

Cultural Adjustment of Foreign Students in the Era of Globalization (A Case Study at Iiui-pakistan)

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Received September 05, 2019; Revised October 23, 2019; Accepted November 25, 2019

Abstract Studying at a higher education institution can be stressful, particularly for international students, who leave their homes to study in another country. Native students just have to do efforts for educational attainment but foreign students need to develop bicultural competence, as they maintain their values while adjusting to the practical, interpersonal, and emotional challenges encountered in the host country as well. This study explored the foreign students' cultural adaptation for academic achievements at higher education level in Pakistan. The present study revealed the role of activities, interests, attitudes, knowledge, preferences and diverse cultural personalities, which drive the foreigner to become a successful student in the non-native institute. The key objective of the study was to explore the pace of cultural adaptation of foreign students at the university level. It was a Purposeful qualitative study with descriptive narration style. The target population was all the foreign students studying in IIUI BS program in faculty of social sciences. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 55 foreign students for the study. The self-developed questionnaire used to collect the data from the foreign students. Collected data were analyzed by using SPSS software. Pearson's correlation coefficient method was used to find out the relationship. Analysis of data revealed that the University environment has been marked supportive for cultural adaption by foreign students but university administration staff meaninglessly wastes their study time and make them worried about the least important things. It was found that foreign students were very much satisfied with the behavior of fellow students and most of the teaching staff. It was concluded that all institutions at higher education level generally and IIUI specifically have to do the work on the main objective of globalization. The teaching and administrative staff here has to be trained that how to help the foreign students to feel at home in their institution, how to reduce the fear and risk factors and increase the pace of cultural adaptation. It is recommended that the teachers, administration and, students of the institution must be made aware of the importance of cross-cultural adaptation and globalization as it is a gateway to attract more foreign students along with economic benefits for the institution.

Keywords: globalization, cultural adaptation, foreign students

Cite This Article: Sadia Dilshad, and Samina Malik, "Cultural Adjustment of Foreign Students in the Era of Globalization (A Case Study at Iiui-pakistan)." *American Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 7, no. 11 (2019): 853-858. doi: 10.12691/education-7-11-15.

1. Introduction

Globalization consists of a movement of economic integration, cultural homogenization and technological uniformization. It's a movement which has a worldwide impact. It involves an increased transnational economic cooperation, greater worldwide technological development, and the spread of a more uniform worldwide culture in an international institution [1]. Native students just have to do efforts for educational attainment but foreign students need to develop bicultural competence, as they maintain their own values while adjusting to the practical, interpersonal, and emotional challenges encountered in the host country as well. This study was conducted to examine the responses of foreign students studying at International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) Pakistan,

about their adaptation with the local culture and their academic achievements. Studying at a higher education institution can be stressful, particularly for international students, who leave their homes to study in another country. Unlike native students, foreign students need to develop bicultural competence, as they maintain their own values while adjusting to the practical, interpersonal, and emotional challenges encountered in the host country [2].

In order to tackle with these students the universities are required to make especial plan to address the problems and issues related to the cultural adjustment of foreign students. Although the cultural adjustment varies from country to country and person to person but there are some common problems which are faced by the foreign students at university level. The main problem is the environment of the host university regarding the academic activities. As the university culture is a compulsory variable for cultural adaptation of the foreign student for the attainment of

educational objectives or the degree completion so there is no way out without this adjustment. In this study every student which do not belong to Pakistan is considered as foreign student so there is a variety of respondents some understand Urdu like students from Somalia, some from Afghanistan can understand Pashto so they are much close to our culture and have to face less adjustment problems based on language at least. The students from the host country don't have to face the cultural adjustment problems so it is said that they are more focused for the educational attainment. The guest students have to face the double mindedness as they bring their own cultural attitude towards learning in the class but they have to face the totally different atmosphere in the host university. In the beginning it creates a problematic situation or "learning shock" for the foreigner student and the end result is the slow and difficult educational attainment.

