

# Predictive Role of Emotion-Regulation in Acculturative Stress and Spiritual Well-Being of International Students

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## Abstract

The present study examined the role of cognitive emotion-regulation strategies in acculturative stress and spiritual well-being of international students. Measures of Cognitive Emotion-Regulation, Acculturative Stress, and Spiritual Well-Being (measured in terms of religious wellbeing and existential wellbeing) were administered on a sample of 100 female international students living in Varanasi. The findings showed that maladaptive emotion regulation strategies were associated with greater acculturative stress and lower spiritual well-being while adaptive emotion regulation strategies were associated with lower acculturative stress and higher spiritual well-being. Furthermore, stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed to explore the predictive role of emotion regulation on acculturative stress and spiritual well-being. Acculturative stress was positively predicted by 'rumination' and 'blaming others', and negatively predicted by 'positive refocusing'. The use of 'acceptance' strategy positively predicted religious well-being while 'blaming others' negatively predicted religious well-being. Existential well-being was positively predicted by 'positive reappraisal' and negatively predicted by 'catastrophizing' and 'putting into perspective'. Consistent with previous studies in this area, the present findings suggest that emotion regulation may have definite role in intercultural adjustment of international students. Results are discussed in light of existing research and their implications are outlined.

**Keywords:** Acculturative Stress; Emotion Regulation; International Students; Spiritual Well-being

## Introduction

Owing to its rich historical and cultural heritage, India has attracted scholars from over the world since ancient times and the trend is present even today. As per the latest data by All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), India hosted 47,427 international studies in the year 2018-2019 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2019). International students on campus contribute to the cultural diversity of the university and enrich the educational landscape of the host country by connecting domestic students and institutions with the rest of the world. Given their significance, India has devised policies and programs to entice international students to pursue higher education in Indian institutions. For instance, the General Scholarship Scheme of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) along with Mekong Ganga Cooperation Scholarship Scheme, Aid to Mongolia Scholarship Scheme, Africa Scholarship

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Scheme, etc. introduced by the Ministry of External Affairs encourage students from different countries to join Indian institutions. While such opportunities allow for mutual contact and provide economic aid to students in a foreign land, the process of transition is not always smooth. The experience of international students in the host country is a growing area of research in cross-cultural psychology.

As they transition into the new country, international students may encounter numerous barriers. Difficulty in adjusting to the language,

food, academic expectations, residence (Chien, 2015; Wu & Hammond, 2011), linguistic difficulties, incongruence in values and traditions (Gil et al., 1994), prejudice, negative stereotypes, and discrimination (Jung et al., 2007), and a lack of knowledge of social norms and cultural awareness (Markus & Kitayama, 2003) act as potential hurdles for them. At the same time, they are expected to meet the academic standards of their domestic peers. These experiences often give rise to feelings of inadequacy, insecurity, and insufficiency leading to stress, frustration, confusion, and lowered self-esteem (Kim & Cronley, 2020). The resulting stress has been termed acculturative stress and it has gained considerable research with respect to this particular population. It encompasses various psychological and psychosomatic problems arising due to unfamiliarity with a new culture, social norms, lifestyle, and other acculturation-related life experiences (Berry, 2005; Wei et al., 2007).

Considerable research has found that acculturative stress impairs health and leads to risky health behaviors. Acculturative stress can lead to a variety of negative emotional states, including negative mood, anxiety, and depression. Research in the U.S. has linked acculturative stress to negative health outcomes such as depression in the Chinese students (Wei et al., 2007); feelings of loneliness and depression in non-European students (Jung et al., 2007); and suicide attempts among students belonging to diverse ethnic groups (Gomez et al., 2011). Among the Latin American immigrants in Barcelona, acculturative stress has been indicated to be the risk factor for depression and anxiety (Revollo et al., 2011). Glancing through literature on acculturation experiences of international students mostly portray the negative health outcomes with lesser focus on the positive aspects of the experience. Further, the greater focus on physical and mental aspects health often ignores the sociocultural and spiritual domains of

health, which are particularly important in cross-cultural settings.

With greater recognition of the role of psychosocial, cultural, and spiritual factors in health, a more comprehensive conceptualization of health was proposed by Marks et al. (2005), where they defined health as “a state of wellbeing with physical, cultural, psychosocial, economic and spiritual attributes, not simply the absence of illness”. The inclusion of spirituality in the already existing biopsychosocial model of health has opened up a new research area that explores the role of spirituality and spiritual practices in the maintenance of health, and promotion of psychological well-being (Hatala, 2013).

