

## **Struggle of Immigrants: Acculturation, Life satisfaction and Psychological wellbeing of UK nationals and UK immigrants.**

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**Abstract:** *Globalization today has led to increase in immigration in various countries around the Globe. But it is equally intriguing to understand the struggle of immigrants and its impact on their Psychological being, in such countries before they get a permanent residential Status. Researchers have indicated that coping and wellbeing is related to person-environment interactions. Drawing from this, the study is orchestrated to ascertain the relation between acculturation, life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing of the immigrants. The study also highlights the comparison of immigrants with permanent nationals of UK. Sample was collected in support of this statement comprises of UK nationals and UK immigrants. To draw conclusions the data was analyzed with the help of descriptive and inferential methods. The results indicate no significant relationship between the factors under study.*

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### **I. Introduction**

Immigration is the global phenomenon of citizens moving from their country to another country throughout the globe. This regional mobility is due to various reasons like job opportunities, better workplace environment, desire for financial security, better future prospects and wide scope in the field of education and technology. The main reason for immigrants moving to UK is to get a better and stable lifestyle. It can be said that Immigration is a result of 'pull factors' and 'push factors'. Pull factors comprises of the causes that motivate people to move into a new country for specific purpose and the Push factor act as a force for an individual to leave his/her own country. Pull factors include potential for employment, better opportunities, less crimes, political stability and improved quality of life whereas the push factor includes lack of services, poor employment opportunities, adverse climatic conditions, poor standard of living and political insecurity.

In order to attain a stable and successful life, immigrants suffer from various problems. People move away from homes leaving their friends and family. They lack social support and securities as well as they have to deal with the climatic changes and adjustment issues as the environment is completely new for them. Also language and cultural differences becomes a barrier in their adaptability. An immigrant undergoes different problems which lead to a great struggle for immigrants in their initial years. Immigration has been portrayed both as source of problems and as an opportunity for individuals and societies (Baubock, Heller, & Zolberg, 1996). In this whole process of immigration and adapting yourself in a new environment, adjustments become an important aspect for healthy living and mental peace.

This process of regional mobility can affect a person's psychological wellbeing. Working as an immigrant can be very challenging whereby adjusting in a workplace environment is a big thing in itself. Psychological wellbeing is one of the most important variables to be considered at workplace for immigrants. Researchers suggest that strengths of ethnic and national identity vary depending on the support for ethnic maintenance and the pressure for assimilation. Most studies show that the combination of a strong ethnic identity and a strong national identity promotes the best adaptation. WHO explains wellbeing as a state of mental health where in every individual realises his or her own potential; can cope with normal stress of life, work fruitfully and productively and is able to contribute to the society he is living in. Psychological wellbeing in simple terms is stated as personal happiness, satisfaction and is significantly related to the workplace efficiency. Employee's psychological wellbeing and stress management has a wide implication on quality of life of an immigrant. Wellbeing is a major variable for performance, quality and productivity and hence relates to business profit and effectiveness. Disturbed levels of wellbeing can result in poor performance of the professionals which may put an adverse impact on the organisational performance factors such as reduced productivity and conflicts among the employees which may lead to absenteeism, low morale and negative work environment.

Immigrants experience alienation due to the accommodation factors such as environment, people and the culture, as it is completely different to what they are used to. Adaptation becomes difficult in such a situation which affects a person's psychological wellbeing. Researches have proven that, this alienation or loneliness puts an impact on an individual's level of psychological wellbeing influenced by struggle of acculturation and

adjustment in the new society. Lahti et.al. (2006) studied the Perceived Discrimination, Social Support Networks, and Psychological Wellbeing among Three Immigrant Groups. Perceived discrimination had a significant impact on psychological wellbeing. Also, strong evidence was obtained for the direct and the buffering effect of host support networks on wellbeing. In addition, social support provided by ethnic networks abroad was generally beneficial for the psychological wellbeing of the immigrants. There are other factors which can also alter the level of wellbeing. Such as the job in itself demands emotional and cognitive stability; if the job role provides an individual with the variety of opportunities and appropriate feedback, this in turn is more likely to increase the wellbeing of an immigrant as he'll be professionally satisfied. Similarly, recognition and rewards in a workplace i.e. gratitude and acknowledgement of an employee's effort in a fair and timely manner can reduce the job strain and insecurity which will also lead to comparatively high levels of wellbeing. By the virtue of all the above reasons, the employee would try to acculturate and accept the new environment and culture and hence will take initiative and perform to best of his abilities; with increased levels of life satisfaction the adjustment becomes easier for an immigrant. Thus, relatively less struggle for an immigrant. Shields et.al (2005) explored the extent to which economic and social factors influence the psychological wellbeing of individuals and their perceptions of the social support that they receive, using Health Survey for England data. The results indicate that females with acute and chronic physical illness, unemployed or inactive in the labour market, living in poor areas report lower levels of psychological wellbeing. Reduced perceptions of social support are associated with being male, single or post marriage, from an ethnic minority, having low educational achievement and living in a poor conditions, but are not statistically related to area deprivation measures.

