

## **The impact of religious coping and resilience on psychological well-being among international students in Hungary**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship between acculturative stress, religious coping, resilience and psychological well-being among 176 international students in Hungary. Extending previous research, we hypothesized that resilience and positive religious coping would act as protective factors against stress and would predict higher levels of psychological well-being. More precisely, resilience and positive coping would moderate (exacerbate) the relation between stress and well-being. However, negative religious coping would contribute to lower levels of psychological well-being. Constructs were measured by the following scales: Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994), Brief RCOPE Scale (S-BRCS; Pargament et al., 2011), Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Connor & Davidson, 2003) and Psychological Well-Being scale (PWB; Diener et al., 2009). Results indicate that, as predicted, resilience contributed to higher psychological well-being and negative religious coping negatively correlated with psychological well-being. The relationship between positive religious coping and psychological well-being, however, was not found statistically significant. Moreover, the interaction between positive religious coping and resilience showed a surprising, negative influence on psychological well-being. The implications of these findings are critically discussed and are suggested to contribute to the work of university counsellors, student affairs officers, student organizations, such as Erasmus Student Network through providing a better understanding of acculturative stress and different coping processes among international students.

### **Keywords:**

Resilience, acculturative stress, religious coping, psychological well-being, international students, Hungary

### **PsycINFO Codes:**

2920 Religion

3000 Social Psychology

## Resumo

O objetivo do presente estudo foi examinar a relação entre stress aculturativo, *coping* religioso, resiliência e bem-estar psicológico entre 176 estudantes internacionais na Hungria. Com base em pesquisas anteriores, formulámos a hipótese de que a resiliência e o *coping* religioso positivo agiriam como fatores de proteção contra o stress e preveriam níveis mais altos de bem-estar psicológico. Mais precisamente, a resiliência e o *coping* positivo iriam moderar (exacerbar) a relação entre stress e bem-estar. No entanto, o *coping* religioso negativo contribuiria para níveis mais baixos de bem-estar psicológico. Os construtos foram medidos pelas seguintes escalas: Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994), Brief RCOPE Scale (S-BRCS; Pargament et al., 2011), Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Connor & Davidson, 2003) and Psychological Well-Being scale (PWB; Diener et al., 2009). Os resultados indicam que, como previsto, a resiliência contribui para um maior bem-estar psicológico e o *coping* religioso negativo correlaciona negativamente com o bem-estar psicológico. A relação entre *coping* religioso positivo e bem-estar psicológico, contudo, não foi considerada estatisticamente significativa. Além disso, a interação entre *coping* religioso positivo e resiliência mostrou uma influência negativa surpreendente no bem-estar psicológico. As implicações dessas descobertas são discutidas criticamente e são sugeridas contribuições para o trabalho de conselheiros universitários, oficiais de assuntos estudantis, organizações estudantis, como a Erasmus Student Network, fornecendo uma melhor compreensão do stress aculturativo e diferentes processos de *coping* entre estudantes internacionais.

### Palavras-chave:

Resiliência, stress aculturativo, *coping* religioso, bem-estar psicológico, estudantes internacionais, Hungria

### Códigos PsycINFO:

2920 Religião

3000 Psicologia Social

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## **Introduction**

Annually, many students leave behind their home countries in order to obtain better education abroad. In recent years, the number of international students all over the globe rose due to globalization and the fact that studying abroad grants desirable and invaluable experiences and knowledge which can mean a huge advantage in the labor market (Di Pietro, 2019). However, students of such kind are prone to bigger stress, anxiety and depression due to the physical and emotional distance from their family, social support system and habitual environment, the language barrier and cultural distance between the home and the host country (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015; Yeh & Inose, 2003). In the case of international students, however, these stressors are subsidiary to getting into a sometimes entirely different educational system, with distinct teaching methods, requirements, grading system, and studying in a second or third language (O'Reilly, Ryan & Hickey, 2010; Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015). According to Pedersen (1991), "International students are likely to experience more problems than students in general and have access to fewer resources to help them" (p. 24). The lack or loss of social support has also been found to significantly impact international students' psychological well-being (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Pedersen, 1991; Sandhu, 1995; Yeh & Inose, 2003). International students became a big part of the population in the recent years in Hungary, hence the need for exploration of their situation to better support and facilitate their transitions.

Resilience might be a factor that buffers the impact of acculturative stress on international students and promotes adjustment to a new cultural setting (Gunnestad, 2006). Resilience in this context is understood as a set of protective factors, such as positive personality traits, stable and supportive relationships with family and community, optimistic outlook and positive reaction to life challenges (Thompson, Fiorillo, Rothbaum, Ressler & Michopoulos, 2018). Resilient individuals have a greater ability to bounce back from stressful life circumstances and are more capable of preserving their psychological and physical health in adversity (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Ryff & Singer, 2003). Furthermore, in cross-cultural context, social factors besides personal ones are equally important, such as belonging to a group of people with whom we share core beliefs and values. Belonging to a religious community may serve as a buffer in the face of life's adversities and stressful situations. According to Pargament and Maton (2000), belonging to a religious community may serve as spiritual support as well as social support, within which context individuals may feel a strong sense of connectedness to God on the

individual level and a sense of belonging on a community level contributing to the overall well-being of the individual (Carleton, Esparza, Thaxter & Grant, 2008; Pargament & Maton, 2000).

Therefore, the focus of the present study is to investigate how resilience as a personality trait and religiosity as a social factor play a role in coping with stress caused by cross-cultural transition, and how these factors influence the international students' psychological well-being in Hungary. The findings of this study can demonstrate how social support from religious groups, for example, may mitigate the negative effects of the stressful transition; raise more awareness to the different struggles international students may encounter and contribute to improving counsellors' and campus personnel's work with this population.

## **Chapter I – Literature Review**

### **Acculturation, acculturative stress and coping**

Becoming accustomed to all the differences of a new culture can be a difficult task and this topic has become of great interest of cross-cultural psychology (Berry, 2006). Countries may differ in cultural values such as individualism vs collectivism, power distance, cultural distance, as well as being tight or loose cultures (Gelfand et al., 2011; Hofstede, 2001; Ward & Szabo, 2019). According to the cultural distance hypothesis, the more distant the home and host culture, the more difficult it may be to adapt for immigrants and sojourners, and the more stress and psychological maladjustment they may experience (Dunbar, 1992; Geeraert & Demoulin, 2013; Searle & Ward, 1990; Torbiorn, 1982; Ward & Searle, 1991). Perceived cultural distance is the subjective measure of cultural distance, which includes difference in food, language, climate etc. (English, Zeng & Ma, 2015). Furthermore, financial struggles, perceived racial/ethnic discrimination may make the process more difficult. Factors such as personality traits, adaptability and teachability, awareness of existing cultural differences, willingness to try and understand underlying reasons for various cultural phenomena and the level of social support from either the home country or the host country will also play a role and determine how well the individual will cope with the arising stress and find their way around in a foreign country (Yeh & Inose, 2003).

