

Adjustment Problems of Non Local Students in a Local University

RabiaIrum and M. AsirAjmal
GC University, Lahore

Shamama-tu-Sabah (Principal)
Govt. College for Women , Taxila, Rawalpindi

The present study was conducted to investigate the adjustment problems of students coming from areas other than Punjab for better educational facilities to a local university of Lahore. The focus was on non-local students who took admission in the university and were living in university's hostels. Sample consisted of eight students, two students were from Baluchistan, two each from Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa and Waziristan, one from Sindh and one from Azad Kashmir. Focus group discussion was conducted with these students to explore their adjustment problems. Information gathered through this interactive group session was transcribed to analyze the important themes. Grounded theory was used to assign codes and develop categories of the data. Results show significant problems regarding administration, students, and teachers attitude towards non-local students. The present study will help university administration to draw some strategic plan for future faculty training program and for student's staff orientation. Formation of a support group will help these non local students to get well adjusted.

Keywords: adjustment problems, non local, local, university students

This study aims at exploring the adjustment problems and stages through which a non-local student, from a different cultural background, has to pass in his/her attempt to get well-adjusted at a foreign place. Educational setups are more similar throughout the world now because of its semester systems and term units as well as professional and course contents (Al 'Amin, 1999). This academic convergence gives opportunity to knowledge to go to some other place for education or knowledge that is not available at one's hometown. So when a person moves from one ethnic background to the other, it's a complicated process to get assimilated in other culture. One's ethnicity refers to certain set of characteristics such as cultural heritage, religion, language, race, nationality and so on. Every one belongs to some ethnic background and has some biases or conflicts towards people of other ethnic backgrounds (Santrock, 2006). So when people of different ethnic backgrounds meet, people witness different ways of thinking, communicating and behaving contrasted to their own. Naturally people adopt some of the new habits and keep some of their own as well. This process is called, 'acculturation'. In this process the guest learns the language of host culture, their norms, manners, customs, behaviors, laws, makes new friends, and develops friendly or working relationships (Gillette, 2006). These experiences can enrich one's experiences as well as can lead to maladjustment or stress. While coping with different kinds of social networks, with their distinct social and psychological functioning, a student can achieve either acculturation or maladjustment.

During the process of adjustment in a foreign culture, newcomers may encounter the situations that work as stressors for them. These stressors can be physical, social, cultural, functional and biological. Physical stressors include new settings, changes of weather, safety problems and accommodation. Social stressors refer to difficulty in communicating with new people and making friends, the issue of homesickness and loneliness and difficulty in relating oneself with that of the hosts. Cultural stressors include the differences in norms, beliefs, customs, and ways of dressing, traditions and racial or ethnic discrimination. Functional stressors are work or study conditions, language, transport system and financial problems.

Biological stressors include different food or eating traditions, diseases and illness (Berry, 2006). If a person responds negatively to these stressors, the sensation of being lost in so many unfamiliar people is great.

Previous literature indicates that less research has been carried out with respect to our indigenous culture to address the issue of acculturation of non local students; however in the west this issue has captured the attention of the researchers and the psychologists. A study conducted on the adjustment issues of Turkish college students studying in the United States discusses that during the process of cross cultural adjustment, students have to pass through various stages to acquire culturally defined roles. (Poyrazli, Arbone, Bulington and Pisecco, 2001). Trifonovitch (1973) in his book *On Cross-Cultural Orientation Technique* has discussed four stages through which student have to undergo, in order to adopt and assimilate a new culture. First stage is excitement stage is characterized by fascination, anticipation, exhilaration and extreme joy of experiencing everything new and different. Second stage is hostility stage is characterized by an actual phenomenon of cultural shock. A student starts rejecting the new environment and its surroundings. An immediate expression of anger, anxiety, depression, rejection and frustration leads an individual to maladjustment. Third is acceptance or integration stage: In this stage, people start becoming familiar with new culture, systems, and values and feel themselves more comfortable and relaxed. They start trusting people, make new friends, understand their perspectives and find connections and similarities between each other's, learn to ignore the differences and accept others as similar beings. Final stage is home stage a student successfully adjusts to the new environment and feels the place as his/her second home.

