

## Cultural Intelligence and Cross-Cultural Adjustment of Foreign Students in Punjab: A Relationship Study

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### Abstract

This study aimed at exploring the relationship between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment of foreign students studying in different universities of Punjab. The sample constituted of 120 foreign students with the gender wise break up of 71 male and 49 female students studying in three universities in Punjab namely Lovely Professional University, Phagwara; Punjabi University, Patiala and Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana. These universities cater a significant number of international students. Cultural Intelligence scale for adults was used for measuring foreign student's cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment test for foreign students was used to measure their adjustment in Punjab. The results of the study revealed a substantial correlation between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment of foreign students, as well as different components of cultural intelligence and cross cultural adjustment except that of cognitive cultural intelligence and academic cross cultural adjustment. Further it was also revealed that that the male and female foreign students studying in different universities of Punjab do not differ significantly on their cultural intelligence and cross cultural adjustment respectively. However the present study expects a well-coordinated and planned effort on the part of the concerned universities for enhancing the cultural intelligence of the foreign students admitted in their institutions in order to ensure better academic achievement as well as adjustment to the cross cultural situations.

**KEYWORDS:** Cross-Cultural Adjustment, Foreign Students, Punjab, Unfamiliar Situations.

### Introduction

Liberalization, privatization and Globalization that gained momentum in India in 1990s ushered its substantial impact on different aspects of human life including economic, social, political, educational etc. It evolved the world as a small village and the interaction among the people around the globe increased to a considerable extent. The shrinking of the world has led to the continuous contact between people from diverse cultural backgrounds (Zakaria, 2000; Montagliani & Giacalone, 1998). The interdependency among the people of different countries has been increased to a large extent. People visit other countries for multiple reasons like education, health and business purposes etc. But their success is dependent upon the extent to which one becomes able to read the cultural patterns of the country visited which affects his/her overall adjustment with various challenges in the host country. It may be mentioned here that India has been one of the favoured locations for education especially in case of the students belonging to the countries like Nepal, Afghanistan, Sudan, Bhutan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Iran, Yemen, and Sri Lanka. The foreign student's enrolment is increasing every year as in 2011-12, the total number of foreign students enrolled in Indian Universities and Colleges were 31632 (AISHE 2011-12) but this number has

been increased as 46,144 (AISHE 2017-18) foreign students enrolled in 2017-18 in Indian Universities and Colleges.

Punjab is one of the advanced state of India providing higher education through reputed private and government universities, that is why foreign students are attracting to continue their study in Punjab in different streams like Science, Engineering, and Social Science etc. According to AISHE report, 2017-18 total 3775 foreign students have been enrolled in different universities and colleges of Punjab. The seats are reserved for foreign students in the universities of Punjab and special facilities are providing these universities to foreign students as separate hostels and some universities arranged special food stalls to provide their native food. But despite of these facilities they face problems to adjust in a multicultural environment because culture is varied from country to country. These problems are not only academic but also language, social, and cultural in new surroundings (Perrucci & Hu, 1995). Sometimes these problems create misunderstandings among foreign students and native students. But students with high cultural intelligence easily adjust in unfamiliar settings as cultural intelligence is an individual's capability to adapt in diverse cultural situations.

### **Cultural Intelligence (CI)**

The ability of a person to interact effectively in multiple cultural situations has been labelled as cultural intelligence. It enables the individual to depict intercultural performance and refers to an individual's ability to work and succeed proficiently in multicultural settings (Anget al., 2007) as it helps to communicate and work with people who belong to various cultures. Cultural intelligence teaches us to deal effectively with people from various cultures and makes easy to forget the different perceptions and perspectives of people. Thus, it decreases intercultural barriers and prepares people to manage cultural diversity (Fayazi and Ahmadi, 2006). It is an important skill for successful life in the age of globalization and a capability that helps the people to understand and act appropriately in diverse cultural situations (Thomas, 2006).

