

GLOBALIZATION AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION:***A Study on University Foreign Students***

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Abstract

Globalization has deep-rooted into every sphere of life. Globalisation especially social networking sites have become an indispensable element of everyone's day to day social life. Social network is not only amalgamation of ideas but also interchange of global views and ideas that have resulted in a major transformation of the lifestyle and living standard of people worldwide. India has a rich cultural background and pride of its culture is famous throughout the world. With the emergence of globalization, our deep rooted traditions and customs have slackened their hold and intercultural adaptations have proliferated in the society. Intercultural adaptation includes communicative adjustment during initial cross-cultural interactions to decrease the probability of being misunderstood. Researchers have found that people have a propensity to exercise social media to get incorporated into the host culture during their adjustment and adaptation and to remain connected to their home countries. The present paper attempts to examine the impact of social media on the intercultural adaptation process. To carry out the present study the researcher conducted In-depth interviews of the foreign students studying in the universities of NCR. In light of the results of the analysis, directions for future research in this line of research are also discussed. I believe the present study will add to the sporadic information on the impact of globalization on intercultural adaptation and becomes the basis for further insight in this imperative area of usage of social network especially among student youth.

Keywords: Globalization, online social networks, intercultural adaptation, cross culture.

Introduction

The corollary of globalisation reflects directly not only in economic front but also in the social and cultural areas of the individuals as well. Social dimension in globalisation refers to the influence that globalization has on the daily lives of the people and society at large. Globalization has deep-rooted into every sphere of life. Globalisation especially the online networks have undoubtedly become an indispensable element of the social support network for proper functioning of the society. Social network is not only amalgamation of ideas but also the exchanging platform of global thinking, ideas and opinions resulting in major transformation in the living standard of people across the world. The cultures across the world and the way people live their lives is deeply affected by globalization. Globalization has intensely influenced our eating habits, our dressing style, our lifestyle, even our choices of music, reading books and has deeply affected our communication patterns viz. how and in which language we will communicate with others. A study by Chen & Zhang, (2010) reveals that "the compression of time and space, due to the convergence of new media and globalization, has shrunk the world into a much smaller interactive field". Further, Johnson (209, 14) rightly stated that "the phenomenon of global village coined by Marshall McLuhan,

described the present scenario of shrinking as well as expanding of world's culture due to pervasive technological advances that allow for instantaneous sharing of culture”.

McLuhan's idea of global integration and global village upshot the concept of cultural amalgamation across borders, but there have been apprehensions about cultural exclusion as well. Globalisation has hastened the pace of cultural change. Throughout the world, India is known for its rich cultural background and takes pride of its culture. Intercultural adaptation is the process of communicative adjustment during initial cross-cultural interactions to decrease the probability of being misunderstood. Researches shows that people tend to use online social media to become more incorporated into the host culture during their alteration and to maintain connections to their home countries (Swayer & Chen, 2012).

Social media not only endorses interconnectedness in our entity but also encourages interdependence of our culturally diverse world. According to a study by Chen and Zhang, (2010), “the compression of time and space, due to the convergence of new media and globalization, has shrunk the world into a much smaller interactive field”. Social media not only connects the people across the world to interact but also provides them with all the information about what is happening across the globe at one click. The interface done through social networks not only supports interactive communication but also fabricates understanding of diverse thinking. One of the researches by Georgetown University, (2010), states that, “New social media means that everyone is a publisher and everyone is a critic”. Further a study by Sawyer & Chen, (2012), exhibits that “in social media, people have the opportunity to express their opinions to the public and participate in conversations and dialogue through a common virtual medium”.

