



Research Article

Health Promotion Behavior of Chinese International Students in Korea Including Acculturation Factors: A Structural Equation Model



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SUMMARY

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to explain the health promotion behavior of Chinese international students in Korea using a structural equation model including acculturation factors.

Method: A survey using self-administered questionnaires was employed. Data were collected from 272 Chinese students who have resided in Korea for longer than 6 months. The data were analyzed using structural equation modeling.

Results: The *p* value of final model is .31. The fitness parameters of the final model such as goodness of fit index, adjusted goodness of fit index, normed fit index, non-normed fit index, and comparative fit index were more than .95. Root mean square of residual and root mean square error of approximation also met the criteria. Self-esteem, perceived health status, acculturative stress and acculturation level had direct effects on health promotion behavior of the participants and the model explained 30.0% of variance.

Conclusions: The Chinese students in Korea with higher self-esteem, perceived health status, acculturation level, and lower acculturative stress reported higher health promotion behavior. The findings can be applied to develop health promotion strategies for this population.

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Introduction

Health is one of the most precious and fundamental factors in human lives. As with the change of society, the concept of health care is changing from medical treatment in the past to a broader sense of positive and proactive health promotion. Long term health behavior can easily become accustomed health practice. Once it becomes a permanent health habit, changing it involves strong resistance. In comparison with the late-middle age, it is relatively easy to develop a good health behavior in early adulthood. Thus, it is important to encourage good health behavior at an early age [1].

Many young people in college sometimes show unpredictable behaviors and health hazardous behaviors such as drinking, smoking and irregular diet [2]. International students departed from their family have a responsibility to manage their own health. However, many do not recognize the importance of health and may try health hazardous behaviors. The majority of international students in Korea are Chinese students. With the establishment of

diplomatic relations between Korea and China, huge numbers of Chinese international students have entered Korea for bachelor, master, or doctoral degree as well as research purpose. In 2010, 76.0% of international students in Korea were Chinese [3].

Many international students are facing various problems. The typical problems include health, financial difficulty, language, study, human relationship and access to health services [4]. Some colleges and universities require students to subscribe to health insurance throughout the academic year but most others do not. The lack of payment capability for health service, with not many healthcare professionals who understand their cultural background and health-related issues, and communication barrier all build health risk factors for this population [5].

Migration to a foreign country creates various mental pressure to leave existing social position and to adapt a completely different lifestyle. The pressure may jeopardize the physical and mental health status of the immigrant [6]. However, without recognition of the importance of health, they may try health risk behaviors out of curiosity or by peer group pressure. Moreover, the difference in lifestyle and sociocultural background of the international students may influence prevalence of disease and health promotion behaviors [7].

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Prior research studies have focused on the accommodation status or the relationship between acculturative stress and mental health of international students in Korea but few of them have paid attention to the health promotion behavior of these students [8,9]. However, it is necessary to pay attention to the health promotion behavior and related lifestyle of the international students in order to encourage healthy campus life.

This research attempts to explain the health promotion behavior of Chinese international students in Korea with known influential factors from prior research and new acculturation factors, to prove causality among the factors. This study aims to explain and predict the health promotion behaviors of Chinese international students in Korea.

Conceptual framework

Based on Pender's Health Promotion Model (HPM) [10] and the result of previous studies, a hypothetical model was constructed. Pender [10,11] defined health promotion behavior as activities to improve the well-being of a person or group so as to maintain or enhance self-realization. The third model of Pender's HPM included the expectancy-value factor and the cognitive-perception factor. Three determinants to health promotion behavior were individual characteristics and experiences, behavior-specific learning and affect, and behavioral outcomes. According to Pender [10], there are two types of individual characteristics and experiences that affect behavioral outcomes. The first is prior related behaviors that an individual possesses. The second is personal characteristics composed of biological, psychological, and sociocultural experiences. These individual characteristics and experiences interact with the interpersonal and situational influences to shape the behavioral outcomes.

Pender [10] stated that self-esteem and perceived health status are the psychological factors of the individual characteristics that influence behavior-related learning and affect. In previous studies [12,13], social support was confirmed to be an antecedent to increased self-efficacy and perceived health status. Therefore, self-esteem and social support were included to indicate the individual characteristics and experiences.

