Intercultural Sensitivity of International Students in a State University of the North

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the intercultural sensitivity of international students (IS) at the University of Northern Philippines (UNP). Specifically, it determined the profile of the international students, their level of cultural sensitivity, and the significant association between respondents' level of cultural sensitivity and their profile. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational method of research, the respondents are the 181 international students enrolled at the university. This study used triangulation. Survey questionnaires were answered by the IS students. Individual interview was conducted to key informants to validate the results of the study. Ethical considerations were included. Frequency, percentage and bivariate correlational analysis were the statistical tools used. Results revealed that a great majority of the respondents are Indians, religiously affiliated with Hinduism and have been staying in the country for 24 months. They have a high level of intercultural sensitivity. The Korean nationals, Muslims/Islams, and those that have stayed in the country for seven years have the highest intercultural sensitivity. Among the five factors of intercultural sensitivity, interaction confidence was inversely related to the respondents' length of stay in the country. Philippine universities should include internationalization of their systems and processes in their agenda to meet the demands of diverse students.

Keywords: *intercultural sensitivity scale, foreign students, Philippines*

INTRODUCTION

International students are currently gaining a growing presence in different universities and colleges in the Philippines. As residents of other nations who decide to be in other countries to obtain a higher education, international students have their unique needs and circumstances. They often encounter various challenges in adjusting to their new academic surroundings. These changes can impose a great struggle to both the students and the educational institution. Students may find it hard to thrive and achieve academic success and psychological well-being, while the retention of these students inside the campuses is the main concerns of educational institutions (Barratt and Huba; Pedersen; Zhai as cited in Reid and Dixon, 2012).

Language differences, cultural variances and racial discrimination, social dealings and personal adjustment difficulties are the usual problems that international students face on a regular basis (Abe, Talbot and Geelhoed; Luzzo, Henao, and Wilson as cited in Reid and Dixon, 2012). Cultural differences on food and language have been an expected area of concern for international students. However, they are expecting no differences on how people would interact with each other. It is in these unanticipated areas of dissimilarity that international students often become confused, hurt, or angry. It is at the area where someone is not anticipating any difference that the difference can be overwhelming. Therefore, to have an effective environment with internationals, it is necessary to understand and address differences in cultures.

A person's culture and ethnic background can affect the way an individual sees the world and its components. Growth and development in a specific place lays the foundation of the one's values and beliefs which will be carried out throughout his or her life. The different environments where a person is exposed to provide the individual a distinct "web". Web is referred to the culture that people live and create. It is community from which they acquire their identities and or a community from which they create ideologies, interact with other people, and face new circumstances. Within this context are the explanations on how people recognize the world in various ways and give meanings to events and ideas differently from others. This web provides justifications to the personality of an individual. It does not only entail reasons why an individual has a specific physical characteristic but also experiences such as being comforted and feeling secure.

Meanwhile, developing a culturally competent attitude is a never-ending process. It is fundamental to perceive individuals as unique with respect to their experiences, language, beliefs, and values. Also, one must be conscious that within cultures differences also exist. It is incorrect to suppose that all members of one culture share the same beliefs and experiences.

Thus, the presence of international students increases the need for policies, methodologies and student services especially designed for them. These areas are important priorities for university administrators and personnel. These changes in demographics and the trends toward globalization support the need for cultural awareness and sensitivity. Unfortunately, how to be culturally sensitive towards other people cannot be taught by education and past experiences alone. Furthermore, lack of cultural sensitivity among the employees can lead to undesirable outcomes (Vogt, 2014).

With that said, cultural sensitivity is then defined as the awareness and defined sensitivity of other practices and cultures. Various skills are needed to be

culturally sensitive such as, but not limited to, the ability to distinguish differences among culture, knowledge on the appropriate way of approaching and communicating with people from other culture. Additionally, ascertaining the effect of cultural differences on how people work, and the value of differences to prevent the occurrence of discrimination and harassment are also skills needed to become culturally-sensitive (Vogt, 2014).

