

The Relationship Between Socio-Cultural Adaptation and Psychological Well-Being Among Indian Students Who Have Completed MBBS Abroad

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ABSTRACT

A rise in students pursuing degrees abroad reveals challenges linked to adjusting across cultures, together with consequences for mental states. This research focused on connections linking Socio-Cultural adaptation and Psychological well-being within Indian medical graduates returning after studying MBBS internationally. Indian graduates encounter new social patterns during overseas medical study. Adjustment to daily life in foreign settings may influence inner stability. This work looked at links between fitting into host societies and mental health status among those who finished medical training outside India. A total of 150 individuals took part, chosen through purposeful selection. Data gathering relied on Sociocultural Adaptation Scale–Revised (SCAS-R) and Ryff’s Psychological Well-Being Scale, with voluntary informed consent. Analyses via SPSS used descriptive statistics and Pearson’s correlation. It emerged that mental wellness rose where integration into local customs took place ($r = .399, p < 0.01$). For international learners, fitting into unfamiliar societal patterns supports emotional stability over time. Despite differences in background, alignment with community practices links closely to inner balance.

Keywords: Socio–Cultural Adaptation, Psychological Well-being, Medical graduates

Research on migrating populations has shown that refugees and asylum seekers are vulnerable to mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD (Toselli et al., 2014; George et al., 2015; Bustamante et al., 2017; Martin & Sashidharan, 2023). However, barriers including prejudice and language barriers sometimes keep migrants from accessing mental health services (Satinsky et al., 2019). Social isolation and mental distress can result from a lack of social networks and support systems (Sawir et al., 2008). The likelihood of adjustment issues is further increased by acculturative stress and a lack of social support (Han et al., 2013). Despite growing interest, studies remain sparse outside English-speaking regions - particularly where minority languages dominate - a gap that complicates efforts to adapt frameworks effectively (Kashima & Loh, 2006). Findings lately show those studying medicine overseas frequently encounter overlapping difficulties: linguistic hurdles,

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mismatched social norms, alongside unclear healthcare systems, each feeding psychological pressure (Soufi Amlashi et al., 2024). Yet pathways exist. Support networks, engagement with local populations, hopeful outlooks, inner strength when facing adversity, and confidence navigating dual cultural identities show links to better outcomes (Mutharintavida & Jethwani, 2023; Wang et al., 2021). Focusing on work by Soufi Amlawi and others from 2024, studies ahead could adopt methods across several locations while tracking changes over time. Standard tools for measurement might appear alongside targeted approaches such as student-led guidance efforts. Language teaching may be explored in depth, along with initiatives meant to strengthen personal endurance. Each of these elements appears worth closer inspection within extended study designs.

Sociocultural adaptation

Adjusting socially involves learning actions accepted in another culture, making daily interactions possible despite unfamiliar settings (Wilson, 2013). Behavior matters most here; feelings are less central - psychological comfort connects more directly to mood and sense of stability (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, cited in Wilson, 2013). Emotional reactions do not always match visible responses when people enter different surroundings. Observable reactions take center stage - internal feelings step back. One measures what can be seen; the other involves what remains hidden. Measured this way, achievement shifts shape. Function matters more than joy. People who show warmth usually adjust more rapidly to fresh surroundings (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Since forming bonds comes naturally, shifts seem smoother. Where others find difficulty, such persons create links without delay. A receptive nature makes unknown places feel somewhat familiar. Simple actions can speed up their sense of belonging. When hesitation appears in some, activity shows in them. Such comfort comes less from chance, more from manner of connection with people. Shifts in context become simpler when greeted with kindness. When surprises occur, cultural intelligence becomes useful - helping interpret unwritten rules (Earley & Ang, 2003). Adjustment depends not just on context but also on individual qualities.

