

Relationships Between Acculturation Strategies And Psychological Resilience Among Mongolian Residents In The Republic Of Korea

Sainbileg Dulguun MA.¹, Darimaa Dashzeveg MA.², Enkhbayar Batsaikhan Ph.D.³, Anudari Chinbat MA (Corresponding Author)⁴, Suvd-Erdene Chuluun Ph.D.⁵, Ankhnanan Batsaikhan MA.⁶, Gerlee Otgonbayar MA⁷, Batchimeg Ganbold MA⁸

¹Main Contributor- To the Research. Former graduate: Otgontenger University, Email: Sainaaduk@yahoo.com, <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9336-017X>

²Senior Lecturer - Department of Psychology and Social Work, Otgontenger University – Mongolia. Darimaa@otgontenger.edu.mn, <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-2816-6215>

³Associate Professor Dean of the School of Humanities, Otgontenger University – Mongolia. Email: b.enkhbayar@otgontenger.edu.mn, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3165-6665>

⁴Head of the Department of Psychology and Social Work, Otgontenger University - Mongolia. Anudari@otgontenger.edu.mn, <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6067-540X>

⁵Lecturer - Department of Psychology and Social Work, Otgontenger University - Mongolia. Email: Suvd-Erdene@otgontenger.edu.mn, <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3212-9680>

⁶Lecturer - Department of Psychology and Social Work, Otgontenger University – Mongolia. Email: Ankhnanan@otgontenger.edu.mn, <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-8757-7627>

⁷Lecturer - Department of Psychology and Social Work, Otgontenger University – Mongolia. Email: Gerlee@otgontenger.edu.mn <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7692-2572>

⁸Lecturer at the Department of Psychology and Social Work, Otgontenger University – Mongolia. Email: Batchimeg@otgontenger.edu.mn, <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-7136-4378>

Abstract

This study aimed to examine the relationship between acculturation strategies and psychological resilience among young Mongolian adults residing, working, and studying in the Republic of Korea (ROK). A total of 206 Mongolian citizens aged 18-35 who had been residing in the ROK for more than six months were selected using a purposive sampling method. Intercultural adaptation was measured using Berry's (1997) Acculturation Attitude Scale (AAS), while psychological resilience was assessed using the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25) developed by Connor and Davidson (2003). Data were analyzed using SPSS, employing correlation analysis, one-way analysis of variance (One-Way ANOVA), and Tukey's Honestly Significant Difference (Tukey HSD) post-hoc test. The results revealed that assimilation (34.0%) and integration (30.6%) were the predominant acculturation strategies among the participants. According to Berry's (1997) model of intercultural adaptation, the integration strategy represents a balanced approach wherein individuals maintain their heritage cultural identity while actively participating in the host culture. One-way ANOVA demonstrated that participants utilizing the integration strategy exhibited statistically significantly higher levels of psychological resilience compared to other groups ($p < .05$), particularly those adopting assimilation or separation strategies. These findings confirm that maintaining a balanced bi-cultural position-preserving one's native culture while adapting to the host culture-serves as a protective factor for individual psychological adjustment. Consequently, the results of this study carry important theoretical and practical implications for identifying the psychological and social needs of Mongolians living abroad, as well as for developing targeted psychological counseling and cultural adaptation support programs.

Keywords: Acculturation, Acculturation strategies, Integration, Psychological resilience, CD-RISC-25, Mongolians in South Korea.

INTRODUCTION

In an era of globalization, the mobility of individuals migrating abroad for study, work, and residency has increased significantly. Upon entering a new socio-cultural environment, migrants encounter the imperative to adapt to the language, ethical norms, and social standards of the host country. In psychological science, this process of intercultural adaptation is conceptualized as acculturation (Berry, 1997). Acculturation is not merely confined to adapting to physical or material environments; rather, it is a complex, multifaceted process that encompasses structural changes in individual values, behavioral patterns, emotional regulation, and social interactions.