“Social networking sites allow individuals to create profiles within the system, view others' profiles with which they share a connection, and interact with others in the system, that lays the groundwork for working of social sites”, in a study by Boyd & Ellison, (2007). The best example of social media that promotes the exchange of messages between people across the world is Facebook followed by YouTube, Twitter and iPhone. A study by Grossman, in 2010, shows that, “If Facebook were a country, it would be the 3rd most populated country in the world, behind China and India”. YouTube is a video-sharing website that allows individuals to interact with the global community by viewing and sharing user generated video content. As per the study by Elliott, (2011), “there were over 490 million users worldwide by 2011” and this innovation became a driving force for the change of human society, according to Ostrow, (2010). Twitter allows society to share information through micro blogging and relays real time information to users. People use microblogging to share personal stories or events and seek information (Java, Song, Finin & Tseng, 2007). iPhone combines the function of a mobile phone, MP3 player, and instant messenger (Nowak, 2008). These four most popular social media - Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and the iPhone has made intercultural dialogue critical today, where various cultures come across daily.

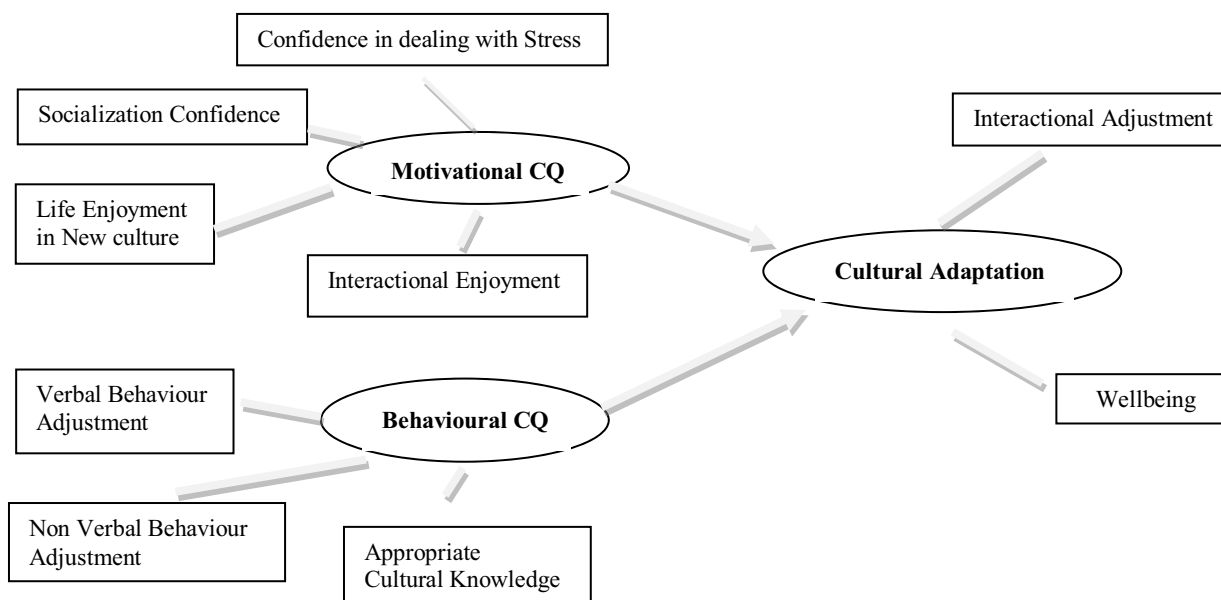
“The experiences of migrants and those adapters who fruitfully acclimatize to different cultures results in a multicultural world” says Kim (2001). Intercultural studies is a “dynamic

process by which individuals, upon relocating to an unfamiliar cultural environment, establish (or re-establish) and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the environment” (Gudykunst, 2003).

Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on the concept of cultural adaptation by Ang et al. (2007). According to him, cultural intelligence (CQ) and cultural adaptation share a strong relationship. Cultural intelligence (CQ) is one’s potential to work and deal efficiently in culturally diverse settings. CQ was earlier multi-dimensional comprising of meta-cognitive, cognitive, motivational and behavioural dimensions; later only two dimensions were established - motivational and behavioural sharing a positive relation to cultural adaptation. Motivational CQ and behavioural CQ differ in the context that the former reflects an individual’s intrinsic interest in learning and adapting to the culturally diverse situations whereas the later reflects the ability of adjusting to behaviours as expected by culturally diverse situations (Ang et al. 2007).