### **The four dimensions of Cultural Intelligence**

Cultural Intelligence has been theorized, as a multidimensional concept comprises meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural components (Earley & Ang 2003), which grounded on Sternberg and Detterman's (1986) framework of the multiple foci of intelligence. Sternberg's framework of the multiple foci of intelligence proposes that different "loci" of intelligence are present within a person as meta-cognition, cognition, and motivation, which are mental competencies that reside within the "head" of the individuals, while obvious actions are behavioural competencies.

Although these four components of CI are qualitatively different, but they are interconnected. All these four components of CI are equally important as culturally intelligent people need to possess such capabilities. These components are Motivational CI which refers to intrinsic and extrinsic self-efficacy, Cognitive CI referring to cultural systems, norms and values, Meta Cognitive CI indicating ability of awareness, planning and checking; and Behavioral CI referring to various forms of verbal and non-verbal behavioral acts.

- 1. Cognitive Cultural Intelligence**—It is our knowledge of similarities and differences of cultures.

2. **Meta-Cognitive Cultural Intelligence** - This aspect of cultural intelligence involves the process which people use to obtain and understand cultural knowledge. It helps to make judgments about our own thought processes and others.
3. **Motivational Cultural Intelligence**—It is the ability of the individual to have interest in the culture of others and engage in that.
4. **Behavioural Cultural Intelligence** - Behavioural intelligence shows overt actions as it indicates what the person does instead of what he or she thinks (Sternberg & Detterman, 1986).

### **Cross Cultural Adjustment (CCA)**

Cross-cultural adjustment basically refers to the extent to which an expatriate is capable of adjusting with multifarious challenging situations of the host country. The phenomena of cross-cultural adjustment is manifested in different areas like (1) Adjustment in general environment like climatic conditions, health related issues and food pattern etc. (2) Mode of interaction with the people of the host country and (3) Work adjustment referring to standards of performance, job and supervisory related duties (Black & Stephens 1989). Work adjustment is related with the culture of workplace and educational institution in case of students (Gabel, et.al 2005). Adjust to unfamiliar situations of the host country is generally a challenging task for foreign students. The ability of the foreign students to adjust with an unfamiliar academic environment plays a decisive role in their success in the course they pursue. (Shaffer & Harrison, 1999). But it is to be kept in mind that they are culturally different from their host nationals as they have their own social standards, cultural values and learning ways. Due to these differences, they face various problems in their educational courses, in new settings, in emotional and social situations (Tepeci and Barlett 2002). Their cross-cultural adjustment in the host country affects their daily life and academic achievement. Although foreign students have good chances of learning in cross-cultural settings, but they may face many obstacles that hamper their learning experiences (Pandian, 2008).

### **Cultural Intelligence and Cross-Cultural Adjustment**

Cultural intelligence plays a decisive role for the success of an individual in varied cultural situations because it accelerates the person's ability to relate and work effectively in different cultural settings. There is a strong relationship between the ability of a person to face challenges in cross-cultural situation and their cultural intelligence. (Polák Weldon et al., 2012). Culturally intelligent people are not only aware but can also effectively work and relate with people across different cultural settings. The review of earlier studies depict that there exist a positive relationship between CI and cross-cultural adjustment (Ang et al., 2007; Chen, Kirkman, Kim, & Farh, 2010; Huff, 2013; Kim et al., 2008; Lee & Sukoco, 2010; Lin, Chen, & Song, 2012; Templer et al., 2006; Ward, Fischer, Lam, & Hall, 2009; Ward, Wilson, & Fischer, 2011).

Foreign students high in CI are expected to adjust better in multicultural environment of Punjab as CI is a person's ability to adapt successfully to diverse cultural surroundings. The four dimensions of CI are expected to be associated with CCA in view of the previous research findings which show positive relationship between different components of CI and components of CCA and since meta-cognitive CI is

significantly associated with all three components of social cultural adjustment i.e. general, interaction, and work adjustment (Gudmundsdottir, 2015). Persons who have high cognitive CI are able to recognize similarities and variances of different cultures (Brislin et al., 2006) which help an individual to adjust to new settings. Motivational cultural intelligence is having positive association with cross-cultural adjustment (Ang et al., 2007; Chen, Liu, &Portnoy, 2012; Kim & Slocum, 2008; Templer et al., 2006) and behavioural cultural intelligence is correlated with general, interaction, and work related adjustment (Black, 1990, Ang et al. 2007).

