

PERCEIVED LONELINESS AMONG INDIAN STUDENTS STUDYING ABROAD

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Abstract

The present study was conducted on a sample of 100 Indian students who are pursuing their education at foreign universities. The data was further stratified into male and female as well as graduate and postgraduate students. The study mainly aimed at finding out the differences in perceived loneliness among Indian students studying abroad with respect to their gender and level of education. The data was collected with the administration of the Perceived Loneliness Scale (1997) by Dr. Parveen Kumar Jha. The careful analysis of data, helped the investigator to infer that there is no significant difference in the perceived loneliness among Indian students studying abroad with respect to their gender and level of education,

Keywords: Perceived loneliness, Graduate and Postgraduate

INTRODUCTION

Education is a means of achieving better employment and a bright future in the present modern society. It has resulted in a rise in the standard of competition among students. Advancement in science and technology has caused underdeveloped and developing nations to thrive for the latest advancements in various fields like industrial, economic, agricultural, and educational, etc. As it has been very rightly said that education is the manifestation of perfection already existing in man. Keeping in mind the challenges of the present world it has become mandatory to get an education and in today's global world students are no more bounded to get an education in one's country only but are moving outside their country. No doubt there are several advantages of this but with these various problems have also cropped up like the problem of social adjustment and loneliness faced by students who study abroad. Kennedy (1993) in a study on psychological and socio-cultural adjustment of two groups of sojourners (145 Malaysian and Singapore students in New Zealand and 156 Malaysian students in Singapore) found that locus of control, life changes, social difficulties and social support variables predicted psychological adjustment during cross-cultural transitions.

Sam (2001) reported that 304 international students (159 males and 145 females) at the University of Bergen, Norway were satisfied with life. However, students from Europe and North America were on the whole more satisfied than their peers from Africa and Asia. It was also found that factors such as the number of friends, satisfaction with finances, perceived discrimination and information received prior to the foreign sojourn significantly affected the student's life satisfaction. Language proficiency and having host national friends did not show a significant effect on life satisfaction.

In abroad also various types of educational courses in the area of science and technology, humanities, economics, agriculture, etc. are available for students in educational institutions. As a result, students travel to different countries in search of educational opportunities; similarly, many students from different states of India go to study in various reputed universities in other countries. Students from India take admission in foreign universities to quench their thirst for learning. The education system is the instrument that society uses to equip its entire population to lead a productive public life and to groom their talent toward the right and desirable direction. Education is improving self by removing ignorance. The modern aim of education is the wholesome balanced or harmonious development of personality. Personality does not exist in a vacuum but to a large extent depends upon social environment. By harmonious development we mean an all-round development i.e., physical, intellectual, aesthetic, moral, social, and spiritual development should take place in a balanced way. No doubt there are several advantages of this but with these various problems have also cropped up the problem like inadequate finance, the difference in culture, lack of knowledge of the educational system of foreign countries etc. Out of all these problems, which are faced by Indian students studying abroad, the problem of lack of adjustment and perceived loneliness are the prominent one. Cynthia (2001) examined the psychological adaptation of overseas and migrant students and Anglo-Australian students, in the light of various individual variables including social self-efficacy, locus of control, loneliness, age, sex, and acculturating group membership. Participants were 382 students attending various universities in Melbourne, Australia. The results indicated ethnic differences in loneliness, social self-efficacy, locus of control and academic satisfaction. For nonimmigrant students, a sense of control was important to their psychological and academic adaption

whereas for migrant/overseas students, supportive social relationships were important for their psychological and academic adaptation.

Janneke wiers-jenssen (2003) conducted a survey screening the experiences and viewpoints of Norwegian students exchange. The majority of the students were found satisfied with their sojourn abroad and seemed highly capable of adapting to new situations. They have found studying abroad academically advantageous and they put much emphasis on the social personal, linguistic, and cultural rewards. Thomson et.al. (2006) conducted a study on undergraduate and postgraduate international students at a large Australian university (n=979, 64% females) regarding their perception of social connectedness. The majority of students reported being well-connected to others in Melbourne. Connectedness in Melbourne is related to student's cultural background and communication skills in the new culture and their evaluation of their perceived academic progress. Students from Asian countries reveal different patterns of social connectedness as compared to other students, especially in the relationships between connectedness and interactions with co-cultural.

