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Assessment of cross cultural adaptation of diaspora on their return for higher education to the country of origin

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Abstract--Background: The number of diaspora students enrolling in the courses offered in India who is also called as Non Resident Indians when return back to India must be experiencing cultural adaptation difficulty similar to a student enrolling in any foreign country. Aims: To evaluate the cross cultural adaptation of Non Resident Indian Student on their return for further education. Settings and Design: Online questionnaire in a Cross Sectional study design. Methods and Material: The NRI students with the help of snowball sampling technique were asked to fill the questionnaire consisting of Satisfaction from Life scale and Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale. A Total of 210 NRI students participated in the present study. Statistical analysis: Descriptive analysis of the data with Anova applied on mean and SD to test the significance between Length of Residence with Life Satisfaction and Social-cultural Skills. Model Summary and Parameter Estimates for the Regression Relationship between Length of Residence with Life Satisfaction and Social-cultural Skills was applied. Results: Among which 84 (40%) were males and 126 (60%) females with 24.11 as mean age of the participants. Social cultural scores are found to be increasing as the length of residency increases

in direct proportion. Conclusions: Both the factors life satisfaction and social cultural skills reported a positive association with length of residence. The difficulties faced by the students reported are similar to that of any other foreigner student.

Keywords--non resident Indian student, socio cultural adaptation, psychological adaptation, snowball sampling.

Introduction

India holds a protracted history of migration, beginning in the pre-colonial period. According to J.S. Mangat^[1], later in nineteenth and twentieth century migration got concentrated according to colonial networks to Asia and new settler colonies such as Canada and Australia. Since the 1960's, skilled Indian migrants have taken advantage of liberalized immigration policies in the West and settled there^[2]. States of India like Punjab, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat have contributed a lot to migration^[3]. Recent estimates by a Report of the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora^[4] the number of persons of Indian descent outside of India are around 20 million people, spread across 48 countries. Some of these countries including Canada, Malaysia, Mauritius, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, the United Arab Emirates and the United States are home to populations above half a million.

These people who are settled in foreign are called as a Non-Resident Indian's NRI. As these people are settled there from the long time their children's schooling and upbringing is being done in a foreign country like any other child of that country. This makes these NRI kids citizens of India but residents of that country. These children higher education nowadays for the parents is a huge financial liability which they cleverly try to reduce by getting them enrolled in Indian Universities. This is clearly reflected in the article published in Forbes by National Center for Education Statistics who have emphasised the increasing average cost per year for 2015-2016 from over \$19,000 for a public four-year university education to nearly \$40,000 for a private university in a years span for universities in the United States. Hence these students are relocated to India, where they must be experiencing adaptation difficulties as they need to adjust to an entirely different system, which they belong to but might not be able to easily adapt with.

With an increasing number of the NRI students getting enrolled for higher education across the country, it became a felt need to evaluate the level of adaptation both (psychological and socio-cultural) of these NRI college students who were born in the same country but have done their schooling from a foreign country. Besides, they were born in the same country yet the adaptation to the new environment, far away from parents poses a challenge towards these adolescents, these variables (cultural adaptation) have been previously discussed among students from different countries who join universities in the USA by ^[5] but is never conducted in students of the same country. This will be first of its kind attempt to understand and record the cross-cultural adaptation of students

who were born in the same country but have been staying in a foreign country on their return for higher education.

Method

Purpose of the Present Study

To evaluate the effect of cross cultural adaptation among nonresident Indian students on their return for higher education.

Sampling Design

The current study is an attempt to extract cross-cultural adaptation among Non-Resident Indian university students perusing their graduation/ post-graduation. The sampling for this group was a snowball sampling technique. This technique is a method, which is also called the "chain method,"^[6] it is an efficient and cost-effective technique to access people who would otherwise be very difficult to find. Goodman ^[7]conceptualized this as an ideal way where every individual in a population can nominate other individuals in that population, which provides an equal probability of being selected among the target universe. The protocol has been accepted and approved by the institutional ethical review board.

Sample

To acquire a study group that approaches a random sample as closely as possible, a very important condition is that the first group of respondents (zero-stage) should be selected randomly. The participants were sent with an invitation mail enquiring certain information such as NRI status and student status to be confirmed beforehand, if the individual was found willing to participate after understanding the need of the study the questioner was forwarded to the individual and this participant was added to the chain or else a new network was initiated.

Pretesting of questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to five students, twice on successive days, who were interviewed to gain feedback on the overall acceptability of the questionnaire in terms of length, language clarity, time and feasibility of completing it. Based on their feedback, the necessary changes in the questionnaire were made and Cronbach's coefficient was applied which reported being 0.80, which represent internal reliability of the questionnaire. The 210 valid respondents completed the form sent to them; rest a few forms had to be discarded as all the questions were not filled with a response. These students were enrolled from various graduation and post-graduation courses offered spread all around the country. It required 10 minutes maximum to fill the entire questionnaire when tested.