Acculturation is the process of psychological change and cultural change that follows regional contact (Berry, 2003) and is an essential part of immigration. Psychological changes include alterations in individuals' attitudes toward the acculturation process, their cultural identities (Phinney, 2003), and their relation to the groups in contact. Cultural changes include alterations in a group's customs and in their economic and political life. This eventual adaptation also have core psychological features, including a person's wellbeing and social skills that are needed to function in their culturally complex daily world (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, (2001). All this leads to acculturation stress, which in turn can lead to disturbed mental and physical health. Acculturation stress directly puts an impact on a person's psychological being and coping plays a major role. This has become a good topic of research all over the world. One of the research works by Hovey et.al. (2000) revealed results that Immigrant workers with elevated levels of acculturative stress reported high levels of depression and anxiety. The findings highlight the importance of establishing prevention and treatment services for migrant workers that aim to increase levels of emotional support, self-esteem, and coping skills. Researches suggest when empowered with sufficient social resources, racial minority individuals of diverse cultural heritages are more likely to confront than to accept racial bias. Numerous researches have been done in this field as a result various strategies explained, through which people deal with the acculturation stress. There are four ways by which people decide to acculturate. These four ways depends on the extent to which acculturation stress has been experienced. In Integration, the person experiences the least stress. The person tries to involve and adapt the culture an even interacts with the larger society. Whereas in Assimilation person tries to involve in their culture as well as there is little preference in interacting with the large society which in turn leads to moderate levels of acculturation stress. Next comes the Separation, in which the person completely avoids the culture of the other country and does not interact with the larger society. And last is Marginalisation where person neither tries to adapt the culture nor interacts with larger society which leads to extreme levels of acculturation stress. Researchers have shown acculturation is a process that takes place over a period of time and where the demographic factors such as age, sex, socioeconomic status, religion can lead to variation in how well a person tries to acculturate. Psychological adaptation is an essential element in low levels of acculturation stress which in turn maintains high level of individual's psychological wellbeing. Researchers tried to study other factors that can affect levels of acculturation, which can alter the wellbeing of an immigrant and possibly lead to disorders like depression and concluded that elevated acculturative stress, low self-esteem, ineffective social support and lack of control, low religiosity, and high education were significantly related to high anxiety and therefore are vulnerable to the development of anxiety-related disorders and highlight the importance of establishing prevention and treatment services for immigrants. Studies also reveal that acculturative stress significantly predicted depression and suicidal ideation and that family support, social support, religiosity, agreement with the decision to migrate, and expectations for the future were significant predictors of depression and suicidal ideation. Moreover, researches have proven that acculturation, correlated with SES, contributed to depressive symptom severity only through indirect pathways. Higher acculturation was found associated with higher stress that in turn contributed to more elevated depressive symptoms. Better support, lower personality negativity, better health perception, and lower stress were found mediating the relationship between higher SES and lower depressive symptom severity. Jian et.al. (2012) investigated the association of acculturation of immigrant employees with three types of workplace relationships: leader-member exchange (LMX), co-worker,

and mentoring relationship. Based on a survey of immigrant employees, the study reveals that the two dimensions of acculturation, adjustment to one's host culture and retention of one's original culture, are differentially related to the three types of workplace relationships. Lu et.al. (2011) did a research on Acculturation strategies among professional Chinese immigrants in the Australian workplace. They investigated the predictors of acculturation strategy selection including language proficiency, education experience in the host country, work-related experience outside the home country, and social support at work. English proficiency and social support at work predicted higher levels of acculturation. Also, social support at work is the better indicator of acculturation among this immigrant group. British surveys and reviews show comparatively less reference to acculturation stress. There are studies in UK which shows more acculturated Indians were found to have lower levels of acculturation stress.

