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Socio-Cultural Diversity as Academic Benefit of Higher Education Institutions: A Study of the Interstate Students in Central University of Punjab

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Abstract:

The Central University of Punjab conducted a study on the benefits of socio-cultural development in higher education for interstate students from 5 states. 50 respondents from Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal were selected from each of the five states. The study is qualitative and considers both positive and negative effects of sociocultural diversity on students' lives. Despite facing issues, students have benefited from coming across new cultures and enhancing their knowledge in academics and personal life. The research focuses on academic benefits but also discusses other benefits and disadvantages such as communication problems and change in food

habits. The change in culture and environment has adversely affected the daily life routine of students from different states. Despite this, they have to adjust and move forward towards their goals.

Keywords: Socio-Cultural Diversity, Higher Education Institutions, Interstate Students.

1. Introduction: The global landscape of higher education has witnessed a notable shift in emphasis towards diversity and inclusivity in recent times. Higher education institutions now serve as both hubs for academic study and as melting pots for various cultures, philosophies, and viewpoints. The presence of interstate students, who bring with them distinct sociocultural backgrounds that enhance their own and their peers' educational experiences, is a noteworthy aspect of this diversity. The goal of this study is to investigate the numerous academic advantages that the sociocultural diversity that interstate students at Punjab's Central University provide. Drawn from every state in the country, the Central University of Punjab is a microcosm of India's heterogeneous socio-cultural fabric. Along with bringing with them unique linguistic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds, these students also bring with them regional customs and traditions. This convergence of diversity creates a rich canvas for scholarly inquiry, giving both teachers and students the chance to interact with viewpoints and experiences that are different from their own. Although socio-cultural diversity in higher education has been shown to have positive effects on academic performance, there is still a dearth of empirical studies specifically examining the effects of interstate students in Indian universities, especially when it comes to Punjab. In order to close this gap, this study looks at the perceptions and experiences of local and interstate students about the impact of Drawn from every state in the country, the Central University of Punjab is a microcosm of India's heterogeneous socio-cultural fabric. Along with bringing with them unique linguistic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds, these students also bring with them regional customs and traditions. This convergence of diversity creates a rich canvas for scholarly inquiry, giving both teachers and students the chance to interact with viewpoints and experiences that are different from their own.

Although socio-cultural diversity in higher education has been shown to have positive effects on academic performance, there is still a dearth of empirical studies specifically examining the effects of interstate students in Indian universities, especially when it comes to Punjab. In order to close this gap, this study looks at the perceptions and experiences of local and interstate students about the impact of socio-cultural diversity on their academic endeavors.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 McLean (1983) conducted a study on Education and cultural diversity in Britain, where he studied basically about immigrants. England and Wales tried to borrow information from other countries to implement it in the educational policy towards cultural diversity, but it was very unsuitable. The magazine focuses on how comparative studies might affect how guidelines are developed and implemented in education, social development, and

national and international cooperation. Contributions from related fields such as government, management, sociology, technology, and communications that have an impact on educational policy decisions are welcomed by Comparative Education.

- 2.2 **Cross (2004)** conducted a study on institutionalising campus diversity in South African higher education, where he discussed that increasingly the social, educational, cultural, linguistic, religious and racial diversity of South African society has been looking for expressions within the higher education institutions in South Africa. Variety and diversification have become a part of the educational and policy debates, posing new challenges to South African institutions. Most of these institutions are trying to respond to these above-mentioned challenges within the context of the transformation process, affecting academic life from student access and support. This paper focuses on how the higher education institutions of South Africa are meeting these challenges. how the ideas, initiatives or practices around diversity have been appropriated and made part of the mainstream intellectual and academic discourses. It also investigates the social and epistemological conditions of possibility for meaningful scholarship
- 2.3 **Hudelson and Stalder (2005)** focussed in their study of socio-cultural diversity and medical education that there has been an immense increase in the variety of populations due to global migration. This study mainly focuses on how physicians should work efficiently with people from different backgrounds. In medical education, socio-cultural diversity should not affect any physician. They should ignore the socio-cultural differences of other people. Populations have become more diverse due to global migration patterns, and doctors must have the skills to effectively treat patients from different origins. However, some components of medical education can support the notion that doctors are exempt from having to account for social and cultural disparities in their work. The concept of cultural competence must be included in every facet of medical education if we are to produce doctors who can deliver high-quality treatment to patients from a variety of backgrounds. Only then will it no longer be seen as an "optional" medicine component.
- 2.4 **Ghosh (2012)**, in his article diversity and excellence in higher education, has discussed the variety and the equal opportunities that can be undertaken to achieve excellence in education. She also talks about how complex globalisation is, how expanded diversity is and how it helps boost higher education globally. Power, equality, and diversity-related questions have frequently come up in my teaching, research, and community work in Canada. How can underprivileged groups in higher education attain equality of opportunity? What standards are used to identify those who are disadvantaged in society? Is the applicant's financial situation a better criterion for acceptance into a university than their race, ethnicity, or gender? Should colleges advocate for diversity, equality, or both? We must consider what distinctive viewpoints comparative and international education can bring to an issue in the context of the work of the Comparative and International Education Society, as well as how we can advance knowledge of the world and human development. How can we, as comparativists, be

engaged in researching issues of inequality.