### **Significance of the Study**

Globalization has made the world smaller and closer but increasing cultural diversity creates a challenge for people as cultural barriers do not get eliminated. Due to globalization, the students are attracted to study in foreign countries where they face many problems like cross-cultural adjustment, language difficulty, academic problems and poor decision making etc. These problems show negative results on these students' health and academic achievement (Kilinc&Granello, 2003). But culturally intelligent students can avoid all problems because cultural intelligence is a capability which helps an individual to understand and act appropriately across a wide range of cultures (Thomas, 2006). So, there is a need to conduct studies that can reveal the role of cultural intelligence in the cross- cultural adjustment of foreign students in the host country.

Foreign student's enrolment in India is increasing every year and Punjab is one of the advanced state of India providing higher education through reputed private and government universities. It is seen that a number of foreign students come to Punjab for their education; therefore they need more attention on their cross-cultural adjustment related issue because cultural variances present critical challenges to these students. Due to the multicultural environment, intercultural misunderstandings, tensions, and conflicts are increased. It is a fact that the understanding of foreign students' cross-cultural adjustment process is still incomplete. Such a situation often leads to a stress among the students that may disturb their psychological well-being. It is seen that some students do not face problems in managing problems in unfamiliar settings, hence it is essential to analyse the reasons how do they function more efficiently than others in different cultural situations (Gelfand, Erez, &Aycan, 2007).

Only a few studies have been conducted on foreign students studying in Punjab to measure the influence of cultural intelligence on their cross-cultural adjustment. The reason of the deficiency of research on cultural intelligence is that the construct is still new, especially as it relates to educational settings (Ang et al., 2007). Although, studies onthe relationship between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment were conducted in foreign countries but there is dire need to conduct such studies in Punjab in order to solve the adjustment related issues of the foreign students.

### **Objectives**

The hypotheses of the study are as follows;

1. To examine the relationship between cultural Intelligence and Cross-Cultural Adjustment of foreign students studying in Punjab
2. To examine the relationship between the components of cultural intelligence (Cognitive, Meta-cognitive, Motivational, Behavioural) and components of

cross-cultural adjustment (general, interactional, and academic) of foreign students studying in Punjab

3. To measure the difference between cultural intelligence of male and female foreign students studying in Punjab
4. To measure the difference between cross cultural adjustment of male and female foreign students studying in Punjab

### **Hypothesis**

The hypotheses of the study are as follows;

1. There exist a positive relationship between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment of foreign students studying in Punjab
2. There exist a positive relationship between components of cultural intelligence and components of cross-cultural adjustment of foreign students studying in Punjab
3. There is no difference between the cultural intelligence of male and female foreign students studying in Punjab
4. There is no difference between the cross- cultural adjustment of male and female foreign students studying in Punjab

### **Method and Procedure**

Survey Method of descriptive research was used for the current study. The researcher personally met the foreign students to collect data studying in different universities of Punjab. Data were collected from 120 foreign students with the gender wise break up of 71 male and 49 female students studying in three universities in Punjab namely Lovely Professional University, Phagwara; Punjabi University, Patiala and Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana by following the random sampling technique of sampling method.

Cultural Intelligence scale and cross-cultural adjustment test developed by the investigator of the study was used to collect data from the foreign students studying in different universities of Punjab. In order to test the reliability of the tools Cronbach alpha was calculated. As such the reliability of the scale on cultural intelligence was found to be 0.80 and reliability of the Cross-Cultural adjustment test was 0.81. Cultural Intelligence scale for adults has four dimensions: Cognitive CI, Meta-cognitive CI, Motivational CI and Behavioural CI. It includes 23 items, which are rated on a 5-point Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) having 5-4-3-2-1 score, respectively. Cross-Cultural adjustment test for foreign students has three dimensions: general adjustment, interactional adjustment and academic adjustment. The test included 24 multiple choice items based on situations and one mark was given to right answer and zero was given to the wrong answer.