Another variable that is studied under this research is Life satisfaction. Life satisfaction can be defined as the way person evaluates the satisfaction level of their life. Life satisfaction includes satisfaction levels of achieved goals, perception about your own self, ability to cope and self concept. It is a person's positive attitude towards himself or herself. As there is lack of social support and individual is away from his friends and family, it is very important that the immigrants maintain high levels of life satisfaction. It is the conscious evaluative judgments about one's satisfaction with life as a whole. Life satisfaction is basically the level of happiness and satisfaction from life. It can be as simple as doing an activity of little pleasure or doing something meaningful, it can also include having friends, being financially well off, being mentally and physically healthy and fit, happy and fulfilling relationships and success in all the aspects of life. Many governments, including UK government, have started drawing reports on Life satisfaction levels to monitor the progress of the nation (Office for National Statistics, 2012). In this paper we are focusing on life satisfaction and immigration, that whether there are differences in life satisfaction levels among professionals from different backgrounds, in a same country. When people immigrate from their own country to another country, they carry themselves as an asset. They act a resource for the economy and for the overall development of the individual and the society it is important that person finds acculturation easy; which can in return lead to higher levels of life satisfaction. An immigrant undergoes drastic cultural changes that influence the life satisfaction levels. Researchers have proved that life satisfaction can include various important concepts such as positive self esteem, confidently seeking growth and achievement, our motivation levels, optimism and healthy relationships. All this will add a purpose and meaning to the life of the professionals which may result in comparatively higher levels of satisfaction from life; thus professionals giving their best and working efficiently.

In the given study to bring out the significant relation between acculturation, life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing at workplace, we have compared UK nationals and UK immigrants. Researchers have indicated that coping and wellbeing is related to person-environment interactions. Drawing from this, the study is orchestrated to ascertain the relation between acculturation, life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing of the immigrants. It is important to understand the hardships and the struggle of an immigrant and its impact on their Psychological being. In order to see the impact, this paper focuses on the UK nationals and UK immigrants working there in UK. In this paper, the data is collected from the working officials, as adjustment is a major issue which is due to differences in culture, work environment and system, along with this; individuals need to fulfil their job responsibilities on time. As a result of this there is deep-seated frustration and distress among the immigrant professionals at the workplace which affects their psychological wellbeing. This may put an impact on the levels of life satisfaction among these professionals and could make acculturation difficult.

## **II. Objective Of The Study**

- To ascertain the relation between acculturation, life satisfaction and psychological wellbeing of the immigrants at workplace.
- To study the effect of acculturation and life satisfaction on well being.
- To investigate the impact of acculturation and psychological wellbeing on life satisfaction levels.

### **Hypotheses**

- There is a significant correlation between the three variables.
- The level of Acculturation stress is more amongst the UK immigrants as compared to the UK nationals.
- UK immigrants have low levels of life satisfaction as compared to UK nationals.
- UK immigrants are higher on psychological wellbeing, when compared to UK nationals.

## **III. Methodology**

**Sample** – The sample size was 60 that include 30 UK Nationals and 30 UK Immigrants (from India). The sample includes all the professionals working in different organizations.

**Procedure** - Potential participants were asked to fill the questionnaires. All the questionnaires were mailed to the participants and their responses were also received through mails only. After the data was received, it was arranged in the spreadsheets, so that it could be further evaluated and analyzed to get the results.

**Tools and Techniques used** - Ryff's psychological wellbeing scale, Life-satisfaction scale by Dr. (Mrs.) Promila Singh and George Joseph were used. Also, questions from Acculturation Attitude Scale were used in the study.

