

ACCULTURATIVE STRESS AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN RELATION TO GENDER, AGE AND FAMILY INCOME

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Abstract

In recent times, India has become one of the important centers of education for international students. Many students from different parts of world are now enrolled in Indian universities and colleges. The international students' presence in our institutions helps to promote culture & international understanding among these students. As the number of international students increase, so is the number of acculturative stress cases. International students not only face with problems similar to those of all university students, but they have the added pressures associated with life in a new environment, learning the new language and culture. The combination of these stresses reduces the international student's ability to perform. The earlier researches on acculturation suggested that an individual can regain his/her ability to function better by increasing his/her understanding of the new environment's language and culture. Additionally, the research indicated that if they receive information and support, international students may adjust more quickly and easily (Chae, 2014, Khan, 2016). It, therefore, becomes need of time to find methods for helping international students to deal with stress. The present study was initiated in response to the growing concern about the acculturative stress experienced by international students. The objectives of present study were to study the level of acculturative stress among international students in relation to gender, age and family income. For this researcher developed and validated the acculturative stress scale. The acculturative stress level of international undergraduate studying in one of university of union territory Chandigarh was measured. It was found that there was significant difference in the level of acculturative stress in relation to gender and family income. There was no significant difference in the level of acculturative stress in relation to age.

Keyword: Acculturation, Acculturative stress, International students



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Immigration is a cultural transition that involves a variety of challenges. A new culture often challenges one's values and beliefs. When an individual or group of people immigrate to new culture they have to contact with a culture which is different from their own culture. After the contact there is reciprocal influence of both the culture upon the individual or group. This period of contact with other culture is known as "Acculturation". Redfield et al. (1937) defined "acculturation as the phenomenon which result when groups of individuals

having different cultures come into contact with other culture ,this result in subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups”.

When an individual move into an environment that is linguistically and culturally different from his own, he may find himself in the middle of challenges and dilemmas and thus may face many difficulties such as geographical distance, foreign language, moving from predominantly one culture to other. During the acculturation process an individual experiences a type of stress .Individuals who are in the process of acculturation in a dominating culture and are adapting culture, language and norms of dominant culture experience acculturative stress. Berry (1987) described acculturative stress as “reduction in health status (including psychological and social aspects) of individuals who are undergoing acculturation”. Berry (2006) defined “acculturative stress as a response by people to life events that are rooted in intercultural contact.”When an individual experience conflict with new culture, it result into acculturative stress”.

India has the second largest education system in the world offering the widest spectrum of programs .The courses are recognized over the world .India is the 2nd largest English speaking population in the world and hence it is a place where foreign nationals feel at home. India has been a global destination for education, offering the best learning experience for a long time. A large number of students come to India from countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Ethiopia, Maldives, Mauritius, France, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, UK, US, Vietnam and Zimbabwe etc. for their higher studies. They look at the Indian education system with trust and belief. The representation of international students in higher education institutions plays a vital role in national economy. The international students’ presence in our institutions will help to promote our culture & international understanding among these students. As the number of international students increases, so does the number of acculturative stress cases. It, therefore, becomes imperative to study the acculturative stress so that method can be developed for helping international students to deal with stress. Thus present problem was taken for study by the researcher.

Significance of the Study: The first reason of taking this study was as review of researches has showed that international students do experience acculturative stress (Berry et al, 1987) and that this stress could be reduced by providing information on support (Boyer & Sedleck, 1988). This study was initiated in response to the growing concern about the acculturative

stress experienced by international students. The second reason was that despite a large number of international students in India, there has been limited research on the acculturative stress and their adjustment problems (Mishra, 1996, 2002; Ayoob, 2011). India is a land of Culture, traditions and religious diversity. Nowhere on Earth does humanity represent itself in such a magnificent creative burst of cultures and religions, races and tongues. Results of studies done there are assumed to have generalizability to the Indian context. It is recognized that some commonalities exist with regard to language, culture and institutional existence. A lack of adaptation resources for these students during their academic life causes stress and consequently leads to unfavorable academic results (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). Thus there was a need of investigating the process of acculturation that these students go through and understanding the challenges they experience. This will provide a view to what kind of services can be provided to keep them, as well as to increase the number of international graduates in India. The purpose of finding the level of acculturative stress they suffer is to help them function at their full potential and achieve more academic success. The present study attempted to fill the gap in the current research by meeting its objectives to know whether stress is imposed upon them when they are in new environment, whether they are able to adjust and adapt to the new environment or not. Till date, studies in this field have been limited, therefore, this study will provide a better understanding of some of the psychological process that international students go through. As teachers and administrators our aim is to help all the students to attain their goals and to enhance their adjustment in the environment. Thus it might help education practitioners to improve their understanding of the issues related to acculturation and might enhance their ability to provide cultural sensitive and helpful services to the international students for their easy adjustments in new land.

