

Interpersonal Relationship and Adjustment as predictors of Acculturative Stress among Tribal Students

Remya, V and Bindu, P

University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram

The study examined whether interpersonal relationship and overall adjustment could predict acculturative stress among tribal students. The sample consisted of tribal girl students (N= 625) in the age range of 10-18 years, purposively chosen from residential schools in Kerala (from 12 districts). Acculturative Stress Scale, Interpersonal Relationship Scale and An Adjustment Battery were administered. Data were processed with Pearson's product moment correlation and stepwise regression analysis. Correlation results revealed that the variables such as, age, interpersonal relationship, and all the domains of adjustment have moderate positive correlation with each other while acculturative stress has significant moderate negative relationship with these variables. Stepwise regression analysis revealed that a set of seven variables, viz., age, emotional adjustment, classroom adjustment, health adjustment, social adjustment, home adjustment, and interpersonal relationship were significant in predicting acculturative stress among tribal girl students.

Keywords: Acculturative Stress, Interpersonal Relationship, Adjustment, Tribes.

Education has been conceived of as a process that trains people for a better life and an effective adjustment within a given community or social context. The main aim of education is to present, transfer and enrich culture. It emerges as an instrument to bring social transformation. The entire culture including values, norms, ideas, beliefs, customs, skills and techniques, etc. is transmitted through education from one generation to another (Joshi, 2009). In the last decades of India's independence, the tribal society has undergone a considerable change. Education through schooling has played a vital role in this process. As a social process, education has nurtured the tribal society by preparing its members to function more effectively than before. Ideally it is believed to promote a harmonious development in an individual in the context of the community and culture to which he/she belongs (Mishra et al., 1998). In the absence of any formal education system, the tribal people in India had their traditional institutions for educational purposes, which catered to the needs of their culture. Such an education was usually imparted through one's family. As the smallest unit, it played a very

important role in the formation of personality by providing culturally meaningful and economically viable education to children (Sahu, 2014).

Though the position of Kerala State is always glorified with its achievements in education, it is very regrettable that the literacy rate of tribal and other backward groups are low and far away from the state levels (Rao & Francis, 2000). Special efforts are needed to educate the tribal population in Kerala, especially those belonging to primitive and backward societies. So, the government has taken more efforts to encourage tribal students into education.

In the formal education system, school plays an important role for tribal children. In order to provide high quality education to students belonging to scheduled tribes, model residential schools have come up in Kerala. A maximum of 30 students are benefited by this provision of which 27 students from among the schedule caste/scheduled tribe candidates and three from candidates belonging to other communities are selected based on a state level admission test. Thus, a total of 30 students are given admission in these schools. Fifty students are selected Std.

4th based on the marks scored by them and are sent to eminent residential schools. Under this scheme, the total expenditure on account of tuition fee, residential facilities, boarding, dress and educational aids is met by the state government.

In recent years, an increasing number of tribal students are joining these residential schools in different districts. At the same time, the residential educational system creates a lot of psychological difficulties among tribal children probably because they are adapting to a sharply different culture from their native one. Hitherto, they engaged in traditional occupations such as hunting and gathering of forest produce and rudimentary farming and remained underdeveloped, economically as well as educationally (Prasad, 2012). While cross-cultural living can be exciting, it is also challenging, as it may be accompanied by stress due to constant adaptation to a series of continual changes. In addition to adjusting to a new physical environment, students must also make psychological adjustments (Berry, 2008). When these tribal children become part of formal education system, he/she must coordinate and cope with a new kind of setting, which earlier was never a part of his/her life. These types of changes are often difficult as it challenged the traditional male and female roles (Remya & Bindu, 2014 b). In a tribal community, parents socialize their children at a very early age for the management of these activities without any support from elders (Vijayalekshmi, 2005). Residential education systems lead to geographical displacement from their native place to residential schools. This exposes migrating tribal students to a new experience: acculturation.

