

Academic Resilience among International Students in relation to their Mental Health

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Abstract: The present study focused on exploring academic resilience among international students in relation to their mental health. The major objectives of the study were to examine the relationship between academic resilience and mental health of International students mainly from Nigeria, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Nepal and Tanzania. For the present study the data was collected from 500 international students by applying self constructed questionnaire of academic resilience and Mental Health Battery by Srivastava, AK and Jagdish (1996). In the present study stratified random sampling techniques of sampling was applied. Results of the study reveal that there exists a strong positive relationship between academic resilience and mental health among international students.

Key Words: Academic Resilience, Mental Health, International Students.

1. INTRODUCTION:

International Student Mobility is undeniably transforming the academic, social and political landscape in higher education. As at international level universities compete, to magnetize the creamy layer of students, but they are required to deal with the unique mental health concerns of their international community as well.

In this pursuit of global universities especially with regard to magnetizing international students, India is also not far behind. Earlier the trend was that only Indian students used to visit foreign lands to pursue further studies, although this practice is in continuation till today also but time has transformed and nowadays there are thousands of international students who arrive India to pursue their education.

There are plentiful grounds because of which students land up in foreign country to pursue their education. Few students decide to study abroad simply because the field they wish to study is not readily available in their home country. This trend is true especially in the context of students from developing countries who want to acquire experience about new technology and scientific advances which are not available in their home country. Some of these students wish to go back to their countries after achieving their degree in order to aid in the development of their country. While many prefer to stay in the host country permanently, contributing to the so-called “brain drain” which has become a chief concern for some nations (Altbach , 1991). The reasons for studying abroad can be varied. A study of Norwegian students (Wiers - Jenssen, 2003) found that two of the most prominent reasons for the students to choose studying abroad were that they thought it would be “interesting to study in a foreign environment” and because they had a “love of adventure”. Similarly Langley and Breese (2005) found that positive recounts from other students were a major influence in the choice to study abroad. While still in the native country, listening to positive tales of foreign study, told by co-nationals, had a tremendous impact on students’ desire to travel.

Other reasons reported for studying abroad are more of personal in nature, such as influence of friends studying abroad, being captivated by a specific culture, yearning to reconnect to one’s roots, lack of trust in the educational system of the home country, or wish to learn another language. The reasons are probably as diverse as the students are. Whatever the reasons, many students leave their native land behind and travel to another country to study, some staying away for years. These students face many exciting and interesting endeavours, but also many challenges. They must learn and abide by rules, perhaps learn a new language, make friends and find their social place within a new environment.

However, the mental distress that people, especially international students, undergo when they land up in a new culture often comes from a barrage of small cultural differences that can have a dominant emotional impact on students , so these international students tackle multiple challenges at the academic front. Doing everyday things that were easy for students in their home countries no longer remains easy, and due to academic, social, and sometimes financial problems, students can start experiencing variety of emotions like loneliness, confusion, frustration, anger, and depression resulting into poor mental health. When this occurs, students sometimes view the host culture with suspicion and reject cultural differences. However, most students gradually become accustomed, and as they do, they gain confidence and turn more emotionally stable. But this is not the case with all students, not all go through the process in the similar fashion. Some may adapt swiftly while others are not able to adapt completely at all. Others feel well adapted, and remaining ones are left with the feeling of culture shock after experiencing an incessant

series of new problems. Some problems are faced by the international students at the academic front also. Few students are able to succeed despite, while others are left perplexed. This ability to succeed in academic life despite barriers is termed as academic resilience. In other words it refers to the capability to bounce back and overcome the stress or successful adaptation to the challenging and threatening circumstances/environment. Resilience helps to succeed academically despite barriers that make it difficult for them to succeed (Benard , 1991).