As the proposed research was concerned with the acculturative stress of international students, it was necessary to develop understanding of the problems they encounter during acculturation. After going through review of literature, researcher found that acculturation is an important process as discussed by Church (1982) various problems faced by international student's - language difficulties, financial problems, adjustment to new educational system, homesickness and adjustment to social norms etc.. International students were most frequent user of university health services (Rice, 1974). The four leading health problems of

international students were- fatigue, homesickness, headaches & cold (Miler & Harwell, 1983). They also faced difficulty particularly with respect to the unfamiliarity of the academic system (Maxwell, 1974). The most common educational problem for international students was language understanding (Leong, 1989). Although much research has been conducted to identify the adjustment problems of international students (Brein & David, 1971; Hull, 1978; Spaulding & Flack, 1976; Church, 1982) .Few studies have focused on their needs (Leong & Sedlacek, 1989). According to Huang (1977) stress created to international students by four problem areas: English deficiency, shifting the cultural gears that are involved in acculturative stress (i.e. balancing of host culture and retaining one's own cultural heritage and identity) , replacement of social network of family and friends, and dealing with their multiple accountability(i.e. academic failure may lead to shame and humiliation because of high family expectations and monetary investment).Although Huang discussed the areas of assistance but little is discussed with regard to methods for meeting these needs. Boyer and Sedlacek (1988) showed that the areas required help of international student's are information giving and support.

Objective

To study the level of acculturative stress among international students in relation to gender, age & family income.

Method

The purpose of this study was to find the level of acculturative stress among international students .The design of present study was descriptive survey. To measure the level of acculturative stress researcher developed and validated acculturative stress scale. 'Cronbach's alpha' reliability was calculated with the help of SPSS. It was found to be 0.896. It was fairly high to testify the soundness of the scale. Each item of the measure has a response option on 'Likert' five points continuum viz, 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. In order to obtain value of score for each statement, response category of the present scale was assigned by a number. The total score can be derived from sum total of scores of responses. Higher the score obtained by a respondent on all statements higher the level of stress was considered. There were 26 unfavourable items and 55 favourable items. According to scale the minimum and maximum range of the score was 63

and 315 respectively .The z score was obtained and the score below 26 means individual have low level of acculturative stress and score 42-58 means individual has average level of acculturative stress and above 59 shows the high level of acculturative stress.

Table 1 Levels of Acculturative stress based on Z scores

Levels of Acculturative Stress	of Z	High acculturative stress	Average acculturative stress	Low acculturative stress
Range of score		Above 59	42-58	26-41

Sample

Since the objective of the research was to study the level of acculturative stress of international students in India so population of international students was target. So purposive sampling technique was used. . In this study, an international student is defined as a student studying in an undergraduate course in any streams of study who comes from any country other than India.”

Sampling Frame

International students enrolled currently in minimum 2 years duration of course were taken. International students who had completed one month of enrolment were taken.- Undergraduate international students were taken. The selection criterion was supported by Mohammad, 2011) who found that shorter the length of stay high was the acculturative stress. Azizah (2014), Hajara (2014 reported that undergraduate significantly showed high level of stress. A sample of approx. (N= 159) international students taken from one of university of union territory Chandigarh. The demographic characteristics of the sample were- female (59.74%) and male (40.25%) and the students were between the ages of 18-20 years (M=41.45%, F=13.26%), 20-22 years (M=27.24%,F=18.04%) and marital status of all the participant was single. Students were from the countries like Afghanistan (M=20.43%, F=7.87%),Bhutan(M=23.57%,F=6.84%),Nepal(M=15.84%,F=3.53%),Bangladesh (M=8.17%,F=3.77%),Iraq(.M=12.42%, F=2.24%)respectively. family income of >50,000/- <=1,00000group(M=15.72%andF=7.54%) and >1,00000(M=60.37%,f=16.35%) respectively. Introductory interview with the participants was made and students were made aware about the objectives of the research. The participants were explained about the temperament of research and about keeping the privacy of the participants. The acculturative stress scale was

administered to whole group to know the level of acculturative stress. Thus, attempt was made to study the student participants in a natural setting.