Moving to a different country, being away from one's family and habitual social support, getting acquainted with a new culture, new customs and new people is always a challenge. Acculturation involves at least two groups, both of which become affected by the process; however, it has a far greater impact on the minority culture's members than of the dominant culture's (Berry, 2001). Feelings of homesickness, isolation, perceived alienation and psychological distress are very common during acculturation (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Sullivan & Kashubeck-West, 2015). This distress induced by the process of acculturation is called acculturative stress, which means a culture change that originates from continuous, first-hand contact with a new culture (Berry, 1987). Acculturative stress can be interpreted both as a distinctive type of stress occurring during cross-cultural transitions, and as an outcome of inadequate acculturation upon living in a foreign country, which can lead to social, physical and psychological problems (Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987; Berry, 2001; Yeh & Inose,

2003). Cross-cultural transition is a challenge that requires sufficient and effective coping strategies on behalf of immigrants, otherwise, having high levels of acculturative stress may provoke detrimental effects on both physical and mental health – even in the case of a semester abroad, or other shorter periods of time (Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987). However, acculturative stress cannot be isolated from other forms and sources of stress that one may experience due to pre-migration trauma, loss of social roles, financial challenges, loss of a loved one, heartbreak etc. (Rudmin, 2009).

Individual factors such as personal background, age, gender, personality, cultural background and orientation, social support and situational-contextual factors such as a multicultural environment, cultural looseness-tightness and cultural distance all influence the emergence and outcome of acculturative stress and moderate relationships between important variables (Ward & Szabo, 2019). Celenk and Van de Vijver (2011) call certain factors, such as personality, situational context and perceived discrimination as acculturation conditions, referring to the resources available to the individual in the acculturation process. Adaptation to the new cultural environment entails psychological changes within the acculturating individual (Celenk & Van de Vijver, 2011). Among others, psychological adaptation is one of the key components of the adaptation process, which can be defined as psychological and emotional well-being, including a clear sense of cultural identity and good mental health, and its achievement is determined by the outcome of experienced acculturative stress and the applied coping strategies (Berry, 2001; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward, 1996; Ward & Szabo, 2019).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person” (p. 141.). The three most studied coping strategies are task-oriented (or problem-focused) coping, emotion-oriented coping and avoidance-oriented coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Smith, Saklofske, Keefer & Tremblay, 2016). According to the coping theory, whether the individual deems the stressful situation as manageable or uncontrollable, and the available coping resources as sufficient or lacking, will determine which coping strategy will be used (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

## **Religiosity and religious coping**

Hungary's religion is historically dominated by forms of Christianity. About 50% of the country's population consider themselves of Christian faith, be it Catholic, Protestant or non-denominational. The Jewish-Christian religious tradition considers human life as a part of a divine plan, in which the purpose and meaning of the individual's life is determined by God. According to the famous existential psychotherapist, Irvin D. Yalom, the individual's job in this context is to learn and understand the will of God concerning their own lives and to fulfill that will. This concept of purpose provides comfort, knowing of the existence of a greater plan which we are a part of and in which everyone has their own role. Not only this gives meaning to one's life, but also helps to understand how one should live their life (Yalom, 2017).

The relationship between religiosity and negative life circumstances, however, is a complex and dynamic phenomenon: religious faith may enhance the coping ability with stressful life events, whereas negative events can result in a greater, deepened faith. It is also possible that negative life circumstances, which can result in reduced well-being due to increased levels of distress, strengthen religious faith which in turn helps to re-establish well-being and reduce distress (Baumeister, 1991; Connor & Davidson, 2003).

Religious coping can be an important tool in the prevention of negative outcomes of stressful events, however, it is not considered to be one of conventional coping strategies. According to Pargament (1998), religious coping can be defined as meaning seeking in the midst of negative life circumstances. In this framework, the individual is not only using their religion as a resource but they are using the available religious interpretations in seeking the understanding of the purpose of the event and/or the control over the situation with the help of their religion, which is an active stress-response within the religious context (Pargament, Smith, Koenig & Perez, 1998). Religious coping behavior may manifest in prayer, meditation, devotion, or other ritual, or through a community-based behavior (Carleton et al., 2008).

Religious coping can be further divided into two constructs: positive and negative religious coping, according to how the individual interprets negative and stressful events in relation to God. Positive religious coping involves seeking God's closeness, turning to God and increased religious activity. These methods imply a secure relationship with God, or a higher power, a sense of connectedness with the community and a positive outlook on life. We can talk about negative religious coping if the individual blames God for the negative circumstances or feels that God or the religious community turned away from them, which implies an underlying

spiritual struggle and conflict not only with God but with others and oneself as well by negative interpretations of God's power (Láng, 2013; Pargament, Feuille & Burdzy, 2011). According to Pargament's religious coping theory, religious coping involves behaviors, cognitions, emotions and relationships. It is a dynamic process that can change over time, circumstances and contexts, which can lead to both helpful and harmful outcomes. Whether the method is effective or not is based on personal, situational and socio-cultural factors and the interaction of the above and can be deemed adaptive or maladaptive accordingly. Thus, an adaptive coping method can become maladaptive in a different circumstance or context (Pargament et al., 2011).

According to Pargament and Maton (2000), religious organizations help with stress coping by providing three types of religious coping resources: spiritual support, social support, and opportunities to serve the community. Spiritual support is defined as fostering the individual's sense of connectedness to God, for instance, through prayer and worship. Social support derives from the fact that a religious organization is itself a community which can provide a social network and friendships within the religious context. And thirdly, individuals may experience a deep sense of belonging and purpose by serving others within the community through community service and volunteerism, which can also foster a sense of mastery and enhance well-being (Carleton et al., 2008; Pargament & Maton, 2000). In the case of acculturating individuals, a religious community may serve as a handrail where foreigners can socialize easily within a local community, meet with like-minded people (both locals and fellow foreigners) and receive support from them during their season of transition.

## **Resilience**

Resilience can be defined both as a measure of successful stress-coping ability and a dynamic process of adaptation to stressful situations, but also as a protective factor against the negative outcomes of stress upon experiencing adverse life circumstances, placing an emphasis on assessing resilience as a personality trait, as certain characteristics, or personal qualities (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Maltby, Day & Hall, 2015). In recent times, researchers reached an agreement on the importance of different dimensions of resilience, such as positive characteristics of the individual, positive social and community networks and cultural values (Morote, Hjemdal, Uribe & Corveleyn, 2017). In any case, resilience is not a stable, general, unchangeable characteristic, but much rather a dynamic one that can be learned and developed over time. It moves in a continuum and can be present in different areas of the individual's life

to varying degrees. One may adapt easily to stress in their workplace, for instance, but in interpersonal relationships or in the face of natural disasters, the individual may fail to cope or adapt successfully (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick & Yehuda, 2014). In the current study, resilience was construed as a set of protective factors, including positive personality traits, stable and supportive relationships with family and community, optimistic outlook, positive reaction to life challenges, which enables the individual to respond positively to adverse circumstances (Thompson et al., 2018). Being resilient does not necessarily mean, however, that the individual never experiences negative consequences of stress, such as anxiety, depression or even post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), but rather being resilient means that even though adversity occurs, and the individual is being shaken, they do not break but bounce back (Southwick et al., 2014). The arising of adverse circumstances and high levels of stress may also entail an opportunity for growth and increased resilience (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

