

The Social and Cultural Adjustment of Nepalese Students in Pakistan

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Abstract:

With the increase in the number of student exchange, programs and scholarships offered by governments in recent years, student mobility across borders has also increased. The Pakistani government also offers different exchange programs and scholarships for foreign students and a number of international students come to Pakistan for their higher studies. This research was conducted to understand the essence of the social and cultural adjustment experiences of Nepalese students enrolled in the University of the Punjab and the study has employed a hermeneutic phenomenological approach for the purpose. The sample consisted of Nepalese female students and the data collection techniques of in-depth interviewing, focus group discussion and review of available literature was used for the study. A triangulation scheme was employed to increase the credibility and validity of the data. The thematic analysis of the data gathered showed that adjustment is an on-going process. The Nepalese students encounter challenges and adjustment issues but parallel with these,

facilitating factors also start appearing which enable the Nepalese students to work out ways to deal with the adjustment issues and feel integrated with the host community at Punjab University, also helping them to grow both mentally and spiritually in the process.

Key words: adjustment process, mobility, challenges, Nepalese, female students, socio-cultural

Introduction

Students today are experiencing transnational mobility, According to Messer & Wolter “Student mobility or studying at universities other than the institution, at which the student originally matriculated, was for a long time an important element in a fully-rounded academic education The resulting prolongation of the study period was a deterrent to many students who might otherwise have participated in an exchange program. In an attempt to break with this trend, many countries especially in Europe set up special programs to promote student mobility” (Messer & Wolter 2005).

In recent years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of student exchange programs and these exchange programs have now become the most common form of intercultural exchange. They acquire inter-cultural experience and their tolerance and open mindedness is enhanced which helps them in their personal growth and professional development (Hartel 2010). Pakistan has always welcomed students from all over the world, may they come as students or as visitors. Hospitality is embedded in the culture of the people of Pakistan. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has made concerted efforts to make the educational system of Pakistan comparable to the international standards.

Living in another country with different culture may create problems of adjustment to the host country for the migrant (Hammond, English, & McLeod 2000). Many complex

challenges face international students especially if the culture of their host country is strikingly different from that of their home country, the cultural distance, the more challenges to be faced (Ward, Bochner & Furnham 2001). According to Ward & Kennedy (1993) Socio-cultural adjustment refers to 'culture-specific skills, the ability to negotiate the host culture and general behavioural competence.

Learning experiences of the International students in their host countries usually involve features such as cultural, psychological, social and academic adjustments (Edwards & Ran, 2006). Researchers from around the globe have studied the adjustment processes and the challenges faced by foreign. Adjustment is a dynamic and interactive process that takes place between the person and the environment (Lischinski, Farbman, Uyttendaele, & Szeliski 2006). Despite the widespread report of the difficulties International students encounter, majority of the International students make reasonable adaptation to their cultural and institutional demands (Janjua, Malik & Rehman 2011).

Many qualitative and quantitative studies on adjustment experiences of international students have identified the following socio-cultural adjustment factors commonly encountered by international students across the globe in their respective foreign institutions of higher learning language barrier (Searle & Ward 1990), mismatch of cultural values (Mehdizadeh & Scott 2005), discomfort with the new physical environment (Searle & Ward 1990), difficulty and frustration in establishing friendships and relationships (Searle & Ward 1990, Wang & Shan 2006; Lewthwaite 1996), low participation in social events and leisure activities (Mehdizadeh & Scott 2005), discrimination and stereotyping , lack of practical social support (Mehdizadeh & Scott 2005) accommodation difficulties ,dietary restrictions , and financial stress (Burns 1991).

The predominant academic factors of adjustment

experiences identified thus far amongst international students are the different teaching and learning approaches/methods (Stoynoff 1997; Major 2005; Zhang 2002; Lewthwaite 1996; Mehdizadeh & Scott 2005), different relationship between faculty and students (Wang & Shan 2007; Major 2005; Zhang 2002), different expectations set by the faculty (Major 2005; Zhang 2002), difficulty following academic conventions, difficulty utilizing learning resources (Stoynoff 1997; Wang & Shan 2007), inadequate language proficiency levels (Lewthwaite 1996). Thus Adjustment is an on-going process demanded by one situation and then another. It does not happen overnight. Most students gradually adjust their lifestyles to be balanced with a country's own cultural norms.