The core defining properties of the 2 CQ dimensions as provided by Ang et al. (2007) are provided as a network model (Miles et al. 2013) in Figure 1 below. The theory elaborates that a culturally motivated person must have confidence in socializing with people and in dealing with the stress of adjusting to the host culture. Likewise, a person with behavioural CQ is assessed by the ability to exhibit appropriate verbal and non-verbal behaviours based on their accumulated knowledge related these behaviours. The present research tries to study the behavioural patterns of an individual in dealing with his virtual social sites to enhance his growth of CQ that enable him in adapting to a diverse culture.



Network Model of Cultural adaptation

Research Objective

This paper attempts to study the social media usage among foreign students in Indian universities. It also tries to find out the purpose of using social media among foreign students and investigates the impact of using online social media on the intercultural adaptation process. The present research study explores how foreign students use their social sites to grow their association which enable their adaptation to a new diversified culture.

Research Methodology

To carry out the present research, Survey Method was used. Among the various tools to conduct Survey, In-depth Interviews were carried out with 20 foreign students studying in two universities of Delhi. Jamia Milia Islamia and Jawahar Lal Nehru University were selected among other state, private, deemed universities in Delhi as both the universities have departments related to international studies. Convenience sampling method was used to choose the sample. The students are all from Post Graduate Courses from various disciplines.

Results

For the present study, 20 international students were selected from two universities situated in Delhi, Capital of India as respondents. Criterion sampling was used to select the sample for the study. Jamia Milia Islamia and Jawahar Lal Nehru University were chosen as the sample for the primary reason that, as a public university centered in the capital of the nation, it receives students every semester from all over the world. Thus, we could easily select relevant cases for studying. A brief description of each student is provided in Table below:

Participant No.	Name	Country	PhD/ Exchange programmes/ Masters	Gender	Cross-cultural Experience	No. of Facebook friends
1	Mohammad Taleb Mohsen	Palestine	PhD	Male	3 Years	45
2	Jaffur Ibrahim	Ghana	Masters	Male	6 Months	76
3	Habib-Ur- Rahman	Afghanistan	PhD	Male	1 Year	179
4	Mohammad Malik	Afghanistan	Masters	Male	2 Years	88
5	Suppawit	Thailand	PhD	Male	2 Years	250
6	Zakirullah	Afghanistan	Masters	Male	6 Months	29
7	Ferhat	Egypt	Exchange	Male	3 Months	54
8	Alamzab Momand	Afghanistan	Masters	Male	1 Year	98
9	Mohammad Tahir	Ghana	Masters	Male	1 Year	154
10	Desmond	Thailand	PhD	Male	6 Months	162
11	Kabir	Ghana	PhD	Male	3 Years	345
12	Jonas	Germany	Exchange	Male	2 Months	12
13	Maxmilian	Germany	Exchange	Male	2 Months	56
14	Nohan	Germany	Exchange	Male	2 Months	97
15	Denpa	Burma	Masters	Male	8 Months	54
16	Lwin	Burma	Masters	Male	1 Year	67

17	Ben-Aryeh	Israel	PhD	Male	3 Years	178
18	Chiram	Israel	Masters	Male	1 Year	76
19	Eiran	Israel	Masters	Male	1 Year	43
20	Kibzaim	Palestine	Masters	Male	1 Year	178

Social Media Usage

Q1 Are you active on any of the platforms of social media? How often you use social media and how much time you spent on social media on daily basis?

Facebook, Whatsapp and Youtube are common social media platforms that each & every respondent uses. Apart from these, some of the students also use Twitter and LinkedIn to connect with the people from related field.

All the respondents exercise social media on daily basis and the around 75% of the respondent foreign students studying in Indian universities spends at least 2-3 hours in a day on social media. Some of them check in weekly to talk to their family and friends back in their home country. Most of the sites are just logged in to get updates that too for 10-15 minutes fortnightly by half of the respondents. **Mohammad Taleb Mohsen**, student from **Palestine** said, “I have account on almost all the popular sites- Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Instagram. I check in several times in a day and almost spend 3 hrs daily.” “I exclusively use Facebook daily for half an hour to connect to my family back in Ghana, but spend longer time when I am chatting with friends,” said **Jaffur Ibrahim**.

