Embracing Change: Exploring the Role of Personality Dispositions and Social Orientation in Relocation Readiness among Indian Students

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Relocating to a new city for educational purposes or career opportunities can offer significant advantages to students. However, the process of uprooting one's life and adjusting to a new environment can be challenging and overwhelming. This study examines the role of Personality Disposition and Social Orientation influence Relocation Readiness among Indian students (n=120). Data were gathered from a heterogeneous sample of students enrolled in different universities in India, employing convenience sampling. To investigate the relationships between Relocation Readiness and Personality Dispositions, as well as Social Orientations, Pearson's correlation analysis was employed. Furthermore, Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis was utilized to assess the predictive value of Personality Disposition and Social Orientation in determining Relocation Readiness. Results reveal significant impacts of Openness, Uncertainty Tolerance, Neuroticism, Horizontal and Vertical Individualism, and Perceived Social Norms on Relocation Readiness highlighting their predictive role in students' willingness to relocate for education or work, emphasizing the importance of supporting successful transitions amidst relocation challenges.

Keywords: relocation readiness; personality disposition; social orientations; Indian students

A move might be advantageous if it offers the individual an opportunity for immediate or potential growth. However, uprooting one's life, shifting to a new place, and adapting to the new environment can be quite challenging and will likely overshadow the advantages of the new opportunity. According to the 2011[1] census, in India, a total of 4,14,22,917 people have migrated for work/employment reasons and a total of 54,57,556 have migrated for education (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, 2011). Many young people move to bigger cities or metropolitan areas in search of better job opportunities. These cities have a higher concentration of companies, startups, and industries, which increases the likelihood of finding a suitable job. Over 1,113 universities and 43,796 colleges (Ministry of Education,

2023) make India one of the largest higher education systems in the world. However, the educational infrastructure of India is unevenly distributed, which leads to the flow of human capital in search of avenues for quality education. This trend highlights the need to recognize the factors that influence individuals' readiness to relocate for study or work-related purposes. Gaining an understanding of these factors can greatly aid in implementing measures to enhance students' preparedness when they move for academic or work-related pursuits.

The existing literature on relocation readiness has predominantly focused on international job transfers, leaving a notable gap in research specifically investigating this phenomenon among the Indian population.

India's collectivistic culture, characterized by a strong emphasis on interdependence and social cohesion (Sivadas et al., 2008), provides a unique context for studying relocation readiness, where inter-group boundaries hold significant value (Rychlowska et al., 2015). Additionally, the diverse cultural, geographical, and developmental conditions within India further shape attitudes and preparedness for relocation.

Previous studies have provided valuable insights into factors influencing relocation readiness. Piero et al. (1997) examined the demographic and psychological antecedents of individual resistance to job flexibility among Spanish youngsters aged 16-30 years and found that marital status increased the probability of location flexibility resistance. Allen et al. (2002) explored the effects of gender, marital type, and parental status on an applicant's commitment to relocate and family resistance to relocation in a controlled laboratory study. They highlighted the significance of gender and family structure in influencing others' perceptions of relocation commitment and spousal resistance. Martin (1999) conducted a longitudinal study on a sample of 54 relocators, investigating the relationship between pre-move relocation preparedness and psychological adjustment to job relocation. The findings indicated that greater pre-move relocation preparation correlated with improved post-move mental health and job-related contentment.

Otto & Dalbert (2012) carried out cross-sectional and longitudinal studies involving 380 German employees, unemployed individuals, and apprentices. Neuroticism and collectivism were negatively correlated with relocation mobility readiness, while openness to experience, uncertainty tolerance, and individualism showed positive correlations. Furthermore, perceived social endorsement of relocation mobility was positively related to readiness. Similarly, Nisak & Rachmawati (2019) studied personality dispositions and social orientations among 374 non-structural employees in an Indonesian public audit institution. They discovered significant influences on relocation mobility readiness, with uncertainty tolerance and social norms positively impacting readiness, while higher levels of vertical collectivism were associated with lower readiness.