There is a limited scope in higher education in Pakistan, so it doesn't attract foreign students but within Pakistan certain areas are well reputed in education in comparison to others cities. i.e. Punjab and particularly Lahore is considered more advanced in higher education facilities than Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Sindh and other tribal areas like Gilgit, Waziristan, and Baltistan etc. Therefore students from these areas usually move towards Lahore to get better higher and quality education. Migration to get better educational facilities is primarily because Lahore is known to be the Pakistan's education capital. Lahore hosts Pakistan's oldest and most well reputed institutions like Government College University, Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), University of

The Punjab, Kinnaird College for Women and University of Engineering and Technology

Through this study, the researcher wants to see what happens to students of other areas, when they move towards Punjab. Their noticeable cultural differences, adjustment problems and likes and dislikes will help the researcher know what happens when students of different cultures and ethnic background meet within the boundary of a sole nationality and how they feel inclusion or exclusion in the mainstream of life in Punjab, Lahore or in their college.

Objectives

- To find out the adjustment problems of non-local students living in university's hostels.
- To explore the qualitative differences in adjustment strategies among students of first year and final year.
- To provide some suggestions for the university administration to assist students to enhance the quality of adjustment process.

Method

Research question

- What are the adjustment problems of non-local students from Baluchistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Waziristan and Azad Kashmir?
- What is the nature of these adjustment problems?
- What steps do they think university should take to accommodate them and to better cope with situations confronted in an unfamiliar place?

Research plan

Qualitative research design was used to collect data and information about the topic being studied.

Research measures

Focus group technique was used to collect data. Focus groups are used to explore people's beliefs, opinions, perceptions and attitudes about the particular concept or proposal. Six to ten people are interviewed in the same group discussion and talk about their ideas and views about issue to be discussed (Debus, 1998 & Stewart, Shamdassani & Rook 2007). So it was appropriate to use this technique for this kind of study which requires the interactive and rich accounts of non local students who can freely talk about it while in a group. The moderator in this focus group was female.

Sample

Purposive sampling strategy was used to select the students from University's hostels. Eight students were selected with the age range of 19 to 23 years. Two students were from Baluchistan and Waziristan; one each from Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Sind, Gilgit and Azad Kashmir were included. They all were students of BscHons and five of them belonged to political science department. One student was from English department, one from history, and one from biotechnology. All of them were males except one female from Azad Kashmir. The reason for not selecting the equal ratio is

that there is a very less number of non-local female students and she was the only available female to participate in this study.

Procedure

Students from university hostels were approached through purposive sampling and were requested to participate in the study. Informed consent was taken from each student. Focus group discussion was held at university's psychology department's library. Eight students participated in the discussion proceeded by moderator. The discussion continued for two hours and was videotaped, as it allows the researcher to make sure that not a single piece of information is being missed out and everyone is clearly visible in the video. This video recording was then transcribed for further analysis.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed by using grounded theory method. It is a systematic analysis tool, which is frequently used in social sciences. Grounded theory method (GT) works in reverse manner from conventional method. It starts with collection of data with some questions in consideration instead of hypothesis. Codes are assigned to the collected data, categories are formed from these codes to make them more workable, and then hypotheses are formed by these categories that consequently lead to theory development (Smith, 2003).

Results

The present study was conducted to find out adjustment problems of non local students who came from areas other than Punjab to the local university at Lahore for better educational facilities. Major themes emerged from the grounded theory analysis.

Using grounded theory analysis, hypothesis were made as a function of drawing assumptions from the data. Following hypothesis were formulated based on the findings of the data.

