

## **A Study on the Way to Improvement of Career Commitment and Life Satisfaction among Chinese Students Who Study in Korea**

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### **Abstract**

*The current number of international students is gradually increasing in the world due to their passion for study or exchange students programs related to be affiliated with their universities. Many international students have great hope for their successful life of studying abroad. The factors that play a key role in successful study abroad can be seen as life satisfaction in host country and career commitment. Therefore, this study suggested the way to improve students' life satisfaction and career commitment among Chinese international students in Korea. It focused on social identification as a core factor in improving international student life satisfaction and career commitment. In addition, it also focused on social support as a factor to increase social identification. According to the results of empirical analysis, it was verified that perceived social support improves social identification among international students. In addition, social identification improves their life satisfaction and career commitment. Therefore, the mediating effect of social identification was found to be significant in the relationship between perceived social support and life satisfaction and career commitment. This study was verified that if international students perceive social support, they can experience social identification. This process can eventually lead to life satisfaction and career commitment. Based on these results, it emphasized that the role and importance of social identification. Finally, the practical implications and future research directions were discussed.*

**Keywords:** *Perceive social support, Social identification, Career commitment, Life satisfaction*

### **1. Introduction**

According to Ministry of Education in 2019, it was confirmed that there are 142,205 international students study in Korea in 2018 and 160,165 international students on April 1, 2019. This statistical value indicates that the number of international students is increasing every year. However, not all international students are successful in studying abroad. In addition to the difficulties typically associated with study, they also have difficulties with the problem of living, money, and curriculum [1]. International students are also experiencing linguistic difficulties [2], the problem of academic achievement, and adaptation to the life of university [3]. Moreover, they have to face to the new cultures and environments [4]. If international students cannot cope with these problems or they cannot adapt to their lives in studying abroad, they will experience stress [5]. Furthermore, the perception of discrimination experienced in a different culture can lead to depression [6]. It suggests that such problems may have negative influences on their academic performance and life in studying abroad. In this regard, life satisfaction is a key factor that may reduce such negative problems. The

reason is that satisfaction can lead to trust in school [7], commitment [8], work effort, and high participation [9]. It also reduces turnover [10] and absenteeism [11]. It is necessary to take action to increase international students' life satisfaction. This study focuses on international students' life satisfaction and career commitment to find the way to improve them. It focused on the perceived social support as a core element that can increase their life satisfaction and career commitment. Social support can improve individuals' ability to solve problems [12]. It is also positively related to persistence on challenging tasks and academic achievement [13]. To sum up, it is positively associated with satisfaction of psychological needs such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness [14]. The main purpose of this study is to explore the way to improve life satisfaction and career commitment among Chinese students who study in Korea. It also aims to clarify the concept, role, and theory of perceived social support and social identification. Furthermore, it identifies the role of mediating role of social identification in the relationship between perceived support and life satisfaction and career commitment. Finally, the study provides the practical implications by the results of empirical analysis and discusses the directions for future study.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Social support**

The concept of social support can be seen as a positive resource that an individual can get such positive resource from his interpersonal relationships [15]. It is also a support that a role in the well-being of an individual [16]. General social support refers the support for individual's overall well-being [17]. It is also defined as psychological and social support gained from one's surroundings [18]. Social support refers to the financial, instrumental, or emotional support that is obtained from individual's network [19]. Social support is an overall perception of an individual receiving positive resources or help from his or her interpersonal relationships. Social support can be seen as a key resource for international students. The reason is that social support is an important factor for the successful study abroad of foreign students who are undergoing a cultural transformation process [20]. In addition, social support plays an important role in the management of stress that arises through the well-being and changes in life of international students [21].

