ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND ACCULTURATIVE STRESS: CHALLENGES FACED BY INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN DELHI NCR

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Abstract
The relationship between International Students' academic performance in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) and their experience with stress related to acculturation is the subject of this research. The major concern is to establish the concern through the research. The study found out these areas by subjecting the responding students to qualitative analysis regarding the issues they face and how they tackle them. Non-collaborative and individual, semi-structured interviews were used to administer the data among the 20 responding international students with diverse backgrounds. Consequently, the findings highlight social isolation, language integration, and culture as the main acculturative stress variables that affect academic performance. The report also goes to a great length to explain why specialized support services can help enhance the experiences of overseas learners in Delhi NCR.

Introduction
The present research is centered on the relationship between foreign students' achievements in schools in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) and the extent of stress elicited from acculturation. In this context, the research employs qualitative analysis to establish the main challenges that these students suffer and the strategies used to cope with them. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with international students from all kinds of backgrounds, and twenty of them were administered. Based on the research done, some of the acculturative stress factors that have an implication on the performance of students include solitude, language, and culture. The paper emphasizes on the importance of providing specialized support services to increase the quality of Learning for the International Students in Delhi NCR.

Research Questions
Which factors are mainly influential for acculturative stress among the international students in Delhi NCR?
In what mode does acculturative stress impact the achievement of success by these students?
How do international students manage acculturative stress?

Literature Review
One comprehensively studied process affecting individuals in the process of cultural transition is acculturative stress. Berry (2006) stated that acculturative stress relates to a variety of psychological and intellectual difficulties. According to the research, the main causes of stress in international students include language and culture barriers and social exclusion (Smith & Khawaja, 2010). For international students, the stressor may extend to homesickness as well as financial difficulties (Sawir et al., 2008). Scholarship has consequently shown that acculturative stress impacts on academic performance as an explicit method. For instance, Yeh and Inose (2003)

noted that students experiencing a great deal of acculturative stress often engage in lower-level academic performance. Coping strategies, social support, and institutional support services now act in this context as mediators between M&S and the two other factors of the model: self-care and external care. This is well supported by another study by Glass and Westmont (2014), which established that strong social support can greatly decrease the effects of acculturative stress on performance. Lack of cultural and social support leads to stress which adversely affects performance this is according to Ward & Kennedy (1993). In like manner, Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) established that homesickness and perceived prejudice have a significant relationship to overseas students' stress levels and consequent implications for their academic success. Lee and Rice (2007) elaborate on the studies of perceived prejudice, insisting that experiences with discrimination could play a highly negative role in academic performance, in addition to the well-being of overseas students. However, Andrade (2006) and Chirkov et al. (2008) noted that motivation and coping styles serve to minimize the impacts of acculturative stress. Such investigations show that coping strategies and social networks play a significant role in overseas students' performance. In addition, Tseng and Newton (2002) noted that peer mentorship and orientation programs are advantageous to international students, especially in their adjustment process, and reduce stress associated with acculturation.

Methodology

This qualitative study uses phenomenology as its research paradigm to capture the essence of the participants whose life narratives occur in Delhi NCR as international students. Twenty self-selected international students from a range of countries and disciplines at the University participated. The interviews were taped, and the results were transcribed, using thematic analysis to group them according to frequently reported aspects of acculturative stress and academic performance.

Participant Selection

The participants were recruited purposively to obtain a wide cross-section of international students. To be selected, participants had to be international students studying in a university in Delhi NCR and had to have spent at least six months in India.

Data Collection

The participants were interviewed with semi structured interviews in order to let the participants tell their experiences and views in detail. Interview questions were aimed at stress sources, academic difficulties, and possible ways of dealing with them. All interviews took about one hour and were tape-recorded with the consent of the participant.

Data Analysis

Structural analysis was applied to find patterns. According to the researchers, the transcripts were analyzed and grouped in the areas of acculturative stress and academic achievement. Such an approach enabled the uncovering of the participants' stressors and use of coping strategies.

Findings

Different themes on acculturative stress and the effect it has on academic performance was brought out in the analysis. The major areas of focus involves issues on communication, culture, loneliness and management strategies.

Language Barriers

Some of the participants commonly pointed to language difficulties as the primary issues they came across. Lack of comprehension, attending lectures, engaging in classroom and group discussions, and writing assignments in English or Hindi impacted their learning. One student from China shared:

When the professor speaks fast, it becomes a challenge for me to follow what is being taught in class. This makes it hard for me to note and gain comprehension of that which is being taught in class." With English and Hindi being the main medium for instruction in Delhi NCR, such children suffer greatly from learning barriers.

