Lived-In Experiences of International Students in Indian University: Enculturation, Emigration & Resilience

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Abstract:- The idea that high-quality higher education is essential for long-term human growth is apparent in the modern world. Learning analytical and problem-solving skills through higher education eventually aids in the development of intellectual curiosity and character in people. Our objectives with the study was to explore the lived in experiences, their emigration, cultural differences and coping mechanism adopted by foreign students studying in Sharda University. In this qualitative study we interviewed 10 international students enrolled in the selected university to understand: (a) The process of migration from native country to India. (b) The cultural challenges they faced here. (c) The adapting strategies followed by students to cope in host country. We identified "different education system ", "cultural differences", "different food preferences", " looted by local vendors & autos" as the challenges faced by the students and themes such as "learned to cook" , " dependent on food delivery", " positive attitude", "friendly professors" as most noteworthy coping techniques adopted by the students related to cross-cultural transitions. This research may be helpful in providing market intelligence to Indian higher education policy makers and university administrators.

Keywords:- *International Students, Challenges, Resilience, Host Country, Emigration.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The rate of human migration is increasing rapidly. According to the International Organisation for Migration's World Migration Report 2018, 3.3% of the world's population, or nearly 244.000.000 international immigrants, were living abroad in 2015. This number was rising faster than expected.[1]

Emigration is termed as the movement of people from one country to another. Individuals move abroad for number of reasons such as quality of life, education. The decision of an individual or group to emigrate strongly depends upon internal or external motivations. Student migration refers to the movement of students who study for a year or more outside of their country of birth or citizenship. Due to globalization, the higher education has grown more internationally oriented and more market driven. Migrating to another country for studying is viewed as stepping stone to success or chance to get permanent residency of that particular country by the students. Countries now compete with attractive initiatives to welcome the international students with immigration or visa policies. The high enrollment by the international students comes with some benefits as well as major responsibilities for the host country. The number of international students preferring to "study in India" is rising than before.[2]

Enculturation is the process through which individuals get familiar with the dynamics of the society they live in and pick up values and standards that are essential or suited to that culture. Acculturation is the process by which a racial or ethnic group adopts the cultural norms (such as beliefs, religion, and language)[3]. Acculturation is triggered by migration a dominant/host group's language. India received students in various academic courses from more than 175 countries across the globe. Maximum arrivals from being Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Maldives, Yemen, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Iran. Additionally, developed countries like China and

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United States have shown surge in students admission, by this India is becoming educational hub. With state of art infrastructure, modern laboratories, well equipped classes, modern pedagogy, top resources and good educational quality satisfying India as destination for future education.[4]

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The research findings and the implications are discussed using "push-pull factors and Lee's Theory of Migration". That explains characteristics sets humans apart from other animals is migration, which has existed since the existence of time. Even in the prehistoric era, people were mobile, migrating in pursuit of a plentiful supply of food, a secure place to live, and safety from physical perils. The onset of the industrial and urbanization eras in the contemporary era has given migration more significance.[5]

Push factors, which are connected to the nation from which a person migrates, are situations that may compel people to leave their homes. The lack of sufficient employment opportunities, poverty, population growth that outpaces resource availability, "primitive" or "poor" living conditions, desertification, famines and droughts, fear of political persecution, inadequate healthcare, loss of wealth, and natural disasters are all push factors.

People are drawn to a certain region by pull forces, which are the exact opposite of push factors. More job opportunities, better living conditions, political and/or religious freedom, superior education and welfare systems, better communication and transportation infrastructure, a better healthcare system, an attractive and stress-free environment, and security are typical examples of pull factors for a location. A permanent or semi-permanent shift in residence is considered migration. In other words, migration can be viewed as a type of relocation to new places and the spread of innovations, ideas, and behaviors.[6]

Push and pull factors, which are influences that either persuade people to relocate to a new area or compel them to abandon existing residences, determine the reasons why people migrate. They could be environmental, cultural, political, or economic.