The rationale for selecting Indian students as the focus of this study stems from the recognition of the unique cultural context in India, which can present distinctive challenges and opportunities for relocation compared to previous research on other populations. Additionally, by replicating and extending the studies of Otto & Dalbert (2012) and Nisak & Rachmawati (2019) with Indian students, this research aims to enhance the comparability and reliability of findings across a diverse cultural setting.

Through this investigation, valuable insights will be gained, enabling informed decision-making and effective support mechanisms for Indian students navigating the challenges of relocation.

Relocation Mobility Readiness: The concept of "relocation mobility readiness" has been explored by various researchers in the contexts of both domestic and international relocation (Andresen et al., 2014; Otto & Dalbert, 2012; Stoermer et al., 2017). For the present study, relocation mobility refers to the act of actually moving to another city or state, indicating a relatively permanent change in residence as an integral aspect of job demands. Hence, relocation mobility readiness (henceforth RMR) has been conceptualized as an individual's preparedness to undertake a relocation, characterized by a change in their primary place of residence, either for the pursuit of higher education or in pursuit of career opportunities.

Personality Dispositions: There is an extensive body of literature that provides compelling evidence for the association between personality traits and inclination to relocate. Mobility exhibits a positive association with openness (Clark et al., 2023; Campbell, 2019; Ciani & Capiluppi, 2011; Jokela, 2014), extraversion (Campbell, 2019; Ciani & Capiluppi, 2011), and neuroticism (Jokela, 2014). Furthermore, openness to experience, marked by curiosity and tolerance for novelty (Costa and McCrae, 1989), has shown a positive correlation with the willingness to embrace relocation opportunities (Mignonac, 2008). Furthermore, individuals with high uncertainty tolerance, perceiving uncertainty as challenging rather than threatening (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), are more prone to seek out uncertainty-inducing activities (Grupe & Nitschke, 2013; Carleton, 2016a), whereas low uncertainty tolerance may lead to anxiety-related issues (Ladouceur et al., 2000).

Social orientations: Many previous studies on relocation readiness have employed the Theory of Planned Behavior as the theoretical framework, conceptualizing RMR as a behavioral intention (e.g., Andresen and Margenfeld, 2015; Otto & Dalbert., 2012; Remhof et al., 2014b). According to Ajzen (1991), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is particularly well-suited for understanding behavioral intentions, especially in situations where individuals may not have full, voluntary control over their actions. A *subjective norm*, as described by Ajzen (1991), represents the perceived social influence exerted on an individual to either engage in or refrain from a specific behavior. When it comes to performing a particular action, individuals are inclined to take into account and adhere to the opinions and expectations of others such as family, friends, colleagues, etc. In previous studies, Perceived social norms were found to be a

significant predictor of relocation mobility readiness (Otto & Dalbert, 2012; Nisak & Rachmawati, 2019).

Additionally, individualism-collectivism, encompassing horizontal and vertical dimensions, influences individuals' perception of themselves within their environment and is associated with relocation mobility readiness (Dette & Dalbert, 2005; Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995). Collectivists prioritize group norms and responsibilities, while individualists prioritize personal goals and preferences (Triandis, 1995). Horizontal individualism emphasizes autonomy and equality, while vertical individualism acknowledges hierarchical structures (Singelis et al., 1995).

Based on a comprehensive review of the existing literature, the following objectives were developed:

- To see whether Relocation Mobility Readiness has a significant relationship with Personality dispositions and Social orientations

- To see whether Personality dispositions and Social orientations significantly predict Relocation Mobility Readiness

Based on the objectives formulated, the following hypotheses were developed.

H1a: There will be a significant negative correlation between Neuroticism and Relocation mobility readiness among Indian students.

H1b: There will be a significant positive correlation between Openness and Relocation mobility readiness among Indian students.

H1c: There will be a significant positive correlation between Uncertainty Tolerance and Relocation mobility readiness among Indian students.

H2a: There will be a significant positive correlation between Horizontal

Individualism and Relocation mobility readiness among Indian students.