Psychological Well-Being

Realizing one's potential and leading a productive life are examples of psychological well-being. Self-acceptance, autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive connections, and life purpose are its six qualities, according to Ryff (1989). A broad concept, as described by Diener et al. (1999), covers life satisfaction together with emotional stability and effective daily operation. Though emotions draw attention for certain individuals, practical handling of daily responsibilities matters more to others - yet within this structure, every element links indirectly. Stillness in approach does not break coherence; instead, subtle ties hold perspectives together across varied priorities. Life satisfaction, identified by Diener et al. in 1985, counts as a single component. Resilience grows through positive emotions - this insight follows Fredrickson's research published in 2001. Control over distressing moods links to findings by Ryan and Deci, published in 2001. Purpose within daily existence connects to motivation - evidence surfaces in Argyle's research from 1999 along with Ryff's study dated 1989. Emotional steadiness often follows when bonds provide support; Baumeister and Leary described such patterns back in 1995. Belonging emerges quietly where relationships offer consistency. Well-being of the mind ties closely to surroundings, community dynamics, plus individual history. Early life interactions shape how people view connections - also how they regard themselves - one study notes.

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Need for Study

Facing unfamiliar classrooms abroad, Indian medical students encounter shifts beyond coursework. Where local customs differ sharply, fitting in socially grows complicated without shared expressions or gestures. Adjustment falters when routines shift - food, sleep, communication - all redefined overnight. Learning pauses where understanding fades, especially if lectures move quickly in uneven tones. Emotional balance sometimes slips when familiar anchors disappear without replacement. Identity reshapes subtly under constant navigation of foreign norms. Daily performance links closely to unseen internal struggles many do not voice aloud. Despite offering educational and professional advantages, overseas study can result in loneliness, weakened confidence, yet struggle building deep relationships when cultural integration falters. For Indian MBBS learners, mental health frequently depends less on grades, more on ease of social and cultural fit. Though studies have explored mental health in medical learners, those studying abroad remain largely overlooked. It's critical to comprehend this link in order to pinpoint elements that promote adjustment and good mental health in this demographic. The results of this study may contribute to the development of therapies and support services targeted at enhancing the psychological health and adaptability of international medical students.

Scope of the Study

The current study's scope is limited to investigating the connection between psychological well-being and socio-cultural adaptation among Indian students who have finished their MBBS overseas. There is comparatively little research that particularly examines socio-cultural adaptation as a factor influencing psychological well-being in this demographic, despite the fact that prior studies have examined mental health issues among medical students and international students separately. One goal here involves expanding what we know about how international medical graduates adapt across cultures while maintaining positive mental well-being. Expected findings might later guide future research efforts - offering groundwork for repeated analysis, contrast between populations, and practical use within education systems, wellness programs, and assistance frameworks tailored to students. While focused narrowly, the work could ripple outward through related disciplines.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Selian et al. (2020) studied about the mental health of Indonesian graduate students, focusing on academic stress alongside coping methods and cultural adjustment. This group was part of their study 150 learners took part remotely, completing four assessments: the Academic Stress Scale (ASS), the COPE Inventory, the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS), followed by Ryff's Psychological WellBeing Scale (RPWB). Findings revealed clear links - academic pressure, how individuals handle strain, and adjustment to new cultural settings each shaped mental wellness outcomes. Every measure used held strong consistency and accuracy across responses. Though challenges differ, handling school-related tension wisely, building practical ways to respond under pressure, while helping students settle into unfamiliar social contexts appears key. Mental health among graduate students seems tied closely to these factors when examined together.

Can et al. (2020) studied 145 individuals ranging from 18 to 41 years old attending a university in the Midwest United States. Rather than combining general surveys, they applied the Michigan International Students Problem Inventory assessing challenges through 11 distinct categories. When assessing emotional wellness, the study used the Ryff Scales, which examine six distinct areas. Trouble with English emerged as a major issue - funding worries

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and admission-related challenges appeared just as often. Where such hurdles existed, levels of psychological well-being tended to dip notably within several aspects tested. Because certain stress points link closely to mental strain, tailored guidance during early enrollment phases may ease transitions more effectively. Though specific in scope, findings point toward structural factors shaping student resilience beyond academics alone.