Acculturation is the exchange of cultural features that results when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact; the original cultural patterns of either or both groups may be altered, but the groups remain distinct (Kottak, 2007). In facing the new educational system and social environment, tribal students need to go through a process of adjustment. Adapting to the new environment may be stressful for tribal students

who experience accumulated pressure to adjust to a new language, to cultural values, as well as to social norms. The reaction to those changes arising from the differences between their home, culture and the dominant host culture is commonly referred to as acculturative stress (Ayoob & Singh, 2011). Thus, acculturative stress is the difficulties and stressors that arise as a part of acculturation and adaptation process (Joiner & Walker, 2002). It will reduce the health status including psychological, somatic, and social aspects of individuals who are undergoing acculturation (Kuo & Roysircar, 2004).

Interpersonal relationships and adjustment are formed in the context of social, cultural and other influences (Philip, 2006). Interpersonal relationships exist between any two or more persons who interact and fulfil one or more physical or emotional needs (Cavazos, 2015). It is also a give and take relation and is the foundation for learning and human development (Wertsch, 1998). Adjustment is a process by which an individual manages to cope successfully with the various demands of day to day life (Hammer, 2015). Kennedy and Kojima (1998) observed that adjustment problems were greater at the beginning of a new experience and decreased over time. Acculturating tribal students feel pulled between traditional values, norms, and customs on the one hand, and those of the new society on the other. The formalized and structured school environment adds to their anxiety and stress and they may show less interest in interpersonal interaction with friends and school authorities (Tartakovsky, 2007).

Empirical evidence suggests that tribal children possess the basic cognitive abilities and psychological dispositions for successful participation in schools, and their low achievement levels are attributed to school-related variables as would apply to non-tribal students (Gautam, 2003). Poor performance of tribal students and the below average situation of primary education in tribal areas is driven by inter-related factors. Most children tend to be first generation learners whose education is not reinforced or supported in their home environments (Bhoi & Lakra, 2017). Student's relationship with parents, teachers, friends, mentors and others have a tremendous

impact on their lives and can profoundly affect their overall performances in schools (LaRusso, Romer, & Selman, 2008).

When tribal students enter in to a new school, they experience a new culture in terms of language, religion, dress materials, food habits as well as attitude, beliefs and values, in addition to physical and geographical features. The demands of adjusting to a new culture can be a significant source of stress, especially when there are differences in language and culture. Migrant tribal girl students experience factors that are particular to the new environment, including discrimination, insecurity, language inadequacy, lack of social and financial resources, feeling of not belonging in the host society, and a sense of anxious disorientation in response to the unfamiliar environment. These can trigger a variety of physical and psychological problems in them because of their inadequate skills in social interaction with members of the non tribal culture and unfamiliarity with the new structured environment (Berry, 2008).

Pattanaik and Mishra (2010) have noted that high level of social anxiety and stress is significantly associated with interpersonal and adjustment problems among tribal children. The acculturative stress and adjustment difficulties is seen to be quite high especially at the time of entry to the school and is expected to diminish as years pass by (Remya & Bindu, 2014b). Though many studies have examined the relationship between acculturative stress and behavioural problems of student population who migrate to a different country (Ayoob & Singh, 2011), the psychosocial consequence of within country migration is still an under-researched area. Hence it is deemed worthwhile to consider acculturative stress in the context of interpersonal relationship and adjustment of tribal girl students .

Aim

- To find out the relationship of acculturative stress to age, interpersonal relationship, and adjustment among tribal girl students.

Based on prior findings and literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1. There is significant inter-correlation among age, acculturative stress, interpersonal relationship, and adjustment of tribal girl students.
2. Interpersonal relationship will significantly predict acculturative stress among tribal girl students
3. Overall adjustment will significantly predict acculturative stress among tribal girl students

Method

Participants

The sample of the present study consisted of 625 tribal girl students belonging to the age group of 10 to 18 years ($M=2.046$, $SD=.7676$). The participants were selected purposively from Std V through XII of the tribal residential schools in Kerala. A total of 12 tribal groups were involved in the present study. They are: Kanikkar, Malaipandaram, Kattunaikkan, Malaivedan, Irular, Kuruman, Paniyan, Adiyan, Kurichyan, Malayarayan, Kadar, Malayan. The subjects were drawn from the 12 districts of Kerala, viz., Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Idukki, Kottayam, Palakkad, Malappuram, Wayanad, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Kozhikode.

