three main factors that can lead to the occurrence of transition shock: institutional obstacles, the failure of an applicant to effectively reach particular developmental goals, and integration problems when moved to an unfamiliar setting (Romano, L. 2015).

Besides, when migrant students are welcomed into international schools abroad, the sense of belongingness immediately comes along, so as the need for organizational support from the people surrounding these students; be it on the right side, the social needs, or most notably in international states, the cultural specification. Culture shock comes along with the unfamiliarity of diversity experienced by transfer students and might affect the academic abilities of said group. Moreover, across various school settings, the study of Martinson, M. (2016) clarified the effective utilization of cultural-based

education (CBE) methods in favor of students who retained a sense of belonging in school at sharp transition points or halfway through an academic year. It has a combined understanding of the racial consciousness of education (MCE), and individuals' identity needs based on Maslow's Desires Hierarchy. The study examined instructor interpretations of how students coped with stress as a result of the change, how they developed a sense of belonging to school, and instruction in MCE.

Although tough, these migrant transfer students continually leave the familiar scene in order to meet ends and to seek life opportunities. For these Filipino junior high school completers to live a life abroad, the need for migration is completed. By definition, migration is a process that has both positive and negative effects. Nevertheless, the degree to which migration affects people's life opportunities positively or adversely, especially young people abroad, is partly affected by migrants' desires and ambitions before they embark on their journeys. As said in the data obtained from Dako-gyeke, M.'s (2016) study, the analysis found that most migrants were willing and determined to leave their country in search of better lives abroad. Improved living standards, job opportunities, and possibilities for further education were illustrated in the discourses of the participants on planned migration. However, the results showed that the plans of the participants to relocate were based on a combination of restrictions between their countries and incentives abroad. The study findings highlight the need for research and policies that take into account the aspirations, interests, and voices of young people who want to migrate abroad. The process of transition is never easy, as different challenges and levels of struggles can be faced throughout, and lucky are those who have no problems with sociocultural adaptation.

Adjustment Struggles

Transfer students often experience transfer shock and struggle at institutions, which includes a variety of academic, social, and institutional challenges associated with transfer experience (Fermatt, 2017). Adjustment struggles due to the transfer of educational institutions are inevitably experienced by Filipino students. It has been documented that transfer students experience more significant stress and more psychological issues than domestic students (Chang, 2016). Transferring is stressful and challenging for many individuals because they may be challenged with new cultural norms and different cultural values (Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 2014). Therefore, the stressors in this learning and adapting process often impact people's adjustment in a new school (Smith & Khawaja, 2014). Additionally, language barriers, cultural norms, and the nature of friendships in the transferred school may all keep transfer students from establishing a strong social and academic network (Smith & Khawaja, 2014).

Cultural differences are one of the factors that cause difficulties for Filipino students as they transfer to an international school. Intercultural differences encompass a range of clashes, which occur, in part, because of differences between cultural groups (Rubinfeld & Chlement, 2014, p.1206). Instead of this, transferring to a different school can often cause stress and identity confusion because it is a process of dealing with different cultures and finding a balance between them (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2014).

According to studies, it is important to provide transfer students opportunities to find one another since transfer students who have attempted to establish social connections with traditional students have perceived these students as disinterested and unwilling to expand their already established social circles (Townsend & Wilson, 2017). Creating a new social network after arriving in a new school is very important for transfer students. Sturdy social support may help international students enhance their self-efficacy in adjusting to the transferred school.

Some research suggests that international students' stress levels would be reduced if they have strong familial and graduate social support in school, especially in their classrooms (Araujo, 2016). The more involved the student was in the classroom, the more confidence that student reported in their ability to reach academic milestones at the university (Schwehm, 2017). Classroom involvement is essential; it is also recommended that colleges and universities offer extracurricular programs that are accessible to transfer students (Allen & Zhang, 2016). Lester et al. (2014) found that transfer students experienced college engagement differently than do students who begin at the baccalaureate institution, as they tend to depend on classroom engagement to provide a sense of belonging, and are less focused on social engagement because of a lower self-esteem as compared to the latter. Tinto (2015) posits that a sense of belonging, developed from the perception and meaning from engagement itself, is even more important than engagement. Other studies that have examined the experiences of transfer students have also found culture shock, language differences, and interactions with international students as additional hurdles (Valdez, 2015)

However, despite of the factors indicated, the adjustment struggles of every participant are various in some ways due to difference in handling situations and acquired cognitive skills which would be factorized into psychological and sociocultural. Psychological capacity is related to psychological well-being such as depressive indications, global mood disturbance, and physical symptoms and is influenced by personality traits, life changes, and social support (Ward & Kennedy, 2015). Zhang and Goodson (2014) consider psychological symptoms, stress, acculturative stress, physical

symptoms and satisfaction with life as factors that can be used to assess psychological adjustment. The sociocultural capacity, on the other hand, indicates the connection an individual has with the new society (Smith & Khawaja, 2014). It is related to a person's knowledge of different cultures, length of residency in the school's culture, and the quality and quantity of interaction with local people. The most frequently reported predictors for sociocultural adjustment in the literature were language proficiency, social contact with local people and acculturation (Lee and Ciftci, 2014)

CONCLUSION

This research offers an opportunity to pay close attention to the effect on the adaptation of the student based on financial, cultural, and academic influences. This study reveals that, directly after switching from one school to another, students still encounter a range of transitional difficulties (Baklashova, 2015). This study deals with the adaptation styles of the students where tranquility and belongingness, learning style conditioning, and cultural acceptance arise. Students came from diverse backgrounds. Hence, adjustment struggles were encountered like language barriers and shifts with different curriculums. However, social support was given by peers and family, enough to make the students strive harder in their academics—in general, school life.

