



## Stressful experience and Acculturation challenges among Migrants

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### Abstract

**Background:** Migration, a common phenomenon in India, often brings significant psychological and cultural adjustments. Migrants face difficulties such as homesickness, discrimination, and challenges adapting to new societal norms. These factors can lead to acculturative stress, affecting both emotional and behavioral functioning.

**Aim:** The study aimed to examine the relationship between acculturative stress and socio-cultural adaptation among inter-state migrants in India. It sought to determine whether higher levels of stress correspond with challenges or efforts in adjusting to a new cultural environment.

**Method:** A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was used. The study sample consisted of 102 migrant individuals aged between 18 and 45 years. Data was collected using two standardized scales: the Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale (SAFE) and the Revised Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS-R). Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation analysis were applied to examine the relationship between the variables.

**Results:** The mean score for acculturative stress was 52.87 (SD = 14.445), and for socio-cultural adaptation, it was 61.23 (SD = 13.001). The correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.059$ ) indicated a weak positive relationship between the two variables. However, the result was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.277$ ), suggesting that stress and adaptation may not be strongly linked in this sample.

**Conclusion:** While the correlation was in the expected direction, the lack of statistical significance implies that other factors might influence adaptation among migrants. The findings highlight the importance of addressing stress in migration-related support services and encourage further research into the complexities of cultural adjustment.

**Keywords:** Acculturation, migrants, stress, socio-cultural adaptation

## Introduction

Migration is one of the most ancient traditions of human history. For new chances and an improved existence, individuals have been relocating and crossing social and cultural frontiers on countless occasions. In recent centuries, however, human movement across national or international boundaries has grown significantly. These days, migration is a well-researched and covered subject on a global scale. The decision to move could be influenced by several factors; some of them may be voluntary while others are not. In particular, acculturation circumstances are frequently linked to stressful scenarios for migrants, particularly when they observe themselves establishing new connections with members of the mainstream culture of the host country. Factors such as war, ethnic or cultural conflicts, political pressure, inequalities, unemployment rates, poverty, hope for better living standards, family reasons, climate, and natural disasters can all cause people to migrate.

While the receiving nations have distinctive goals influenced by these countries' economic needs for labor, political dogmas, or social obligations, migrants may see their moving as a financial gain or just one more movement on way to improved life. Besides that, the migrant's experience depends more on their position in host country. The selection of who will leave and why is determined by gender, age and other social characteristics.

Relocating is a hard and problematic process. A person's current location may be very different from their previous one not just in terms of geography but also in terms of social and cultural aspects. The World Health Organization has noted that, in most low- and middle-income nations, indigenous people are forced to move to cities in search of a living, a situation that is similar to the migrating situation in India.

It goes on to say, "Most of the time, migration results in terrible living conditions, exposing migrants to social stress and increased risk of mental disorders due to lack of friendlier social networks. In fact, migration may not be able to enhance general social welfare." However, moving from a rural to an urban area may bring with it the difficulties of adjusting to a culture that is more foreign to them in terms of beliefs, traditions, language, and accent (Bhugra and Becker, 2005).

A process of cultural change that happens when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into direct and lengthy contact with each other is acculturation. During the acculturation process individual must adapt and become part of a new culture. This can include a number of stressors. This can also lead to stress in a number of ways, such as social stigma, language obstacles, and the disappearance of familiar social networks. People who migrate tend to experience post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorder, depression disorder, schizophrenia and related disorders as well as culture shock, disability, abuse, and suicidal

ideation/attempt, especially among migrating women and children. Moving to a new culture can be problematic for students as they move away from their standard routine, friends, and family, and also need to get used to a new lifestyle, language, environment, and people.

Although acculturation is not a recent phenomenon, the globalization of the twenty-first century has facilitated new avenues for cross-cultural interactions, leading to the emergence of distinct types of acculturation that individuals worldwide are currently experiencing. The concept is also used in discussions of how societies or communities adapt when faced with cultural diversity. The social and group level contextual factor that affects and restricts one's process of adapting or failing to adapt is defined by psychological acculturation.

This study plan to aid in filling this void by providing recommendations that will be beneficial in shaping future academic insight as well as applied exercises. I decided to research this because it relates to my own experience migrating. For me, relocating and adjusting to a new culture was a deeply changing experience. My interest in this subject developed by observing the experiences of other migrants, both inside and outside of my community.

