The Academic Culture Shock Experiences of Turkish International Students in Japan: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract
The present research focuses on academic culture shock (ACS) experienced by Turkish students due to the differences between academic cultures. ACS is a novel concept which can be described as "the shock when faced the cultural differences in academic life". It can be used to identify problems and challenges that international students experience during their academic transition to a new academic culture. This research explores ACS experiences of 21 Turkish students (12 females and nine males, ages from 25 to 37) in the context of Japanese universities. The aim is to understand the ACS of Turkish students, suggest solutions to the problems and help them to overcome the challenges for successful academic adjustment. The research draws on data from semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Turkish students to identify the stressors, challenges and problems related to ACS. Each interview transcript was individually examined via qualitative analysis, aiming to develop or identify possible categories based on Grounded Theory Approach. According to the results, there emerged some categories related to ACS. Supervision style, language skills, laboratory/seminar system, differences between Japanese and Turkish academic systems, stressors, coping strategies for stress, and academic-social skills are main categories. The results showed that challenges that Turkish students encountered resulted in ACS which might lead to difficulties in academic adjustment. It is suggested the problems and challenges that the students experienced are associated with their educational and cultural background. Cross-cultural differences in educational background which resulted in problems in academic adjustment are considered of reasons that can explain ACS.

Keywords: Academic culture shock, academic adjustment, grounded theory approach, Turkish international students in Japan, autonomous learning

Introduction

Universities in Japan host a substantial number of international students including Turkish students. The number of international students as May 1, 2017 was reported as 267.042 by Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO). The number of Turkish students in Japan estimated by The Embassy of The Republic of Turkey in Tokyo (2017) and by UNESCO (2018) is 160 and 152 respectively. Although there is a substantial body of research that focuses on international students from Asian and Western countries in Japan (Guo, Yiwei, & Ito, 2014; Maruyama, 1998; Simic-Yamashita & Tanaka, 2010), there are a limited number of studies (e.g. Boiger, Güngör, Karasawa, & Mesquita, 2014; Güngör, Karasawa, & Boiger, 2014) available that compares Turkish and Japanese cultures. However, these studies make cross-cultural comparisons using samples directly from Turkey and Japan. Also, they focus on topics such as interpersonal relations, interdependence, relatedness, certain emotions and autonomy. In addition to this, there is no other available research which investigates academic adjustment of Turkish people studying in Japan. In other words, the research on Turkish and Japanese cultures in a cross-cultural academic context is very limited. Therefore, the present research focuses on academic culture shock (ACS) and academic adjustment.

Culture Shock and Academic Culture Shock

International students must encounter new social and educational organizations, behaviors, and expectations. Also, they must cope with the adjustment problems common to students in general. This process is challenging even when international students are conscious about the cultural differences. However, it is more challenging when they are not conscious and falsely expect that the new culture operates like their home country. Unfamiliar experiences have a collective impact on cultural travelers which is defined as culture shock (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). International students may have to struggle with potential challenges by moving to a foreign country to study. Therefore, it may result in experiencing cross-cultural stress and adjustment problems (Smith & Khawaja, 2011), which may result in experiencing shock when faced the cultural differences in academic life (e.g. teaching style, communication with teachers) especially when there is a mismatch between cultural facts and expectations. It can be termed “academic culture shock”.

Academic Adjustment

Adjustment refers to the responses to a new environment such as new work procedure, a new language or a monetary system or a new academic life. Adjustment is a dynamic process which involves a motive, goal-directed movement and an obstacle or thwarting. International students face with the challenges of and are expected to meet the demands of a novel academic setting. The adjustment to the demands of a novel academic setting including teaching and learning style is defined as academic adjustment. It is a challenging intellectual revolution that takes time. Also, it is difficult for international students to understand the changes that they go through (Ballard, 1987).

It is crucial to understand the adjustment problems of these students in order to frame their unique challenges in unique academic settings and a new society, and in order to

offer guidance for a better adjustment both to academic settings and society. Therefore, the main purpose of the current study was to investigate the academic culture shock which is thought to be related to academic adjustment problems of Turkish international students studying in Japan. In addition, this study should also provide upcoming students with an overall understanding of what to expect when they choose to study at a university in Japan, and it should provide universities with some implications of how to devise better support and facilities to aid international students with their transition stages.

