Analytical Study Of Cultural Differences And Sustainability Of Indian Students Going Abroad

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Abstract
Background- An individual’s personality is influenced by both human nature and culture. The culture is usually introduced at birth, developed over time, and nurtured as they grow up. India is one of the most densely populated country known for rich culture and heritage. Indian students are moving overseas for higher studies as they are attracted by global professional opportunities and world-class universities to get their dream job and achieve better career prospects.

Objective- The purpose of this study is to understand whether the Indian students are well equipped to adjust in the foreign environment despite of experiencing culture differences when they reach host country.

Design- The cultural characteristics of individuals are described by Hofstede’s cultural dimension theory, which is a framework for cross-cultural communication, developed by Geert Hofstede (Hofstede 2011). The three sample countries chosen for the study are USA, Australia and Canada based on the justification that maximum proportion of Indian students are going to these above-mentioned countries for pursuing their higher education.

Method- This paper is based on secondary research and highlights the indicating factors which are sufficient for the sustainability of Indian students in host country.

Result- The findings indicate that although Indian students do experience cultural differences but still, they are able to sustain in different cultural settings.

Conclusion- The reason behind this sustenance is the cultural values which have been developed in Indians during childhood due to which it is not difficult for them to adjust in new settings.

Keywords- Culture, Cultural Differences, Hofstede Model, Indian Students, Sustainability.

INTRODUCTION
The culture of a country shapes the norms, values and beliefs of individuals working in organizations (Hofstede, 1980; Singh, 1990; Triandis, 1995). Cultural values serve as the founding principles of everyday life as it shapes ones thinking, behaviour, and personality. It is one of the easy ways to connect with others who share same mindset and values. (Chhokar, Brodbeck, House, Mahwah, 2007). Culture appears as a semantic network that is woven over again with the change of generations. Cultural differences (Lim, (2012) )are the different behaviours, beliefs, languages, practices and expressions which are unique to specific ethnicity, race or national origin hence, to understand cultural differences it is important to analyse the nature of people, the relationship of one individual to other and an individual’s relationship to the external environment.

The three sample countries chosen for the present study are USA, Australia and Canada based on the justification that maximum proportion of Indian students are going to these above-mentioned countries for pursuing their higher education. It is significant to understand the cultural difference of these countries with respect to India as cultural values form (Cnaan, 2011) a foundation for the norms of a culture and the various people in cultures to know and realise what is most appropriate in different situations based on these norms (Schwartz 1994). A brief introduction of these countries on the parameters of comparison w.r.t family structure, food habits, festivals, marriage system, fashion, caste system, spirituality, work culture, goals and hierarchies, time, business relationships and expression, the cultural difference amongst India, USA, Australia & Canada are studied. The following factors form a basis for better understanding of cultural differences of India with the sample countries-

1. Family-
The Indian culture is family-oriented and respect is one of the major concepts in India. American, Australian, and Canadian culture are more goal, ambitious and individual oriented. The families of India are quite close knit and parents tend to influence their children throughout their lives. This is evident in Indian business families where strict hierarchies are followed. In USA, Australia and Canada families have a different set up as they are classically understood as nuclear family with their extended family living separately.

2. Food-
The Indian food is a combination of various kinds of vegetables and plants cooked with lot of spices. In US, the food does not contain many spices and it is mainly meat based. Australians prefer cuisine that are mild in taste with few distinct flavours. In Canada, there is fast food, frozen food, canned food preferably foods that are easy to put together.

3. Festivals-
In India many festivals are celebrated where different colors, lights, splendor, and grandeur can be seen as people of different religion follow different traditions. America celebrates many festivals but, Christmas and Thanksgiving are the main ones. Some of the biggest festivals in Australia are Adelaide Festival, Melbourne International Comedy Festival, New Year’s Eve. Montreal Jazz Festival, Winterlude, Celebration of Light, The Ex, Pride Toronto, Canada Day Celebrations are the famous festivals of Canada.

4. Marriage-
In India, the average age of marriage for females is eighteen and for males it is twenty-one. Multiple traditions are performed in Indian marriages and the ritual of marriage is performed in presence of a pandit in a mandap. The marriage style is arranged marriage. In USA, the average age of marriage in females is twenty four and males is twenty six. Marriages are held generally in churches in presence of priest. The marriage style is love marriage. In Australia, the minimum age for females and males is 18. The celebrant recites the prescribed words to solemnise the marriage. The marriage can be performed anywhere in Australia and the marriage style is love marriage. In Canada, the minimum age for females and males is 16. Marriages can be performed anywhere, anytime and the marriage style is love marriage.