Also, cultural competency, or cultural awareness and sensitivity, is also defined as, "the knowledge and interpersonal skills that allow providers or individuals to understand, appreciate, and work with individuals from cultures other than their own. It involves an awareness and acceptance of cultural differences, self-awareness, knowledge of a patient's culture, and adaptation of skills" (Fleming and Towey as cited in American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2011).

Additionally, culturally sensitive health care was described as "the ability to be appropriately responsive to the attitudes, feelings, or circumstances of groups of people that share a common and distinctive racial, national, religious, linguistic, or cultural heritage" (Office of Minority Health as cited in Tucker, et al., 2011). With the changing demographics of the continually growing world population, the need for cultural sensitivity is emphasized. Likewise, Sarafis (2013) and Malliarou (2013) magnified that to provide safe and effective care, nurses must take into consideration their patients' health and illness belief, to the religion influences' on health-care decision making, and native language, values, and other cultural and socio-economic factors in order to respond appropriately.

A number of people might argue to the need of intercultural sensitivity in their everyday lives. However, for people who are in constant interaction with a culturally-diverse population, a higher intercultural sensitivity cannot be overemphasized. More so, the value of intercultural sensitivity to international students is also magnified. Therefore, intercultural sensitivity is defined within the premise of Chen and Starosta (1998) as the subjects' "active desire to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate, and accept differences among cultures".

Hence, this study determined the intercultural sensitivity of international students at the University of Northern Philippines. Specifically, it determined the following: (a) the profile of the international students in terms of their nationality, religion, and length of stay in the Philippines, (b) the IR level of cultural sensitivity, and (c) the significant association between the respondents' level of cultural sensitivity and their profile. The null hypothesis which stated as there is no significant relationship between respondents' level of cultural sensitivity and their profile, was tested in this study.

Studying students' intercultural sensitivity will help the university develop and improve its orientation and international programs. Furthermore, the development of intercultural sensitivity among the students prepare them and the university community for upcoming international students (Kawita Reungthai, 2012). Results of this study could serve as a baseline assessment of how these foreign students interact with domestic as well as other international students other than themselves. Furthermore, it will serve as the basis on the creation of culturally-sensitive programs, events and/or strategies that would cater to the unique needs of this diverse student population.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the descriptive – correlational method of research that described the level of intercultural sensitivity of international students presently enrolled at the University of Northern Philippines. Furthermore, it determined the association between the respondents' level of intercultural sensitivity and their profile.

Most of the international students currently enrolled in the university for the second semester of the academic year 2014 – 2015 are nationalities of India, Korea, Nepal, Nigeria, Angola, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Zambia and dual citizens. Based on the total of 327 international students in the said university, the 181 sample size was determined using the Slovin's formula and was selected randomly regardless of their course and age.

This study used the data triangulation in gathering the needed data. It used a survey questionnaire to assess the self-report intercultural sensitivity of the respondents. Thereafter, individual interview was conducted with key informants to validate the results of the instrument.

Chen and Starosta's (2000) 24-item Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS) was used as a tool in determining the intercultural sensitivity of the respondents. The ISS was chosen due to the fact that its validity, as well as its functionality across cultures, has been established by several studies measuring intercultural sensitivity. The scale has five factors such as interaction engagement (7 items), respect for cultural differences (6 items), interaction confidence (5 items), interaction enjoyment (3 items), and interaction attentiveness (3 items). Items 2, 4, 7, 9, 23, 25, 28, 30 and 22 were reverse-coded before summing the 24 items. Research respondents completing the ISS ranked their responses regarding levels of disagreement or agreement to the statements contained in the questionnaire. A five-point Likert scale was used to respond to each item in which 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 somewhat agree, 4 agree, and 5 is strongly agree. According to Chen and Starosta

(2000) "higher scores on this measure are suggestive of being more interculturally sensitive".

