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A comparison of residence hall experience for students of different backgrounds

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A comparison of residence hall experience for students of different backgrounds

Abstract

The current study explored the impact of students' hall experience in terms of academic, social and personal development and students' motivation to join hall activities at a Hong Kong university. The results revealed significant differences, with females, local and non-first-year student groups reporting more gains from their residential hall experience relative to male, non-local and first-year students. Findings are useful in the refinement of the hall system to cater for students of diverse backgrounds.

Keywords: hall residence, student involvement, gender, nationality, year of study

Introduction

University experience is valuable in that it gives students the opportunity to step out of their comfort zone, whether it is through academic pursuit or participation in out-of-class activities. While academic endeavor is certainly an important component of this experience, the latter is also a significant contributor to a student's life-long development and growth. One major component of out-of-class activities is the experience of living in a residence hall (Franklin, 2013). The significance of residence hall is supported by a number of developmental theorists. The *student involvement theory* (1984) postulated by Astin suggests that the physical and psychological energy invested in the academic experience is related to the desirable outcomes of a higher education institution. Of the various forms of student involvement in university, one important facet is peer group involvement, whereby greater involvement is associated with better student learning and personal development (Astin, 1993). Since hall residence tends to encourage interaction between students through various forms of hall activities, residential hall life can profoundly affect students in terms of academic, social and personal development. Academic development relates to one's perception and motivation for academic achievement, social development is associated with interpersonal communication and interaction with others, and personal development refers to the development of oneself. Students' development is heavily influenced by their experience in residence halls through the enhancement of learning experience and achievement of university's education aims (Hall Education Development Project, 2012). Additionally, hall education includes a variety of activities contributing to the well-rounded development of students, such as hall orientations, sports and cultural activities, high table dinners, and mentorship schemes. Living in halls can not only provide opportunities for social, cultural and extracurricular involvement, this involvement also has the potential to improve

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3 students' learning experience (Flowers, 2004; Holdsworth, 2006). Therefore, hall education is an
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5 important area of investigation, especially for educators.
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9 A number of empirical studies have pointed out that residence hall life can shape the
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11 learning experience of students and improve undergraduate education (Flowers, 2004;
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13 Holdsworth, 2006; Yang & Chau, 2011). When compared to students who live at home and
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15 commute to school, those living in residence halls have been found to participate in more extra-
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17 curricular, social and cultural activities (Arboleda et al., 2003; Curley, 2003), interact more
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19 frequently with faculty and peers (Bray, 2006; Pike, Schroeder, & Berry, 1997), be more likely
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21 to aspire to a graduate degree (Astin, 1984, Long, 2014), have better personal development in
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23 terms of their autonomy and self-concept (Flowers, 2004) and be more committed to the
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25 university (Bray, 2006; Engstrom & Tinto, 2009).
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31 Aside from the general benefits of living in residence halls, it is essential to understand
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33 how students from diverse backgrounds are affected differently by hall experience. The social
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35 identity theory suggested that society is perceived as containing multiple groups, such as gender
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37 and nationality (Hornsey, 2008; Trepte & Loy, 2017). Based on these perceived groups, people
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39 tend to identify themselves with certain groups, **thereby impacting their behaviors and self-**
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41 **concept.** Following this line of thought, it becomes logical to conclude that the residential hall
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43 experience can be vastly different as students come from a range of background. Since their self-
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45 perception will likely differ according to their identifications with their social groups, the
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47 activities they engage in, the rationale behind and their general hall experience can be dissimilar.
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49 The present research can thus add value by taking students' background into account when
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51 understanding their hall experience.
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3 Gender difference is one aspect considered by previous studies. A research showed that
4 not only were male students more involved in hall activities than females, they also achieved
5 better academic results (Arboleda et al., 2003). In contrast, Roland and Enochs (2006) reported
6 that females relied on socialization and relationship formation experiences more than males, they
7 were better able to utilize their hall experience in forming social relationships, resulting in better
8 social development. In a related vein, Kuh and Hu (2002) suggested that males were likely to be
9 either extremely engaged or disengaged in campus activities, whereas females' engagement was
10 more consistent. As the existing findings have not yielded consistent results, how hall experience
11 affects male and female students remains inconclusive.