In addition to the personal dispositions, resilience is influenced by the social, cultural, religious and societal contexts we live in. These contexts and the individual's interaction with them will define his or her response to stress, as each of them has the potency to support or hinder the individual to varying degrees (Southwick et al., 2014). As Gilligan (2004) explains: „The degree of resilience displayed by a person in a certain context may be said to be related to the extent to which that context has elements that nurture this resilience” (p.94. as cited in Ungar, 2008). Religious faith and faith in the meaning of life were found to promote resilience and resilient people were found to engage more in active coping strategies, such as social support seeking behaviors (Kiss, 2015; Thompson et al., 2018). According to Ryff and Singer (2003), resilient individuals not only bounce back from stressful, adverse events, but are also more capable of preserving their mental and physical health. Sourì and Hasanirad (2011) found that there is a positive relationship between resilience and psychological well-being. In addition to this, they found that resilience might stem from one's cultural and religious values (Sourì & Hasanirad, 2011). Understanding resilience apart from cultural context therefore may be insufficient since core values are unwittingly embedded in cultural contexts. A resilient person in one of the Western societies might not be deemed resilient in an African context, for example, and vice versa (Ungar, 2008). It is argued that those who are more resilient can cope more efficiently with the stress that originates from the encounter with a new culture upon a cross-cultural transition. Resilience might be a factor that fosters adjustment and adaptation to a new cultural setting, and those who acquire the norms and rules of the new culture, while keeping



their own cultural values, language, and social support appear to be the more resilient (Gunnestad, 2006; Stutman, Baruch, Grotberg & Rathore, 2002).

### **Psychological well-being**

As opposed to subjective well-being, which is understood through the individuals' evaluations of their own lives, psychological well-being is understood to be a measure of optimal human functioning. The construct of psychological well-being is based on humanistic theories of positive functioning. Diener et al (2009) included a number of aspects in their construct of psychological well-being, which compose the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWB), such as *meaning and purpose*, following the work of Ryff and Seligman (Ryff, 1989, 2008; Seligman, 2002); *supportive and rewarding relationships*, following the work of Ryff, Deci and Ryan (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2001; Ryff, 1989, 2008); *being engaged and interested in their daily lives*, following the work of Csikszentmihalyi, Ryff and Seligman (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Ryff, 1989, 2008; Seligman, 2002); *the individual's contribution to the well-being of others*, following the work of Maslow, Ryff, Deci and Ryan (Maslow, 1958; Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2001; Ryff, 1989, 2008); *competency*, following the work of Ryff, Deci and Ryan (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2001; Ryff, 1989, 2008); *self-acceptance*, following the work of Maslow and Ryff (Maslow, 1958; Ryff, 1989, 2008); *optimism*, following the work of Seligman (Seligman, 2002), and finally *the feeling of being respected*, following the work of Maslow and Ryff (Maslow, 1958; Ryff, 1989, 2008). In the Psychological Well-Being Scale, each of these aspects are measured by one single item (Diener et al., 2009).

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) argued that being engaged in one's activities and experiencing flow are important components of well-being. Seligman on the other hand (2002), asserted that not only engagement, but also interest, pleasure, meaning and purpose are important in relation to well-being. The feeling of being respected is a core human need according to Maslow (1958), and optimism is thought to be crucial for healthy functioning according to the work of Peterson and Seligman (2004). Positive social relationships and contribution to others' well-being were also found to be predictors of happiness, mental health and well-being through showing empathy and affection, experiencing intimacy and relating warmly to others within trusting relations (Diener et al., 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Self-acceptance is thought to be closely related to mental health and positive psychological functioning. Meaning and purpose in life are vital parts of positive functioning, via having goals, a sense of direction

and purpose, which all contribute to the feeling of life being meaningful (Diener et al., 2009; Ryff, 1989). Psychological well-being can also be understood as feeling healthy, experiencing a full awareness of personal integrity, which also includes spirituality in life (Souri & Hasanirad, 2011).

Religious individuals tend to report better mental and physical health, in which case not religious affiliation in itself seems to matter, but much rather the strength of that religious affiliation and religious identity (Green & Elliott, 2010). When it comes to religious coping, positive religious coping is in general associated with higher levels of psychological well-being, whilst negative religious coping is found to contribute to lower levels of psychological well-being (Láng, 2013; Pargament et al., 2011). Psychological well-being in the acculturation framework can be understood as an outcome of acculturation, i.e. a psychological adaptation to the new cultural environment, resulting in greater well-being and better mental health (Celenk & Van de Vijver, 2011).

## **Present study**

The purpose of this study was to better understand the role of religiosity and resilience as a social, and individual protective factor, respectively, against acculturative stress and how these factors influence the individual's psychological well-being among those international students who chose Hungary as their host country. More specifically, the present study was conducted to address the following hypotheses:

*H1: resilience and positive religious coping both contribute to better psychological well-being among international students, both being protective factors against stress*

*H2: those students who engage in more positive religious coping would experience better psychological well-being, whereas negative religious coping would contribute to decreased well-being*

As controlling variables, the following covariates were included to see if they have any impact on the students' well-being: the extent of spirituality and the extent of religiousness, religious affiliation, age, gender, marital status, country of origin, program, academic level, field of study, study language, learning of Hungarian language, length of stay in Hungary.

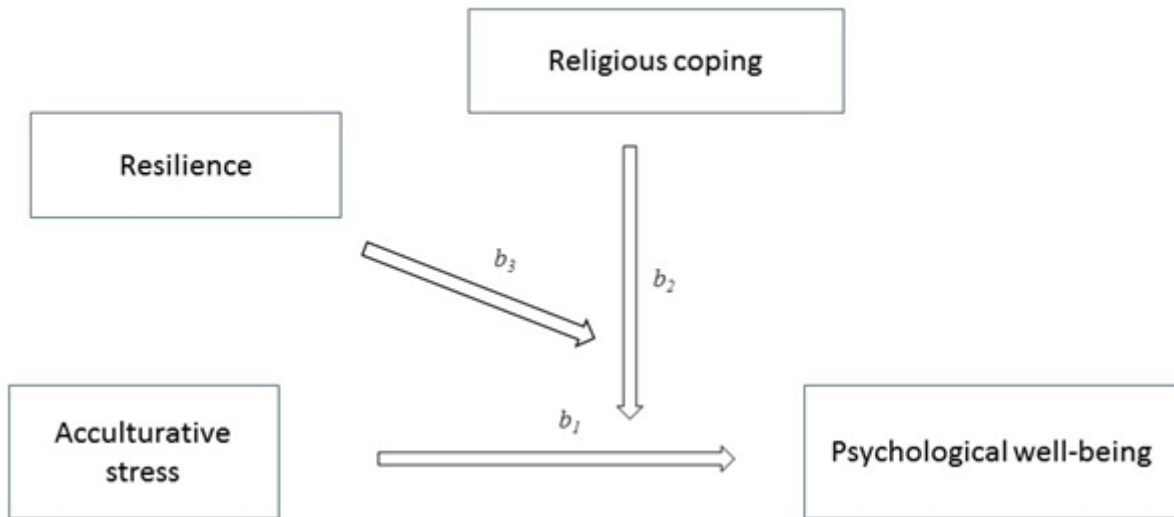


Figure 1. Conceptual model

## Chapter II – Methodology

### Design

A correlational study was conducted. The statistical analyses used in this study were carried out by SPSS 22 and PROCESS macro software (Hayes, 2017). The internal reliability of the scales was tested by examining Cronbach-alfa coefficients. To understand the relationship between the scales, Pearson-correlation was conducted, as presented in Table 1. To test the hypotheses, the impact of religious coping and resilience were assessed in three-way interactions, using PROCESS macro for SPSS, as follows: Stress  $\times$  Positive Religious Coping  $\times$  Resilience and Stress  $\times$  Negative Religious Coping  $\times$  Resilience (Model 3; Hayes, 2017). In every case,  $p < .05$  value was considered significant.