Results

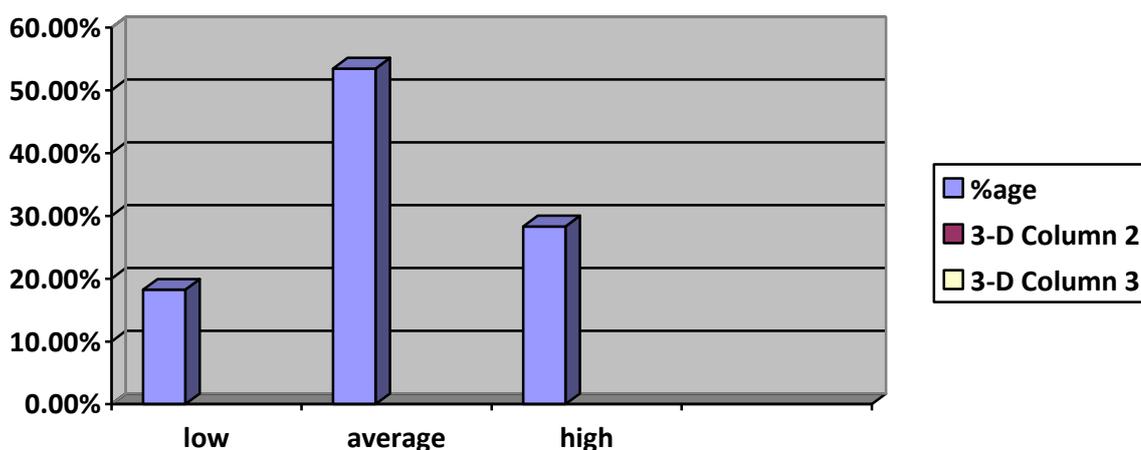
Table 2 showing mean, standard deviation, standard error of Mean of International students

Group Statistics				
Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
International	159	216.65	8.547	0.678

It was evident from table 2 that mean scores of sample of international students was 216.65, standard deviation 8.547 and standard error of mean 0.678. Thus it was clear that there was statistically significant mean score of level of acculturative stress among international students.

Table 3 Percentage wise distribution of total sample at different levels of acculturative stress

S.no.	Levels of acculturative stress	N	%age
1	Low level of acculturative stress	29	18.24%
2	Average level of acculturative stress	85	53.45%
3	High level of acculturative stress	45	28.30%
Total		159	



Graph 3.1

Table 3 and graph 3.1 showed distribution of total sample on different level of acculturative stress of international students. The data revealed that 18.24% of the total sample reported in low level acculturative stress and 53.45% of total sample reported in average level of acculturative stress. On the other hand, 28.30% of total sample reported high level of acculturative stress. The overall results indicated that high percentage of sample revealed average level of acculturative stress, followed by high level of acculturative stress and low level of acculturative stress. The findings supported by Nasirudeen (2014) and Azizah (2014) they also found that a significant level of acculturative stress among international students.

Table 4 showing mean, standard deviation, and standard error of Mean of International student's gender wise

Group Statistics					Std.	Error
	GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	
SCORE	male	95 59.74%	150.09	7.303	1.101	
	female	64 40.25%	209.75	9.359	1.411	

From the table 4 mean scores of male and female international students respectively were 150.09 and 209.75 and standard deviation 7.303 and 9.359 and standard error of mean 1.101 and 1.411 respectively. So it was evident from the table that there was statistically significant difference between mean score of acculturative stress of male and female international students. So there was statistically significant difference between two groups ($t_{157} = -33.335, p < .05$). We can conclude that there was statistically significant difference between the mean score level of acculturative stress between male and female. Female have high %age in high level of stress. The findings supported by the Al-Qaisy (2010) who also found the there was significant difference in the level of acculturative stress on the basis of gender.