Research Questions

The research questions that are examined in the current study are as follows:

1) What are the academic problems Turkish international students experience in Japan?
2) What are the similarities and differences do Turkish international students encounter between the Turkish and the Japanese academic system?
3) What kind of strategies do Turkish international students use to cope with the problems and difficulties that they face with in academic life in Japan?
4) What kind of social skills do Turkish international students learn in the context of Japanese universities?

Method

Participants

A total of 21 students (12 females and nine males) from Turkey who were in higher education or graduated from a university in Japan (one bachelor's degree, two master's students, one master's degree, 11 PhD students, four PhD degrees and two postdoc degrees). Twenty of the students received their bachelor's degree from various universities in Turkey. Only one student received her bachelor's degree from a university in France. Additionally, all students except one student received or were studying to receive a postgraduate degree in Japan. One student was on one-year exchange program in Japan and did not continue into graduate education. Of the total sample 13 of the students were from natural sciences or engineering (five females and eight males), and the rest were from humanities or social sciences (seven females and one male). Students ranged in age from 25 to 37 years with a mean age of 29.09 years (SD = 3.30). The average length of stay in Japan was 52.14 months (SD = 32.89) at the time of interview completion (range = 12-151 months). The students were asked to report their Japanese language levels. Japanese language levels are distributed as follows: Eight advanced (38 %), eight intermediate (38 %) and five beginners (24 %). (see Table 1)

Measures

A three-page long demographic questionnaire and a two-page long interview question sheets were employed in this study. Questions on demographics covered information about the age, gender, major, hometown, education level, length of stay in Japan and Japanese language proficiency level. The interview was designed to assess academic culture shock, academic problems, academic stress and coping strategies, academic

social skills, communication and relationship with supervisor and laboratory mates, academic expectations and so on.

The research draws on data from semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Turkish students to identify the stressors, challenges and problems related to ACS. Each interview transcript was individually examined via qualitative analysis, aiming to develop or identify possible categories based on Grounded Theory Approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As a result, interviews were employed with the Turkish students to identify the stressors related to academic issues that the Turkish students encounter and coping strategies that they use. It also explores the social skills that Turkish students use while studying in Japan.

Procedures

The interviews were conducted in Turkish in 2017-2018. The participants were interviewed individually after they filled out the questionnaire. Participation was anonymous and voluntary. In order to maintain anonymity, the interviewees' real names were not used. Of 21 interviews, 17 (81 %) were conducted on Skype and four (19 %) were face-to-face. The interviews were recorded with a voice recorder with the consent of the participants. The interviews lasted approximately one hour.

Table 1: Demographic information of Turkish students.

	Gender	Age	Major	Education Level	Bachelors	Master	PhD	Length of Stay	Japanese Language Proficiency Level
1	F	28	Humanities	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan (completed)	Japan (ongoing)	55 Months	Advanced
2	F	31	Humanities	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan (completed)	Japan (ongoing)	108 Months	Advanced (N1)
3	M	26	Engineering	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan (completed)	Japan (ongoing)	26 Months	Intermediate (N3)
4	F	37	Engineering	PhD Graduate	Turkey	Turkey (completed)	Japan (completed)	42 Months	Beginner
5	M	37	Engineering	Postdoc Graduate	Turkey	Turkey (completed)	Japan (completed)	151 Months	Intermediate (N2)
6	F	26	Social Sciences	Master's Student	Turkey	Japan (ongoing)	N/A	20 Months	Beginner
7	F	27	Social Sciences	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan (completed)	Japan (ongoing)	30 Months	Intermediate
8	F	26	Natural Sciences	PhD Student	France	France (completed)	Japan (ongoing)	21 Months	Beginner
9	M	30	Engineering	PhD Graduate	Turkey	Japan (completed)	Japan (completed)	94 Months	Intermediate
10	F	29	Humanities	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan (completed)	Japan (ongoing)	56 Months	Advanced (N1)
11	F	27	Humanities	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan (completed)	Turkey (ongoing)	42 Months	Advanced
12	M	29	Engineering	PhD Student	Turkey	Turkey (completed)	Japan (ongoing)	67 Months	Intermediate (N3 - Old)
13	M	26	Humanities	University Graduate	Turkey	N/A	N/A	12 Months	Advanced (N1)
14	F	25	Humanities	Master's Student	Turkey	Japan (ongoing)	N/A	28 Months	Advanced (N1)
15	M	30	Engineering	PhD Graduate	Turkey	Japan (completed)	Japan (completed)	66 Months	Intermediate
16	F	30	Engineering	Master's Graduate	Turkey	Japan (completed)	N/A	36 Months	Advanced (N2)
17	M	27	Natural Sciences	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan (completed)	Japan (ongoing)	60 Months	Intermediate (N3)
18	M	33	Engineering	Postdoc Graduate	Turkey	Turkey (completed)	Japan (completed)	36 Months	Beginner
19	F	29	Engineering	PhD Student	Turkey	Japan (completed)	Japan (ongoing)	51 Months	Intermediate
20	M	28	Natural Sciences	PhD Graduate	Turkey	Japan (completed)	Japan (completed)	60 Months	Advanced (N2)
21	F	30	Natural Sciences	PhD Student	Turkey	Turkey (completed)	Japan (ongoing)	34 Months	Beginner (N4)