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25 Another variable that has been studied is nationality. In the present research, participants
26 were categorized into non-local and local students. The former refers to students who require a
27 student visa or entry permit to Hong Kong for education purpose, while the latter refers to those
28 who do not need such documents to study at Hong Kong (The University of Hong Kong, n.d).
29 Past studies have found that non-local students face more psychological and emotional
30 difficulties compared to local students, such as experiencing difficulties in making friends and
31 adapting to local culture (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Zepke & Leach, 2005). It has been theorized
32 that each campus holds a common habitus, which refers to the norms and practices shared by
33 students of similar backgrounds, aspirations and attitudes (Berger, 2000; Thomas, 2002). This
34 often applies to the dominant student — that is, the local students in this case. Indeed, some
35 studies revealed that locals tend to be more involved in hall activities than non-locals (Arboleda
36 et al., 2003; Beekhoven, 2002; Farris, 2010). Another study investigating individuals who were
37 more involved in residence halls observed that the majority group students showed greater
38 involvement than the minority group students (Arboleda et al., 2003; Volet & Ang, 2012). This
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3 was presumed to be associated with the majority group students' higher comfort level with
4 respect to the hall residence environment. Likewise, due to the relatively less involvement within
5 minority students, it was postulated that they might turn to other experiences, such as
6 concentrating on academic study. According to the demographics of this university, the
7 proportion of local-students far exceeds non-local students in residence hall. Thus, previous
8 findings can be viewed as a reference in exploring hall involvement among students of different
9 nationalities.
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20 Alongside gender and nationality factors, students' year of study is another key factor
21 that researchers have examined (Huhn, 2006; Roland & Enochs, 2006; Yang & Chau, 2011). The
22 first year of university is believed to be particularly crucial since the likelihood of making gains
23 in learning is greatest for most students (Tinto & Goodsell, 1993; Yorke & Longden, 2008).
24 According to Tinto (1986), first-year students go through a process of separation, transition and
25 incorporation. The residence hall will thus play an influential role in providing an environment
26 that enables newcomers to find an early physical, social and academic anchor during the
27 transition to university, facilitating their integration into the broader campus social system in the
28 long term (Newbrough, 1992; Tinto, 1993). Nevertheless, while there are a number of existing
29 studies on first-year students' hall experience, there has been relatively little research on the hall
30 experience of non-first-year students. One of the few studies reported that senior students tended
31 to be less involved in hall activities, presumably because they focused on other areas, such as
32 academic study (Arboleda et al., 2003). Research examining the impact of non-first-years'
33 involvement in clubs and organizations offers further evidence suggesting that students of
34 different level of study are affected differently while engaging in the same activity. For example,
35 Foubert & Grainger (2006) found that first-years tended to experience greater personal
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3 development than non-first-years. Consequently, comparing the hall experience of students from
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5 different level of study may yield interesting findings.
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9 The investigation of residential hall experience seldom included student's motivations as
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11 a variable. It seems that while a majority of studies explored students' outcomes as a result of
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13 living in hall (e.g., Li, Sheely, & Whalen, 2005; López Turley & Wodtke, 2010), the rare
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15 research that examined students' motivations tended to place its focus on other aspects of
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17 university education, such as quality of academic and career advising (e.g., Sherry, Bhat, Beaver,
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19 & Ling, 2004; Wawrzynski & Jessup-Anger, 2010). Understanding students' motivations for
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21 joining hall activities is imperative as it offers a glimpse of their expectations of hall life. The
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23 variable can also predict students' satisfaction of their hall experience as they compare the reality
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25 of living in hall to their initial motivations in joining hall activities. Indeed, a study on students'
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27 social expectations reported that those whose expectations were fulfilled tended to be more
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29 socially integrated in university (Helland, Stallings, & Braxton, 2002). Besides, students'
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31 motivations can profoundly affect their hall experience, such as influencing the extent of their
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33 involvement in hall activities. Consequently, in light of the limited study on student's motivation,
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35 the paper aims to bridge such research gap by examining students' motivations to join or not to
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37 join hall activities.
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44 As mentioned, student gender, nationality and year of study are three major individual
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46 differences that can significantly affect students' hall experience, yet, most studies merely
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48 investigated one or two of these factors only. While some research explored males' and females'
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50 hall experience (e.g., Long, 2014; McCluskey-Titus & Oliver, 2001), others examined the
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52 experience in relations to student's level of study (e.g., Farris, 2010; Huhn, 2006). Meanwhile,
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54 some studies were more concerned with the the impact of students' nationality and other factors,
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3 such as gender and level of study on hall experience (e.g., Arboleda et al., 2003; Dusselier,
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such as gender and level of study on hall experience (e.g., Arboleda et al., 2003; Dusselier,
Dunn, Wang, Shelly, & Whalden, 2005; López Turley & Wodtke, 2010). This creates a niche to
examine how students from different backgrounds are affected by their hall experience.