H2b: There will be a significant positive correlation between Vertical Individualism and Relocation mobility readiness among Indian students.

H2c: There will be a significant negative correlation between Horizontal Collectivism and Relocation mobility readiness among Indian students.

H2d: There will be a significant negative correlation between Vertical Collectivism and Relocation mobility readiness among Indian students.

H2e: There will be a significant positive correlation between Perceived Social Norms and Relocation mobility readiness among Indian students.

H3a: After controlling for demographic variables (Age, Gender, Educational level, and Frequency of previous relocations), model 2 will significantly predict Relocation Mobility Readiness when Personality dispositions are entered in the first block.

H3b: After controlling for demographic variables (Age, Gender, Educational level, and Frequency of previous relocations), model 3 will significantly predict Relocation Mobility Readiness when Social Orientations are entered in the second block

Method

Design of the study:

The present study employs a survey research design to investigate the role of Personality Disposition and Social Orientation as predictors of Relocation Mobility Readiness among Indian students. By collecting data through survey instruments, the study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing students' readiness to relocate.

Sample of the study:

The sample for this study comprises Indian students of undergraduate, postgraduate, and MPhil/Ph.D. levels within the age range of 17-31 years. It was a cross-sectional survey where the questionnaires were disbursed via online as well as offline modes and data were collected using convenience sampling.

Tools Used:

The present research utilized well-established tools. To assess various aspects of geographical mobility for study/job-related reasons, the Geographical Mobility Scale by Dalbert (2002) was modified, demonstrating strong reliability (Cronbach alpha = 0.835). The Big Five Inventory (John, 1991) was employed to measure neuroticism and openness, showing satisfactory internal consistency (neuroticism subscale Cronbach alpha = 0.84, openness subscale Cronbach alpha = 0.628). To gauge uncertainty tolerance, the Uncertainty Tolerance Scale (Dalbert, 2002) was used, displaying good reliability (Cronbach alpha = 0.853). The Individualism-Collectivism Scale by Triandis and Gelfand (1998) assessed individualist and collectivist orientations, with acceptable internal consistency for all subscales (Horizontal Individualism Cronbach alpha = 0.655, Vertical Individualism Cronbach alpha = 0.645, Horizontal Collectivism Cronbach alpha = 0.641, Vertical Collectivism Cronbach alpha = 0.733). Perceived social norms were measured using a subscale from the Attitudes of Social Environment towards Mobility questionnaire (Otto et al., 2004), demonstrating strong reliability (Cronbach alpha = 0.853).

Procedure:

For this study, data were collected via both online and offline modes, ensuring that informed consent was obtained from all participants. Online data collection involved

using Google Forms, which were distributed using convenience sampling. Simultaneously, offline data was gathered in the field while adhering to strict ethical guidelines and obtaining explicit permission and consent from the participants.

Data Processing:

A total of 169 data were obtained (129-online, 40- offline). Data of participants (n = 2) who indicated an age >35 was deleted, in accordance with the inclusion criteria of the study. Data were screened for careless responding using the Resampled Individual Reliability method (Curran, 2016). According to Curran's (2016) recommendation, any correlation below 0 or undefined was marked and all the data from that respondent was removed to ensure sufficient data quality. The final analysis sample consisted of N = 120 datasets.

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (N=120)

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Female	59	49.2
Male	61	50.8
Age		
17-21	38	31.66
22-26	55	45.83
27-31	27	22.5
Educational level		
Graduation	79	53.3
Postgraduation	42	34.2
M.Phil/Ph.D	18	12.5
Frequency of previous relocations		
Never	53	44.2
Once	28	23.3
Twice	19	15.8
More than twice	20	16.7

Statistical Analyses:

SPSS 25.0 was used for statistical analysis. For calculating the correlation between variables Pearson Product moment correlation was used. Hierarchical regression was employed to test hypotheses 3a and 3b as it allows for comparing the amount of variance explained by different groups of variables entered in each block. All the variables were entered into blocks in the order followed by previous studies (Otto & Dalbert, 2012; Nisak & Rachmawati, 2019). The demographic variables consisting of age, gender, education level, and frequency of previous relocations were entered as control variables in the first block. In contrast to prior investigations on Relocation Readiness, the present study utilized dummy coding for Gender, Educational level, and Frequency of the previous relocation, as nominal and ordinal variables are not suitable for direct use as predictor variables in regression analyses, primarily due to their lack of fixed intervals, necessitating their conversion to dummy variables (Grotenhuis & Thijs, 2015). Personality Dispositions (Neuroticism, Openness, and Uncertainty Tolerance) were entered in the second block, and Social Orientations (Social norms, Horizontal Individualism, Vertical Individualism, Horizontal Collectivism, and Vertical Collectivism) in the third block. Preliminary analyses were undertaken to ensure that the assumptions related to normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were not violated.

Results

Relationship between Relocation Readiness and Predictor variables:

Upon examining Table 2, it is evident that the Pearson product-moment correlations reveal significant associations between five out of the six predictor variables and Relocation Readiness, aligning with the hypothesized direction. Relocation

Readiness exhibited significant positive associations with Openness (r(118) = .380, p <.001), Uncertainty Tolerance (r(118) = .558, p <.001), Horizontal Individualism (r(118) = .481, p <.001), Vertical Individualism (r(118) = .388, p <.001), and Perceived Social Norms (r(118) = .464, p <.001). Conversely, significant negative associations were observed between Relocation Readiness and Neuroticism (r(118) = -.184, p = .044), as well as Relocation Readiness and Vertical Collectivism (r(118) = -.182, p = .047). Horizontal collectivism had a negative association with Relocation Readiness, however, the relationship was not significant (r(118) = -.116, p = .207).

The findings support the acceptance of Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, 2d, and 2e indicating a significant relationship between the variables investigated. In contrast, Hypothesis 2c is not supported by the data and is therefore rejected.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Personality dispositions											
1. Neuroticism	22.44	6.492	—								
2. Openness	37.16	4.594	-.093	—							
3. Uncertainty Tolerance	27.36	8.032	-.426**	.417**	—						
Social orientations											
4. Horizontal Individualism	28.37	4.337	-.231*	.481**	.389**	—					
5. Vertical Individualism	21.88	5.899	-.037	.320**	.205*	.409**	—				
6. Horizontal Collectivism	27.19	4.804	.039	-.029	-.196*	-.006	-.124	—			
7. Vertical Collectivism	25.44	5.532	.161	-.057	-.293**	-.018	-.011	.548**	—		
8. Perceived Social norms	17.00	4.050	-.087	.438**	.444**	-.274**	.208*	.018	.059	—	
Outcome Variable											
9. Relocation Readiness	37.10	8.855	-.184*	.380**	.558**	.481**	.388**	-.116	-.182*	.464**	—

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

Predicting Relocation Readiness from Personality Dispositions and Social Orientations:

A three-step hierarchical multiple regression was conducted with Relocation Readiness as the dependent variable. The results presented in Table 3 indicate that Model 1 of the hierarchical multiple regression, which includes the demographic variables, yielded a negative adjusted R^2 value (R^2 = -.019, F(7,112) = .687, p = .683). This indicates that the model had no significant contribution in explaining the variance in Relocation Readiness, suggesting a poor fit. Introducing the Personality disposition variables explained an additional 32.7% of the variation in Relocation Readiness and this change in R^2 was significant, F (10,109) = 6.35, p < .001. Finally, the addition of the Social Orientation variables to the regression model explained an additional 14.6% of the variation in Relocation Readiness and this change in R^2 was significant, F (15,104) = 7.35, p < .001. The final model accounted for 44.5% of the

variance in Relocation Readiness. In the final adjusted model, four out of the eight predictor variables were statistically significant, and these were Uncertainty Tolerance (â = .379, p < .001), Horizontal Individualism (â = .277, p < .01), Vertical Individualism (â = .207, p < .01) and Perceived Social Norm (â = .216, p < .05).