Data Analysis

After all of 21 interviews were completed, the researcher compiled each audio-taped interview transcript to ensure that the data was full and accurate. Additionally, all transcriptions were read several times to eliminate typographical errors and to remove any possible contradictions. As soon as all 21 interview transcripts were read several times, the researcher began to examine each transcript individually, with the aim being to develop or identify possible categories based on Grounded Theory Approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In this type of qualitative analysis, categories that emerge in the interviews are identified. In other words, each transcript is coded, distinguishing important categories and each category is reconsidered as the coding progresses. The researcher creates hierarchical organization of the categories where appropriate. This approach is described as iterative, because it is repeated to allow categories and organization of the categories to best fit the data.

Results

The coding resulted in two hierarchical levels of categories (i.e., categories and subcategories), using 1008 comments by students in total. Three main categories emerged. Within the three main categories there were 11 categories, and within 11 categories there were 51 subcategories.

Eleven categories are named as *Supervisor, Academic Self-Reliance, Research, Education, Academic Gains, Differences between Turkish and Japanese Academic Systems, Laboratory/Seminar(Abbreviated as "Zemi" in Japanese)/Kenkyushitsu (which means laboratory or seminar room in Japanese) System, Academic Facilities and Support, Challenges and Problems in Academic Life, Coping Strategies for Stress* and *Academic/Social Skills*. After the analysis, these 11 categories were grouped into three main categories which are named as *"Research in Academia" (Supervisor, Academic Self-Reliance and Research), "Education in Academia" (Education, Academic Gains, Differences between Turkish and Japanese Academic Systems, Laboratory/Zemi/Kenkyushitsu System, Academic Facilities and Support)* and *"Social Skills in Academia" (Challenges and Problems in Academic Life, Coping Strategies for Stress and Academic/Social Skills)* (see Table 2).

Table 2: Categories that emerged based on Grounded Theory Approach.

Research in Academia			**Education in Academia**					**Social Skills in Academia**		
Supervisor	**Academic self-reliance**	**Academic facilities and support**	**Laboratory/ zemi/ kenkyushitsu system**	**Challenges and problems in academic life**	**Education**	**Differences between Turkish and Japanese academic system**	**Research**	**Academic gains**	**Coping strategies for stress**	**Academic/ Social skills**
Supervision style	Self-motivation	Lab utilities	Laboratory/zemi environment	Language related problems	Teaching style	Information on the differences	Pace (Low vs. fast)	Research experience	Active vs. passive coping strategies	Social skills used in academic life
Feedback on academic performance	Conscientiousness	Academic sources	Laboratory meetings/seminars	Alienation	Class participation	Research focused vs teaching focused	Change of research theme	Academic ability		
	Autonomous Learning	Academic funding	Laboratory/zemi mates	Passive supervision style	Class Discussions	Expectations vs reality	Lack of instructions/ guidance on processes and using lab equipment	Academic network		
Differences between Japanese and Turkish supervisors			Closedness	Low feedback on academic performance	Course contents and requirements	Academic facilities and support		Presentation skills		
			Alienation			Supervision style	Publication	Satisfaction with academic improvement		
Relationship			Senpai-Kohai relationship	Lack of classes in PhD level	Language related problems	Lab/zemi/kenkyushitsu system	Length of PhD			
Professionalism				Change of research theme	Courses offered	Assertion/agreeableness	Support to women in science	Satisfaction with academic life		

Research in Academia

The first main category *Research in Academia* consists of three categories which are *Supervisor, Academic Self-Reliance and Research*.