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Currently, most studies on hall education were predominantly conducted in Western
countries with the generalizability of those findings remaining questionable due to differences in
geographical and cultural settings. This is especially evident in Hong Kong universities as there
have been limited studies concerning students' involvement in out-of-class activities, let alone
research on hall education (Tam, 2002; Yang & Chau, 2011). Though theories such as the
student involvement theory (1984) can be useful in understanding student's involvement in hall
education, it was seldom examined in the Asian context. While Ting, Chan, & Lee (2016) found
a positive correlation between multiple desirable variables and living in hall, it is only the first
step in understanding the nature of residence halls with regard to Hong Kong students.
Differences between the West and the East can suggest different experience for hall education,
especially when considering the contrast between western individualism and eastern
collectivism. Given that the present research is conducted at a Hong Kong university with strong
Western philosophical background in emphasizing "whole-person education", the interplay
between the two cultures may yield interesting findings pertaining to hall education in Hong
Kong (Ting et al., 2016). For this reason, it is critical to gather more information on the impact of
hall education, research in the Asian context would thus be helpful in gaining a thorough
understanding of the matter.

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Based on the rationale that individual differences are central to different hall experiences,
it was hypothesized that hall education would affect students from diverse backgrounds

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3 differently. It was also predicted that males and females, local and non-local, and first-year and
4 non-first-year students would have different reasons for joining hall activities.
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10 11 **Method**

12 13 **Design and procedure**

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15 The study used a between-participant independent t-test design to compare the impact of
16 hall education and reasons for joining hall activities across students from diverse backgrounds.
17 An independent t-test compares the mean difference between two treatment conditions or
18 between two different populations (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009, p. 308). In this case, the
19 independent variables were student gender (males and females), nationality (local and non-local)
20 and year of study (first-year and non-first-year). The dependent variable was the different impact
21 of hall experience, which was divided into academic, social, and personal development. Another
22 dependent variable was reasons for joining hall activities. Undergraduate students at a public
23 university in Hong Kong were recruited by convenience sampling to participate in the study via
24 high table dinners. Students invited were residing in one of the 13 residence halls within The
25 University of Hong Kong. All students were given opportunities to complete the questionnaires
26 in hard copies or online, which took approximately 15 minutes. This study was carried out in
27 accordance with the recommendations of The University of Hong Kong and the protocol was
28 approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. All participants gave written informed
29 consent in accordance with the university policy.
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52 53 **Materials**

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3 A questionnaire was used for this study, which consisted of three sections: demographic
4 information, the impact of hall experience and reasons for joining hall activities. Questions
5 within the demographic information section comprised 4 items in total, including student gender,
6 student status, faculty (a division within a university that the student belong), and year of study
7 (an indication of the particular stage the student is in within a programme of study). The section
8 on the impact of hall experience was divided into three parts, with a total of 33 items. The first
9 part concerned academic development and consisted of 4 items. This was followed by social
10 development, which included 12 items. The last part was personal development, which contained
11 17 items. Ratings for all three parts were evaluated on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 =
12 *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*, an option of *Don't Know* was also included. The third
13 section of the questionnaire asked participants to rate their reasons for joining hall activities, with
14 a scale consisting of 12 items, which were evaluated on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1 =
15 *Not a reason for me* to 5 = *Very important reason for me*.
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35 **Participants**

