

Acculturative Stress and Social Support among the International Students: An Empirical Approach

Feba Thomas^a, Sumathi G. N^b

^a Research Associate, VIT Business School, VIT University, Vellore-14, India

^b Associate Professor, VIT Business School, VIT University, Vellore-14, India

Abstract

The students face acculturative stress when they move from one country to another country for the study purpose. This study aims in understanding the role of social support in reducing acculturative stress among the International students. The sample is collected from foreign students studying in India and Indian students studying abroad (n=100). The sample consists of both male (47%) and female (53%) students. The study uses purposive sampling. Data is collected through an online survey using questionnaire. The findings from this study indicate that the acculturative stress can be reduced to a greater extent if the students have social support when they go to another country. Social support from their families, friends, and significant others will also help them to reduce the stress in the new environment. Social support from the families have a significant relationship with the acculturative stress, this will reduce the acculturative stress. There are fewer studies conducted so far on acculturative stress and social support among the foreign students, and Indian students who move from their home country to another country for their studies. This study also focuses on the way the social support can enhance the students to cope up with acculturative stress.

Keywords: Acculturative stress, Social support, International Students, Indian Students

Introduction

Acculturative stress is been observed among individuals who move from one place to another for their study purpose and the students face issues with the adjustment and this will lead to stress among them. Students face a lot of stress when they come from their home country to another country for their studies. Acculturative stress is the stress that is caused when an individual is in a process

of living and learning in a new environment and it is defined as, “*Acculturative stress is defined as the reduction in the health status of the individual who have to struggle to adjust to a new culture psychologically and socially*” (Berry, 1987). The stress can be reduced to a greater extent when there is coping strategy. The factors that contribute to the acculturative stress by the international students is been address in this study.

Social support from the families and the friends can reduce the stress to a greater extent the students need to learn how they can manage. The acculturative stress. Support from the families will create a positive impact and a direct effect and this will reduce the acculturative stress that the students face. The individuals when they move from their hometown to a new environment it will have a result on internal stress as they will miss their families, friends.

Homesickness is one of the major factor that is been observed among the students (Rajab, 2014) Cultural shock is another factor that is been observed among the international students when they move from one country to another country for their studies (Boafo, 2014). Our country being a diverse nation has many cultures and when they move from their home country to another country there is a lot of stress that is been observed among the individuals. Language also creates a difference in the culture, and the students come from different parts of the world they will feel it difficult to adjust to a new environment, they are not aware of the native language and they feel it difficult to communicate with the students (Singh et al, 2015).

The purpose of this study is to measure the level of stress that the international students face when they leave their home country and come to another country for their studies and also social support is a predictor for acculturative stress. The objectives of the study are: (a) To measure the level of acculturative stress that the International students face; (b) To examine the relationship between the acculturative stress and social support and (c) To find out

the effect of social support from the friends, family and significant others and their relation with acculturative stress.

Review of Literature

The support from the families and the friends can reduce the stress and this will have a positive impact on the students and they will be able to adjust to the new environment, gender also plays a role in the stress. Strong social support will reduce the stress that the students face (Mallinckrodt, 1992). Acculturative stress among the students is associated with anxiety and depression and support from the peers have reduced the acculturative stress and the students can adjust in the college, social support will reduce the negative outcomes of stress and result in positive outcome (Crockett, et al 2007).

The more social support the lower will be the level of acculturative stress, the lesser the social support there will be more acculturative stress, the students who have the acculturation mode will have less acculturative stress. There is a lot of changes that is been observed among the international students when there is acculturation this will lead to stress (Sullivan, 2015). Based on the review the hypothesis is framed.

H1: There is a positive relationship between the social support and acculturative stress

The students often face acculturative stress and this has an influence on their health also in their wellbeing, it is reported that the unmarried students have lower acculturative stress and they have the capability to adjust to a new environment than the married students (Yu, et al 2014). The social support

among the Chinese international students is been studied and the students have different types of social support and the students will reduce the loneliness when they have support from their partners in the host country (Lin, 2014). The social support on acculturation among the Chinese international students and the acculturative stress that the students face. There is adjustment difficulties that the students face when they come to a new country. The students often find it difficult to find support from people when they come to a new country (Bertram et al 2014). Acculturative stress and social support among the Indian and Korean immigrants, social support will reduce the acculturative stress that the individuals face, the social support that the individuals get from their parents will have a major impact in reducing the acculturative stress among the individuals (Thomas, 2006).

