

Exploring the Intercultural Communication Experiences of Pakistani Immigrants in Canada

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Abstract

The main aim of this study is to investigate the experiences of Pakistani immigrants on intercultural communication in engaging with the people of different cultures and languages for their pursuit of livelihood. The purposive sampling was followed in the selection of participants living in Mississauga, Vancouver and Toronto in Canada. The researcher conducted semi structured interviews of the eight participants of different age groups. The group of experts validated the collected data. This study is of qualitative approach, and the data was analyzed through the thematic analysis paradigm laid by Braun & Clark (2006). They had more personalized and nearer communication exchanges with greater politeness as they identified numerous barriers and bottlenecks to the way of developing the relational accommodation and space in Canadian culture. They also had some undesirable communication experiences of having free contact and access to public services. This study stands to be different one from the viewpoint of Pakistani immigrants. Effective means of intercultural communication involve a procedure of personal upbringing and self-reflection. It needs more self-awareness and assurance both on public and personal level for eradicating the undesirability among relationships of different cultures assembled at the same place as in Canada by being person-entered and public-centered intercultural communication.

Keywords: Intercultural Communication; Pakistani Immigrants; Relational Accommodation

1. Introduction

The modern man is all set to renovate the old age struggle for survival. He is not confined demographically to one area, but he has gone through the process of redefinition of his being as a citizen of the world. This rediscovery continues freely through the process of work, education, technological elevation and limitless physical browsing for business. In this pursuit, according to Turner (2006), for being an international citizen, he has to thaw ethnic, linguistic and national boundaries.

Immigration is a widely entailed phenomenon around the globe. It brings socio-demographic and sociopolitical variations. It generates greater cultural diversity. It causes the multiplicity in every walk of the host societies. People immigrate mainly in search of better living conditions with the particular purpose preferably for seeking lucrative livelihood and settling down in the hosting country for a long period of time.

Cultural and racial diversity are prominently distinctive features of the inhabitants of Canada. Thousands of immigrants in Pakistan every year leave the homeland for Canada in search of a

successful future. Such sojourns, however, appear to be full of challenges. According to Choudhry (2001) immigration takes along innumerable opportunities but these also cause several risks. Al-Issa and Tousignant (1997) also indicate variegated factors as cost of professional status, objectives struggles and cultural shock that add to the prolongation of stress and strain among immigrants. The research study of Maraj (1996) finds that job-related displacement has a larger motivation than economic influence on educated professional immigrants.

1.2 Immigration Causes of Pakistani Nationals to Canada

The migration to Canada began sometime after the historic independence of Pakistan in 1947. This migration trend started gaining momentum in the late 1950s and early 1960s in small numbers. The preference was eminently accorded to the people with advanced professional and skillful credentials. This number increased with escalating pace after 1971. The majority of immigrants considered themselves to be travellers for a brief stay that would return after earning money but the amenities awarded in the foreign land hanged their thinking.

The statistics of the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan based in Islamabad has revealed that at least 450,000 citizens in the first half of 2025 have gone from the country in search of jobs abroad. Accordingly, the people have moved towards countries like Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar ,the UAE, Bahrain Gulf states and other countries where they believe to earn viable wages and surplus economic benefits that appeared to compensate the adversities they would face in their own country.

In the current scenario in Pakistan, the economic uncertainty is an irrefutable reality. It has deep implications to persist for a longer period of time. The IMF has also highlighted a quite gloomy picture of the economy. The recent policy decisions of the government have not only made it difficult for skilled people to envisage a contented life in the country but also cannot enforce the citizens by offering incentives to stay back in the country. The immigration of Pakistanis to Canada remains afloat without any pause.

The people of Pakistani origin in Canada exceed 300,000. This is comparatively smaller community in Canada that is gradually expanding with the most of the people of Pakistani origin residing in Toronto, Vancouver, Mississauga and Montreal. One of the largest Pakistani Diasporas in Canada is based in Greater Toronto. One of every five Canadians is an immigrant. This is 20.6% of the total population.

Pakistani immigrants in Canada face extra obstacles including language as one of the most prevailing problems since English and French are the officially spoken languages in Canada. Most of the Pakistanis are not fluent in either and lack in having fundamental professional knowledge to get the job by fulfilling its official requirements. Consequently, they become prone to experiencing problems and hardships in Canadian culture which differs significantly from Pakistani culture.