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37 The student sample consisted of 1,234 undergraduate students, including 558 males and
38 652 females (See Table 1). Regarding students' nationality, 811 were local, and 378 were non-
39 local students. As for student's year of study, 480 were first-year students, while 740 were non-
40 first-year students. Students came from a range of faculties, such as Business and economics
41 (24%), Engineering (15%), Medicine (13%) and Science (14%).
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49 Table 1. Demographic information of participants

(N=1234)		
Gender	Male	561
	Female	673

	Unknown	11
Nationality background	Local	811
	Non-local	378
	Unknown	32
Year of study	First-year	480
	Non-first-year	740

Results

There was no significant difference in academic development between gender and between first-year and non-first-year students. However, the results revealed that non-local students reported a stronger drive to achieve academic/ professional excellence than local students, $t(1232) = 2.17, p < .05$, whereas local students reported more enthusiasm for learning than non-local students, $t(1232) = 2.17, p < .05$.

Table 2. The impact of hall experience on students from different groups

As a result of my hall experience,	Male		Female		Local		Non-local		First-year		Non- first-year	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Academic development												
I have a stronger drive for excellence in my academic/ professional studies	3.57	0.99	3.58	0.96	3.49	0.96	3.72	1.00	3.60	0.99	3.50	0.97
My enthusiasm for learning has been further stimulated	3.44	0.95	3.41	0.91	3.35	0.92	3.54	0.95	3.41	0.95	3.37	0.91
I have achieved more of my personal goals'?	3.34	0.97	3.30	0.91	3.28	0.92	3.37	0.96	3.30	0.94	3.28	0.94
I have acquired more intellectual stimulation	3.55	0.92	3.48	0.87	3.52	0.87	3.47	0.92	3.44	0.89	3.51	0.89

Again, there were no significant differences in terms of social development between first-year and non-first-year students. In terms of gender difference, females reported more gains in most of the measures on social development compared to males. Similarly, the nationality comparison indicated that local students also reported more gains in social development when compared to their non-local counterparts, common measures included being more aware of the thoughts and feelings of other people, $p < .05$, being more able to see things from other people's point of view $p < .05$, improving skills in social communication $p < .05$, collaborating with other people in completing tasks $p < .05$ and negotiating with others in coming to a decision $p < .05$. However, when compared to local students, it is noteworthy that non-local students reported more gains in being aware of their roles as responsible global citizens $p < .05$ and seeing things from a global perspective $p < .05$.

As a result of my hall experience,	Male		Female		Local		Non-local		First-year		Non- first-year	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Social development												
I am more aware of the thoughts and feelings of other people	3.91	0.75	4.03	0.71	4.05	0.69	3.83	0.79	3.98	0.74	3.97	0.74
I am more able to see things from other peoples' point of view	3.92	0.74	4.06	0.68	4.05	0.69	3.90	0.75	3.97	0.73	4.01	0.71
I have developed a better understanding of people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds	3.78	0.75	3.91	0.75	3.82	0.75	3.90	0.77	3.81	0.80	3.87	0.74
I am more aware of my role as a responsible global citizen.	3.65	0.84	3.75	0.83	3.66	0.84	3.77	0.83	3.67	0.89	3.70	0.83
I am more able to see things from a global perspective	3.60	0.86	3.65	0.83	3.53	0.85	3.70	0.82	3.58	0.88	3.63	0.84
My skills in social communication have improved	3.90	0.74	4.01	0.71	4.02	0.69	3.85	0.78	3.92	0.74	3.98	0.72
I am more able to communicate my ideas with people	3.89	0.75	3.96	0.73	3.97	0.71	3.84	0.80	3.87	0.75	3.95	0.74

I have learnt more about how to collaborate with other people in completing tasks	3.85	0.76	3.95	0.73	3.99	0.71	3.75	0.82	3.86	0.75	3.92	0.76
I have learnt more about how to negotiate with others in coming to a decision	3.81	0.78	3.92	0.73	3.94	0.72	3.75	0.81	3.82	0.75	3.89	0.78
I am more aware of issues like human equality, fairness, and justice	3.63	0.82	3.73	0.83	3.67	0.83	3.69	0.83	3.64	0.85	3.68	0.82
I have a stronger sense of belonging to a community in the university	3.82	0.82	3.89	0.82	3.91	0.79	3.77	0.88	3.85	0.84	3.86	0.82
I have a stronger sense of identity as a member of the university	3.82	0.84	3.93	0.80	3.92	0.79	3.83	0.88	3.88	0.81	3.87	0.84

Regarding personal development, there were no significant differences in all measures between first-year and non-first-year students except in leadership gains. Non-first-years reported having acquired more leadership skills, $t(1232) = 2.17, p < .05$ and feeling more confident in taking up a leadership role than first-years, $t(1232) = 2.17, p < .05$.