The main purpose behind this study is not only to locate the problem area for cultural adjustment of the foreign students but to sensitize the administration about the situation just to make the foreign students more comfortable and help them in their learning in a better speed. This paper focuses on the relationship between the cultural adjustment and the academic achievements of the foreigner students. The objective of the study is to explore the pace of cultural adaptation of foreign students at university level, and the hypothesis that there is a significant effect of cultural adjustment on educational attainment of the foreigner students. The findings may have significance for teaching and learning environment in other international universities with same cross cultural adjustment problems of the foreigner students.

2. Statement of the Problem

This research explored the foreign students, cultural adaptation for the academic achievements at higher education level in Pakistan. As it has been observed that foreign students are facing various problems regarding academic achievements and cultural assimilations due to non-native circumstances such as language barriers, adjustment with local students, inability to discuss their concern with teachers and administrators etc. Present study was conducted to explore the factors distressing or helping the foreign students for Acculturation in Pakistan generally and at International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI) in specific.

3. Objectives of the Study

Objectives of this study were to:

1. Explore the pace of cultural adaptation of foreign students at university level.
2. Find out the relationship between cultural adaptation of foreign students and their academic achievement

4. Research Questions

Following research question was developed for this study:

1. What is the pace of cultural adaptation of foreign students at university level?

5. Research Hypothesis

H₀₁ There is no significant relationship between cultural adaptation of foreign students and their academic achievement.

6. Significance of Study

The research is significant for teachers and administrators of international universities on the whole as it will assist them to understand the problems of foreign students. Furthermore, findings of study will enable them to take necessary measure for making foreign students to feel at home and perform better, which will ultimately bring more foreign students. This study will also be helpful for local and foreign students as it will help them in Acculturation and creating a globalized environment of study on the whole. Finally this study will prove helpful in creation of effective multicultural environment at higher education institutions that is key demand of 21st century.

7. Literature Review

Pakistan is a developing country and passes through the transition phase since its creation. The change in the past decade is remarkable, but the process of global competition and international standards and the change in the cultural capital ought to be sharper so that Pakistan could enjoy a respected status in the countries of the world, and be an effective member of global society. The most important role in transforming is the role of educational institution. Because education plays an important role in the social development of a country. Therefore, there is a need to accelerate the educational process and remove all educational obstacles that slow down the educational process. Academic Adaptation is the cultural adaptation for academic relating to student teacher relationship and behavior. It may be related to the teachers expectations for the students about the class performance. The international student is said to be culturally adapted to the extent to which he/she is fulfilling the teachers expectations in the classroom performance [3].

7.1. Cultural Adaptation Ability (Cultural Capital)

Bourdieu [4] used the term "cultural capital" to increase the meaning of the capital (ability to use in future) as compared to simple meanings such as Economic capital, Social and educational capital etc. Established on this basic level. He described capital as the ability to use its outcomes in their own near future. In other words, people must move through social stairs, it is considered as a form of power. Further broadcasting of the two types of capital is financial or economical. Social capitals are the footsteps of the staircase and Cultural Adaptation Ability (cultural capital) is the railing, which is not only helpful for going

up but also supports in the journey. Common stages of Cultural adaptation in different sociological models are as follows:

- 1: Initial Euphoria/Excitement
- 2: Irritation/Hostility
- 3: Gradual Adjustment, Humor, and Perspective
- 4: "Feeling at Home" Adaptation and Biculturalism

Although these four stages of cultural adaptation were first mentioned by Kalvero Oberg in 1954 but was first time explained by him and the U-Curve model developed by Kalvero Oberg in 1960, utilizes the form of letter "U" to describe the emotional ups and downs that occur during intercultural sojourns Oberg defines that people become more comfortable with the host culture and re-adapting their home culture also becomes a problem once you are segregated in a foreign community [5].



