**Interview Questions for Qualitative Research**

**Name: Ni Ni Aung**

**Gender: Female**

**Age: 34**

**Marital Status: Single**

**No of Children: Non**

**Spouse: Non**

**Mother Education : High School**

**Father Education: High School**

**Source of study Finance: MOFCOM Scholarship Program**

**Home country Name: Myanmar**

**Social Class (Home Country): Middle Class**

**The year came in China: 2023**

**Major: International Trade**

**Degree: Ph.D.**

**Session: 2023-2027**

**University/ City Name: Huazhong University of Finance and Technology**

**No of Chinese Friends: 5**

**Acculturation Stress Experiences**

1. Did you feel any discrimination in China?

No. During my time in China, I found the atmosphere to be generally warm and welcoming. Many locals were eager to share their culture and traditions, which created a positive environment for interaction. Additionally, the richness of the history and diversity in Chinese society made for a unique experience. Overall, it was an opportunity to learn, engage, and appreciate a different way of life.

1. Can you share a specific situation where you felt discriminated against in China? How did that make you feel?

I never felt discriminated against in China. Instead, I had many positive experiences that made me feel welcomed and appreciated. For example, when I interacted with locals in markets and restaurants, they were often friendly and eager to help. I enjoyed engaging in conversations about culture and traditions, which allowed me to learn more about the country and its people. These interactions left me with a sense of warmth and connection, reinforcing my belief that a positive attitude can lead to enriching experiences while traveling.

1. How do you manage homesickness while studying in China? Could you share any particular strategies that have helped you?

To manage homesickness while studying in China, I talk to my family back home regularly, which really helps me feel connected and supported. Hearing their voices and sharing my experiences with them makes me feel less isolated. Here are some particular strategies that have helped me:

1. I schedule regular video calls or messages with my family and friends, which helps maintain those important relationships and provides emotional support.
2. Establishing a daily routine helps me feel more grounded and gives me a sense of normalcy in a new environment.
3. I make it a point to explore my surroundings, trying new foods, visiting local attractions, and engaging with the community. This helps distract me and makes me appreciate my experience more.
4. I joined student organizations or local clubs, which allows me to meet new people and build a support network with others who may feel the same way.
5. Writing down my thoughts and feelings in a journal allows me to process my emotions and reflect on my experiences, helping me feel more in control.
6. I make sure to take care of myself by engaging in physical activities, meditating, or enjoying hobbies that bring me joy, which helps improve my overall mood.
7. By using these strategies, I’ve been able to manage homesickness more effectively and focus on making the most of my time in China.
8. Have you experienced direct or indirect hatred or rejection due to your cultural background? Please share details of these incidents.

While my experience in China has generally been positive, I have encountered a few instances of indirect rejection due to my cultural background. These incidents were often subtle, such as people being hesitant to engage in conversation with me or making assumptions about my abilities based on stereotypes. For example, there were times when I felt excluded from group activities or noticed that people were initially reserved or distant, possibly due to preconceived notions about my culture.

However, I chose to view these situations as opportunities to educate and bridge the gap between our cultures. By remaining open, friendly, and patient, I was able to break down barriers and show that cultural differences are something to be celebrated rather than feared. Over time, many of those who were initially distant became friends and allies, proving that understanding and respect can overcome any challenge. These experiences have only strengthened my resolve to promote cross-cultural understanding.

**Cultural Adaptation**

1. When you first arrived, what were the most challenging aspects of adapting to Chinese culture? How have these challenges evolved?

When I first arrived in China, the most challenging aspects were adjusting to the language barrier and understanding the nuances of social norms, such as greetings and interpersonal communication styles. Initially, navigating daily conversations and fully grasping the cultural expectations in social interactions was difficult. However, over time, I embraced these challenges as learning opportunities. I took language classes, practiced with locals, and consciously observed and adapted to the cultural norms. Now, I find myself much more comfortable and confident in my interactions, and I even more appreciate the richness of Chinese culture.

1. In what ways do you feel that living in China has changed your cultural values or behaviors?

Living in China has significantly broadened my perspective and deepened my appreciation for different ways of life. I've become more patient and open-minded, especially in understanding the importance of harmony and respect in social relationships. The emphasis on family values and community in Chinese culture has also influenced me to prioritize these aspects more in my own life. Additionally, I've adopted some of the local customs, like enjoying tea culture and participating in traditional festivals, which has enriched my daily routines and brought me closer to the local community.

1. How do you manage cultural shock, particularly in food, social norms, and language?

I manage cultural shock by approaching it with curiosity and a willingness to learn. When it comes to food, I made it a point to try local dishes and explore the culinary diversity of China, which helped me develop a genuine appreciation for the cuisine. For social norms, I observed and asked questions when unsure, allowing me to better understand and respect local customs. Regarding language, I focused on learning key phrases and practicing regularly, which not only improved my communication skills but also helped me connect more with the locals. Embracing these aspects with an open heart has made the adaptation process smoother and more enjoyable.

**Social Integration and Support**

1. Can you tell me about your social interactions with local Chinese students and other international students? What have been some positive and negative experiences?

My social interactions with both local Chinese students and other international students have been enriching and diverse. I've had the opportunity to learn a lot from the local students about Chinese traditions, language, and daily life, which has helped me integrate better into the culture. We’ve shared meals, worked on group projects, and even celebrated festivals together, which has been a wonderful experience. Interacting with other international students has also been great, as we share similar experiences of adapting to a new environment, and it’s comforting to have a support system of people who understand those challenges. While there have been occasional misunderstandings due to cultural differences, I've found that open communication and a willingness to understand each other's perspectives have turned these moments into learning experiences rather than negative ones.