5. Fashion-
In India, women preferably wear sarees and men wear kurtas. The formal dress code in India is a lightweight suit and ties are not compulsory for men. Americans prefer casual wear and loose clothes. As formal dress code. The most appropriate attire for men in America is a business suit with a light-coloured collared shirt, matching tie and formal shoes are. For women, business suit with a matching or contrast top or short skirts with stockings underneath, along with high heeled sandals. Australians prefer casual wear and loose clothes. As formals, men wear business suit with tie and women wear business suit or formal business style dress. Canadians prefer casual wear and simple clothing. The dress code is conservative, well-dressed appearance is desirable.

6. The caste system and status-
In India, the concept of hierarchy is prominent in business. For Indians, a catchy title is important and brings status to their family. For an American, status signifies personal success. The structure of Australian organisations is non-hierarchical. Titles and rankings are not that important for Australians within organisations. In Canada, people have no disgrace in performing any type of work. A higher-level official does not feel disgrace in helping juniors. Here people take pleasure in all varieties of work.

7. Spirituality-
Indian culture is quite deep and Indians are used to being thoughtful. In business context Indians normally bring one’s spiritual values and beliefs. Americans, are not that spiritual but tend to be more materialistic. Although many Americans are religious but they do not impose one’s faith to others at the workplace. Australians are moderately religious. Australians generally avoid over display of being religious. Australians tend to maintain a distinction between their private and public life hence they avoid mentioning their religious beliefs. Canadians have no official religion but most of the Canadians follow Christianity.

8. Work Culture-
In India workplaces are hierarchical generally based on age and position. Mostly Indians avoid speaking in a direct, frank manner if they do not have a strong relationship. Therefore, indirect, circuitous communication is expected if a business deal has to be concluded. In USA, there is less hierarchy in the workplace. People work for long hours in USA and they hardly go on vacation or take any family leave. Americans seldom take breaks during the day and manage to eat at their desk. They send emails after work hours. Australians value punctuality. Most Australians drive to work. During the working hours Australians rarely say no to extra work. People speak their mind. Australians use a lot of slang and tend to shorten words in everyday office talk. They sometimes swear in the workplace and like to keep things casual in a business setting. They tend to have a separate time for their work and family. In the Canadian workplace soft skills like ability to work in team, open-mindedness, tolerance, flexibility, positive attitude, time management, presentation skills, leadership qualities, integrity, and ability to motivate co-workers are more important than the technical hard skills. Canada has an ethnocultural diversity.
9. Goals and hierarchies-
Indians, emphasize more on hierarchy. Officials at the higher positions make decisions with their own interests in mind and do not let the individuals at lower positions to get empowered and make decisions. Americans are highly ambitious and tend to achieve more profits. With efficient delegation of responsibility and teamwork each individual takes responsibility of their own decisions and achieve their goals. Australian society is stringently anti-hierarchical. Australian society is based on the principles of egalitarianism. Based on this principle, Australians do not emphasize office hierarchy and concentrate more on team and performance. Canadian businesses are traditionally hierarchical but now it is getting flattened. Canadian communication style is direct but Canadians wrap negative feedback in positive comments.

10. Time-
In India, time is viewed comparatively more as circular as linear hence life moves at slower pace. The relationships are given priority over deadlines. At the workplace, it is the complete responsibility of the senior official to be aware of the deadline and not the junior staff. In USA, life is full of conveniences hence it is moves at a fast pace. Deadlines are considered to be very important and are expected to be met. The tolerance for delay is not accepted so people work for long hours. Punctuality is one of the most important attributes and behaviours of Australians. Being late is considered as a sign of disrespect. Delays are viewed as inefficient. In Canada also, punctuality is appreciated as a sign of respect, professionalism and being ready for business.

11. Business relationships-
In India, building and maintaining relationships is primarily important. To have a smooth communication if a relationship is already established definitely helps. In US, the business is goal oriented. General talk is considered as a waste of time. Australians are hard and direct business people. They are straight forward. Exchange of business cards is not very common. Canadian workplace culture is egalitarian. Respect for equality, diversity, opinion, and justice are the governing values for the business environment. The business card should have both English French translations.

12. Expression-
Indians use indirect communication to preserve their strong face. To say ‘no’ directly to the other person is considered rude as it causes them to lose face. Indians use negative feedback as a tool for constructive criticism. Americans use direct speech and also shout at subordinates in high pressure work environments. In USA, conflicts are considered constructive and feedback is direct and critical. Australians are straight forward. They appreciate people being up front and very open in their communication styles. In Canada, communication is somewhat indirect. A direct eye contact is considered as a sign of respect and sincerity therefore it is important for Canadians. It is advisable to go confidently smiling and straight to the point of meeting.

