

ACCULTURATIVE STRESS AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN INDIA

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Abstract: As an individual immigrates he/she has to contact with a new culture which is different from his own. A new culture often challenges individual's values and beliefs. As they are away from family and friends and due to change in language, academic system etc. they are subjected to stress. "This stress which is result of collective stressors that occur during the process of acculturation and can result in lower mental health of the acculturating individual is called acculturative stress" (Berry 1980). The objective of present research was to study and compare the acculturative stress of international students immigrating India across variables such as gender and type of university they are studying (Govt. / Private). A sample of 117 male and 118 female international students from one Govt. and one private university of North India was taken. Acculturative stress scale having 11 dimensions: Discrimination, Isolation, Homesickness, Cultural shock, Guilt, Social support, Self image, Hate, Sad, Safety, Academic challenges, was developed and validated and used to measure level of acculturative stress. The findings of the study revealed that there was significant difference in the level of acculturative stress of male and female international students. There was significant difference in the level of acculturative stress between International students from Govt. and private university.

Keywords: Acculturation, Homesickness, Discrimination, Isolation, Cultural Shock.

INTRODUCTION

The world now has become a global village in which one is not confined to one's own country but moves to other countries for study, job or for some other reasons. Cross-cultural living is exciting but challenging also because individual has to make physical, psychological, socio-cultural adjustment etc. In case of students these adjustments could be social, cultural or psychological. "This period of adjustment, during which immigrants understand and incorporate the values, beliefs, and behaviors of new host culture into the context of the values, beliefs, and behaviors of their culture of origin, is known as the process of acculturation." (Berry, 1980).

While making these adjustments international students may face pressure and worries. Some students may be able to adjust it but other may experience some stress. This stress may be due to adapting a new language, a new culture, experiencing racial discrimination, homesickness and a lack of comfort with the new host culture. "This stress due to cross cultural transition is called acculturative stress". 'Acculturative stress' was introduced by Berry (1970) and is defined as a "reduction in health status of individuals who have to struggle to adapt a new culture

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psychologically and socially.” The stress arises due to differences in social customs, norms, values, education standards, politics etc. between the new host culture and the original culture. Berry (1989) stated that the extent to which a situation can cause stress depends on the characteristics of both the individual and the host culture. Higher level of acculturative stress brings about negative emotional situations such as anxiety and depression (Williams & Berry, 1991). Rawson, Bloomer & Kendall (1994) studied the relationship between depression and stressful experiences in college students and found a positive correlation between them. Gil (1994) found that first-generation adolescent boys who were low on acculturation have high acculturative stress. Hovey and King (1996) found no relationship between acculturation and acculturative stress in a study of 30 male and 40 female Latino adolescents from a bilingual program in California and found due to contextual factors the acculturation process is felt differently by different people.

International students leave behind their home, country and culture, and encounter an entirely different environment to adjust. Thus they experience high levels of acculturative stress and are more prone to psychological problems such as depression (Mori, 2000; Sam & Eide, 1991). According to Gudykunst & Kim (2003), the degree of integration with the host society is negatively correlated with the level of acculturation stress, while separation is positively correlated with it. Barlow(2004); Lazarus & Folkman (1984) showed that viewing a situation which is beyond one’s resources for coping causes stress and leads to negative effects in emotion. It was also indicated that sojourner international students had more stress than other foreigners because of the limited social networks they have (Berry et al., 1987). Anderson(1998) & Berry(2005)found that acculturative stress has a positive aspects which can bring about long-term adaptation to the host culture. Sagy (1999) examined the acculturation patterns among Palestinian adolescents in Israel and found that Palestinian females tended to use the separation strategy, where they preferred to integrate with groups from their original culture and refrained from interacting with the culture of their host. Adapting to new educational and social environments may be even more stressful for students who have different cultural values, language, academic preparation, and study habits (Coelho, 1979; Mori, 2000; Zwingmann & Gunn, 1983). Dyson & Renk (2006) found that an increase in college stress factors lead to higher levels of depressive symptoms in students. The new student has many challenges to overcome (Michael et al., 2006) such as the stress of academic life, sharing their lives with strangers, financial pressures, other development issues (psychological autonomy, economic independence, and identity building), interacting with individuals from different cultural backgrounds, leaving home, and performing as is expected of them as university students (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). Despite the fact

that many students are capable of grappling with the unfamiliarity of university life without experiencing immobilizing difficulties in adjustment, a considerable number of students also develop high levels of depression during these formative years (Michael et al., 2006). Otlu (2010) showed college adaptation is correlated negatively with acculturative stress, even though it is positively correlated with positive coping skills. Yu et al. (2014) found that students from Asia and Africa had more acculturative stress than students of Europe & America. Lower acculturative stress was found in unmarried students and students who were prepared for acculturation. International students from China had more acculturative stress than of developed countries. Azizah et al. (2014) indicated that the majority of international undergraduates suffered cultural stress especially for stressor relating to culture shock, homesickness and perceived hate. The findings suggested that need of programs, designed to assist the international students to adapt to new culture.

