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A study of mental health VIS a VIS culture change and anxiety among international students: A study in Bengaluru

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Abstract---Culture change is an incident an individual experience when he is exposed to an environment of different cultural components ideally differing to the home culture; Additionally, it refers to the sense of confusion that a person may have when adapting to a new culture as a result of immigration or travel, changing social situations, or just adopting a more varied way of life. (Macionis, 2010) This research identifies some of the major causes of a cultural change and highlights on parameters which affects their experience and their impact on mental health. The research has been done with a thought process of evaluating the type of change through four distinct phases vis a vis honeymoon, negotiation, adjustment, and adaptation phase. The aim of this research was to examine the culture shock and anxiety among international students studying in Bengaluru and to find out various coping strategies adapted by them to overcome their culture shock. Parameters identified in this study are: information overload, language barrier, generation gap, technology gap, skill interdependence, formulation dependency, homesickness (cultural), infinite regress (homesickness), boredom (job dependency), response capability (cultural skill set) (Ramsay, Jones, & Barker, 2007; Winant, 2001). The parameters mentioned are directly proportional to hamper the growth/development of the individual and increases the anxiety in them and reduces the efficiency of the individual which would further create dejection in them. Stratified sampling was conducted. This Research on cultural adjustment, where groups reside provisionally in foreign environment suggests that engagement, involvement, and

short-term amalgamation into the host culture may contribute to less psychological and socio-cultural difficulty while studying in a foreign environment.

Keywords---Cultural Adjustment, Sojourner, Anxiety.

1. Introduction

Cultural change occurs when an environment different from an individuals' home environment with respect to the cultural parameters. Cultural adjustment is a dynamic process that might result in the achievement of a good fit between the individual and the environment. (Mustaffa, Ilias, Mustaffa, & Ilias, n.d.). Due to cultural adjustment, it can be challenging for international user to accomplish tasks in their new host country's culture. "Upon arrival in a new country, most international students go through an adjustment process that is usually referred to as cultural shock" (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). The period of transition to college signifies moving away from friends and family as well as a divide from experience-related patterns and norms that are not entirely conventional in the behavioral patterns of the university environment. (Ramsay et al., 2007).

Being exposed to a new, strange culture while being separated from family members and friends may cause feelings of uneasiness, loneliness, and dissatisfaction. There are numerous methods for locating students who are having trouble making cultural adaptations. Based on the students' self-reports of their dedication to the university, involvement in college activities, psychological well-being, and academic status, cultural changes can be measured. Interpersonal interactions with citizens of the host destination are referred to as socio-cultural adjustment. Work adjustments relate to workplace culture and requirements; in this case, we're talking about the educational institutions where students attend classes. The term "general adjustments" refers to everyday concerns including food, language, and life satisfaction. (Yıldırım, 2014).

1.1 Outcome of Cultural Adjustment

Cultural adjustments have both favorable and unfavorable results. Communication difficulties were found to cause feelings of embarrassment, frustration, lack of assertiveness, sensitivity to criticism, and low self-esteem, all of which might cause depression in students. The pupils will be exposed to the aforementioned characteristics due to their new, unfamiliar cultural surroundings; this is a thoroughly researched scenario with the majority of the students in primary school. due to cultural shifts, students are leaving colleges or other institutions. A study (Meiers, 2006) indicated a strong link between cultural changes and academic issues. Positive results include the fact that learners who are excited are more likely to learn about the new culture, connect with their surroundings more quickly, and perform better academically.

1.2 Anxiety

People who experience social anxiety frequently worry that they will be perceived as nervous, "crazy," ignorant, confused, or otherwise inadequate in dreaded circumstances or environments (Clark, 2001). Additionally, it is sometimes anticipated that individuals may display overt physical signs of worry in specific circumstances or settings, such as perspiration, tense muscles, blushing, and/or shaky hands, etc. could lead to or support such unfavorable reviews (Heimberg, Mueller, Holt, Hope, & Liebowitz, 1992; Holt, Heimberg, Hope, & Liebowitz, 1992). People who have the described anxiety are more afraid of the unfavourable judgments that come with interpersonal interactions than they are of actual social circumstances or conversations. (Hofmann, 2007; Liebowitz, Gorman, Fyer, & Klein, 1985). People who are socially anxious are inclined to be hypersensitive to criticism, poor judgement, and rejection, even when they only indirectly encounter these things. (Hofmann, 2000; Liebowitz et al., 1985; Smith & Sarason, 1975).