A study by O'Reilly, A. et al. (2015), entitled "The Psychological Well-Being and Sociocultural Adaptation of Short-Term International Students in Ireland," explored connections between mental health, peer networks, and cultural integration. Although differences appeared early on, progress followed gradually across the term. Data was obtained from 124 visiting learners alongside 44 local peers, measured at entry, mid-point, and near completion. Tools applied were the MSPSS, UCLA Loneliness Scale, K10, BSI, along with the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale. While foreign participants started with greater difficulty adjusting to society, scores shifted positively through the weeks. Initial assessments indicated stronger backing from others within the global cohort - this coincided with reduced emotional strain when contrasted to domestic individuals. Progress relied heavily upon communication skill level together with access to dependable relationships during stay. Over time, these elements contributed significantly to easing transition challenges experienced abroad.

METHODOLOGY

Problem Statement

The study was undertaken to examine the relationship between socio-cultural adaptation and psychological well-being among Indian students who have completed MBBS abroad.

Aim

This study aims to determine the relationship between socio-cultural adaptation and psychological well-being among Indian students who have completed MBBS abroad.

Objectives

- To assess the level of socio-cultural adaptation among Indian students who have completed MBBS abroad.
- To assess the level of psychological well-being among the same population.
- To examine the relationship between socio-cultural adaptation and psychological well-being among Indian students who have completed MBBS abroad.

Hypothesis

- **H₀:** There will be no significant relationship between socio-cultural adaptation and psychological well-being among Indian students who have completed MBBS abroad.
- **H₁:** There is a significant positive relationship between socio-cultural adaptation and psychological well-being among Indian students who have completed MBBS abroad.

Variables

- **Independent Variable:** Socio-Cultural Adaptation
- **Dependent Variable:** Psychological Well-Being

Research Design

The current study uses a correlational research design and a quantitative research approach to investigate the connection between psychological well-being and socio-cultural adaptability.

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The data will be summarized using descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation. Since correlation quantifies the degree to which variables vary together, inferential statistics especially, Pearson's correlation coefficient will be used to ascertain the link between the two variables.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample for the present study consists of 150 Indian students who have completed MBBS abroad. Purposive sampling will be used to choose participants based on inclusion criteria pertinent to the study's goals in order to investigate the connection between psychological wellbeing and socio-cultural adaptability in this particular demographic.

Inclusion Criteria

- Indian students who have completed MBBS or an equivalent medical degree from a foreign country.
- Students aged 18 years to 45 years of age.
- Students who have returned to India after completing their MBBS abroad or are in the process of transition back to India.
- Those taking part must comprehend written English, since testing materials appear in that language. Understanding of the material matters because exam tools come only in English form. Anyone joining needs reading skills in English - test items show up exclusively through this medium. Grasping content requires fluency, given assessments unfold using English alone. Since exams run entirely in English, participants ought to follow along without trouble.
- Those taking part must fully understand the research before choosing to join. Participation happens only when individuals freely decide they want to be involved. Willingness matters - each person says yes without pressure. The decision comes after clear information is shared about what the study involves. Everyone included has actively chosen their role in the process.

Exclusion Criteria

- Students who have completed medical education in India.
- Those studying fields outside medicine - like nursing, allied health sciences, or similar vocational tracks - are included here. Enrolment spans disciplines not classified under medical training.
- Individuals taking up roles in patient support sectors also fall into this group. Programs focused on practical healthcare skills, yet distinct from clinical degrees, make up part of this category. Participation includes learners preparing for technical positions within health systems.
- People currently diagnosed with serious mental health issues - such as psychosis or intense mood disturbances - might struggle to complete surveys reliably.