### **Comparison with existing literature**

In recent years, the movement of people within national boundaries or across international borders has greatly increased. This direct

engagement results in changes to individual values, attitudes, beliefs, and identities as well as social and cultural institutions (Berry, 2006). Key characteristics of the acculturation process include ancestral causes (acculturation circumstances), strategies (acculturation orientations), and results (acculturation outcomes). A person can choose to adopt the culture of their new location or preserve their own culture.

Immigrants' mental health concerns are addressed with psychosocial therapeutic strategies include Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), individual and group trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, and narrative exposure therapy. But there must be more psychologically supported treatment services for immigrants on offer. The aim of this review is to assess the evidence supporting the hypothesis that immigrants have mental health issues. Adaptation is a behavioral long-term acculturation result while acculturation behaviors are short-term acculturation outcomes (Sam, 2006).

Acculturative strategies involve attitudes and behaviors that vary from groups to individuals. Migration-related groups' and individuals' mental health outcomes have been shown to be significantly impacted by acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2010). However, it often occurs that members of the receiving society have different expectations about new immigrants' acculturation than do the immigrants

themselves. According to Berry et al. (1987), acculturative stress refers to negative behavioral and emotional reactions associated with the adaptation process and lived experiences in a foreign culture.

According to Berry's theory (1997, 2006), the first type of adaptation involves a "behavioral shift" on the side of the assimilating person, who takes up the behaviors of the dominant culture to reduce stress or intergroup conflict. The second type has to do with "psychopathology," which is a generic term for a person's unsuccessful attempts at acculturation and coping. High amounts of stress may arise from this, and stress may show themselves as retreat or marginalization. The third and last type of adjustment is called "acculturative stress," which is a typical source of stress for refugees, immigrants, and indigenous people when they engage with members of the outside group, dominant cultural group

Learning the capabilities that are necessary for effective interaction in a new culture is called socio-cultural adaptation. The process of adapting can lead to a number of outcomes in terms of identity formation, including complete identification with the new culture, the preservation of the previous identity, or the development of new, hybrid identities. It is important to identify and comprehend such dynamics in the process of designing intervention strategies for the promotion of adaptive cross-cultural adjustment. Authentic Interaction with the Host Culture Is Associated

with Improved Psychological Well-Being and Sociocultural Adjustment of Migrants. Socio-cultural adaptation challenges can cause serious psychological distress in migrants. Socio-cultural adaptation and acculturation are key processes experienced by them.

## **Method**

### **Hypothesis**

There would be positive relationship between stress and socio-cultural adaptation among migrants

### **Study Design**

The present study employed a correlational research design, which was chosen to examine the relationship between acculturative stress and socio-cultural adaptation among migrants. This design is appropriate because the objective of the study was to explore how naturally occurring differences in stress levels relate to adaptation outcomes in a real-world setting.

### **Participants**

The study involved cross-sectional data collection through an online survey and relied on purposive and snowball sampling techniques to recruit 102 participants who identified as migrants.

### **Tools Used**

1. The Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale (SAFE) is a tool used to measure acculturative stress among individuals who are adapting to a new culture. It consists of 24 items, participants responded to each item on a 5 point likert scale

ranging from 1(not stressful) to 5 (extremely stressful).

- i. Reliability: Internal consistency reliability estimate (coefficient alpha) for total SAFE scores has ranged from .89 to .93 in different studies
  - ii. Validity: It was found to have significant correlation with other stress indices and psychological distress, thus establishing validity of scale as measure of acculturative stress.
  - iii. Scoring: The total score can range from 24 to 120, with higher scores indicating greater acculturative stress. Subscale scores can also be calculated for four dimensions i.e. Social, Attitudinal, Familial and Environmental.
2. Revised Socio cultural Adaptation Scale is a tool used to measure how well immigrants have adapted to a new cultural environment. It consists of 21 items, participants responded to each item on a 5 pointer likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all competent) to 5 (extremely competent)
- i. Reliability: The SCAS-R has shown high internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically ranging from 0.80 to 0.91
  - ii. Validity: The SCAS-R has demonstrated good validity. The scale captures the multi dimensional nature of socio-cultural adaptation
  - iii. Scoring: Scores are calculated by averaging the individual item scores,

where higher scores represent greater competency (skills or behaviors) in a new cultural environment.

### Procedure

To investigate the relationship between acculturative stress and socio-cultural adaptation an online survey was designed using Google forms. Purposive and snowball sampling method were used. The form include the brief description of the study, it's objective and the criteria of participation (migrants). The participants were given consent form before the survey. The survey included Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress (SAFE) Scale and Revised Socio-cultural Adaptation Scale.