2. Review of Literature

The service requirement experiences and expectations of immigrants are often different from those of the local inhabitants and the job and service status of arriving immigrants is often lesser than that of the native inhabitants (Rechel. etal, 2013). According to Torán-Monserrat (2013) & García-Sierra etal (2020), the notable conditions they experience in the host country are multiple: limited income, separation from family, cultural changes, social isolation and discrimination. These conditions turn out to be different from what they expected on the departure from homeland. Resultantly, they lead them to stress, depression, anxiety and unsystematic lifestyles. These emerging issues faced by immigrants are the result of sanity job-related resources, narrow socio-economic and political instability back home (Malmusi., 2014). The review of literature in this area reveals that the main experiences as barriers and impediments to the accomplishment of the jobs and other settlements, the immigrants face are notably related to culture, language and communication (Ahmed. 2016 & Tuli., 2020).

2.1. Intercultural Competence

It is essential to engage the students academically at advanced level from different cultures in the comprehension of the intercultural competition so that they become loser to live, learn and lead the life together. According to the notable studies conducted by Holmes (2005-6) and Holmes and O'Neill (2005), intercultural communication at a functional level by group or by brief meetings in the classroom does not nurture intercultural friendships nor develop intercultural competence. It may even emphasize cultural stereotypes. On the other hand, the review studies conducted in different context as Deardorff (2009), Rathje (2007), Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) have pursued to explain the concept of intercultural competence as the understandings of the processes by which individuals obtain, or an aid others to obtain intercultural competence but it abounds elusiveness. According to Arasaratnam, L.A (2016), intercultural competence stresses on bidirectional and interactive nature but the earlier one is left unexplored and given the nominal significance and intercultural communication is analyzed at the individual level by the job seeker immigrants. Their understanding of intercultural competence depends on personal knowledge as a set of perception for what not to do and what to do in some specific context and circumstances pertaining to group, place and time affiliations (Holmes; O'Neill 2012).

The mainstream authors stand divergent on the definition of intercultural competence, according to Holmes. & O'Neill. (.2012) & Alizadeh,; Chavan, 2016) "the capability of successfully managing collaboration and interactions with people, individuals, families, groups and communities from dissimilar and diverse cultural settings and contexts," which is one of the very essential elements to overcoming and removing obstacles and providing ideal, reasonable and unbiased carefulness (Holmes; O'Neill, 2012) &, (Alizadeh, ; Chavan (2016). Intercultural competence comprises a incessantly continuous process of learning in which it is one of main pillars of the objectives of seeking job for immigrants Degrie (2017) &, Paternotte (2017). Intercultural communication and intercultural competence are utilized interchangeably in various subjects (Arasaratnam 2016) because competence is established in the process of communication and the interpersonal at whereas intercultural communication is the contact among professionals at workplace from different cultural backgrounds and mental constructs in order to reach at a viable understanding and working harmony to form a common and mutual reality for establishment of an acceptable relationship (Martin, 2015).. This composite cult of communication needs non-verbal and verbal skills, cultural adaptability, knowledge and sensitivity along with productive emotional expression. (Paternotte (2015); Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) present the view of "rationality" in intercultural communication. They are interested more in understanding the solid process of individual engagement to develop competences and in how people enhance the management of intercultural interactions.

2.2. Immigrant Absorption of culture or Acculturation

Immigrants are prone to undergoing strange and unusual experiences to pursue the job related goals from their arrival to the host country. They face to be occupied in a linear and dynamic process of cultural absorption simply called acculturation. This is aimed at increasing the valuable cultural, social and communicative competences. It allows them to abide to a new living environment. It leads them to encounter a type of social interaction (Oppedal.etal 2020) & (Abraí do-Lanza, 2016). The acculturation process is meant to become an individual with overall intercultural competence and having a knack of understanding every aspect of human life and the experiences followed in the host country. A crucial element in the acculturation of immigrants is language proficiency supported by social norms and values. The immigrants desire for clear, friendly, courteous intercultural communication, personalized interaction and contentment in intercultural encounters (Degrie, 2017); (Paternotte, 2017); (Alpers, 2018); (Rocque, Leanza, 2015).

Several undesirable experiences have been recognized which are involved in the major job settings (Ahmed, 2016): poor communication skills of the professionals with inactive listening, undue use of technicalities, lop-sided and irregular conversations lacking mutual respect. According to Rocque & Leanza (2015), these experiences are followed by several barriers to intercultural competence. They are not only cultural but personal, social and structural (Côté, D, 2013; Kleinman & Benson, 2006).