Measures

In addition to a demographic data schedule (age, class, tribal group, and district) the following measures were administered in the present investigation.

Acculturative Stress Scale (Remya & Bindu, 2014a): Acculturative stress is operationally defined as the social, attitudinal, familial and environmental stress due to the acculturation process of tribal students. Acculturative stress scale is a self-report measure consisting of 30 items which can be administered either individually or in group. The scale contains 27 positive and 3 negative items; the positive items are given a weightage of 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 for the responses strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree, whereas it is scored in the reverse order for the negative items. . Some of the items in the scale include "Others often laugh at my beliefs and tradition"

"I was not able to follow the language, when teachers taught". The total score is obtained by summing up the scores on the 30 items, with a high score indicating high acculturative stress. The reliability of the test using Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.850 (N = 625, No. of items = 30). The scale has content validity.

Interpersonal Relationship Scale (Remya & Bindu, 2014a): Interpersonal relationship in the study refers to the nature of relationship of tribal students as they interact with school authorities, class mates, hostel mates, teaching/non-teaching staff, hostel authorities etc. Interpersonal relationship scale is a self-report measure consisting of 37 items pertaining to the various dimensions of interpersonal relationship like inferiority feelings, dominance, autonomy, and self-acceptance. The scale contains 22 positive and 15 negative items and the final score is summated score of 37 items. Positive items were given a weightage of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 for strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree and they were reverse scored for negative items. Some of the items in the scale include "I try to solve the problems of others". "I believe that I can control a group". A high score indicates high interpersonal relationship. Cronbach's alpha was used to find out the reliability of the test and was found to be 0.868 (N= 625, No. of items= 37). The scale has content validity, which was ensured through consensus judgment of subject experts.

An Adjustment Battery (Jasseer & Sam Sananda Raj, 1994): It is a self-report measure consisting of 84 items which can be administered either individually or in a group. It includes items related to six areas of adjustment such as, emotional adjustment, home adjustment, social adjustment, health adjustment, personal adjustment and classroom adjustment. The scale contains equal number of positive and negative items. The scores of all items in a subscale are summed up to obtain the score for that adjustment variable. The total of the six subscale scores may be taken as the total adjustment score of a subject. Reliability using split-half method was found to be 0.89, 0.87, 0.81, 0.88, 0.89, and 0.85 for emotional adjustment, home adjustment, social adjustment,

health adjustment, personal adjustment and classroom adjustment (N= 625, No of items = 84). Reliability of the total scale is 0.865. The test reports content validity.

Procedure

At first, the investigators visited the Directorate (Trivandrum) of Scheduled Tribal Development in Kerala and sought the permission from the Director for data collection. After securing permission from the district's tribal development project officers, the tribal residential schools under Government of Kerala were visited. The Principals were met personally, and the purpose of the study was explained to them. With the permission of school authorities, the participants were contacted in their respective classes and their willingness to participate in the study was secured. The subjects were administered the Acculturative Stress Scale, Interpersonal Relationship Scale, and An Adjustment Battery and General Information Schedule. Special attention was given to create a positive attitude by means of establishing rapport. Detailed explanations of all the statements were given to ensure the clarity of response and the students were requested to answer all the questions. All the subjects were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and that it would not affect their overall performances in the school. The individual had to respond by putting a tick mark against the answer they selected. The answer sheets were checked for omissions. The instrument was collected back later for scoring after completion of the scale by the students.

Results and Discussion

The correlation analysis was conducted using Pearson's product moment correlation method for exploring the interrelationships between scores on age, acculturative stress, interpersonal relationship, emotional adjustment, home adjustment, social adjustment, health adjustment, personal adjustment, classroom adjustment and overall adjustment (vide table-1) and stepwise regression analysis was run to find out the significant predictors of acculturative stress among tribal girls (given in table- 2).

