CHAPTER 4
CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

4.0 CONCLUSION

International students not only come from widely diverse backgrounds but they vary in almost every field like culture, religion, social economic status, values, beliefs, food habits etc. It is expected from them that they should learn host culture values and beliefs. This may lead to stress (Spradley & Philip, 1972, Pederson, 1991). They are expected to learn to adapt not only to the university culture but also host culture. This period of adaptation of values and beliefs of host culture along with the values of their original culture called acculturation and stress associated with this transition is called acculturative stress.

In recent times, India has become one of the important centers of education for international students. Many students from different parts of world are now enrolled in Indian universities and colleges. There are approximately more than 35,000 students migrated from different countries to India for education. Minority representation in higher education institutions is essential to contribute socially and economically. The international students’ presence in our institutions will help to promote our culture & international understanding among these students. As the number of international students increase, so does the number of acculturative stress cases. It therefore, becomes need of time to find methods for helping international students to deal with stress.

A lack of adaptation resources for these students during their academic life causes greater stress levels and consequently leads to unfavorable academic results (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). International students not only face with problems similar to those of all university students, but they have the added pressures associated with life in a new environment, learning the new language and culture. The combination of these stresses reduces the international student's ability to perform (Misra et al., 2003). The researches on acculturation suggested that an individual can regain his/her ability to function better by increasing his/her understanding of the new environment's language and culture. Additionally, the research indicated that if they
received information and support, international students may adjust more quickly and easily (Chae, 2014, Khan, 2016). The purpose of dealing with acculturative stress was to help the students to function at their full potential and achieve more academic success.

This study will provide a better understanding of some of the psychological process that international students go through. Therefore, investigating the process of acculturation that these students go through and understanding the challenges they experience will provide a view of what kind of services can be provided to keep them as well as to increase the number of international graduates in India.

4.1 **MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

- The overall results of university I and university II indicated that high percentage of sample revealed average level (53.45%, 52.90%) of acculturative stress, followed by high level (28.30%, 29.06%) of acculturative stress and low level (18.24%, 18.02%) of acculturative stress respectively (Nasirudeen, 2014, Azizah, 2014).

- Discrimination (38.481%) and isolation (11.61%) were found to be major predictors of stress as identified by earlier research (Burbach, 1972). The reason may be that students do not feel the need to socialize with other students (Schram and Lauver, 1988). They were seemed to be caught between their own cultural values and values of host culture.

- The feeling of homesickness due to lack of social support system was significant predictor (9.246%) of stress (Pederson, 1991). The loss of emotional & social support system due to separation from family (Pederson, 1991, Romero, 1981) and limited social contact with host students (Bochner, Hutnoik & Furnham, 1988) due to language & cultural barriers are apparently the major reasons for international students’ loneliness.

- Cultural shock was another cause of stress (6.299%) (Alexander et al. 1981, Bochner, 1972, Mena, Padilla & Maldonado, 1987). Negative attitude and lack of sensitivity to the values of other culture by some individuals confirm the perception of foreign students that they are not welcomed. Most stress was due to
migration to new land where they experience difference in climate, food, social values, modes of behaviour, verbal and nonverbal communication etc. (Dillard & Chisolm, 1983).

- Guilt of leaving their family and country was also a source of stress (7.490%) as international students seemed to caught between their own cultural values and values of host culture which they must adopt to in order to succeed. (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). Adapting values of host culture may be perceived as being not sincere to their own culture.

- Low self esteem contributed to (5.410%) to the total stress. Low self esteem may be due to due to lack of family support system (Pederson, 1991) and cultural shock (Allen & Cole, 1987) which foreign students experience after migration. A high percentage of students agreed that they need approval of people around them. National students preoccupied with their own concerns and friendships do not make special acquaintance with foreign students to help them.

- Another factor found to be a stressor for foreign students was fear of insecurity (2.377%) in unfamiliar situations, high rate of crimes, racial discrimination, socio-political relations between some foreign students’ native countries and India.

- The acculturative scale has good psychometric properties and was reliable and valid to assess the acculturative stress among international students.

- Female international students have high mean score of acculturative stress as compared to male international students in both universities (Al-Qaisy, 2010). There was statistically difference in the mean scores of level of acculturative stress among male and female international students on the basis of gender ($t_{157} = 13.652, p < .0001, t_{170} = 1.562, p < .0001$). The reason as explored after discussion with students was that female international students have more problems related to security issues and homesickness etc.

- International students of age group (18-19 years) and (20-21 years) have almost same mean scores of acculturative stress ($t_{157} = -1.686, p = .094, t_{170} = -.319, p = .750$ in both universities. So statistically the mean scores of level of
acculturative stress among international students on the basis of age group were almost same (Asmawati, 2012).

