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# A Phenomenological Study about the International Student's Cultural Shock in India

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### ABSTRACT

The paper examines the cultural shock of international student in India. The study explores the degree of acculturation hang on various factors, such as the general personality, Age group, Gender, Religion, Duration, the motivation to adapt, language skills, support of fellow and host nationals, the cultural detachment. The study conducted was empirical in nature. Statistical tools like regression analysis, regression analysis and KMO and Bartlett's Test is carried out. The study indicates that the family situation and the friends of the origin have a high impact over the cultural shock. Even though Culture Shock cannot be avoided completely it can be decreased significantly through appropriate preparation.

## INTRODUCTION

The term Culture Shock refers to the feelings of distress and unease when being exposed to a foreign culture. Besides this narrow definition of the actual shock the expression is also used in order to describe the whole process a sojourner goes through during an international encounter. This adaptation or adjustment process usually starts with an initial euphoria about the foreignness of the host culture. Everything is new and exciting and the sojourner is in the role of a tourist exploring the foreign environment. The euphoria is followed by a crisis, the actual Culture Shock. The individual feels isolated and misses the familiar symbols, attitudes and habits of the culture of origin. During the crisis phase many different psychological and physical symptoms of Culture Shock can occur with varying severance, ranging from homesickness to depression and serious illnesses. Once the crisis stage is overcome the sojourner starts to accept the differences of the host culture and becomes functioning. He learns how to cope with the situation and handles the challenges of everyday life. This stage is referred to as the recovery stage. It results in the final adjustment stage, where the individual reaches a certain state of acculturation.

### II. Literature reviews:

Thomas (2004), studied the national culture of higher learning and to promote appreciation of cultural diversity to the students. UNESCO (1998) examined the cultural function of university synchronises with New Zealand Ministry of Education's international student report's (Deloitte, 2008) suggestion for educational institutions to promote cultural awareness among international students in the country. Although there are many studies on international students in institutions of higher learning in New Zealand, the bulk of the studies are in the areas of teaching and learning (e.g. Campbell & Li, 2008; Selvarajah, 2006) and social integration (e.g. G. H. Kim, 2006; Ward, Masgoret, & Gezentsvey, 2009). Charles (1999) comments that the opening of the United States "campuses to the world continues and expands the traditional role of student affairs" (p. 15). This

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growing significance of international student support office taking place in the United States is concurrently emerging in other parts of the world with various discussions around this office. For example, Bonnet (2004) presents a case study on the challenges of international student affairs practitioners in one of the Philippines' institutions of higher education, Humfrey (2008) reports on the present condition and future expectations of international student services in the United Kingdom, and Seow (2006) shares insights on the changing roles of international student advisors at an Australian university. As the international student population continues to soar around the world (OECD, 2009), the need for international student support services becomes critical. Universities now have weightier responsibility not only to cater to the welfare of local students, but also the additionally substantial headcounts of the international students enrolled in their campuses. Moreover, needs specific to the foreign student necessitate that student support services to be enhanced.

### ***III. The Problem of Adjustment to New Cultural Environments:***

Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. These signs are the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and when to refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not. These cues, which may be words, gestures, facial expressions, customs, or norms are acquired by all of us in the course of growing up and are as much a part of our culture as the language we speak or the beliefs we accept. All of us depend for our peace of mind and our efficiency on hundreds of these cues, most of which are unconsciously learned. When an individual enters a strange culture, all or most of these familiar cues are removed. He or she is like a fish out of water. No matter how broad-minded or full of good will he may be, a series of props have been knocked from under him. This is followed by a feeling of frustration and anxiety. People react to the frustration in much the same way. First they reject the environment which causes the discomfort: the ways of the host country are bad because they make us feel bad. Another phase of culture shock is regression. The home environment suddenly assumes a tremendous importance, everything becomes irrationally glorified. All difficulties and problems are forgotten and only the good things back home are remembered. It usually takes a trip home to bring one back to reality.