It can be a daunting life and cultural change for most Filipino students who have completed their undergraduate studies and then look for international universities and colleges to continue their academics. Such problems include, but are not limited to, language difficulties, which is considered to be one of the biggest academic problems that hinder smooth transition for international students (Garza, et al., 2015), difficulties in adjusting to academic culture, misunderstandings and inconsistencies in contact with faculty and peers; tension, anxiety, feeling isolated, social experiences, and even cultural shock. It coerces negative and positive changes; for, negatively, international students who have higher self-esteem may gather more easeful responsibilities that can be achieved, which increases daily hassles yet positively, students adjust faster and surges self-esteem by indulging more time with the host culture (Lopez & Bui, 2014).

Diversity coincides with language barriers and literacy, segmented on an individual's ability and competence to speak and communicate in English to peers and teachers. Schachner, et. al (2018) suggests that cultural diversity, dealt constructively, is beneficial for students; utmost understanding and comprehension is vital for a student to communicate effectively which extensively, as Wingate (2016) conferred, there is a noticeable need for inclusivity in literacy pedagogy with the increase in students from diverse backgrounds. With language barriers, students should rather be vigilant and knowledgeable in communicating through ways such as: (1) know the same ground, (2) double-check to avoid errors, (3) be an attentive listener, (4) put oneself in the receiving end's shoes, (5) assert your decisions (Marbaniang, 2015).

Indeed, support from peers, teachers, and family, in which parental support contribute positively to an adolescent's development (Hasan, 2019) make a difference in a student's life. This implies teacher and peer support in aiding one's academic motivation, classroom engagement, and school belonging (Kiefer, et al., 2015).

Lastly, students are found to be inspired by these issues to develop strategies to address emerging challenges, broadening the spectrum of student life in international schools with familiarity with the idea of transitioning—acculturating to adapting. The data obtained can be used in university administration, faculty and staff to identify and eradicate academic, social, and cultural challenges that might be faced by Philippine students who have completed their undergraduate studies and eventually study in an international setting.

In this study, the researchers propose that potential researchers expand the range of participants by not only restricting this study to Filipino students but also making use of other nationalities' responses. Furthermore, a way that can improve this study is to focus on a more precise topic in order to be able to derive specific experiences instead of concentrating on a more significant scope that could lead to even more possible studies. More studies of their experiences would also be useful in order to understand their needs in the educational and social sense better.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH



Rachel Anne C. Casipit is currently a STEM (Science Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) student in Philippine School Doha and is currently in her 12th year of study. In April 8, 2020, she will finally graduate Senior High School and shall move to a new chapter of her life. She is a proud member of the PSD school publication namely, The Link, which had greatly honed her skills in photography and writing. She was also a former Cadette Major of the C.A.T. group back in the school year 2017-2018. Following her active participation in different organizations in her Junior High years, she has continued to offer her service in the school as the Treasurer of Batch Cavalier and is part of the Senior Planning Board of the Senior Girl Scouts. Not only does she focus on academics making her a Laureola Awardee in both Grades 11 and 12 but she had also been sharing her talent in performing arts through dancing and visual arts, gaining different awards and achievements for her active participation. During the school year 2018-2019, Rachel had participated in various seminars related to research which had provided valuable insights for their study. She had also gone to career related seminars which had provided experiences for her with valuable knowledge and insights that will surely be helpful in her

chosen career for the future. She had taken her SAT and IELTS in the month of December with the dedication and goal in mind to study in the University of Calgary Qatar or in Qatar University, if accepted. After her graduation in Philippine School Doha, she is looking forward to attending workshops and seminars in universities present in Qatar which can contribute to her plans of continuing her studies abroad in Canada for her specialization as an Anesthesiologist.



