

Personality, readjustment and stress of migrant students

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The awareness that migrating for gaining education may bring about wellness and enhanced quality is reflected in the exponentially increasing number of young adults migrating for higher education. Migration, being a process of change, has an impact on physical, psychological and academic life. Often these changes are so drastic that the students face many challenges in completing their education. Several factors are involved in the process of readjustment as well as that of health and well being of migrant students. Out of these factors personality, stress and readjustment of migrant students were selected. A sample of 210 migrant students, age ranging from 18-22 years (mean age = 20.4 years), pursuing non professional courses from various colleges in Pune city was selected. Tools used to test hypothesis were NEO-FFI, Stress Symptoms scale and Readjustment Scale. Neuroticism has significant positive correlation with readjustment ($r = .313, p < .01$) as well as that with stress symptoms ($r = .313, p < .01$). Extraversion has a significant negative relationship with readjustment that ($r = -.280, p < .05$). The rest of the Personality factors, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness do not have significant correlations with readjustment. Readjustment and Stress symptoms have a significant positive relationship ($r = .600, p < .01$).

Keywords: migrant students, personality, stress symptoms, readjustment

The decision to migrate is usually based on a desire for wellness and enhanced quality of life. Wellness, the process of maximizing human functioning at the physical, mental and spiritual level (Archer, Probert & Gage, 1987) can be achieved by education. Equally, education can also be a tool to ensure quality of life in the future. This awareness is reflected in the exponentially increasing number of young adults migrating for higher education.

However, migration is a relocation of not only the person but that of a microcosm of culture, values and aspirations. It is a process of change needing significant amount of readjustment on the part of the individual. This has an impact on physical, psychological and academic life. Often these changes are so drastic that the students face many challenges in completing their education. Any person's performance depends on the individual's capacity to adapt and function in the new and changing circumstances (Fabrizio and Neill, 2005). If the students do not adjust, it affects their educational outcomes. Their family also gets affected and so does the success rate as well as the image of the college and university.

The student's failure to adapt to a different culture may cause home sickness, negative acts and interpersonal conflicts, which can together be termed as 'culture shock' (Fabrizio & Neill, 2005). This culture shock is an indication of stress. Thus, mal adaptation and stress go hand in hand. The experiences that this changed environment brings also have an impact on the motivation of the student, especially on what the student expects to gain from the educational journey.

It is important to note here that there are several factors involved in the process of readjustment as well as that of health and well being of migrant students. They could be the individual's personality traits, their academic motivation, resilience or their stress and coping. The present research has selected those aspects that can throw insight into the health status and well being of migrant students personality,

stress and readjustment of migrant students.

Personality

Different individuals adjust differently to changed circumstances. Some find it easier to make friends, some thrive in the face of new experiences, some can be flexible and adapt easily while others can manage emotions easily. These individual differences in migrant students have led to differences in readjustment and experienced stress of migrant students. It is the personality of the individual that he or she brings with them to the new situation and which influences their functioning extensively.

The present research follows the definition of personality as given by Mayer (2005). He considers all the complex aspects of the term as well as the context in which it operates. He has described personality as an individual's pattern of psychological processes arising from motives, feelings, thoughts, and other major areas of psychological function. Mayer further suggests that personality is expressed through its influences on the body, in conscious mental life, and through the individual's social behaviour.

Readjustment

According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Languages, readjustment can be defined as the act of adjusting again to changed circumstances. In the context of the present research, it refers to the changes that migrants have to make in themselves in order to adjust to the new surroundings. These changes are global and occur in all important domains of life like physical, environmental, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, social, financial and general psychological well being.

Stress

Migration can affect the health and well being of migrant students, as it can be a stressful experience. This has an adverse effect on their health as well as sense of well being

Lazarus (1966) defined stress as that state experienced when an individual perceives that the demands exceed the personal and social

resources the individual is able to mobilize or when there are threats to well being.

The present research was therefore focused on these significant aspects - personality, stress and readjustment of migrant students and their inter-relationships.

Objectives of the study

- To measure the Personality factors, readjustment and stress of migrant students.
- To study the relation among personality, readjustment and stress of migrant students.

Hypotheses of the study

- Neuroticism will be positively correlated with Readjustment of Indian migrant students.
- Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness will be negatively correlated with Readjustment of Indian migrant students.
- Neuroticism will be positively correlated with stress of Indian migrant students.
- Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness will be negatively correlated with state stress of Indian migrant students.
- Readjustment of Indian migrant students will be positively correlated State Stress.

Method

Participants

A sample of 210 migrant students (Indian national students who reside outside Pune city) was selected through purposive sampling for the present study. The students, age ranging from 18-22 years (mean age = 20.4 years), pursuing non professional courses like B.A., B.Com and B.Sc from various colleges in Pune city were selected.

Instruments

NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) by Costa and McCrae (1992): The NEO FFI has 60 items and is a shortened version of the NEO-PI. It is a five point scale, with responses ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Internal consistencies reported in the manual for N, E, O, A, and C are: .79, .79, .80, .75, and .83. The scale has predictive validity for college Grade Point Average scores, convergent and discriminate validity with tests like MBTI,

MMPI, etc.

Readjustment Scale for Migrant Students: This scale has been developed by the researcher and contains 67 items. These items include domains regarding changes relating to lifestyle and physical aspects (Diet, sleep, climate etc), Socio-cultural (cultural beliefs, values, social support, language, communication, hostel life/room partners), academic (syllabus, teaching-learning process, examination system), financial (managing finances) and other administrative issues like migration certificate, eligibility etc. It has a 5-point Likert type measure with responses ranging from “Never” to “Almost Always”. Cronbach alpha ($\alpha = .92, p < .01$), Criterion related validity ($r = .633, p < .01$) and test retest reliability ($r = .951, p < .01$) are satisfactory.