According to the theoretical framework developed by psychologist John W. Berry (1997), individuals adopt four primary acculturation strategies depending on their orientation toward maintaining their heritage culture and interacting with the host culture:

1. Integration: Maintaining one's heritage cultural identity while actively participating in and adapting to the host culture;
2. Assimilation: Relinquishing one's heritage culture in favor of fully adopting and absorbing the host culture;
3. Separation: Rejecting the host culture and strictly maintaining one's heritage culture;
4. Marginalization: Experiencing detachment from both the heritage culture and the host culture.

During the process of intercultural adaptation in a foreign environment, individuals inevitably face acculturative stress, which includes challenges such as culture shock, language barriers, fear of discrimination, and social isolation (Yoon et al., 2013). To successfully navigate these adverse conditions and protect mental health, psychological resilience serves as a vital protective factor (Connor & Davidson, 2003). Psychological resilience is defined as an individual's internal psychological resource capacity to preserve psychological equilibrium, flexibly overcome adversity, and bounce back from stressful conditions without succumbing to their negative impacts.

For citizens of Mongolia, the Republic of Korea (ROK) represents one of the primary destinations for study and employment. Therefore, establishing the relationship between the acculturation strategies and the levels of psychological resilience among young Mongolian adults residing in the ROK constitutes the core rationale of this research.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational research design to examine the relationships and potential effects among two or more continuous variables.

Participants and Sampling

The sample comprised 206 Mongolian citizens aged 18 to 35 who had resided in major metropolitan areas in the Republic of Korea (ROK), including Seoul, Incheon, and Busan, for more than six months. A non-probability purposive sampling strategy was employed to recruit participants voluntarily, taking into consideration demographic balance across age and gender distributions.

Measures

- Acculturation Attitude Scale (AAS): Based on Berry's (1997) theoretical model, this instrument was utilized to evaluate the four acculturation strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization.
- Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25): Developed by Connor and Davidson (2003), this 25-item self-report questionnaire assesses individual psychological resilience using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Not true at all) to 4 (True nearly all the time).

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a statistically significant correlation between acculturation strategies and levels of psychological resilience among young Mongolian residents in the ROK.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Participants adopting an integration strategy exhibit statistically significantly higher levels of psychological resilience compared to those utilizing other acculturation strategies (assimilation, separation, and marginalization).

Hypothesis 3 (H3): After controlling for relevant demographic variables, acculturation strategies serve as a significant independent predictor of psychological resilience.

RESULTS

Reliability and Data Suitability Analysis

To evaluate the internal consistency of the measurement scales, Cronbach's alpha (alpha) coefficients were calculated. The analysis revealed that the 20-item Acculturation Attitude Scale (AAS) demonstrated an acceptable level of internal consistency with $\alpha = .674$. Furthermore, the 25-item Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25) exhibited high internal consistency with $\alpha = .919$.

These findings confirm that the CD-RISC-25 is a highly reliable instrument for measuring psychological resilience, and the AAS serves as a sufficiently reliable scale for assessing acculturation attitudes. Consequently, the empirical data gathered satisfy the requisite psychometric standards for subsequent statistical analyses.

To determine sample adequacy and evaluate whether the data were suitable for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted.

Table 1. Sampling Adequacy and Sphericity Analysis (N = 206)

Measure	KMO Measure	Bartlett's χ^2	(df)	Significance (p)
Acculturation Attitude Scale (AAS)	0.713	578.842	190	< .001
Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC)	0.921	1978.337	300	< .001

The analytical results indicate that the KMO values for both measures exceeded **.70**, demonstrating that the sample size provided good overall adequacy and was fully sufficient for further statistical analysis. Furthermore, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a statistically significant result at $p < .001$ (Sig. = .000), confirming that the correlation matrix of the variables was significantly different from an identity matrix. This validates that the empirical data collected are highly suitable for factor and regression analyses.