Hypotheses

- Lack of awareness and acceptability leads to disrespectful attitude towards non local students.
- Trivial things seem to be more offensive when students are away from home.
- Language based discrimination affects self esteem and confidence among non-local students.
- Consideration at administration level can reduce the intensity of adjustment problems.

Discussion

Results of this study showed a great agreement with previous works done on this issue. This study highlights the adjustment problems of the non-local students. It primarily focuses on non local students coming from areas of Pakistan other than Punjab to Lahore for better educational prospects. Nature of these problems differs from that of previously pointed out. The sample was taken from a local university of Lahore. Focus group methodology was used and non local students from Sindh, Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Waziristan and Azad Kashmir were invited to participate in the

Table 1

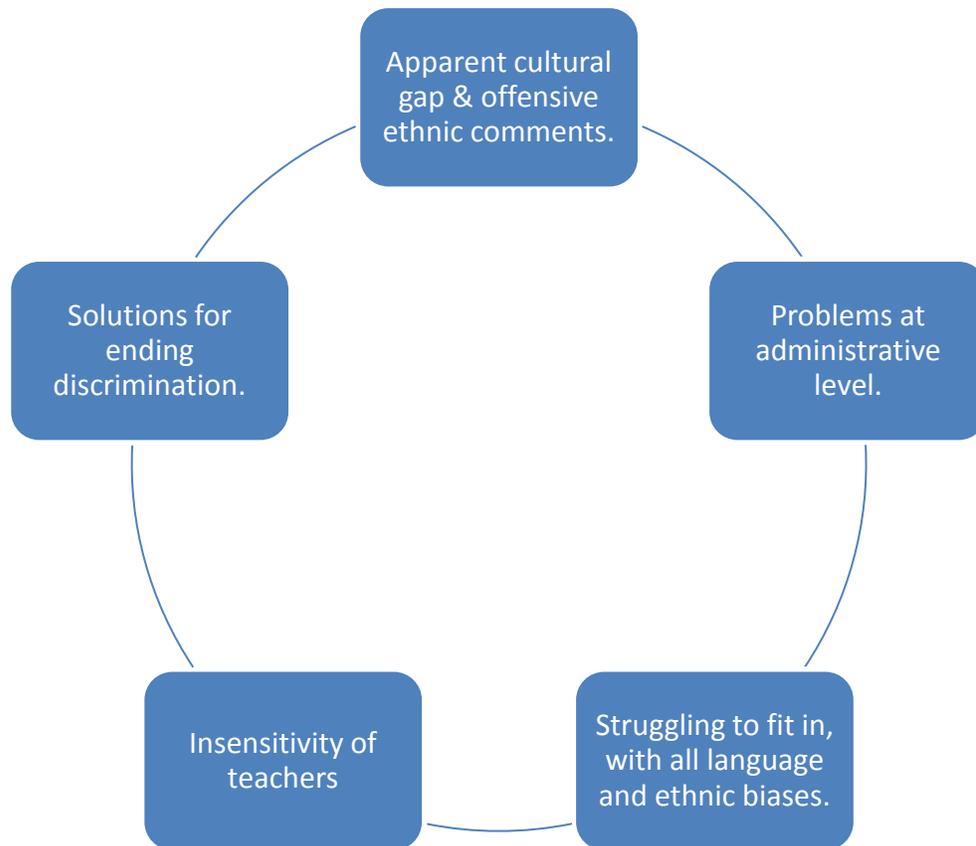
Table 1 shows the main and sub categories derived from data.