The time consumed in the host country by the immigrants encourages not only their language proficiency but also their relationships with settled professionals, and provide with the access to use the system and service outlets (Gelpí –Acosta..etal, 2016 & Ojikutu etal 2014). Most of the Pakistani immigrants are progressing to be well integrated into Canadian society. The officials for immigrants are partly assistive to all immigrant settings and the individual immigrants have to personally prove the professional worth to become nicely assimilated into the Canadian society by gaining suitable work to live and today a large part of Pakistani diaspora is serving in the every walk of the society in Canada.

3. Methodology

The study of intercultural communication mostly concentrates on the viewpoint of the individual formed of perceptions and experiences raised in different cultural, ethnic and religious segments. Thus, the qualitative approach is followed to collect the data pertaining to intercultural communication brand of study. Creswell (2014) says that the qualitative approach provides thorough description of the behavior of the participants in the original setting. This study focuses on the different and diverse experiences of the Pakistani immigrants living in different cities in Canada. They are the exponents of the experiences, they encountered, and in seeking the suitable jobs in the country which was completely new to them with the indigenously local educational credential and insufficient linguistic and cultural knowledge of the host country Canada.

3.1. Population

This study is based on exploring the intercultural communication experiences of the Pakistani immigrants in Canada where the immigrants are exposed to different intercultural communication realities. The population of the study, therefore, includes Pakistani diaspora residing in Canada for the period of more than six years. They are minority groups in Canada who experienced diverse challenges to gain the livelihood and assimilated into Canadian culture after a decade of struggle amidst the persistent problems at different social, political, economic and educational forums. The target population for the study includes the immigrants of Pakistani origin. They visit Pakistan once or twice a year for seeing their parents.

3.2. Sampling

The purposive sampling was followed in the study to collect the data. The study focuses on exploring the intercultural communication experiences of Pakistani immigrants in Canada. Eleven participants were identified to interview but only the eight of them were approached. The three of the available eight participants were interviewed face to face on their visit back home in Qasimabad, Hyderabad, Pakistan. The remaining five participants were approached through Zoom to express their experiences as immigrants in pursuit of livelihood in Canada. Here lie the characteristics of the participants for interview:

Serial	Participants	Gender	Age	Years in Canada	Education
01	P1	Man	39	04	Bachelor
02	P2	Woman	51	13	Secondary
03	P3	Woman	47	07	Secondary
04	P4	Woman	43	06	Bachelor
05	P5	Man	52	14	Masters
06	P6	Man	37	05	Bachelor
07	P7	Man	38	04	Bachelor
08	P8	Man	53	12	Masters

The eighth participant was very keen to arrange other five participants out of there uneven work schedule to be part of the study. The data was collected from 08 participants of different age described

in the table who are now inhabitants of different cities of Canada. They produced a sufficient amount of data to analyze it by keeping in view the thematic analysis of Braun & Clark (2006). The less number of participants is sufficiently enough in a type of qualitative study Saunders et al (2017) sine it provides substantial amount of rich data as Cui and Costa (2022) conducted the study on a single participant from the context. This study involves eight Pakistani immigrants in Canada.

4. Research Tools and Data Analysis

The present study intends to explore the intercultural communication experiences of Pakistani immigrants in Canada. In this regard, semi structured interviews were conducted as a more responding way to gather detailed experiences of the participants. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), the practice of interview is the pertinently eminent technique to produce responses. It provides an insiders' viewpoint about the different experiences of positivity and negativity. Therefore, semi-structured interviews from the eight participants were conducted in this study. The researcher started asking common questions at the beginning but some of the questions emerged from the responses of the participants. The five of the total eight participants were available in Pakistan on their causal visits so the face-to-face interviews were a possible task and they were conducted nicely. The remaining five participants were available online for interviews on Zoom. All interviews were recorded on the digital device. The formal consent was taken from the participants. They were also briefed about the nature of study. It was the discretion of the online participants either to turn on or turn off their cameras during the interview. The participants were informed of the academic purport of the study. They were assured that their identity would not be disclosed nor any part of the information garnered from them would be misused. Consequently, the identity of participants was kept incognito. They were assigned different codes. The way of conducting interviews along with the order of the asking questions was validated by the expert opinions that supervised and coordinated in this study. The interviews were initially recorded. Although, this was a cumbersome task, it was transcribed later for data analysis to get enriched data. Every individual session for interview lasted for 30 to 50 minutes. It depended on the possession of the individual approach to express divergent experiences of the intercultural communication as an immigrant in Canada.