Spirituality is understood as a multidimensional construct where one learns about the boundaries of existence and the meaning of life. It encompasses a sense of life, a connection with others, and a relationship with a transcendent force (Ghaderi et al., 2018). Spirituality differs from religion as religion is a social phenomenon whereas spirituality is unique to the individual (Tovar-Murray, 2011). Thus, spiritual well being (SWB) not only refers to religiosity or religious persuasion but to the feeling of affirmation with oneself, others, nature, and the transcendental other, as well as connecting with others, having a sense of purpose and significance in life, and believing in an exalted power (Hawks et al., 1995). The present research is based on Ellison's (1983) conceptualization of SWB and its two components namely existential well-being (EWB) and religious well-being (RWB). EWB is a psychosocial aspect and individuals' feeling of existence about who they are while RWB is an emotional relationship with the power of the supreme (God). RWB indicates a vertical connection where one moves from self to a higher power or God and EWB indicates a horizontal movement where one develops a meaning or purpose of life.

Spirituality has been shown to have a favorable

impact on positive health outcomes such as recovery from mental illness, subjective well-being, quality of life, coping skills, suicidality, and substance use (Kharitonov, 2012; Unterrainer et al., 2014). Studies have found associations of SWB and religious deeds with stress, anxiety, depression, self-esteem, life-satisfaction, emotional instability, and mood disorders (Genia, 2001; Kim, 2000; Leach & Lark, 2004; Taheri-Kharamah et al., 2016). Since psychological stressors are present throughout life, and especially in the acculturation process of international students, it is reasonable to say that developing and sustaining a sense of SWB is critical to adaptation to stress.

### **The Role of Emotion Regulation**

To manage the stress in the new environment, international students often engage in student induction programs and social activities to develop contacts with domestic students and university staff members (Burnett, 2007; Kift et al., 2010). In addition to the resources and programs, they must also acquire intrinsic skills and competencies to effectively adapt to a new culture and meet educational goals (Wu & Hammond, 2011). A major determinant of effective intercultural adjustment is how a person manages the emotions evoked during adaptation. Managing negative emotions evoked during conflict and stress helps one to think clearly and rationally, and prepares one to use other essential psychological skills such as openness, resilience, and critical thinking for better adaptation (Matsumoto et al., 2003; Van Oudenhovem & Van der Zee, 2002).

Extensive research has revealed that emotion regulation by cognitions or thoughts assists people in maintaining control of their emotions during or after the experience of stressful events (Garnefski et al., 2001, 2002). For instance, while experiencing a negative life event, we may have thoughts of blaming ourselves or others for our

misfortunes. We may also ruminate about the circumstances or try to reappraise or accept them. Thus, cognitive emotion regulation strategies are cognitive reactions to demanding situations that change the emotional state of an individual or the process of consciously controlling and managing the information that induces emotional arousal (Abdi et al., 2012). Garnefski et al. (2001) have regarded self-blame, blaming others, rumination, and catastrophizing as maladaptive strategies, while acceptance, refocus on planning, positive refocusing, positive reappraisal, and putting into perspective are regarded as adaptive strategies. The use of adaptive strategies leads to adaptive functioning while using maladaptive strategies result in poor mental health and poor well-being (Gross & Muñoz, 1995). Although the ability to cognitively regulate emotions is universal, there lie individual differences in the content of thoughts and the amount of cognitive activity undertaken to regulate the emotions.

Research on emotion regulation and SWB displays a two-way relationship. Emotional regulation is central to positive personal growth, education, discipline, autonomy, and the development of divine qualities (Geula, 2004). On the other hand, religious beliefs and engagement can improve one's ability to participate in successful emotional regulation (Pizarro & Salovey, 2002). For instance, individuals who have access to formal channels for emotion disclosure and regulation such as confessions, discussing problems with clergy, or pastoral therapy have better emotion regulation abilities. They also engage in practices such as meditation, offering prayers, and rituals that alter the strength of their emotions and emotion regulation, which may in turn lead to better SWB.