Main categories	Sub categories
1. Reasons to choose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lahore as hub of education • Lack of higher educational facilities in our areas.
2. Apparent cultural gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prejudice and biasness on both sides. • Superiority complex of local students. • Self made assumptions about our culture, traditions, and attitudes. • Unverified information about our areas. • Lack of interaction.
3. Offensive ethnic comments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Pathan’ as our surname. • Repetitive satirical comments by everyone. • Stereotypical generalizations. • Exaggeration and propagation of ethnicity. • Vocal expressions of calling Pathans as ‘foolish’, child abusers or insane.
4. Problems dealing with administration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mismatch in university’s admission dates and result dates of our boards. • Clerical staff’s humiliating attitude. • No consideration of non-locals when planning for leaves schedule or date sheets. • strict library rules
5. Prejudice among teachers/insensitivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telling Pathan jokes in class. • Labeling us as anti-Pakistan. • Partial views and discussion in class about ethnicity. • Teacher’s lack of exposure. • Bias. • Making fun of our mistakes in class.
6. Struggling to fit in.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure of social conformity on us. • Always trying to convince others that we are not bad people. • Afraid of being perceived as members of Taliban or Bloch liberation front. • Always try to be humble in order to make friends. • Striving to mix up in local people. • Struggle for individuality. • Fear of alienation. • Disappointing to see that these people have no interest in our culture, language, history or geography.
7. Language based discrimination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making fun of our Urdu accent and grammar. • Strong prejudice against Pashto. • Forced to speak Urdu, even if we are talking to any member of our own community.
8. Solutions for ending discrimination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitization to issues. • Changing mental attitudes of teachers and students. • Strictly prohibiting everyone through orientation to avoid discrimination and racial comments while dealing with non local students. • Equal opportunities of representations in co-curricular activities. • Formation of a club which give equal lighting to all culture of Pakistan by celebrating cultural weeks, seminars, poetry and music competitions.

discussion and talk about their adjustment problems that they face during their stay at the local university. These students elaborated the issues and problems they face.

The qualitative in-depth investigation revealed the thinking patterns of the local students who consider the out-group (non local students) as inferior and in group (local students) as superior. This in-group and out-group conflict develops prejudice among university students. Lack of awareness and unwillingness to acceptability leads to disrespectful attitude of local students towards non locals. For instance, students quoted that people usually tell Pathan jokes in front of them and make fun of their culture and traditions. Students pointed out that ignorance to one’s own countrymen is so widespread that people of Lahore even don’t

know who we are. They perceive people of Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa, Waziristan and Gilgit as ‘Pathan’. They said that we are so diverse in our areas but here we are together known as Pathans. People of Punjab have heard multitude of stories and assumptions (of course negative) about Pathans that they generalize them and target at these students. If they are asked to give any evidence or share any such experience with any Pathan, they usually have no answer. Initially they make ‘Pathan’ their surname and then everything they do is added to their impressions about Pathans. These students repeatedly face satirical and ethnic comments which are usually filled with the assumptions of Pathan being foolish, child abuser, fraud, liar and insane. These non local students undergo a constant pressure to fit in the setup. They



struggle for social conformity and their individuality. They constantly need to prove to others that they are not bad people or the typical Pathan about whom they were being frightened in their childhood. Neither they belong to ‘Taliban’ if unluckily born to Waziristan, nor with ‘Bloch Liberation Front’ if belong to Baluchistan. By keeping their ego aside, they always behave as humble and helping to local people. They try to tell their class fellows about positive things in their culture, language, geography and history. While constantly fighting with fear of alienation, they work hard for getting their individual status different from the one already prevalent.

An important discourse emerged from this discussion is that trivial things seem to be more offensive when people are away from home. Researchers have shown that non local students often feel that they are given unwelcoming treatment and usually reported subtle forms of bias (Cones, Noonan, and Janha, 1983; Fleming, 1988; Green, 1989; Hall and Sandler, 1982; Pemberton, 1988; Sadker and Sadker, 1992; Simpson, 1987; Woolbright, 1989). People become more reactionary especially when they are ignorant of ground realities discuss their homeland, Saying that Sindhis are so strict about their women is easy, but living in that setup might give a new different perspective. Making fun of their eating habits, ceremonies, and styles is no way of proving them uncivilized.