Figure 1. U-Curve model of cultural adaptation [5]

In 2006, mingsheng Li and Jacqui Campbell from Massey University New Zealand conducted a case study about, Asian Student' Learning Experiences at New Zealand. The study revealed the importance of professional and appropriate behavior of the academic and administrative staff to equip the Asian students specifically because they are too slow to maintain the pace with the local or other foreign students. The researcher found that it's the responsibility of the local staff of the institution to provide the Asian students with adequate knowledge of specific subjects in each discipline, and help them to surpass the cultural barriers and partialities. The researcher suggested to review the pedagogical strategies and make them align with the needs of rapidly growing globalization [6].

Subjective and objective factors have significant impact on successful adaptation of foreign students. Among subjective ones are "cultural background" ("ethnically formed attitudes" – a set of moral and ethical standards of society and socially settled, sometimes logically incomprehensible subconscious beliefs in all manifestations of the nation's culture) and personal characteristics (adaptive potential), socio-psychological characteristics of students [7]. Studying in a higher education institution can be stressful, particularly for international students, who leave their home to study in another country. Unlike native students, foreign students need to develop bicultural competence, as they maintain their own values while adjusting to the practical, interpersonal, and emotional challenges encountered in the host country. Most students are young adults who are in the process of developing personal characteristics and identity in order to function with the greater psychological

and financial independence [8]. Keeping in view this theory and the related researches this study aimed to understand the cultural adaptation of foreign students for academic achievements in a different perspective. That is education attainment is directly related to cultural adaptation in any multicultural institution like International Islamic University Islamabad Pakistan.

Independent variable is level of degree or course and dependent variables are academic performance and social adaptation at higher education level. The study examined the foreign students, adaptation with the local culture and their academic achievement. The study has focused on foreign students studying at International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) Pakistan. Although there are several public and private universities which are catering foreign students all over Pakistan but IIUI is unique in this regard as it is part of a chain of International Islamic universities all over the Muslim world and still it is different as it offers some space for non-Muslim students also. These students have to adapt the culture of this university which is a blend of Muslim culture and a mix Pakistani culture. So the cultural adaption of foreign students in this university is quite interesting and to some extent it may affect the academic achievement of the student.

Ryan stated that most of the difficulties related to academic achievements of the foreigner students are in the fields of curriculum, instructions, and pedagogies along with assessments done by supervisor or educators. He said that the administration of the host institution must adopt a new approach towards the foreign students and mark them a, "assets" not a "problem" for the local students. He suggested that the reason behind the change of not only words but the attitudes i.e. we solve the problem while we value the assets [9]. Nasir conducted a study to explore the effect of cultural adjustment on academic achievement of international students. Cultural Adjustment Scale (CAS) was used to measure the adjustment level of students. The academic achievement of international students was taken in terms of Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) after completing first semester in university. Correlation analysis revealed significant correlation between cultural adjustment and academic achievement. A significant difference was found in the academic performance of the students between high and low level of cultural adjustment; and cultural adjustment was found to be a significant predictor of academic achievement of international students [10].

Limjuco et al. conducted a study to describe the level of cross-cultural adaptations and the academic achievement of foreign students. The data was gathered through survey using a self-constructed questionnaire and interview of the participants. The statistical tools used in the study were t-test, ANOVA, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Data also revealed that there is a relationship between the level of cross-cultural adaptation efforts and the academic achievement of the foreign students [11]. Freeman, Nga & Mathews conducted a study in Malaysia to examines the association between academic adjustment and socio-cultural, psychological, social support and self-efficacy challenges faced by international students. regression analysis was carried out for this study. The overall empirical results suggest that socio-cultural adjustment is not statistically

significant and does not significantly affect the academic adjustment of international students in Malaysia [12].

8. Methods and Procedures of the Study

8.1. Research Design

It was a purposeful qualitative study with descriptive narration style which can be used for cases like people, organizations, communities, cultures, events, critical incidences which are selected because they are “information rich” and illuminative. Descriptive or hermeneutical phenomenology research design was adapted as it refers to the study of personal experience and requires a description or interpretation of the meanings of phenomena experienced by participants in an investigation [13].