Instrument

The study questionnaire can broadly be divided into three domains firstly the demographic profile of the individual, recorded with the help of questions such as age, gender, country of schooling enrolled for which course and is staying in India as a student from how long in months. Second domain recorded the Satisfaction From Life with the help of previously published by Diener et al. [8]. Thirdly the socio-cultural adaptation with the help of SCAS-R Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale by Wilson and Ward [9].

Life Satisfaction

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), developed by Diener et al [8] was used to assess participants' psychological adaptation. The SWLS was initially designed to identify the participant's overall life satisfaction, specified by the individual's own apparent and conscious judgment of satisfaction with life Pavot & Diener^[10]. The scale consists of five statements (e.g., "In most ways my life is close to my ideal") that are responded to using a 7-point Likert response format. Participants were asked to indicate the degree of agreement with each statement that reflected their global judgment of life satisfaction and well-being, with 7 representing "strongly agree" and 1 representing "strongly disagree." The SWLS has acceptable construct validity to assess one's global life satisfaction. It has been translated into different languages, and the English version was used in the current study. The correlation coefficient of the test-retest reliability was 0.85, and the coefficient alpha was 0.83. To interpret the scores, cutoffs were applied based on the summed aggregate score recommended by Diener et al^[8]. Specifically, participants who scored in the range of 30-35 were considered to be very highly satisfied, enjoy their lives and believe that their lives were going very well. Those who scored in the range of 25-29 felt their lives were going well, and participants who scored in the range of 20-24 were usually satisfied but may have needed improvement in their lives. Participants who fell in the range of 15-19 were evaluated as slightly below average in life satisfaction and had small but significant problems in their lives. Those who scored in the range of 10-14 might be dissatisfied with some notable facet of their lives. Those who scored in the range of five to nine were considered to be extremely dissatisfied and unhappy with their lives.

Socio-Cultural Adaptation

To measure participants' socio-cultural adaptation, the revised version of the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale was used. The original Socio-cultural Adaptation Scale by Searle & Ward,^[11] contains 16 items. The revision was made by Wilson and Ward^[9] in 2010, retaining the 5-point Likert format (1- Not at all competent, 5- Extremely competent), but extending the total items to 21. Responses reflect the degree to which participants believe they are competent in gaining specific new skills and behaviours in a new culture.

Results

Table 1 : A Total of 210 NRI students participated in the present study. Among which 84 (40%) were males and 126 (60%) females with 24.11±3.92 as mean age.

Most of them were enrolled for a graduation degree with 66.1 9% population only 33.8 1% pursue post- graduation. Maximum students belong to the group of 1 to 4 months of stay with 28.10 percent. Next group present in abundance are those who are staying from 13 to 24 months. Among the total 164 that is (78. 9%) belong to Middle East and African countries. Rest of them 42 that is 21.9 % belong to other countries.

Table 2 : Descriptive statistics of life satisfaction and social cultural skills by months of residence depicted mean life satisfaction score when tested with length of stay yielded maximum score for more students having more than 49 months of residency with mean 25.65 ± 3.74 and a minimum of mean life satisfaction score reported for students whose length of residence was 9 to 12 months with 22.46 ± 3.72 . Social cultural scores are found to be increasing as the length of residency increases in direct proportion. Both the factors reported a positive association with p value 0.04 and 0.01 for life satisfaction and social cultural skills respectively with length of residence.

Table 3 : Shows the model summary and parameter estimates of the regression equation. Only the quadratic equation model of the data is significant, with $p < .05$. The equation of this quadratic model is life satisfaction = $25.32 - 1.38(\text{length of residence}) + 0.19(\text{length of residence})^2$. Table 4 : Shows the model summary and parameter estimates for both linear and nonlinear regressions. Although both linear and nonlinear models show significant fitness (with F Linear; F Quadratic; F Cubic, the variance explained by the change of model does not change significantly. Therefore, there is a significantly strong relationship between length of residence and social-cultural skill development among these students.

Table 1
Demographic information of the study subjects

Parameters	Value (N=210)
Gender	
Male, N (%)	84 (40%)
Female, N (%)	126 (60%)
Age, Mean \pm SD	24.11 \pm 3.92
Education	
Graduates, N (%)	139 (66.19%)
Postgraduates, N (%)	71 (33.81%)
Length of Residence	
1-4 months	59 (28.10%)
5-8 months	26 (12.38%)
9-12 months	22 (10.48%)
13-24 months	48 (22.86%)
25-36 months	21 (10.00%)
37-48 months	15 (7.14%)
>49 months	19 (9.05%)
Geographical Areas	
Middle East/ African Countries	164 (78.09)
Other countries	46 (21.91)
Total	210 (100%)