Everyone has their own origins of traditions and customs but people from a faraway place, without putting them in their shoes, try to create humor out of their lifestyle. This is extremely offensive and so they respond to it harshly, even if they are just

called ‘Khan Sahab’ by anyone. There was a noticed difference of responsiveness among students from Year I, II, III, and IV. While reporting and admitting by 1st year students that we respond aggressively to such irritating stimulus, students of year IV reposted that initially our response was similar to them but with the passage of time, we become tolerant, friendly and less responsive to such type of stimulus. These responses were very much similar to the theory about adjustment stages, which state that a non-local student pass through hostility to integration and finally arrives at home stage. (Trifonovitch, 1973) interestingly the only female student from Azad Kashmir did not report about much difficulty in adjustment perhaps for the reason that she was not interested in any efforts of letting people know about herself, her place or about her people. She was a science student and she thought she is having a good time because she has so many female friends who are never concerned about politics or any economical issues.

Language based discrimination affects self esteem and confidence among non local students. A Sindhi student raised the issue of language, as these non locals don’t have that particular Lahori accent; they are usually looked down upon. Teachers don’t let them read English lesson in class because of their accent problem. Studies revealed that students suffer from anxiety and inferiority which leads to low self esteem to the students and they feel uncomfortable to engage in class discussion (Brown, 2007). While trying to speak Urdu, if they happen to pronounce anything wrong or grammatically incorrect, they are immediately caught and humiliated. Students show a great resentment towards

Pashto or Sindhi language and don't like them using it.

Students reported that there is a constant pressure on non local students to prove themselves as patriotic, nice and friendly. They struggle for social conformity and their individuality. They constantly need to prove to others that they are not bad people or the typical Pathan about whom they were being frightened in their childhood. Neither they belong to 'Taliban' if unluckily born to Waziristan, nor with 'Baloch Liberation Front' if belong to Baluchistan. By keeping their ego aside, they always behave in a humble and helping way. They try to tell their class fellows about positive things in their culture, language, geography, and history. While constantly fighting with fear of alienation, they work hard for getting their individual status different from the one already prevalent.

Problems faced by non local students are not just on student's level. They become extensive in nature on administration level. Non local students raised a very important yet ignored issue. This local university is a national level institute and people all over Pakistan wish to get admission here. Admission dates of the university are always in accordance with Lahore board. There is no criterion for hope certificates (i.e., an affidavit that the admissions should be given on the basis of previous performance, and if results are not up to the mark, admission can be cancelled out), when students of other boards, after their results are announced come to take admission, university's admissions are already closed. And the administration staff never listens to the students rather they humiliate them saying that you Pathans are always creating fuss and chaos, you are always late and a step behind. Administration of the university never consider about non locals when planning for leaves. They are usually dragged for practicals for months and they are never able to get any semester break. Usually exams and classes are scheduled in a way that they get their leaves a day before Eid.

Not only with administration, have these non local students faced discrimination even in the presence of a well learned university professor. Teacher in their presence tell Pathan jokes in their class

IRUM, AJMAL AND SABAH

Pakistan is facing out whenever we tried to participate in the discussion; we are stigmatized as anti Pakistan. They said that while talking about Two Nation Theory in Pakistan, even if we say something neutral, we are immediately tagged as anti-Pakistan. Teacher themselves are so biased and ignorant on some issues of ethnicities that they need a complete mindset change. Classroom discussions are biased for them, for they can never criticize Lahore or Punjab for any of their fault while criticizing Baluchistan, Waziristan and Pakhtoonkhwa is a Lahori's birth right. Teachers make fun of their mistakes in class and in initial years the situation is usually disappointing for them. They have to convince their classmates and teacher that we are sincere to you and your Punjab. This indigenous research supports the western researches which have shown that teachers are unconsciously biased because of factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, ethnicity, appearance and previous performances or records (Green, 1989). If the teacher criticizes a specific group in class because of ethnicity of race, it significantly affects students self esteem and competencies (Hall and Sandier, 1982)

This study aimed at finding out these unnoticed problems which are usually not given enough consideration. Through this study the researcher also tried to draw some solutions that if applied by university administration may eliminate this discrimination and the non local students could get an excellent experience of studying in

the University even from the very first day of their arrival. During the focus group discussion, these non local students were asked to give their respected opinion about how these problems can be solved or eliminated. Some of the suggestions came forward by these students.