**Positives Experience**

***Cultural Exchange****:* Interacting with local Chinese students has been incredibly enriching. I've learned so much about Chinese traditions, language, and day-to-day life, which has deepened my understanding and appreciation of the culture.

***Supportive Community****:* Other international students have provided a sense of camaraderie. We've supported each other through the adaptation process, sharing tips and experiences that have made our time here more enjoyable.

***Building Friendships****:* I've made lasting friendships with both local and international students. These connections have made my experience in China more fulfilling and helped me feel more at home.

**Negatives Experience**

***Language Barriers****:* Sometimes, language differences have made it challenging to fully connect with local students, leading to occasional misunderstandings.

***Cultural Misunderstandings****:* There have been moments of cultural misunderstanding, especially in communication styles, which have sometimes led to awkward or uncomfortable situations.

***Social Clustering****:* I’ve noticed that international students, including myself at times, tend to cluster together, which can limit deeper integration with the local student community.

1. What support does the university provide for cultural adaptation and psychological well-being?

The university provides a wide range of support for cultural adaptation and psychological well-being, which has been incredibly helpful. They offer orientation programs that introduce us to Chinese culture and practical tips for living in the country. There are also language courses that help us improve our Mandarin, making daily interactions smoother. For psychological well-being, the university has counseling services available in multiple languages, which is reassuring for international students. Additionally, they organize cultural exchange events, workshops, and social gatherings that promote interaction between local and international students, helping us build connections and feel more at home.

1. How important has it been for you to connect with your culture while in China? How do you maintain this connection?

Connecting with my culture while in China has been very important to me, as it provides a sense of comfort and identity in a foreign environment. I maintain this connection by participating in cultural events organized by my embassy or international student associations. I also stay connected with my family and friends back home through regular communication, and I enjoy cooking traditional dishes, which brings a piece of home to my daily life. Additionally, I've found that sharing aspects of my culture with my friends in China, both local and international, has been a great way to stay connected to my roots while also contributing to cultural exchange.

**Psychological Well-being**

1. How would you describe your psychological well-being since moving to China? What factors have most influenced your well-being positively or negatively?

Overall, my psychological well-being since moving to China has been stable, with some ups and downs that come with adjusting to a new environment. The excitement of experiencing a new culture and the opportunity to study at a prestigious university have been major positive influences on my well-being. I’ve found that immersing myself in local activities, making new friends, and exploring different parts of China have helped me stay positive and engaged. However, there have been moments of homesickness and the stress of adjusting to a different academic system, which have occasionally impacted my mood. I've learned to manage these challenges by reaching out to friends, practicing self-care, and keeping a balanced routine

1. Could you discuss any specific support or resources that have significantly impacted your mental health during your studies here?

Several support systems and resources have significantly impacted my mental health in a positive way. The university's counseling services have been a great resource, offering a safe space to discuss any concerns and receive professional guidance. The international student office also provides helpful information and organizes events that promote social integration, which has been essential in building a support network here. Additionally, the availability of mental health workshops and stress management seminars has given me practical tools to handle academic pressure and cultural adjustment. These resources, combined with the support from friends and faculty, have played a crucial role in maintaining my mental well-being during my studies in China.

**Future Considerations and Reflections**

1. How has your perception of your future changed since studying in China? Do you see yourself staying here, returning home, or moving to another country for further opportunities?

Studying in China has expanded my perspective on what is possible for my future. Initially, I thought I would return home after my studies, but being here has opened my eyes to the many opportunities available in China and beyond. I have gained valuable skills, built an international network, and developed a deep appreciation for Chinese culture, which makes staying here to explore career opportunities very appealing. However, I am also open to the idea of moving to another country to further diversify my experiences or even returning home with the new knowledge and skills I have acquired to contribute to my community. My time in China has definitely made me more flexible and open-minded about where my future might take me.

1. Reflecting on your time in China, what advice would you give new international students about managing acculturation stress? Please give me 3 suggestions.

*Embrace Curiosity:* Approach your new environment with curiosity rather than apprehension. Take the time to explore the culture, try new foods, and learn the language. This mindset will help you see challenges as opportunities for growth rather than sources of stress.

*Build a Support Network:* Make an effort to connect with both local students and other international students. Having a diverse support network will provide you with different perspectives and a sense of community, which is crucial when dealing with the stresses of adapting to a new culture.

*Practice Self-Care:* Remember to take care of your mental and physical health. Establish a routine that includes regular exercise, healthy eating, and relaxation. Don’t hesitate to seek out the university’s counseling services or talk to someone if you’re feeling overwhelmed. Taking care of yourself is key to managing acculturation stress effectively.

**Personal Stories**

1. Are there any memorable moments or stories from your time in China that particularly stand out as significant in your adaptation journey?

One of the most memorable moments in my adaptation journey was celebrating Chinese New Year with a local family. I was invited by a Chinese friend to join his family for the holiday, and it was an incredible experience. I got to participate in the traditional preparations, including making dumplings and decorating the house with red lanterns. The warmth and hospitality I received made me feel like part of the family, and it gave me a deep appreciation for the cultural significance of the holiday. This experience was a turning point for me, as it made me feel more connected to the local culture and more confident in my ability to adapt to life in China.

1. Can you share an experience where you overcame a cultural or communication barrier?

There was a time when I had to give a group presentation with local students. Initially, the language barrier made it difficult for us to communicate our ideas effectively. We had different approaches to how we wanted to present the material, and there were moments of misunderstanding. Instead of letting this become a source of frustration, we decided to meet more frequently to discuss our ideas in detail. I used translation tools and asked for clarifications whenever needed, and my Chinese teammates were patient and willing to explain things more slowly. By the end, we had successfully bridged the gap and delivered a cohesive presentation that we were all proud of. This experience taught me the importance of patience, open communication, and the willingness to learn from each other.