PERCEIVED LONELINESS

Loneliness is a feeling where people experience an eternal powerful feeling of emptiness and solitude. It is the state of being alone from other people and often implies having made a conscious choice to be alone. Although there are cross-cultural differences in how people respond to loneliness. A lonely person may be easily convinced that there is something wrong with him or that no one understands his/her situation. Especially in the case of women as they may feel a sense of emptiness, which may ultimately turn into a state of clinical depression. Every person feels lonely in his life at some point on others but it is natural to have such feelings because that's what makes us all human beings. Introspection always makes people communicate with their inner selves.

Loneliness is a phenomenon that has been recorded in literature throughout the ages. It is now being recognized as a problem not only in adults but in children and adolescents as well. Loneliness is an emotional state that can be a barrier to a student's social development and affect their physical and mental health. It is a feeling where people experience a powerful surge of emptiness and solitude. Loneliness is more like a feeling of unwantedness. Marcoenet.al. (1985) investigated the differences in loneliness and found that boys frequently reported loneliness feelings as compared to girls. With respect to peer-related loneliness, no age differences were found.

Rokach A (1998) found that loneliness is a pervasive social problem and is experienced universally. The study was conducted to examine the influence of cultural background on the perceived causes of loneliness. In this study, 679 participants (318 men and 361 women) answered a 15-item loneliness questionnaire and represented three cultural backgrounds: North American, south Asian, and West Indian. Results indicated significant differences in the perception of the antecedents of loneliness amongst the three cultural subgroups. Gender differences were also found across the cultures and within the North American and the West Indian populations. Rokasch (2002) examined the influence of cultural background on the causes of adolescent loneliness. Youth adolescents formed the participant pool. A questionnaire was used which was composed of five subscales mainly personal inadequacy, developing deficiency, unfulfilling intimate relationships, significant separations, and social marginality. Results revealed a mixed pattern of differences between the two cultures. The youth had lower mean scores on personal inadequacies and developmental deficits but scored higher on social marginality.

Asher (2003) examined that loneliness is a normative experience and found that there is an urgent need to be concerned about children's relationship that is chronically lonely in school. Research indicated that loneliness in children is influenced by the conditions that how well they are accepted by their peers, whether they are overtly victimized or bullied by friends. Rokasch (2005) found that homelessness and loneliness tend to pervade. The author compared the five causes of loneliness experienced by young homeless youth. The causes are personal insufficiency, developing deficiency, no close and familiar relationships, relocations, and social marginality. The results found that the causes of loneliness in young homeless youths are different from the common population. Dunn (2007) examined the relationship and perceived strong competence, peer acceptance, and loneliness in school children. It was found that loneliness in childhood and adolescence is associated with many psychological and emotional problems. Lonely children are not physically active and fit. They experience more tension and anxiety than their non-lonely friends. There is a negative impact of loneliness on a child's well-being.

OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the difference in perceived loneliness of male and female Indian students studying abroad.
2. To find out the difference in the perceived loneliness among graduate and postgraduate students.

HYPOTHESES

1. There exists no significant difference in the perceived loneliness of male and female Indian students studying abroad.
2. There exists no significant difference in perceived loneliness among graduate and postgraduate Indian students studying abroad.

DELIMITATIONS

1. The study is delimited to only those Indian students who are studying in countries like the USA, UK, Canada, and Australia.
2. The sample has been restricted to 100 students only.