### **2.2. Social identification**

Social identification is defined as part of individuals' concept of recognizing that individuals belong to a certain social group, along with the emotions and values of members of that particular social group [22]. It can be seen as individuals' perception that an individual belongs to a particular social group, either physically or symbolically [23]. According to the social identification theory, organizational members become loyal to their organizations when they recognize their organizations are valuable [24]. Social identification is generally regarded as a positive factor. The reasons are that social identification is positively related to individuals' motivation, task performance, and contextual performance [25]. It can also improve the level of support and organizational commitment [26]. When individuals have a positive attitude and reaction to a country or culture, they can use more of the culture's resources and better coordinate themselves. According to this, identification with migrant countries and their own countries improves positive psychological status or well-being [27]. Social identification plays a role in helping organizational members create an environment that is perceived as part of a group [28]. A review of previous study shows that Asian international students think of themselves as Australian members when they study in Australia [29]. It suggests that international students tend to perceive themselves as part of a university in Australia and perceive them as valuable people. Thus, social identification is a variable that can be changed by various experiences over time. It also lead individuals loyalty to organizations and culture and it also drive to corporate and impact on performance related to organizations, which are including cooperation, altruism, and cohesion within their organizations [26].

### **2.3 The relationship between perceived social support and social identification**

Social support for individuals plays a positive role in the formation of an individual identity [30]. If organizational members with high recognition of social support, they will develop self-esteem and identification [31]. Organizational members who recognize a high level of social support have an obligation to reciprocate society or organizations. Such process or development can lead to high level of identification [32] [33]. Perceived social support is also available to create attachment to organizations [33] and even in special individuals such as non-regular workers [34], volunteers [35], and victims [36]. Social support makes members to perceive themselves as worthy people and improves identification as well [33]. Positive factor such as perceived social support can give rise to a positive attitude toward the society. In the case of international students, when school or social support is provided, international students will have more identification with society and organization. Based on these theories, the following hypothesis is established.

*H1: Perceive social support will have a positive influence on social identification.*

### **2.4 Life satisfaction**

Life satisfaction is defined as a judgmental process that people assess the quality of life is based on their own unique series of criteria [37]. Satisfaction with life can be seen as an overall perception of well-being and is defined as an assessment of people's quality of life in their lives [38]. Student life satisfaction is influenced by a variety of social and personal resources [39]. Social satisfaction(e.g. social support) and personal resources (e.g. self-efficacy) have been shown to take precedence over material resources regarding the link between life satisfaction in wealthy countries [40] [41] [42]. The quality of international students' life in host countries will be affected based on the experiences that international students have experienced while studying in a migrant country. For example, factors such as school or social support provide them with various abilities to adapt well to their lives. Such process will lead to international students' life satisfaction. Factors such as culture and environment of host country will also impact on their life satisfaction.

### **2.5 The relationship between social identification and life satisfaction**

Most of people try to be members of high-ranking groups and tend to identify themselves with the group [43] [44]. According to the social identification theory, organizational members become loyal to their organizations when they realize their organizations is valuable [24]. Social identification can also provide international students with help in directions related life of host countries [4]. The main reason is that organizational members with high level of organizational identification have the qualifications to belong to the organization. Therefore, they can confirm that they are a member of their organizations [45]. The high level of sense of belong lead to be motivated with a certain positive attitude and they can play extra-role behavior [46]. Previous study has already verified that there is a significant positive correlation between belonging and job satisfaction [47]. Overall, social identification may give rise to organizational members have a high sense of belonging. This sense of belonging eventually leads to job satisfaction. Thus, social identification can lead to job satisfaction [45] [48]. Based on these theories, the following hypothesis is established.

*H2: Social identification will have a positive influence on life satisfaction.*

### **2.6 Career commitment**

The concept of Career commitment refers to the degree of motivation to work in a career of your choice [49]. It can also be seen that an individual develops his or her career goals and identifies and participates in those goals [50]. Career commitment is a solid mental state that leads to a series of actions related to your career [51]. And it is a general attitude toward a job or occupation as the degree of motivation for an individual to engage in a job of individuals' choice [52]. Career commitment can be viewed as an emotional concept that

demonstrates a series of job-related identities in a particular job-related field. Career commitment refers individual's identification and involvement in his/her occupation [53]. Overall, career commitment is defined as the overall attitude towards one's job [54]. Linked to this, individual do not commit if there is no value pursued for his or her career [55]. They may also have the ability to cope with failure in pursuing career goals [56].