In recent times, India has become one of the important centres of education for international students. Many students from different parts of world are now enrolled in Indian universities and colleges. There are approximately more than 35,000 students migrated from different countries to India for education. Despite the substantial number of international students in India, there has been limited research on the acculturative stress and the adjustment problems faced by international students in Indian universities. A lack of adaptation resources for these students during their academic life causes greater stress levels and consequently leads to unfavorable academic results (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). Minority representation in higher education institutions is essential and plays a vital role in one's future ability to contribute socially and economically. The international students' presence in our institutions will help to promote culture & international understanding among these students. Therefore, investigating the process of acculturation that these students go through and understanding the challenges they experience will provide a view of what kind of services can be provided to keep as well as to increase the number of international graduates in India. Understanding the challenges and obstacles faced by International students can contribute to planning for new support for academic help. Such support to the current structure could be: academic advising, support services in terms of coping with a new environment, psychological services for students in hardship and financial support etc. The present study was conducted with an objective to know the level of acculturative stress among international students studying in India. To know whether stress is imposed upon them when they try to adjust to new environment, whether the international students are able to adjust and adapt to the new environment. Therefore this study was conducted with the aim of assessing and comparing the level of acculturative stress experienced by international male and female students in relation to the type of university they are studying .

OBJECTIVES

1. To study and compare the level of acculturative stress among international students with respect to gender.
2. To study and compare the level of acculturative stress among international students with respect to kind of university.

Hypotheses

1. There exists no significant difference in the level of acculturative stress among male and female international students.
2. There exists no significant difference between acculturative stress among international students of Govt. and private university.

METHOD

1. **Sample:** Purposive sampling was used for the study. Two hundred and thirty five international students of Ist year of graduation of streams(Management, Science, Arts) of one Govt. and one Private university of north India who had immigrated recently (after one month) in India were taken. The demographic characteristics of the students who completed the survey were: female (50.21%) and male (49.78) and the majority of the students were between the ages of 18-21and single. All were Ist year student of minimum two years undergraduate course.
2. **Tool:** Acculturative stress scale was developed by researcher after reviewing the psychological problems of International immigrants like Personal depression, Anxiety (Ward, 1967 (Kline berg & Hull (1979); Homesickness, Loneliness (Pederson,1991);); Attitude and cognitive style (Berry,1987); Social Support (Jeesook, 2004), Perceived discrimination (Bacallao, 2006); Homesickness (Eugene, 2009), English Language (Singh, 2011), Personal Growth Initiative (Yakunina, 2013)etc. Sandhu & Asrabadi (1994) in their study stated 7 factors that contribute to acculturative stress (perceived discrimination, homesickness, perceived hate, fear ,cultural shock ,guilt, miscellaneous factors). Toyokawa & Toyokawa (2002) found academic life and psychological autonomy , economic independence etc. are the causes of stress . Mori(2000) found stress arises due to cultural adjustments demands. Yeh and Inose (2003) found lack of adequate social support and social connectedness are the causes of acculturative stress. Ying (2005) found five stressors - physical environment (new setting, climate and safety),biological factors (food and diseases)social factors (loneliness, homesickness) cultural factors (cultural value differences and racial discrimination) and functional factors(academic, transportation

problems and financial difficulties) for acculturative stress. But researcher found a little work has been done on acculturative stress of international students in India (Mishra et. al(1996,2002); Ayoob et al.(2011). As a result there was no instrument available which could be used to assess the acculturative stress of international students in India. The investigator laboriously went through the existing stock of test and tools available. The scanning of the already developed tool revealed that most of the scales were constructed in foreign countries. (Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students(Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994); Social, Attitudinal, Familial & Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale for Children (Hovey & King, 1996);Acculturative Stress Scale(Mena et al,1987) The investigator felt that the tools constructed in foreign countries could not be scientifically used in Indian educational settings. Thus an attempt was made to construct and standardized a measure that could be used to measure acculturative stress of international students in India. Based on above mentioned scales researcher developed acculturative stress scale for international students immigrating in India. The scale having 11 dimensions –Discrimination, Isolation, Homesickness, Cultural Shock, Guilt, Social support, Self image, Hate, Sad, Safety, Academic challenges were used to measure acculturative stress. There were 63 items in the scale. Each item of scale has a response option on ‘Likert’ five points scale- Strongly Agree, Agree, Not Sure, Disagree and Strongly Disagree with respective weights of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 for favourable statements and 1,2,3,4,5 for the unfavourable statements. There were 15 unfavourable items and 48 favourable items. Un-favourable items were 7,8,10,12,13,16,21,23,32,38,41,47,48,50,63 rest were favourable ones. Cronbach’s alpha reliability was calculated with the help of SPSS. It was found to be 0.867 .

