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The immigrant students and their struggles in the US

**Abstract**

Life in the United States is full of struggle and challenges for immigrants. In the last decade, the United States has experienced a major wave of immigration. People are migrating in search of better living standard and political stability. People of America are supportive based on many matters. However, employers often show discrimination to these immigrants in job opportunities. Immigrants are discriminated in school and the workplace due to their race and ethnic paradigms. There are vast opportunities for jobs in the US, but immigrants have to work for long works and low wages as compared to Americans. Language is a primary aspect of trouble for these immigrants. Lack of English speaking leads to social isolation in American society. People are unable to interact or share their feelings with others due to the language barrier. Even organizations categorize individuals on the basis of language. The immigration process is problematic for individuals due to the complex procedure and long waiting period. Many immigrants migrate to the US with their family members. As young individuals are internalized to adjust themselves in the new environment and new society, which lead to social conflicts among parents and children. Illegal immigrate are unable to attain basic social services in the US due to the fear of being caught. It is a nightmare for them to report complaints regarding oppression or violence. This research has found that the life of immigrants in the US is hard, but it does provide an opportunity to earn better living standards in American society.

# Introduction

The United States is a place shaped by the cultures of Latin Americans, Native Americans, Asians, and African Americans. The US has one of the most complex cultural identities due to the immense size and diverse heritage. America is known as a land of opportunity, and it gives people freedom of lifestyle. It is notable to mention that the US is currently experiencing a major wave of student immigration. Furthermore, child immigration is also a significant facet of the growth of the population of America. Students from different countries having diverse cultures often face trouble in the linguistics, as English is not their primary language. According to Isphording, Ingo, and Otten, language is not the only problem faced by immigrants. There are a bunch of other paradigms and aspect that bother these students to settle in the US. Cultural and social aspects are crucial facets that affect the life of immigrant students in the US as these aspects help in understanding the identity and success of immigrant students. The immigration process is often not easy for most of the children and students as it includes long waiting time period. Moreover, cultural variations made it hard for students to amend themselves in the current environment of the US. Here, the focus is to determine various aspects and challenges that are problematic for students to amend themselves in the diverse culture of the US.

**Literature Review**

 According to Yoon (2012), focusing almost exclusively on the linguistic needs of immigrant students is not enough. There are certain reasons that make this particular choice problematic. Solely focusing on the linguistic needs ignores other non-linguistic needs such as social and cultural preferences of the immigrant students. Individuals come to America in search of a better lifestyle, to escape political persecution, or in search of improved socioeconomic opportunities. Many immigrants often underestimate the intense stressors that they might face in the United States. These challenges often influence the psychological well-being and behavior of an individual. It is obvious that every individual may face different challenges in the US, but there are some typical challenges that new immigrants might confront. These challenges include economic disadvantage and poverty, social network and social capital, resettlement and affordable housing, difficulty in the immigration process, language and linguistic diversity, and adjustment to social norms. According to Tienda, Marta, and Ron Haskins (2011), due to the meager financial condition upon arriving in the United States, many immigrants are forced to live in low-cost societies, which offer poor living conditions and are poverty-stricken. It is difficult for new immigrants to access high-income jobs due to their lower education level. It is noteworthy to mention that low education attainment results in long work hours and low paying jobs for immigrants as compared to the US-born population. There are some immigrants who are well-educated and attain a reputable degree often find suitable and economic jobs. There is a significant shortage of labors in the health care and nursing department, so immigrants who are skilled in nursing areas are more likely to get a better job.

Helgesen (2009) implemented a case study in which he examines the diversity of school systems between the United States and Mexico. He found significant troubles for students when they transition from culture to culture and school to school. Different aspects are pointed out that make it hard for Mexican students to amend themselves in the US such as homework load, the way schools are run, and the length of compulsory education (Helgesen 1-12). A survey was conducted by the US Institute of physics, which demonstrated that many international students are facing problems with their visas (Bloemraad 55-84). Due to this, many master granting departments and Ph.D. granting departments in the US have reported complains. It is obvious that international students are getting troubles in gaining their visas due to which the research programs are deteriorating, and TA slots are going unfilled (Bloemraad 55-84). According to Isphording, Ingo, and Otten, the language barrier is a critical facet, which impedes adjustment to living in the US. It often leads towards the feeling of frustration and helplessness as people from other regions of the world find it difficult to speak English. It is notable to mention that the language minority students are growing at an alarming rate in the public schools of America (Isphording, Ingo, and Otten 30-50).