The acculturative stress that is observed among the international students in United States, social support will reduce the acculturative stress, the students need to been given proper support in the universities. The students need to be given counselling as the results of the study indicate the stress level has exceeded the normal level, students form middle east reported higher amount of stress than the other areas (Bai, 2016). English language fluency and social support satisfaction is the predictors of acculturative stress among the students from Europe experienced comparatively less stress than the others in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Social connectedness is also a predictor of acculturative stress (Yeh, 2003). The adjustment among the Latino college students, the role of social support and the stress that the students face. Social

support has a positive association with the adjustment, Stress has a negative relationship with the adjustment (Alvan et al 1996).

Social support and stress among the Hispanic college students and the adjustment that the students face, it reduce the stress that the students face. Academic stress, social support is been observed among the students. Social support will reduce the stress that the students face and it will help them for adjusting (Solberg, 1994). Social support mediates and moderates the relationship between the stress, acculturation and physical health. Family members, peers will support the individuals and this will reduce the stress and also improve the health. The acculturation stressors and social support is been observed on physical health (Finch, 2003). International students struggle in adjusting in the new environment and also in the new culture social support will have an important role and this will help the students to adjust to a new culture. Support from the friends, family and a special person will report higher amount of adjustment (Yusoff, 2011). Based on the review the hypothesis is framed

H2: There is a positive relationship between the social support from the family and acculturative stress

Social support has reduced the acculturative stress of the families the depression that the individuals face is also less when there is cultural adaptation and when the stress is less. The adaptation to the new culture is an issue for most of the families in Korea, social support will help these families to adapt and also for the growth (Hyung et al 2015).

International students are often able to cope up with the stress by having personal and also strengths from the multicultural environment and they are able to adjust to the new culture. The international students when they have greater amount of personal and multicultural strengths the acculturative stress will be reduced (Yakunina, 2013). The Asian American individuals reported that there is a relation between the acculturative stress and social support from the families and friends on the distress that the immigrants face psychologically. The individuals had higher amount of language barrier, discrimination and this led to the distress, social support reduced the amount of stress and distress that the individual face (Singh et al 2015).

Acculturation has an influence on the adaption to the new culture and the students have stated that they have cultural adaption when they are having social support. The Chinese students had acculturative problems, and cross cultural adaptation issues, social support from the friends, family, and non-local friends helped them in sociocultural adaptation (Ng et al 2013). Based on the review the hypotheses is framed

H3: There is a positive relationship between the acculturative stress and social support from significant others.

H4: There is a positive relationship between social support from the friends and acculturative stress

The Chinese international students reported lower level of psychological distress when there is forbearance and coping there is racial discrimination. The younger students reported more coping than the older students

and they are able to adjust in the new culture (Wei, 2012).

The international undergraduate students experienced moderate amount of acculturative stress when they come to a foreign country for their studies they have issues to adjust in the new environment. Homesickness is observed among students when they come to a new environment when they are far from their family and friends (Rajab et al 2014). The Arab American Adolescents face discrimination, distress and also there is acculturative stress, this will lead to psychological distress. There is mental health among these adolescents because of discrimination and acculturative stress, religious support reduces the distress (Ahmed, 2011). The length of stay in the United States has an impact on the acculturative stress and the depression. The Chinese students are prone to depression when they face acculturative stress, they also face language difficulties, issues with food and cultural values (Wei et al 2007).

The relationship between emotional intelligence, acculturative stress, the coping strategy and the length of stay in Thailand. The stress that the students face is due to the cultural shock, discrimination, and homesickness, the stressors can have an effect on the academic achievement and the satisfaction (Vergara et al 2010). The acculturative stress among the international students who are postgraduates, the sources of stress that occurs in the lives of the students. Stress can reduce the student's motivation and also academic performance. The main two variables that causes acculturative stress are environment and attitude (Desa et al 2012).