For the individual interview, three participants were interviewed using an open-ended question based on the results of the survey. The participants of the interview were considered as key informants since they are in direct contact with the respondents under survey. They are composed of instructor, preceptor, landladies/landlords. Consent was obtained. They were informed ahead of time prior to the interview and were asked to withdraw answering if they feel uncomfortable. Objectives, benefits derived and no risk in the study were also explained to them.

Before gathering information from the international students of the University of Northern Philippines, a letter of permission to gather data was forwarded to and approved by the University President. The approved request letter was forwarded to the head of the International Students Services. After approval, the questionnaire was distributed to the respondents enclosed with a cover letter explaining in brief the purpose of the study. Making sure of the respondents' anonymity/confidentiality, responses were tallied and subjected to statistical computation for analysis and interpretation.

To answer the formulated problems, the researcher utilized the following statistical tools in treating the gathered data: a) frequency and percentage determine which the distribution of the profile of the respondents; b) mean to determine the level of cultural sensitivity of the respondents; c) bivariate Correlational Analysis which correlated the respondents' level of cultural sensitivity and their nationality, religion, and length of stay in the Philippines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the Respondents

The demographic data for the 181 respondents is presented in Table 1. It can be seen in the table that great majority of the respondents are Indian nationals (153 or 84.53%); religiously affiliated with the teachings of Hinduism (146 or 80.66%); and majority (94 or 51.93%) have been staying in the Philippines for 0 to 12 months.

Based on the demographics of the study, Indians comprise the highest cut of the total international students' population in the university. They make up the 86.54% of the whole international students' population presently enrolled in the university. They hold the distinction of being the pioneer foreign nationals that the university welcomed for their academic quests. Almost all of the Indian nationals

Table 1
Distribution of the respondents in terms of their demographic data

Variables	*f*	Percentage (%)
Nationality		
Indian	153	84.53
Kenyan	1	0.55
Korean	1	0.55
Bangladeshi	2	1.11
Indonesian	7	3.87
Pakistani	2	1.11
Nepalese	4	2.21
Iraqi	1	0.55
Nigerian	4	2.21
Zambian	1	0.55
Angolan	2	1.11
Fil-Am	3	1.66
Total	181	100.00
Religion		
Seven Day Adventist	13	7.18
Roman Catholic	6	3.31
Hinduism	146	80.67
Islam	7	3.87
No answer	9	4.97
Total	181	100.00
Length of Stay in the Philippines (in months)		
0 -12	94	51.93
13 – 24	63	34.81
25 – 36	11	6.08
37 – 48	6	3.31
49 – 60	4	2.21
61 – 72	1	0.55
73 – 84	1	0.55
85 – 96	1	0.55
Total	181	100.00

are enrolled in health-related courses such as medicine and community health management. The university has produced a top notcher in the October 2013 Ministry of India Medical Board Examination in the person of Mr. Love Patel. Seventeen out of the 24 Indian medicine graduates of UNP passed the said examination.

Level of Intercultural Sensitivity

The overall mean rating of 3.99 depicted in Table 2 shows that the respondents have a "high" level of intercultural sensitivity. This finding means that the international students are highly aware of the differences between their culture and that of the other international and local students. This result is validated by the key informants as they unanimously claim that the respondents are very sensitive

Table 2
Mean Ratings showing the level of cultural sensitivity of the respondents

Cultural Sensitivity Factors	$\bar{x}$	Descriptive Rating
Interaction Engagement	3.93	High
Respect for Cultural Differences	4.14	High
Interaction Confidence	3.98	High
Interaction Enjoyment	3.97	High
Interaction Attentiveness	3.92	High
Overall	3.99	High

and very observant of the behavior of their counterparts. However, one key informant claimed that the respondents have reservations because of the differences in culture. She further emphasized that language barrier is the primary hindrance to communication and one of the compelling reasons why most of the respondents violate policies inside the classroom or university.