The mean scores, standard deviations, and normality distribution metrics for the four acculturation strategies among the participants are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Normality Parameters for the Acculturation Attitude Scale (AAS) (N = 206)

Subscale	Mean & Standard Deviation (M±SD)	Range (Min–Max)	Skewness	Kurtosis
Integration	2.52 ± 0.63	1.00 - 5.00	0.254	1.028
Assimilation	2.62 ± 0.66	1.00 - 5.00	0.253	-0.008
Separation	2.70 ± 0.61	1.40 - 5.00	0.671	0.457
Marginalization	2.28 ± 0.66	1.00 - 5.00	1.626	2.588
AAS Total Score	2.53 ± 0.36	1.45 - 4.00	0.798	1.727

Regarding the four acculturation strategies evaluated among participants, the separation strategy (M = 2.70, SD = 0.61) and the assimilation strategy (M = 2.62, SD = 0.66) recorded relatively higher mean scores. Conversely, the integration strategy (M = 2.52, SD = 0.63) and the marginalization strategy (M = 2.28, SD = 0.66) yielded lower average values. The overall mean score for the Acculturation Attitude Scale (AAS) was 2.53 (SD = 0.36), indicating a moderate level of general acculturation orientation among the study participants.

Regarding data distribution, the integration strategy (skewness = .254, kurtosis = 1.028) and the assimilation strategy (skewness = .253, kurtosis = -.008) approximated a normal distribution. The separation strategy displayed a slight positive skewness (skewness = .671, kurtosis = .457), indicating that the distribution of participants' scores was somewhat clustered below the mean. Conversely, the marginalization strategy exhibited a high positive skewness and kurtosis (skewness = 1.626, kurtosis = 2.588), suggesting a clear tendency among the majority of participants to reject or disavow this particular strategy.

To categorize the primary orientation of each participant, mean scores across the four AAS subscales were calculated, and participants were assigned to a dominant acculturation strategy based on their highest subscale score (e.g., if Integration = 3.2, Assimilation = 2.8, Separation = 2.1, and Marginalization = 1.9, the participant was classified into the "Integration" group).

This categorization process yielded four distinct sub-groups:

1. Assimilation group (n = 70, 34.0%),
2. Integration group (n = 63, 30.6%),
3. Separation group (n = 57, 27.7%), and
4. Marginalization group (n = 16, 7.8%).

To evaluate whether levels of psychological resilience (CD-RISC-25) differed significantly among these dominant acculturation groups, a One-Way Analysis of Variance (One-Way ANOVA) was conducted.

Table 3. One-Way ANOVA Results for Differences in Psychological Resilience Across Dominant Acculturation Groups (N = 206)

Dominant Strategy	n	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	F	p
Integration	63	69.25	16.18	8.617	< .001***
Assimilation	70	61.10	17.38		
Separation	57	54.63	15.95		
Marginalization	16	60.56	15.68		

***p < .001

The analytical results revealed statistically significant differences in psychological resilience scores (CD-RISC-25) across the four dominant acculturation strategy groups, $F(3, 202) = 8.617$, $p < .001$. Specifically, the integration group demonstrated the highest level of psychological resilience ($M = 69.25$, $SD = 16.18$), whereas the separation group recorded the lowest mean score ($M = 54.63$, $SD = 15.95$).

Table 4. Tukey HSD Post-Hoc Pairwise Comparisons Across Acculturation Groups

Pairwise Groups (I vs J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Standard Error (SE)	Significance (p)	95% Confidence Interval
Integration vs. Assimilation	8.15*	2.87	.014	[1.30, 16.15]
Integration vs. Separation	14.62***	3.02	< .001	[7.38, 23.09]
Integration vs. Marginalization	8.69	4.62	.190	[-2.71, 23.23]
Assimilation vs. Separation	6.47	2.94	.128	[-1.16, 14.10]
Assimilation vs. Marginalization	0.54	4.57	.999	[-11.31, 12.39]
Separation vs. Marginalization	-5.93	4.71	.712	[-18.38, 6.52]

$p < .05$, $p < .001$

Results from Tukey's HSD post-hoc test confirmed that the integration group demonstrated statistically significantly higher psychological resilience compared to both the assimilation ($MD = 8.15$, $p = .014$) and separation ($MD = 14.62$, $p < .001$) groups. Conversely, no statistically significant differences in psychological resilience were observed among the assimilation, separation, and marginalization groups ($p > .05$).

