

Building Resilience for International Students: Results of Stress Prevention Seminars

留学生レジリエンスの向上：ストレス対策セミナーでの結果

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1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has triggered the transformation of higher education. International students become prone to the impacts of the pandemic and might develop stress (ACO, 2021; Keyserlingk et al., 2021; Rosowsky, 2020; Sovic, 2008; 昱龍 et al., 2021). Survey data taken on November 2020, at Tokushima University have shown that only 20% of international graduate students reported no worry or anxiety, while 70% cited anxiety about "economic conditions". On the other hand, about 10-20% of the international students reported that they would not consult with anyone about their concerns. Regarding current mental state, only 80% of international students choose "well-function" or "normal" state (第8回大学院生生活実態調査報告書、2021).

By analyzing the results of seminars on stress prevention for international students conducted at Tokushima University in 2021, this presentation is aiming to explore: (1) preliminary results of the seminars conducted; and (2) challenges and potential of these events for strengthening campus resilience during and post-pandemic.

2. Method

This paper analyzes data from the two online seminars on stress prevention for international students conducted at Tokushima University in May and July 2021. These seminars were conducted using Microsoft Teams. Seminar 1 was themed "Strengthening immune function of mind and body", while Seminar 2 was focused on "Assertion training" - a technique for effective communication that could help to cope with various stresses. Records of the

seminars, including students' interactions, Q&A, feedback, and final evaluation were analyzed.

3. Results

(1) Participants

Table 1. Participants' Characteristics

	Seminar 1 (n=8)	Seminar 2 (n=14)
Undergraduate	2	2
Graduate	6	12

Number of graduate students were higher in both seminars, and the number of students who were proficient in English were higher than in Japanese.

(2) Satisfaction and Understanding Level

Table 2. Final evaluation

	Seminar 1 (n=5)	Seminar 2 (n=12)
Satisfaction	100%	95%
Understanding	92%	93.4%

About the reasons for satisfaction, most of the participants stated that the content added a new knowledge and was interesting to them, the technique presented was simple but practical and could be helpful in daily life. Participants mentioned that these seminars were useful to improve communicating with each other, gaining confidence in communication especially with older or higher position people, helping to solve difficulties in daily communication when happened.

(3) Preference

Participants have shown interest to participate in the future events. The final reflection shown that more participants prefer

online over offline mode. The most suitable time for participating is weekday, after 18:00.

(4) Challenges

Regarding participant involvement, taking the capacity of the online mode which may host higher number of participants, however actual participation was not reach over 10% of the total number of international students. It seems difficult to make the students who may have a real stress problem to participate. It may need a different strategy to target these non-participants.

Regarding the seminar content, although the topics was carefully selected, some of the concepts may need more elaboration for being applicable to international students. Considering these seminars to be systematically implemented may become a worthwhile but challenge task in the future. Finally, follow-up of improvement of stress resilience and overall impacts on campus resilience may also pose a challenging task for the team.

4. Conclusion

Since almost two years from the first breakout, the Covid-19 pandemic continue to make impacts on the higher education. Along with the transformation of learning and online study, the students are forced to adapt with prolonged staying at home, lockdown, lack of face-to-face communication and insufficient social activities, isolation, and uncertainty. In this situation, some international students may become prone to stress and anxiety. To support international students to cope with potential stress, two seminars for stress prevention have been conducted during 2021. In

addition to counseling service, where students can discuss their problem on individual basis, these seminars could give international students a chance to improve effective communication. By applying practical approach and hand-on techniques for improving immunity of mind and body and assertive communication, the students were introduced to methods for coping with stress during Covid-19.

In the future, it is necessary to strengthen support for international students towards campus internationalization. The results showed in the presentation suggest that providing seminars to international students may be an effective strategy, in addition to providing individual counseling and other activities, to improving stress resilience of international students for long term.

References

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