

Acculturative Stress and Mental Health of International Students: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study is to review of empirical studies to examine the relationship between acculturative stress and mental health of international students. A literature search using JSTOR, Google Scholar and J-Gate database covers the period from 1995 to 2015, the author acknowledged 20 peer reviewed papers (full text) gathering inclusion criteria. Search terms were Acculturation, Acculturative stress, mental health, and international students. This search generate many empirical studies which includes participants from African, Arabian, Asian, Bosnian, Caribbean, Chinese, Iraqi, Korean, Latino, Oceania, Mexican, Norway, Lebanese, Somali, and Greenland countries. The majority of them were from Psychology, Psychiatry, Sociology, Social Science, Anthropology, Nursing, Health Promotion, Science, Life Science and Medicine. Six parameters proposed by Zhang and Goodson (2011) have been selected to assess the internal validity of reviewed studies; viz., research design, validity coefficient of criterion measure on own data, reliability coefficient of criterion measure on own data, reliability and validity coefficient of different predictor measures on own data, statistical analysis, effect size. Current review demonstrated contradictory findings on the relationship between acculturative stress and mental health of international students. The information of acculturative stress of international students studying in India has not yet been ascertained. Theoretical and practical issues have been discussed.

Keywords: *Acculturation, Acculturative Stress, Mental Health, International Students.*

Today, intercultural contact is a world wide experience. In modern society, individuals are exposed to various levels of cultural influence either through sojourners or being members of a society that receives migrants (Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987). In any society, culture provides individuals with normation about its values and offers guide for behaviour and thoughts (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Migrants such as tourists, refugees, immigrants and students, at first experience a lack of such normative information and guidance regarding how to think and behave in that culture. This information vacuum often leads to a significant amount of

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life stress. It is observed in many studies that the level of stress might even increase depending on the difference between the culture of an individual and the new culture. (Berry, Kim, Minde & Mok, 1987; Knowles, 2003; Yeh & Inose, 2003).

Acculturation is “a process of cultural and psychological adjustment resulting from contact between cultural groups and their individual members” (Berry, 2005). Acculturation occurs at two levels viz. group and individual. “At the group level, it involves changes in social structures institutions and in cultural practices” (Berry, 2005), and in the individual level “acculturation involves adjustment in the form of change in individual’s behavioral patterns and mental health status” (Graves, 1967).

Berry, (1997) proposed an acculturation framework for the study of acculturation and adaptation. His work frame considers the acculturative experience as a most important life event that is characterized by stress. It demands cognitive appraisal for situation, and also requires coping strategies. The processes of acculturation, as well as their psychological outcomes are likely to be influenced by both societal and individual level variables.

Two approaches to conceptualize the results of acculturation process were recommended by Berry (1992).

First, normally, individuals face minimum trouble in behavioural change. Later on, this approach incorporated three process viz. Cultural learning, cultural shedding and cultural conflict. Cultural learning and shedding connect with selective, focused and substance by behaviours regarding adjustment of the host culture (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). Therefore, individuals going through acculturation may face minimum difficulties. These types of behavior changes or difficulties are not challenging. Those individuals face less difficulty. However some degree of cultural conflict possibly occurs.

After facing conflict individuals use some strategies to deal with the experience. These strategies are mentioned under four categories: (1) Assimilation (2) Integration (3) Separation (4) Marginalization. Assimilation involves rejection of one’s cultural values in favour of entrance to the dominant culture practices. It has also been conceptualized as the “process by which one individual develops a new cultural identity” (Lafromboise et al., 1993). Integration, on the other hand involves maintaining one’s cultural identity and participating in the dominant culture’s values. Separation refers to the presence of one’s own cultural norms and not participating in the cultural norms of the dominant/ host cultural. Marginalization occurs when individual neither participates in one’s own or the dominant group’s cultural practices (William & Berry, 1991). Research has since revealed that integration is the most adaptive strategy while marginalization was found to be least adaptive (Berry et al, 1987). Assimilation and separation are thought to fall somewhere in among (Berry, 1997; Berry & Sam, 1997).

Acculturative Stress

To deal with problematic aspects of acculturation, the concept of acculturative stress was proposed by Berry (1970). “Acculturative stress is a stress reaction in response to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation (Berry, 2005)”. The Acculturative stress model was introduced by Berry, Kim, Minde, Mok (1987) to understand the acculturation process and outcomes. This model put emphasis on the importance of discovering acculturative stress as an expression of acculturation when an individual or a group of migrants arrived in connection with different cultural group. Acculturation stress model starts with acculturation experience i.e. short and long-term migration in host culture. During acculturation individual’s participation and experience changes from more to little. In the next block Berry et.al, (1987) explained that, an individual may face stressors due to change of experiences. Changing experiences of acculturation are responsible for stressors. Therefore, individuals face stressors from many to few.