In terms of gender comparison, females reported more gains in most of the measures on personal development compared to males. Similarly, local students also reported more gains in this aspect when compared to their non-local counterparts. These common measures included being more able to look at things from different perspectives, further developing skills that enable engagement in life-long learning, feeling more confident about tackling unfamiliar problems, and learning more about how to identify a problem and tackle it (*all* $p < .05$).

As a result of my hall experience,	Male		Female		Local		Non-local		First-year		Non- first-year	
Personal development	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
My analytical skills have been sharpened	3.66	0.83	3.63	0.76	3.72	0.75	3.49	0.86	3.59	0.79	3.65	0.80
I am more able to look at things	3.85	0.74	3.96	0.67	3.95	0.66	3.83	0.79	3.87	0.70	3.93	0.72

from different perspectives

I have further developed skills that will enable me to engage in life-long learning	3.77	0.77	3.87	0.71	3.86	0.72	3.73	0.78	3.79	0.72	3.82	0.76
I feel more confident about tackling unfamiliar problems	3.78	0.77	3.86	0.73	3.87	0.73	3.74	0.80	3.78	0.76	3.85	0.76
I have learnt more about how to identify a problem and tackle it	3.76	0.77	3.84	0.70	3.85	0.71	3.68	0.77	3.79	0.73	3.79	0.75
I feel more confident when I am put in a new situation	3.83	0.79	3.88	0.77	3.86	0.78	3.84	0.79	3.81	0.81	3.87	0.77
I have become more aware of my personal strengths and weaknesses.	3.92	0.79	3.98	0.71	4.01	0.73	3.84	0.78	3.90	0.73	3.98	0.76
I maintain higher standards of personal integrity	3.77	0.78	3.84	0.73	3.83	0.74	3.75	0.80	3.78	0.75	3.80	0.76
I have learnt more about how to pursue ethical practices in social, academic and professional settings	3.66	0.81	3.71	0.79	3.69	0.80	3.69	0.81	3.67	0.79	3.65	0.82
I have acquired more leadership skills	3.63	0.86	3.72	0.79	3.75	0.82	3.50	0.83	3.55	0.84	3.73	0.83
I am more confident in taking up a leadership role	3.62	0.89	3.71	0.80	3.74	0.83	3.50	0.84	3.55	0.84	3.72	0.86
My commitment to making the world a better place for all to live in has been enhanced	3.56	0.85	3.64	0.79	3.59	0.82	3.59	0.83	3.59	0.81	3.57	0.84
I have cultivated a more inquisitive mind	3.64	0.80	3.70	0.75	3.70	0.76	3.60	0.80	3.64	0.77	3.66	0.79
I have achieved more of my personal goals	3.67	0.81	3.73	0.77	3.73	0.77	3.65	0.83	3.67	0.78	3.70	0.81
My time management skills have improved	3.68	0.90	3.71	0.85	3.69	0.87	3.69	0.89	3.67	0.88	3.67	0.88
I have adopted a lifestyle that is more conducive to my psychological wellness	3.61	0.87	3.60	0.89	3.58	0.89	3.63	0.88	3.54	0.89	3.60	0.90
I have adopted a lifestyle that is more conducive to my physical wellness	3.56	0.97	3.51	1.01	3.50	1.04	3.57	0.93	3.47	1.10	3.52	1.00

Note. 1-Strongly disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, 5-Strongly agree (:p <0.05, **:0<0.01)*

The comparison of reasons for joining hall activities between males and females showed non-significant differences across all items except for increasing the chance of re-admission, where females ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.16$) rated it as a greater motivation than males ($M = 3.16$, $SD = 1.24$; $p < .05$).