The socio demographic variables are associated with the level of acculturative stress among the international students, coping styles is also having a relation with acculturative stress. Country also has an association with the level of stress students coming from Asia, Africa, or Latin America reported higher amount of stress while compared to the European country (Akhtar, 2015). The length of stay as an association with the acculturative stress and the health, the students who had short span of stay reported higher stress than the students who stayed for a longer time. The Kashmiri students migrated to Bhopal for their higher education, length of stay is a predictor for acculturative stress (Ayoob, 2011).

There is suicidal related phenomena among the students when they have acculturative stress, Acculturative stress plays an important role among US students who reside in Korea. The support from the parents will reduce the acculturative stress and will increase the well-being among the students, life stressors and also will not let the students have the thought about suicide (Cho et al 2010). The students face stress and it will have an effect their physical and mental health, the students belong to Nepal and they were studying in South Korea, for their studies they have moved to South Korea. The students need to be given counselling and also necessary orientation for reducing the perceived stress and the acculturative stress that the face (Bhandari, 2012).

The coping strategies that is used to manage the acculturative stress among the Asian international students, there are various coping strategies that are adapted

task-oriented, avoidance oriented, emotion-oriented for reducing the acculturation and the acculturative stress. Among the various coping strategy the emotion-oriented coping was mainly associated and which reduces the acculturative stress (Ra et al 2015). The acculturative stress and the depressive symptoms that the university undergraduate students face, the acculturative stress will lead to depressive symptoms. The students who are away from the family members were likely to experience more acculturative stress than the students who stay with their family members (Cano, 2014). Acculturative stress that the international students face and the way the black African international students have adjustment concerns and are discriminated when they come to another country. Culture shock is one of the problem that these students face, the way the students can adjust in the new environment is been discussed (Boafo, 2014).

Methodology

The current study is conducted to measure the acculturative stress that the international students face when they move from one place to another for their studies. The study follows a descriptive research design. Purposive sampling technique is used to select the respondents for the stress. The respondents include 100 students both male and female students from various universities, the countries include India, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda, China, United States, and United Kingdom. An online questionnaire is used to collect data on social support and acculturative stress.

Instruments

Acculturative Stress for International Students (ASSIS)

This study used acculturative stress scale which is developed by Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) to determine the acculturative stress that the students face. The scale consists of 36 items in a 5 point Likert scale, which has seven factors: perceived discrimination (8 items), homesickness (4 items), perceived hate (5 items), fear (4 items), the culture shock (3 items), guilt (2 items), and miscellaneous (10 items). The Respondents were asked to rate each statement using a five point Likert scale scoring 1-strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- not sure, 4 - agree, 5 -strongly agree. The Indian students who were abroad responded through an online survey and foreign students in India responded through the questionnaire. The reliability of the ASSIS is 0.96.

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

Social support is measured using a perceived social support, it's a 7 point scale with 12 items. The multidimensional scale of social support (Zimet, 1988) is divided into three factors which is significant others, friends, and family. The respondents were asked to measure each item using a 7 point Likert scale ranging from 1-Very Strongly Disagree; 2-Strongly Disagree; 3-Mildly Disagree 4-Neutral; 5-Mildly Agree; 6-Strongly Agree; 7-Very Strongly Agree. The Indian students who were abroad responded through an online survey and foreign students in India responded through the questionnaire. The reliability Perceived Social Support scale 0.84.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

The sample consists of 100 students, of which male students (47%) and female students (53%), few students were asked to complete a questionnaire and few students through an online survey. The majority of the students (56%) were in the age group of 20-23 years, and majority of these students were pursuing their UG (Undergraduate) degree. The total mean score for the acculturative stress is 3.15, the SD 0.75, the mean score for the social support is 5.46, and the SD (10.51). With three factors of Social support, they are Support from Significant Others, Support from friends, and Support from the family. The factors for acculturative stress includes Discrimination, Homesickness, Perceived Hate, Fear, Cultural Shock, Guilt, and Miscellaneous.

Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation, and Reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) of Seven Acculturative Stress factors and three Social Support factors

| Measures | Mean | S.D | α |
|--|------|------|----------|
| Discrimination | 3.00 | 0.87 | 0.887 |
| Homesickness | 3.69 | 0.67 | 0.670 |
| Perceived Hate | 3.04 | 0.90 | 0.796 |
| Fear | 2.82 | 0.95 | 0.786 |
| Cultural Shock | 3.52 | 0.74 | 0.753 |
| Guilt | 2.99 | 1.12 | 0.629 |
| Miscellaneous | 3.13 | 0.84 | 0.870 |
| Support from Significant Others | 5.06 | 1.26 | 0.798 |
| Support from Friends | 5.62 | 1.02 | 0.745 |
| Support from Family | 5.69 | 0.91 | 0.779 |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------|------|------|
| Total Acculturative Stress | 3.15 | 0.75 | .957 |
| Total Social Support | 5.46 | 0.87 | .844 |

The Cronbach's alpha for discrimination is 0.887, for Homesickness its 0.670, for perceived hate its 0.796, for fear its 0.786, for Cultural shock its 0.753, for Guilt its 0.629, for Miscellaneous its 0.870, support from Significant others its 0.798, for support from friends the value is 0.745, for support from family its 0.779. The total Cronbach's α for Acculturative Stress is 0.957, and for Social Support its 0.844.

Table 2: Means of Acculturative Stress (AS) and Social Support (SS)

| Profile | Options | AS Means | SS Means |
|---------------------------|---------------------|----------|----------|
| Gender | Male | 2.86 | 5.46 |
| | Female | 3.40 | 5.46 |
| Age | 20-23 | 3.25 | 5.24 |
| | 24-27 | 3.06 | 5.77 |
| | 27 and above | 2.18 | 5.16 |
| Currently Pursuing | UG | 3.52 | 5.43 |
| | PG | 2.45 | 5.51 |
| | Others | 1.92 | 5.38 |

The mean score of the total acculturative stress and the social support is presented for the Gender, age and currently pursuing degree (Table 2). Acculturative stress is high among the Female students (3.40) than the male students (2.86). The acculturative stress is high in the age group of 20-23 (3.25), and the stress is high among the UG students (3.52) than that of the PG students (2.45). The Social support among the male and the female students is comparatively moderate and there is no much difference

in the mean scores. The social support is more among the age group of 24-27(5.77), and the social support is more among the PG students (5.51) than the UG students (5.43).

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation, T-test, & Anova between Acculturative Stress and the demographic Variables

| Gender on Acculturative Stress | | | | | |
|---|----|------|------|---------|----------------|
| Gender | N | Mean | SD | f-value | Sig (2-tailed) |
| Male | 47 | 2.86 | 0.70 | 14.74 | 0.000* |
| Female | 53 | 3.40 | 0.71 | | |
| Age on Acculturative Stress | | | | | |
| Age | N | Mean | SD | f-value | Sig (2-tailed) |
| 20-23 | 56 | 3.25 | 0.65 | 3.38 | 0.03* |
| 24-27 | 41 | 3.06 | 0.84 | | |
| 27 and above | 3 | 2.18 | 0.46 | | |
| Currently Pursuing on Acculturative Stress | | | | | |
| Currently Pursuing | N | Mean | SD | f-value | Sig (2-tailed) |
| UG | 66 | 3.53 | 0.56 | 51.32 | 0.000** |
| PG | 31 | 2.45 | 0.47 | | |
| Others | 3 | 1.92 | 0.02 | | |

*p< 0.05, **p<0.001

The results of the t test predicts that there is a significant relationship between the gender (0.000), age of the students (0.03) currently pursuing degree of the students (0.000) and the acculturative stress scores. Further, acculturative stress is been observed among the UG students than the PG students. The One way Anova states that the there exists a relationship between the acculturative stress between the gender (male and female students), age and the currently pursuing degree (Table 3).