- Male and female international students of Science, Humanities and Management streams group have same mean score of acculturative stress (\(F(2,156)=77.269, \ p=0.612, \ F(2,171)=.150, \ p=.861\)). So there was statistically no significant difference in the level of acculturative stress among male and female international students on the basis of stream of study.

- International students of family income (>50,000 and <=1,00000) and (>1,00000) were almost have same mean score of acculturative stress (\(t_{157}=-2.297, p>0.063, \ t_{170}=-1.777, p>0.077\)). So there was statistically no significant difference in the level of acculturative stress among international students on the basis of family income. As most of the respondents agreed that they depend on their parents to meet their financial demands. Parents believe that it is their obligation to support their children both financially and emotionally.

- There was no significant difference in the level of acculturative stress of international students on the basis of country of origin. (\(F(4,141)=2.273, \ p=0.064, \ F(5,161)=223.41, p=.0709\))(Nwadiora & Mcadoo, 1996).

- All the participants of research were single so effect of marital status was not depicted.

- There was statistically significant effect of intervention on post treatment level of acculturative stress at three stages (\(p < .0001, \ d = 43, \ p < .0001, \ d = 40\)) immediately, after one month and after three months of intervention to experimental group. There was statistically no significant difference in the level of acculturative stress in the control group (without intervention) (\(p > .05, \ d = 57, \ (p > .05, \ d = 61\)) after three months.

- There was statistically no significant difference in post treatment level of acculturative stress of international students with respect to gender, age, stream of study, marital status, family income and country of origin in both the universities\((p>0.5)\).
As results of both the university were almost of same nature. Thus this intervention could be used in both conditions.

Other than statistically results, few observations made by researcher while interacting with international students were:

- Mostly participants were not satisfied with medium of instructions as they told often teachers use their mother tongue which creates difficulty in understanding the instructions.
- Participants have some resettlement worries also.
- Few participants feel teachers’ expectations were different from them. They sometimes feel biased also due to different cultural identity.
- Finding accommodation, paper work, visa problems were some other problems faced by students.
- Some were not satisfied with timetable, exam patterns, assignments work etc.
- Cultural clashes, bullying incidents etc. were also suffered by some participants.
- Food problem was the major problem of international students. They did not get food of their choice here.

Thus the purpose of present research purpose was to develop confidence among international students for preparation in settlement in India, to develop feelings among students that there are cultural similarities and differences. The results of this study emphasized that active participation lead to positive emotions among international students. The study identified a notable difference after intervention in the mean score of level of acculturative stress of experimental group. International students struggle with homesickness, and isolation from family, friends, new food & language and have considerable pressure to perform well in new academic and cultural environment (Mishra et al, 2003, Constantine et al, 2004; Martiza et al., 2013; Nicholson, 2013). Further taking into consideration, our study implied that with regard to different demographic considerations like age, family income, stream of study, country of origin international students have almost similar level of difficulty while on basis of gender they have different level of difficulty. The results of the study suggested that cultural adaptation
techniques developed by an institution are important aspects in minimizing acculturative stress. It seemed that maintaining connection to original culture while exploring and developing positive connections to the host culture lead to a decrease in difficulties in cultural adaptation. The study supported the previous studies results that developing interpersonal skills and social relationships encouraged a sense of belongingness and connectedness to the new culture (Yates and Youniss, 1996). Other related studies (Mckinney, 2002) had shown that having a sense of belongingness and responsibility with in a community reduce feelings of social alienation as well as increase empathy, openness and tolerance towards others & promotes positive social interactions. The findings of our study also supported that participation in meaningful activities plays an essential role in coping with stressful experiences as found by earlier researchers (Hutchinson, Loy, Kleiber, & Dattilo, 2003; Griffin, 2005; Iwasaki & Barlett, 2006; Chun & Lee, 2008; Kim et al., 2013; Kuo, 2014).

The various activities taken under intervention helped the students to know host culture as well as other cultures. It helped international students to be aware that cultural stress is normal reaction to life and cultural diversity is healthy one Understanding of group diversity and ways in which one is similar or different from others in a group help to recognize the ways in which each person is unique. Listening to various cultural language help in developing understanding of diversity of languages. Working together with others help to appreciate their abilities to adjust, develop positive interdependence. It will provide an opportunity to think beyond the particular culture and provide environment in which one can share their feelings. Some of activities helped them to equip them with coping strategies to deal with discrimination, hatred and sadness. The main purpose of intervention was to reduce stress and anxiety of discrimination, cultural shock by understanding that many things are common with others regardless of background, race and culture. Intervention activities may help to develop multiple perspectives, reduce stress through physical activity and how to share positive and negative feelings. Activities like ‘Collaborative Learning’ may help to make them responsible, productive and empowered and developed feelings of sharing. Activities like ‘Staying focused’ may help to develop passion to accomplish something in life. It also
helped them to stand for themselves, develop feelings of self appreciation etc. Equipping them with few words of host language will enhance their understanding of host culture and thus leads to better social interactions.