Significant differences were found when comparing local and non-locals' incentives for joining hall activities. Non-local students rated commitment/ contribution to hall and increasing the chance of re-admission higher than did local students ($p < .05$). On the other hand, local students rated peer encouragement ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.91$) and peer pressure ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 0.99$) higher than did non-local students ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 1.11$; $p < .05$).

For first-year and non-first-year students, reasons for joining hall activities differed significantly. First-years rated all reasons higher than non-first-years, except for peer pressure, which found no significant result. Examples of significant findings included personal interest as a greater motivation for first-years ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.79$) than for non-first-years ($M = 4.10$; $SD = 0.80$; $p < .05$). The desire to experience a well-rounded university life also revealed a similar pattern, with first-years ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.82$) rating it higher than non-first-years ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.86$; $p < .05$).

Table 5. Gender difference in reasons for joining hall activities

Reasons	Male		Female		Local		Non-local		First-year		Non- first-year	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Self-improvement	3.81	0.91	3.76	0.81	3.81	0.94	3.72	0.89	3.75	1.04	3.71	0.91
Personal interest	4.17	0.80	4.08	0.72	4.15	0.79	4.10	0.80	4.19	0.89	4.08	0.79
Commitment/ contribution to hall	3.56	1.00	3.49	0.88	3.59	0.97	3.54	0.96	3.66	1.07	3.56	0.92
Meeting/ making friends	3.97	0.87	3.95	0.77	4.07	0.80	3.92	0.87	4.02	0.95	3.99	0.82

Achieving a more well-rounded University life	3.91	0.90	3.96	0.79	4.04	0.82	3.87	0.86	3.91	0.94	3.96	0.79
Increasing the chance of re-admission	3.16	1.24	2.88	1.12	3.24	1.20	3.17	1.21	3.68	1.16	3.24	1.16
Being considered for awards	2.53	1.19	2.45	1.09	2.56	1.07	2.42	1.17	2.53	1.20	2.42	1.07
Peer encouragement	3.26	1.03	3.34	0.91	3.33	1.01	3.23	0.98	3.17	1.11	3.28	0.96
Peer pressure	2.54	1.07	2.60	0.99	2.50	1.03	2.51	1.09	2.37	1.14	2.47	1.06
Experiencing unity and group achievement	3.54	1.01	3.54	0.85	3.59	0.92	3.51	1.01	3.55	1.14	3.55	0.94
Avoiding penalty	2.23	1.24	2.19	1.15	2.39	1.23	2.14	1.16	2.30	1.26	2.24	1.15

(*: $p < .05$, **: $p < .01$)

Discussion

As stated in the literature review, a residence hall is not only a place for accommodation, it is also crucial in affecting students' university experience (Franklin, 2013). The present study sought to examine how students with diverse backgrounds could be affected differently by their hall experience. Additionally, reasons for joining hall activities were also compared across different students. As predicted, students of different genders, nationalities and year of study were affected to different extents in their academic, social and personal development. The results also indicated that university students of different backgrounds had different reasons for joining hall activities.

Pertaining to the impact of hall experience for males and females, no significant gender differences were found in terms of academic development as residence hall was equally beneficial to both genders in this aspect. This is contrary to previous research that reported a gender difference in academic outcomes (Arboleda et al., 2003; Long, 2014; Roland & Enochs, 2006). However, significant gender differences were found in social and personal development, with females experiencing more gains in communication and intrapersonal skills. Examples were