Purpose of Social Media Usage

Q2 What is the rationale of having an account on social networks? How occupied are you on social networking?

To maintain contact and connections in the relationships it is very important to stay connected to the people who are far off and social media plays a very crucial role in this. When the researcher enquired the students about the rationale of social media in their life, it is noticed that almost everyone uses it for entertainment, for study purposes, to connect with people from both home and host country. Being far away from their families it helps them to stay connected with them, talk to them and make new friends. With the help of social media students are also keeping themselves updated with current affairs from across the world and virtual social sites are helpful in sharing information, news articles, photos, resources, and links.

The students are more involved in getting familiar with the happenings in the world and most of them in their leisure time. Most of the respondents are actively involved on social media with updating their status and keen to know about their friends that makes them busy on social media. **Habib-Ur- Rahman**, student from **Afghanistan** said that social media creates a strong network in the campus where a lot of information and sources are shared for studies and for making friends but he doesn't interact much, and only observes. Another student from **Afghanistan**, **Malik** said that he share a lot of articles on social media platforms and also

alleged that most of the students are cynical about the posts on government, and even upload pictures and news links related to their home country.

Many students are of the belief that we not only interact with others, share photos but also extend the boundaries and maintain strong connections.

Social Media and Information

Q3 How often you use social media to get connected and familiar with the Indian culture, before arriving in India? What kind of interactions you have done and what were your learning's?

It is seen all the international students had social media accounts before arriving in India and some of them have been using it for many years. But majority of them didn't use it to get associated and acquainted with the Indian's culture. However some students used the same to do so. Most of the interactions were with their friends from their own countries or their family members.

Jaffaru Ibrahim, student from **Ghana** said, he had academic, religious and social relations with people from India before arriving here and it helped him knowing about the Indian culture. **Mohsen** from **Palestine** was never on social media and communicate with his faculty through email.

"Facebook did help me in getting involved and in touch with my friends and social activities before arriving in India. These sites facilitated in having a better idea of how people think, talk, eat and live and that helped me in adjusting to the Indian culture", said **Desmond** from **Thailand**.

Social Media and Cultural Adaptation

Q4 Do you agree that social media assists in accommodating to the Indian culture?

Social media nurtures relations and creates awareness about the various facets of the culture, while some use social sites for entertainment. When the students were enquired if social media assisted them in adjusting to Indian culture, it was found that it was not of much help to many but few said that it helps them fostering relations and become more familiar with the Indian culture after coming to India.

Suppawit, student from **Thailand** on this said that 'Culture is a practice and it can only be learnt while practicing it'. While **Malik** experienced that with social media he became more occupied and is in touch with his new friends and is updated about social activities before arriving in India. Virtual sites gave him a better idea of behavior of Indian people and that in turn helped him in adjusting to the culture.

Social Media and Stereotypes

Q5 Did social media helped you in overcoming stereotypes or biases towards the Indian culture?

The responses of the students for the question that has social media helped them in overcoming the stereotypes or biases towards the Indian culture, there was variety of views the researcher got to know. Some participants are of the opinion that social networks both strengthens and weakens stereotypes as some sites campaigns in overcoming stereotypes, whereas few are highly interested in shunning activists and encourage the stereotypes. They were aware of the existence of diverse viewpoints and the significance of being critical and skeptical of the sources for creating a wider world-view perspective.

Zakirullah, student from *Afghanistan* said that ‘there are many cultures besides Indian culture and I realized it here only. Earlier I had this belief that India and Afghanistan have common culture’. **Suppawit** from *Thailand* said I formerly believed India is a very bad country because social media there presented India like that only but my views got changed after coming here. **Habib-Ur-Rahman** from Afghanistan also said that ‘living here only helped us overcoming stereotypes not social media especially the Youtube videos made fun of varied cultures in India and spread biases.’ On the contrary, **Kabir from Ghana** opined that these videos don’t make or emphasize stereotypes & biases towards any culture as people trust what they trust. It certainly helps in understanding different ethnicities and cultures.