8.2. Population of the Study

All foreign students (526) registered in all programs at International Islamic University of Islamabad (IIUI) constituted the population for the study.

8.3. Sample and Sampling Techniques

For descriptive research the sample should be 10% of population. So, 55 students were selected by using simple random sampling technique [14].

8.4. Research Instrument

For data collection, self-developed questionnaire was used for collecting the views of foreign students. Major themes of questionnaires were as follows:

- Demographic Information (a. Semester, b.CGPA)
- Adoption with teachers
- Adoption with fellow students
- Adoption with the administrators
- Adaption with University Environment
- Cultural differences
- Teaching Methods.

8.5. Data Collection

The data were collected through personal visits of the researcher to the respondents and if students were unable to understand the language then in that case peer help (local student and class fellow) was taken for making the understanding of the questionnaire easy for the respondent.

8.6. Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using SPSS software. Pearson's correlation coefficient (which is normally denoted as r) was used to find out relationship among variables.

9. Pace of Students' Cultural Adaption

For exploring the pace of students' cultural adaption, following indicators were taken:

Table 1. Satisfaction level regarding teachers' behaviors

Perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	12	22%
Neutral	27	49%
Agree	16	29%
Total	55	100%

Results of table showed that foreign students were not too much satisfied with the behavior of teachers. As only 29% students were agreed with the statements related to behavior of teachers. 12% students were disagreed with the statement regarding satisfaction with teacher behavior, while responses of 49% respondents were neutral.

Table 2. Satisfaction level regarding behavior of fellow students

Perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	11	20%
Neutral	09	16%
Agree	35	64%
Total	55	100%

Foreign students were very much satisfied with the behavior of fellow students as for its statements 64% respondents were agreed. Responses of 11% students showed that they were not satisfied with the behavior of fellow students while responses of only 9% respondents were neutral in this regard.

Table 3. Satisfaction level regarding behavior of administrative staff

Perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	43	78%
Neutral	6	11%
Agree	6	11%
Total	55	100%

Foreign students claimed that behavior of administrators was not good with them and for it 78% respondents were disagreed. Responses of students who were agree and neutral regarding this statement were same (11%).

Table 4. Adaption with University Environment

Perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	10	18%
Neutral	15	27%
Agree	30	55%
Total	55	100%

University environment has been marked very supportive for cultural adaption and 55% responses were agreed in this regard. 18% respondents showed dissatisfaction with university environment while responses of 27% respondents were Neutral.

Table 5. Perception Regarding Cultural Differences

Perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree	10	18%
Neutral	10	18%
Agree	35	64%
Total	55	100%

Students claimed that the culture of host institutions is quite different from their home institutions and

64% respondents were agreed with responses regarding difference. Respondents who stated that there is no difference and those who were neutral regarding this statements were equal in numbers (18%).

Table 6. Perception Regarding effectiveness of Teaching Method

Perceptions	Frequency	Percentage
Neutral	31	56%
Agree	24	44%
Total	55	100%

Foreign students were not too much satisfied with teaching strategies that are being practiced by teachers as only 44% respondents were agreed with statements regarding teaching methods. Majority of students' responses regarding this statement were neutral as they were 56%.

Table 7. Relationship between students cultural and academic achievement

Variables	Cultural Adaptation of Foreign students	Academic achievement of Foreign students
Pearson Correlation	1	.961**
CAF Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
N	55	55
Pearson Correlation	.961**	1
EAF Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
N	55	55

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results of table showed value of correlation was 0.961 which showed that alternate hypothesis "There is a significant relationship between cultural adaptation of foreign students and their academic achievement" has been accepted and cultural adaptation affects the student's achievement to great extent.