Elaizabelle Jem P. Bisenio is a Senior High School Student completing the track and subjects offered by Philippine School Doha through the strand STEM (Science Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). In the spring of April 2020, on the 8th, she will be finishing her 12th year of study with flying colors. She had studied under the said strand in correlation to her desired pre-med/college course: Bachelor of Science (BS) in Nursing. After her secondary education (college), she plans to take on proper medicine in Australia, to receive further education as she studies for her anticipated career in the future: being an Anaesthesiologist or an Anaesthetist Nurse. During her study in PSD that had summed up to almost 18 years, she is nearing the date of her completion, and she will graduate on the first week of April, 2020. In PSD, she had been a part of many clubs and organizations, and one of her joined organizations is the school's publication team, The Link. She had joined the team in the fifth (5th) grade, wanting to raise her name and reputation, to show the abilities and skills she has in the field of photography and writing, and to express her capabilities through student leadership. Ms. Bisenio was known in her batch as a leader and a consistent top-notch; she was a Laureola Awardee for two years straight. She had

always been proud in all of her achievements: winning in both inside and outside school competitions, receiving certificates, medals and trophies, but the proudest she had been of herself was when she was hailed as the 'Female Best Writer' back in 2017 during her Junior Promenade. She is determined to finish her last year with flying colors, proud parents, and contented happiness.



Jan Erika Mari D. Castro is a STEM student in Philippine School Doha and is currently in her 12th year. She will graduate Senior High School on April 8, 2020. From her young years, she already has excelled and shown great potential in academics and various skills. She started her academic years in Qatar, initially studying in Philippine International School – Qatar, from the 1st Grade until the 10th Grade. In her Elementary and Junior High School years, she has been a member of a number of clubs where her leadership and skills were thoroughly honed. She was a member of the Girl Scouts of the Philippines. She also became the organization’s President for 2 years and was awarded as “Most Outstanding Girl Scout” Alongside being a member of the GSP, she also was a dedicated student leader as she served the school as a member of the Supreme Student Government of PISQ from the 4th Grade to the 10th. She has also won in contests and competitions in different aspects both in academics and non-academics. One of the prestigious awards she received was the First Place award in the annual Keralite Inventors award which involved extensive research and our invention of an effective portable water purification system. She was also the Captain of PISQ Girls’ Volleyball Varsity team, which won the Championship Title in 2018. She

graduated as the Batch Valedictorian in her Elementary graduation and Junior High School completion. Currently, she is studying in Philippine School Doha for her completion of Senior High School where she continues to prosper with flying colors. Even with a switch of schools, she remains to be an honor student who excels in various aspects, competing in contests both school-based and outside school. She is a Laureola Awardee and has been Top 3 over-all for Grade 11. As for her future endeavors, she passed most of her CETs in the Philippines so far with hopes of getting in a great school to serve a foundation for her studies towards to becoming a successful Medical Doctor in the future



Danna Sofia L. Dichos is currently a Grade 12 student in Philippine School Doha under the academic track STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). She has been a consistent honor student throughout her academic career. A recipient of the Silver award and Citation in Journalism in her 10th grade. During the same academic year, her group placed 3rd with the title “The Antimicrobial and Antioxidative Activities of Moringa Oleifera Extracts in Bacteria Growth” in a Research Fair held at her school. A Laureola Silver Awardee in her 11th grade and at present. Albeit focused on her studies, she manages her time for extra co-curricular activities. She serves the school as part of The Link—a major organization which serves as the official publication of Philippine School Doha—as the Chief Photojournalist and a member of the Senior Girl Scout Organization. She plans to pursue a career in the medicine field and study abroad after finishing her bachelor’s degree in the Philippines.



Anika Jolie G. Fajutagana is currently a Grade 12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) student in Philippine School Doha and she will graduate this coming April 2020. She consistently achieved a Silver award as a Laureola awardee and she has been a consistent top student in her class. Throughout her Junior High School years, she continuously achieved a Silver award and she received a CEM award for Mathematics in 7th grade. Aside from her academic achievements, she is a part of numerous organizations such as Dunong: Academic Guild, Senior Girls Scout Organization as a Senior Planning Board, and a cartoonist in her school's publication, Link. She also serves her school with her artistic talents where she has been recognized with awards and achievements. She has also attended numerous seminars that are related to research that gained her a lot of knowledge to write this study. She also took her SAT in December and IELTS in February, in which she had the goal in mind to study in University of Calgary Qatar or College of the North Atlantic Qatar (CNAQ). If accepted and graduated, she will continue her studies in United States to finish her medical degree.



Mary Angelynne L. Tabernilla is currently in Senior High School under the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics strand in Philippine School Doha. She is a multi-talented student, equipped with different skills that makes her unique and unusual. During the school years 2015-2016 and 2018-2019, her group placed 1st in the Battle of the Bands event in school and she was awarded as the best drummer. She also served the school as a C.A.T. Officer, being the Staff Officer 1 of her batch. She is also actively participating in different Filipino community volleyball leagues outside school. During the 2nd season of Pinoy Volleyball of Qatar, she was awarded as the Most Valuable Player of the Season. Despite her extracurricular involvements, she also excels in her academics and had received various awards and recognitions. She had been a Valedictorian during their Preschool Commencement Exercise and also had been a Bronze and Silver awardee from Primary to Junior High School Recognition Ceremonies. She has been a consistent Laureola awardee for both Grade 11 and Grade 12, achieving both Bronze and Silver awards. After she graduates in Senior High School on April 2019, she plans to pursue a 3-year course of Sports Science at Qatar University.