Table 4: Mean, Standard Deviation, T-test, ANOVA, between Social Support and Demographic Variables

| Gender on Social Support | | | | | |
|---|----------|-------------|-----------|----------------|----------------------|
| Gender | n | Mean | SD | t-value | Sig(2-tailed) |
| Male | 47 | 5.45 | 0.90 | .000 | 0.99 |
| Female | 53 | 5.45 | 0.86 | | |
| Age on Social Support | | | | | |
| Age | n | Mean | SD | f-value | Sig(2-tailed) |
| 20-23 | 56 | 5.24 | 0.91 | 4.82 | 0.01* |
| 24-27 | 41 | 5.77 | 0.73 | | |
| 27 and above | 3 | 5.16 | 0.76 | | |
| Currently Pursuing on Social Support | | | | | |
| Currently Pursuing | n | Mean | SD | f-value | Sig(2-tailed) |
| UG | 66 | 5.43 | 0.94 | .109 | 0.89 |
| PG | 31 | 5.51 | 0.77 | | |
| Others | 3 | 5.38 | 0.09 | | |

*p< 0.05, **p<0.001

The results of the t test indicates that there is a significant relationship between the age (0.01) with social support where as there is no significant relation with the age groups, currently pursuing degree, and the perceived support score on social support. The One way Anova states that there exists a relationship between the social support and the age (Table 4).

Regression

The table 5, provides the regression analysis of the three factors of social support and the relationship between the acculturative stress.

Table 5: Regression results of Social Support and Acculturative stress

| Variable | Beta β | Sig |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| Significant Others | 0.08 | 0.15 |

| | | |
|----------------|-------|-------|
| Friends | -.132 | 0.14 |
| Family | .210 | 0.02* |

*p< 0.05, **p<0.001

There is a relationship with the social support and acculturative stress the results shows that, the stress will be reduced among the students when there is support from the Family (β .210), and its value is significant at 0.02. There is no much relationship with the significant others and support from the friends. Based on the β value the social support from Family is having the highest explanatory value compared to the significant others and friends.

Discussions

This results of this study has shown us that there is a relationship with the social support and the acculturative stress among the International students. The

acculturative stress level of the students were measured using a seven sub constructs of acculturative stress, then we could find the relationship with the demographics with the acculturative stress. Gender has an influence on the acculturative stress, female students reported higher amount of stress compared to the other students. The stress level can depend on the support that they receive from their parents, friends, and the significant others, there is one dimension which is significantly contributed to the Acculturative stress. Family has the highest contribution in helping the students to cope up with the stress. The international students have high levels of support coming from their family.

The results of this study suggests that there is an association with the acculturative stress among the students when they go to another country for their studies. The social support on acculturation among the Chinese international students and the acculturative stress that these students face. There are adjustment difficulties that the students face when they come to a new environment. The students often find it difficult to find social support from people when they come to a new country this will lead to acculturative stress (Bertram et al, 2014).

The regression analysis tells us that the relationship between one of the predictor of social support has a relationship with the acculturative stress and it reduces the stress level among the students. It is indicated from the results that the social support from the families have a significant relation and it's very important for the students. There is no significant difference between the demographics and the social support, but there is a significant difference between the

demographics like age, gender, currently pursuing degree with the acculturative stress. The Chinese students had acculturative problems, and cross cultural adaptation issues, social support from the friends, family, and friends helped them in sociocultural adaptation (Ng et al, 2013).

Conclusion

The social support is found to be very essential for the international students as they are away from their families and they often feel lonely and they have homesickness and some are discriminated. Social support could help them to reduce the acculturative stress that they face, gender also has a significant relation with the acculturative stress, and it will also help them to adjust to any new environment. The social support from the families is having a strong relation with the acculturative stress, the support given by the families could reduce the acculturative stress that the students face. Finally, the findings of this study will be helpful for the parents, mentors as they can give social support and this will reduce the acculturative stress level. The Future research can find the relationship with the acculturative stress and the other factors that can have a relationship and which will help in reducing the stress level of the students.

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