Cultural differences amongst the four major countries of the world namely India, USA, Australia & Canada based on Hofstede ‘s dimensions of cultures-
The various reasons for the countries of the world to be different could be the geography, different customs, values, religious practices, and beliefs. Due to this a unique culture is created which becomes identity of a country and also defines the people who are born and brought up there.

The cultural differences influence and significantly impact the work attitude and decision-making skills of an individual. Hofstede (2011) tried to identify the cultural dimensions which are applicable globally in various aspects of life. Hofstede (1980) provides quantitative data on cultural values so it is easier for researchers to differentiate and evaluate different cultures. As it is applied and validated by scholars across different research discipline’s , it is one of the most important theory of culture. (Kirkman et al., 2006; Yoo et al., 2011). This framework helps to develop a comparison between the findings of previous and future research.

Source- https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/knowledge/other/hofstedes-cultural-dimensions-theory/

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Figure 1: Hofstede model:
Critical Analysis to understand cultural differences of Sample Countries

Table 1: Scores of India, USA, Australia, & Canada on the six dimensions are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>Canada</th>
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<tr>
<td>POWER DISTANCE</td>
<td>It justifies the inequalities of individuals in societies expressed through the attitude of culture and defined as the power distance. So, it is the unequal distribution of power in an organization which is expected and accepted by some powerful members.</td>
<td>high score of 77 on this dimension. This indicates a top-down structure for hierarchy in organizations.</td>
<td>low score on Power Distance (40)</td>
<td>low score of 36 signifying the establishment of hierarchy for convenience. The easy access of superiors and, managers for the juniors and the confidence on individual employees and teams.</td>
<td>low score of 39 signifying the egalitarian structure of organization.</td>
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<td>INDIVIDUALISM</td>
<td>It is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. It works with people’s self-image in terms if “I” or “We”.</td>
<td>score of 48, which signifies an intermediate score of both collectivistic and individualistic traits.</td>
<td>scores 91 in this dimension highlighting to be the most individualistic culture in the world.</td>
<td>also scores high on this dimension as 90.</td>
<td>score is 80 in this dimension characterized as an individualistic culture.</td>
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<td>MASCULINITY/ FEMINITY</td>
<td>Masculine dimension indicates the society to be driven by competition, achievement and success and success is defined by the winner in the field. A Feminine dimension indicates the dominant values in society as caring for others and quality of life.</td>
<td>score of 56 and is considered as a Masculine society.</td>
<td>scores 62 which is higher on Masculinity.</td>
<td>scores 61 signifying a Masculine society.</td>
<td>score is 52 characterized by moderately Masculine society.</td>
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<td>UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE</td>
<td>It is defined as the ambiguous or unknown situations which creates a threat for the members of a culture so either it should be controlled or let it happen.</td>
<td>score is 40 on this dimension which shows a medium low preference for avoiding uncertainty.</td>
<td>scores 46, which is below average on uncertainty.</td>
<td>shows an intermediate value of 51 on this dimension.</td>
<td>shows 48 on this dimension.</td>
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<td>LONG TERM ORIENTATION</td>
<td>It is described as the linkage of a society with its own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future and to give priority to these existential goals in a different manner.</td>
<td>intermediate score of 51 in this dimension.</td>
<td>a low score of 26 on this dimension.</td>
<td>a score of 21 on this dimension.</td>
<td>a score of 36 in this dimension.</td>
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<tr>
<td>RESTRAINT Vs INDULGENCE</td>
<td>This dimension signifies the extent to which the people try to control their desires and impulses based on their upbringing.</td>
<td>low score of 26 signifying a culture of Restraint.</td>
<td>the score of USA is 68 signifying an Indulgent society.</td>
<td>has a high score of 71 which defines it to be Indulgent country.</td>
<td>has a high score of 68 which means Canadian culture to be Indulgent.</td>
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</table>

Figure 2: Scores of India, USA, Australia, & Canada on the six dimensions:

Note: The figure has been taken from https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/india, the-usa/ Figure 2 gives a comparative visual amongst India, Australia, Canada, and USA.
Based on the cultural differences drawn from the secondary sources the inference drawn follows with the belief that Indian students going to the sample countries viz USA, Australia & Canada are better equipped to sustain due to the strong cultural values being inculcated during the childhood.

Cultural values of the country are respectively linked to the people behaviours (D.M.S.B. Dissanayake, 2015). It is based on the framework of Hofstede cultural dimension Model.