The category called *Supervisor* related to subcategories such as supervision style, feedback on academic performance, differences between Turkish and Japanese supervisors, relationship with supervisor and professionalism. This category refers to the relationship with Japanese supervisors, how interviewees form a relationship with them, how they adjust to style of Japanese supervisors, the evaluation of differences between Turkish and Japanese supervisors, the style of Japanese supervisors and feedback provided by Japanese supervisors on academic performance of Turkish students. Most of the Turkish students focused on differences in supervision styles of Turkish supervisors and Japanese supervisors saying Japanese supervisors adopt a passive style and leave most of the work such as planning and decisions about research to the students. The students addressed the differences in supervision style as surprising and stressful and a style that they should tailor themselves. An example of the comments on this category is as follows:

"Of course, professors supervise you, but it seems like they supervise you a little further from the distance. My impression is that they supervise you in a passive way. In Turkey, supervision is more active whereas in Japan supervision is more passive. You yourself need to ask "Professor, is it alright?" Your supervisor doesn't directly explain. (…) Although my Japanese supervisor was already fine, I wish he would supervise a little more actively. He's very knowledgeable, obviously. It was a little hard to reach the source of the knowledge if you didn't ask for it." (Interviewee 16)

The category *Academic Self-Reliance* which is closely related to the category *Supervision* addressed experiences on self-motivation, conscientiousness and autonomous learning. The students mentioned that they expected active supervision including help, knowledge and feedback on their academic performance from their supervisors. However, the passive style of Japanese supervisors led them to begin to plan their research, acquire knowledge reviewing the literature and reading related papers all by themselves which helped them form academic self-reliance increasing

self-motivation and conscientiousness. An example of the comments on this category is provided below:

"The difficulty in the academic sense, I think, is that we the Turkish need someone to push us. (…) While writing your thesis, you need, I think, a boosting/a thrust. Because the Japanese here try to take their own responsibilities even if you don't tell them what to do, maybe they think that telling an adult person what to do hurts his/her dignity and that thought formed some kind of a habit for them, but it doesn't work for us. This thought forms a gap. The important part is how to fill the gap. It is up to us." (Interviewee 14)

The category called *Research* is engaged in issues associated with research pace, publication, instructions/guidance on processes and using laboratory equipment, length of PhD, support to women in science, change of research theme. This category covers all aspects about research which Turkish students addressed. The students not only mentioned about the differences in research pace (slow paced- vs. fast paced-research), but also advantages of studying in Japan such laboratory equipment provided or support by the government of Japan to women in science. However, some students addressed research related problems such as change of research theme and having difficulties adapting to the new theme due to lack of sufficient academic ability. An example of the comments on this category is provided below:

"Sometimes projects progress very slowly. For example, even if an experiment can be completed in six months, it takes, like, a year and a half to complete, the professor takes things slowly. It has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that you learn very well what you study. The disadvantage is that it reduces productivity." (Interviewee 9)

Education in Academia

The second main category is *Education in Academia* comprises of five categories which are *Education, Academic Gains, Differences between Turkish and Japanese Academic Systems, Laboratory/Zemi/Kenkyushitsu System, Academic Facilities and Support.*

Students commented on the *Education* which included aspects of teaching style, class participation, class discussions, courses offered, course contents and requirements and language related problems. Some Turkish students mentioned about the differences in teaching style of Japanese lecturers and class participation of Japanese students addressing that both Turkish lecturers and students are more active in classes leading to more active class discussions. Additionally, they commented on the low number of courses offered in English. Some students who earned their master's degree stated that course contents and requirements are easier than they expected saying that course contents and requirements are almost the same as undergraduate level which they addressed as a disadvantage. Also, some of the students in PhD commented on the lack of a sufficient number of courses which was stated as an unfavorable side. An example of the comments on this category is provided below:

"I didn't get my bachelor's degree here (in Japan), but I interacted with undergraduate students in the laboratory, because they had a research presentation once, and we had twice a year. Together with an undergraduate research I had to write an undergraduate thesis. As compared to my bachelor's thesis, their undergraduate research was much simpler. Likewise, the difficulty and the quality of the courses we received from the graduate school were very different. While the graduate courses I learned in Turkey had a high quality, the level of the graduate courses I took here is below the undergraduate courses in terms of the quality." (Interviewee 15)