Social Media & Friends

Q6 How often you agree that social media facilitated you in making Indian friends?

The researcher got the mixed responses when a question was solicited on the role of social media, that if it has helped them making friends. Some found good Indian friends over social media. Also they are connected to not only Indian students but also with people from across the world. Social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have been majorly used to do so.

However few of the students also mentioned that they have India friends from their course only which says it not necessarily help you making friends but surely will help you strengthen the existing ones. Like one of the student **Ferhat** said he didn’t even try to make friends on social media and as he feels uneasy or insecure on social sites. He said that he is at ease with his known fellows; and in his friend list only those people are there whom he personally know. He is off and on using social sites because of his unwillingness. He is of the opinion that on social media sites, we have more of acquaintances than true friends but people don’t differentiate between the two.

Student from *Ghana*, **Jaffaru** also said ‘he has Indian friends on social media from his course or old friends from the home town whom he really knows beyond that he has none.’

Social Media & Cultural Shock

Q7 What adjustment challenges you encountered on arrival to India and how did social media assisted you in surmounting them?

When the students were asked about any adjustment challenge or cultural shock they faced when they came to India, different views came out. **Alamzab Momand**, student from Afghanistan said ‘the culture of family life and blowing horn on the roads were shocking for him’. **Mohammad Taleb Mohsen**, student from Palestine said slow procedure at every front is one of the challenges, I faced here.

One of the students from *Afghanistan* also mentioned Food culture and female’s freedom here to work till late in night since it’s not the same in Afghanistan despite sharing very much in common. Some also mentioned that shopkeepers and vendors often try to overcharge us.

But majority believed that social media didn’t help them overcome any cultural shock they faced, while few incorporated themselves with the diversified new culture because of social networking sites through mailing lists and social groups. It also helped in understanding new culture and the home dialect chiefly, with the help of the photographs uploaded of social events.

Social Media & Contentment

Q8 Do you feel contented after using social media? Please explicate.

When the researcher raised a question that if they feel satisfied or fulfilled after using social media we got to see mixed opinions. Some are satisfied while some are not. Students said they got to connect with their family and friends also it helps them providing information as well. Whenever they feel lonely or homesick they can easily video chat but some do believe it’s a fake world, information is also not trustworthy also it wastes a lot time and they are getting bored with it day by day.

Most of the foreign students studying in Indian Universities responded are of the opinion that they are satisfied with social networking sites as it keeps them updated with their friends’ and families’, while they are in another countries. “Yes I’m satisfied with what I use on social media. I control it according to my needs and am not reckless. I post the things either to educate or to entertain” said **Jonas** from *Germany*. **Denpa** from *Burma* is of the view that “It’s good to see what people are doing, but other times I feel like I waste so much time. You need to balance how much time you spend on social media sites. You can’t rely solely on social media when building relationships”.

Social Media & Utility

Q9 Kindly explicate the pros and cons of using social media?

Social media has deep rooted prominently in our culture and gelled into our daily lives, but there are various pros and cons attached to it. Social media is not only easy to use and resourceful form of communication & socialization, but also initiate learning through the interchange of links, information, and resources. Despite these social media has many disadvantages viz. privacy, time consuming and people getting addictive.

When inquired from the foreign students studying in Indian Universities, the response was in fire & ice ratio, with almost all the respondents applauded social media for many advantages but also condemned it for many reasons. “There are a lot of advantages. You can really share interesting news and be updated with what is happening in the world. The disadvantages come with the privacy issue. I think people should think before posting things. Personally, I’m not comfortable with sharing my personal things with anyone except my close friends, not on social media sites”, opined **Maxmilian**.

Lwing, is of the view that social media is a great learning platform for lot of things even without any face-to-face communication with people, in spite of lot of hurdles. Virtual Chatting is great, but facial expressions or gestures cannot be noticed.

“Social media is a good way to communicate with other people, share information, and stay connected. Some people spend too much time on social media sites”, said **Nohan**.

Social Media’s Contribution

Q 10 do you agree that social media contributes to sense of community in both your country of origin and host culture?