1. Power Distance-
Power Distance (Hofstede, 2011) is defined as the extent of unequal distribution of acceptance and expectation of power in organisations and institutions.

India with a score of 77 signifies Large Power Distance where power is given most prominence where parents teach their children obedience from childhood and there is respect for older people in families. The education system is teacher-centred. Hierarchy is evidently inequality and juniors are expected to be directed.

USA, Australia, and Canada are 40, 38 and 39 respectively having Distance signifying use of power to be legitimate and subjected to criteria of good and evil. The parents treat their children as equals, no respect for older people so there is no fear of them. The education system is student-centred. Hierarchy signifies inequality of roles and juniors are expected to be consulted.

2. Individualism- Collectivism-
It defines the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. This dimension is a collective and not an individual’s characteristic and thus tries to signify the extent to which people which people are combined into groups. In an individualistic society, the connections between individuals are loose as they look after themselves whereas in a collectivist society, individuals form a strong, cohesive group which involves extended family.

India, with an intermediate score of 48, has both the traits of collectivistic and individualistic society. A high preference for belonging to a larger framework is evident from the collectivist side. It signifies importance of relationships over task. The purpose of education is learning how to do. The individualistic trait of Indian society is the presence of its dominant religion-Hinduism where the Hindus belief in the birth and rebirth after death and the rebirth which is resultant of the preceding life lived by the individual and hence there is an impact on the way they lead their lives and also rebirth. This intermediate score on this dimension is the resultant of This focus on individualism interacts with the other mixture of individualistic and collectivistic traits. USA, Australia & Canada show the scores of 90, 91 & 89 respectively signifying similar scores towards highly individualistic approach where everyone is supposed to take care of him or herself and immediate family only. The task prevails over relationship. There is a right of privacy. The purpose of education is learning how to learn.

3. Uncertainty - Avoidance-
This dimension deals with a society’s tolerance regarding ambiguous situations. It is indicative through the unstructured situations, which are new, unknown, surprising, and different. (Hofstede 2011).

India and USA have a score of 40 and 46 respectively, indicates a well thought risk taking mature culture. Tripathi and Cervone (2008) found that Indian corporate professionals were more concerned for the emotional and financial well-being of the extended family, co-workers, and community members for the achievement of work. There is a higher level of tolerance for different ideas, thoughts, and beliefs. (Thakur, 2010). This culture is reflected in officials as they tend to have an open attitude for risk bearing activities and business globalization but they also have to take calculated risk in this trade off. In USA, people are comparatively open to new technology, different business practices, new type of food, and various forms of personal expression. (Hofstede, n.d.b., p.1). Studies show that to develop a new concept by defying organizational, rules, procedures, and norms the employees within an organization are willing to fight against managerial resistance for the implementation of a new idea. (Scott et al., 1995). The score of Australia is 51, which is an intermediate score for this dimension. Canada scores 48 signifying more acceptance to uncertainty. It indicates the fast and easy acceptance of new ideas, different products, and a desire to try something new or innovative in terms of technology, business practices or consumer products. In Canada the people do not mind freedom of expression and are open to new ideas or expressions from anyone. Canadians are also emotionally less expressive and the culture of Canada is not rule-oriented.

4. Masculinity-Femineity
It expresses the (Hofstede, 2011) distribution of values and emotional roles between the genders.

Masculine has been defined as the assertive pole and feminine is defined as the modest, caring pole. In the masculine countries there is maximum social and emotional role differentiation between genders and in Feminine dominating countries there in minimum social and emotional role differentiation between the genders.
India and Canada are moderately masculine countries with a score of 56 and 52 respectively. In India, majority of decisions related to facts are taken by fathers and the mothers deal with feelings, generally girls cry but boys are considered tough so they do not cry, girls do not fight but boys fight back, fathers take decision regarding family size showing the masculine characteristics. In Canada there is work-life balance as they normally strive to attain high standards of performance in both work and play(sports).

USA and Australia are more towards masculine countries with a score of 62 and 61 respectively. In these countries work prevails over family which is evident as from the childhood Americans are introduced to an aggressive environment both academically and athletically. Competition fosters this attitude. (Marshall, 2014). The people of USA believe in constant improvement and hence try to explore new methods to achieve more success. USA maintains a higher level of disparity in the world. (Facundo et al., 2013). Australians follow the principle of constantly working hard to be the best they can be and it is the winner that takes all is the general behavior in both work and play. Australians are generally proud of their achievements in life and consider themselves as successful. It forms a basis for hiring and taking the decisions regarding promotions at the workplace. They tend to resolve the conflicts at the individual level and ultimate aim is to win.