The collected data through semi-structured interviews was coded and categorized.

The themes and sub-themes were produced after a thoroughly comprehensive analysis. The identity of all participants was kept undisclosed with P-1, P-2, P-3, P-4, P-5, P-6, P-7 and P-8).

5. Findings of the study

The core category for the researcher was to explore the intercultural experiences of Pakistani immigrants in Canada. The focus of this study goes around this aspect for exploration but many other themes and areas emerged during the interviews with the participants

5.1. Pre & Post Immigration Experiences

The immigrants endeavored to arrive at Canada with multiple objectives, dreams, expectations and hopes. They envisioned the prolongation in prosperity, bright future for children, and accomplishment of the citizenship of Canada along with the achievement of the different benefits accorded in being the part of Canadian social settings. These pre-immigration experiences were strengthened by the often-heard claims about Canada as the country of countless opportunities and chances. The arrival in Canada will be a token of grabbing innumerable facilities. Some of the participants said:

P-3, I was so jubilant during my preparations for Canada in Pakistan that I would find every mean of life easily and so excited to move there.

P-5, my hopes were high, even I acted differently with people, I arrogantly argued with the official at the University of Sindh Jamshoro, when he delayed the process of issuing me the pass certificate. I wanted to have it so fast in an insane excitement for Canada.

P-2,my home country was being underrated by me during my private talks with my friends and colleagues but now I have realized that how difficult it becomes to find a place in foreign lands

The participants had many hopes for a better life in Canada in no time. They were sunk down soon. They met the bitter intercultural experiences of life in the new country. This category exposes the severe difference between the pre-immigration hopes and post-immigration intercultural realities consisted of hardship, discrimination and shocks in different culture, easy availability of jobs and security of the future of children. Many participants expressed the resentment over the un-fulfillment of the expectations owing to the different intercultural realities in Canada.

P-5, I had my own home and inherited income source in Pakistan but I felt that I had lost my property and easy life in Canada.

P-8,.....nothing is as fine as we thought in Pakistan for living in Canada. One has to face bitter experiences to do everything of his own

5.2. Adversity in Search of APT Job

The participants were initially disappointed over the immigration process as the point-system used in screening the people for the eligibility of Canadian immigration. They experienced huge inconsistencies in this process. Most of the immigrants experienced that they were incapable to vie equally for professional jobs. Their Pakistani qualifications were not apt to be acknowledged as fulfilling the demands of various job designations in Canada. They were prone to perform low-paying works at various places. This caused the availability of meager financial resources further intensified the high cost of living. The priority was being given in the job selections to the European who had educational and professional credentials matching more the Canadian professional demands than the graduations from Pakistani institutions. This state became more frustrating when the Pakistani English accent and accuracy was considered to be less accommodative:

P-3, ...I had a different idea at the beginning about the screening system but it became confusing for me to get the needing points for work.

P-8, my degree in English literature did not help me because the Canadian schools and colleges have a different frame of subjects.

P-1,..... doing many works for me was too severe, I hired a cab from the company and worked with private security agency and two days of week I served with postal group in Toronto for meeting my family expenses which are higher than that of Pakistan. Some time, I was dollar less and could not easily get new dress.

P-7, there were several petty amounts for me to get from different work places.

P-6, Canadians were giving importance to the white in jobs and they preferred their qualifications to ours

P-4,my style of speaking English was not easy for the Canadian to understand ...most of the times, the answers to my speech was a vibrant What.....Pardon.....Sorry

5.3. Deterioration of Eastern Family and Culture

Some of the immigrants also had bad impacts on their South Asian Islamic culture and family. The people in the nearby vicinity and a workplace had quite different practices averse to Islamic culture and concept of family lives. The children were out of the control of the parental authority. This self-established authority of children was the causes of strains and occasional strife among the parents about their decision of immigration to Canada from Pakistan.

P-3, I don't know anyone in my neighborhood in Montreal. Eid day went silent even my children were on the academic trip to the falls.

P-7... in the central mosque at Montreal, I see mostly the praying men from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan weeping because they say that they left the homeland for the better future of children and they have lost their children in the western culture and values of the parents and they mock on our values as being mediocre

P-8, once I asked my son to get his shoulder falling hair trimmed, on his objection, I slapped him; he complained against me to the helpline and caused me to appear before the official authority for warning.