### ***IV. Symptoms:***

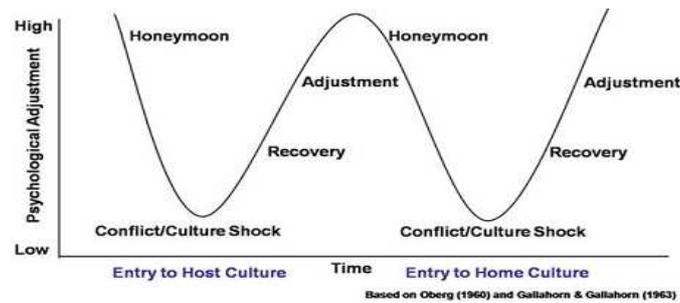
Some of the symptoms of culture shock are: excessive concern over cleanliness and the feeling that what is new and strange is dirty. This could be in relation to drinking water, food, dishes, and bedding; fear of physical contact with attendants or servants; a feeling of helplessness and a desire for dependence on long-term residents of one's own nationality; irritation over delays and other minor frustrations out of proportion to their causes; delay and outright refusal to learn the language of the host country; excessive fear of being cheated, robbed, or injured; great concern over minor pains and eruptions of the skin; and finally, that terrible longing to be back home, to be in familiar surroundings, to visit one's relatives, and, in general, to talk to people who really make sense. Individuals differ greatly in the degree in which culture shock affects them. Although not common, there are individuals who cannot live in foreign countries. Those who have seen people go through a serious case of culture shock and on to a satisfactory adjustment can discern steps in the process.

### ***V. Typical symptoms:***

- Sadness, loneliness, melancholy
- Preoccupation with health
- Aches, pains, allergies
- Insomnia or excessive sleep
- Changes in mood, depression, feeling vulnerable
- Anger, irritability, resentment
- Loss of identity
- Lack of confidence
- Obsessions over cleanliness
- Longing for family
- Feeling of being lost or overlooked

### ***5.1. Stages of cultural shock:***

Four stages of cultural shock shown in the following figure 1.



**Fig. 1:** Four stages of cultural shock.

### 5.2. Objectives:

- To determine the symptoms and causes of cultural shock during the study
- To equate the relationship between independent variables during the study

### 5.3. Research design:

Descriptive and Analytical design is used in the study. The responses were collected from post graduate international students studying at Chennai.

### 5.4. Sample design and sample size:

Simple Random Technique is used. 52 samples are selected from the population .

### 5.5. Tools used:

Regression Analysis  
Correlation Matrix  
Factor Analysis Fitness Test

## VI. Data Analysis and Interpretation:

### 6.1. Impact of personal characteristics on satisfaction level - multiple regression analysis:

Multiple regression analysis is widely used to measure the dependence of one variable on one or more independent variables. It is powerful forecasting tool. The dependent variable is generally expressed, as a linear combination of independent variables.

The general form of multiple Regression equation is,

$$Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + \dots + b_nX_n + u$$

Personality changes ( $Y_1$ ) = Dependent variable

### 6.2. The independent variables are:

Age group( $x_1$ ), Gender( $x_2$ ), Religion ( $x_3$ ), Duration ( $x_4$ ), Preparation ( $x_5$ ), first experience of new culture ( $x_6$ ), university help ( $x_7$ ), family and friends ( $x_8$ ).

**Table 1:** Regression analysis of problem faced towards new culture model summary.

Multiple R	R square	Adjusted r square	Standard Error	Durbin-Watson
.522 <sup>a</sup>	.603	.054	.62712	1.238

**Table 2:** Anova.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	26.603	8	2.660	6.764	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	392.884	999	.393		
Total	419.486	1009			

### 6.3. Regression fitted:

$$Y = 1.486 - 0.039X_1 - 0.152X_2 + 0.145X_3 + 0.154X_4 - 0.026X_5 - 0.002X_6 + 0.006X_7 - 0.054X_8$$

$H_0$  :There is no relationship between dependent and independent factor of cultural shock.

$H_1$  :There is relationship between dependent and independent factor of cultural shock

The table 1 specifies that the coefficient of  $X_1$  (age group) is not significant  $p=0.084$  and the coefficient shows the negative value which would explains that higher age group have lower impact over personality. The percentage of  $X_5$ ,  $X_6$  and  $X_7$  is unrelated to personality. The study shows that these factors are not consider in case of changes in personality in the new culture.