Table 5 showing mean, standard deviation, standard error of Mean of International students age wise

			Paired Samples Statistics			
			Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
groups	Age years	group(18-20)	215.91	N=87 54.71%	8.186	1.234
	Age years)	group(20-22)	209.75	N=72 45.28%	9.359	1.411

Table 5 showed that mean scores of age groups were 215.91 and 209.75 and standard deviation 8.186 and 9.359 and standard error of mean 1.234 and 1.411 respectively. This showed that mean score of both the group almost same. It can be concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between our two variable scores of control group (without intervention) ($t = 5.367, p > .05, df=157$). Result revealed that no significant difference of acculturative stress between different age groups. The findings supported by the Asmawati (2012) who also found there was no significant difference in the level of acculturative stress on the basis of age group.

Table 6 showing mean, standard deviation, standard error of Mean of International students family income wise

Group Statistics					
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
SCORE	>1,00000	122	141.11	5.388	.812
	>50,000<=1,00000	37	207.02	8.754	1.320

It was evident from table 6 that mean scores of groups family income were 141.11 and 207.02, standard deviation 5.388 and 8.754, standard error of mean 0.812 and 1.320 respectively. Table showed that there was statistically significant difference in the mean score of acculturative stress between family income groups. So there was statistically significant difference between two groups ($t_{157} = -42.532, p < .05$). The Sig. (2-Tailed) value was 0.000. This value was less than .05. Thus we can conclude that there was statistically significant difference between the mean score of the groups.

Discussion

Thus results of the study revealed that there exists a significant level of acculturative stress among international students. The overall results indicated that high percentage of sample revealed average level of acculturative stress, followed by high level of acculturative stress and low level of acculturative stress on the basis of gender, age & family income. The findings of hypothesis showed a significant level of stress among international students. This not only supports our hypothesis but also extends the existing literature (William & Berry, 1991; Berry & Kostonik, 1993; Hill et al, 1994, Smart & Smart, 1995; Mishra, 1996; Ada & Suk, 2004; Asmawati, 2012; Azizah, 2014). The result of our study adds to the results of existing literature by demonstrating that whenever an individual moves from one culture to other a stress was imposed to him due to change in language, food, environment, cultural values & education policies etc. The findings of current study also support that acculturative stress was an important stress by itself and was not general stress. These findings also supported carter's (2007) call to examine acculturative stress which helps us to understand the complexities and problems of acculturation. -Female international students have high score of acculturative stress as compared to male international students. The reason may be that female international students have more personal problems, security issues, homesickness etc. - Male and female international students of age group (18-20 years) and (20-22 years) were almost have same level of stress. So there was no significant difference in the level of acculturative stress among male international students on the basis of age group. Male and female international students of family income (>50,000 and <=1, 00000) have more mean score of acculturative stress than the group (>1,00000). So there was significant difference in the level of acculturative stress among male international students on the basis of family income. Thus lack of financial resources also lead to more stress as students have to manage finance for their education.

Educational Implications

Results of this study pointed out that teachers should deal with the culture related issues in the class and should try to put their efforts in providing assistance to international students, in developing more diverse social networks, adapting to host culture's academic norms and developing connections to host culture. Helping international students to expand their social network beyond from their countries of origin may help them to lessen the negative effects of

acculturative stress. Teachers should help international students who come to campuses, in making friends and connections with diverse group of students .As this will help in adapting academics life in India. Even Counselors should assist while counseling international students to develop wider social networks involving a broader range of nationalities. This may develop additional social skills which help to make adjustments in India .This will also provide information about how to mix other people not only in classrooms but also through campus organizations & activities. As has been demonstrated in the other studies on acculturative stress for international students (Coelho, 1979; Dyson, 2006) it was found, academic pressures was an important aspect so counselors and practitioners should take this into consideration. The demand that international students should quickly adapt the new academic culture is difficult one and a major source of stress for students.

Limitations & Suggestions for Future Research

Although the findings of this study add to the existing literature but there were some delimitations that need to be taken into considerations. One of the strengths of this study was that the sample was collected from a region where studies on acculturative stress of international students were not taken but it could be one of delimitation that data was taken only from one university so results of current study may not be generalized to other regions. The study employed a purposive sample of international students residing currently in India. The sample of the present study was not so vast to represent the large population due to low response rate. Although this is frequent difficulty in research with international students (Kagan & Cohen, 1990; Constantine et al, 2004; Poyrazli et al.,2004). Further research can be conducted on large sample. As participation in research was of voluntarily to research participant so this kind of design has limitations because these findings could not be generalized to participants who decided not to participate.The participants of this study were of 18 to 22 years of age and having acculturation period in India of one month. So this age group of the study has indicated stress but elder age group having longer period of stay may show different results. Future study may take elder group.

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