Language is one of the causes of study anxiety, thus it has an impact on how well students do in educational institutions. Worde claims that the majority of students who were surveyed reported having severe levels of language anxiety (Zheng, 2008). Language serves as a means of communication, hence it plays a vital role as a medium of exchange. Language anxiety, according to MacIntyre in Ying (2008), is a type of situation-specific anxiety that is felt in specific foreign language contexts (Zheng, 2008). Similarly, anxiety connected to studying a foreign language in a classroom was conceived as a unique complex of self perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behavior. Personal and interpersonal factors, learner attitudes about language acquisition, instructor ideas regarding language anxiety, teacher-learner interactions, classroom practices, and language testing are all contributors to language anxiety.

High levels of worry can also make it difficult to pay attention and remember details, both of which are important for academic achievement. However, due to exam worry, social anxiety, and other kinds of anxiety, the majority of students would lack the knowledge of studying. Learning of any kind is not improved by feeling uneasy and nervous in a classroom. While physiological symptoms of anxiety include sweaty palms, a racing heartbeat, or an upset stomach, psychological symptoms of anxiety in students include feeling anxious before a study session, panicking, going blank during a test, feeling helpless while completing assignments, or lack of interest in challenging subjects. A self-concept characterized by subjective, consciously perceived emotions of stress is called anxiety. Anxiety is a psychological and physical reaction to address this condition (Spielberger, 2010). Students who are anxious often have cognitive deficiencies such as information misinterpretation or blockage of memory and recall. In his research, Spielberger identified two types of anxiety: trait anxiety, which is a personality attribute, and state anxiety, which is a reaction to a specific stimuli or set of circumstances. According to earlier studies, there are basically two forms of worry that might manifest at various psychosomatic degrees. (Beckler, 2010; Horikawa & Yagi, 2012; Vitasari, Nubli, Wahab, Othman, & Awang, 2010).

2. Methodology

The method used in this research was designed in a quantitative design. The design is such that students in Bengaluru are considered as the population and a sample size of 194 was collected through Google forms. Out of the 194 respondents, 26% were Post Graduate students; where as the remaining 74% were in their Graduation programs. The three factors which are going to be measured in this research were – Cultural adaption, anxiety and coping factors. The tests utilised to determine the association between students' anxiety, cultural adaption, and coping method were standard deviation and Carl Pearson's correlation.

3. Analysis & Findings

3.1 Demographics

Table 1

CONSTRUCT	F	%
Gender		
Male	120	61.9
Female	74	38.1

3.2 Determinants Of Anxiety

Table 2

DETERMINANTS OF ANXIETY	Mean	S.D
1. While adjusting to my peers, I get anxious.	3.27	1.21
2. I have trouble understanding the college teaching methods.	2.83	1.25
3. I often react excessively to small things.	2.97	1.38
4. I have trouble understanding the local language (kannada)	3.40	1.34
5. I have trouble using public transportation	3.14	1.33
6. When I meet new people from other cultural groups, I get anxious.	3.07	1.29
7. I am content with how things are now in Bengaluru.	3.87	1.02
8. In comparison to my home, I feel more at liberty here.	3.37	1.24
9. At this university, students frequently socialize with others from similar cultural backgrounds.	3.33	1.24
OVERALL ANXIETY	3.18	0.692
SCORE		

Interpretation:

The results in table 2 show that while the majority of students feel content with their day-to-day lives in Bengaluru, some of them have trouble understanding the

local language, feel more free than they do at home, and seek solace in the company of other students who share their cultural background. Few pupils are anxious while interacting with peers, they argue that teaching methods are challenging to grasp, and they disagree with exaggerating small grievances. The Composite Scores demonstrate that students are responding well to their anxiety.