These minority groups comprised of almost 250 language groups spoken in US public schools. The linguistic diversity in the US public schools is comprised of 85 percent of the Laotian, Korean, Cantonese Spanish, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Hmong, and Navajo. The new immigrants often respond to the language barrier by appearing withdrawn and remaining silent. Imagine arriving in the United States without knowing how to speak English. It will be really difficult for someone to complete basic tasks such as filling out forms or buying food. It is even hard for the non-English person to make new friends, as he is unable to speak English (Isphording, Ingo, and Otten 30-50). Many immigrants often try to take English classes in order to learn how to speak English. However, finding time between jobs and adjusting in the new environment can be difficult.

Many new immigrants experience tension between the popular cultural norms in the United States and the cultural norms from their home country. When immigrants come to the United States, they explore that the traditional behaviors and values are not sanctioned or undermined in the United States. According to Pumariega, Andres J., and Eugenio Rothe (2010), a new value system, a new language, and a new set of cultural norms are internalized more quickly in the immigrant children in comparison with their parents. It is often difficult for new families to adjust to social norms. A conflict often rises in the family due to the differing rates of acculturation in these immigrants. The social controls of the society mostly weaken due to their exposure to the new norms (Pumariega, Andres, & Rothe 505). Adjusting in the new environment, having diverse social and cultural norms is difficult for students and their families. However, a feeling of alienation is caused by parents and child because of the quick adjustment of a child in the new environment in America. It is noteworthy to mention that the feeling of alienation often threatens parental authority which can be catastrophic for the entire family. America is the land of opportunity and better living standards as it gives immigrant adolescents an opportunity to behave and think independently. It helps them to seek advice from non-kin like school counselors, friends, and teachers who might jeopardize the internal relation of their families (Pumariega, Andres, & Rothe 505).

Los Angeles and New York City are the traditional immigration hubs, and they remain the central point of entry for new immigrants in the United States. It is noteworthy to mention that new immigrants have to suffer from the hardships of getting a reasonable and economical place to live. As many new immigrants have low-income jobs, so it is tough for them to afford a better living standard in highly sanitary conditions. According to McConnell, Eileen Diaz, and Ilana Redstone Akresh, there is increasingly less affordable housing in areas like Los Angeles and New York City due to the urban renewal. Consequently, new immigrants migrate directly to small cities just outside the main urban areas where they can easily afford a reasonable house to live. There is another problem link with affordable housing and resettlement (McConnell, Diaz, & Akresh 143-171). New immigrants mainly focus on getting the affordable house in small towns on the outskirts of major urban areas, but they often forget that they have to manage transportation cost to their offices and workplace. These long-distance transportation costs to the workplace can potentially deteriorate their financial condition. The US Census reveals that industries like meatpacking or farming have the potential to provide affordable housing and employment opportunities (McConnell, Diaz, & Akresh 143-171). There is a changing resettlement trend in different regions of the United States of America including the Hmong community in Lowell, Massachusetts, as well as the Indo-Guyanese community in suburban Schenectady.

In the small cities and suburbs in the outskirts of the main cities, there is a substantial increase in racial and ethical diversity. Another major obstacle faced by immigrants is to fix themselves in a new, unfamiliar culture. Immigrant parents often find it disturbing and disappointing to see their children struggling to amend themselves in accordance with the American education system. Immigrant students who enter American schools are often vulnerable to bullying and discrimination. History suggests that Americans always see themselves as a superior race and culture than any other region in the world (Greer 23-33). They believe that they are better than any race in every aspect. Asian Americans and African Americans are often discriminated and oppressed in schools and workplaces (Greer 23-33). They are bullied as a result of the cultural difference, which demotivates them along with their parents. In the American education system, children are often placed by their age instead of their abilities, which is virtually difficult for them to keep up if they are unable to speak English. Immigrant parents may not be able to communicate the problems and hardships of their children with the school faculty if they do not possess the education and language skills. Regardless of the education system, Immigrants have to suffer from various hardships in order to get a suitable job. Diverse racial and ethical identity is problematic for immigrants to find an economical job. Some of the immigrants faced discrimination while applying for a job due to their race.