Likewise, the respondents attained "high" level of sensitivity in all the five factors of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale namely: respect for cultural differences ($\bar{x}$=4.14), interaction confidence ($\bar{x}$=3.98), interaction enjoyment ($\bar{x}$=3.97), interaction engagement ($\bar{x}$=3.93), and interaction attentiveness ($\bar{x}$=3.92).

As to their respect for cultural differences, the observation of the three key informants are in congruence to the results of the survey. They all believe that the respondents respect other culture too because they are in the same footing and are treated fairly within the university.

For their interaction confidence the key informants agreed that the respondents possess confidence yet they differ into extent. One informant rated (from the scale of 1-10; 10 being the highest) the respondents as 5 out of 10 in their level of confidence while the other informant claims that the respondents are very confident in dealing with others. This observation is attributed to the fact that the respondents and other students stand in the common ground that they are all strangers in the university trying to adjust to the academic environment.

With respect to interaction enjoyment, two out of three informants claim that the respondents enjoy very much interacting with other individuals. This instance can be due to the fact that there is a need for them to mingle with others because they are away from home. Mingling with other people would mean a learning opportunity to be aware with other culture which possibly can lead to a better relationship with each other.

In the premise of interaction engagement, two out of three participants in the interview ascertain that the respondents engage or interact with people from other culture with no hesitations. They further claimed that as to their interaction, the respondents interact with each other as if they belong to the same group. Nonetheless, one of the three says that as per observation, a few of the respondents find it a little bit hard since they are not fully aware of other culture and some sub-cultures. Even if they claim that they are sensitive to other cultures, it is not certain if they are not going against the belief of other culture in all aspect.

As to their interaction attentiveness, two of the three interviewees claimed that they are very attentive in dealing with other individuals. One of the two even rated the respondents 8 out of 10. As to their instructor, she has observed that the respondents have a very short attention span especially during lectures. Their attention span usually last for about 30 to 45 minutes.

Generally, the respondents of this study attained a high level of intercultural sensitivity which is in conformity with the result of the study of Meydanlioglu, Arikan, and Gozum (2015) that a good cultural sensitivity level was noted among their respondents, and a higher sensitivity levels was manifested by the respondents interacting with people from other cultures and speaking a foreign language. Additionally, same result was elicited in the study of Altan (2018) where the respondents attained a high level of intercultural sensitivity among Pre-service English Language Teachers.

On the other note, a moderate level of intercultural sensitivity was captured among the samples of Turkish nurse educators in the study of Simsek et al. (2017). Moreover, the latter result is the same with the result of Zhao's (2018) study where his respondents attained a moderate level. Among the five factors of the ISS, respect for cultural difference attained the highest mean in the present study which is corroborated by the study result of Zhao.

Level of Intercultural Sensitivity based on Respondents' Nationality

As presented in Table 3, the respondents obtained a "high" level of intercultural sensitivity based on their nationality as manifested by an overall mean rating of 4.04. Additionally, taking the five factors of the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS), they have a "very high" level of intercultural sensitivity as to their respect for cultural difference ($\bar{x}$ =4.29).

It is also note-worthy that Korean ($\bar{x}$ =4.47), Kenyan ($\bar{x}$ =4.42), Nigerian ($\bar{x}$ = 4.38) and Bangladeshi ($\bar{x}$ =4.21) nationals have a "very high" level of sensitivity compared to their colleagues. In the case of the Korean national, it can be seen that

Table 3

Mean rating showing the level of cultural sensitivity of the respondents according to nationality