➢ *Participants*

The research was conducted with ten international students enrolled in various schools of selected international universities. A purposive sampling technique was adopted to identify the international students who have satisfied the inclusion criteria. Sample saturation is considered as realization for adequacy of sample size. African countries are the maximum contributors for providing highest number of international students and that is mostly represented. Majority of the students were enrolled for under graduation programme in selected university. Study sample demographics are presented in table no. 1

Table 1 Participants profile

Code	Age	Gender	Country	Course enrolled in
C1	21	Male	Africa –Morocco	B.Sc Nursing (UG)
C2	24	Male	Africa –Malawi	B.Sc Nursing (UG)
C3	23	Female	Africa –Nigeria	B.Sc Nursing (UG)
C4	21	Male	Africa –Cameroon	B.Sc Nursing (UG)
C5	23	Female	Nepal	B.Sc Nursing (UG)
C6	21	Female	Nepal	B.Sc Nursing (UG)
C7	20	Female	Bhutan	B.Sc Nursing (UG)
C8	21	Male	Africa –Tanzania	B.Sc Nursing (UG)
C9	19	Male	Africa –Congo	B.Sc Nursing (UG)
C10	20	Male	Nepal	B.Sc Nursing (UG)

Note: Codes were assigned to each participants and has been kept confidential. UG means under graduation

➢ *Data Collection*

The one to one interview was conducted with the participants with medium of language as English. All the interviews were organized in university only. After assuming that participant that will openly talk and answer honestly were included in the study. All the participants were briefed with the motive of the study, use of the study results and the information gathered will be used for academic purpose only. Audio recording were made with the participants permission. The purpose of the study was not to make generalizations about the problems of international students but to explore the experiences and the impact it had on them.

The interview was structured using similar questions for every participants and a uniformity was made by letting the participant share their "stories" as much as possible with very less prompting as required during the session from the researcher. Participants were made comfortable in the interview settings. Open ended questions were initially asked with only two specific questions keeping in mind the objective of the study. The time taken by each participant varies. There were use of non verbal communication also and sufficient data was collected.

➢ *Analysis of The Content*

All the recorded audio were played repeatedly and notes were written out from them. After reading the transcript meaning full inferences were drawn by the researchers individually, the final analysis was compared and discussed.
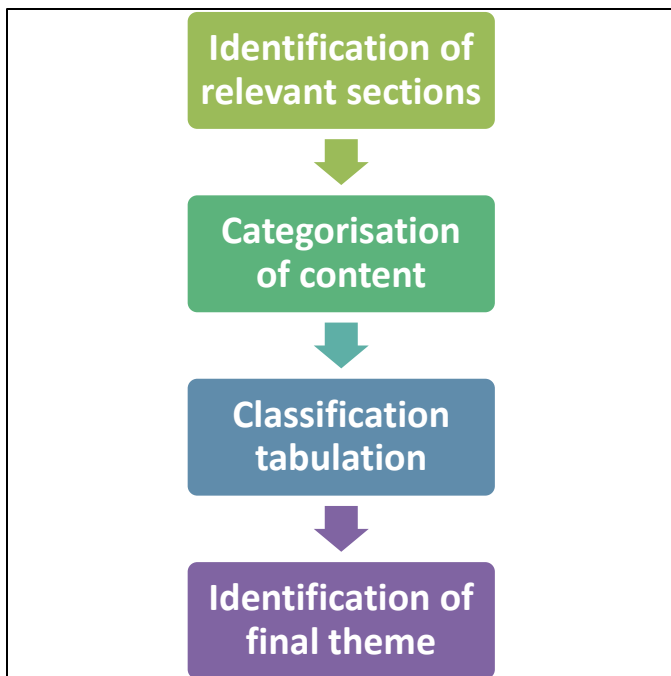

Fig: 1 Schematic diagram

The Colaizzi's method of data analysis technique[7] was used to discover the themes into the relevant text. The transcript of the study participants were read to get the feeling for them and to extract the significant statements from the text. Relevant meaning were collected from the statement with arranging the themes as well. The results are utilized to get much clear description of their lived experiences. The validation of the content as received from the participants is done. Incorporating any new or relevant data that has been validated by participants and modified to achieve congruence with the participants' lived experiences.

The Colaizzi's method was regarded as important since it determined the significance and worth of the words by comprehending the context. The keywords were selected after reading through earlier studies on the topic of international students' choice of study locations. The methods were applied manually, without the aid of any software, by reading the transcripts. Given the small size of the transcripts and the researchers' familiarity with the subject, a manual examination was preferred to the use of software.