### **The Present Study**

Research in the field of cultural contact has revealed the association of several factors such as social support, emotional intelligence, collectivist coping

strategies, etc. with acculturative stress and spiritual well-being among students and other populations (Beauvais et al., 2014; Esmailinasab et al., 2016; Panahi et al., 2016; Srivastava et al., 2021; Yi, 2018). However, the role of emotion regulation strategies in adapting to the changes has rarely been examined although it has potential implications on the mental health and well-being of individuals. International students are more at risk of developing mental health problems due to the availability of lesser social support and acculturative stress making them more prone to depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, paranoid reactions, and loneliness (McLachlan & Justice, 2009). As females are more likely to internalize their emotions, they are more likely to ruminate (Kwon et al., 2013) than males, and thus, the tendencies of developing neurotic conditions become more pronounced for them. Unsurprisingly, most epidemiological studies have found higher prevalence rates of depression and anxiety disorders among females as compared to males (Christiansen, 2015). The World Health Organization (2008) predicted that depression would become one of the most severe diseases by 2030 for females worldwide, making female international students a particularly vulnerable population.

Most international students in India come from Nepal followed by Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sudan, and Bhutan. Owing to the different cultures in each country, it is expected that individuals from different countries may have unique conceptions and levels of SWB (Lun & Bond, 2013). Research on SWB is not a matter of whether one has it or not, but rather a question of how much and how it may be enhanced. The present study is based in Varanasi, India which is one of the oldest cities in India. Varanasi is a major religious hub due to its special place in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Further, the *ghats* (banks) on the Ganges are a common site used for performing rituals, yoga, meditation, cultural activities, and even cremation resulting in its spiritual significance for people

from all walks of life. Therefore, studying spiritual well-being in this context becomes an interesting area.

Understanding the links between emotion regulation strategies, stress, and the well-being of international students will enable higher education institutions to better support them to cope with emotional challenges during their stay in the host country. With this background, the present study was carried out to examine the relationship of emotion regulation strategies with acculturative stress and spiritual well-being in female international students.

We address two main research questions:

- (a) What emotion regulation strategies have been adopted by female international students in the host country?
- (b) How does the choice of emotion regulation strategies affect their acculturative stress and spiritual well-being (examined in terms of RWB and EWB)? Based on the available literature, the following hypotheses were proposed:

Maladaptive emotion-regulation strategies would be positively correlated with acculturative stress and negatively correlated with religious and existential well-being, on the other hand, adaptive emotion-regulation strategies would be negatively correlated with acculturative stress and positively correlated with religious and existential well-being.

## Method

### *Participants*

For the present research, 100 female international students were recruited from various universities and higher educational institutions in Varanasi, India. The participants were aged between 21 to 38 years (Mean=26.38; SD= 4.37) and were pursuing under-graduation (55), post-graduation (26), and Ph.D. (19). A correlational research design was

used and the participants were selected using the purposive sampling method. Participants who met the criteria of living in India for a minimum of six months and were well-conversant in English were chosen for the study. The study was carried out in accordance to the guidelines laid down by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Science, Banaras Hindu University. The participants were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality of data and they were ensured that they may feel free to quit at any point of time without facing consequences. The questionnaires were administered only after obtaining their consent to participate in the study.

### *Measures*

#### Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ):

Developed by Garnefski et al. (2001), the CERQ assesses specific cognitive emotion regulation strategies as a response to stressful or threatening life experiences. It is a 36-item Likert-type scale with 5-point responses ranging from “almost never” (1) to “almost always” (5). The questionnaire consists of 9 subscales namely self-blame (four items), acceptance (four items), rumination (four items), positive refocusing (four items), refocus on planning (four items), positive reappraisal (four items), putting into perspective (four items), catastrophizing (four items), and other-blame (four items). Scores for individual subscales are obtained by summing the scores of the subscale which range from 4 to 20. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients of CERQ ranged from .70 to .80. CERQ also has good factorial validity and good construct validity with good discriminative properties (Garnefski et al., 2002).

#### Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS):

Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) developed this 36-

item scale to assess the acculturative stress of international students. It is a 5-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The scale consists of 7 subscales which are Perceived Discrimination (eight items), Homesickness (four items), Perceived Hate/Rejection (five items), Fear (four items), Stress due to Change/Culture Shock (three items), Guilt (two items), and Nonspecific Concerns (ten items). A higher score on the ASSIS reflects higher acculturative stress. The Cronbach's alpha from .92 to .94 reflects high reliability (Wei et al., 2007). In the present study, the total score of acculturative stress was used for analysis.

#### Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS):

Developed by Ellison (1983), this scale assesses perceptions of the spiritual quality of life. It consists of 20 items divided into two subscales namely Religious Well-being (RWB; 10 items) and Existential Well-Being (EWB; 10 items). It consists of a six-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (6). Scores of the two subscales are summed to attain SWB. Coefficient alpha was found to be .89, .87, and .78 for SWB, RWB, and EWB respectively (Ellison, 1983).

### **Results**

Table 1 presents the summary of the mean scores, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis values for the variables employed in the present study. The measures of skewness and kurtosis were calculated to assess the assumption of normality of the scores. The values for skewness and kurtosis between -2 and +2 are considered acceptable for a normal distribution (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2014), and based on the obtained values, the data was found to be normally distributed. This makes it appropriate to carry out correlation-based parametric statistics as their basic assumption is the normality of the data.

On cognitive emotion regulation strategies, the mean score for self-blame is highest followed by positive reappraisal, acceptance, and putting into perspective. Catastrophizing was the least used emotion regulation strategy. The mean score of acculturative stress is 108.08 indicating a moderate level of stress. According to Sandhu and Asrabadi

(1994), scores higher than 109 should be interpreted as a warning sign of stress and may indicate the need for counseling and psychological interventions. The results indicate that a moderate level of acculturative stress exists in the present sample. On SWB, the sample had greater EWB as

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on CERQ, ASSIS and SWBS**

	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies					
Self-blame	100	13.41	3.14	.03	-.94
Rumination	100	11.76	4.55	-.19	-1.29
Catastrophizing	100	11.12	4.23	.10	-1.34
Blaming Others	100	11.55	4.32	.11	-.99
Acceptance	100	12.02	3.53	-.11	-1.23
Positive Refocusing	100	11.53	4.16	.03	-1.19
Refocus on Planning	100	11.87	4.23	.07	-1.35
Positive Reappraisal	100	12.20	4.38	-.10	-1.30
Putting into Perspective	100	12.00	4.62	-.27	-1.30
Acculturative Stress	100	108.08	21.82	-.42	-.94
Religious Well-being	100	30.82	5.74	-.06	-.60
Existential Well-being	100	32.28	5.90	.32	-.16

Results of correlation analysis of emotion regulation strategies with acculturative stress and the two domains of SWB namely RWB and EWB are presented in Table 2. As hypothesized, the findings reflect that the maladaptive emotion regulation strategies viz. self-blame, rumination, catastrophizing, and blaming others, are positively correlated with acculturative stress and negatively correlated with RWB and EWB. Further, the

adaptive emotion regulation strategies namely acceptance, positive refocusing, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, and putting into perspective, are negatively correlated with acculturative stress and positively correlated with both RWB and EWB. It suggests that international students opting for positive emotion regulation experience lesser acculturative stress and better spiritual well-being.

**Table 2: Correlations of Cognitive Emotion Regulation Strategies with Acculturative Stress and Spiritual Well-being**

	Acculturative Stress	Religious Well-being	Existential Well-being
Self-blame	.42*	-.41**	-.26*
Rumination	.69**	-.50**	-.51**
Catastrophizing	.65**	-.50**	-.52**
Blaming Others	.68**	-.52**	-.48**
Acceptance	-.57**	.61**	.52**
Positive Refocusing	-.64**	.61**	.54**
Refocus on Planning	-.56**	.55**	.48**
Positive Reappraisal	-.66**	.56**	.62**
Putting into Perspective	-.58**	.53**	.49**

\*p<.05, \*\*p<.01

*Multiple Regression Analysis*

Stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed to explore the predicting effect of emotion regulation on acculturative stress and spiritual well-being. The results

summarizing the contribution of emotion regulation strategies (predictor variables) to acculturative stress, RWB, and EWB (criterion variables) are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Stepwise regression analysis predicting acculturative stress and spiritual well-being from cognitive emotion relation strategies**