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3 gaining confidence in tackling unfamiliar problems and looking at things from different
4 perspectives. The results are consistent with past research reporting that females were better at
5 forming relationships in residence halls, which in turn fostered their social development (Roland
6 & Enochs, 2006). Hence, it seems that residence hall is more beneficial to females in cultivating
7 social skills such as perspective taking and social communication.
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12 In terms of reasons for joining hall activities, there was no gender difference apart from
13 females were significantly more motivated by re-admission to hall than males. This suggests that
14 females were more encouraged to join hall activities due to extrinsic factors than by personal
15 interest.
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20 Some differences were found in terms of the impact of hall experience on students of
21 different nationalities. While non-local students reported greater academic development, local
22 students seemed to benefit more in social and personal development, which is consistent with
23 past research that revealed better academic performance among non-local students (Arboleda et
24 al., 2003; Volet, & Ang, 2012). However, non-local students' high ratings for academic
25 development were in stark contrast to their significantly lower ratings for social and personal
26 development. This is congruent with past studies reporting [the challenge of making friends for
27 non-local students](#) (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Zepke & Leach, 2005). Indeed, their lack of social
28 development suggests a pursuit of alternative opportunities instead, such as spending more time
29 on academic matters (Arboleda et al., 2003; Volet, & Ang, 2012). Consequently, more research
30 is needed to ensure that local and non-local students benefit from hall experience equally.
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50 The present study revealed that non-local students tended to participate in hall activities
51 because of their desire to commit/ contribute to the hall and to secure accommodation, whereas
52 local students were more significantly influenced by peers when deciding whether or not to
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3 participate in hall activities. Thus, it seems that non-local students wished to be more active
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5 members of the hall. Past literature offers further insights in suggesting that the lack of belonging
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7 among non-locals can explain their desire for togetherness through participating in hall activities
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9 (Arboleda et al., 2003; Beekhoven, 2002; Zepke & Leach, 2005). At the same time, their
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11 decision to join hall activities might be motivated by their practical need for accommodation.
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13 This is in contrast to local students, who are socially influenced to participate in hall activities.
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15 The present study substantiates this view as it was found that peer encouragement and peer
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17 pressure were the major reasons for local students to engage in hall activities. This is consistent
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19 with past research suggesting the existence of a common habitus that appealed to the dominant
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21 student group within each campus, which comprised local students in this case (Berger, 2000).
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23 Local students seem more susceptible to social expectations, meaning that their active
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25 participation in hall activities can be predicted if their friends are active members too. Coupled
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27 with the findings related to the impact of a residence hall among non-local students, the current
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29 result resonates with Astin's *student involvement theory* (1984), which posits that positive
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31 outcomes are resulted from peer group involvement. The limited social gains reported by non-
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33 local students in the present study demonstrate their inactive involvement in social areas. It
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35 appears that they do not relate to peers throughout their hall experience, whether it is in
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37 cultivating friendships as a result of staying in hall or joining hall activities due to the influence
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39 of peers.
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47 In terms of the impact of hall experience on first-year and non-first-year students, both
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49 reported similar benefits in academic and social development. Although the non-significant
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51 differences reported contradict previous findings that students in their first year at university
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53 generally benefited more from hall education than non-first-year (Tinto & Goodsell, 1993; Yorke
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3 & Longden, 2008), the current findings reflect a good university's hall system design. This
4 means that the hall activities were well-rounded to suit the needs of both first-year and non-first-
5 year students, and, consequently, residents across all years benefited from the hall activities to a
6 similar extent. The only aspect with some differences was personal development. Results showed
7 that non-first-years acquired significantly more leadership skills than first-years. This contradicts
8 a previous study suggesting that the same leadership experience could have a decreasing impact
9 when first-year students became senior year students (Foubert & Grainger, 2006). While the
10 study offers some insight, it is important to keep in mind that Foubert & Grainger's (2006)
11 research focused on student's participation in clubs and organizations at university, it is possible
12 that different nature of the university experience may affect student's developmental outcomes
13 differently.
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28 Generally, students in their first year at university were found to be more significantly
29 motivated to join hall activities than non-first-year students. This parallels past research
30 indicating that first-years were eager to become involved in university life, joining hall activities
31 can thus be a means to reach this goal (Arboleda et al., 2003; Beekhoven, 2002; Farris, 2010).
32 Consequently, it is not surprising that first-years indicated more personal interest and a greater
33 desire to achieve a well-rounded university experience. In contrast, non-first-years might become
34 involved in other activities, which can explain their lack of active participation in hall activities
35 compared to first-years (Arboleda et al., 2003).
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47 There are certain limitations inherent in this research study. Since the present study was a
48 quantitative study, including qualitative data such as students' perceptions of hall education and
49 ways to improve their hall experience can be useful in developing a well-rounded understanding
50 of the impact of hall experience on students. The potential mediating roles of students'
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3 involvement in residence halls, such as a students' leadership role and participation in hall
4 activities, can also be investigated in future research. While students' reasons for participating in
5 hall activities can be useful in inferring the extent of their hall participation, there may still be
6 discrepancies in terms of their actual commitment in joining these activities. Additionally,
7 investigating students' involvement in various hall activities can contribute to a better
8 understanding of the potential hall activities that can most affect academic, social and personal
9 development outcomes.