III. RESULTS

The researchers group the study's findings into three categories in the section that follows: first, the overseas students' emigration from their countries to the host country ; second, the enculturation that they are having in Indian culture; and the third is their resilience in Indian higher education while studying in undergraduate prograrmme in an Indian university . The categorizations match the study's research questions exactly. To present the findings, the pertinent theme has been established first, followed by the presentation of supporting data and the expression of critical observations. The authors have omitted names or fictitious titles while quoting from the interview transcripts.

❖ *Emigration of international students*

Major theme that was identified through the analysis of the transcripts of study participants. Initially "stressful" towards moving to India for higher education.

➢ *Theme 1: A feeling of stress and anxiety towards moving to India.*

The study participants expressed dissentient feeling about moving to India to pursue higher education. Negative feelings were conveyed by using words like, "Stressful", "challenging" and "confused". As the participant explained the dissenting feeling about being a international students in Indian university campus. The statement like "initially it was challenging" or " it was stressful to move at first" or "I was confused at bit initially" denotes the struggles of international student to move in another country.

Migration is the process that orient a person to entirely new environment culturally as well as socially. Stress is a feeling or emotions that induces physical tension. It may arise due to an event or even thought that makes a person feels nervous or frustrated. Stress can be of two types acute or chronic. The response of the participants are classified under acute stress as "initially I feel stressful" has been expressed. Acute stress is short term episode that quickly fades away. These statements shows the feeling of apprehension at first towards the decision of emigration.

❖ *Enculturation of international students*

➢ *Theme 2: Cultural shock as experienced by the students : Enculturation*

Further analysis of transcript finds the cultural diversity the international students faced in India. This can be considered as positive or negative outlook towards this change. The expressions that are captured showing the general view about cultural diversity of India and how it had impact on international students.:

" I faced language issue at first, as I was not able to understand anything. Now I have learned hindi little bit and feels more confident to interact with shopkeepers, auto drivers. Initially they used to take advantage of me by charging more money but I understands the negotiations. India is a big population country and we have to deal with different types of people. It is fun to learn their language and local expression"

International students likes to interact with different background of students in college campus which is seems to as coming together of cultures and makes learning fun and more global.

"I have friends from different countries like Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan and off course India. I have learned a lot here. Being together with friends from different cultures helps broadening our vision to different customs, different ways to doing something or other and we learn. A deeper understanding of cultures also signifies understanding of different temperament and their view point's"

➢ *Theme 3: Diversity of food*

The migration leads to changes of traditional food options or food groups that are consumed by the international students in given span of time. It has been seen that new migrants usually are more inclined to fast food, less healthy diets or convenience food. These preferences are also linked with the economic status of the students.

One of the participant responded " I like having roadside food in India as it is cheap and more spicy. I like spicy food especially. In my first year in India I missed my home food and used to cook in the hostel. Gradually started liking this food"

The food is very important part of one's lifestyle. The preferences of food among college students depends largely on their culture, background, society and living standards. Additionally, the factors affecting the eating habits like time, discipline, self control, inflation in food industry, the budget etc. The observation drawn from this is that students mostly like to eat fast-food only.

One of the participant expressed " I had issues with the availability of food in India. I suffered stomach ache and indigestion at first. I was hospitalized. It takes time to develop tolerance to the food items here. Our country food is much bland. I was bit confused when I moved here. Slowly I realized the difference between north Indian and south Indian food. It is surprising for me after knowing that many people are here vegetarian back in our place we rely more on non vegetarian food. Really food , language is entirely different"

The diversity in Indian food and culture attracts many international students which is unique to India. It appeals to several students migrating to India in search for better

affordable education. The match between their culture and Indian culture actually captures their attention. This cultural diversity in the country in terms of food had made an significant impact for the students. With well over a billion inhabitants, the nation is a cultural melting pot.

Other participants expressing their views regarding food and culture like " well prepared and nice", " really delicious with different curries" , " the best part is the pickles", "a fresh burst of flavours"

The analysis of this theme finds that the preference of Indian food is well accepted by the students with initial apprehensions. The way of preparation, cooking, blending differs from their countries. India is a desirable location for international students seeking a distinctive experience because of its diversity.

