

Hybrid identities: The correlation between language skills, cultural fit and personality types towards integration for long term foreign residents in Japan

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1. Aim

This study attempts to show the correlation between life satisfaction (LS) according to language skill level, various personality types and overall cultural fit to create a clearer image of integrative habits of long term western foreign residents. In Japan, the number western foreign residents deciding to live long term in the country are an important part of globalization which, in this case, will be observed on the local level. Japan's declining population has caused the country to start to look towards foreign laborers to fill the gaps. This will most likely lead to growth in the foreign population in the future requiring nonJapanese of different nationalities and backgrounds to integrate and build an identity in their new community over the long term. Living in Japan challenges western foreigners to overcome wide language and cultural distance gaps. Western residents offer various insights which could be considered valuable to Japanese companies as they go global, but integration into the Japanese system can be a psychological struggle for many. The level of LS is a crucial part of productivity and commitment in the foreign workforce. This study stresses the factor of long term residency of the respondents, because their lives are settled in Japan and they can provide a clear image of what is necessary to integrate. This study is part of ongoing research which hopes to show the presence of a hybrid model within the western foreign group.

2. Methods

A sample of over 100 respondents to an indepth questionnaire have been collected. The respondents needed to be from a native English speaking country or a European who has the ability to fill out the questionnaire in English. All respondents have lived in Japan consistently for over 10 years and were nonmilitary during that period. Although, some questions cover work or professional goals, the main focus of the questionnaire is nonwork related. Respondents were collected through various networks as well as SNS. The questionnaire was distributed as a hardcopy, a PDF as well as an online survey.

3. Results

The data gathered shows high life satisfaction (LS) among the majority of respondents. While language skills and cultural fit have some effects, personality traits seem to be a common factor with the majority of high LS scores. There is also evidence of the existence of cognitive dissonance among some of the respondents.

4. Conclusion

This study plays an important role in my ongoing research to show the presence of hybrid identities within the western foreign group in Japan. This group is expected to grow with the growth of Asian economies, so understanding factors that contribute to cultural adaption will give new members of this group a guideline to help map out effective methods of integration. The LS scores of this study are the first steps towards understanding such methods.