Research Objectives

Since the study of lived experience begins with the awareness of glimpses of the phenomenon of adjustment process, it was both formal in-depth interviews and casual interactions with respondents that led me to pursue this study. The objectives that guided the study were:

- (a) To explore foreign students' perceptions/pre-arrival expectations regarding the education system in Pakistan and perceived value of PU qualification in home country and concerns regarding safety.
- (b) To understand what kind of circumstances and experiences raised challenges for foreign students in adjusting in Punjab university hostels.
- (c) To understand how foreign students facilitated their adjustment process at Punjab university hostels with a focus on their adjustment with accommodation, food, climate, language, rules and social relations.
- (d) To understand how the foreign students construct their personal growth as a result of the adjustment process.
- (e) To understand how the factors involved in the

adjustment process are linked and how they contribute to the process in order to present a comprehensive, yet simplified picture of the adjustment process.

Significance of the Study

There are a few similar studies that had done before, but the researchers were looking at the topic from a quantitative approach (Ong & Ward 2005; Wang 2009). The last twenty to thirty years have seen a shift, not only to the necessity of qualitative methodologies, but also to ones that recognize the importance of narrative to understand the social worlds that the researchers wish to grasp (Stalker 2009).

Researchers employed a narrative study on this topic in order to get a thorough understanding of the adjustment experiences of the foreign students of Nepal from the ontological narratives. Ontological narrative allows researchers to be able to present to their readers detailed case studies of some of the participants, where there is continuity from the beginning, middle and end of the story (Stalker 2009). In addition, although a lot of research has been done in different countries regarding the adjustment patterns and processes of foreign students but in the literature that researchers studied, we come across any research must be done on the adjustment process of Nepalese students in Pakistan. Since this study was focused on adjustment of Nepalese students in the Punjab University hostels, the study will be useful for the Hall Council of Punjab University, which provides them accommodation, and the academic departments in which the students were enrolled as it will give them an insight on the challenges faced by students. The study can also be helpful for the foreign students who enroll in Punjab University in coming years as from this study they can learn how their seniors coped with the challenges they faced.

Research Methods and Data Collection

Since the research objective was to describe the essence of the adjustment experiences of Nepalese Students in Punjab University, it is important to understand several students' common experiences of adjustment to understand the essence of the phenomenon. The study has thus adopted a hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

According to Flood, A. (2010) phenomenology is the study of essences, the very nature of a phenomenon. Therefore, while on one hand, the topic requires a phenomenological sensitivity and understanding of the lived experiences of the foreign students, on the other, it requires a hermeneutic ability to make interpretive sense of the phenomena narrated by the foreign students to see the significance of environment and situations being faced by foreign students. This research approach is inductive (qualitative).

Research strategy

The chosen research strategy is a multiple case design. Several Nepalese students were interviewed to find the commonalities in the experiences of different Nepalese. The gathered data was based on qualitative interview methods. The research methods were included (a) Focus group with Nepalese students (b) Semi-structured interviews focusing on expectations and experiences of Nepalese in Punjab University.

Population

The population of the study consisted of all the Nepalese students enrolled in Punjab University, Lahore in 2013. Purposive sampling technique have been employed for the study within which convenience sampling technique had been used. The purposive sample was based on the research questions of the study. All the students selected in sample were either currently so that the sample selected consists of students

who faced similar circumstances and environment.

Convenience sampling was used in the manner that all the respondents selected in the sample were females residing in the hostels of Punjab University. All the 12 female Nepalese students enrolled in Punjab University were accommodated in the Hostel no. 6 of the Punjab University hostels. From amongst them, 6 students volunteered to participate in the focus group discussion, 4 students volunteered to give in-depth interviews and one in-depth interview was taken of a Nepalese student who had completed their Masters from Punjab University.