P-6, I wish I had failed in IELTS test so as to be dropped from the immigration campaign.

P-2, I was shocked during my stay with Turkish origin colleague at the restaurant in Ontario where we were served with something religiously forbidden to eat. I brought this to the notice of the colleague and he said that he eats these things and he was Muslim two generations ago not now.

5.4. Sense of Contentment and Redemption in New Land

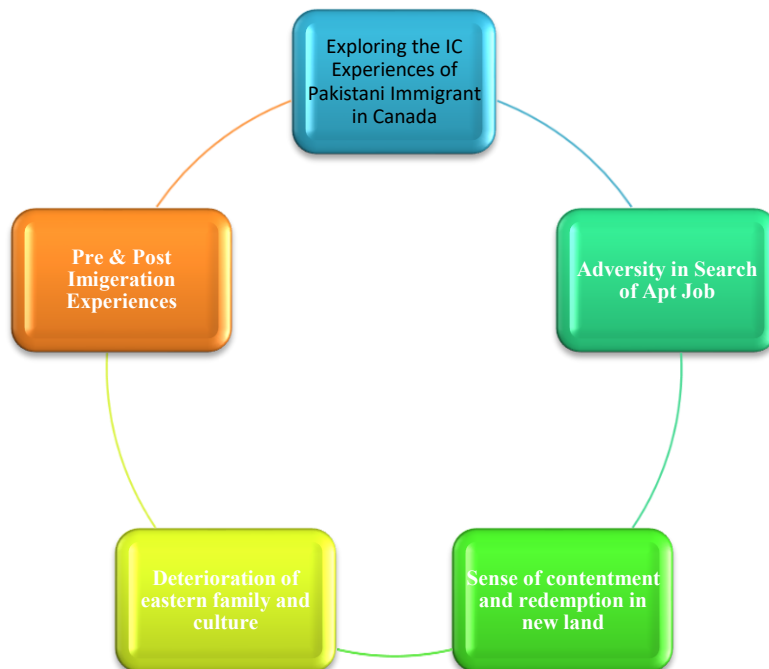
The intercultural experiences of Pakistani immigrants were not only negative and complaining. They expressed various aspects of Canadian cultural life as appreciative. They are comparatively better than those of Pakistan. They revealed that the services of Canada as the viability of free schooling and facilities of health are ahead of Pakistan. They also appreciated the equality in social service and law in Canada. In particular, they feel privileged to have obtained the Canadian passport that have given a sense of achievement after several teething trials.

P-3, many things are positive in Canada once you achieve any solid place.

P-8, Once, I starting feeling indifferent with sudden ache in my right arm and the main in park arranged the ambulance and I was nicely treated and was advised by the medical practitioners to consult them on regular basis on phone.

P-6, schools are more advanced here and help children a lot.

P-7, I got Canadian passport. It is great for me and can go easily any wherein the world.



6. Discussion

Four stages were developed on the basis of the findings for the exportation of intercultural experiences of Pakistani immigrants in Canada. They identify the practices of adjustment or settlement experienced by the Pakistani immigrants amidst different cultural patterns in Canada.

6.1. Pre & Post Immigration Experiences

This finding is in consonance with the notable research conducted by Maraj (1996).that the immigration to the new country by the people is the wish for the socio economic prosperity and the desire for the better future of the children. The reasons behind this motivation are the unstable socio economic conditions prevalent in Pakistan. Pakistan has a scarcity of facilities to provide in the field of education and health with other issues of social security and economic degeneration being encountered by the people. For them, economic prosperity and attainment of the quality life seem to

be a myth. Therefore, the people in Pakistan take Canada as the land of luxury and opportunities and they attempt to pursue the immigration process and go through a lengthy procedure of formalities.

In contrast to the pre-immigration experiences of excitement, the immigrants experience the different intercultural situation in the host country. These marginalize the immigrants socially, economically and even emotionally when they encounter new experience which they were previously unknown of in the new country, (Arredondo-Dowd, 1981; Aroian, 1990; Romero Martha, 1981; Ward & Styles, 2003). Their pre-immigration expectations dash down as they lose well set aboriginal economic and social positions in the homeland. According to Maraj (1996) revealed that the immigrants experience a loss of identity and self-recognition amidst the various intercultural barriers.