The investigator of the study has applied descriptive as well as inferential statistics for the analysis and interpretation of the hypotheses of the study.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **A. Cultural Intelligence and Cross-Cultural Adjustment-Study of Relationship**

To explore the relationship between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment of the foreign students the scores obtained on both the variables were

subjected to analysis of coefficient of correlation between the two and the results therein are presented in table No-1.

**Table1 Correlation between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment of Foreign Students**

| Variables                   | N   | r    | Remark                    |
|-----------------------------|-----|------|---------------------------|
| Cultural Intelligence       | 120 | 0.48 | Sig. at .01 level of sig. |
| Cross-Cultural Intelligence | 120 |      |                           |

The coefficient of correlation between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment of foreign students studying in Punjab was found to be 0.48 which indicates substantial relationship between the two variables and the coefficient was found to be significant at .01 level of significance. Hence the hypothesis that was framed as there exist positive relationship between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment of foreign students studying in Punjab is accepted and it can be concluded that the cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment of foreign students studying in Punjab are positively correlated. Such result is in consistent with the earlier research findings which shows positive relationship between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment (Ang et al., 2007; Chen, Kirkman, Kim, & Farh, 2010; Huff, 2013; Kim et al., 2008; Lee & Sukoco, 2010; Lin, Chen, & Song, 2012; Templer et al., 2006; Ward, Fischer, Lam, & Hall, 2009; Ward, Wilson, & Fischer, 2011).

#### **B. Component wise relationship between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment**

Apart from the relationship between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment of foreign students it has also been the matter of concern to determine the relationship between the different components of cultural intelligence with the components of cross-cultural adjustment which will indicate a detailed relationship between the two variables. The analysed result pertaining to both the variables have been presented in table No-2.

**Table-2 Correlation between components of cultural intelligence and components of cross-cultural adjustment**

| Cultural Intelligence | Cross-Cultural Adjustment |                          |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
|                       | General Adjustment        | Interactional Adjustment | Academic Adjustment |
| Cognitive CI          | .33**                     | .27**                    | .12                 |
| Meta Cognitive CI     | .32**                     | .22**                    | .28**               |
| Motivational CI       | .26**                     | .32**                    | .21*                |
| Behavioural CI        | .34**                     | .44**                    | .17*                |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

The table- 2 reveals that cognitive CI is correlated positively with general adjustment ( $r = .33$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and interactional adjustment ( $r = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but there is no relationship found between academic adjustment and cognitive CI. Meta cognitive CI is also correlated positively with all three dimensions of CCA (general adjustment  $r = .32$ ,  $p < .01$ ) interactional adjustment ( $r = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) academic adjustment ( $r = .28$ ,

$p < .01$ ). Motivational CI is also correlated positively with all three dimensions of CCA: general adjustment ( $r = .26, p < .01$ ), interactional adjustment ( $r = .32, p < .01$ ) and academic adjustment ( $r = .21, p < .05$ ). Behavioural CI is positively correlated with all three dimensions of CCA: general adjustment ( $r = .34, p < .01$ ), interactional adjustment ( $r = .44, p < .01$ ), academic adjustment ( $r = .17, p < .05$ ). In the context of such result of the study the hypothesis that runs as there exist positive relationship between components of cultural intelligence and components of cross-cultural adjustment of foreign students studying in Punjab is accepted but only in one case that is cultural intelligence and academic achievement very poor relationship was reported.

The result of the present study shows that cognitive CI is positively correlated with general and interactional adjustment, although some studies reported that there is no significant relationship between Cognitive CI and the three dimensions of adjustment: general, interactional and work adjustment (Gudmundsdottir, S. 2015). Very negligible relationship was reported between cognitive CI and academic adjustment, and this result is almost in consistent with the study that shows no relationship between cultural intelligence and academic achievement (Pour 2015). The meta cognitive CI positively correlated with three dimensions of CCA as expected. This indicates that if students have greater meta cognitive CI then they will have greater general, interactional and academic adjustment. The motivational CI was also positively correlated with three dimensions of CCA. These results similar with the study that shows motivational CI was significantly related to all three types of adjustment, as work, interaction and general adjustment (Huff, et al. 2014). Behavioural CI was also positively correlated with general, interactional and academic adjustment.