Acculturative stress is the stress associated with adjusting to a new cultural environment (Berry, 1998, 2003) and includes some typical psychological difficulties such as linguistic challenges, loss of social supports and difficulty establishing new social ties, disruptions in family dynamics, difficulty finding a job in a new country, discrimination, and non acceptance by the host culture or ethnic identity issues. Acculturative stress can be psychological, social or physical and can lead to a reduction in health status for ethnic minorities (Berry, Kim, Minde, Mok ,1987; Yeh, 2003). There have been many studies suggesting that adaptation to the host culture is very difficult and stressful (Choi, 1997; Mori, 2000; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Yang & Clum, 1994).

Church, (1982) reported that international students confronted “language difficulties, financial problems, adjusting to a new educational system, homesickness, adjusting to social customs and norms and for some student’s racial discrimination”. Similarly, Lin & Yi, (1997) indicated the following problems unique to or exacerbated among international students: academic difficulties due to English language and the different educational system, financial pressures, psychological stressors due to unfamiliarity with new customs and social norms, and changes in one’s support system, and intrapersonal and interpersonal problems caused by the process of acculturation and adjustment.

The exact manifestation of acculturative stress is unclear but literature suggests that there are various symptoms of acculturative stress and have aggravating effects on each other and usually have a tendency to affect following areas of functioning viz. Psychological, Physical/Somatic, and Behavioural. Psychological Symptoms- Depression, Anxiety, Isolation, Helplessness, Hopelessness, Sadness, Feeling of loss, Anger, Guilt, Shame, Fright, Disappointment, Sense of inferiority etc. are few psychological (Berry, 1997; Berry & Sam, 1997; Hwang et al., 2005; Mori, 2000; Roysircar-Sadowsky & Maestas, 2000; Lazarus,1992, 1993). Physical Symptoms- Headaches, sleep and appetite disturbance, fatigue, Increases in blood pressure, gastrointestinal problems. (Berry, 1997 Mori, 2000). Behavioural Symptoms- Less self-confidence, Role conflict, career indecision, poor self-respect (Berry, 1997; Hwang

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et al., 2005; Roysircar-Sadowsky & Maestas,2000; Naditch & Marissey 1976, Torbiorn,1982).

WHO has recently proposed that mental health is “a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community” (WHO, 2001d, p.1).

Objectives

Following major objectives were included

1. To find out some technical research issues of current research literature on the relationship between acculturative stress and mental health.
2. Summarize the research findings of current research literature on the relationship between acculturative stress and mental health.

METHODOLOGY

“The present piece of paper is a part of unpublished thesis”

Literature review procedures- In order to the review the literature, an extensive and systematic search was carried out to locate journal articles that deal with empirical work on the factors responsible for acculturative stress with mental health. Articles were identified through JSTOR, Google Scholar and J-Gate database covering the period from 1995 to 2015, using the term acculturative stress, mental health and international students. This search generate many empirical studies which includes participants from African, Arabian, Asian, Bosnian, Caribbean, Chinese, European, Iraqi, Korean, Latino, Oceania, Mexican, Norway, Lebanese, Somali, and Greenland countries. The majority of them were from Psychology, Psychiatry, Sociology, Social Science, Anthropology, Nursing, Health Promotion, Science, Life Science and Medicine. Some inclusion criteria were included within the review viz. empirical studies in English language only. Empirical studies from various literature reviews on acculturative stress and mental health. Quantitative studies from various literature reviews on acculturative stress and mental health of International students only.

Methodology assessment criteria: In present research six parameters were decided to assess internal validity of reviewed every empirical studies recommended by Zhang and Goodson (2011). These were Research design, validity coefficient of criterion measure on own data, reliability coefficient of criterion measure on own data, reliability and validity coefficient of different predictor measures on own data, statistical analysis, effect size.