### Procedure and sample

Data collection took place online, the questionnaire was available on Qualtrics (Provo, UT) between 07/02/2020 and 09/05/2020. The research was approved by the Ethical Committee. The scales were all in English language, since this is the most likely common language among international students.

Participants were recruited via social media platforms (e.g. Facebook groups dedicated to international students) and with the collaboration of the University of Pécs, using convenience sampling. Participants were recruited from all the big university cities in Hungary, such as Pécs, Budapest, Szeged and Debrecen. Altogether, 247 responses were recorded, however, 64 answers were excluded due to partial completion and 7 participants did not agree to complete the questionnaire, thus a total of 176 complete responses have been analyzed. Participants were informed at the beginning of the questionnaire about the topic, the conditions of participation, its voluntary nature, approximate length of participation and contact information about the researcher after which they had to indicate agreement before proceeding. Participants were not compensated for their participation.

The final sample comprised of 176 international students (*mean age* = 23.99; *SD* = 4.12; min = 18 years; max = 38 years) Gender distribution of the sample was the following: 101

female (*mean age* = 23.94; *SD* = 4.26; min = 18 years; max = 38 years) and 75 male (*mean age* = 24.07; *SD* = 3.96; min = 18 years; max = 36 years). Participants came from 42 countries from four continents (see Table 1). 169 students were in a full-degree program (96%), only 6 students were part of an exchange program (3.4%) and 1 student studied in Hungary through a scholarship program (0.6%). Regarding academic level, 36 students were pursuing a Bachelor's degree (20.5%), 12 students were pursuing their Master's degrees (6.8%), 14 students were pursuing their Doctorate's (8%), 113 students were pursuing medical degrees (including general medicine, pharmacy and dentistry degrees; 64.1%) and 1 student was pursuing a One Tier Master degree (0.6%). In terms of study fields, the proportion of students was the following: 119 medicine (67.6%), 13 arts and humanities (7.4%), 28 science (15.9%), and 15 business (8.5%).

Students were distributed into three groups according to how long they have been living in Hungary: 14 students have been living in Hungary for less than 6 months (8%), 18 students have been living in the country for between 6 and 12 months (10.2%) and 143 students have been living in Hungary for longer than 12 months (81.3%). One participant did not provide information on the length of stay in the country. Among participants, 67% considered themselves at least slightly religious. Regarding religious affiliation, 45 participants claimed themselves to be not belonging to any religious denomination (25.6%), 25 participants claimed themselves to be Catholic (14.2%), 44 participants claimed themselves to be Protestant (25%) and 37 participants claimed themselves to be of Muslim faith (21%). One participant claimed himself to be Jewish (0.6%), 3 participants claimed themselves to be Buddhist (1.7%) and 21 participants claimed themselves to belong to other denominations (11.9%), answers included Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Orthodox and Agnostic.

Country of origin	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Africa</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>20.1</b>
Algeria	3	1.7
Angola	1	.6
Cabo Verde	1	.6
Egypt	4	2.3
Ethiopia	1	.6
Kenya	8	4.5
Nigeria	9	5.1
South Africa	2	1.1
Tunisia	4	2.3
Uganda	2	1.1
<b>Asia</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>23.0</b>
China	13	7.4
India	10	5.7
Indonesia	2	1.1
Japan	1	.6
Kyrgyzstan	1	.6
Mongolia	2	1.1
Pakistan	1	.6
South Korea	8	4.5
Sri Lanka	1	.6
<b>Europe</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>34.5</b>
Albania	1	.6
Croatia	1	.6
France	1	.6
Germany	33	18.8
Ireland	1	.6
Norway	14	8.0
Portugal	2	1.1
Russia	2	1.1
Spain	3	1.7
Switzerland	1	.6
Ukraine	1	.6
<b>Middle East</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16.1</b>
Iran	7	4.0
Iraq	1	.6
Israel	2	1.1
Jordan	8	4.5
Saudi Arabia	1	.6
Syria	2	1.1
Turkey	5	2.8
Yemen	2	1.1
<b>North America</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4.6</b>
USA	7	4.0
Canada	1	.6
<b>South America</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1.7</b>
Bolivia	1	.6
Brazil	2	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Note: 2 participants did not provide information regarding their country of origin*

Table 1. Country of origin of international students (n =174)

## Instruments

**Acculturative stress.** To measure acculturative stress and the adjustment problems of international students, the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994) has been used. The scale consists of 36 items, all phrased in a positive direction. The items can be grouped in the following way: Perceived Discrimination Items (e.g. “I feel that I receive unequal treatment”), Homesickness Items (e.g. “I feel sad living in unfamiliar surroundings here”), Perceived Hate Items (e.g. “People from some other ethnic groups show hatred toward me verbally”), Fear Items (e.g. “I fear for my personal safety because of my different cultural background”), Stress Due to Change/Culture Shock Items (e.g. “I feel uncomfortable to adjust to new foods and/or to new eating habits”), Guilt (e.g. “I feel guilty to leave my family and friends behind”). There is an additional “Miscellaneous” subscale. The items of this last subscale do not fall under any other factor, however, they importantly address special concerns of international students (e.g. “I feel nervous to communicate in English” or “I worry about my future for not being able to decide whether to stay here or to go back”). Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”. Higher scores on the scale indicated greater perceived acculturative stress ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

**Religious coping.** To measure religious coping with stress, the Brief RCOPE Scale (S-BRCS; Pargament et al., 2011) has been used. The 14-item measure includes two subscales: negative and positive religious coping. Participants were asked to indicate on a 4-point Likert scale to what extent the statements represented their behaviour in stressful situations, with responses ranging from 1 = “not at all” to 4 = “a great deal”. The overall scale had a Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .94$ , with the Positive Religious Coping subscale  $\alpha = .97$ , and the Negative Religious Coping subscale  $\alpha = .88$ .

**Resilience.** Resilience as a personality trait was assessed by the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Connor & Davidson, 2003). The scale consists of 25 items with each item being rated on a 5-point scale (0 = “not true at all”, 1 = “rarely true”, 2 = “sometimes true”, 3 = “often true”, 4 = “true nearly all the time”) based on the participants’ level of agreement. There are no reversed items, therefore higher scores on this scale reflected greater resilience ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

***Psychological Well-Being.*** To measure respondents' well-being, The Psychological Well-Being scale (PWB; Diener et al., 2009) has been used, which consists of eight items, with each item being assessed on a 1-7 scale, ranging from 1 = "strong disagreement" to 7 = "strong agreement". All items are phrased in a positive direction, therefore high scores indicated greater psychological well-being ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

***Sociodemographic questions.*** Participants were asked to provide information regarding demographics, as follows: gender, age, marital status (single; in a relationship; in a domestic partnership; married; divorced/widowed; other), country of origin, university/faculty, study field, academic level (BA/BSc; MA/MSc; PhD/Doctorate; other), program (full-degree program; exchange program; other), language in which they study, length of stay in Hungary, how long do they anticipate to stay in the country, if they learn/are willing to learn the local language (yes/maybe/no), religious affiliation (Catholic; Protestant; Muslim; Jewish; Buddhist; none; other), denomination. The extent to which participants consider themselves religious and spiritual was also measured on a 4-point scale (1 – "very religious/spiritual"; 2 – "moderately religious/spiritual"; 3 – "slightly religious/spiritual"; 4 – "not religious/spiritual at all").