10. Findings

On the basis of data analysis, following findings were drawn:

1. Foreign students were not too much satisfied with behavior of teachers as responses of only 29% respondents were agreed regarding it.
2. Behavior of Pakistani students was good with foreign students as majority of foreign students 64% were satisfied regarding their behavior.
3. Behavior of administrative staff was very despondent with foreign students as 78% respondents showed dissatisfaction regarding their behavior.
4. Overall university environment was very supportive for foreign students and 55% students were satisfied with university environment.
5. Environment of host institutions is quite different from foreign students home institutions as 64% respondents were agreed with responses regarding difference.
6. Foreign students were not too much satisfied with teaching strategies that are being practiced by

teachers as only 44% respondents showed satisfaction regarding it.

7. Result of correlation that is "0.961" showed that alternate hypothesis "There is a significant relationship between cultural adaptation of foreign students and their academic achievement" has been accepted.

11. Discussion

Many studies were conducted to find the causes relations and effects of social adjustments to that of educational attainments of the foreign students. But most of the studies were conducted in western world like UK, USA, etc. and the impact or relationship was studied. This study was unique in the sense that it was a case study of students at IUI and was conducted to find out the pace of academic adjustment of the foreign students along with the relationship of academic adjustment with that of educational achievements. Behavior of teachers, non-cooperative administration staff, and ambiguous teaching strategies were major problems of foreign students. As far as behavior Pakistani students and overall university environment was seemingly supportive for cultural adaptation of foreign students. Results of correlation coefficient shows that cultural adaptation of foreign students and their academic achievement are correlated.

As the finding of this research has revealed that the teaching strategies and administration related issues have increased the adjustment problems of the foreign students. Findings of the study aligned with findings of study conducted by Ryan (2011) who stated that for ensuring cultural adaptation of foreign students, teachers must practice innovative strategies and administrative staff must adopt a new approach towards the foreign students. As a significant relationship was found between cultural adaptation of foreign students and their academic achievement. Findings of study are also supported by study conducted by Nasir (2010) and Limjuci et al. (2016) as it was found by their studies that cultural adjustment is a significant predictor of academic achievement of international students and there is a relationship between the level of cross-cultural adaptation efforts and the academic achievement of the foreign students.

12. Conclusions

Due to globalization process all institutions at higher education level generally and IUI specifically have to do the work on the main objective of globalization that how to help the foreign students to feel at home in their institution. Findings showed that pace of cultural adaptation of foreign students is slow that is getting better gradually. Foreign students are facing problems due to diverse learning environment, non-cooperative behavior of teacher, ambiguous teaching strategies and inattentiveness of administrative staff. Results of study further indicated that foreign students show satisfaction regarding good behavior of Pakistani students and overall university environment as these indicators are playing an important role in ensuring their cultural adaptation. Results of correlation coefficient revealed that there is a significant

relationship between cultural adaptation of foreign students and their academic achievement.

13. Recommendations

On the basis of findings and conclusions followings recommendations were made:

1. As only 29% students were satisfied with the behavior of teachers, so the higher authorities may take this situation seriously and teachers may be trained in order to provide adequate guidance and special attention to foreign students.
2. Students of the higher education institutions may be made aware complementary of the idea and importance of cross-cultural adaptation and globalization along with the significance of the international students so that they can prepare themselves to help the foreigners and make a gate way to attract more foreign students along with economic benefits for the institution.
3. Behavior of administrative staff has been found very dependent with foreign students so administrative staff may be trained to be supportive, respectable and facilitating for them.
4. In order to make the foreign students attracted for the choice of institution out of their motherland, the admission section may upload a documentary or some slide show for sharing a glimpse of the institutional culture with the students who have already joined the university from abroad for their academic progresses for future success in life.
5. As it has been reported by foreign students Environment of host institutions is quite different from foreign students home institutions so attention may be paid towards organizing extracurricular and cross cultural activities fir making them familiarize with culture of host environment as well as offering them an opportunity to provide a foretaste of their own culture.
6. Foreign students were not too much satisfied with teaching strategies that are being adopted by teachers. so the institute may arrange training sessions for the teachers of IIUI to make them acquainted with the

demands of expediting the foreign students in future.

7. Combine efforts may be made to minimize adjustment related problems of foreign students as cultural adaptation has been found as a strong predictor of better academic achievement of foreign students.

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