Table 1: Target group of international students concerning 20 reviewed studies

Author	Ethnic group	n	Sample size	Sample selection Technique
Pillay (2005)	African-American students	1	136	Quasi random sampling
Ahmed, Kia- Keating and Tsai (2011)	Arab adolescents students	2	240	Simple random sampling
Jamsiah, Taher & Tauik (2014)	Arab university students	-	119	Purposive sampling
Hwang & Ting (2008)	Asian American students	2	107	Simple random sampling
Miller, Yang, Farrell & Li Lin (2011)	Asian American students	-	376	Disproportional stratified random sampling
Geeraert and Demoulin (2013)	Balgians	1	162	Purposive sampling
Livingston, Neita Riviera & Livingston (2007)	Caribbean College students in U.S.	1	418	Incidental cum random sampling
Wei, Mallen, Heppner, Liao, and Wu (2007)	Chinese- American college students in U.S.	1	189	Purposive sampling
Fritz, Chin, & DeMarinis (2008)	European, Asian university students in U.S.	1	246	Purposive sampling
Abdulahad, Graham, Monrownlee (2014)	Iraqi	1	326	Purposive sampling
Jang & Chiriboga (2009)	Korean American	1	472	Cluster Sampling
Lee, Koeske & Sales (2004)	Korean international students	1	74	Simple random sampling
Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart (2004)	Mexican-American students	2	247	Purposive sampling
Crockett et al. (2007)	Mexican-American students	-	148	Purposive sampling
Gomez, Miranda, & Polanco, (2011)	Mix group*	4	969	Purposive sampling
Sullivan & West (2015)	Mix Group*	-	104	Simple random sampling
Vergara, Smith & Keele, (2010)	Mix Group*	-	219	Purposive sampling
Yeh, & Inose, (2003)	Mix Group*	-	359	Purposive sampling
Ellis, et. Al (2008)	Somali students	-	135	Quasi random sampling
Rahman & Rollock (2004)	South Asian College students in U.S.	1	199	Purposive sampling

Mix group- Asian, African, European, Latino, Latin American, North American, Middle East, and South American, Oceania, (Black & White) US-born and non-US-born.*

RESULTS

Sample of reviewed studies

Table 1 indicated that 20 reviewed studies were included international students from African American (1), Arabian (2), Asian American (2), Belgian (1), Caribbean (1), Chinese American (1), European-Asian (1), Iraqi (1), Korean (1), Korean-American (1), Mexican – American (2), Mix group (4), Somali (1), South Asian (1). Table 1 suggested that percentage value of reviewed studies concerning to sample size less than 200 participants 50% (10), and more than 200 participants 50% (10). At glance of table-1, it is clearly shows that percentage value of reviewed studies concerning to sample selection technique-purposive sampling 55% (11), simple random sampling 20% (4), quasi random sampling 10% (2), incidental cum-

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random sampling 5% (1), cluster sampling 5% (1), disproportional stratified random sampling 5% (1).

Methodology of reviewed studies

A perusal of table 2 indicates it clearly that, 15% (3) reviewed studies were employed longitudinal research design. On the other hand, 85% (17) reviewed studies were employed cross-sectional research design. Further only 10% (2) reviewed studies were reported validity coefficients of criterion measure on own data. In additional, 85% (17) reviewed studies were reported reliability coefficients of criterion measure on own data. Also 75% (15) reviewed studies were reported validity or reliability coefficients of different predictor measure on own data. Additionally, 60% (12) reviewed studies were controlled confounding variable by statistical analysis. Moreover, 60% (12) reviewed studies were reported effect size.

Table-2 target group of international students concerning 20 reviewed studies

<i>Parameters</i> <i>Studies</i>	Research design	Validity Co. of Criterion Variable	Reliability Coefficient of Criterion Variable	Validity & Reliability Coefficients Of Predicting Variable	Statistical analysis	Effect size
Abdulahad, Graham, Montelpare and Brownlee (2014)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ahmed, Kia- Keating and Tsai (2011)	0	0	1	1	1	0
Castillo, Conoley & Brossart (2004)	0	0	1	1	1	1
Crockett et al. (2007)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ellis, et. al (2008)	0	1	1	1	0	1
Fritz, Chin, & DeMorris (2008)	0	0	1	0	0	0
Geeraert and Demoulin (2013)	0	0	1	1	1	1
Gomez, Miranda, & Polanco,(2011)	0	0	1	1	1	0
Hwang & Ting (2008)	0	0	1	1	1	1
Jamsiah, Taher & Taufik (2014)	0	0	1	0	0	0
Jang & Chiriboga (2009)	1	0	1	1	1	1
Lee, Koeske & Sales (2004)	0	0	1	1	1	1
Livingston, Neita Riviera & Livingston(2007)	1	0	1	1	0	0
Miller, Yang, Farrell & Li Lin (2011)	1	0	1	1	1	1
Pillay (2005)	0	0	1	1	1	1
Rahman & Rollock (2004)	0	0	1	1	0	0
Sullivan & West (2015)	0	0	1	1	1	1
Vergara, Smith & Keele, (2010)	0	0	0	0	0	1

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<i>Parameters</i> <i>Studies</i>	Research design	Validity Co. of Criterion Variable	Reliability Coefficient of Criterion Variable	Validity & Reliability Coefficients Of Predicting Variable	Statistical analysis	Effect size
Yeh, & Inose, (2003)	0	0	1	1	1	1
Wei, Mallen, Heppner, Liao, and Wu (2007)	0	1	1	1	1	1
0	(n=17) 85%	(n=18) 90%	(n=03) 15%	(n=05) 25%	(n=08) 40%	(n=08) 40%
1	(n=03) 15%	(n=02) 10%	(n=17) 85%	(n=15) 75%	(n=12) 60%	(n=12) 60%
<i>Scoring patterns</i> - Research design (longitudinal= 1, cross-sectional= 0), validity coefficients of criterion measure on own data (yes=1, no=0), reliability coefficients of criterion measure on own data (yes=1, no=0), validity or reliability coefficients of different predictor measures (yes=1, no=0), statistical analyses viz. controlling of confounding variables (yes=1, no=0) and reported effect size (yes=1, no=0).						