During the process of adaptation to academic life, students may experience a number of difficulties such as stress from academics, general development issues, concerns about economic independence, sharing one’s life with strangers, leaving home etc. (Spencer, Oatey & Xiong, 2006; Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). It was stated in the literature that international students face more challenges than students who are from same nation (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994). Despite the fact that many students are capable of adjusting with the unfamiliarity of university life but some may develop high levels of depression during these formative years (Michael et al., 2006). Adapting to new educational and social environments may be more stressful for students who have different cultural values, language, academic preparation, and study habits (Coelho, 1979; Zwingmann & Gunn, 1983; Mori, 2000). As they are between two different worlds and may find it difficult to fully embrace either. Engaging with the new country & its cultural practices may alienate them from their home culture. This inability to fully relate to people to the dual cultural identity becomes a critical issue. Thus acculturative stress is a common phenomenon during acculturation.

If international students are encountered with cultural conflicts and that may lead to misunderstanding with others because of cultural and ethnic differences. This may lead to stress and anxiety. If they are acknowledged with cultural similarities and differences and gained knowledge of, how to interact with others in culturally appropriate manners. Such a positive process will result an enhanced sense of cultural understanding.

To conclude, the current study’s findings suggested the significance of social support given by a teacher/counselor in an institution can help in adjustment and lessening problems of acculturation experienced by the international students. Thus findings of the study revealed as earlier researchers suggested (Atri & Randall, 2007; Hsiao-ping, 2015; Azizah et al., 2017) that there is need of cultural sensitivity and awareness while working with these populations (Pfau, 1983; Thao, 2010) and there is need of culture-specific services provided by university to students.
4.2 EDUCATION AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of our study indicated that there is a need to increase the awareness among teachers/counselors/academic practitioners, about international students’ culture related experiences. As international students have issues related to cultural stress. Results indicated that the strategies used have positive effect on the level of the acculturative stress and help them to adjust in the new culture. This study contributes to existing literature of studies (Nunenz & Gary, 2004; Yakunina, 2013).

Results of this study pointed out that teachers should deal with the culture related issues and should try to put their efforts in providing assistance to international students, in developing more diverse social networks, adapting to host culture’s academic norms and developing connections to host culture. Helping international students to expand their social network beyond from their countries of origin may help them to lessen the negative effects of acculturative stress. Teachers should help international students who come to campuses, in making friends and connections with diverse group of students. This will help in adapting academics life in India. Even counselors should assist while counseling international students to develop wider social networks involving a broader range of nationalities. This may develop additional social skills which help students to mix other people not only in classrooms but also through campus organizations & activities (Sharkin, 2006). As has been demonstrated in the other studies on acculturative stress for international students (Coelho, 1979; Dyson, 2006). It was found, academic pressures was an important aspect so counselors and practitioners should take this into consideration. The demand that international students should quickly adapt the new academic culture is difficult one and a major source of stress for students.

Faculty should make classroom and academic expectations more clear through class discussions, providing course information, promoting an open and accepting classroom environment in order to enhance the benefits of education system. Student advisors should develop programs that emphasize opportunities for cross cultural contact like students mentor programs, welcome programs, building partnerships with the local community etc. Campus efforts also should made to involve host culture students to
facilitate contact with international students through campus programs, conversation circles, clubs that directly promote contact between Indian students & international students. Counselors should also assist international students to identify various community organizations and encourage exploring various community resources.

Teachers and Counselors should create counseling programs that are sensitive to culture related matters. They should provide effective intervention for international students who experience adaptation difficulties. Faculty and students should be educated on the cultural values of people who are from different culture. They should create programs and activities that focused on the strengths of students. If needed they should utilize translators and interpreters. Incorporation of activities and programs that appreciate differences (i.e. cultural festivals, food fest etc.) should be organized as also suggested by Domonques,1970;Dillard,1983.

Faced with a wide range of challenges & difficulties, international students can be benefitted greatly from the support and assistance from teachers in class as well as from the campus. They can play a valuable role in assisting students by identifying areas of difficulty as well as developing additional strategies for adapting a new academic and cultural environment. By promoting a more welcoming and inclusive campus and community environment they can work together to be an important resource in assisting international students to have a positive and productive stay in the India.