2.5 Park, Denson and Bowman (2013) in their article does socio economic diversity make a difference? considers whether the socioeconomic diversity of the undergraduate student body and experiences with cross-class interaction (CCI) are significantly related to cross-racial interaction (CRI) and engagement with curricular/co-curricular diversity (CCD) activities. Individual students who reported higher levels of CCI had significantly higher levels of CRI and CCD. While the socioeconomic diversity of the student body had no direct effect on student involvement in CCD activities or CRI, it had an indirect effect on these activities via CCI. In other words, a socioeconomically diverse institution is associated with more frequent interactions across class lines, which is associated both with more frequent interactions across race and greater involvement in CCD activities. Findings indicate that both socioeconomic and racial diversity are essential to promoting a positive campus racial climate and that racial and socioeconomic diversity, while interrelated, are not interchangeable. Implications for the campus climate for diversity are discussed."

2.6 Sabharwal and Malish (2018) in their article studied how Affirmative action regulations have contributed to the massification of India's higher education system and the development of a varied student body on campuses. In terms of their caste, ethnic, class, language, regional, and religious backgrounds, students' makeup reflects diversity. In light of this, CPRHE conducted a thorough study to comprehend the dynamics of student diversity on Indian higher education campuses. Higher education institutions in six states, including Bihar, Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh, participated in the study. The study included both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. An effort has been made to theorise the new phenomena of student diversity based on actual data.

3. Objectives: The main aim of this research is to study the academic benefits face by the interstate students of the Central University of Punjab, which is caused by the presence of socio-cultural diversity in the campus.

- To understand how does the socio-cultural diversity affecting the lives of the interstate students both positively and negatively.
- To examine the changes, they have to face that is brought by the diversity and how much does this diversity affects the academics of these students.

Though there are many disadvantages of the socio-cultural diversity in the educational field but the main motive of this study is to find out the benefits that are caused by the diversity in the academic field.

- To understand the advantages faced by the interstate students in their education because of this diversity.
- To analyse how they are adjusting in this diverse environment and coping up with their studies at the same time.

- To examine the new changes, they have adopted that is brought by the socio-cultural diversity, both in their personal life and academics.

4. Research Methodology:

4.1 Universe: The study focuses on the students who comes from different states of India to study in the Central University of Punjab and how they are affected due to the socio-cultural diversity. There are thousands of students who have come from different cultural backgrounds to study here in the Central University of Punjab. Hence the campus is tremendously diverse in nature, both socially and culturally. Therefore, The Central University of Punjab has been selected as the main area of this study. This is because the study totally depends on the traits that how a student can be academically benefitted due to the presence of sociocultural diversity in the campus. Hence numerous students come here to pursue their degrees from diverse cultural background, so it is perfect to conduct a research in this area. It helped to enhance the knowledge regarding the concept of this research. It is also beneficial for the study to collect data from respondents who belong from different cultural backgrounds and have various social aspects toward a particular topic.

4.2 Sample size: The study focusses on students from 5 states. From each of those 5 states chosen 10 respondents were chosen, out of which 5 are male and 5 are female. In total there are 50 respondents. The 5 states are Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal. Hence, there are 10 students from each of the above-mentioned states, who are the respondents for this research work.

4.3 Tools and Techniques: The data collection of the research work would be done with the help of **interview schedule**. Interview schedule consist of a number of structured questions, this helps as a guide for the respondents, in order to collect data about some particular topics. Hence, a list of structured questions was prepared to collect data from 50 respondents, who belong from different cultural backgrounds and studies in Central University of Punjab. As the area of study is the Central University of Punjab and respondents are from different states so it is **stratified sampling**. The 5 states were randomly chosen hence it falls under **random sampling** as well. A list of 30 structured questions in total were prepared and all of them are open ended questions. The study does not include any numerical findings; hence the research work is **qualitative** in nature.