➢ *Theme 4 The cost of education*

India's economy is currently one of the largest and fastest growing in the world. For international students, India is also quite affordable, especially when compared to Western nations.

One of the participant perceived that " The education in here is much affordable as compared to our country. The tuition fee, and other expenses are much cheaper than my country. The accommodation is also cheaper when compared to other countries"

Other expressions like " really good teachers", "very welcoming", "professors are good and knowledgeable", "plenty of options", "quality of education", "high competition" This perception of the Indian higher education being less expensive than other countries very well attract international students to study here in host country. India is considered as land of knowledge and enlightenment. For many Asian and African countries India is considered as ideal place to study and experience best quality education at affordable costs

❖ *Resilience of International Students*

➢ *Theme 5 Challenges faced by Students*

An international student may encounter a variety of difficulties when enrolling in a new institution in a foreign country. Finding a community is one of the biggest obstacles that many students must overcome. International students emigrate from their home countries in search of better opportunities. Aspirants for study visas have to give up a lot of things in order to pursue their dream of studying abroad, and in the process, they develop both personally and professionally. It has become very simple to obtain education abroad thanks to the vast majority of universities opening their doors to international students, but doing so has its own set of difficulties.

One respondent expressed that " Studies here in India are much more stressful as compared to home country, many assignments are required to be completed, tests and examinations are so stressful and competitive. I sometime feel not able to manage time for studying and other activities. Being from Africa I already lag behind due to language barrier which sometimes makes it difficult to understand lectures and assignments and to keep up with the coursework"

It is not new for the international students to struggle initially in the host country as many things are changes like language, academic style, teaching etc. It often make difficult for these students to keep up with the education policy as followed in India. Academic expectation is a very common challenges for the students to achieve.

Other respondents remarks like "hectic", "discrimination locally", "academic challenges", stressful examination", "managing time for studies and co curricular activities", "more and more assignments", "meeting deadlines". Language barriers, academic difficulties, social and cultural differences, discrimination, financial strains, and mental health issues are just a few of the difficulties that international students may run into. Because local culture and a student's ethnicity are different, the learning environment that both undergraduate and graduate international students experience can be challenging.

IV. DISCUSSION

Individualism and collectivism, which are used as the main focuses in cross-cultural psychology to explain cultural differences, may pose significant barriers to an individual's ability to easily acculturate or assimilate. The style of communication that a person is most at ease with depends on their cultural background. A cultural conflict could arise because assertive communication goes against some of the values held by international students. There are many strategies that help international students adjust to their new academic life when it comes to social acceptance. In order to create a multicultural environment, it is crucial to consider student safety, community acceptance, and universities' and communities' capacity to accommodate international students by providing multicultural facilities, prayer rooms, a variety of international cuisine, and other welcoming services. Studies indicate that additional efforts should be made to increase diversity awareness on campus as well as in the community in order to maintain and benefit from international students' cultural and financial attributes.

This study was conducted adopting exploratory research design and interviews were conducted in selected university where international students are enrolled in number of undergraduate and post graduate programmes. The themes abstracted are quite similar for what is already known about the issues internationals students face in Indian country, but this study will help in creating awareness on diversity in

campus. The findings of this study support the idea that this type of community social modeling could inform new students about campus life, living arrangements, transportation, and other community-related issues. The social interactions between international and domestic students should help domestic students learn more about other cultures while also supporting the mental health of the newcomers. The findings of this study suggest that field trips to nearby towns and tourist attractions might be advantageous for international students. Student cookouts, coffee shop gatherings, and activities that foster conversation and interaction within the global community are a few examples of the social events that some universities offer.

V. CONCLUSION

Since social modeling and social persuasion play a significant role in boosting a person's confidence, an effort should be made to encourage international students to attend community events. Giving international students more opportunities to engage with the community could improve their success. Lack of social activities could have a domino effect that hinders international students' ability to learn crucial information. The knowledge shared at neighborhood gatherings can help students with their linguistic, academic and financial problems. When interacting with others in the community, language is crucial. In order to improve international students' preparation, academic issues need to be addressed seriously, and changing the curriculum may take some time.

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