All the selected students for the sample fulfilled the criteria for mentioned above. From amongst these ten students included in the sample, 4 were students enrolled in the master programs in the Mass Communication Department and the rest 6 were students of D-Pharmacy.

Data collection procedure

Both individual and group level analysis was conducted for the study to understand the essence of individual experiences and to understand the common experiences of several students.

Two data collection techniques were used; in-depth interviews and focus group discussion. In conducting in-depth interviews, respondents were interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview guide. Each respondent was interviewed in her own room separately. Each interview lasted for 55-65 minutes. Prior to the interview, each respondent was told why the research is being conducted and how their sharing of experiences and opinions will contribute in the study. For the focus group discussion, 6 Nepalese students were invited to a friend's room in their hostel, Hostel no. 6 at a time decided by them according to their feasibility.

They were first given an understanding of the topic being studied and the value of their contribution. Then topics related to pre-arrival expectations of foreign students, the

adjustment issues faced by foreigners, the coping strategies adopted by them and modifications in behavior because of adjustment were discussed. The focus group discussion lasted for two hours with a fifteen minutes break in between. All the in-depth interviews and the focus group discussion were recorded both on the cell phone and on voice-recording software on the laptop. For the focus group discussion, a facilitator accompanied the moderator and took notes of key points of the discussion.

All the respondents were encouraged to frankly share their experiences by building rapport and giving them the surety that their names will not be disclosed anywhere in the report and no one would be having access to the recordings other than the researcher. Probes were used to get the information required and to channel the respondents to elaborate on the experiences and opinions that would help in covering all aspects of the topic being studied and enrich the findings. The recordings of the interviews and the focus group discussion were transcribed to be used for data analysis.

Data Analysis method

Data analysis is one of the most important phases of conducting research since through the analysis of the data; meaningful and systematic information is obtained. The following steps were used in data analysis: After exploring the data by reading and re-reading the transcriptions, categories were identified. During the coding, data was reduced and only the data that fitted the categories emerging from an exploration of all the transcriptions were kept and used in coding.

Generating Themes: Immersion in the coded data helped in putting together similar codes under one theme and in this way four themes were generated each based on findings from the coded data

Thematic Analysis and Findings

Making use of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach, data was analyzed to make interpretive sense of the phenomena narrated by the foreign students to see the significance of environment and situations being faced by foreign students and to understand how they adjust and adapt in the host environment.

1. Pre-Arrival Expectations

The analysis of the data suggests that the Nepalese did not have much pre-arrival expectations regarding the experience they were signing up for prior to coming here. They valued the education and anticipated that they will be a little more “bound” in the “strict” and “conservative” country. None of the students chose Punjab University by themselves. Rather, they only chose Pakistan as the study destination after watching newspapers advertisements by the Pakistan Embassy in Nepal, by Pakistani friends or cousins and friends who had studied here. *“It is good to have out-of-country experience. My father has Pakistani friends and he had heard that Pakistani universities are safer for foreign studies for girls and so he sent me here.”*

The Embassy enrolled them in the university after they cleared the entrance test and offered scholarships that served as an important factor in their study destination selection. This had inferred from the following excerpts from the transcriptions. *“Actually, I was working in the embassy. They recommended me to come here. Since 2000 there is this exchange program going on. I was getting the chance to study abroad and on scholarship so I came here”. “We saw the advertisement in the newspaper by the Pakistan Embassy for seats in Pharm D. I had tried for MBBS. I did not get the merit for a seat in MBBS and wanted to study in a medicinal field so when I saw the ad for pharm D, I applied for. The scholarship programme offered bears our study, lodging and food expenses.”*

After getting enrolled in the Punjab University and having checked it up, mostly on the internet, the Nepalese perceived the education to be of great value. Some of the following excerpts from the transcriptions support this:

“It ranked very high among South Asian countries and had a very good reputation”. Another respondent said, “I didn’t have any expectations or image but when I read about the noble prize holders from Punjab University, I really liked it”. They perceived that it would help them further advance in their careers.