Table-3: Research Findings of current research literature

Findings	n	Studies
Acculturative stress was positively associated with mental health	8	Ahmed, Kia- Keating and Tsai (2011); Fritz, Chin, & DeMorris (2008); Gomez, Miranda, & Polanco, (2011); Jamsiah, Taher & Taufik (2014); Miller, Yang, Farrell & Li Lin (2011); Pillay (2005); Rahman & Rollock (2004); Wei, Mallen, Heppner, Liao, and Wu (2007)
Acculturative stress negatively associated with mental health	6	Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart (2004); Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln, & Cabral, (2008); Hwang & Ting, (2008); Jang & Chiriboga (2009); Livingston, Neita Riviera & Livingston (2007) ; Vergara, Smith & Keele, (2010)
Significant buffering effect of social support on the link between acculturative stress and mental health.	6	Abdulahad, Graham, Montelpare and Brownlee (2014); Crockett et al. (2007); Geeraert and Demoulin (2013); Lee, Koeske, and Sales (2004); Sullivan & West (2015); Yeh & Inose (2003)
Total Studies		- 20

Findings of reviewed studies

Positive relationship between Acculturative stress and mental health: Several studies reported that there was positive relationship between acculturative stress and mental health of international students (Ahmed, Kia- Keating and Tsai, 2011; Fritz, Chin, & DeMorris, 2008; Gomez, Miranda, & Polanco, 2011; Jamsiah, Taher & Taufik , 2014; Miller, Yang, Farrell & Li Lin ,2011; Pillay, 2005; Rahman & Rollock, 2004; Wei, Mallen, Heppner, Liao, and Wu, 2007).

Further, some studies reported negative relationship between acculturative stress and mental health of international students (Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart, 2004; Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln, & Cabral, 2008; Hwang & Ting, 2008; Jang & Chiriboga, 2009; Livingston, Neita Riviera & Livingston, 2007 ; Vergara, Smith & Keele, 2010).

Additionally, some studies indicated that significant buffering effect of social support on the link between acculturative stress and mental health of international students. (Abdulahad, Graham, Montelpare and Brownlee, 2014; Crockett et al., 2007; Geeraert and Demoulin, 2013; Lee, Koeske, and Sales, 2004; Sullivan & West, 2015; Yeh & Inose, 2003)

Comments for reviewed studies

Reviewed studies have provided information regarding acculturative stress and mental health among various countries (table-1) African American, Arabian, Asian American, Belgian, Caribbean, Chinese American, European-Asian, Iraqi, Korean, Korean-American, Mexican – American, Somali, South Asian. All reviewed studies incorporated appropriate target group, as well as large sample i.e. ≥ 200 participants. Reviewed studies were employed simple random, incidental cum random sampling, quasi random sampling, cluster sampling and disproportional stratified random sampling technique (table-1). Most of the studies were employed purposive sampling technique due to lacking of sampling frame. But incidental cum random sampling is more appropriate for representation of population if sampling frame is not available. These existing facts indicated that, insufficient external validity of reviewed studies.

Reviewed studies were employed both longitudinal and cross-sectional research design (table-2). Further studies have insufficient external and internal validity. Several studies controlled confounding variable by different statistical analysis. In addition studies reported effective size of the studies also. However, validity coefficient of criterion measure on own data is essential module of trustworthiness of findings (Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Consequently, findings of reviewed studies are not trustworthy. Current review demonstrated contradictory findings on the relationship between acculturative stress and mental health of international students (table-3). Reviewed studies provide insubstantial evidences regarding direct effect of acculturative stress and mental health of international students.

Recommendation for future research

After review of research study it is found that, various studies occurs in Acculturative stress and mental health of International students but here some studies couldn't find or less in numbers of researches like, some technical research issues, preparation for entering in a new culture, proper counselling for International students while in processes of acculturation, measuring acculturative stress of foreign students in India, as well as training for university faculties or student well fare department.

CONCLUSION

In this review the researcher focuses on reviews on different aspects of Acculturative stress and covers all possible factors which may affect mental health of international students. Current review demonstrated contradictory findings on the link between acculturative stress and mental health of international students. It has been found very clearly that the research on acculturative stress and mental health has not been given importance in India and not a single study found in the field of International students. And there is a vast scope in research in the field of various factors which may cause affected mental health due to acculturative stress.

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