Smith Stress Symptom Inventory- State (SSSI) by Smith (1990) - The SSSI measures frequently-reported stress symptoms. It is based on the Stress Costs Inventory (Smith, 1992) and the Smith Stress Symptoms Scale (Smith, 1990). It includes 6 symptom categories developed through factor analysis: Worry/Negative Emotion, Attentional Deficits, Striated Muscle Tension, Autonomic Arousal / Anxiety, Depression, Interpersonal Conflict / Anger. The scale has 35 items that ask the respondent to indicate how one feels right now on a 4- point Likert scale in which 1 = “Doesn't fit me at all” and 4 = “Fits me very well.” Alpha reliabilities range from .89 to .76

Statistical analyses

For statistical analyses of the results, SPSS V20 was used. Data were subjected to descriptive statistics and Pearson's product moment correlation.

Descriptive statistics of mean, SD and SEM was computed for the variables under study. The results are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics in terms of Mean, SD and SEM for the Variables under Study (N = 210)

Variables	Mean	SD	SEM
Neuroticism	26.08	4.601	.317
Extraversion	27.70	4.842	.334
Openness	28.01	4.537	.313
Agreeableness	27.05	4.728	.326
Conscientiousness	28.81	5.154	.356
Readjustment	173.47	31.876	2.200
Stress Symptoms	69.29	16.800	1.159

Pearson's product moment correlation method was used to study the relationship among the variables. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix showing Relationship among the Variables under Study (N = 210)

Variables	Neuroticism	Extraversion	Openness	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Readjustment	Stress Symptoms
Neuroticism	1						
Extraversion	-.050	1					
Openness	-.003	.401**	1				
Agreeableness	-.107	.011	.196**	1			
Conscientiousness	-.250**	.334**	.163*	.128	1		
Readjustment	.280**	-.167*	-.026	-.043	-.096	1	
Stress Symptoms	.313**	-.088	-.028	-.126	-.103	.600**	1

Note: ** p < .01; * p < .05

Results and discussion

The present study was conducted to measure the personality traits of migrant students, the stress symptoms they experienced and adjustment of students to an environment that would be different from the one that they were used to (readjustment score). It then explored the relationships amongst these variables.

As seen in Table 2 above, as Neuroticism has a significant positive relationship with readjustment ($r = .313, p < .01$), Hypothesis 1 was accepted. Swagler and Jome (1995) have noted that the emotional distress experienced by those high on neuroticism thus goes hand in hand with the distress caused by issues of adjusting to the new circumstances.

Extraversion has a negative relationship with readjustment that is significant ($r = -.280, p < .05$). The rest of the Personality factors, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness were not found to have significant correlations with readjustment. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was partially accepted. The description of extraversion given by McCrae and Costa (1997) as that of a person being cheerful, enthusiastic, optimistic, and energetic, talkative, sociable, and warm also may help in the individual having a cordial relationship with the host culture and a reduction in readjustment issues. Those low on extraversion may face more rejection and isolation thus compounding the readjustment problems.

There is a significant positive relationship between Neuroticism and stress symptoms ($r = .313, p < .01$). Hypothesis 3 stating that Neuroticism will be positively correlated with state stress of Indian migrant students is thus accepted. This finding is in accordance with research suggesting that though migration may be voluntary, the changes that it brings in 'everyday rootedness' is stressful (Narchal, 2007). Individuals high in Neuroticism are "prone to experiencing psychological distress, unrealistic ideas, excessive cravings or urges, and maladaptive coping responses" (Piedmont, 1998, p. 84). This corresponds with high level of stress symptoms like worry, sleeplessness, attention deficit etc. On the other hand, individuals low on Neuroticism being emotionally stable can clearly assess, interpret, and determine how to proceed in a stressful situation. Such individuals have also been found to experience low levels of stress symptoms.

Hypothesis 4 was rejected as an insignificant negative relationship was observed between Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and stress symptoms.

Stress symptoms and Readjustment have been found to have a significant positive relationship ($r = .600, p < .01$) therefore Hypothesis 5 was supported. This result suggests that individuals who face significant changes and adjustment challenges also experience stress symptoms. One explanation that can be given is that the more difficulties a person faces while adjusting to the new situation, the more stress responses they experience. When one is already vulnerable to stress, adapting to a new situation, a different culture, seems to be related to low psychological adjustment.

This finding is in accordance with earlier research that suggests that individuals experiencing difficulties in adjustment, show

withdrawal, frustration or ongoing depression (Fabrizio and Neill, 2005).

Conclusion

- Significant positive correlation was found between Neuroticism and Readjustment.
- Extraversion has a negative relationship with readjustment that is significant while an insignificant correlation was found between Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Readjustment.
- Significant positive correlation was found between Neuroticism and Stress Symptoms.
- Relationship of Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and stress symptoms was found to be insignificant.
- A significant positive correlation was found between Stress and Readjustment.

In the present study responses were not analyzed with respect to gender differences or duration of stay away from home. Yet it is important to note that those migrant students having high scores on neuroticism and stress also report difficulty in adjusting to changed circumstances.

Future research should address the meditational role of personality in relationship between re-adjustment and stress. The characteristics of students in terms of duration of stay away from home, self efficacy, coping strategies, problem solving skills etc. can be included. Further research may probe into which aspects of readjustment are stressful and what symptoms are experienced by maladjusted students.

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