Reputable companies and organizations do not tend to take the risk of giving a high-profile job to a person who is not white and who do not manage a fluent English accent. Due to which, many immigrants finish up with low wage job. It is notable to mention that it is incredibly hard to find a job and slowly to move up the ladder. Immigrants who are well qualified and had strong jobs back home often frustration in getting a reasonable job in the US. In the United States, employers mostly job experience within America, which means that the certifications outside the US do not really matter to these employers (Suh et al. 39-51). Hence, qualified and experienced immigrants had to face difficulties in the US. Many immigrants have to face exploitation and discrimination in the workplace. Workers who cannot speak English are more vulnerable to violence and exploitation than those who know English.

In the United States, new immigrants have a difficult time accessing basic services. Undocumented immigrants live in fear of accessing any services due to the liability that they might be deported. People mostly avoid reaching out for services like seeing a doctor or getting legal advice from a lawyer. The fear of being deported avoid these undocumented immigrants to access any services. It is problematic for them to access mental health care as they are often exposed to exploitation and violence. Sometimes, women face violence, torture, and rape but they avoid to document a report to any legal authority. This is due to the fact that they are residing illegally in the United States. Mental health issues create an additional barrier for those in need, as they are taboo in many cultures. The immigration experience is negative for those who are unable to attain the services they need. Language is the biggest issue that immigrants face in the United States. There are multiple examples that doctors misdiagnose a person due to language barrier and law enforcement agents misunderstand the statement of a victim for the same reason. The life of new immigrants significantly affects due to trouble with transportation. There are varieties of reason beyond obtaining a driver license. Procurement of driver license in difficult for every immigrant, whether they are documented or not.

A translator is needed for those who do not speak English, which is a difficult step to achieve. There is a significant written exam for those who apply for a driver license. Being literate is necessary as people have to pass the written exam in order to obtain a driving license. New immigrants by some luck will have a car to share among them. However, it is difficult in getting adults to and from work, as well as getting kids to and from school. It is obvious that having one car can make it incredibly difficult for members of the family to collaborate in order to fit in additional commitments. Most of the times, the men will keep up the car, making it hard for women to reach to market and workplace by finding their own rides. Public transportation is the only reasonable mean of transport for these immigrants. Immigrants mainly rely on public transportation in the United States, which can be terrible for them. Imagine, you are unfamiliar with the traffic routes and different streets in the United States, and you have to cover a large distance to reach your college or workplace. It will be frightening for you if you ever forget a particular road that may lead you to your destination. It is also incredibly terrifying if someone ever forgets the bus station or train on which they are supposed to ride. One thing that must be taken into consideration and no one can deny it is that public transportation for new immigrants in the United States can be a terrible idea if they are unfamiliar with roads or unable to speak English. New immigrants are often unfamiliar with how to cross the street safely. They put their life on risk while crossing a road and even the life of car drivers as they have never learned how to read the traffic signs.

The extended family system left behind in the countries of their origin as immigrants attempt to recreate tight-knit communities and robust social support system. It is noteworthy to mention that being accepted in the new environment and a new society is difficult. According to Greer, many whites avoid to build up any relationship with the new immigrants as they considered their race more superior to others. That is the main reason behind the social isolation of new immigrants in American society. The paradigms of being accepted in the new society is often a troublesome part for most of the immigrants. Therefore, many immigrants’ subgroups attempt to recreate themselves in communities to attain physical and psychological support. Building up of such social support communities is a protective mechanism against social isolation. It helps in providing basic facilities, community life, and safety along with better education for their children. It is safe to say that social networks with high social capital tend to secure their rights in American society.