Predictors	R	R2	ΔR2	df	F	β
Acculturative Stress						
Rumination	.688	.473	.473	1,98	88.098***	.297***
Positive Refocusing	.766	.586	.113	2,97	68.731***	-.351***
Blaming Others	.784	.615	.029	3,96	51.179***	.273***
Religious Well-being (RWB)						
Acceptance	.614	.377	.377	1,98	59.396***	.480***
Blaming Others	.670	.449	.072	2,97	39.599***	-.300***
Existential Well-being (EWB)						
Positive Reappraisal	.624	.389	.389	1,98	62.519***	.799***
Catastrophizing	.672	.452	.063	2,97	40.037***	-.283***
Putting into Perspective	.689	.475	.023	3,96	28.987*	-.347*

\*p<.05, \*\*\*p<.001

'focus on thought/rumination', 'positive refocusing', and 'blaming others' accounted for almost 62 percent variance ( $R^2=.615$ ,  $F_{(3,96)}=51.179$ ,  $p<.001$ ) in the scores of acculturative stress. 'Rumination' ( $\beta=.297$ ) and 'blaming others' ( $\beta=.273$ ) made positive predictions (greater acculturative stress) and

'positive refocusing' ( $\beta=-.351$ ) made negative predictions (lesser acculturative stress).

On the measure of RWB, 'acceptance' and 'blaming others' accounted for almost 45 percent variance ( $R^2=.449$ ,  $F_{(2,97)}=39.599$ ,  $p<.001$ ) in the scores. The use of the 'acceptance' ( $\beta=.480$ ) strategy positively

predicted RWB while 'blaming others' ( $\beta = -.300$ ) negatively predicted RWB.

On the measure of EWB, 'positive reappraisal', 'catastrophizing', and 'putting into perspective' explained 47.5 percent variance ( $R^2 = .475$ ,  $F_{(3,96)} = 28.987$ ,  $p < .05$ ) in the scores. 'Positive reappraisal' ( $\beta = .799$ ) made a positive prediction about EWB whereas 'catastrophizing' ( $\beta = -.283$ ) and 'putting into perspective' ( $\beta = -.347$ ) negatively predicted EWB.

## Discussion

Emotion regulation is a key determinant for the adaptation of individuals undergoing intercultural change. In general, adaptive emotion regulation strategies enable individuals to manage their stress more effectively, leading to better well-being (Matsumoto et al., 2003). Based on the above notion, the present study intended to identify the most used emotion regulation strategies by international students in India. The results revealed that the current cohort of international students most often used self-blame, followed by positive reappraisal, acceptance, and putting into perspective strategies to regulate their emotions.

As hypothesized, the current findings indicate that the use of maladaptive emotion regulation strategies viz. self-blame, rumination, catastrophizing, and blaming others led to the experience of higher levels of acculturative stress and lower levels of religious and emotional wellbeing. Similarly, the findings also support the second hypothesis that adaptive emotion regulation strategies namely acceptance, positive refocusing, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, and putting into perspective led to lower levels of acculturative stress and higher levels of spiritual well-being. The findings are consistent with previous research that college students using self-blame, rumination, and catastrophizing strategies of emotion regulation

experienced more negative emotions such as anger, stress, anxiety, and depression that negatively influenced their psychological well-being (Harrington & Loffredo, 2010; Martin & Dahlen, 2005).

Given these empirically obtained associations, further exploration was carried out to understand which emotion strategies are better predictors of acculturative stress and spiritual well-being.

### *Emotion Regulation and Acculturative Stress*

All maladaptive emotion regulation strategies were positively associated with acculturative stress. The results align with the findings obtained from college students in other countries (Martin & Dahlen, 2005; Misra et al., 2003). The present findings indicate that 'rumination' and 'blaming others' positively predict acculturative stress, i.e. the use of these strategies leads to a greater experience of acculturative stress. People often engage in rumination to find explanations for their problems. More than reaching a solution, repeatedly thinking about stressors aggravates the symptoms of anger, anxiety, stress, and depression (Martin & Dahlen, 2005; Papageorgiou & Wells, 2003). In addition to impaired problem-solving skills, rumination also reduces social support (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008) which is a protective buffer against stress. Therefore, the present finding that rumination is a negative predictor of acculturative stress is strongly supported by the existing literature.

When we face stressors or negative outcomes, the more common human tendency is to blame the circumstances, a phenomenon explained by self-serving bias. It suggests that while we tend to take credit for our successes, we blame the circumstances for our setbacks. 'Blaming others' is an extension of this tendency where people regulate their negative emotions by blaming others for their negative experiences. It is a maladaptive approach but it is often used as it reduces vulnerability,

accountability, and personal control. Although this association has not yet been explored in international students, several studies (e.g. Clavé et al., 2017; Hou et al., 2018) have found that while facing uncontrollable stressors, blaming the stressors has protective effects.