From the responses, the researcher raised a question about social media’s contribution to their sense of community in both the country of origin and host culture it was noticed that in order to maintain the same people are in touch with the people from their community over here. They are associated with religious or social groups from their countries as well as they keep on looking for them to connect, share and strengthen their community.

Alamzab Momand, student from Afghanistan believe that social media do contribute in creating sense of community in both host and home country. **Mohammad Malik, Mohammad Tahir, Maxmilian and Kibzaim** are of the same opinion while **Mohammad Tahir, Lwin and Ben-Aryeh** do not agree to it.

Suggestions

Q11 Any suggestions regarding social media and intercultural adaptation in present times.

When invited if they do want to say something on social media and Intercultural adaptation, different students had to say something different. Since almost everyone uses social media for quite a good amount of time in a day, **Mohammad Talem Mohsen** from **Palenstine** thinks that they are getting more exposed to Indian media now so social media helps them in improving ideas and also he thinks he is getting more into new culture because of the exposure.

Zarifullah, student from **Afghanistan** on this said ‘social media is leading them to fake, unsatisfied relationships.’

Findings

- All the foreign students in Indian Universities are active on social media and that too for a long time.
- Facebook, Whatsapp and YouTube are the most common platforms used by foreign students.
- Students exercise social media daily and spend 2-3 hours of their time daily on social media.
- Entertainment, study and to get connected to their home country are the prime grounds of being active on social media for the foreign students.
- Social media is not a platform to get familiar with the culture of any country, neither it helped most of the students to know about Indian culture but nurtured relationships and developed understanding about various facets of the culture.
- Academic, religion and social relations are majorly followed on social media by the students.
- Social media didn't play any role in adjusting to the Indian culture.
- Fire & Ice relation is seen in case of social media and stereotypes. Social sites not only strengthens stereotypes but also and weakens stereotypes as some platforms advocates and some breaks stereotypes and biases.
- Social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have majorly been used to make friends and strengthen old relationships in a foreign land.
- Social Media helped only few to overcome any cultural shock but helped in understanding cultural differences and local dialect.
- Most of the students were satisfied as they can get connected to their family and friends back in their home country.
- Social media helps in improving ideas and getting to know more about the culture they are residing in because of the exposure they get.
- Social media is even leading them to fake unsatisfied relationships too.

Discussion

The information from in-depth interviews of the foreign students is rich in regard to the impact of social media and intercultural adaptation. The outcome of the present research study accentuates the significance of social media platforms in maintaining and strengthening intercultural adaptation. The results depict that the society can strengthen, shape, and maintain relations through online platforms like social sites. The interactions ascertain communion, which is a significant segment for maintaining relations with family and friends in the country of origin and host countries which plays a significant part in overcoming adjustment challenges and establishing social networks. Alteration is an indispensable aspect in intercultural adaptation, and social networking sites manipulate this development. The students agreed that before arriving to India, they took the help of social media to get acquainted with the Indian cultural values and traditions and social media fills in as a spot for collaboration and discussion so as to connect with contacts abroad in India. Besides, being conscious of stereotypes is part of intercultural adaptation, social media helped in overcoming stereotypes or strengthening them or helping them to form their own perceptions.

Social media helped them to get associated with the people in the host country, after the arrival and that facilitated in shaping the connections and feeling of belongingness into the new culture. Concurrently, staying connected with your family and friends back home is similarly as fundamental. Social media provides a platform where people gets the opportunity to speak with their family & friends so as to remain refreshed, mindful, and educated regarding recent developments. Social media epitomize assets for how one can encourage a feeling of oneness and belongingness to various cultures.

As a researcher, there are a few limitations of the study; Firstly, the study was carried out on only 20 international students. Taking a larger sample or including more students from different universities from the country would be valuable in better understanding of the relationship between social media and intercultural adaptation. Moreover, there is scope to increase the age range of the participants: seasoned and more youthful ages could be contemplated, further the working class or for business. Additionally, the study can also be carried out on Indians to find out usage pattern of social media and its impact on intercultural adaptation, and later, a comparative study can be done.

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