SAMPLE

In the present study, data was collected from 100 Indian students, who are studying abroad out of which 50 were male students and 50 were female students. Apart from this, out of the total 100 students, data of 25 Indian students was taken from each country i.e USA, UK, Canada, and Australia. In the present study, the sampling area of study was countries like the USA, UK, Australia, and Canada. As far as sampling technique is concerned, in the present study investigator resolved to adopt purposive sampling techniques

TOOLS

Tools are the basis to collect relevant data for any study. The selection of suitable tools is of vital importance for successful research. In the present study, the investigator used the following tools to measure the perceived Loneliness of Indian students studying abroad.

1. **Perceived Loneliness Scale (1997) by Dr.Parveen Kumar Jha**

PROCEDURE

In the present study, the investigator could not approach the respondents personally because of paucity of time and geographical constraints. Hence, the questionnaires of both scales were sent through e-mail. All the respondents were assured that their results will kept confidential and will be used for the research purpose only.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and discussions are an important part of good research work. They show the end product of any research study. The present study was designed to assess the perceived loneliness among Indian students studying abroad. On the basis of the results, hypotheses were tested and conclusions were drawn.

Hypotheses 1: There exists no significant difference in the perceived loneliness of male and female Indian students studying abroad.

Table 1.1 Showing Mean Scores, SD, and t-value of Perceived Loneliness of Male and Female Indian Students Studying Abroad.

Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Remarks
Male	50	105.02	14.68	0.305	Insignificant
Female	50	106.2	23.16		

The above-mentioned table clearly indicates that the mean score for the perceived loneliness of male and female Indian students studying abroad was found to be 105.02 and 106.2 respectively. The calculated t-value for the perceived loneliness of male and female Indian students studying abroad came out to be 0.305 whereas the tabulated value came out to be 1.99 and 2.77 at 0.05 and 0.01 level of significance respectively. As the calculated value is smaller than the table value, hence the hypothesis i.e. there exists no significant difference in the perceived loneliness of male and female Indian students studying abroad is accepted.

Hypotheses 2: There exists no significant difference in the perceived loneliness of graduate and postgraduate Indian students studying abroad.

Table 1.2 Showing Mean Scores, SD, and t-value of Perceived Loneliness of Graduate and Postgraduate Indian Students Studying Abroad.

Sample Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	Remarks
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Graduate	50	108.47	22.43		
Postgraduate	50	102.5	14.59	1.59	Insignificant

The above-mentioned table shows that the mean score for the perceived loneliness of graduate and postgraduate Indian students studying abroad was found to be 108.47 and 102.5 respectively. The calculated t-value for the perceived loneliness of graduate and postgraduate Indian students studying abroad came out to be 1.59 whereas the tabulated value came out to be 1.99 and 2.64 at 0.05 and 0.01 levels of significance respectively. As the calculated value is smaller than the table value, hence the hypothesis i.e. there exists no significant difference in the perceived loneliness of graduate and postgraduate Indian students studying abroad is accepted.

CONCLUSIONS

This final step of research demands critical and logical thinking in summarizing the findings of the study and comparing them with the hypothesis formulated in the beginning. On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. It is concluded that there is no significant difference in the perceived loneliness of male and female Indian students studying abroad. This shows that gender does not make any difference in the feeling of perceived loneliness as anyone may feel lonely in a new country having different environment and culture.
2. There is no significant difference in perceived loneliness of graduate or postgraduate Indian students studying abroad. This shows that such results came out because the level of education does not matter in making someone feel lonely as it is not necessary that graduate students will feel more lonely and post-graduate students will feel less lonely or vice versa.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

For understanding and to modify the behavior of human beings, intensive research in education and psychology is needed on various aspects of human behavior. No single study can cover all aspects. Hence, there is a wide scope for further research in the present study also. The investigator has offered the same as the undermentioned.

1. The study may be conducted on students who are studying in countries other than the USA, UK, CANADA, and AUSTRALIA.
2. The study may be conducted on all immigrants (not only students) regarding their adjustment.
3. The study can also be conducted on foreign students studying in India.
4. The sample size can be large.
5. A study can be undertaken on non-Indian students also who are studying abroad.
6. A comparative study can be also undertaken with regard to counties, institutions or other personal variables.

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