### **2.7 The relationship between social identification and career commitment**

When organizational members' career expectations are fulfilled by the organization, members with high career commitment can get greater motivation than members with low career commitment [57]. The attitude towards individuals' work experiences and society are closely related to an individual's social identification in work life. Due to social identification theory, individuals perceive that they belong to a certain category. Therefore, they positively evaluate the categories to which they belong based on intrinsic motivation [58]. Organizational commitment is triggered not only by individuals' organizational identification, but also by their own personal career identification [59]. Therefore, it is expected that if international students have a high social identification with the host country, their attitude toward the country may be positive. It also is predicted that a positive attitude toward individuals' knowledge of major and experiences will lead to a career commitment. Based on these theories, the following hypothesis is established.

*H3: Social identification will have a positive influence on career commitment.*

### **2.8 The Mediating effect of social identification**

Social support plays a key role in the formation of an individual's identification [30]. High recognition that members receive support from the organization leads to self-esteem, recognition and identification [31]. In addition, organizational members with a high level of perceived organizational support have a high degree of identification with their organizations [60]. Based on this theory, recognition of support can increase identification. In addition, social identification is related to job satisfaction. This is because identification drives to organizational members can be convinced that they belong to their organization [45]. The high level of sense of belong lead to be motivated with a certain positive attitude and they can play extra-role behavior [46]. Previous study has already verified that there is a significant positive correlation between belonging and job satisfaction [47]. According to this, social identification can lead to job satisfaction [45] [48]. The higher the recognition of social support may lead to the higher social identification. As social identification increases, it will prompt a positive psychology about the countries in which they are studying. This will eventually lead to satisfaction for their host countries and ultimately lead to international students' life satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis is established.

*H4: Social identification will mediate the relationship between perceived social support and life satisfaction.*

Social support in workplace can be seen as providing personal incentives for higher levels of organizational identification, as organizational members improve identification with the organization [33]. Organizational members who feel lack of social support lose their sense of belonging to the organization and feel away from the organization [33]. Therefore, organizational members who perceive more social support are expected to improve social identification. In addition, the main cause of social identification related to job satisfaction is that members who identify with the organization at a high level recognize that the person working in the organization has the qualifications of belonging to the organization. It is also because members identify their jobs with organizational consistency [45]. Therefore, social identification will be formed through social support from host country. Social identification is expected to play a role in helping international students to immerse themselves in their careers. Therefore, the following hypothesis was established.

*H5: Social identification will mediate the relationship between perceived social support and career*

*commitment.*

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Research sample characteristics**

This study conducted a survey from Chinese international students who study in Korea. A total of 164 questionnaires were used for empirical analysis. A detailed description of demographic analysis of sample's characteristics is as follows: Data showed that 57 males (35.6%) and 103 females (64.4%) participated in the survey. In relation to Participants' age, 43 participants(26.9%) were 18-20 years old, 108 participants(67.5%) were 21-24 years old, 8 participants(5.0%) were 25-28 years old, and 1 participants(0.6%) was over 29 years old. In relation to residence period, 14 participants (8.8%) have lived in Korea 1-3 months, 15 participants (9.4%) have lived in Korea 4-6 months, 30 participants (18.8%) have lived in Korea 1 year, 74 participants (46.3%) have lived in Korea 2 years, 18 participants (11.3%) have lived in Korea 3 years, and 9 participants (5.4%) have lived in Korea over 3 years.

#### **3.2 Measurement**

Social support is defined as a positive resource that an individual can get such positive resource from his interpersonal relationships [15]. Social identification was measured in a total of 7 items. The sample items included "Get you to think about your values and feelings." and "Comfort you and tell you that they are on your side." [61]. Social identification is defined as part of individuals' concept of recognizing that individuals belong to a certain social group, along with the emotions and values of members of that particular social group [22]. Social identification was measured in a total of 5 items. The sample items included "I have a lot in common with the other members of the cooperative." and "I have a lot in common with the other members of the cooperative." [62]. Career commitment is defined as an individual develops his or her career goals and identifies and participates in those goals [50]. Career commitment was measured in a total of 6 items. The sample items included ""The ambitions in my life mainly have to do with my career.", "My career plays a central role in my life." [63]. Life satisfaction is defined as a judgmental process that people assess the quality of life is based on their own unique series of criteria [37]. It was measured in a total of 4 items. The sample items included ""In most ways my life is close to my ideal.", "So far I've gotten the important things I want in life." [64]. All items were completed on Likert seven-point scale(1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=slightly disagree, 4=undecided, 5=slightly agree, 6=agree, 7=strongly agree).