PROCEDURE

The questionnaire was administered by self-completion method. Questionnaire were administered in small group meetings in the universities. All participants were informed that the researcher was interested in hearing about their experiences in new culture and that participation was made voluntary. Filled questionnaire were collected by researcher.

RESULTS

The data was analyzed using SPSS Statistics 22.0. The first hypothesis was examined by *t*-tests – for comparison between level of acculturative stress of female and male International students of Govt. university.

Table (i) shows that female students had mean scores ($M = 58.5$) and their male counterparts ($M = 54$) of Govt. university and actual mean difference of stress level was 4.5, which statistically indicated that female stress scores were more than male. The calculated t -ratio 2.81 was more than tabulated value and thus was significant at 0.01 level. Here the null hypothesis *i.e.* "There exists no significant difference between level of male and female international undergraduates of Govt. university" was rejected.

TABLE 1

S. No	Subject	N	Mean	Standard Deviation SD	Standard Error of mean 'D'	't'	Level of Significance 0.01
1	Female	60	58.5	8.67	4.5	2.81	Significant
2	Male	52	54	7.9			

Table (ii) shows that female students had mean scores ($M = 59.2$) and their male counterparts ($M = 55$) of private university. There was statistically significant differences existed on the obtained difference between mean (4.2) ' t '- ratio obtained (2.7) of stress scores of male and female was significant at 0.01 level of significance. It was clear from results that stress scores of female international undergraduate of private university was more than male students. Hence the null hypothesis *i.e.* "There exists no significant difference between stress level of male and female undergraduate international students of private university" was rejected.

TABLE 2

S. No	Subject	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of mean 'D'	't'	Level of Significance 0.01
1	Male	65	55	8.7	4.2	2.7	significant
2	Female	58	59.2	9.1			

Table (iii) shows the comparison between acculturative stress among international undergraduate of Govt and private university. It is evident that Private university undergraduates have low score than Govt. university. The obtained t -ratio is 3.65 for stress scores and ' t ' value when tested for significance stands significant at 0.01 level. This means that ' t ' of the differences between means of stress scores of international undergraduates of Govt. and private university were statistically significant *i.e.* the two groups were not same on the scores of acculturative stress. Thus null Hypothesis therefore rejected which indicated that no significant difference exists, on the variable of stress score for the two groups taken up for the study.

TABLE 3

<i>Category</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t'</i>	<i>Level of Significance 0.01</i>
Private University	Male and female	123	54.08	9.96	3.65	Significant
Govt. University	Male and female	112	58.5	8.48		

DISCUSSION

There were diverse results from earlier studies on gender difference and acculturation stress. Earlier research on gender differences in acculturative stress among graduate students, where male graduates reported a higher level of acculturative stress (Poyrazli, Arbona, Nora, McPherson & Pisecco, 2002). Female students were more likely to experience acculturative stress as they feel more homesickness and loneliness, in comparison to male students (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). However, although males and females have different reactions to stress, some scholars found no significant gender differences concerning acculturation stress (Atwood, 2001; Misra, Crist, & Burant, 2003; Zhang, 2012). The result of this study showed that there was significant gender differences concerning acculturative stress. As female students of Govt. and private university have more score than male students. The reason may be that female students feel more homesickness, loneliness etc. While there was significant difference in level of acculturative stress among students studying in Govt. and private university. Acculturative stress of international students of the private university was found to be less than international students of Govt. university. The reason may be that students get more support from these organizations in adjusting to new environment. Private university show more concern for international students. The administration helps the students in paper work and other formalities of visa. Food, language and safety arrangements were better and this lead to easy adjustment of them. To conclude, the current study's findings suggest the significance of social support given by an institution help in adjustment and reduce the acculturative stress experienced by students (Tamres et al.(2002).

CONCLUSION

Thus findings of the study revealed that there is need of culture-specific services provided by university to students and also need of awareness and cultural sensitivity while working with these populations. Develop activities and programs that embrace and respect the cultural and linguistic values and preferences of each diverse individual student. Faculty and students should be educated on the cultures

and values of people who are different. Although the findings of this study add to the existing literature but there were some delimitations. The study employed a purposive sample of 235 international students residing currently in the India. Future research could be conducted on large sample. Present research was conducted in two universities of north India further research could be conducted in more universities of India.

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