### C. Cultural intelligence of male and female foreign students studying in different universities of Punjab

Gender also plays a significant role with regard to the cultural intelligence of the foreign students studying in any host country. The following section deals with the data pertaining to the differences in the cultural intelligence of the male and female foreign students studying in different universities of Punjab.

**Table-2 Comparison of mean scores of male and female students on cultural intelligence**

| Variable              | Gender | N  | Mean   | SD    | SEM  | t    | Remark   |
|-----------------------|--------|----|--------|-------|------|------|----------|
| Cultural Intelligence | Male   | 71 | 108.41 | 14.44 | 1.71 | 1.18 | Not Sig. |
|                       | Female | 49 | 105.27 | 14.12 | 2.02 |      |          |

The analysed result on the cultural intelligence of foreign students reveals a mean score of 108.41 and 105.27 respectively in case of male and female students with a standard deviation of 14.44 and 14.12 respectively. When such mean scores were subjected to the testing of their significance of difference it calculated 't' ratio was found to be 1.18 which is not significant at .05 level of significance. Therefore the hypothesis i.e. there is no difference between the cultural intelligence of male and female foreign students studying in Punjab is accepted and it can be concluded that the male and female foreign students studying in different universities of Punjab do not differ significantly on their cultural intelligence. The results of the present study is opposite to the study that exposed that male students had a significantly higher cultural intelligence than female students (Keavanloo et al. 2013)

### D. Cross-cultural adjustment of male and female foreign students studying in different universities of Punjab

**Table-3 Comparison of mean scores of male and female students on cross-cultural adjustment test**

| Variable                  | Gender | N  | Mean  | SD   | SEM  | t    | Remark   |
|---------------------------|--------|----|-------|------|------|------|----------|
| Cross Cultural Adjustment | Male   | 71 | 14.14 | 5.0  | 0.59 | 0.76 | Not Sig. |
|                           | Female | 49 | 14.80 | 4.02 | 0.57 |      |          |

The analysed result on cross cultural adjustment of foreign students reveals a mean score of 14.14 and 14.80 respectively in case of male and female students with a standard deviation of 5.0 and 4.02 respectively. When such mean scores were subjected to the testing of their significance of difference it calculated 't' ratio was found to be 0.76 which is not significant at .05 level of significance. Therefore the hypothesis i.e. there is no difference between the cross- cultural adjustment of male and female foreign students studying in Punjab is accepted and it can be concluded that the male and female foreign students studying in different universities of Punjab do not differ significantly on their cross- cultural adjustment. The result is similar with other studies that resulted that male and female expatriates felt they were equally able to achieve their adjustment in the host country (Tung, 1998; Abbe, Gulick& Herman, 2007).

**Conclusion-** Foreign students contribute to upsurge the academic and economic growth of the host country, but they have their own social, educational and cultural background which play a key role with regard to their adjustment as well as academic success in the host country. The foreign students' success in the host country to a great extent depends upon their cultural intelligence. The findings of the present study reveal that the cultural intelligence of the foreign students studying in different universities of Punjab is having substantial relationship with their cross cultural adjustment. Further the different components of cultural intelligence like cognitive cultural intelligence, meta-cognitive cultural intelligence, motivational cultural intelligence and behavioural cultural intelligence is also substantially related to different components of cross cultural adjustment like general adjustment, interactional adjustment and academic adjustment except cognitive cultural intelligence and cross cultural academic adjustment. The present study also focused on the role of gender in the cultural intelligence and cross cultural intelligence. In this respect the results of the present study reveals no such significant difference among the male and female foreign students with regard to their cultural intelligence and their cross cultural adjustment too.

As more of foreign students come to Punjab for their education, the more attention to their cross-cultural adjustment is needed because cultural variances present critical challenges to these students in the host country. Thus, universities and colleges should be aware of the problems of international students to help them to enjoy their educational program. Training programmes should be organized by the educational institutions to enhance their cultural which plays a significant role in the cross-cultural adjustment of foreign students that will contribute to their overall success in the host nation.

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