The *Academic Gains* was another category that emerged as the interviewees addressed the acquirements and their satisfaction with those while studying and doing research in Japan; namely, research experience, academic ability, academic network, presentation skills, satisfaction with academic improvement and satisfaction with academic life. Most of the Turkish students commented on their satisfaction with academic improvement and academic life in general in Japan. They stated that opportunities and sources provided by Japanese universities are higher than Turkish universities. However, students except to Japanese language majors and students in English-medium programs addressed Japanese language as the biggest problems which prevented them to benefit more from course contents, class discussions and presentations in laboratory meetings and seminars and contribute to discussions in return. An example of the comments on this category is shown below:

"My academic performance in Japan is much better than Turkey, but it is still below my expectation. Obviously, as I was coming to Japan from Turkey, I had an academic expectation. I couldn't meet it, but I can tell that it is better than Turkey, and my performance in Turkey. I mean, I thought I would be more productive in Japan, I mean much more productive as I left Turkey. My underperformance may be the result of academic differences." (Interviewee 20)

The category *Differences between Turkish and Japanese Academic Systems* addressed the information on Japanese academic system before going to Japan. Also, this category covers all the differences that Turkish students addressed in the interviews with most common ones being research focused- vs. teaching focused-approach, academic facilities and support, supervision style and laboratory/zemi/kenkyushitsu system. An example of the comments on this category is provided below:

"As I observe, starting from masters in Japan, at least in field of biology, there is a research focused-approach. There are fewer courses and students are directly affiliated with a laboratory." (Interviewee 8)

Another category was *Laboratory/Zemi/Kenkyushitsu System* that emerged as the interviewees addressed the laboratory/zemi/kenkyushitsu environment, laboratory meetings and seminars, laboratory/zemi/kenkyushitsu mates, senpai-kohai relationship, closedness and alienation. Laboratory/zemi/kenkyushitsu system which is a unique part of Japanese academic system can be described as research group of a Japanese professor. This research group consists of a professor and his/her students, and depending on department and size, it can include more than one professor, postdoc researchers, graduate students and bachelor students. The analysis of the results suggested differences in laboratory/zemi/kenkyushitsu system depending on departments. For example, most of the students from natural sciences and engineering mentioned that they are expected to go to the laboratory every day, report the results of experiments regularly whereas students from humanities and social sciences commented that this type of requirements are almost non-existent. Additionally, students from natural sciences and engineering reported that relationship in their laboratories being more connected while students from humanities and social sciences stated loosely connected relationships between members. Another aspect of this system is the vertical hierarchy in laboratory. There is an informal hierarchical relationship between all members which is called senpai-kohai relationship. This type of vertical hierarchy exists in laboratory/zemi/kenkyushitsu system and requires lower classmates to show respect to upper classmates. Some Turkish students stated that they had some difficulties adjusting to this type of hierarchy between their laboratory

/ zemi/kenkyushitsu mates. An example of the comments on this category is provided below:

"If you can utilize well, there is an advantage of zemi system, because when you study together, you are always in touch with many students. Assistant professor is also in the same laboratory. (…) You live in a communal life. Also, a very good environment for friendship is built in the laboratory if you wish. Especially among the Japanese. (…) When there is a problem they find a solution together. They speak and discuss. They create a very nice communal life. We couldn't benefit from it, though. The international students couldn't join if they didn't push other students to get accepted. The Japanese take the advantage of this very well and push it further." (Interviewee 5)

Academic Facilities and Support category addressed laboratory utilities, academic sources and academic funding. This category addresses the aspects of university facilities including laboratory utilities, laboratory equipment, library, access to academic sources and academic funding to research. Especially students from natural sciences and engineering addressed that opportunities provided by universities with a high level of satisfaction. An example of the comments on this category is shown below:

"My supervisor in Turkey had very limited funding. Now being under such a professor and a big laboratory (in Japan), these people have no account of the amount of money they can receive and spend." (Interviewee 12)

Social Skills in Academia

The third category is *Social Skills in Academia*, consisting of categories called as *Challenges and Problems in Academic Life, Coping Strategies for Stress* and *Academic/Social Skills*.