Based on the results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis, Hypotheses 3a and 3b have been accepted, indicating a significant prediction of Relocation Readiness by Personality Disposition and Social Orientation.

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Results for Relocation Readiness

Model	Variable	B	95% CI for B		SE B	β	R^2	ΔR^2
			LB	UB				
1							-.019	.041
	Constant	33.747***	13.705	53.729	10.115			
	Age	.43	-.685	.770	0.367	.016		
	Male	.150	-3.215	3.516	1.698	.009		
	Graduate	1.141	-5.808	53.789	3.507	.065		
	Post Graduate	.690	-5.016	0.770	2.880	.037		
	Once	1.202	-3.034	3.516	2.138	.058		
	Twice	1.934	-2.852	8.090	2.415	.080		
	More than twice*	5.141	0.255	6.396	2.466	.217		
2							.310	.327***
	Constant	10.466	-13.014	5.439	11.846			
	Age	-.064	-.683	6.720	.313	-.024		
	Male	-.329	-3.326	10.027	1.512	-.019		
	Graduate	.300	-5.477	33.945	2.915	.017		
	Post Graduate	.180	-4.601	.556	2.412	.010		
	Once	-.944	-4.578	2.669	1.834	-.045		
	Twice	1.116	-2.910	6.077	2.031	.046		
	More than twice	3.772	-0.400	4.961	2.105	0.159		
	Neuroticism	0.74	-0.185	2.690	0.131	0.054		
	Openness	.261	-0.077	5.142	0.171	0.136		
	Uncertainty Tolerance	.588***	0.382	7.943	0.104	0.534		
3							.445	.146***
	Constant	-5.979	-30.132	0.334	12.179			
	Age	.077	-0.498	0.600	0.290	0.029		

Male	.849	-1.907	0.794	1.390	0.048		
Graduate	.479	-4.793	18.173	2.658	0.027		
Post Graduate	.500	-3.846	0.651	2.192	0.027		
Once	-.707	-4.144	3.605	1.733	-0.034		
Twice	.283	-3.454	5.751	1.884	0.012		
More than twice	4.608	0.611	4.847	2.016	0.195		
Neuroticism	.147	-0.092	2.729	0.120	0.107		
Openness	-.172	-0.514	4.019	0.172	-0.089		
Uncertainty Tolerance	.417***	0.203	8.606	0.108	0.379***		
Horizontal Individualism	.566**	0.210	0.385	0.179	0.277**		
Vertical Individualism	.311**	0.072	0.170	0.120	0.207**		
Horizontal Collectivism	.128	-0.190	0.632	0.160	0.070		
Vertical Collectivism	-.113	-0.400	0.921	0.145	-0.071		
Perceived Social Norm	.472*	0.098	0.549	0.189	0.216*		

*$p<0.05$, **$p<0.01$, & ***$p<0.001$

Discussion

The findings of this study, as revealed in Table 2, provide valuable insights into the associations between predictor variables and Relocation Readiness. The results align with the hypothesized direction, demonstrating significant positive correlations between Relocation Readiness and Openness, Uncertainty Tolerance, Horizontal Individualism, Vertical Individualism, and Perceived Social Norms. Moreover, significant negative associations were observed between Relocation Readiness and Neuroticism, as well as Relocation Readiness and Vertical Collectivism. The positive associations suggest that individuals with higher levels of Openness, Uncertainty Tolerance, and Individualistic tendencies may exhibit greater readiness to relocate. Individuals scoring high on Openness may exhibit more flexibility, curiosity, and desire to change (McCrae & John, 1992; Mignonac, 2008). They are more likely to embrace new opportunities, adjust to unfamiliar settings, and seek out diverse experiences and cultures through relocation. Individuals with higher uncertainty tolerance exhibit resilience in handling ambiguity and unpredictable situations (Dalbert, 1999; Ladouceur et al., 2000; Grupe & Nitschke, 2013), which may enable them to navigate unfamiliar environments and face new challenges associated with relocation, contributing to their higher readiness for relocation. Individualist persons' value for independence and self-reliance fosters their openness to explore new opportunities and take risks without feeling limited by social expectations or obligations (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). This could be a plausible reason for the positive association between Relocation Readiness and Individualistic orientation. Furthermore, the significant association between Perceived Social Norms and Relocation Readiness implies that individuals' perceptions of societal expectations and norms can influence their readiness for relocation. Those who perceive greater support or approval from their social environment regarding relocation may feel