In contradiction to this, social networks that are fragile can become detrimental to the physical and psychological wellbeing of its members as it creates excessive demand of individuals within the network. Social isolation is frequently seen in immigrants who neither incorporate themselves in such immigrant community of residence nor integrate into the non-immigrant communities. Social isolation can cause crucial situations for these new immigrants such as mental disorders, depression and substance abuse. Among the immigrant youth of all ethnic and racial group, the lack of social support is a significant facet that contributes to depression and alienation.

**Research Methodology**

 This research is quantitative research with questionnaires which focused on our defined variables in order to attain the suitable results. This research was meant to be conducted in a particular way to determine the struggles and challenges that are experienced by immigrant students in the United States. This chapter is comprised of methods of data collection and procedures for the research. The research was conducted on immigrants who are living in the United States for more than five years. These immigrants comprised of students who are still getting an education in the United States and those who are working in different organizations in order to achieve a better lifestyle. The questionnaires are shared with these people to find out the struggles and challenges that they faced in the United States. The questionnaire that is shared with these people is given below;

1. Who did you immigrate with?
2. What was the process like? Easy? Hard?
3. Why did you immigrate to the USA?
4. What did you expect the USA would be like?
5. What was your life like before immigrating?
6. What was your life like after immigrating?
7. How did people treat you when you came here?
8. Do you regret your choice of immigrating here? If so, why? If not, what do you like most about the USA?
9. What struggles did you face most here?
10. When did you immigrate?

These questions are crucial to understanding the circumstances, which forced these immigrants to move to the United States. Moreover, these questions provide an insight into different aspects such as a new environment, new culture, and new opportunities, which alter the lives of the immigrants in American society. These questionnaires are simple close-ended questions which will completely cover the purpose and objective of this research study. The questionnaire will cover all the significant aspects of the lives of these immigrants in the country of their origin and in the United States.

**Analysis**

 To analyze the data, the narrative analysis method is used with the help of a questionnaire. This technique summarizes a collection of information in different aspects with the help of different interview questions to determine the challenges and struggles that immigrant students have to face in American society. Narrative analysis is considered as a ‘real world measure’ which is effective to use in case of getting understanding regarding the ‘real-life problems.' This analysis focus on the study of the experience of the different individual after their migration in the United States. Narrative analysis is an effective method of investigating topics related to the social science investigation. Ten people were asked whom they immigrated to the United States, upon which 80 percent of them state that they immigrate along with their family in the United States. The results suggested that immigration alone is a hard task for these people due to various reasons. These reasons include family issues and financial issues. Immigration is not an easy process as there are various strings attached to it. There is a list of a few problems related to immigration and its whole procedure. The immigration process is a far too restrictive system, as it requires extensive documentation. There is also a need for clearance from the government to show that a person is eligible for immigration. When the persons were asked about the immigration process, they state that it was mostly hard for them. They had to wait in line for decades.

There is a long procedure of immigrant which requires a significant time period. However, applicants having relatives in the United States are more likely to get a visa with ease. Upon asking the reasons behind immigration, many people said that they wanted a better lifestyle. It is noteworthy to mention that the United States is a land of opportunities for every individual. There are many regions of the world where people are having trouble due to political and financial issues. That is the reason behind their immigration to the United States, as they want a better living standard. The United States provides extensive employment opportunities to ensure a better living standard. Forgetting a better understanding of the whole immigrant process, these people were asked about their life before immigration. Most of them state that they had faced many challenges and difficulties in the country of their origin. Mostly, the families were stressed due to poverty and financial difficulties. That is why they planned to immigrate to the United States to overcome all the hardships. People were asked what their expectation about life in the United States was? They expect that the United States will help them in providing educational facilities and better health care facilities. It is a well-known fact that the United States is the hub of high-class education and health facilities. People also expect that the US would be cheaper in terms of studying and living, but their expectation regarding this was wrong.