The category called *Challenges and Problems in Academic Life* focused on language related problems, alienation, passive supervision style, low feedback on academic performance, lack of classes in PhD level and change of research theme. Some of the students addressed deadlines of papers and dissertations, interpersonal problems with laboratory mates, strict attitude of supervisor, obstacles in experiments and data, and lower academic ability as challenges and problems that they had to overcome. Most of the students addressed the passive supervision style which is also related to low feedback on academic performance as one of the biggest problems. Following the supervision style, the most commonly used language being the Japanese language is presented as one of the struggles that they had to overcome. Some of the students stated that they felt alienated during the laboratory meetings. The results suggested that students who earned their master's degree from a country other than Japan reported having more problems in adapting to Japanese academic system that students earned their master's degree from Japan and continued into PhD. An example of the comments on this category is shown below:

"We international students feel really alienated in the classroom, because we don't understand anyway. We feel weird when we are there to understand, and we don't do any English version of this activity, so we feel a little disconnected and isolated." (Interviewee 19)

Interviewees described how they coped with stress in *Coping Strategies for Stress*. The coping strategies are classified into two strategies; namely, active coping strategy and passive coping strategy. Active coping strategies can be exemplified as doing

exercise, talking to supervisor about obstacles in research whereas passive coping strategies is associated with taking antidepressants or withdrawal from social life. An example of the comments on this category is provided below:

"I have two options when I have problems with the experiments. Actually, not two options, but two ways. Either I'm really nervous, and "I'll troubleshoot it" I say, I work 7 days and 24 hours, or I close myself off and stay at home. So, I can't tell that I can cope with stress very well." (Interviewee 17)

The final category was *Academic/Social Skills* consisting of social skills used by interviewees in academic life. Some students stated that they observed and adopted new social skills to use in academic life including class environment and communication with laboratory/zemi/kenkyushitsu mates whereas some students stated that they do not regulate their actions and behaviors. An example of the comments on this category is provided below:

"I often use an indirect expression, like a Japanese. I observed the relationship between Japanese students and teachers. When the teacher asks a question, they don't immediately answer, or the Japanese do not respond very confident. It is what I've observed. They are like "Oh, isn't it?" They take a moment to think. I began to mimic it. I realized that when you act like that, the teachers began to treat kindlier." (Interviewee 1)

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of this study revealed the academic experiences of Turkish students regarding to the Japanese academic system with the evaluation of the positive and negative aspects, differences between Turkish and Japanese academic systems, challenges and problems encountered and coping strategies used. The results suggest that supervision related variables are associated with academic culture shock leading to adjustive problems. A study (Güngör, Karasawa, & Boiger, 2014) that compared Turkish students and Japanese students in terms of autonomy revealed that the autonomy level of Turkish students is lower than Japanese students. Autonomy is described as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (Holec, 1981). Research on autonomous learning done in Turkey (Cakici, 2017; Kırtık, 2017) suggest that although Turkish university students are aware that they can autonomously learn, and they exhibit features of an autonomous learner, they still expect guidance and support from teachers in some areas. Also, research indicate that education system in Turkey is not designed to promote and maintain autonomous learning in students. The results of the present study revealed that Turkish students in Japan had problems when they encountered the Japanese style of supervision, and experienced academic culture shock which was a challenging process that they had to go through. As mentioned previously in results section, the style of Japanese supervisor is described as passive, and some students stated that they expected an active guidance from their supervisors such as providing knowledge on a certain topic or teaching a method. Most of the students addressed this issue as one of the biggest differences between the Turkish academic system and the Japanese academic system. Some students had problems understanding if it is the cultural difference in the supervision style or indifference of their supervisors. The results of the analysis point out that problems comprehending the differences between academic systems may result in frustration and wrong attribution to the attitudes of supervisors leading to academic culture shock. Additionally, it was revealed that students who expected more guidance in research and feedback on their performance and had lower levels of

autonomous learning experienced a decrease in motivation and an increase in stress levels leading to adjustment problems to the Japanese academic system. Conversely, the results suggest that students with higher levels of autonomous learning or students who realized the essence of the Japanese academic system experienced lower levels of academic culture shock and problems and adjusted more quickly to the system. To sum up, the results suggest that the cross-cultural differences in educational background which is related to academic culture shock resulted in some problems in academic adjustment. The results of a study conducted by Okumuş Ceylan (2015) with Turkish university students indicate that autonomous learning can be acquired via student training, and autonomous learning strategies that are provided can help make students their own teachers at universities. Therefore, a training program to promote autonomous learning in Turkish students in order for them to gain academic self-reliance prior to their arrival to Japan is suggested for a smoother academic adjustment.

Further research on international students from different countries is needed in order to have a deeper understanding the current issue, for generalizability and to devise a training program for all international students to support academic self-reliance prior to their arrival at Japan if needed.

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