Two open-ended questions were also included in the beginning of the questionnaire, as follows: "Think of your experience of living abroad as an international student. What three words come to your mind first?" and "Now think of factors that are/were the most impactful for your experience living abroad as a student. Please name at least three.". However, the students' answers to these questions were not analyzed and discussed in the present study.



### Chapter III – Results

First, Pearson-correlation analyses were conducted to explore the relationship between the different variables. Acculturative stress, as expected, showed a negative relationship with resilience ( $r(174) = -.18; p < .05$ ) and a strong negative relationship with psychological well-being ( $r(174) = -.35; p < .01$ ). On the other hand, acculturative stress showed a strong positive relationship with both positive and negative religious coping ( $r(174) = .28; p < .01$  and  $r(174) = .37; p < .01$ ). Positive religious coping was positively correlated with resilience ( $r(174) = .24; p < .01$ ), whilst negative religious coping besides being positively correlated with acculturative stress, was negatively correlated with psychological well-being ( $r(174) = -.26; p < .01$ ). Positive religious coping, however, was not found to be significantly correlated to psychological well-being, it seems therefore that engaging in religious coping, if negative, had bigger impact on the individual's well-being, than if it was positive. As predicted, resilience showed a strong, positive correlation with psychological well-being ( $r(174) = .47; p < .01$ ). Thus, it seems that psychological well-being was only being impacted by acculturative stress and negative religious coping negatively, and by resilience positively. With spirituality, it also showed a strong positive tendency ( $r(174) = .14; p = .06$ ). Find Pearson-correlation results in Table 2.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Religiosity	2.13	.96	–					
2. Spirituality	2.47	1.00	.47**	–				
3. Acculturative Stress	88.25	24.25	.18*	.08	–			
4. Positive Religious Coping	15.69	7.88	.76**	.48**	.26**	–		
5. Negative Religious Coping	10.06	4.74	.30**	.21**	.37**	.53**	–	
6. Resilience	67.44	15.39	.21**	.26**	–.18*	.24**	–.01	–
7. Psychological Well-being	43.62	7.96	.03	.14	–.35**	–.04	–.26**	.47**

Note: \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlations for study variables

For addressing the main hypotheses, two three-way interaction analyses were conducted to check whether religious coping along with resilience function as moderators in the acculturative stress–psychological well-being relationship. This corresponds to Model 3 of the SPSS macro Process, created and documented by Hayes (2017) (see Figure 1 for a conceptual model). The version 3.4 was used in the analyses, and variables were standardized, and mean-centered. Separate moderations were conducted for positive and for negative religious coping.

The first moderation model including positive religious coping, explained 38% of the variance of psychological well-being, ( $F(7,168) = 14.66; p < .01$ ). The second model included negative religious coping, and explained 38.5% of the variance of psychological well-being, ( $F(7,168) = 15.08; p < .01$ ). Following the conduction of moderated moderation analyses, it was reinforced that stress had a negative association with well-being ( $\beta = -.18; t(174) = -2.36; p = .02$ ) in the positive religious coping model. Resilience had a strong positive association with well-being in both the positive religious coping model ( $\beta = .52; t(174) = 7.55; p < .01$ ) and negative religious coping model ( $\beta = .52; t(174) = 7.77; p < .01$ ), as predicted in *H1*. However, surprisingly, the interaction between positive religious coping and resilience had a negative association with psychological well-being ( $\beta = -.29; t(174) = -4.31; p < .01$ ), which contradicted our predictions both in *H1* and in *H2*. The three-way interaction between Stress  $\times$  Positive Religious Coping  $\times$  Resilience on psychological well-being was not significant, ( $\beta = .02; t(174) = .40; p = .69$ ). Although not significant, the interaction between stress and negative religious coping had a slight negative tendency on well-being ( $\beta = -.11; t(174) = -1.82; p = .07$ ) which was in accordance with our prediction in *H2*. Finally, the three-way interaction between Stress  $\times$  Negative Religious Coping  $\times$  Resilience on psychological well-being was also not significant, ( $\beta = -.04; t(174) = -.99; p = .33$ ). Results are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

To visually interpret the results, simple slope analysis was conducted to display the interaction between positive religious coping and resilience (Aiken, West & Reno 1991). The graph depicts that psychological well-being was highest at high levels of resilience and low levels of positive religious coping. Also, at low levels of resilience and high levels of positive religious coping, it had a slight positive tendency on psychological well-being, however, at both high resilience and positive religious coping, there was a decrease in psychological well-being levels. Thus, on this sample, positive religious coping did not appear to be a protective factor against stress, but rather one contributing factor to lower levels of psychological well-being (see Figure 2).

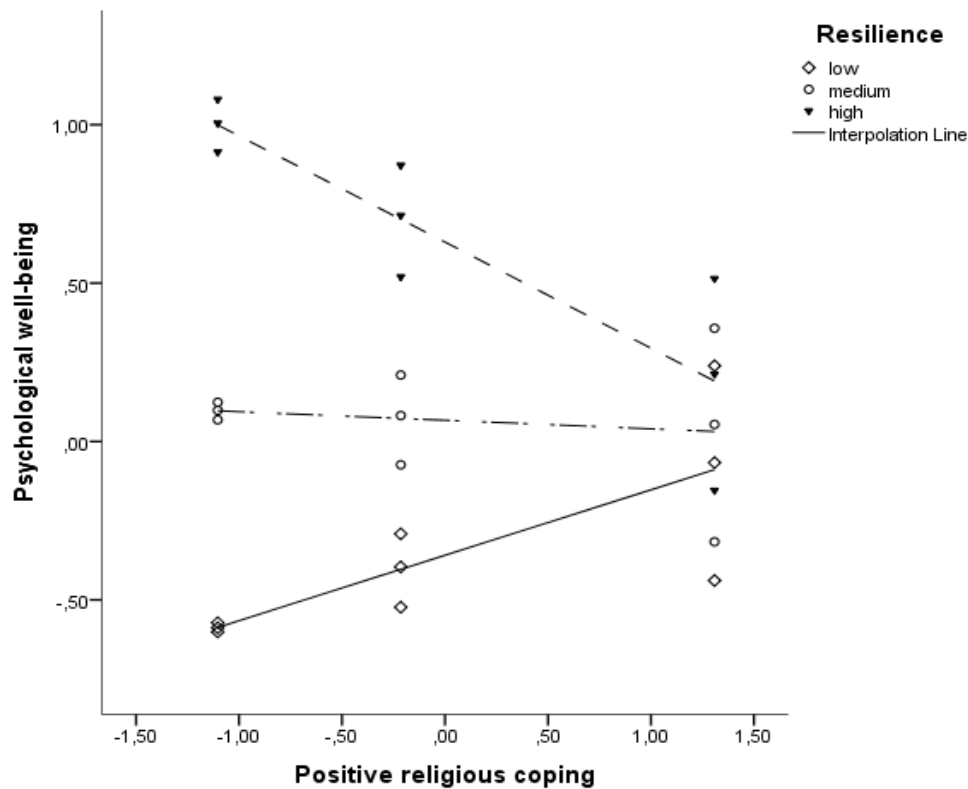


Figure 2. Moderation effects of positive religious coping and resilience on psychological well-being

After addressing the main hypotheses, three-way interaction analyses were conducted with covariates included to control for the potential influence of each of these variables on the relationship between acculturative stress and psychological well-being. Each covariate was included in the positive and negative religious coping model, separately, as follows: the extent of spirituality and the extent of religiousness, religious affiliation, age, gender, marital status, country of origin, program, academic level, field of study, study language, learning of Hungarian language, length of stay in Hungary. None of the included covariates influenced psychological well-being. In the positive religious coping model, however, spirituality showed a slight positive tendency of influence, ( $\beta = .13$ ;  $t(174) = 1.85$ ;  $p = .07$ ). In conclusion, following the addition of covariates to the models, none of the results of the interactions were changed. Thus, these variables do not seem to influence the relationship between acculturative stress and psychological well-being, implying that surveyed international students experienced similar challenges in terms of the relevant variables addressed, regardless of their age, gender, nationality, study field etc.