Table 2
Descriptive statistics of life satisfaction and socio-cultural skills by months of residence

Length of Residence	LifeSatisfaction		Socio-culturalSkills	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1-4 months	23.99	4.27	57.61	10.89
5-8 months	24.47	3.79	59.99	11.19
9-12 months	22.46	3.72	61.30	11.06
13-24 months	22.82	3.94	61.04	10.94
25-36 months	24.37	3.09	63.81	12.02
37-48 months	24.02	3.55	64.26	11.58
>49 months	25.63	3.74	69.30	11.78
Anova Test	4.88		9.11	
p value	0.04*		0.01*	

*: statistically significant

Table 3
Model Summary and Parameter Estimates for the Regression Relationship between Length of Residence and Life Satisfaction

Equation	Constant	b1	b2	b3	R2	p value
Linear	23.48	0.08			0.003	0.58
Quadratic	25.32	1.38	0.19		0.04	0.05
Cubic	24.97	0.90	0.08	0.01	0.05	0.11

Table 4
Model Summary and Parameter Estimates for the Regression Relationship between Length of Residence and Social-cultural Skills

Equation	Constant	b1	b2	b3	R2	p value
Linear	56.08	1.52			0.057	0.02
Quadratic	57.35	0.62	0.16		0.059	0.006
Cubic	53.11	5.91	1.56	0.08	0.060	0.008

Discussion

Migration is a characteristic of globalization. In 2008, almost 3% of the world population lived in a country other than their country of birth Howard P^[12]. These are called as diaspora, the term diaspora comes from an ancient Greek word meaning "to scatter about." And that's exactly what the people of a diaspora do — they scatter from their homeland to places across the globe. The diaspora community of India working/settled in any foreign location are being considered as non-resident Indians. The NRI students are increasingly getting enrolled in Indian Universities. These students in spite of being Indian from origin does not show any characteristic traits of being in house candidates rather faces problems of cultural shock. Culture shock is hastened by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse.^[13]

Trifonovitch GJ ^[14] in the year 1977 had published a paper defining four stages of cultural adjustment. He described stage one as the honeymoon stage, which is characterized by feelings of excitement. In this phase, students feel good about themselves and may feel a sense of accomplishment. The second stage is the hostility stage, the student can no longer tolerate the experience of the new culture. The students may experience culture shock which is expressed by feelings of frustration, anger, sadness, confusion, anxiety, and depression. The humor stage is considered as the next stage for the students which enhance the ability to engage in more relaxing activities such as laughing and socializing. They interact more with others because they have made friends and they have begun to enjoy their academic activities. The final stage is called the home stage. The home stage is characterized by the students feeling settled in the new environment or culture because they feel accepted.

This universally accepted scale on cultural adjustment is well established by the results of this study as the mean life satisfaction scores show an increase in the mean value of 23.99 ± 4.27 to 24.47 ± 3.79 , demarcating the transition of the student from the honeymoon stage of 1-4 months to hostility stage initiating after 5 months of time in college. The hostile stage doesn't last long and the student's life satisfaction score clearly show a drop in the mean score of life satisfaction to 22.46 after 8 months in the new settings. The humor stage with NRI students remain till one year and suddenly after 12 months the scores start to shift towards 24.02 ± 3.55 between 37-48 months representing the home stage. This is the phase from where the life satisfaction score tends to increase in the present study, authors correlate this with the end of 5-year professional course and the student who got settled in life suddenly start to think about future prospects in life and end of student life. The reason for the extended home stage can even be understood by the same reason. As the students are from different kind of courses, the three-year graduation course will make students come out of the home stage early.

The results from table two can be made to categorise the cultural adaptation scale with the length of residence in the new settings of the students. The socio-cultural skills among the students if found to be on a steady rise, with no fall of scores from 51.61 ± 10.89 at 1-4 months of stay to 69.30 ± 11.78 at the end of the 49 months and more. This kind of results depict the students culturally scores are directly proportional to the length of stay. The statistical difference reported between the length of stay and life satisfaction along with Socio-cultural Skills is reported to be statistically significant. The findings of this present study, in spite of being conducted among the population from the same country of origin have lot of similarity with a study conducted by Wang et al^[15] in 2018 among students from a different country of origin facing socio-cultural adaptation issues in USA.

According to the author's, there will always be a difficulty for any international students towards adjustment in a new environment, Gebhard in 2012^[16] found that students encountered problems in adjustment in three primary areas, academic, social interaction, and emotional reaction. The unfamiliarity with available resources and difficulties associated to access those resources, missing social support system and/or the social network makes it a multifactorial

problem experienced^[17] and often manifest in depression, loneliness and isolation^[18]. It is expected by the authors that the best of the students who are intelligent and smart enough are getting a chance to be nominated for a higher education course in a foreign country, these students are definitely intelligent but the cultural intelligence is another concept of the intelligence which can help the international students to successfully undergo throughout their experience of living in a foreign land.