Table-1 shows that, whereas most of the investigated variables such as age, interpersonal

Table-1: Summary of Intercorrelations for scores on Age, Acculturative Stress, Interpersonal Relationship and the different components of Adjustment among Tribal Girl Students (N=625)

Variables	AG	AS	IPR	EMAD	HMAD	SAD	HLAD	PRAD	CLAD	ORAD
AG	()									
AS	-.611**	()								
IPR	.437**	-.553**	()							
EMAD	.417**	-.570**	.554**	()						
HMAD	.135**	-.187**	.427**	.263**	()					
SAD	.421**	-.553**	.647**	.607**	.371**	()				
HLAD	.265**	-.434**	.405**	.397**	.306**	.430**	()			
PRAD	.236**	-.433**	.652**	.505**	.445**	.583**	.301**	()		
CLAD	.032	-.316**	.487**	.287**	.406**	.414**	.281**	.586**	()	
ORAD	.362**	-.587**	.739**	.720**	.651**	.806**	.652**	.780**	.673**	()

*p< .05**p< .01

Note. AG = Age., AS = Acculturative Stress., IPR = Interpersonal Relationship., EMAD = Emotional Adjustment., HMAD = Home Adjustment., SAD = Social Adjustment., HLAD = Health Adjustment., PRAD = Personal Adjustment., CLAD = Classroom Adjustment., ORAD = Overall Adjustment

relationship, emotional adjustment, social adjustment, personal adjustment, health adjustment, home adjustment, classroom adjustment and overall adjustment have moderate positive correlation with each other ($p < .01$) acculturative stress has significant moderate negative relationship with the above-mentioned variables. At the same time, the variable classroom adjustment was found to be independent of age.

In the correlational analysis, the tribal students in the younger age group were seen to experience greater acculturative stress compared to the senior age groups, whereas in the case of interpersonal relationship and overall adjustment, the older age group were better. The younger students are poor in interpersonal relationships and adjustment probably because of the fear and anxiety about their new life and environment which prevent them from interacting and adjusting effectively with friends and school authorities. On the other hand, senior students are familiar to the situation and cope adaptively. Similar results are also reported by Remya and Bindu (2014b); Khaleque, Malik and Rohner (2015); Mena, Padilla and Maldonado, (1987). Eco-cultural conditions of tribal area are

different from that of school environment and because the two places manifest a contrasting difference, it becomes quite difficult for tribal students to adapt themselves to the eco-cultural conditions prevailing in schools. Moreover, culture contact while living and studying in residential school is a new experience for most of the tribal girls; this creates a lot of stress among them. These stresses negatively affect their overall performance in school. Researchers have documented that migrant students face acculturative stress due to tension caused by language deficiency, and/or homesickness, because of feelings of inferiority, or perceived discrimination during the adjustment process (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Yeh & Inose, 2003). A wealth of research studies have provided strong evidence for acculturative stress and its negative impact (Barlow, 2002; Parka, 2009; Miranda, Frevert & Ken, 1998) as well as how it compromises psychological well-being of migrant students (Ayoob, Wani, Ahmad, Jan, & Dar, 2015). Thus, the first hypothesis that there is significant inter-correlation among age, acculturative stress, interpersonal relationship, and adjustment of tribal girl students is accepted based on the results obtained.

Table-2: Stepwise Regression of Acculturative Stress on Age, Interpersonal Relationship and Dimensions of Adjustment

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			R	R ²	R ² Change
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	sig			
(Constant)	171.984	4.306	39.938	.000				
Age	-10.226	.796	-.405	-12.851	.000	0.611	0.373	0.373
Emotional Adj	-.461	.079	-.205	-5.834	.000	0.702	0.493	0.121
Classroom Adj	-.385	.082	-.153	-4.710	.000	0.731	0.534	0.041
Health Adj	-.314	.064	-.149	-4.912	.000	0.744	0.554	0.020
Social Adj	-.208	.080	-.102	-2.606	.009	0.749	0.561	0.007
Home Adj	.255	.068	.115	3.766	.000	0.754	0.568	0.008
Interpersonal Relationship	-.114	.041	-.111	-2.786	.005	0.757	0.574	0.005

The results of the stepwise regression analysis (Table- 2) revealed that a set of seven variables, viz., age, emotional adjustment, classroom adjustment, health adjustment, social adjustment, home adjustment, and interpersonal relationship were significant in predicting acculturative stress among tribal girl students. A linear combination of these seven variables explained a total of 57.4 % of variance in acculturative stress ($R = 0.757$, $R^2 = 0.574$).