Variables	Indian		Kenyan		Korean		Bangladeshi		Indonesian		Pakistani		Nepalese		Iraqi		Nigerian		Zambian		Angolan		Fil-Am		As a whole	
Cultural Sensitivity	$\overline{x}$	DR	$\overline{x}$	DR	$\overline{x}$	DR	$\overline{x}$	DR	$\overline{x}$	DR	$\overline{x}$	DR	$\overline{x}$	DR	$\overline{x}$	DR	$\overline{x}$	DR	$\overline{x}$	DR	$\overline{x}$	DR	$\overline{x}$	DR	$\overline{x}$	DR
Interaction Engagement	3.85	H	4.57	VH	4.29	VH	3.79	H	4.04	H	3.50	H	3.57	H	3.29	H	3.64	H	4.86	VH	4.07	H	3.67	H	3.93	H
Respect for Cultural Differences	4.02	H	5.00	VH	5.00	VH	4.67	VH	4.33	VH	3.83	H	3.78	H	3.83	H	4.79	VH	5.00	VH	3.50	H	3.72	H	4.29	VH
Interaction Confidence	3.95	H	4.20	H	4.40	VH	3.90	H	3.69	H	4.00	H	3.75	H	4.40	VH	4.55	VH	4.00	H	4.80	VH	3.60	H	4.10	H
Interaction Enjoyment	4.05	H	4.67	VH	4.67	VH	4.67	VH	4.52	VH	3.50	H	3.67	H	3.33	F	4.50	VH	4.00	H	3.83	H	3.00	F	4.03	H
Interaction Attentiveness	3.89	H	3.67	H	4.00	H	4.00	H	3.91	H	3.83	H	3.50	H	3.33	F	4.42	VH	3.00	F	4.50	VH	3.89	H	3.83	H
Overall	3.95	H	4.42	VH	4.47	VH	4.21	VH	4.10	H	3.74	H	3.65	H	3.64	H	4.38	VH	4.17	H	4.15	H	3.58	H	4.04	H

Norm

Mean Range　　　　**Descriptive Rating**
4.21 – 5.00　　　　　Very High (VH)
3.41 – 4.20　High (H)
2.61 – 3.40　　　　　Fair (F)
1.81 – 2.60　Low (L)
1.00 – 1.80　Very Low (VL)

he/she attained a "very high" level of sensitivity ($\bar{X}$=4.47), as well as along respect for cultural differences ($\bar{X}$=5.00).

Nevertheless, among the nationalities mentioned in the survey who have "very high" intercultural sensitivity, only Nigerian nationals coincide with the observation of key informant interviews. Others mentioned by the interview-participants are Indonesians, Indians and Nepalese which attained a high level of intercultural sensitivity based on the self-report survey

Survey results conformed with the study of Seak-Zoon Roh (2014) conducted in Korea concluding that the results were reflective of the current multicultural educational programs of schools which is focused on the promotion of intercultural understandings and respected for cultural differences. However, the survey results of Morales (2017) found out that Korean students scored a lower intercultural sensitivity than their counterparts.

Table 4
Mean rating showing the level of cultural sensitivity of the respondents according to religion

Variables	Religion											
	Muslim		Hindu		Roman Catholic		Seven Day Adventist		No answer		Overall	
Cultural Sensitivity	$\bar{X}$	DR	$\bar{X}$	DR	$\bar{X}$	DR	$\bar{X}$	DR	$\bar{X}$	DR	$\bar{X}$	DR
Interaction Engagement	3.84	H	3.84	H	3.81	H	3.97	H	3.83	H	3.86	H
Respect for Cultural Differences	4.12	H	4.03	H	3.42	H	4.33	VH	4.29	VH	4.04	H
Interaction Confidence	4.43	VH	3.93	H	3.57	H	4.05	H	4.16	H	4.03	H
Interaction Enjoyment	4.43	VH	4.06	H	2.72	F	4.36	VH	4.00	H	3.91	H
Interaction Attentiveness	4.05	H	3.86	H	4.11	H	4.00	H	3.93	H	3.99	H
Overall	4.17	H	3.95	H	3.53	H	4.14	H	4.04	H	3.97	H

Norm:

Mean Range	Descriptive Rating
4.21 – 5.00	Very High (VH)
3.41 – 4.20	High (H)
2.61 – 3.40	Fair (F)
1.81 – 2.60	Low (L)
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low (VL)

Level of Intercultural Sensitivity based on Respondents' Religion

Shown in Table 4 is that international students' sensitivity to other culture based on their religion is "high" as supported by an overall mean rating of 3.966. When the five factors of the ISS are taken singly, the respondents have a "high" level of intercultural sensitivity in all five factors with respect for cultural differences ($\bar{x}$ = 4.038) having the highest mean.