Institution should develop activities and programs that include and respect the cultural and linguistic values and prefer each diverse individual student. As teachers and administrators our aim is to help all the students to attain their goals and enhance their adjustment in the environment. This intervention program might be beneficial for teachers, university advisors and officials who are concerned with planning and implementation of educational strategies of international students, to identify barriers that prevent cultural adjustment. If professionals are more aware of the coping strategies, they are more likely to provide effective coping resources for international students who are experiencing problems because of adaptation difficulties.
4.3 LIMITATIONS & SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the findings of this study add to the existing literature but there were some limitations that need to be taken into considerations:

- One of the strengths of this study was that the sample was collected from a region where studies on acculturative stress of international students were not taken but it could be one of limitation that data was taken only from two universities so results of current study may not be generalized to other regions. The basic limitation of the study was that no university allowed the investigator implementing intervention on their international students. So further studies can be conducted in other institutions of other regions.

- The basic limitation of the study was that no university was allowing the investigator to implement intervention on their international students. Only two universities gave the permission to implement the intervention. Therefore selection of university was limited.

- The study employed a purposive sample of international students residing currently in India. The sample of the present study was not so vast to represent the large population due to low response rate. Although this is frequent difficulty in research with international students (Kagan & Cohen, 1990; Constantine et al, 2004; Poyrazli et al., 2004). Further research can be conducted on large sample. As participation in research was of voluntarily so this kind of design has limitations because these findings could not be generalized to participants who decided not to participate.

- The participants of this study were of 18 to 21 years age group and having acculturation period in India of approx. one month. So this age group of the study has indicated stress but elder age group having longer period of stay may show different results. Future study may be conducted with elder group.

- The data collection method was only self-prepared questionnaire. Self-assessment measures have limitations, such as restrictive rating scale, variance in participant’s honesty based responses and introspective ability of participants. Further studies
may use a multi-method approach like interview, views from parents and teachers etc.

- The sample in present study was not representative of all international students in India. The participants were mainly from countries like Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Thailand and Iraq etc. Thus present sample results may not be generalized to other racial groups. Moreover the association between acculturative stress and coping strategies may be different for different ethnic groups. Future investigators can conduct a follow up study with a specific ethnic group.

- Due to lack of ample size of sample, the effect of intervention on the post treatment level among international students with respect to gender, age group, family income, marital status, country and stream could not effectively analyzed. Further studies can be conducted on specific ethnic group.

- The present study did not compare similarities and differences across ethnic groups. Thus certain stress may or may not be experienced by all groups. For example an immigrant from English speaking country may not have stress related to language while an immigrant from non English speaking country may have. Further researchers may compare differences and similarities across ethnic groups.

- The acculturative stress experienced by international students due to feeling culturally disconnected from family, friends appeared to have effect on their academic ability (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006). So future studies may be conducted on the effect of cultural stress on academic performance. Future study may examine the benefit of intervention program on health & well-being of international students.

- Acculturative stress may vary with the support given by an institution. Thus results of two institutions cannot be generalized to other institution. Further investigation could be conducted to know whether this is a generalized difficulty among international students to fit into host culture or a reflection of the campus where the present study took place.
There were also a number of strengths of the present study. One of the strengths of this study was that the sample was collected from a region where studies on acculturative stress of international students were not taken. The current study explained the literature on acculturative stress & coping strategies. As there was a dearth of research on the acculturative stress & coping strategies of international students in India. The current study contributes to necessary knowledge to begin with understanding their difficulties and experiences due to culture transition. Thus, a desire for more orientation programs specifically designed to meet the needs of international students was indicated by the study.

To conclude, international students are an important part of our education system. They represent our faith in cultural diversity. Better the adjustment more the number of foreign students in our institutions. Thus our institutions should adapt certain measure for more welcoming and inclusive campus. Thus to conclude universities should:

- Organize mentoring programs in partnership with the diverse communities and organizations.
- Develop programs that respect the cultural and linguistic values and preferences of each diverse individual student.
- Educate faculty and students on different cultures and their values.
- Develop programs and activities that focus on strengths as well as weaknesses of the diverse students.
- Involve all the stakeholders i.e. parents, community, community leaders and create culturally sensitive programs that enable each stakeholders to be responsible, productive and empowered.
- Utilize translators and interpreters if needed.
- Incorporate activities and programs that appreciate differences.
- Provide more field experiences, internship opportunities, workshops like cross cultural communication, research/teaching assistance programs.