3.3 Determinants of Cultural Change

Table 3

DETERMINANTS OF CULTURAL CHANGE	Mean	S.D
1. It's challenging for me to fit into the culture here.	3.12	1.10
2. I find Bangalore's natural setting unsettling (climate, humidity)	3.02	1.31
3. I have trouble adjusting to the local cuisine.	3.18	1.31
4. The locals are open and welcoming.	3.44	1.14
5. I consider my native culture to be "better" than the host culture.	3.56	1.28
6. I enjoy residing in a city where there is a diverse population.	3.80	0.99
OVERALL CULTURAL CHANGE SCORE	3.71	1.25

Interpretation:

The data in table 3 show that the majority of students concur that they enjoy residing in a city with residents of many ethnicities. Few of them moderately agree that they find it difficult to adapt to host culture and feel the climate and humidity are uncomfortable, as well as to adapt to local cuisine. The majority of them moderately agree that their home culture is superior to the host culture and they also find the host culture welcoming. Overall results indicate a nearly unanimous agreement regarding their cultural changes.

3.4 Determinants of Coping Strategy

Table 4

DETERMINANTS OF COPING STRATEGY	Mean	S.D
1. I tend to read and learn more about the host culture	3.50	1.04
2. I'm trying to pick up the language here.	3.59	1.04
3. Learning about local traditions and customs helps learners fit in with the community.	3.74	1.02
4. Taking part in community events (festivals, tournaments)	3.85	0.91
5. Establish connections with locals in your host nation.	3.73	1.01
6. Looking for organizations or clubs like the ones you belonged to back home.	3.61	1.17
7. I seek advise from friends and family members who have studied in other environments.	3.76	1.09
OVERALL COPING STRATEGY SCORE	3.26	0.68

Interpretation:

The findings from Table 3 indicate that students are almost unanimous in their agreement that engaging in social activities, forming connections with residents of

the host culture, attending awareness events and social gatherings, reaching out to friends and family who have had similar experiences studying abroad, making an effort to learn the local language, and assimilating into the local culture will all aid in reducing anxiety and assisting with cultural adaptation. Overall results indicate that students only somewhat agree that the suggested coping mechanisms are beneficial.

3.4 Inferential Statistics

Pearson's Correlation

The relationship between student's anxiety, cultural adaptation, and coping strategy

Table 5

Constructs	Anxiety	Cultural Adaptation	Coping Strategy
Anxiety	1		
Cultural Adaptation	.182*	1	
Coping strategy	.657**	-.002	1

Interpretation:

To evaluate the connection between students' anxiety, cultural adaption, and coping mechanism, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated. Three variables had a positive association ($r=0.657$ for coping strategy and anxiety, and $r=0.182$ for cultural adaptation and anxiety), indicating a relationship between them. Since coping techniques and anxiety are strongly correlated, coping strategies may be used to help students who travel to Bengaluru for their studies feel less anxious.

4 Suggestions & conclusion

The cultural adjustment that students must make to life away from home is their biggest challenge. They deal with issues and circumstances that are foreign to their home country (state). The study suggested that there should be a coaching centre for students to learn the local language or that they should download a mobile application to do so because most of the students were happy with their day-to-day lives in Bengaluru. However, a small number of them did find it difficult to interpret the language. Some students acknowledged that they have trouble adjusting to new peers. These issues can be resolved by holding ice-breaker activities and team-building exercises prior to the start of class.

The factors that influence cultural change were discovered, and it was shown that the majority of students enjoy interacting with people from diverse cultures while also believing that their own culture is superior. Since this makes it difficult to transfer information from one culture to another, groups and programmes for cultural exchange must be established where students can engage and discuss the significance of each other's cultures through forums and other means. The ability of students to adapt to the local food opens up a new market where

students might potentially benefit from being introduced to eateries serving other cuisines.

The findings indicated a connection between anxiety and cultural adaptation as variables. Most students indicate that they enjoy interacting with people from various cultures while living in the city. There is a strong correlation between coping strategy and anxiety, which suggests that coping strategies can be used to lessen the anxiety of students who travel to Bengaluru for their studies. Positive correlations between variables like anxiety and cultural change also show that there is a strong correlation between coping strategy and anxiety. The students found the coping mechanisms useful, and they can use them to acclimate in a setting other than their home.

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