		$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Model					
$R^2 = 0.38, F(7,168) = 14.66, p < .001$					
Constant	$i_Y$	.09	.07	1.37	.17
Acculturative Stress (X)	$b_1$	-.18	.07	-2.34	.02*
Positive Religious Coping (W)	$b_2$	-.05	.07	-0.70	.48
Resilience (Z)	$b_3$	.52	.07	7.55	.01*
X × W		-.13	.08	-1.68	.10
X × Z		-.03	.07	-.42	.67
W × Z		-.29	.07	-4.31	.01*
X × W × Z		.02	.06	.40	.69

Note: \* $p < .05$

Table 3. Three-way interaction model testing positive religious coping with resilience as moderator of stress

		$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Model					
$R^2 = 0.39, F(7,168) = 15.08, p < .001$					
Constant	$i_Y$	.06	.06	.97	.33
Acculturative Stress (X)	$b_1$	-.11	.07	-1.53	.13
Negative Religious Coping (W)	$b_2$	-.10	.07	-1.50	.14
Resilience (Z)	$b_3$	.52	.07	7.77	.01*
X × W		-.11	.06	-1.82	.07
X × Z		.06	.07	.84	.40
W × Z		-.04	.07	-.55	.58
X × W × Z		-.04	.04	-.98	.33

Note: \* $p < .05$

Table 4. Three-way interaction model testing negative religious coping with resilience as moderator of stress

## Chapter IV – Discussion

The focus of the present study was to investigate the relationship between resilience, religious coping, and psychological well-being among a sample of international students studying in Hungary. We hypothesized that resilience and positive religious coping would contribute to higher psychological well-being levels in the face of acculturative stress, whilst negative religious coping would contribute to lower levels of psychological well-being. The results of the study were somewhat unexpected, yet both hypotheses were partially supported by data.

The positive relationship between resilience and psychological well-being was found to be consistent with our prediction based on previous research findings (Smith, Saklofske, Keefer, & Tremblay, 2016; Sourì & Hasanirad, 2011). Resilience also moderated the relationship between acculturative stress and psychological well-being. This finding is in accordance with that of Ryff and Singer (2003), according to which resilient individuals are more capable of preserving their mental and physical health in the face of adversity and resilient individuals tend to use more proactive coping strategies, such as task-oriented coping, leading to higher levels of psychological well-being (Ryff & Singer, 2003; Smith et al., 2016; Sourì & Hasanirad, 2011; Thompson et al., 2018).

Although the impact of resilience was in accordance with the predicted hypothesis, the impact of positive religious coping on psychological well-being was not significant in the present sample which was also the case in some studies conducted on nursing home residents and among women with breast cancer (Hebert, Zdaniuk, Schulz & Scheier, 2009; Scandrett & Mitchell, 2009). In our study, both positive and negative religious coping showed a positive correlation with acculturative stress. The same association was found in some studies conducted on Latino immigrants (e.g. Ellison, Finch, Ryan & Salinas, 2009; Sanchez, Dillon, Concha & De La Rosa, 2015). Moreover, positive religious coping and negative religious coping also showed a strong positive association with each other, which is in alignment of what Pargament et al (2011) found in a few studies (Pargament, Feuille & Burdzy, 2011). Thus, it seems like higher levels of stress initiates the application of more coping mechanisms, regardless of being positive or negative.

Positive religious coping and resilience were positively correlated, which is in accordance with previous findings (Kiss, 2015; Rezapur-Shahkolai, Taheri-Kharamah, Moeini &

Khoshravesh, 2017). However, the interaction between positive religious coping and resilience, surprisingly, displayed a negative influence on psychological well-being. It seems like when acculturative stress is added to the equation, positive religious coping sets back the protective effect of resilience, not appearing to be a protective factor against stress itself. One alternative explanation of this is that resilience represents an assertive, problem-solving approach towards stressful situations (e.g. “I feel like I am in control” or “I prefer to take the lead in problem-solving”), whereas positive religious coping represents a rather passive, avoidance-oriented strategy, with items like “Focused on religion to stop worrying about my problems” and “Tried to see how God might be trying to strengthen me in this situation”. Avoidant coping strategies were also found to be negatively associated with resilience in other studies (Thompson et al., 2018).

As Pargament et al (1998) and Carleton et al (2008) argue, religious coping is considered as an active stress-response within the religious context (Pargament, Smith, Koenig & Perez, 1998), which may manifest itself in prayer, meditation, devotion, or through a community-based behavior (Carleton et al., 2008), predominantly resulting in turning inward and towards God, instead of turning towards and facing the problem itself. However, in a new cultural setting, engaging in more proactive and problem-focused coping seems to be more efficient, as our results display in the case of resilience. Moreover, seeking social support is an important component of resilience (e.g. “In times of stress, I know where to find help” and “I have one close and secure relationship”), which is not measured by the positive religious coping scale, furthermore, turning inward in this instance is rather the opposite of seeking help from others (Thompson et al., 2018).

The role of social support in the lives of international students has been investigated by many authors, and it has been consistently found to buffer the negative impact of stress (e.g. Crockett, et al., 2007; Philip, Neuer Colburn, Underwood & Bayne, 2019; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Furthermore, social support from the students’ academic program, different social support networks and support from co-nationals or fellow students were found to be crucial in dealing with the stress of being far from home (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Belonging to a religious community may enhance the protective nature of social support, and had we control for that aspect, it might have contributed to psychological well-being (Carleton et al., 2008; Pargament & Maton, 2000).

In addition to this, as Pargament explains (2011), the effectiveness of any coping method depends on personal, situational and socio-cultural factors, the same way as it depends on the

conceptualization of the construct of well-being, therefore a positive religious coping pattern can be found profitable in one context and inadequate in another situation or context (Pargament et al., 2011). The same manner, resilience is impacted by cultural, social and religious contexts, which determines whether the individual's responses to stress are adaptive or rather maladaptive within the given context (Southwick et al., 2014). Considering the cultural diversity of the sample, with students coming from 42 different countries, it might be possible that the construct of resilience and even religious coping was perceived in different ways, therefore causing incongruence in results (Ungar, 2008).