Resilient students experience one or more difficult life conditions or traumatic events, but somehow find the power to conquer their unpleasant impact (Bryan, 2005). Resilience help out students to deal effectively with academic impediments, anxiety, and study pressures during the learning process. In case of international students , academic resilience is characterized with attributes like adaptable temperament, flexibility, tolerance of haziness, Optimistic attitude, anticipation of problems, solving problems logically, finding creative solutions to challenges, curiosity, internal locus of control and achievement-oriented attitude. So academic resilience which is affected by many factors like emotional maturity, social adjustment, educational aspiration, social intelligence is of utmost importance for international students

There are many factors which effect mental health of students namely academic anxiety, financial trouble, increased use of technology, and dramatic change in the lifestyle of university and college students. All of these factors play an imperative role in the mental health crisis. Although almost every individual may confront this crisis related to mental health balance but it turns more challenging for the students who visit different country to pursue their further education.

Although a sound mental health is pre-requisite for all individuals but it becomes more significant when these individuals are students that too when they belong to different country. Because of exposure to completely new environment these students are more likely to lose their mental health. The difficulties associated with relocating to live and study in a foreign environment have been acknowledged (Mewett et al.2008). The associated cultural adjustment or ‘culture shock’ is believed to create anxiety and emotional stress for international students (Rosenthal et al.2001). Delaying intervention for mental health problems often means increased chances of mental health related problems. Some mental health problems would escalate to the point of suicidality if left untreated. A number of reasons have been offered as to why students are unwilling to seek professional help. Different cultural constructions or idioms of personal distress are found to be the prominent one. (Kleinman 1986). International students commonly do not delay in seeking help for solving mental health problems until it becomes too late to receive adequate care that would enable them to successfully complete their studies.

In order to help out international students with respect to maintaining their mental health, few initiatives can be taken by host country especially.

It is always advisable to gain a better understanding of mental health warning signs and the interplay between typical international student unique challenges, common mental disorders, developmental issues and acculturative stressors. There is need to learn the way to refute misconceptions about important offers such as psychiatric care and psychological counseling, and to promote mental health awareness and well-being among international students. It is also suggested to learn to conceptualize and implement overarching inter-departmental processes and communication structures that allow for an early detection and coordinated support of at-risk students. Development of agreements with culturally-sensitive local counseling and health care providers offering consultations in English and/or other languages spoken by international students can also be helpful.

2. OBJECTIVES:

- To explore the relationship between Academic Resilience and Mental Health among international students.
- To find out the relationship between Academic Resilience and Mental Health among international students from Nigeria.
- To examine the relationship between Academic Resilience and Mental Health among international students from Bhutan.
- To analyze the relationship between Academic Resilience and Mental Health among international students from Afghanistan.
- To find out the relationship between Academic Resilience with Mental Health among international students from Tanzania.
- To examine the relationship between Academic Resilience and Mental Health among international students from Nepal.

3. HYPOTHESIS

- There exists no significant relationship between Academic Resilience and Mental Health among international students.
- There exists no significant relationship between Academic Resilience and Mental Health among international students from Nigeria.

- There exists no significant relationship between Academic Resilience and Mental Health among international students from Bhutan.
- There exists no significant relationship between Academic Resilience and Mental Health among international students from Afghanistan.
- There exists no significant relationship between Academic Resilience with Mental Health among international students from Tanzania.
- There exists no significant relationship between Academic Resilience and Mental Health among international students from Nepal.

4. METHOD:

The successful conduct of any research requires application of suitable methodology with specific operational steps and well constructed tools. Studying the review of literature and considering the objectives of the study, descriptive survey design was found to be most suitable for the present study. The present study is essentially empirical in nature and falls mainly in the purview of survey research design. In the present study descriptive survey research method was employed as the purpose of the research was to explore the relationship of Academic resilience of international students with their mental health

4.1 Sample

Sampling is a process by which a relatively small number of individuals or measures of individuals, objects or events are selected and analyzed in order to find out something about the entire population from which it was selected.

In the present study stratified random sampling technique was employed to choose the sample. The population for the present study was international students studying in different educational institutions of Punjab.