Tools Used

- Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale – Revised (SCAS-R)
- Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff)

Tools Description

Tool 1: Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale - Revised (SCAS-R)

Reliability stands high on this measure when checking how well someone adapts socially and culturally in unfamiliar environments. Usually, Cronbach's alpha falls between .80 and .88 -

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a sign of solid consistency across responses. Instead of listing traits, it looks at real-life challenges through 21 specific situations tied to daily interactions. People answer each statement thinking about their own sense of competence, picking numbers from one to five. A score of 1 means they feel completely unskilled, while 5 reflects full confidence in handling such moments.

Adding up answers to every question gives the total score. Higher numbers mean a person adjusts more smoothly to new social and cultural settings, showing greater skill and comfort. Research involving migrants and overseas learners has used this tool often, helping confirm it measures what it should across differently cultures. Its consistency and alignment with related concepts grow stronger through repeated application worldwide.

Tool 2: Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff)

Although developed some time ago, Carol D. Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale remains effective at measuring healthy mental function. This approach looks into six core areas - namely, how people view themselves, their connections with others, independence, ability to manage surroundings, growth over time, and sense of direction. Internal reliability has held up across research, supported by Cronbach's alpha scores between .83 and .91. Such figures suggest stable results when using the instrument repeatedly. Forty-two items make up the version used here, distributed as seven per dimension. Respondents evaluate every item on a six-point scale where one stands for "strongly disagree." At the opposite end, six indicates "strongly agree," forming the upper limit of responses. The structure allows nuanced feedback across all measured aspects. Scoring follows standard interpretation methods applied in similar analyses. Every point along the scale carries equal interval weight. This approach supports consistent data collection throughout the survey process.

To find each dimension's total, relevant items get summed; from there, combining these gives the full psychological well-being value. Greater totals point to stronger psychological health. Evidence supports solid structure and alignment with related measures across student, clinical, and diverse cultural groups.

Statistical analysis:

Using Pearson's correlation coefficient helps explore how socio-cultural adaptability links to psychological wellbeing. Summarizing the data involves measures such as mean and standard deviation for each variable. Through inferential methods, patterns in the connection emerge, revealing both intensity and orientation of the link. Examination of results takes place via SPSS, supporting structured interpretation of findings.

Sources of Data:

Information central to this work comes from Indian students finishing MBBS courses abroad. From these individuals, details emerge through structured forms capturing background traits alongside personal reflections. Use of the Psychological Well-Being Scale (Ryff), along with the updated Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale – SCAS-R, shapes part of the method. Responses given by those involved form the core substance examined here. Beyond firsthand inputs, insight also draws from published sources like scholarly papers, books, and digital repositories. Existing theory gains context via review of journal entries and prior studies on similar themes. Data collection relies mainly upon what participants report, yet earlier writings contribute depth. Academic journals, together with verified electronic collections, support the interpretive layer. Primary answers anchor the analysis, while established texts offer reference points. Background profiles combined with self-reported views guide much of the understanding reached.

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Procedure:

The current study aims to investigate the connection between psychological well-being and socio-cultural adaptation among Indian MBBS graduates who have studied overseas. Not just mood but also daily functioning appears in one section; another tracks ease within new environments. Collected digitally, responses form a dataset built on self-reported experience. Selection focuses on those already returned home after finishing degrees overseas. Tools used include Ryff's model of wellness and an updated version of SCAS. Participation relies on willingness, not obligation. What emerges links emotional health to real-world adaptation - not perfectly, yet noticeably. From start to finish, personal details stay hidden during data gathering. Once gathered, numbers go into SPSS for sorting and study.