Finally, we found negative religious coping to be negatively correlated with psychological well-being, and, however not significant, the interaction of negative religious coping and acculturative stress indicated a negative tendency on psychological well-being, which is in accordance with our prediction based on previous findings (Láng, 2013; Pargament et al., 2011; Scandrett & Mitchell, 2009). Negative religious coping was proved to be more predictive of negative health outcomes (Hebert et al., 2009), and was more strongly associated with anxiety, depression symptoms and with poorer psychological adjustment than positive religious coping on various samples (Francis et al., 2019; Hebert et al., 2009; Scandrett & Mitchell, 2009). One possible explanation of this is that experiencing spiritual struggle, having negative reappraisals of God (e.g. feeling punished or abandoned by God) and of others (e.g. feeling abandoned by one's church) may place an extra burden on the individuals who already struggle with stressful transitions.

### **Limitations and implications for future research**

The present study has several limitations. First, instead of a broader religious perspective, in our research only religious coping was taken into account, which is only a narrow aspect of what religiosity may entail. We did not control for religious activities, including prayer, attending religious services and other activities. Second, the Brief RCOPE was mostly used and validated on Christian samples, whereas in the current sample several other religious affiliations were included. In addition to this, the scale is limited in its capacity to measure the different components of religious coping. It is predominantly focused on intrapersonal aspects of religious coping, much more than on the social support aspects, which could have played an important role in the lives of international students. Using a more comprehensive scale and adding measures of social support would be preferable in future studies. Third, while the

purpose of the study was to explore the effects of religious coping, more people considered themselves spiritual than religious in this sample, hence why, in the future, examining the effect of spirituality on well-being in a more extensive manner would be important to consider.

Fourth, we did not control for other negative life circumstances and stressors, such as pre-arrival stress, relationship struggles, health-related stress, bad news from home, etc. other than acculturative stress which can be present in the lives of the students. It is also worth mentioning that during the data collection period, the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world, universities closed and switched to online teaching, and our lives have been changed. Social gatherings, along with church services, have been cancelled and people were forced to stay in their homes. This has created a unique, unprecedented situation for all, so it is suggested that students' overall well-being and mood could have been affected. Finally, the correlational design of this study by default is not sufficient to explain causality between variables. To further assess the relationship between acculturative stress, religious coping, resilience and psychological well-being, an experimental design would be advisable in a future study.

In the future, it would also be interesting to further explore the specific influence of Hungarian culture on international students, taking into account the cultural distance, tightness-looseness, and religious differences, namely examining how Muslim, Jewish and Buddhist students' acculturative stress levels and psychological well-being are affected by living in a predominantly Christian country.

## **Conclusion**

Investigating the relation of acculturative stress, resilience, religious coping and psychological well-being among international students contributes to the limited understanding on the relationship between these constructs and can also contribute to the promotion of well-being of the students. The findings of this study could contribute to the work of university counsellors, student affairs officers, student organizations, such as Erasmus Student Network, through providing a better understanding of acculturative stress and different coping processes in the lives of international students which can help amend their practices, prevention and intervention programs by paying attention to the specific needs of this population. Providing informal group meetings, for instance, where international and host country students could engage in dialogues about their academic and cultural experiences could probably contribute to the success of acculturation process, thus enhance students' psychological well-being.



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## Appendix A – Tables of Covariates

Covariate	$\beta$	SE	t	p
<b>Religiosity</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.20$ , $p < .001$ )	.14	.10	1.48	.14
<b>Spirituality</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.44$ , $p < .001$ )	.13	.07	1.85	.07
<b>Religious affiliation</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.38$ , $F(8,167) = 12.93$ , $p < .001$ )	-.03	.03	-.93	.35
<b>Age</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.38$ , $F(8,167) = 12.81$ , $p < .001$ )	-.04	.07	-.56	.58
<b>Gender</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.38$ , $F(8,167) = 12.81$ , $p < .001$ )	.07	.13	.55	.59
<b>Marital status</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.24$ , $p < .001$ )	.12	.07	1.56	.12
<b>Country of origin</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,165) = 13.09$ , $p < .001$ )	-.05	.05	-.90	.37
<b>Program</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.38$ , $F(8,167) = 12.91$ , $p < .001$ )	.24	.27	.90	.37
<b>Academic level</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.32$ , $p < .001$ )	-.09	.05	-1.67	.10
<b>Field of study</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.38$ , $F(8,166) = 12.50$ , $p < .001$ )	.08	.06	1.21	.23
<b>Study language</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.38$ , $F(8,167) = 12.78$ , $p < .001$ )	.07	.18	.37	.71
<b>Hungarian language</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.38$ , $F(8,167) = 13.03$ , $p < .001$ )	-.09	.07	-1.17	.24
<b>Length of stay in Hungary</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.38$ , $F(8,166) = 12.45$ , $p < .001$ )	-.12	.10	-1.11	.27

Table 5. Included covariates in positive religious coping model

<b>Covariate</b>	$\beta$	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Religiosity</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.12$ , $p < .001$ )	.002	.07	.03	.97
<b>Spirituality</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.45$ , $p < .001$ )	.08	.07	1.27	.21
<b>Religious affiliation</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.19$ , $p < .001$ )	-.02	.03	-.58	.56
<b>Age</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.42$ , $p < .001$ )	-.08	.06	-1.23	.22
<b>Gender</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.47$ , $p < .001$ )	.16	.12	1.31	.19
<b>Marital status</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.58$ , $p < .001$ )	.11	.07	1.50	.14
<b>Country of origin</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,165) = 13.13$ , $p < .001$ )	-.06	.05	-1.34	.18
<b>Program</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.42$ , $p < .001$ )	.32	.26	1.21	.23
<b>Academic level</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.23$ , $p < .001$ )	-.04	.05	-.75	.45
<b>Field of study</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.38$ , $F(8,166) = 12.92$ , $p < .001$ )	.06	.06	.97	.34
<b>Study language</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.22$ , $p < .001$ )	.12	.18	.70	.48
<b>Hungarian language</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,167) = 13.17$ , $p < .001$ )	-.04	.07	-.48	.63
<b>Length of stay in Hungary</b> (Model: $R^2 = 0.39$ , $F(8,166) = 13.16$ , $p < .001$ )	-.15	.10	-1.46	.15

Table 6. Included covariates in negative religious coping model

## Appendix B – Questionnaire

### Informed consent

Dear Participant,

The present study arises in the context of a psychology master's dissertation underway at ISCTE – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa.

The study concerns international students who study in Hungary. Its aim is to gain a better understanding of how international university students cope with the arising stress of living in a foreign country, and how their religion (or lack thereof) and resilience (as a personality trait) influence their psychological well-being. Participants must be above 18 years old.

You will be asked a few questions indicating your level of agreement on the indicated scales, as well as demographic information.

Your participation, which is highly valued, is strictly **voluntary**, it could take around 10-15 minutes and can be interrupted at any point without having to provide any justification. There are no expected risks associated to participation in the study.

In addition to being voluntary, your participation is also **anonymous** and **confidential**. The data are intended merely for statistical processing for my master's thesis. No answer will be analysed or reported individually, nor given out to third parties.

If you have any questions or comments on the study, feel free to contact the researcher: **Alexandra Somos - assal@iscte-iul.pt**

Your participation and help is greatly appreciated!

In view of this information, please indicate if you understood the conditions and voluntarily accept participating in the study:

☐ I accept

☐ I do not accept

### Open-ended question

Think of your experience of living abroad as an international student. What three words come to your mind first?

Now think of factors that are/were the most impactful for your experience living abroad as a student. Please name at least three.