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12 Another limitation is the generalizability of the research. As this research only included
13 undergraduate students, it is uncertain whether the same findings would be observed among
14 postgraduate students living in residence halls. Likewise, findings obtained from the study
15 merely represent the residential hall experiences of students from a single public university in
16 Hong Kong. Replication of the study in other institutional type is imperative to ensure that the
17 present findings are not exclusive to the environmental and nationality factors of the institution
18 in this study.

37 **Implications for practice**

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40 After reviewing findings of this study, some recommendations for practice can be
41 **proposed**. In response to the different hall experience for students of different genders, further
42 stimulation of social and personal development outcomes for male residents is suggested. For
43 instance, hall administrations can review current residential hall activities to implement more
44 programs **that can appeal to male residents** (e.g. **video game tournaments**, darts competition, or
45 football night). Likewise, as females tended to be more worried about their re-admission in hall,
46 further room for improvement in the design of hall activities is needed to create more appealing
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3 activities, so that female residents do not only choose to join hall activities with the goal of
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5 reducing negative consequences, but also consider intrinsic motivations by recognizing activities
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7 as rewarding and fulfilling to their university life. For instance, adding more popular hall
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9 activities of female choices such as organizing volunteering work together, peer support in study
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11 assignment, etc.
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15 On the other hand, to ensure that local and non-local students benefit from hall
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17 experience equally, further refinements in hall activities may be required. For example, to
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19 motivate further academic pursuit among local students, hall administrations can consider
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21 organizing more academic exchange or seminars. Additionally, as the present findings suggest
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23 that the current hall system at this university is largely rewarding to local students, further effort
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25 to extend the positive outcomes towards non-local students in regards to social and personal
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27 development may be needed. Future research may thus attempt to identify specific ways to fulfill
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29 these needs (e.g. story sharing of their customs/ tradition of ethnic minorities, dressing up night
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31 of different cultures).
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35 Another implication concerns the residential hall experience of first-year and non-first-
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37 year students. Since results revealed less leadership skills gained among first-years, more hall
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39 activities pertaining to leadership development or further leadership opportunities for first-years
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41 can encourage greater personal development. In a previous study, it was postulated that residents
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43 may prefer other activities as they approach graduation (Arboleda et al., 2003). For instance,
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45 non-first-years may be more concern with career development. This complements the current
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47 finding that reported more motivations for participating in hall activities among first-year
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49 students. In such way, more relevant activities, such as career sharing or job shadowing may be
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51 more applicable to non-first-year students.
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3 Despite the limitations put forward, the study provides useful information in identifying
4 groups who may be more likely to benefit from hall education and those who may not. Findings
5 can be useful to university student affairs and hall administrators in reducing the negative effects
6 and expanding the positive effects of hall education. Results are also significant to the
7 establishment of future policies of residence halls in further enhancing student learning
8 outcomes, benefiting students of different genders, nationalities and year of study. It would also
9 help students to reflect whether their hall life lives up to their expectations. For future students,
10 an understanding of hall experience may also be useful when deciding whether to live in a
11 residence hall or in other form of university accommodations.
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24 In summary, a residence hall is not merely a place for accommodation but is also a
25 significant part of the university experience in contributing to students' personal development.
26 The present study examined the impact of living in residence halls and reasons for joining hall
27 activities among students of different demographics. These include gender, nationality and year
28 of study. Regarding gender differences, females were better developed in terms of social and
29 personal development aspects than males as a result of staying in a residence hall. The same was
30 observed among local students: not only did they report more social and personal development;
31 they were also more socially motivated to participate in hall activities than non-local students.
32 Likewise, while first-year and non-first-year students experienced similar outcomes from their
33 hall education, the former were generally more motivated to participate in hall activities than the
34 latter. The findings provide some insights into how students from different backgrounds
35 experience hall education differently, which can be informative for hall administrators who wish
36 to improve hall experience for students. Since hall education plays a critical role in student
37 learning and development, future research should investigate the topic by replicating the research
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3 study and further delving into students' hall experience for a more comprehensive understanding
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5 of the topic.
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