**Table 3:** Regression Co-efficient.

Variables	Beta Co- efficient	Standard Error	t	Sig.
Influencing Factors (Intercept)	1.486	.178	8.343	.000
Age group(x <sub>1</sub> )	-.039	.023	-1.731	.084
Gender(x <sub>2</sub> )	-.152	.048	-3.156	.002
Religion (x <sub>3</sub> )	.145	.041	3.507	.000
How-long (x <sub>4</sub> )	.154	.041	3.757	.000
Preparation (x <sub>5</sub> )	-.026	.048	-.536	.592
First experience of new culture (x <sub>6</sub> )	-.002	.024	-.073	.942
University help (x <sub>7</sub> )	.006	.035	.165	.869
Family and friends (x <sub>8</sub> )	-.054	.023	-2.358	.019

Source: Compiled from Collected Data

**Table 4:** Correlation Matrix – Influence factor Towards Cultural Shock in India.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	1.000													
2	.562	1.000												
3	.713	.612	1.000											
4	.342	.284	.583	1.000										
5	-.652	-.475	-.359	.144	1.000									
6	-.402	-.130	-.211	.142	.627	1.000								
7	-.659	-.467	-.379	.049	.824	.569	1.000							
8	-.713	-.579	-.573	-.188	.686	.457	.721	1.000						
9	.014	.016	-.213	-.306	-.244	-.196	-.302	-.117	1.000					
10	-.589	-.520	-.710	-.532	.254	.041	.222	.491	.206	1.000				
11	.068	.039	-.206	-.375	-.384	-.323	-.448	-.215	.327	.363	1.000			
12	-.223	-.164	-.340	-.316	-.107	-.124	-.121	.115	.194	.518	.442	1.000		
13	-.053	-.165	.065	.024	.191	-.126	.141	.036	-.393	.111	-.016	.094	1.000	
14	.453	.366	.651	.444	-.158	-.272	-.225	-.471	-.315	-.462	-.173	-.190	.516	1.000

The table 2 shows that the values of one show the perfect linear relationship between variables. The correlation value of 0.8 to 1.0 shows the very strong linear relationship. 0.60 to 0.80 shows the strong linear relationship between variables. 0.40 to 0.60 shows the moderate relationship. 0.20 to 0.40 shows the weak form of linear relationship and 0.00 to 0.20 shows the extremely weak relationship between variables.

**Table 5:** KMO and Bartlett's Test.

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.888
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	17742.047
	Df	190
	Sig.	.000

Table3 exhibits the KMO results. If the values of this test stand very small or low, it indicates that the correlation among the variables is not satisfactory and factor analysis is not suitable. But as apparent in table 3, the value is 0.888 which is not less than 0.5 and hence satisfactory. So, the factor analysis for the present study is effective and suitable. In the present study, the data matrix comprising a large number of identified variables which are inter-related have been tested for the amount of variance that each variable shares with all other variables.

### VII. Findings:

Correlation Analysis attempts to study the relationship that exists between two variables. It is understood from the table that there is significant negative correlation between Y1 (Influence factor) and X1 and X2 and X6 and X8 at 1% level and X3 and X4 is positively correlated at 1% level. A close observation of the table reveals that X1(Age) and X7 is negatively correlated at 1% level and X6 and X8 is positively correlated at 1% level and X2 is negatively correlated at 5% level. Multiple regression analysis is widely used to measure the dependence of one variable on one or more independent variables. It is powerful forecasting tool. The analysis of variance of multiple regression models for satisfaction shows that the overall significance of the model well fitted. The co-efficient of determination R<sup>2</sup> value showed that these variables put together explained the variations of cultural shock.

### VIII. Conclusion:

The term culture shock is used to denote the nervousness that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols. Anxiety and stress occur when people meet difficulties regulating to the new culture, not being able to connect with other people in the society or hostile with learning the new language. Student will frequently get over the pressure and anxiety when they successfully go through the stages of culture shock. It is not justifiable to attribute cultural characteristics to genetic inheritance. On the other hand, culture itself is a kind of adaptation which gives human the ability to survive in wide range of environments. Thus, once learned, it becomes a way of life as an adapted culture for that individual. The study found that an efficient and effective selection process

of student and adequate training before, through and after the task can be very advantageous in reducing the undesirable outcomes of Culture Shock. The study indicates that the family situation and the friends of the origin have a high impact over the cultural shock. The study concludes that the Culture Shock cannot be avoided entirely it can be reduced expressively through applicable preparation.

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