The facilities in the US are much are expensive in comparison with other countries as it guarantees a high profile standard. Upon asking the life of these immigrants after immigration, mixed results come out. Some of them argue that immigration proved to be effective for them as it made their life much easier than it was before. People feel easier and confident after living in American society. Some argue that people of America are very supported and open-minded. They treat them nicely in every situation. Whereas, some of them state that their life in the United States was hard in the first few years. Amending oneself in a new environment is always a hard task. With a new environment, there come new challenges. The cultural and social paradigms in the United States are different as compared to other countries. That is the reason behind the difficulty of adjustment in the new environment. Secondly, children in schools were bullied based on their language and race. People were asked if they regret their choice of immigrating. It is stated that they have no regret upon their choice of immigrating to the United States. They compared their life in the United States with their life back home. They were happy to come to America due to the supportive behavior of many American in the United States. Most of the people argue that learning a new language is a real challenge in the United States. People often judge them based on their language. English is essential for people who are living in the United States. Even employers offer a job opportunity by seeing the English language skills in a particular person. The questionnaire also include the date of immigration of these people in the United States. Most of them have been living in the United States for more than seven years. I was migrated to the United States in 2011. I had to face certain challenges in the new society. I find it difficult to make new friends due to the lack of English speaking. I was having troubles in adjusting to the new environment. Finding a suitable job in American society was not so easy for me. Employers often neglect the experience of a person and focus on citizenship along with the English language.

**Discussion**

 Individuals typically come to the United States in search of better lifestyles, to escape political persecution and to achieve better socioeconomic opportunities. However, these people often neglect the challenges that they might face in the new environment. People immigrating to the United States have to face challenges like economic disadvantage and poverty, social network and social capital, language and linguistic diversity, hardships of the immigration process, adjustment to the social norms, and trouble in finding a suitable job. People are forced to live in small towns just outside the cities due to the meager financial condition. They often search for low-cost societies to peruse living in the United States. Immigrants have to face various difficulties such as discrimination and poverty in American society. People of America considered themselves superior to other nations and race. They believe that they are superior based on ethnic and racial characteristics.

Immigrants having good jobs in the country of their origin faced difficulties in accessing high-income jobs in America. Having a low educational background is problematic for these people as it results in long working hours and low paying jobs. The attainment of a suitable job is possible for those who have a strong educational background. There are some specific areas of working where finding a job is not that hard such as health care and nursing. Therefore, a person having a suitable degree in this field is more likely to attain a reasonable job in American society. The research has shown that the language barrier is a crucial aspect for immigrants in the US. Language barrier promotes the feeling of loneliness in immigrants, as they are unable to speak English with anyone. Many immigrants even find it difficult to manage time out of their busy work schedule to take English classes in order to learn how to speak English. There is a significant tension for immigrants between the cultural norms of the United States and the country of origin. It is seen that the traditional behavior of immigrants is undermined in the United States. They struggle to adjust themselves in a set of new cultural norms and value system.

**Conclusion**

It is concluded that the immense size and diverse heritage make America one of the complex cultural identities. The United States is experiencing a major wave of immigration, as it is a land of opportunities for each individual. People migrate to the US in search of better living standards and improved financial stability. However, they suffer from linguistic diversity, as English is not their first language. It is difficult for them to find time from their busy working schedule to learn the English language. Due to low education background, the majority of the immigrants work for longer hours with low wages to make both ends meet. Employers discriminate these immigrants based on their race and ethnic characteristics which make it tough for them to seek a reasonable job. Economic opportunities are vast for these immigrants, but with low wages. Research has shown that the immigration process is tough and long-lasting for the majority of these people. There is a long waiting period in order to get a visa. People often expect that education and healthcare facilities are cheaper in the US as compared to other countries. The new environment is internalized more quickly in children as compared to their parents, which lead towards conflict within the family members. Americans are often very supportive which can ease things for these immigrants in the new society. Illegal immigrants often face troubles in attaining basic services such as health care and police services. They always live in fear of being caught in America, as they do not possess legal documentation of their immigration to the United States. They are unable to report any violence or oppression due to this fear. Concisely, life for immigrants in the United States is full of struggle and challenges.

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