In addition, results further reveal that among other religions, Muslims ($\bar{x}$ = 4.17) have the highest sensitivity. This result is contrary to the observation of two of the three key informants where based on their observation Roman Catholics have higher intercultural sensitivity. According to the informants, Roman Catholics are more sensitive since they easily adapt to the environment and even easily identify themselves as natives since the host country is a composed of majority by the Roman Catholics.

This result of the survey can be explained by the concept of Minimization in the study of Ameli and Molaei (2012) who found that, according to the six stages of intercultural sensitivity model, the orientation of the two Muslim sects from Shia and Sunni in Iran towards each other is "Minimization" meaning that they tend to highlight their similarities and to ignore their differences as compared to other religions.

Level of Intercultural Sensitivity based on Respondents' Length of Stay

Table 5 reveals that international students have a "high" level of intercultural sensitivity on their length of stay in the Philippines as manifested by an overall mean rating of 3.96. Taking the five factors of the ISS individually, the respondents showed a "high" level of intercultural sensitivity with respect for cultural differences ($\bar{x}$ = 4.10) having the highest mean.

Nevertheless, those who have been in the country for about seven years ($\bar{x}$ = 4.30) have attained a very high sensitivity. This result is corroborated by the observation of the key informants where they claim that those who stayed in the country longer have a higher intercultural sensitivity as compared to their counterparts. Adaptation to the culture of the host country might have caused this as seen by the informants. Having adapted the local culture would mean being abreast with cultures other than their own. Moreover, being adapted would also mean gaining a deeper and better understanding of differences.

Table 5
Mean rating showing the level of cultural sensitivity of the respondents
according to length of stay in the Philippines

Variables	Length of Stay in the Philippines																	
	Less than a year		1 year		2 years		3 years		4 years		5 years		6 years		7 years		Overall	
Cultural Sensitivity	$\bar{x}$	DR	$\bar{x}$	DR	$\bar{x}$	DR	$\bar{x}$	DR	$\bar{x}$	DR	$\bar{x}$	DR	$\bar{x}$	DR	$\bar{x}$	DR	$\bar{x}$	DR
Interaction Engagement	3.92	H	4.08	H	3.70	H	3.86	H	3.81	H	3.86	H	4.29	VH	4.36	VH	3.99	H
Respect for Cultural Differences	4.14	H	3.65	H	3.98	H	3.90	H	3.95	H	4.22	VH	4.67	VH	4.25	VH	4.10	H
Interaction Confidence	4.04	H	3.93	H	3.88	H	3.83	H	4.23	VH	3.27	H	3.40	H	3.90	H	3.81	H
Interaction Enjoyment	4.2	H	3.38	F	4.01	H	3.50	H	3.61	H	4.00	H	4.33	VH	4.84	VH	3.98	H
Interaction Attentiveness	3.95	H	4.23	VH	3.75	H	3.92	H	4.00	H	3.55	H	4.00	H	4.17	H	3.95	H
Overall	4.05	H	3.85	H	3.86	H	3.80	H	3.92	H	3.78	H	4.14	H	4.30	VH	3.96	H

Norm:

Mean Range	Descriptive Rating
4.21 – 5.00	Very High (VH)
3.41 – 4.20	High (H)
2.61 – 3.40	Fair (F)
1.81 – 2.60	Low (L)
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low (VL)

Survey results and observations of key informant interviews coincide with the study result of Jonchkeere-Terpstra as cited in Del Villar (2010) that the longer the stay outside their home country, the higher the sensitivity score. Tuncel, and Aricioglu (2018) share the same view when they found out that the longest place of settlement is a factor affecting the intercultural sensitivity of an individual.