### Ethical Consideration

The study followed key ethical considerations to protect the rights and well-being of participants. Informed consent was obtained through an online form that explained the purpose and criteria of the study. Participation was voluntary, and no personal details were collected, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. The tools used were non-invasive and widely accepted in psychological research. Overall, the study was designed to minimize harm and respect the dignity of all participants.

### Data Analysis

The study employed quantitative data analysis to examine the relationship between acculturative stress and socio-cultural adaptation among migrants. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to summarize participants' scores on the Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale (SAFE) and the Revised Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS-R). To evaluate the

relationship between the two variables, a Pearson's correlation test was conducted. The correlation coefficient obtained was  $r = .059$ , indicating a weak but positive relationship between stress and adaptation. The software used was SPSS.

### Result

The study analyzed data from 102 migrant participants to examine levels of acculturative stress and socio-cultural adaptation. The mean score for acculturative stress was 52.87 with a standard deviation of 14.445, indicating a moderate level of perceived stress among participants. The mean score for socio-cultural adaptation was 61.23, with a standard deviation of 13.001, suggesting a relatively good level of adaptation to the new cultural environment. A Pearson correlation test was conducted to examine the relationship between the two variables. The correlation coefficient was found to be  $r = 0.059$ , indicating a positive but weak correlation between acculturative stress and socio-cultural adaptation. The significance level (p-value) for the one-tailed test was 0.277, which is well above the conventional threshold for statistical significance ( $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that the observed relationship, although positive, is not statistically significant and may be due to chance. Effect size, in this context represented by the correlation coefficient, is very small, suggesting that the relationship between stress and adaptation is weak and may not hold practical significance. Nonetheless, the positive direction of the correlation supports the hypothesis that migrants who experience higher

stress may also make greater efforts to adapt to their new cultural surroundings.

### Descriptive Statistics for Stress and Socio cultural adaptation

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Stress	52.87	14.445	102
Sociocultural Adaptation	61.23	13.001	102

### Correlations between stress and socio cultural adaptation

		Stress	Sociocultural Adaptation
Pearson Correlation	Stress	1.000	.059
	Socio cultural Adaptation	.059**	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	Stress	.	.277
	Socio cultural Adaptation	.277	.
N	Stress	102	102
	Socio cultural Adaptation	102	102

### Discussion

In the present study, it was hypothesized that acculturative stress would be positively related to socio cultural adaptation among migrants. The results of the test states the standard deviation is 14.445 and mean for socio-cultural adaptation is 61.23 with a standard deviation of 13.001, the mean for stress is 52.87. The correlation value,  $r=.059$ , suggests that stress and sociocultural adaptation are positively correlated. These results were also consistent with this theory, showing that acculturative stress enhances the degree of socio cultural change. This is an

indication that while the stresses one goes through during adjustment process as a migrant might be so stressful, they also lead to more meaningful engagements with the host culture as they deal with and move beyond the challenges.

### **Limitation and Future Implications**

Limitations of the study is that the sources of stress and adaptation measures were self-reported by participants. As such, they may not represent true experiences. Furthermore, due to its cross-sectional design, it cannot evaluate the long-term impacts of acculturation-related stressors on coping profiles. It means future longitudinal studies will provide an opportunity to explore temporal dimensions more deeply. There could be personal factors like attitude, stress management style or past experiences which are some understudied areas posing significant threats. Majority of acculturation research does not produce results that can be generalised to other populations or contexts because most research take specific migrant populations and environments as units of study. . Due to limited number of sample study a more verifiable future study should be conducted. Future programs could focus on providing psychological support, cultural orientation, and social integration strategies to ease the stress of adaptation. Educational institutions and workplaces could incorporate cross-cultural training programs.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this study provide substantial evidence for the positive relationship between

stress and socio-cultural adaptation among migrants, confirming the initial hypothesis. This means that stress, which is mostly viewed as a negative factor in individuals' lives, is vital for the migrants' adaptation process since it can be a motivation for the acquisition for cultural adaptation and integration into the new lifestyle.

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### **Author contributions**

Conceptualization,

Author 1: Literature Review, Forming research Question, Data Collection, Data Formulation, Creating original Draft, Editing, Final Drafting

Author 2.: Literature review, Forming research Question, software, Statistical Analysis, resources, Supervision.

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### **Competing interests**

The authors declare no competing interests.

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