4.4 Noteworthy contribution of study: There are numerous numbers of research works that have been conducted on socio-cultural diversity. There have been researches which have talked about the relation between the cultural diversity and education, then how the socio cultural diversity affects the people in India. How does the socio cultural diversity affects the education system and what changes does it brings in this field. Most of the researches have talked about the negative aspects of the socio cultural diversity in the academic field. What problem does it cause in education. But my study focuses on the advantages brought due to the socio-cultural diversity in the academic field. In The Central University of Punjab there are huge numbers of students who come from different cultural background, hence they mingle with people from different states and learn about new

cultures of that state. This helps them to enhance their knowledge about new cultures, which becomes beneficial for them in both academic field and personal life. Hence the topic is totally base on the benefits of socio cultural diversity in higher education, face by the interstate students studying in this Central University of Punjab.

5. Analysis:

States:	Girls:	Boy:
Andhra Pradesh	5	5
Jammu And Kashmir	5	5
Kerala	5	5
Tamil Nadu	1	5
West Bengal	5	5
Total	21	25

Table 5.1: States and Respondents

For the research study I have chosen total 5 states and 10 students from each of these states randomly. Except Tamil Nadu, I am able to collect the data from 10 students from each of the 4 states. But in case of Tamil Nadu I was able to collect data from 5 boys, but I was unable to find more than 1 girl. In this university there is only 1 girl who studies here from the state of Tamil Nadu. In all there are total 46 respondents for the research work.

While studying the responses of my subjects, it is very clear that in spite of the academic benefits, each and every one of my respondents has been going through a lot of problems due to this socio-cultural diversity. While conducting the interview personally through the questionnaire framed by me, it can be analysed that the students are experiencing both positive and negative effects due to this socio-cultural diversity.

States:	Yes	No
Andhra Pradesh	7	3
Jammu And Kashmir	5	5
Kerala	8	2
Tamil Nadu	4	2
West Bengal	7	3
Total	31	15

Table 5.2: Staying far away from the hometown alone.

Hence, we can say that 67% of the chosen respondents are staying alone away from their hometown for the first time. They had never been to any place for studies or other purpose before coming to this university. 32% of the respondents have already experienced staying alone for their studies, so it is not new for them to adjust in a new place and accepting the

various changes happening around them, but still they face various cultural and social changes after coming here, which has affected them both positively and negatively.

States:	Language:	Food:	Both:
Andhra Pradesh	3	2	5
Jammu And Kashmir	0	10	0
Kerala	2	1	7
Tamil Nadu	0	0	6
West Bengal	1	6	3
Total	6	19	21

Table 5.3: Cultural changes experienced by respondents in CUPB

From this above table it can be summarized that 13% of the respondents have problem with language only. They experience a lot of problems in communicating with others. Whereas 41% of the respondents suffer drastically due to the change in their food habits. But they hardly face any issues in communications with anyone, specially the locals. The rest of the 45% experience change both in their in food habits and language problem. Neither can they eat properly nor can they communicate properly with others.

States:	Change In Sleep Routine:	Skipping Food:	Being More Socialised:
Andhra Pradesh	5	3	2
Jammu And Kashmir	4	1	5
Kerala	3	4	3
Tamil Nadu	2	4	0
West Bengal	4	2	4
Total	18	14	14

Table 5.4 New habits adopted by respondents in CUPB

From the above table we can analyse that after coming to the university, majority of the chosen respondents have experienced change in their sleep routine. It has been affected by the timings of the classes and change in daily life routine. 39% of the subjects have adopted it as a new habit. But 30% of the subjects have started skipping their meal due to various reasons, which includes pressure of academic programs or change in their environment and daily lifestyle. The other 30% claims to be more socialised because of the presence of socio-cultural diversity in the campus.

States	Yes	No
Andhra Pradesh	8	2
Jammu And Kashmir	4	6
Kerala	8	2
Tamil Nadu	6	0
West Bengal	4	6
Total	30	16

Table 5.5 Effects of socio-cultural diversity in daily life routines.

This table shows that if the socio cultural diversity is causing any effects on the daily life routine of the interstate students. Here it is seen that 65% of the respondents feel that due to socio cultural diversity, they are facing a drastic change in their daily life routine. Specially the respondents who belong from the south have more problem to adjust here, because it is hard for them to communicate and adjust with the new environment and totally new food habits. Hence the socio cultural diversity affects their daily life adversely.

Whereas the rest 34% doesn't feel that the socio cultural diversity is affecting their daily life routine in any ways. Specially the respondents from Jammu and Kashmir do not face any kind of problem in communication, as their language is somewhat same as Punjabi language. They do face problem due to the change in food habits, but not as much as the other states.