Participants' psychological resilience was assessed using the 25-item Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25), with total theoretical scores ranging from 25 to 125. The overall mean score on the CD-RISC-25 was $M = 61.94$ ($SD = 17.40$), with an empirical score range of 25 to 122. This indicates that the general level of psychological resilience among participants was moderate (given the theoretical scale midpoint of 75). Furthermore, the distribution parameters for the total score—skewness (skewness = .215) and kurtosis (kurtosis = -.593)—fell well within the acceptable threshold for normality ($[-1; +1]$).

A comparison of the item-mean scores across the CD-RISC-25 subscales (on a 1–5 rating scale) revealed the following:

- The Adaptability/Flexibility subscale yielded the highest mean score ($M = 2.71$, $SD = .85$), suggesting that participants possess a relatively strong capability to adapt to new and changing environments.
- Intermediate mean scores ranging from 2.46 to 2.57 were recorded for the remaining subscales, including Coping Capabilities, Meaning/Purpose, Positive Attitude, and Psycho-Emotional Regulation.
- Conversely, the lowest mean scores were observed in the Self-Confidence ($M = 2.33$, $SD = .79$) and Control and Challenge Orientation ($M = 2.37$, $SD = .80$) subscales.

Descriptive statistics for the overall score and subscales of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25) as well as the distribution of resilience levels categorized by quartiles are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25) Subscales and Total Score (N = 206)

Quartile	Score Range	Level and Description	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Q1	25 - 50	Low Psychological Resilience	49	23.8%

Q2	51 - 62	Moderate Psychological Resilience	53	25.7%
Q3	63 - 73	High Psychological Resilience	52	25.2%
Q4	74 - 125	Very High Psychological Resilience	52	25.2%
Total			206	100.0%

The results of the quartile analysis revealed that the distribution of participants' psychological resilience across the four levels was relatively even (23.8% to 25.7%).

- First Quartile (Q1: 25-50 points): Representing 23.8% of the sample (n = 49), participants in this group exhibited low resilience, reflecting limited psychological resources to independently cope with life adversities, environmental stressors, and acculturative stress, thereby demonstrating higher psychological vulnerability.
- Second Quartile (Q2: 51-62 points): Accounting for 25.7% of participants (n = 53), this group demonstrated moderate resilience. While these individuals manage daily stressors to a certain extent, they require external support systems in times of acute distress.
- Third Quartile (Q3: 63-73 points): Comprising 25.2% of the sample (n = 52), individuals in this tier exhibited high resilience, characterized by strong adaptive capacity and psychological flexibility when navigating stressful conditions.
- Fourth Quartile (Q4: 74-125 points): Representing 25.2% of participants (n = 52), this group displayed very high resilience, demonstrating optimal psychological stability and fortitude in overcoming severe adversity.

Overall, 50.4% (n = 104) of the participants were classified within the high and very high resilience categories (Q3, Q4). This finding indicates that more than half of the respondents possess adequate internal psychological resources to navigate socio-environmental stressors encountered abroad. Conversely, the remaining 49.5% (n = 102) fell into the low and moderate resilience categories (Q1, Q2), highlighting a critical need for targeted psychological interventions and psychosocial support programs.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between acculturation attitudes and psychological resilience among young Mongolian migrants living, working, and studying in the Republic of Korea (ROK). Statistical analysis yielded an overall mean acculturation score of $M = 2.53$ ($SD = 0.36$), indicating a moderate level of overall acculturation orientation. These findings suggest that while young Mongolians in ROK adapt to the host socio-cultural environment to a reasonable degree, they tend to maintain a balanced orientation rather than adopting extreme strategies such as total disengagement from their heritage culture (marginalization) or complete absorption into the host culture (assimilation). Regarding the separation strategy, the distribution exhibited a slight positive skewness ($skewness = .671$), supporting the assertion that the majority of participants disfavor remaining solely within their native culture while isolating themselves from Korean society. According to Berry's (1997) acculturation framework, greater distance from the host culture diminishes opportunities for social support and exacerbates acculturative stress. The low preference for separation in our sample suggests an active willingness among young Mongolians to interact with Korean society and acquire its language and culture.