### **4. Results**

#### **4.1 Confirmatory factor and convergent validity analysis**

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in this study to verify the validity of variables. According to the results, absolute fit indexes showed as follow:  $\chi^2(p)=378.770(.000)$ ,  $\chi^2/df=1.940$ , and  $RMSEA=.077$ . Incremental fit indexes showed that  $TLI=.949$ ,  $CFI=.957$ , and  $IFI=.957$ . Parsimony adjusted indexes showed that  $PNFI=.773$  and  $PGFI=.635$ . Such results can satisfy the acceptable standard value of [65]. In addition, the convergent validity analysis was conducted. The results of average variance extraction(AVE) showed that perceived social support=.824, social identification=.770, life satisfaction=.771, and career commitment=.796. All variables were higher than .5. The results of composite reliability(C.R) showed that perceived social support=.950, social identification=.914, life satisfaction=.908, and career commitment=.948. All variables were higher than .7. If the value of AVE is higher than .5 and the value of C.R is higher than .7, such values can be considered to be significant composite reliability [66]. Therefore, the results can be considered valid

and it is acceptable. The table 1 shows the results of confirmatory factor analysis and convergent validity.

#### 4.2 Descriptive statistics, reliability, and correlation analysis

The results of reliability, descriptive statistics, and correlation analysis in this study were as follows. The results of reliability analysis showed perceived social support=.971, social identification=.929, career commitment=.954, and life satisfaction=.933. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value was confirmed to be more than .7 [67]. All of variables showed over than .7 in this study. Thus, the reliability can be considered to be valid and acceptable. The results of correlation analysis of this study are summarized as follows. Perceived social support is positively related social identification( $r=.608, p<.001$ ), Career commitment( $r=.588, p<.001$ ), and life satisfaction( $r=.537, p<.001$ ). Social identification is also positively related to Career commitment( $r=.703, p<.001$ ), and life satisfaction( $r=.651, p<.001$ ). The table 2 shows the results of descriptive statistics, reliability, and correlation analysis.

#### 4.3 Regression analysis

The path analysis was conducted using AMOS for the hypotheses verification of this study. In relation to model fit, absolute fit indexes showed as follow:  $X^2(p)=384.054(.000)$ ,  $X^2/df=1.980$ , and  $RMSEA=.078$ . Incremental fit indexes showed that  $IFI=.955$ ,  $TLI=.946$ , and  $CFI=.955$ . Parsimony adjusted indexes showed that  $PNFI=.768$ , and  $PGFI=.634$ . Such results can satisfy the acceptable standard value of [65].

**Table 1. The results of confirmatory factor and convergent validity analysis**

Confirmatory factor analysis		
Absolute fit indexes	$X^2(p)$	378.770(.000)
	$X^2/df$	1.940
	RMSEA	.077
Incremental fit indexes	TLI	.949
	CFI	.957
	IFI	.957
Parsimony adjusted indexes	PNFI	.773
	PGFI	.635
Convergent validity		
Variable	AVE	C.R
Perceived social support	.824	.950
Social identification	.770	.914
Career commitment	.796	.948
Life satisfaction	.771	.908

**Table 2. The results of descriptive statistics, reliability, and correlation analysis**

	Mean	Standard deviation	1	2	3	4
1	4.723	1.199	(.971)			
2	5.153	1.045	.608***	(.929)		
3	5.419	.968	.588***	.703***	(.954)	
4	5.325	1.024	.537***	.651***	.637***	(.933)

1=Perceived social support, 2=Social identification, 3=Career commitment, 4=Life satisfaction