Here it may be noted that the most important predictor variable of acculturative stress was age ($R^2 = 0.373$) followed by emotional adjustment ($R = 0.702$, $R^2 = 0.493$, R^2 change = 0.121), classroom adjustment ($R = 0.731$, $R^2 = 0.534$, R^2 change = 0.041), health adjustment ($R = 0.744$, $R^2 = 0.554$, R^2 change = 0.020), social adjustment ($R = 0.749$, $R^2 = 0.561$, R^2 change = 0.007), home adjustment ($R = 0.754$, $R^2 = 0.568$, R^2 change = 0.008) and interpersonal relationship ($R = 0.757$, $R^2 = 0.574$, R^2 change = 0.005). Thus, about 37.3 % of the variance in acculturative stress could be predicted by age, which underscores the importance of this variable in acculturative stress of tribal girl students. The beta value associated with the age is $-.405$, indicating that higher levels of age predicts lower levels of acculturative stress. Emotional adjustment contributed 12.1% variance, classroom adjustment 4.1%, health adjustment 2.0%, social adjustment 0.7%, home adjustment 0.8% and the variable interpersonal

relationship contributed 0.5% of variance in acculturative stress.

Results given in the present table revealed that most of the predictor variables except for home adjustment were associated negatively with acculturative stress. The beta value obtained for home adjustment was 0.115, $t = 3.766$ $p < .001$; this positive relationship implies that good home adjustment predicts high acculturative stress and vice versa. The beta value for age ($Beta = -.405$, $t = -12.851$, $p < .001$), emotional adjustment ($Beta = -.205$, $t = -5.834$, $p < .001$), classroom adjustment ($Beta = -.153$, $t = -4.710$, $p < .001$), health adjustment ($Beta = -.149$, $t = -4.912$, $p < .001$), social adjustment ($Beta = -.102$, $t = 2.606$, $p < .01$) and interpersonal relationship ($Beta = -.111$, $t = 2.786$, $p < .01$) indicated a negative correlation with the variable acculturative stress.

Age, the most potent predictor of acculturative stress, explains that young students in tribal schools are worst hit by the geographical displacement. Acculturation is associated with age, gender, generation and cultural values have been reported by Khaleque, Malik and Rohner (2015); Remya and Bindu (2014a). When entering into the residential school, young students suffer a lot of psychological problems because they are separated from their parents, grandparents, siblings, childhood friends etc. and these in turn accentuate the acculturative stress. Most migrant students have experienced

many stressors during the process of adapting to a new society (Ayoob, Wani, Ahmed, Jan & Dar 2015).

Emotional adjustment was the next largest contributor to the unique contributions made by the predictor variables while explaining acculturative stress. Students new to the culture, which is different from their native culture, may experience severing of ties with family and friends in the culture of origin. This may result in a feeling of loss and lead to a reduction in effective coping resources (Crockett et al., (2007). Migrant students may also experience factors that are particular to the new environment, including discrimination, insecurity, language inadequacy, lack of social and financial resources, feeling of not belonging in the host society, and sense of anxious disorientation in response to the unfamiliar environment (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994).

The negative beta value of health adjustment indicates that when acculturative stress increases, the quality of health adjustment among tribal girls decreases. The food habits and eating styles of tribal girl students who migrate from their native place to residential school are different. They find it difficult to adjust to new tastes and try to avoid it, thereby compromising their health. Lone and Singh (2011) found that students experiencing higher acculturative stress reported poorer health. There is a weight of evidence supporting the finding that acculturative stress is associated with numerous negative health consequences (Tran, Fitzpatrick & Wright, 1996; Hovey & Magana, 2000; Hwang, Chun, Takeuchi, Myers & Siddarth, 2005; Parka, 2009; Suarez-Morales, 2009; William & Berry, 1991; Ayoob & Singh, 2011; Yu, Chen, Li, Liu, Tiura & Yan, 2014) and anxiety and depressive symptoms (Crockett, Iturbide, Stone, McGinley, Raffaelli & Carlo, 2007).