Cultural intelligence mentions the aptitude of an individual to communicate, relate, familiarize, and work effectively across cultures. A student even if having a high intelligence quotient (IQ) does not guarantee successful cultural adjustment because he or she could have low cultural intelligence. Similar results are being reported regarding Cultural intelligence to be predictors of successful psychological adjustment of international students by Harrison & Brower^[19]. The changes in the reported trend of life satisfaction scale scores, according to the author could be related to the Institutional efforts who are helping these students to adjust in the environment, it is unlikely for them to have a sudden leap from the recovery phase to the adjustment phase. This pattern found in this study is actually similar to a previously published ^[20] model based on research on immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Israel.

The rise in the scores at and after 49 months of residence for life satisfaction and socio-cultural skills could be correlated with the pressure of returning home, seeking job or preparation for further education. Unlike the results of the present study, it is not always necessary that the duration of these phases will be the same as reported in the present survey even the order of these phases might vary and might not follow the order of honeymoon phase to follow with a cultural shock which will further, lead to recovery and home stage or adjustment phase what has been reported in the present survey. There have been instances where the time at which the crisis of adaptation occurs may vary^[20]. In Lysgaard's^[21] traditional model (1955), culture shock may appear six to eighteen months after arrival. In other situations, as revealed by study^[20] of immigrants in Israel, the crisis may appear after a longer period of time—such as the fifth month after arrival. Furthermore, in cases like another^[21] study published, the period of stress and difficulties began as late as the seventeenth or eighteenth month of residency for Western businessmen in Mainland China^[21]. In comparison to some of these findings of different studies ^{[20],[21]}, international students who took part in this study and whose crisis periods lasted from the ninth month through the twenty-fourth month of residency experienced a delay in entering the toughest period and recovery.

The present study revealed that the socio-cultural skills mean scores are seen rising from 57.61 ± 10.98 to 69.30 ± 11.78 similarly there has been an upward trend of rising scores of socio-cultural scores in a research on Japanese students in New Zealand^[22], the toughest time of socio-cultural adaption appeared at the entry point and then alleviated as time went on. The results found in this study are consistent and aligned with Ward et al. ^[22] regarding the rapid acquisition of socio-cultural skills. The academic pressure will definitely be another factor to be considered since academic achievement is an important aspect of psychological adaptation ^[23]. These students are definitely expected to excel in academics by

their parents and teachers which might create a situation of workload, stress and overall stress. With the increasing levels of class difficulty and workloads, students might experience many problems, such as stress, lack of sleep, and some psychosomatic disorders. As suggested previously these problems could help explain the long-term low levels of psychological adaptation among the students.^[23]

With the extensive literature search done by the authors it has been absolutely clear that the colleges /universities hold the most important position towards making cross cultural adaptation feasible for the students, supportive programs for first year international students, such as an orientation at the beginning of their study, seminars or regular meetings that address issues concerning professional development, a buddy system, informal get-togethers for students to talk and socialize, and panel discussions in which international students share experiences and problems are all definitely proving remarkable results this is being supported by Erichsen & Bolliger^[24].

Conclusion

The Non-Resident Indian students in spite of returning to their homeland face similar issues as that of a foreigner, this is due to the fact that other than an Indian Passport the student has been receiving the similar upbringing as that of any other classmate. There should be a negligible effect of language, the financial burden and missing family members for the NRI student unlike the regular foreign student getting enroll in a new country where the language is new or has taken a heavy loan in order to pay the fees and literally having no family or friends in that country, still being affected by the difficulty of cross-cultural adaptation. Both the students NRI and of Foreign origin have similar reaction towards cross-cultural adaptation. The purpose of this article is to address an issue regarding these Diaspora students who for an instance are considered as returning home are actually facing equal adaptation and adjustment issues as any Indian student being sent to a foreign country.

Adjustment and adaptation are such volatile factors that every student handles it in a different way, academic intelligence should not be considered as a factor which can help. This article will highlight for the first time the unexpected challenges being faced by the student of Indian Origin but settled in a foreign land. The NRI students are being bullied for the kind of pronunciation and way of speaking, their sophistication and lifestyle, as disclosed during personal interaction with some of the participants is another hurdle being faced towards getting social and interactive as suggested by the Oberg. Considering these factors the students are suggested to be flexible in terms to attaining a social acceptance and getting adapted, these situations should not affect the state of mental health and the student should be able to reach a adaptation stage. The Indian Diaspora community is the largest in world and being well educated is slowly reaching strategic positions in the world, these students receiving education in India will soon become the face of eminence in the world of their respective field, the future leaders, business man, professionals, doctors and engineers hence preparing them early towards adaptation skills should be a priority of every parent.

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