States	Yes	No
Andhra Pradesh	7	3
Jammu And Kashmir	6	4
Kerala	8	2
Tamil Nadu	5	1
West Bengal	3	7
<u>Total</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>17</u>

Table 5.6 Opinion of respondents whether far from home is beneficial or not.

This table shows that whether the decision of staying away from home has been proven to be beneficial for the respondents. 63% of the total respondents have agreed to the fact that, the decision of studying away from the hometown have been proven to be really beneficial for them. They are able to focussed more in their studies without any interruptions from their family, they can live an independent life and learn about new cultures, which helps them to enhance their knowledge about different cultures and rituals. They also become very

socialise with other people, which help them to accept the various aspects of the socio cultural diversity.

On the other hand 36% of the respondents believe that the decision of coming far from home to study in CUPB have not at all been advantageous to them. They are unable to adjust with the existing environment and they are facing problems on every steps in their daily life. It has proven to be very hard for them to live a peaceful life without any conflict.

States:	More Research Oriented:	Introduced To Group Study:	Increase In Focus Level:	Good Access To Lib\Lab:
Andhra Pradesh	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>
Jammu And Kashmir	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>
Kerala	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
TamilNadu	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
West Bengal	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	<u>11</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>12</u>

Table 5.7: Benefits in the academic field due to socio-cultural diversity

From the above table we can conclude that 28% of the respondents have found that staying away from home for studies have helped them to become more focused in their education field. the presence of socio cultural diversity have benefitted them academically. Whereas 26% of the respondents have felt that the library and laboratories have proved to be very beneficial in the educational field. 23% have felt that the education in this university is very research oriented and it would help them further in their higher studies. The rest 21% have experienced that the introduction of group\ combined studies have helped them to score good marks in their exams and other academic activities.

6. Conclusion: Socio-cultural diversity encompasses cultural aspects that have the potential to shape how individuals engage with others from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, it can impact how individuals respond to the expectations set by management, operational necessities, and company policies, essentially defining the organization's culture. In a classroom setting, there are students who belong to various religions, economic backgrounds, sexual orientations, genders, and linguistic communities. As a result, the classroom will exhibit a range of behavioral patterns, learning habits, and communication skills among the students. The sociocultural perspective emphasizes that learning occurs through interactive engagement, negotiation, and collaboration when solving real-world

problems. This perspective highlights the significance of learning from personal experiences and engaging in meaningful conversations, going beyond mere cooperative learning.

From the above study we can conclude that though socio cultural diversity affects the interstate student beneficially but still it has many negative aspects. Specially the students who are coming from the extreme South India to study here in the North India, it is very hard for them to get adjust to the new lifestyle. This is because it is a totally new world for them. Not only they face problem in communicating with people but they also have a drastic change in their food habit. The students from the Southern states like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, TamilNadu have a totally different lifestyle there, but here in the Northern India the lifestyle is totally different. Not only language and food but also the daily routine life, but still they are trying hard to adjust with the new environment.

Whereas students who are coming from central India or states like Jammu and Kashmir, they are not facing any problem regarding communication. The main problem they face is the drastic change in climate and food taste. That affects them drastically. There are these socio cultural differences that affects the lives of these interstate students but at the same time due to this socio cultural diversity the students are experiencing benefits in their education background. Through the analysis, it is found that the main benefits that the interstate students face are, they become more socialize, they come across new cultures and even tend to learn new languages. They become socially independent and their knowledge about various things enhance immensely.

In case of academic benefits, it seen that the major advantage they feel because of the socio cultural diversity is the enhancement of knowledge about various things. As they are staying alone away from their family, it helps them to focus more on the studies without any interference. They get the access to lab and libraries more often which helps them to achieve good performance in their education field. They even find the education here to be very research oriented which will help them to prosper further in their higher education.

From this study it is also seen that the socio cultural diversity causes a lot of negative effects on the daily life of the interstate students, who are studying in CUPB. Not only they face problem to communicate but the change in food habit affects them drastically. They are unable to adjust with the existing environment. They find problem to socialise with others. Though the socio cultural diversity helps them to enhance their knowledge about other cultures but it also plays a negative role in the life of these respondents.

7. Significance of the study: The importance of this study is found in how it sheds light on how sociocultural diversity enhances academic settings at Central University of Punjab, especially for interstate students. Teaching strategies and policy choices are influenced by the research's examination of its effects on learning outcomes and promotion of inclusive excellence. Additionally, through improving cultural competency, it gets students ready for global citizenship. This study adds to the body of knowledge on diversity in higher education by supporting evidence-based strategies that foster cross-cultural communication

and comprehension. In the end, its conclusions have broad ramifications that influence not only scholastic experiences but also societal perceptions of diversity and inclusivity.

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