Social adjustment was the smallest, unique contributing variable among the seven significant predictor variables that entered in to the final regression equation for predicting acculturative stress. When an individual is making a shift from one culture to another, he / she modifies many aspects of his/ her self- identity in order

to accommodate information and experience within the new culture. This process generally leads to stress (Ayoob & Singh, 2011). Tribal students have a lack of previous experience in social interaction with non tribal students and there is unfamiliarity with the new structured environment. So they feel uncomfortable with the residential school life.

Out of these seven significant predictor variables, only the variable home adjustment contributed positively to acculturative stress (Beta= 0.115). This finding, apparently appears to be contradicting the inverse relationship between acculturative stress and home adjustment noted earlier (vide table-1). One explanation for this could be that the relationship between acculturative stress and home adjustment as computed via Pearson's Product Moment Correlation is essentially bivariate in nature, and does not try to control for the impact of other variables that may have a bearing on this relationship. However, when the predictors of acculturative stress were probed into (Table-2), the relationship turned multivariate in nature, with the impact of other variables somehow being adjusted for or modulated to bring out clearly the relationship between acculturative stress and home adjustment.

The reversal of sign in the relationship between acculturative stress and home adjustment (i.e., negative in the correlation analysis and positive in the regression analysis) could be due to the fact that the positivity in the relationship between acculturative stress and home adjustment which was either unmanifested or suppressed in the bi-variate relationship due to the impact of uncontrolled variables, now is expressed in the multivariate relationship when their impact was accounted for. Since the multivariate picture is a true reflection of the real-life situation, the positive relationship between acculturative stress and home adjustment as revealed by the regression analysis can be considered as more genuine and closer to reality. Another plausible explanation is that, tribal children who get more love and care from parents are very happy and comfortable with their family. So, they are well adjusted in their home. When they enter in to residential schools,

they feel anxious and lonely which augments the acculturative stress.

Interpersonal relationship was the last variable in the regression equation (Beta= -.111) indicating a negative correlation with the variable acculturative stress. Fears could be associated with new life circumstances which causes girl students to withdraw from social interaction. Berry, Poortinga, Segall, and Dasen (1992) noted that the level of adaptation that promotes psychological wellbeing is influenced by the individual's level of engagement in the acculturation process in various contexts, such as school, work, mass media, religion and social interaction.

Part of the reason for the high acculturative stress and poor interpersonal relationship of these students may be less knowledge and understanding of the mainstream culture. Interacting with outside persons was never part of the tribal girls' life. Hence, they experience high acculturative stress and subsequently, poor interaction with others. On the other hand, the more the immigrant adolescents perceived their teachers and friends to be supportive and respectful of their ethnic identity, the more likely they were to report feelings of belonging, self-esteem, and well being, and less likely they were to exhibit symptoms of acculturative stress (LaRusso et al., 2008 & Tartakovsky, 2007). The results obtained provide evidence for our hypothesis that interpersonal relationship and adjustment are significant predictors of acculturative stress of tribal girl students. .

Conclusion and Limitations

In sum, stepwise regression analysis revealed that the variables, namely age, emotional adjustment, classroom adjustment, health adjustment, social adjustment, home adjustment, and interpersonal relationship are the best predictors of acculturative stress. A linear combination of these variables explained a total of 57.4 % of variance in acculturative stress with the most unique contribution made by age (37.3%). Out of these significant predictor variables, only variable, home adjustment contributed positively to acculturative stress.

The present study operated under a few limitations: Though a total of 37 tribal groups are there in Kerala, only 12 tribal groups were considered for this study. Further, being a single gender study done on a small sample, stable generalization could not be drawn. One of the measures (An Adjustment Battery) used for present study has considered adjustment from the point of view of regular students and not specifically tribal students. Despite these limitations, the study has shed light on the potent predictors of acculturative stress among tribal girl students in Kerala. The knowledge gained through this research may increase the awareness of student counsellors in managing acculturative stress, particularly among tribal students, enabling the host culture to develop effective interpersonal relationship and facilitate better adjustment.

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Remya, V, Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, University of Kerala.

Bindu, P, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Kerala, Trivandrum 695581.