Quartile analysis of psychological resilience indicated a remarkably uniform distribution across four levels (23.8% to 25.7%). The fact that 50.4% of respondents (Q3 and Q4) displayed high to very high resilience demonstrates that young adults living abroad possess substantial internal psychological capacity to flexibly navigate life difficulties and environmental stressors.

Crucially, participants adhering to the Integration strategy recorded the highest resilience scores, a result that aligns closely with previous literature (Berry, 1997; Yoon et al., 2013). Actively integrating into the host culture while maintaining one's heritage identity provides individuals with a psychological "double shield." On one hand, heritage

cultural identity acts as an anchor for baseline psychological security; on the other hand, adaptation to the host culture reduces language barriers and culture shock while broadening access to social support networks.

Practical Implications: When designing acculturation and integration programs in collaboration with Mongolian community associations and diplomatic missions in ROK, interventions should go beyond promoting heritage culture. Providing psychological and social support that actively fosters integration into Korean society represents the most effective strategy for enhancing psychological resilience among young migrants.

Limitations: A key limitation of this study lies in its cross-sectional design and reliance on online self-report surveys. Consequently, longitudinal effects-such as how length of stay in ROK or language proficiency influence psychological resilience over time-could not be evaluated.

CONCLUSION

Based on the statistical findings and theoretical discussion, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Young Mongolians residing in ROK demonstrated a moderate overall level of acculturation ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 0.36$). Within Berry's (1997) acculturation framework, this moderate mean indicates a balanced adaptation process wherein learning host societal norms occurs without leaning toward extremes of assimilation or isolation. The remarkably low standard deviation ($SD = 0.36$) confirms a high degree of homogeneity in participants' acculturative strategies rather than widely dispersed individual behaviors.
2. A clear disinclination toward the separation strategy was observed among participants. Statistical analysis demonstrated a slight positive skewness (skewness = .671, kurtosis = .457), confirming that staying isolated within the native culture while avoiding host culture interaction was the least favored orientation. Migrants demonstrated a strong drive for active socio-cultural participation, showing a preference for integration and assimilation orientations.
3. Psychological resilience levels were evenly distributed across the four quartile groups (23.8% to 25.7%), with 50.4% of participants (Q3 and Q4) demonstrating high or very high resilience capabilities. As conceptualized by Connor and Davidson (2003), resilience operates as a dynamic capacity that develops through encountering and mastering life challenges, rather than remaining a fixed trait. However, 49.5% of respondents (Q1 and Q2) exhibited psychological vulnerability, underscoring the necessity of social support systems and psychological interventions.
4. Integrating into the host culture while preserving heritage identity (Integration) serves as the most potent internal protective psychological resource against acculturative stress. Theoretically, the integration strategy provides individuals with a bicultural identity and a dual psychological buffer, which directly connects to the core of resilience as defined by Connor and Davidson (2003)-namely, the capacity to perceive challenges as opportunities and adapt flexibly to changing environments.

References

- [1] Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control. W. H. Freeman.
- [2] Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, 46(1), 5–34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x>
- [3] Connor, K. M., & Davidson, J. R. (2003). Development of a new resilience scale: The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). *Depression and Anxiety*, 18(2), 76–82. <https://doi.org/10.1002/da.10113>
- [4] Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer Publishing.
- [5] Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227–238. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.227>
- [6] Rutter, M. (1987). Psychosocial resilience and protective mechanisms. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 57(3), 316–331. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-0025.1987.tb03541.x>
- [7] Yoon, E., Chang, C. T., Kim, S., Clawson, A., Cleary, S. E., Hansen, M., ... & Gomes, A. M. (2013). A meta-analysis of acculturation/enculturation and mental health. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 60(1), 15–30. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030652>