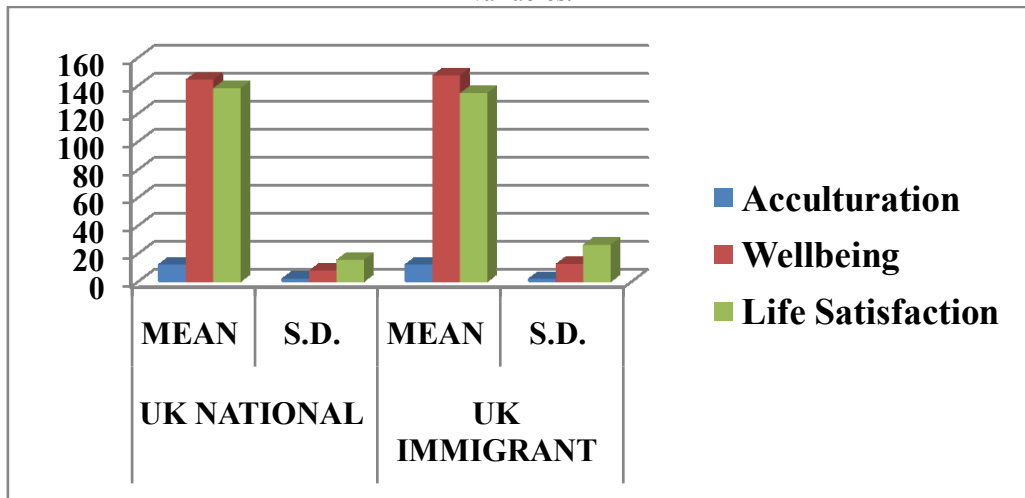
**IV. Result & Discussion**

**TABLE 1:** Shows the mean and standard deviation of each of UK nationals and UK immigrants for the three variables.

MEASURES	UK NATIONAL (N=30)		UK IMMIGRANT (N=30)	
	MEAN	S.D.	MEAN	S.D.
Acculturation	12.50	2.286	12.43	2.254
Wellbeing	144.50	8.050	147.50	12.743
Life Satisfaction	138.37	15.710	134.80	26.454

When professionals were considered on the basis of their nationality, the mean for UK nationals came out to be 12.50 and 12.43 for UK immigrants, for Acculturation level; showing that the immigrants are able to acculturate well when compared to the nationals. When considered on Wellbeing scale the mean came out to be 144.50 and 147.50 for nationals and immigrants respectively; showing that immigrants have higher levels of wellbeing. And lastly, the mean for UK nationals for Life satisfaction was 138.37 and 134.80 for UK immigrants; showing nationals higher on life satisfaction level.

**Figure: 1** shows the mean and standard deviation of each of UK nationals and UK immigrants for the three variables.



**Table: 2** Shows Correlation between the variables with Immigration Status

MEASURES	CORRELATION	SIG. (2-tailed)
Acculturation	-0.01	0.91
Wellbeing	0.14	0.28
Life Satisfaction	-0.08	0.52

Table 2 shows the correlation values of immigrants and nationals of UK obtained on dimensions Acculturation, Wellbeing and Life satisfaction. The results indicate no significant correlation between the variables. Therefore, we reject our first hypotheses that there is a significant correlation between the variables.

**Table: 3** Shows Comparison of Mean Value of UK Nationals and UK Immigrants

MEASURES	t-VALUE
Acculturation	0.11
Wellbeing	1.89**
Life Satisfaction	0.64

( \*\*p < 0.01, p > 0.05)

Table 3 shows significant difference between the wellbeing scores of UK nationals and immigrants. UK immigrant higher on psychological wellbeing levels as compared to the nationals. The results for acculturation and life satisfaction do not hold any significant difference between the scores of nationals and immigrants.

## V. Conclusion

The correlation values show that there is no significant correlation between the variables; Acculturation, Wellbeing and Life satisfaction; thus rejecting our hypotheses. The results prove that UK immigrants have high level when compared on wellbeing score. The possible reason is that the immigrants (Indians) are extremely optimistic, they never lose hope because have strong faith in god. Another reason is the remarkably high social support from their friends and family. Results also show that the immigrants are able to acculturate well when compared to the nationals i.e., lower levels of acculturation stress and study also shows that UK nationals are higher on life satisfaction level as compared to UK immigrants.

UK immigrants are provided with help to improve their lifestyle. Various human right groups make plans to improve the immigration process, expressing their concern for improving the condition of UK immigrants. National Health Service (NHS) provides a wide range of medical health care services; irrespective of individual's residency status, they are entitled to equal facilities. There are training programs for the immigrants to learn and adjust according to British English so that they could easily adjust in their new lives. Also, advance technology in various specialization fields help UK immigrants to improve their living.

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