The variables of behavior-specific learning and affect have crucial motivational meanings. These variables can be modified by nursing intervention. Perceived benefits of action, perceived barriers of action, perceived self-efficacy, activity-related affect, interpersonal influences and situational influences are included. Many studies [14–19] identified perceived health status and self-efficacy as the strongest factors influencing behavior-specific learning and affect.

Many Chinese students in Korea live in a different political, physical, social and economic environment from their own country. They have to go through an acculturation process to adapt to Korean culture. Acculturation is a multidimensional process related to change of behaviors, values, and attitude, and it can create chronic stress. It has been reported that if stress is not properly relieved, it may create various health problems [20]. Many previous studies report that acculturation level [17,21] and acculturative stress [8,22] might be related to psychological and social characteristics of individuals.

Figure 1 presents the hypothetical model based on a literature review including Pender's HPM [10]. The model includes two exogenous variables and five endogenous variables. Among the exogenous variables, self-esteem was defined as a determinant of self-efficacy, and social support was connected to perceived health status, self-efficacy, acculturative stress and acculturation level. The suitability of those paths were tested and modified by empirical studies [8,12,15–29,31–34] (see Figure 2).

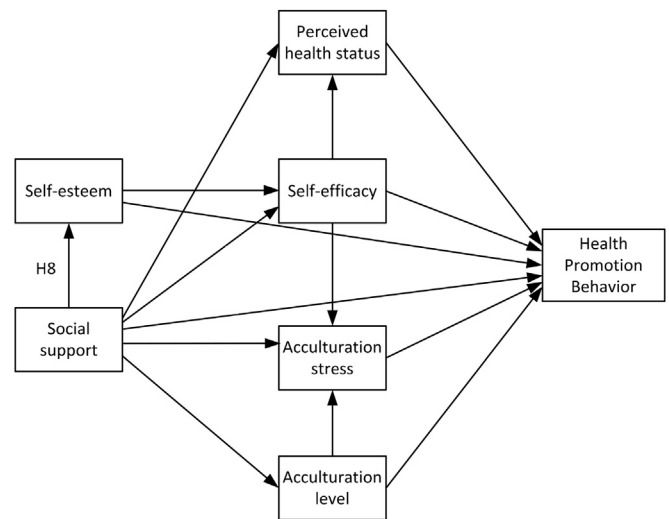


Figure 1. Hypothetical path model.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the health promotion behavior of Chinese international students in Korea and to identify the causal relation among the significant factors affecting their health behavior by developing a structural equation model.

Method

Study design

This study employs a cross-sectional design and structural equation modeling to analyze and identify the causal relationship among the health promotion behaviors of Chinese international students in Korea.

Settings and sample

The target population of the study are Chinese international students in Korea who are (a) enrolled in an academic degree

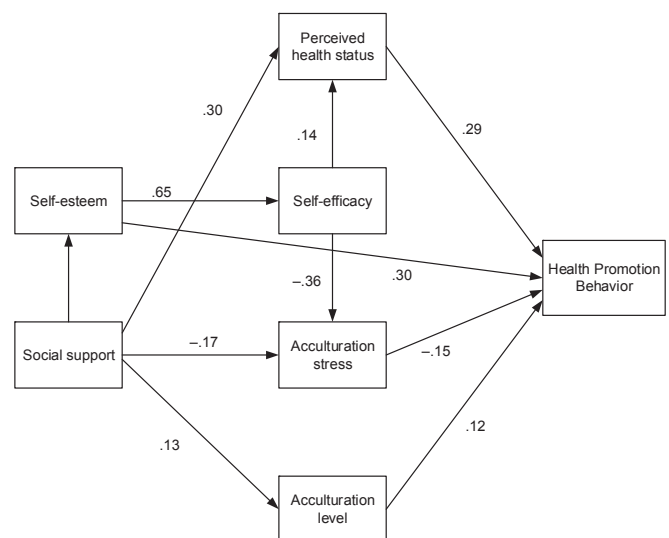


Figure 2. Path coefficients of the model (standardized path estimates).

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