## Acculturative Stress

As foreign students have to make a number of personal, social, and environmental changes upon arrival in a strange land, this *cultural-shock* experience might cause them acculturative stress. This scale is designed to assess such acculturative stress you personally might have experienced. There are no right or wrong answers. However, for the data to be meaningful, you must answer each statement given below as honestly as possible.

For each of the following statements, please choose the number that BEST describes your response.

1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = not sure, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

*Because of my different cultural background as a foreign student, I feel that:*

	1 = Strongly disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Not sure	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly agree
1. Homesickness for my country bothers me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I feel uncomfortable to adjust to new foods and/or to new eating habits.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I am treated differently in social situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I feel rejected when people are sarcastic toward my cultural values.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I feel nervous to communicate in English.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I feel sad living in unfamiliar surroundings here.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I fear for my personal safety because of my different cultural background.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I feel intimidated to participate in social activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	1 = Strongly disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Not sure	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly agree
9. Others are biased toward me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I feel guilty to leave my family and friends behind.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Many opportunities are denied to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I feel angry that my people are considered inferior here.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I feel overwhelmed that multiple pressures are placed upon me after my migration to this society.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I feel that I receive unequal treatment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. People from some ethnic groups show hatred toward me nonverbally.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. It hurts when people don't understand my cultural values.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1 = Strongly disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Not sure	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly agree
17. I am denied what I deserve.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. I have to frequently relocate for fear of others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. I feel low because of my cultural background.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. I feel rejected when others don't appreciate my cultural values.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. I miss the country and people of my national origin.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. I feel uncomfortable to adjust to new cultural values.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. I feel that my people are discriminated against.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. People from some other ethnic groups show hatred toward me through their actions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	1 = Strongly disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Not sure	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly agree
25. I feel that my status in this society is low due to my cultural background.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. I am treated differently because of my race.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. I feel insecure here.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. I don't feel a sense of belonging (community) here.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. I am treated differently because of my color.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. I feel sad to consider my people's problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. I generally keep a low profile due to fear from other ethnic groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. I feel some people don't associate with me because of my ethnicity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	1 = Strongly disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Not sure	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly agree
33. People from some other ethnic groups show hatred toward me verbally.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. I feel guilty that I am living a different lifestyle here.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. I feel sad leaving my relatives behind.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. I worry about my future for not being able to decide whether to stay here or to go back.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Religious Coping

In this section, please think of a stressful situation, experienced upon living and studying in Hungary.

Using the 1–4 scale below please indicate to what extent the following statements were true and described your behavior during the stressful situation.

1 = not at all, 2 = somewhat, 3 = quite a bit, 4 = a great deal

	1 = Not at all	2 = Somewhat	3 = Quite a bit	4 = A great deal
1. Looked for a stronger connection with God.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Sought God's love and care.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Sought help from God in letting go of my anger.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Tried to put my plans into action together with God.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Tried to see how God might be trying to strengthen me in this situation.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Asked forgiveness for my sins.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Focused on religion to stop worrying about my problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Wondered whether God had abandoned me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Felt punished by God for my lack of devotion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Wondered what I did for God to punish me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Questioned God's love for me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Wondered whether my church had abandoned me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. Decided the devil made this happen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Questioned the power of God.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Resilience

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements according to the scale below:

- 0 - Not true at all
- 1 - Rarely true
- 2 - Sometimes true
- 3 - Often true
- 4 - True nearly all the time

	0 – Not true at all	1 - Rarely true	2 - Sometimes true	3 - Often true	4 - True nearly all the time
1. I am able to adapt when changes occur.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I have one close and secure relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Sometimes fate or God helps me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I can deal with whatever comes my way.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Past successes give me confidence.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I try to see the humorous side of things when I am faced with problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Having to cope with stress can make me stronger.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	0 – Not true at all	1 - Rarely true	2 - Sometimes true	3 - Often true	4 - True nearly all the time
8. I tend to bounce back after illness, injury or other hardships.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I believe most things happen for a reason.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I make my best effort, no matter what.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I believe I can achieve my goals, even if there are obstacles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Even when hopeless, I do not give up.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. In times of stress, I know where to find help.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Under pressure, I stay focused and think clearly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	0 – Not true at all	1 - Rarely true	2 - Sometimes true	3 - Often true	4 - True nearly all the time
15. I prefer to take the lead in problem-solving.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. I am not easily discouraged by failure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. I think of myself as a strong person when dealing with life's challenges and difficulties.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. I make unpopular or difficult decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. I am able to handle unpleasant or painful feelings like sadness, fear, and anger.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. I have to act on a hunch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. I have a strong sense of purpose in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	0 – Not true at all	1 - Rarely true	2 - Sometimes true	3 - Often true	4 - True nearly all the time
22. I feel like I am in control.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. I like challenges.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. I work to attain goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. I take pride in my achievements.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### Psychological Well-Being

Below are 8 statements with which you may agree or disagree. Using the 1–7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by indicating that response for each statement:

- 7 - Strongly agree  
6 - Agree  
5 - Slightly agree  
4 - Mixed or neither agree nor disagree  
3 - Slightly disagree  
2 - Disagree  
1 - Strongly disagree

	7 - Strongly agree	6 - Agree	5 - Slightly agree	4 - Mixed or neither agree nor disagree	3 - Slightly disagree	2 - Disagree	1 - Strongly disagree
1. I lead a purposeful and meaningful life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. My social relationships are supportive and rewarding.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I am engaged and interested in my daily activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I am a good person and live a good life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I am optimistic about my future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. People respect me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Demographics

Gender

- ☐ Male  
☐ Female

Age

Marital status

- ☐ Single  
☐ In a relationship  
☐ In a domestic partnership  
☐ Married  
☐ Divorced/widowed  
☐ Other

Country of origin

For how long have you been living in Hungary? (in months)

How long do you anticipate to stay in Hungary?

Which university/faculty are you studying at?

What is your field of study?

What kind of program are you completing in Hungary?

- ☐ Full-degree program  
☐ Exchange program  
☐ Other

Academic level

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- ☐ BA/BSc
- ☐ MA/MSc
- ☐ PhD/Doctorate
- ☐ Other

In what language are you studying?

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- ☐ English
- ☐ Other

Do you learn/would like to learn Hungarian?

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- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ No

What is your religious affiliation?

---

- ☐ Catholic
- ☐ Protestant
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other

Which specific denomination you belong to (if any)?

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To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?

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- ☐ 1 - Very religious
- ☐ 2 - Moderately religious
- ☐ 3 - Slightly religious
- ☐ 4 - Not religious at all

To what extent do you consider yourself a spiritual person?

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- ☐ 1 - Very spiritual
- ☐ 2 - Moderately spiritual
- ☐ 3 - Slightly spiritual
- ☐ 4 - Not spiritual at all

## **Debriefing**

Thank you for having participated in this study. Your help is greatly appreciated.

The goal of this study was to assess how resilience and religiosity play a role in coping with stress arising when an individual moves to a new country, and how these factors influence the individual's psychological well-being. Your participation is very important to better understand the role of religion and resilience as a social, and individual protective factor; and, ultimately, help other students to better integrate in a new country.

We remind that the following contact details can be used in case the questions in this study caused you any discomfort, for any questions that you may have, comments that you wish to share, or to indicate your interest in receiving information about the main outcomes and conclusions of the study:

**Alexandra Somos - [assal@iscte-iul.pt](mailto:assal@iscte-iul.pt)**

**Many thanks for participating**

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