In the present study the data was collected mainly from Lovely Professional University, Phagwara Chandigarh University, Kharar, Thapar University, Patiala, Panjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, Punjab University, Chandigarh as international students are enrolled in these institutions mainly. As it is not feasible to collect data from all the international students Hence, it was decided to select a representative sample of international students from five different countries on the basis of stratified random sampling method. Finally a data of 500 students international students was selected, out of which 100 students constituted the sample from single country.

4.2 Tools

There are diverse types of tool for collecting information from the participants. The selection of appropriate tool is guided by the purpose of the study and the characteristics of the sample. In the present study following tools were used.

- Self Constructed Academic Resilience Scale
- Mental Health Battery by Srivastava, AK and Jagdish (1996)

5. RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION:

The variable of academic resilience includes five dimensions namely confidence, coordination, control, composure and commitment. The analysis of correlation of academic resilience with mental health for total sample has been given in under mentioned table .

Table : Showing Coefficient of Correlation of Academic Resilience with Mental Health regarding Total Sample

Coefficient of Correlation (r)					
Academic Resilience with Mental Health (Total Sample)= .756**					
Country	Nigeria	Bhutan	Afghanistan	Nepal	Tanzania
	'r' value	'r' value	'r' value	'r' value	'r' value
Academic Resilience and Mental Health	.803**	.713**	.777**	.752**	.769**
Confidence and Mental Health	.413**	.493**	.377**	.585**	.585**
Coordination and Mental Health	.496**	.519**	.464**	.641**	.543**
Control and Mental Health	.621**	.532**	.647**	.555**	.645**
Composure Mental Health	.447**	.526**	.567**	.537**	.634**
Commitment Mental Health	.663**	.578**	.444**	.643**	.570**

*correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

From table it is clearly evident that the correlation value of academic resilience and mental health of international students is .756. It is apparent from correlation value that there lies a strong positive correlation between both variables. As this p value (.000) is significant at 0.01 level hence the null hypothesis i.e. there exists no significant relationship between academic resilience and mental health among international students is rejected. Hence it can be concluded that there exists a significant relationship between academic resilience and mental health among international students. Data indicates that those students, who have high academic resilience, have good mental health as well and vice versa. As per the investigator's anticipation such results points out that generally those who have good mental health manage to overcome academic problems as well.

(i) *Correlation of Academic Resilience and its dimensions with mental health among international students from Nigeria*

Table depicts the correlation value between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Nigeria. The correlation value for the same came out to be .803 (strong positive correlation). Whereas the p value is .000. This p value is significant at .01 level. Hence the hypothesis that there exists no significant correlation between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Nigeria is rejected. Therefore it can be stated that there exists a significant relationship between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Nigeria. Table shows that the correlation of academic resilience with mental health among international students from Nigeria is (r=.413), (r=.496), (r=.621), (r=.447) and (r=.663) respectively for confidence, coordination, control, composure and commitment dimension of academic resilience. Close look at values makes is comprehensible that all these values are significant at .01 level. Hence it would be apt to mention that there exists a positive correlation between dimensions of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Nigeria. The correlation between confidence, coordination and composure dimension of academic resilience and mental health is moderate positive correlation. Whereas control and commitment dimension share a strong positive correlation with mental health among international students from Nigeria.

(ii) *Correlation of Academic Resilience and its dimensions with mental health of international students from Bhutan*

Table confirms that the correlation value of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Bhutan came out to be .713 (strong positive correlation) As the p value is .000 which stands significant at .01 level. Hence the hypothesis that there exists no significant correlation between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Bhutan is rejected. Results helps to mention that there exists a significant relationship between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Bhutan. Table 4.8 further depicts that the correlation of academic resilience with mental health among international students from Bhutan is (r=.493), (r=.519), (r=.532), (r=.526) and (r=.578) respectively for confidence, coordination, control, composure and commitment dimension of academic resilience. All these values are significant at .01 level. Correlation values makes it comprehensible that there exists a moderate positive correlation between confidence dimensions of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Bhutan. In contrast to this remaining dimension of academic resilience has strong positive correlation with mental health among international students from Bhutan.