6.2. Adversity In Search of APT Job

Every immigrant tries to find a suitable job in Canada according to the expectations but this becomes quite difficult when he is encountered with different criterion for the job positions at workplaces worth. Maraj's (1996) found that immigrants were not appropriately informed by the Canadian consulates about the correct way to the acquisition of jobs in their home countries. Such barriers curtail the professional development of the immigrants in Canada as a result of non-recognition and devaluation of the skills (Whittebrood & Robertson, 1991). According to the report of Canadian Task Force (1988), this embodied difference in the process of immigration and employment is a disfavor to immigrants to national interests. They are discriminated on the basis of different backgrounds along with educational ones which appear to be less effective in the Canadian jobs context. They are mostly considered for low paying jobs. English language efficacy is also one of the factors to be acculturated in the workplace among the number of different cultural people. Most of the times, it becomes one of the barriers to obtain the suitable job. They continue to perform several works at times so as to meet the high cost life in Canada Maraj (1996) also found that immigrants experience discrimination in the Canadian workforce The discrimination and non-acknowledgement of skills are further degraded by the incapability of the immigrants to acquire local experience in respective areas.

Most of the studies conducted in this area have found that the most critical barrier at the work force is a lack of Canadian job experience and practicability of foreign qualification. According to the Ministry of Immigration in Canada (2005), the treasure trove of skillfully experienced immigrants is wasted in smoke at factories and is accorded with petty amount jobs. According to Maraj (1996), the quality of life of the low paying workers is degenerated.

6.3. Deterioration of Eastern Family and Culture

According to Maraj (1996), the immigration to the foreign land adversely affects the family fabric. The parents fall in stress and strife when their authority is badly challenged by their children in the host countries. They no longer seem to impose the values of morality on them. They become autonomous and independent when they attain the age period called sweet sixteen in Canadian context. This dash down the wishful parental thinking that they left the home land for. They lament over the loss of parental authority and fall in depression and homesickness (Arredondo-Dowd, 1981; Fisher, 1989; Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Lee, 1994; Ward & Styles, 2003). They feel to be losing the religious faith during the process of acculturation. They also feel marginalized in the absence of community unanimity and solidarity. In this regard, Hyman's (1997) study reveals the significance of community networks for immigrants to diminish the adverse effects of migration.

The apprehension generally exits when they are exposed to different culture. It becomes challenging for the immigrants to avoid being the part of any culturally and religiously forbidden practices. It turns out to be a cultural shock because it is difficult to preserve and maintain cultural specialty based on norms and beliefs

Pakistani immigrants in Canada experienced undesirable events with regards to the exposure of children to Canadian culture.

6.4. Sense of Contentment and Redemption in New Land

This category reveals the sense of contentment and redemption of Pakistani immigrants in Canada after a series of tribulations caused by intercultural challenges. They were first appreciative of amenities accorded in Canadian culture noticeably the Canadian social networking which is assistive and makes the immigrant feel comparatively better as Whittebrood and Robertson (1991) emphasized the necessity of helpful networking that stresses ethnic identity and adjustment after immigration. The participants were contented on the presence of educational and health care resources for all and sundry in Canada. This strengthens the belief of sufficiency of resources in future. Although, the participants stand firm on thinking to be discriminated in the sphere of jobs, the highly motivating thing in Canada is equality, impartiality and fairness in the social system before the law. Some participants mentioned Canadian citizenship enables them to be encouraged and optimistic. Most of the participants of the study are practicing Muslims. They believed that praying at Mosques in congregations with other Muslim immigrants also offered them the sense of solidarity away home diminished the stress was another way that these women coped with their post immigration stress.

7. Conclusion

Immigration is a major life transition process. It has numerous social, economic, emotional and especially cultural consequences. Pakistani immigrants in Canada experienced the confrontation of diverse realities quite averse to the early expectations. The participants felt marginalized on the basis of their incompatible professional profiles to Canadian work considerations. This increased the sense of discrimination and cultural dislocation. Although, the participants were actively critical at Canadian culture, they were at the same time completely reluctant to refute the Canadian citizenship. The active participations of Pakistani immigrants in Canada accelerated the pace of acculturation. Today, from Canadian parliament to passerby's paths, Pakistani people are in abundance and serving as the law abiding citizen of Canada.

The study highlights the dire need for culturally sensitive programs that can propagate supportive counseling, community support services, and intercultural job related drills, and social networking opportunities, religious support groups so as to make the intercultural immigration experience flexible. It might be helpful for people to get the pre departure diversity counseling as practiced in America in the post-World War II period.

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