2. Challenges Faced

The analysis of the transcriptions suggest that the primary factors which created problematic circumstances and led to causing challenging experiences included cultural shock, accommodation, climate, language, food, conservative culture, sexual harassment, economic problems, academic problems, discrimination and stereotyping. The following excerpts from the transcriptions support these findings:

(a) Dissimilarities between home and host culture

In the initial phase, the Nepalese felt there are too many “dissimilarities” between their home and host culture, which made them to even, regret coming to a “totally new” place and “wanting to go back”. *“In the beginning when I went to my department all I felt that this place would be one of them where I can never adjust. All the unfamiliar faces with different languages and a totally different place were in front of my eyes.”*

(b) Accommodation and climate issues

It created major issues and problems for Nepalese especially since they were adamant that they only wanted rooms in Hostel 6 of the University where there seniors Nepalese students are allotted rooms and not in the foreigner students’ hostel 10.

Climate also caused discomfort since in Nepal; the temperature does not go beyond “20 to 30 degrees at maximum”. Another participant stated, *“It is hotter than last*

year and keeps on increasing each year. You get frustrated because of heat. There is load shedding in Nepal too but it feels worse here because of the heat". One of the primary reasons that caused hindrance for Nepalese in getting integrated in Punjab University was that of language since "most of girls here can't speak English fluently" and they could not talk in Urdu. "It's like it is your native language so some of it comes in everyday conversations. Well here in pharmacy dept 50% teachers talk in Urdu and some even speak in Punjabi. Because of language problem, in the beginning the Nepalese stay with Nepalese be it boys or girls but our seniors used to get scolded for that".

(c) Arrangement of food according to needs

The Nepalese students said they could not eat the mess food since it was "too spicy and too oily" and had too much meat whereas they usually eat "boiled stuff and vegetables". As even anticipated prior to coming to Pakistan, the Nepalese found the culture too "strict" and "conservative" where girls and boys are not allowed to talk or be seen together and girls are made to feel awkward if they wear short shirts. *"I feel bit restricted outside like you are not allowed to wear jeans or t-shirts".*

(d) Financial and management issues

The study also revealed that the Nepalese face economic problems primarily because of it being their first experience away from home, they did not know how to manage expenses. *"Managing financially was little difficult for us as we were new to management with money at new place. We had no idea how we should spend money and about scholarship we had more problems. We thought we were on full scholarship but then we had to do hostel and other dues by ourselves so had little problem."* There were also some problems with scholarship as they were getting lesser than anticipated amount or getting it late. *"It was no problem for the first year but in the second problem we had to face some difficult situation regarding the money issue. Absence of a proper channel to be able receive money from family in Nepal was also a problem. "I faced*

financial crisis this year because I got my scholarship money too late so before getting money it was too hard to manage for us, because there no any channel to send money from Nepal to Pakistan because there is no good business ties between Nepal and Pakistan.”

3. Facilitating Factors

The study identified four major factors that facilitated the Nepalese in adjusting in Punjab University and the coping strategies they implied to overcome the obstacles to their adherence with the culture, norms and the academic environment. The primary factor from amongst these was the co-operation of other Nepalese residing in the University hostels. The Nepalese find strength in the company of other Nepalese and find it easier to adjust because of their cohesive and strongly united Nepalese community.

(a) Accommodation in hostels

“There are very few bitter experiences. Usually the people are very nice with us. Being in a group still helps a lot. We are so many that when something like this happens, we say it doesn't matter”. All the twelve Nepalese currently enrolled in the University lives in the Hostel 6 in the same wing. They cook together, shop together and spend most of the time spent in hostel together. *“The seniors guided me to come and then we will have fun. In the wing there are only four Pakistanis, the rest of them are Nepali. It feels like being in Nepal mostly.”* Further, *“Our Nepali seniors came to the gate to receive us. It felt very good. All the seniors were good n co-operative”.* The Nepalese also resolved the food issue by cooking together. *“There was an issue with food but Nepali hostilities' cook their own food so that problem was solved”.* *“Well it is like we cook for us ourselves. We bought fridge after pooling in too to refrigerate the food for longer time. Everyone cooks by turn”.*