5. Long and Short-Term Orientation

Long-term oriented societies emphasize that the important events in life will occur in future. The focus is to earn rewards, to include persistence, to save and the capability to adapt and change. In short term-oriented societies, personal steadiness and stability is emphasized. As per short term-oriented societies most important events in life occurred in the past or they may take place now.

Indians have a more long-term Orientation (51). In India, the expectation that the Indian business person has to provide the detailed business plans because of their need for Long-Term Orientations. Long term orientation is indicated by remaining in one job and this feature is changing due to economic growth (Thakur, 2010). For Indians the deadlines are open until and unless it is clearly specified that the deadline is critical, they assume the deadline to be flexible. (Walker, 2007). Providing others is an important goal. America scores 26, Australia has a score of 21, and Canada scores 36 on this dimension. They focus on short term profits and quick gains. Thrift and perseverance are important goals. Americans tend to seek instant gratification and are desperate for quicker results. Building relationships and to have long term partnerships is not always a priority to American business people which shows “Time is money” attitude in businesses (eDiplomat, 2010).

6. Indulgence Versus Restraint-

Indulgence signifies a society that allows free gratification of basic and natural human desires which are required to enjoy life and have fun. Restraint stands for the controlled gratification of needs and is regulated by strict social norms.

Indians remain low on Indulgence with a score of 26 which is evident in Indian managers as they are more work oriented. In USA the Indulgence score is higher at 68, expressed by their mangers style of work hard, party harder. Australia is having a high score of (71) and Canadian culture also has a high score of (68) therefore classified as indulgent. High score of indulgence signifies the willingness of people to realize their impulses and desires of enjoying life and having fun. The people of Australia and Canada are quite optimistic and tend to have a positive attitude towards life. They try to remain happy, spend money as they wish and give lot of importance to leisure time.

DISCUSSION-

India has different score in Power distance, Individualism- collectivism, long and short-term orientation and Indulgence vs restraint when compared with the three sample countries namely USA, Australia, and Canada.

When Indians are compared based on cultural dimension Power Distance it scores high on this dimension signifying the concern for hierarchy and inequality that is rooted in the family and school i.e., children are expected to obey their parents and elders. When the Indian student goes to USA, Australia, and Canada with low power distance score he experiences certain cultural difference but because of his upbringing and adjusting nature adapts easily in different cultural settings. Based on Individualism-collectivistic Indians show collectivist culture with more emphasis on relationships and well-being of the group as compared to USA, Australia and Canada which are more towards individualistic societies focusing on the needs of oneself and one’s immediate family.

Indian student with long term orientation focuses on the future, emphasizing traits such as persistence, perseverance, thrift, saving long-term growth and the capacity for adaptation. This dimension also contributes to the adaptation and hence retaining of the cultural values in contrast to USA, Australia and Canada with short term orientation indicating short term success or gratification, and emphasizing on the present than the future. (Hofstede, 1980). Indians remains low on indulgence where it is more likely to save money and focus on practical needs as compared to USA, Australia, and Canada where people may tend to spend more money on luxuries and enjoy more freedom (Hofstede, 2011).
Masculinity-Femininity refers to the (Hofstede, 2011) distribution of values and emotional roles between the genders. Masculine has been defined as the assertive pole and feminine is defined as the modest, caring pole. India and Canada are moderately masculine countries whereas USA and Australia are more towards masculine countries.

The Uncertainty-Avoidance of Hofstede’s cultural dimension reflects the tolerance of a society for uncertainty and ambiguity. India and USA both show a calculated and mature culture of well thought risk taking. Australia and Canada have an intermediate score for this dimension indicating more uncertainty accepting behaviour.

**CONCLUSION**

The cultural differences exist for Indian students going abroad in host countries as per critical analysis based on Hofstede Model. On the dimension of power distance, Individualism-collectivism, long and short-term orientation and indulgence vs Restrain. Indians are culturally different in comparison to host countries. The cultural traits of Indians viz children obedience, respectful attitude towards elders, teacher-centred education system, belief in collaborative effort, farsightedness, focus on adaptation, patience and securing future to strike balance between life and leisure, feature of restraint because of strict social norms makes them culturally enriched and culturally intelligent to adapt into new environment which is comparatively different as that from India. The reason behind this sustenance is the cultural values which have been developed in Indians during childhood due to which it is not difficult for them to adjust in new settings. Hence, although there are cultural differences existing as per analysis yet edge of Indians going abroad and adapting sustainability in new cultural environment is concluded.

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