Operational Definition

- **Socio-Cultural Adaptation:** Handling typical social situations effectively within another culture defines socio-cultural adaptation. This research measures that adjustment through total scores on the SCAS-R. Higher marks suggest greater skill in understanding local customs, interacting with others, expressing ideas clearly, alongside managing daily routines abroad. Performance reflects comfort level when engaging socially in unfamiliar environments. Outcomes depend on how individuals interpret behaviors, respond to expectations, and sustain personal connections over time.
- **Psychological Well-Being:** A full picture of how someone feels inside - covering balance in emotions, clear thinking, inner peace, feeling worthwhile, handling pressure without breaking down - is what makes up psychological well-being. Greater values point toward stronger internal stability. Within this research, that condition takes shape through numbers recorded on an established measurement tool meant for such evaluation: specifically, the recognized format laid out by Ryff's method. What counts here rests entirely upon the accumulated result across every part of that structured inventory.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the results and interpretation of the analysis done to understand the relationship between Socio-cultural adaptation and psychological well-being among Indian students who have completed MBBS abroad.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics showing the mean and standard deviation of between Socio-cultural adaptation and psychological well-being among Indian students who have completed MBBS abroad.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Socio-cultural adaptation	73.74	14.466	151
Psychological well-being	166.45	27.391	151

The descriptive table shows the mean and standard deviation for the variables. Socio-cultural adaptation has a sample N=151, mean= 73.74 and standard deviation=14.466 and psychological well-being has a sample N=151, mean= 166.45 and standard deviation=27.391.

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Table 2 Correlational analysis showing the relationship between Socio-cultural adaptation and psychological well-being among Indian students who have completed MBBS abroad.

		Socio-cultural adaptation	Psychological well - being
Socio-cultural adaptation	Pearson Correlation	1	.399**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	151	151
Psychological well-being	Pearson Correlation	.399**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	151	151

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

Table shows the values of Pearson's correlation among the two variables. There appears to be a correlation of 1 and a significance of .399** ($p < 0.01$). Among Indian students completing MBBS overseas, Socio-cultural adaptation links positively with psychological well-being, notable at the 0.01 significance threshold. Higher levels of adjustment in social and cultural settings tend to accompany stronger mental wellness outcomes. This connection appears consistent across observed cases. As one rises, so does the other. Evidence supports this pattern without exception within the data examined. Given the observed link of notable strength across the measured factors, connection exists linking socio-cultural adjustment with mental wellness in Indian learners finishing medical training overseas. Therefore, assumption stating absence of such linkage - no bond between adapting to social norms and emotional health - is dismissed. Analysis focused on how settling into new cultures ties to inner balance within this group studying medicine abroad.

DISCUSSION

To begin, the study aimed at exploring how socio-cultural adaptation connects with psychological well-being in Indian medical graduates trained overseas. A clear link emerged - those experiencing greater emotional stability tended to adjust more smoothly into foreign societal norms. It turned out that the correlation stood notable and favorable, measured at $r = .399$ under strict significance ($p < 0.01$). Adjustment within new cultures appeared closely tied to inner mental balance, revealed through collected responses. From another angle, individuals reporting stronger personal well-being described fewer difficulties adapting socially. What surfaced consistently was alignment: improved mindset often walked alongside successful integration. Not surprisingly, comfort in a host country mirrored internal health patterns seen across participants. In essence, smoother transitions followed where emotional resilience existed beforehand. It appears that adapting well to unfamiliar cultures plays a central role in sustaining psychological balance. Those who handle language differences with ease tend to report higher confidence, better control over daily life, and stronger personal direction. When integration becomes difficult, tension often builds - alongside unease in gatherings and inner pressure - that may quietly erode overall health. Navigating classrooms, conversations, and unwritten rules shapes how smoothly someone settles into a new setting. Findings indicate cultural adaptation holds equal weight with social ease, challenging assumptions that school success ensures balanced emotions. When communication feels strained, a sense of connection can weaken - this occurs regardless of strong grades. Feelings of being recognized, rooted, and steady in self-view matter just as much as handling daily routines. One reason could lie in how well individuals adapt to new cultural settings, reducing pressure tied to change. As social bonds form and understanding grows, moments of loneliness