- They held the opinion that sensitization to issues is very necessary. Once the issue is being pointed out, everyone will ultimately take care of their behaviors. Up till now people even don't know that such problems exist.
- There is a need to change mental attitudes of clerical and administration staff, teachers and students. They should be taught to be realistic and mature enough to understand others perspective.
- Each year when new comers are given orientation, this issue should be included in it. Students never dare to violate university rules if strictly prohibited to pass racial and ethnic comments or calling them 'oyePathan', 'lala' etc
- There should be equal opportunities of representation for non-local students in co curricular activities such as debates and dramatics.
- A society should be formed which will work as a support group for every non local student so that their voice may get heard. Seminars, poetry and music competitions, lectures and cultural weeks should be conducted by this society so that others may get to know about others cultures, literature and traditions of Pakistan. This will work as an orientation to their culture and make non-local students feel comfortable seeing their home like activities in this host place.

Limitations, suggestions, and implication

- The sample of the study consisted of only one university students, which limits its generalizability.
- It captures the perception of students at only one time.
- It is suggested that longitudinal studies should be conducted in future.
- Future research should include larger contexts because circumstances and experiences may differ in different settings
- A parallel focus group of local and non-local could be conducted to have a clearer picture of their interaction.
- The present study suggests that university administrations should draw some strategies to sensitize faculty, staff, and students about this issue.

References

- Adelman, B. M. (2002). *Cross-cultural adjustment: A theoretical perspective on social support*. USA: Northwestern University.
- Al'Amin, M.A. (1999). Globalization and cross-cultural values: the politics of identity and judgment. UK: *Arab Studies Quarterly (ASQ)*. Retrieved from <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/GLOBALIZATION+AND+CROSS-CULTURAL+VALUES%3A+THE+POLITICS+OF+IDENTITY+AND...-a057510054>
- Berry, J.W., & Sam, D.L. (2006). *The Cambridge handbook of acculturation psychology*. UK: Cambridge University press.

- Debus, M. (1988). *A handbook for excellence in focus group research*. Project special Report Series. Washington, D.C.: Porter/Novelli.
- Furnham, A. (2004). Foreign students: Education and cultural shock. *Psychologist* 17(1), 16-19
- Furnham, A., Bochner, S. (1986). *Culture shock: Psychological reactions to unfamiliar environments*. UK: Taylor & Francis
- Gillette, M.S. (2006). *Acculturation: To stress or not to stress*. USA: Prudential Financial.
- Gizewski, P., & Dixon, T.H. (1996). Environmental scarcity and violent conflict: The case of Pakistan. Washington, D.C.: American Association for the Advancement of Science and the University of Toronto
- Green, M.F. (Eds.). (1989). *Minorities on Campus: A Handbook for Enriching Diversity*. Washington, D. C: American Council on Education
- Hall, R. M., and Sandler, B. R. (1982). *The Classroom Climate: A Chilly one for women?* Washington, D. C.: Association of American Colleges
- Malik, I.H. (2006). *The cultures and customs of Pakistan*. US: Greenwood press
- Poyrazli, S., Arbona, C., Bullington, R., Pisecco, S. (2001). Adjustment issues of Turkish college students studying in the United States. *College student journal*: USA
- Santrock, J.W. (2006). *Educational psychology*. UK: McGraw Hill.
- Smith, A.J. (2003). *Qualitative Psychology. A practice guide to research methods*. Sage publications: London
- Trifonovitch, G. J. (1973). *On cross-cultural orientation techniques*. Retrieved from books.google.com.pk/books?id=gN1oLwEACAAJ

Received June, 2012
Revision Received October, 2012