more confident and motivated to undertake such a transition (Ng et al., 2007).

Additionally, the negative associations with Neuroticism and Vertical Collectivism suggest that individuals with lower levels of Neuroticism and Vertical Collectivism may display higher levels of Relocation Readiness. Individuals scoring high on Neuroticism might have a tendency to experience heightened levels of emotional instability and stress which may hinder their ability to adapt effectively to new environments (Ng et al., 2007). Individuals high in Vertical Collectivism may exhibit decreased readiness for relocation due to their strong reliance on existing social ties and support systems, attachment to cultural norms and traditions, and preference for stability and security within established hierarchies (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). These factors may contribute to their hesitation in initiating a relocation and adapting to unfamiliar environments. These findings are in line with the existing literature (Otto & Dalbert, 2012; Nisak & Rachmawati, 2019) that has demonstrated significant correlations of Relocation Readiness with the variables assessing Personality dispositions and Social Orientations.

However, the rejection of Hypothesis 2c suggests that the anticipated relationship between Relocation Readiness and Horizontal Collectivism was not supported by the data. The lack of a significant relationship could be influenced by specific characteristics of the sample or contextual factors within the study.

The findings from the three-step hierarchical multiple regression analysis revealed that the demographic variables had a poor fit in explaining the variance in Relocation Readiness. However, the introduction of Personality Disposition variables and Social Orientation variables significantly improved the model's explanatory power. Specifically, Uncertainty Tolerance, Horizontal Individualism, Vertical Individualism, and Perceived Social Norm emerged as significant predictors of Relocation Readiness. These findings align with existing literature that suggests personality traits and social orientations play a crucial role in individuals' readiness for relocation (Otto & Dalbert, 2012; Nisak & Rachmawati, 2019).

Conclusion

The present study expands upon existing literature by confirming several expected associations between predictor variables and Relocation Readiness. The results support the hypothesized relationships, highlighting the positive correlations of Relocation Readiness with Openness, Uncertainty Tolerance, Horizontal Individualism, Vertical Individualism, and Perceived Social Norms. Additionally, negative associations were observed between Relocation Readiness and Neuroticism, as well as Relocation Readiness and Vertical Collectivism. These findings emphasize the importance of considering personality dispositions and social orientations in understanding individuals' readiness for relocation.

The study demonstrates several strengths. Firstly, it employed rigorous statistical analysis, including hierarchical multiple regression, to examine the relationships between predictor variables and Relocation Readiness. This approach enhances the credibility of the findings and provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing relocation readiness. Furthermore, the findings align with existing literature, reinforcing the robustness of the relationships between personality traits, social orientations, and relocation readiness.

However, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study relied on self-report measures, which may introduce common method variance and social desirability

response bias. Moreover, the cross-sectional design of the study limits causal interpretations and the ability to examine changes in relocation readiness over time.

To address these limitations, future research should consider employing a longitudinal design to examine the dynamic nature of relocation readiness and its predictors. Additionally, exploring other potential factors, such as cultural dimensions, socioeconomic status, or past relocation experiences, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of relocation readiness. Furthermore, investigating the impact of interventions or support programs aimed at enhancing relocation readiness could have practical implications for individuals and organizations.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the existing literature on relocation readiness by highlighting the significance of personality traits and social orientations in understanding individuals' readiness for relocation. Nonetheless, further research is necessary to delve deeper into the underlying mechanisms and explore additional factors that may influence relocation readiness.

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