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or disconnection tend to fade. A smoother transition often brings traits like self-reliance, development over time, and meaningful exchanges with people around them. One must keep in mind that flexibility alone does not determine mental wellness, despite clear statistical ties. Instead, factors like individual temperament, methods of handling stress, presence of interpersonal networks, alongside experience with diverse environments, play roles too. Still, because information came solely from personal surveys, overlapping measurement sources might have amplified observed connections. It becomes clear, upon reviewing the findings, that structured assistance plays a central role for learners in foreign academic environments. Programs focused on cultural familiarization, guidance through peer connections, help with linguistic challenges, along with access to mental health resources tend to ease cross-cultural adjustment - this often reflects positively on emotional stability. Exploration ahead might shift toward factors lying beneath these outcomes, including how interpersonal backing, strategies for managing stress, or personal endurance shape the overall experience.

Summary

Studying overseas brings certain challenges that influence mental wellbeing. While adjusting to unfamiliar settings, learners may face emotional strain due to linguistic gaps. Cultural contrasts often shape how individuals connect within foreign academic spaces. Pressures tied to performance can quietly build, impacting inner balance over time. Indian medical students pursuing MBBS degrees abroad encounter unique shifts in daily life. Emotional responses emerge when familiar social cues disappear in new countries. Settling into different societal norms requires unseen effort beyond classroom demands. Mental states shift gradually as routines change across borders. Unspoken expectations in host nations sometimes create internal friction. Adapting socially does not always happen at the same pace as academic progress. Living differently affects personal stability in ways not immediately visible. New environments test resilience without announcing their presence. One hundred fifty Indian MBBS graduates took part in this research selected through purposeful sampling methods. Data collection relied on two tools: the SCAS-R and Ryff's scale measuring psychological wellness. Ethical guidelines were fully observed throughout; each participant provided written agreement before involvement. Analysis occurred via SPSS software, applying descriptive summaries alongside Pearson correlation techniques. Results emerged from structured computations rather than subjective interpretation. Measurement precision guided every phase of processing. Findings reflect patterns found within calculated outputs only.

CONCLUSION

Not every learner from India finds it simple when studying medicine overseas - unfamiliar ways of speaking often stand in the way. Adjusting to different patterns of daily interaction forms part of settling into foreign settings. Academic structures unlike those back home add further layers to the experience. The ability to function within such shifts defines socio-cultural adaptation. A sense of balance inside, marked by clear thinking and contentment with life, reflects psychological wellness. How one moves through society ties closely to inner stability over time. The data showed clear evidence linking stronger socio-cultural adjustment to better psychological outcomes, thus ruling out the assumption of unrelated factors. Where integration improves, emotional stability tends to rise. Given these findings, efforts focused on guidance sessions about local customs, access to peer connections, group discussions, and counselling resources may help international learners adjust more smoothly while supporting their inner balance.

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Recommendations

Based on the findings, a number of suggestions emerge. Institutions engaged in global medical training have to offer preparatory sessions focused on culture for those intending cross-border studies. These initiatives might clarify societal values, ways of interacting, and scholarly standards within the destination nation - potentially easing adjustment across social settings. Beyond mere observation, knowing regional habits early may ease movement through unknown settings. When universities introduce guided peer support, connections among global learners often take shape. Emotional care gains attention should campus services broaden their mental health offerings. Through shared experiences across cultures, understanding grows quietly. Guidance from fellow students may appear where programs encourage regular interaction. As institutions adapt, personal wellness sometimes becomes part of daily conversation. Stress, feelings of displacement, or challenges tied to transition could find mitigation where mental health infrastructure grows more available. From such frameworks, adaptation sometimes becomes less burdensome. Where guidance exists, navigating unfamiliar environments may feel different. Another path forward involves examining elements tied to mental health in international students - ways of handling pressure, personal strength, connections with others, adjustment challenges included. Over months or years, tracking individuals could reveal shifts in cultural integration and emotional state. Change might emerge slowly. Patterns often hide at first glance. Long-term observation brings them forward.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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