Relationship between the Intercultural Sensitivity and the Profile of the Respondents

Table 6 shows that when taken as a whole, the respondents' level of cultural sensitivity is not significantly related to any of the respondents' profile. However, when taken singly, respondents' interaction confidence is inversely related to their length of stay in the Philippines (r=-0.146).

This result means that the shorter the respondents' stay in the country the higher their interaction confidence. Nevertheless, this result does not coincide with the observation of the key informants where they claim that those who stayed in the country longer are more confident in interacting with other people with different culture. This can be due to the fact that as they were exposed longer, they are able to adapt themselves to the culture of the host country and were able to arm themselves with enough knowledge of cultural similarities and differences.

Table 6
Correlation coefficients between the profile of the respondents and
their level of cultural sensitivity

Variables	Cultural Sensitivity					
	Interaction Engagement	Respect for Cultural Differences	Interaction Confidence	Interaction Enjoyment	Interaction Attentiveness	Cultural Sensitivity as a whole
Nationality	-0.031	0.057	0.063	-0.078	0.029	0.003
Religion	0.056	0.060	-0.054	-0.032	0.048	0.017
Length of Stay	-0.069	-0.049	-0.146*	-0.097	-0.055	-0.123

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In the context of the survey results, those who stayed in the host country shorter tend to be more confident in interacting with people from other culture. This instance can be possibly explained by the fact that as new inhabitants in a foreign land, the need to establish social relations is indispensable thus the necessity of being confident in every interaction. Confidence in intercultural communication comes from communication acts. The more frequently one communicates, the more confidence in communication one should build up according to the developmental nature of intercultural sensitivity (Bennett as cited in Altan, 2018).

Meanwhile, observations of key informant interviews conforms with the study results of Medina-López-Portillo (2004) suggesting that longer students stay immersed in a target culture, the more they learn and grow, and the more their intercultural sensitivity develops.

Nevertheless, as the survey result is different from the observations of informants, the significant association of length of stay and interaction confidence as presented in the current study dwells with the result of Straffon (as cited in Penbek et al, 2012) showing that the length of time attending an international school has a significant relationship with the level of intercultural sensitivity among the 336 high school students who attended an international school.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study, a great majority of the respondents are Indians religiously affiliated with Hinduism and have been staying in the country for 24 months. With the increasing number of foreign students in UNP, it has been found out that they have a high level of intercultural sensitivity in general as well as high level of sensitivity to its five factors that include interaction engagement, respect for cultural differences, interaction confidence, and interaction enjoyment and interaction attentiveness. It has been noted that among the international students of the University, Korean nationals; Muslims/Islams; and those that have stayed in the

country for seven years have the highest intercultural sensitivity. It has been established further that among the five factors of intercultural sensitivity, interaction confidence was inversely related to the respondents' length of stay in the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In a growing intercultural climate, there is a need to understand how foreign students behave when they are in a host country. Philippine Universities, UNP included, must include internationalization of their system and processes in their agenda to meet the demands of diverse student population. They must focus on creating processes that allow foreign students to create a conducive learning environment as well as to enhance their international competence through intercultural sensitivity. They must reinforce their orientation programs focusing on the values and norms of Filipino culture as well as on the varied nationalities they cater to correct misconceptions and to enhance understanding of culture diversity. Outside-the-classroom activities such as cultural camping are also an important opportunity for international as well as domestic students to interact and learn more about individual and group attitudes and behaviors which in turn help increase their level of intercultural sensitivity. Likewise, culturally-unbiased health-related programs must be created to cater the unique needs of this diverse population.

Moreover, a similar study using ISS and including different demographic variables could be conducted in other schools in the province or region to find out if other factors are affecting intercultural sensitivity. It is also recommended that a study that utilizes both the ISS and open-ended one-on-one interview should be conducted to provide an in-depth or more detailed information on the participants 'intercultural sensitivity.

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