This finding aligns with previous research by Yeh and Inose (2003), who found that language proficiency is a critical factor in the academic success of international students.

Cultural Differences

Population characteristics also featured as another huge trend They include culture. Some of the difficulties mentioned by the participants were related to transition to Indian educational context which was very different from the one in the participants' countries. Contrasts in modalities of instruction, ways of evaluating student learning and interactions within the context of a classroom were illustrated.

A student from Nigeria noted: This method of teaching here is way different from what we are taught in college or what I am used to. We have more group discussions back home, but here, there are more lectures, which I find a little hard to cope with.

Ward and Kennedy (1993) also pointed out that cultural differences in learning expectations are a source of considerable stress and erode academic performance. For instance, the mode of teaching and learning in India might be very different from that in Western countries, hence making international students feel confused and stressed. Teaching conditions and learning climate: Chirkov et al. (2008) proposed that the failure of academic expectations and teaching approaches is likely to hamper students' performance levels and stress them out.

Social Isolation

Most of the participants reported feeling lonely or excluded from social activities. Some complained about isolation because they did not have friends and family to rely on in India. This seclusion worsened their pressure and also affected their studies.

A student from Bangladesh mentioned: They say here that 'no friends, no problem,' but believe me, sometimes it's not nice to be alone." When I feel stressed over my studies, there is no one to open up to, and it makes things worse when I try to look for ways to solve the problem.

In the study done by Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) concluded that lack of social support as a key determinant of acculturative stress which results in poor admission performance by the international students.

Coping Strategies

There was significant use of different coping mechanisms that the participants were able to adopt for use in managing their stress. Some depended on social support originating from fellow internationals, while others from formal academic support like tutoring and language classes. Also, many students had an opportunity to participate in extracurriculars as a way of reducing pressure. A student from Kenya shared:

"It has been quite beneficial to me since I have joined the international students' club. It really does make me feel that there are other people like me, and it reduces the academic stress on my head to some extent".

Coping and social support stand out as the most widely recognized approaches in conditions of acculturative stress, which was stated by Chirkov et al. (2008) and Andrade (2006). The present study aims to identify coping mechanisms used by international students to deal with acculturative stress. Both peer support from fellow international students and support from domestic students seem to reduce stress (Constantine et al., 2004).

Academic Performance

There is much evidence suggesting that acculturative stress correlates with and affects academic performance. Yeh and Inose (2003) noted that these students' acculturative stress predicts poor performance in class. These factors include social support and language with an additional reference to the cultural adaptation implication. Andrade also pointed out that the student who fails to control stress will hardly achieve good results and may even drop out of school at all.

Discussion

This research supports other studies focusing on acculturative stress and how it affects study engagement. This study pointed out that academic stress included language barriers, cultural differences, and social isolation of students in the Delhi NCR. These stressors identified undermined their academic performance, a fact which provides the impetus to address the need for support services.

Institutions in Delhi NCR can avoid the challenges explained by offering language support, cultural orientations, and social integration. An example of such initiatives is the following, which may make the shift easier, thereby eradicating stress and boosting the performance of international learners.

Therefore, Olivier contends that the level of social support is critically important. Offering and establishing group companioning, peer mentoring, and social activities will help overcome the loneliness felt by international students.

In addition, academic institutions should develop educational workshops for teachers and employees about cultural proficiency and the difficulties of international students. This can create a more supportive and empathetic educational environment.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The study highlights several key areas where universities and policymakers can take action to support international students:

Language Support: Programs such as language courses, tutoring, and conversation clubs can help international

students overcome language barriers.

Cultural Orientation: Therefore, to enhance the experience of students from different parts of the world, more effective and complete cultural courses should be conducted to facilitate the assimilation of the learner into the new learning system of the country.

Social Integration: International students particularly benefit from social interaction with domestic students and other international/national students through clubs and events and peer mentoring.

Counselling Services: Making mental health and counseling services available to facilitate support and culturally sensitive help that any student suffering from acculturative stress can benefit from.

Faculty Training: To improve the experience of international students, training programs for faculty to increase their cultural competency will be helpful.

Conclusion

This paper aims to unravel the difficulties international students experience in Delhi NCR especially based on the effects of acculturative stress on academic achievement. From this study, recommendations can be made with a view to enhancing the experience of these learners, including their performance, through the provision of services that would be suitable for their needs. For instance, language and culture differences, isolation, and other aspects that lead to acculturative stress influence international students' success, and these should therefore be addressed. Hence, institutions in Delhi NCR can facilitate the academic and personal success of international students through special needs intervention programs and promote a supportive school climate.

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