()=reliability

\*\*\*: $p < .001$ , \*\*: $p < .01$ , \*: $p < .05$

The results of path analysis showed as follows: Perceived social support had a positive influence on social identification (Estimate=.578,  $p < .001$ ). And social identification had a positive influence on life satisfaction (Estimate=.794,  $p < .001$ ) and career commitment (Estimate=.789,  $p < .001$ ). In relation to indirect effect, it showed that social identification mediated the relationship between perceived social support and life satisfaction (Estimate=.485). And social identification mediated the relationship between perceived social support and career commitment (Estimate=.502). In relation to indirect effect, it showed that social identification mediated the relationship between perceived social support and life satisfaction (Estimate=.485). The bootstrapping showed that the value of lower bounds was .362 and upper bounds was .069. Therefore, it can be confirmed that 0 is not included in the lower and upper bounds. The mediating effect can be considered significant. Thus, H4 was supported. And social identification mediated the relationship between perceived social support and career commitment (Estimate=.485). The bootstrapping showed that the value of lower bounds was .391 and upper bounds was .069. Therefore, it can be confirmed that 0 is not included in the lower and upper bounds. The mediating effect can be considered significant. Thus, H5 was supported. The table 3 shows the results of path analysis.

**Table 3. The results of path analysis**

Path		Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	<i>p</i>
Perceived social support	→ Social identification	0.578	0.072	8.009	.000
Social identification	→ Career commitment	0.789	0.075	10.548	.000
Social identification	→ Life satisfaction	0.794	0.085	9.369	.000
Mediating effects		Indirect effect	Lower bounds	Upper Bounds	
Perceived social support → Social identification → Life satisfaction		.485	.362	.069	
Perceived social support → Social identification → Career commitment		.502	.391	.069	
Absolute fit indexes		$X^2(p) = 384.054(.000)$ , $X^2/df = 1.980$ , RMSEA = .078			
Incremental fit indexes		IFI = .955, TLI = .946, CFI = .955			
Parsimony adjusted indexes		PNFI = .768, PGFI = .634			

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Conclusion and research implications

This study examined the effect of perceived social support on career commitment and life satisfaction through social identification among Chinese students in Korea. As a result of this study, it was verified that perceived social support is a predictor that enhances social identification. It suggests that social support for international students is a key factor in their study abroad. It also suggests it is extremely important for international students to recognize social support from society. In addition, it was verified that social identification is a factor that enhances career commitment and life satisfaction. Career immersion plays a role in helping international students continue to do what they are currently experiencing. For example, it allows students to continue to study majors or practice at university. Satisfaction with living abroad can be seen as a key factor for international students. Dissatisfaction with life can be regarded as a factor that can eventually lead to give up their studies and return to one's own country. It suggests that social identification is a key factor in bringing these positive results such as life satisfaction. Therefore, social identification should be increased. Social identification is a variable that can change. In other words, the level of social identification among international students may change over time. High level of social identification will enhance self-efficacy, career commitment, and life satisfaction in international students. Overall, the improvement of social identification for international students suggests that improves their performance by helping students adapt to social, cultural, and school adaptation problems in school or society.

### 5.2 Limitations and future directions

This study is an empirical study conducted by Chinese international students who study in Korea. In this regard, the limitations and direction of this study are summarized as follows. First, this study focuses only on perceived social support in relation to independent variables. It did not classify the sub-elements of perceived social support and it is viewed as one factor. In this regard, future studies will need to classify sub-elements of perceived social support. For example, it should focus on perceived organizational support, emotional support, informational support, and material support. Therefore, it is necessary to test the influence of each sub-element on social identification. Second, it focused on simply perceived social support for the way to improve social identification. In future study, it should be necessary to conduct research on the moderating effect that determines the level of social identification. It will be necessary to focus on personal characteristics in relation to the moderating variables. The personal characteristics can be seen as international students' foreign language ability, extroversion, openness to experience, need for cognitive closure, and ethnocentrism. These personal characteristics will affect the level of social identification. Third, the dependent variables focused only on life satisfaction and career commitment. Future research should focus on individual and organizational performance. It should focus on academic achievements as individual performance, and focus on school performance as organizational performance.

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