(b) Co-operation of Pakistani students

Secondly, since most of the Nepalese were enrolled in different

classes so in the university they are not together. After they started befriending Pakistanis in the university, they say that adjusting in the university got much easier. *“In the university, we have a very big group and I am friends with them all.* They also mentioned that they overcame the language barrier because a Nepalese seniors and Pakistani students also helped them in understanding and speaking Urdu by translating whenever someone spoke in Urdu. Thirdly, the Nepalese mentioned the role of teachers as “co-operative” and concerned about their studies. Fourthly, the study shows that the Nepalese found the general behavior of Pakistanis very hospitable and caring which made it easier for them to integrate in the culture since in many incidents Pakistanis generally showed very kind behavior towards them because they were foreigners.

“People here are so good. They are so co-operative; they are so nice to everybody. It is like if u go anywhere here they are so good. They say that you are our guest. Here people are kind and generous to everyone. Once we went to Barkat Market. We had to go to bank. It was a Saturday and the banks were closed. The rickshaw driver went and asked the people there and then he told us the banks would not open today. Sometimes people are so nice that we feel like oh my God, they are so nice and helpful”.

(c) Generous culture of Pakistan

The Nepalese also mentioned some aspect of the culture here which they found very appealing and welcoming including the way people “embrace” each other when they meet, the bringing of home-made food for hostelites to show care, the welcome and farewell parties, family bonding, the way girls carry kurta shalwar and long shirts so “beautifully” and “glamorously”, and the “small detail Muslims give to everything like drinking water when seated”.

(d) Self Motivation of social cultural adjustment

Finally, and most importantly, the study revealed that it was

the Nepalese students' own motivation to adjust and adaptability that helped them in adjusting in the university, befriending both fellow Nepalese and Pakistanis and finding solutions to hurdles they faced with their positive and friendly attitudes. The following excerpts from the transcriptions assert this finding:

The study showed that in the initial phase when arriving in Punjab University, all the students, experienced anxiety, frustration and loneliness, primarily because of homesickness, shyness to talk to others, communication barrier, climate and food. They felt that being foreigners if they dislike something anyone does or say, they cannot shout or fight back because it is not their country and they did not want to get into trouble. Then gradually they start realizing that their families are away and they have to end their problems themselves so they started talking to fellow hostelites, trying to learn how to understand and speak Urdu and work out ways to adjust in the hostel and university. Following excerpts from the transcripts help in understanding how Nepalese students coped with different adjustment issues:

"I talk to people very politely. I try to understand what people around me expect from me. Like we are both talking and I feel I should know what you want to know from me. I try to be cooperative". Another student stated, *"Most important think to establish any kind of relationship is Communication, good communication skills help people to make friends, and it also help to active in social status. I participated in lots of seminars here and I found it's quite helpful to know other culture and behave according to their social system."*

One Nepali student summarized her adjustment process in the following words:

"I believe that my own behavior played the important role in adjustment with an equal contribution of the people over here that I got as my friends and teachers. Both of us have equal participation on to increase my adjustment level in Pakistan."

When I came from Nepal, I had made up my mind that whatever will be the culture, I would adjust there. When I came here I started interacting with Pakistanis and that helped me in adapting easily”.

5. Construction of Personal Growth and Change in Perceptions

The study findings revealed that the Nepalese feel that during the process of adjustment and after having become “integrated with the culture”, they have experienced modifications and changes in their “attitudes”, “beliefs” and “perceptions because of which their behaviors have been modified and they have mentally and spiritually grown.

(a) modifications changes attitudes, beliefs” and perceptions

“When I was in Nepal, I used to get angry, shout and get whatever I wanted. I was so childish. Here I have to decide what is good or bad. Moreover, economically I have to spend money properly. I have to wash my clothes and cook my food. I had to change everything.”

They also felt that they having come to a foreign country and deal with different situations has made them more sensitive towards others and more caring towards their families. *“You never know when people may get hurt so you have to be calm n deal people tactfully”.* Another respondent said that *“When I went back home, I was calm when I talked, I was much connected to home. I started sharing things with family a lot. I cooked for them. I almost did all of the things. I cleaned my room.”*

(b) Positive image about Pakistan

The study also revealed an interesting change that Nepalese who had now spent quite few years in Pakistan had started feeling protective and defensive regarding its image.