(iii) *Correlation of Academic Resilience and its dimensions with mental health of international students from Afghanistan*

The results shown in table indicates that the correlation value of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Afghanistan came out to be .777 (strong positive correlation). The p value is .000 which is significant at .01 level. Hence the hypothesis that there exists no significant correlation between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Afghanistan is rejected. Therefore it can be mentioned that there exists a significant relationship between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Afghanistan. As mentioned in Table 4.8, the correlation values of academic resilience with mental health among international students from Afghanistan is (r=.377), (r=.646), (r=.647) and (r=.444) respectively for confidence, coordination, control, composure and commitment dimension of academic resilience. All these values are significant at .01 levels. Analysis of these correlation values reveal that there exists a positive correlation between dimensions of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Afghanistan. The correlation between confidence and commitment dimension of academic resilience and mental health is moderate positive correlation. Whereas other dimensions of academic resilience share a strong positive correlation with mental health among international students.

(iv) *Correlation of Academic Resilience and its dimensions with mental health of international students from Nepal*

Table points out that the value regarding correlation between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Nepal came out to be .752 (strong positive correlation). The p value for the same is .000 which is significant at .01 level. Hence the hypothesis that there exists no significant correlation between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Nepal is rejected. Therefore it can be mentioned that there exists a significant relationship between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Bhutan. Analysis of values in Table helps to deduce that the correlation of academic resilience with mental health among international students from Nepal is (r=.585) , (r=.641) (r=.555) and (r=.643) respectively for confidence, coordination, control, composure and commitment dimension of academic resilience. All these values are significant at .01 level. It is evident from correlation values that there exists a strong positive correlation between dimensions of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Nepal.

(v) Correlation of Academic Resilience and its dimensions with mental health among international students from Tanzania

Table mentions that the correlation value of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Tanzania i. e .769 (strong positive correlation) In comparison to this the p value stands out to be .000 which falls significant at .01 level. Hence it becomes apt to state that the hypothesis that there exists no significant correlation between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Tanzania is rejected. Therefore it can be inferred that there exists a significant relationship between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Tanzania. Table reveals that the correlation of academic resilience with mental health among international students from Tanzania is (r=.585), (r=.543), (r=.645), (r=.634) and (r=.570) for confidence, coordination, control, composure and commitment dimension of academic resilience. All these values are significant at .01 level. These values helps to deduce that there exists a strong positive correlation between all the dimensions of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Tanzania. Meaning thereby that being concentrated, confident, meticulous planner and industrious is positively correlated with mental health.

6. CONCLUSIONS:

Statistical analysis of the data helped to arrive at the following conclusions:

- There exists a significant relationship between academic resilience and mental health among international students. Data indicates that those students, who have high academic resilience, have good mental health as well and vice versa. As per the investigator's anticipation such results points out that generally those who have good mental health manage to overcome academic problems as well.
- There exists a positive correlation between dimensions of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Nigeria. The correlation between confidence, coordination and composure dimension of academic resilience and mental health is moderate positive correlation. Whereas control and commitment dimension share a strong positive correlation with mental health among international students from Nigeria.
- There exists a moderate positive correlation between confidence dimensions of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Bhutan. Correlation values make it comprehensible that there exists a moderate positive correlation between confidence dimensions of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Bhutan. In contrast to this remaining dimension of academic resilience has strong positive correlation with mental health among international students from Bhutan.
- There exists a significant relationship between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Afghanistan. Analysis of correlation values reveals that there exists a positive correlation between dimensions of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Afghanistan. The correlation between confidence and commitment dimension of academic resilience and mental health is moderate positive correlation. Whereas other dimensions of academic resilience share a strong positive correlation with mental health among international students.
- There exists a significant relationship between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Nepal. It is evident from correlation values that there exists a strong positive correlation between dimensions of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Nepal.
- There exists a significant relationship between academic resilience and mental health among international students from Tanzania. These values help to deduce that there exists a strong positive correlation between all the dimensions of academic resilience and mental health among international students from Tanzania. Meaning thereby that being concentrated, confident, meticulous planner and industrious is positively correlated with mental health.

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