Although the adaptive strategies were negatively related to acculturative stress, 'positive refocusing' emerged as the only significant negative predictor of acculturative stress. Positive refocusing is the technique of thinking about positive things and not about what has happened. One of the items of positive refocusing is "I think something nice instead of what has happened" which shows that instead of ruminating on the negative events, one shifts the thoughts towards positive things. Consequently, it has been found to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression (Min et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014). These findings may be useful from a therapeutic perspective wherein learning to think about the positives increases control and may, in turn, reduce acculturative stress (Domaradzka & Fajkowska, 2018).

#### *Emotion regulation and Spiritual Well-being*

'Acceptance' and 'blaming others' strategies made important contributions to RWB of international students. Although the classification of the 'acceptance' strategy is disputed as research has found it to be both adaptive (Garnefski et al., 2001) and maladaptive (Martin & Dahlen, 2005), the present study found 'acceptance' to positively predict RWB. Therefore, it is an adaptive strategy for the present sample indicating that accepting the present situation as well as the cultural values and customs of the host culture enhances well-being. Acceptance is often misconstrued as tolerance which may lead it to be understood as a negative emotion regulation strategy. In the theory of 'information-seeking behavior', Wilson (1996) differentiated between a passive form of acceptance (resignation to negative events) and an

active form of acceptance (the self-admiration process). Active acceptance is a rational decision conducive to well-being whereas tolerance (passive form) is more negative and self-destructive. Therefore, when one accepts their situation, it does not imply that they are apathetic or lost control of the situation. This fine difference changes how one uses acceptance to regulate emotions.

'Positive reappraisal' positively predicted the EWB of female international students. 'Positive reappraisal' is a form of meaning-based coping in which stressful situations are reconstructed as beneficial. It involves finding a positive side of a negative event. For instance, instead of being anguished by culture shock in a new culture, one may see it as an opportunity to meet new people and learn about a different culture. 'Catastrophizing' and 'putting into perspective' have emerged as negative predictors of EWB. 'Catastrophizing' strategy has accounted for lesser EWB which is consistent with previous findings that it leads to the experience of more neurotic symptoms (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2007).

'Putting into perspective' is theoretically considered an adaptive strategy that consists of minimizing the severity of negative experiences by thinking about other ongoing experiences (Garnefski et al., 2001) and it is negatively related to anhedonic depression (Domaradzka & Fajkowska, 2018). Therefore, it seems that provides the ability to see good in adversity leading to better well-being (Major & Schmader, 1998). However, in the present study, it has been found to lower the EWB of international students which is inconsistent with the previous findings. A possibility for such a finding is that items on this dimension tend to play down the seriousness of the stressful event. For instance, "I tell myself that there are worse things in life" tends to diminish the experience of stress at the moment which may be unhelpful in managing the stress and consequently lead to poorer adaptation. Furthermore, Schroevers et al. (2007) also found

'putting into perspective' to lead to greater symptoms of depression which lends support to our research.

## Conclusion

The number of international students in India is increasing but they still remain an understudied population. Despite the established associations between emotion regulation, mental health, and well-being, these links have not been examined for international students. Such explorations could have important implications for promoting the intercultural adjustment of international students. Thus, the present study examined the use of emotion regulation strategies by international students during their stay in India. It also makes a shift from studying mental health problems to understanding well-being in terms of spirituality.

The current findings are generally in consonance with previous research that the use of adaptive emotion regulation strategies facilitates well-being and reduces the experience of acculturative stress. However, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. Different socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and the cultural distance between home and host country were also not taken into consideration for the present study. Religious beliefs may also influence the relationship between emotion regulation and SWB. Further, even within India, different hubs of education offer different educational and cultural experiences that may impact the acculturation experience of international students. Therefore, future studies may take this into consideration. Nevertheless, the findings of this preliminary study may serve as a guide in creating support programs for international students. Emotion regulation is a skill that can be fostered through training and support programs where students may be trained to use adaptive emotion regulation strategies. We propose that by fostering the use of adaptive emotion

regulation strategies through emotion coaching, female international students may be better able to cope with the challenges following intercultural contact in the host country and enhance their SWB.

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