“If I now listen to anything being said against Pakistan that I find wrong, I talk against it that no Pakistan is not like

that, I didn't find it so. Of course after 2 years of living here you feel a sort of ownership and obligation to protect its integrity".

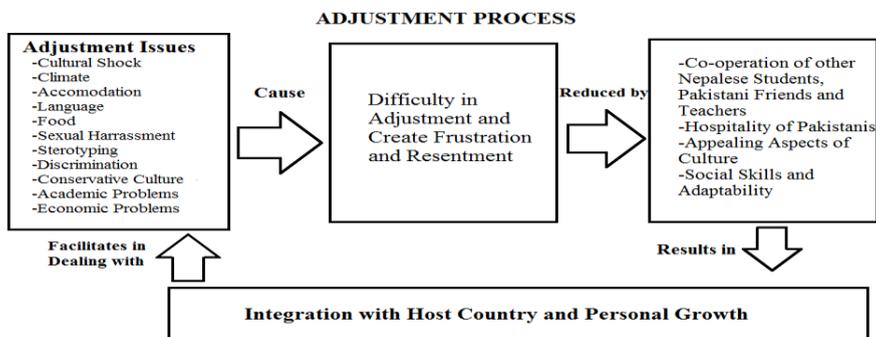
Another positive change in them is that they feel their faith in God has "strengthened".

"People here are so religious. I didn't use to have much belief In God but now I feel that there is someone watching us and my belief in God is strengthening". "I also feel more conscious about what I do now because I feel that God is watching me."

One of the most prominent changes was in the perception they had of people of Pakistan before coming to Pakistan.

"My perception about people here has changed. I used to think that people here are too rigid. They have rigid mindsets and do not listen to others. Of course this is the image that media portrayed of Pakistanis but I found Pakistanis just like we are". "They think and feel as we do. Like the kind of perception you have of pathans, that's the image we had of muslims.big beards and red eyes and now I think it is our duty to change these perceptions because people in Nepal still perceive Muslims like this but in reality Muslims are very nice and they also think and feel as we do." The study suggests that after having stayed here, the Nepalese also started feeling safer and felt that Pakistan is not the type of "terrorist" country as media portrays. *"This country has political issues. Every country has them. Like China, have euro and pound issues. You know there is nothing like terrorist or anything here. Like I have not encountered any such thing. You have some kind of issues when you go anywhere".* Another said, *"It is not like I don't feel safe here. There is much more propaganda than the truth in media".*

Nepalese Students' Integration with Punjab University's Cultural, Social and Academic Environment



The model shows the adjustment process of Nepalese students in Punjab University as identified from the data gathered. As the model shows, adjustment is an on-going process.

(c) Settlement of issues with time

The Nepalese face some adjustment issues starting from the time when they first arrived in Pakistan. These issues raise challenges for them and create difficulty for them in adjusting in host culture and enhance their anxiety and frustration but parallel with the challenges, facilitating factors also start appearing soon after they've arrived in the Punjab University and start reducing the problems faced by Nepalese.

The facilitating factors such as co-operation of Nepalese, Pakistani friends and teachers, the general hospitable behavior of Pakistanis, the appealing aspects of culture and the Nepalese students' own social skills and adaptability enable them to work out ways to deals with the challenges faced and remove the obstacles, which are hindering their adjustment.

The students start feeling a part of the community in which they were living and feel integrated with it. They start realizing how had mentally and spiritually grown since they first came to the university and they start feeling like home in the hostels and university. They start appreciating certain aspects of the culture, enjoy its norms and adapt their lifestyles

in accordance with them. This enables them in more conveniently dealing with any challenges that may arise since they have gotten an understanding of the culture, people and academic needs and have equipped themselves with coping strategies.

Discussion

The findings regarding the adjustment process of Nepalese students in Punjab University seem to be consistent with the previous findings of researchers regarding the adjustment process of foreign students in host countries. Firstly, the data gathered supports the findings of Messer and Wolter (2005) that student mobility was promoted by the setting up of exchange programs and scholarship programs by the government since the Nepalese enrolled are on either SAPSA scholarship or else getting the PTAP scholarship.

Secondly, the factors and challenges encountered by the Nepalese as suggested by the study are also consistent with previous findings such as language barrier (Searle & Ward 1990; Wang & Shan 2007), mismatch of cultural values (Mehdizadeh & Scott 2005; Wang & Shan 2007), discomfort with the new physical environment (Searle & Ward 1990), difficulty and frustration in establishing friendships and relationships (Searle & Ward 1990, Wang & Shan 2006; Lewthwaite 1996), discrimination and stereotyping, accommodation difficulties (Lin & Yi 1997), dietary restrictions (Lin & Yi 1997) and financial stress.

The predominant academic factors of adjustment experiences identified by previous researchers are also consistent with the findings of this study such as the different teaching and learning approaches/methods (Stoynoff 1997; Major 2005; Lewthwaite 1996; Mehdizadeh & Scott 2005), different expectations set by the faculty, difficulty following academic conventions, inadequate language proficiency levels

(Lewthwaite 1996). There has also been a recent research that suggests that psychosocial adjustment is influenced by various cross-cultural variables, such as the amount of contact with host nationals, length of residence, finance, and accommodation. (Mehdizadeh & Scott 2005) These findings are also supported by the findings of this study.

In addition, as the model explains that the adjustment of Nepalese in Punjab University is an on-going and cyclic process, these findings had also been previously researched. "Adjustment is an on-going process demanded by one situation and then another. It does not happen overnight. Most students gradually adjust their lifestyles to be balanced with a country's own cultural norms. (Sicat 2011)". From the available literature on the adjustment process and experiences of foreign students in Pakistan, one study has focused and contributed in a better understanding of the academic adjustment of foreign students in Pakistan but has ignored the impact of factors such culture and social relations of foreign students which greatly affect the foreign students adjustment in general and even their academic adjustment. The findings of this study attempt to fill this gap in literature.

Another study had conducted on the social and cultural challenges faced by foreign students studying in CMH, Lahore and the impact of these challenges on their academic performance and stress had studied using the quantitative approach. This research on the other hand attempts to understand the lived experiences of the foreign students and how they construct their own adjustment process and personal growth. In addition, in the available literature, no study had conducted solely on the adjustment process and experiences of Nepalese studying in Pakistan. The study thus offers an understanding of the unique aspects social and cultural in Pakistan.

Summary

The literature review supports the major findings of the study and the study attempts to fill the gaps in the available literature by presenting an explanation of the adjustment process of Nepalese students enrolled in Pakistan. To conclude, the study employed a narrative approach and used the case of Nepalese enrolled in Punjab University and living in the university hostel to understand the adjustment process of Nepalese.

The study identified the pre-arrival expectations and perceptions the Nepalese had prior to coming to Pakistan and in determining the factors that contributed in their decision of country selection. Most of the students chose Pakistan as the study destination because of reference by some friend, cousin or colleague and because of the exchange programs and scholarships offered by the Pakistan Embassy in Nepal. They had the perception of Pakistan as being a strict and conservative country and this image was changed in their minds by their experiences. However, they started feeling that not all Pakistanis are rigid, rather most are quite hospitable and caring but the conservative norms prevail in the society.

The study also identified the adjustment issues faced by Nepalese that consisted of challenges related to accommodation, food, climate, language, sexual harassment, conservative culture, academic problems, economic problems, discrimination and stereotyping. Thirdly, the study identified the factors that facilitated the Nepalese in adhering to host environment and overcoming the obstacles. With the help of other Nepalese, Pakistani friends, teachers, hospitable Pakistanis and because of appealing aspects of culture and the social skills and adaptability of Nepalese, they were able to work out ways of dealing with any problems faced and started enjoying the cultural values and succeeded in adjusting their lifestyles in accordance with the environment in the university.

Finally, the study attempts to understand and explain how the Nepalese students construct their personal growth as a result of the adjustment process and in what manners they thing the adjustment process modified their beliefs, attitudes and perceptions.

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