

# EFFECTS OF CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT CHALLENGES OF NON-KERALITE PROFESSIONALS IN THE IT PARKS IN KERALA

## Abstract

In recent decades, the peoples of the world have been brought closer and closer by fast technological development in transportation and communication. Working in multicultural team involves many challenges, disagreements and conflicts. The study covers the cultural shock of non-Keralite IT professionals in the IT parks in Kerala. The institutions selected are Info Park Kochi and Techno Park Trivandrum. This study derives its significance from the reality that organizations which are able to create work environments in which cultural differences among employees are properly harnessed and synthesized usually enable their employees to improve their potentials, maximize their efficiency and improve productivity. The study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. It is exploratory as it tries to identify factors of cultural shock and identify management practices followed or cross-cultural training provided by IT parks in Kerala to reduce the effects of cultural shocks. Descriptive statistical tools like percentage, mean, standard deviation and mean percent score were used for describing the collected data and independent sample t test and ANOVA were used to test the hypothesis with the help of SPSS software. The result of the study shows that the non-Keralites are facing different personal, job related or psychological issues at work place because of the cultural differences. The effect of culture shock and the factors influencing culture shock were identified and also various measures to manage the culture shock were assumed.

**Key Words:** Cultural Shock, Human Resources, ANOVA

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the peoples of the world have been brought closer and closer by fast technological development in transportation and communication. Working in multicultural team involves many challenges, disagreements and conflicts. These challenges and conflicts affect the performance of the individuals and the entire firm to a certain degree. Working in a new culture can produce a number of reactions, including confusion, anxiety, frustration, exhilaration, isolation, inappropriate social behaviour and even depression. Culture describes the collective way of life, values, morals, language, world views, and patterns of behaviour of a group of people. It includes what they think, say, do, believe, and make, and is like a learned template for living. 'Culture shock' is the general term used to describe the stress, anxiety, or discomfort a person feels when they are placed in an unfamiliar cultural environment, due to the loss of familiar meanings and cues relating to communication and behaviour.

Kohls (1979) defined culture shock as "the term used for the pronounced reactions to the psychological disorientation that is experienced in varying degrees when spending an extended period of time in a new environment". The term 'culture shock' was first coined by the anthropologist Kalvero Oberg in 1954, who described it as 'the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social

intercourse. Organizational culture is defined as “the set of key values, assumptions, understandings, and norms that is shared by members of an organization and taught to new members as correct”.

Eventhough it is known that those living in a different culture for an extended period of time goes through a culture shock experience, there is still insufficient research that acknowledges the connections of belonging to a larger cultural group, gender differences, level of proficiency in the language of the host country, differences in social network and the personality variables self-confidence and their impact on the adjustment problems of the non-Keralite’s working in Kerala.

1. What are the factors of cultural shock of non-Keralite employees working in IT Parks in Kerala?
2. What is the perception of the IT professional towards the factors of cultural shocks affecting non-Keralite employees in IT Parks in Kerala?
3. What are the effects of cultural shocks on personal, job related, and organisation related matters of non-Keralite employees working in IT Parks in Kerala?

The researcher, here makes a humble attempt to come across some literary works closely related to the application and impact of the variables under the study. Journal articles, conference proceedings, working papers, articles in periodicals and the documents from websites are reviewed and critically studied. Ana Howarth, Jose Quesada and Peter R. Mills (2017) made a study to examining the relationship between employee health risk status and work performance metrics. The data were collected by using the online questionnaire method. The participants for the study consisted of 117,274 employees (aged 18 to 64 years) taken over four years from the period 2013 to 2016. Online employee HRA data collected from 254 multi-national companies, for the years 2013 through 2016 was analysed. Multiple linear regression models were fitted, adjusting for age and gender, to quantify associations between country status and health risk factors. The period of the study was 2013-2016. The study concluded that there is a Clear difference in health risks between employees from developed and developing countries and these should be considered when addressing well-being and productivity in the global workforce. Kanchan Bhatia (2015) attempts to investigate various cultural shock factors of an expatriate in USA and steps taken by department to overcome the challenges of the employees to easily adjust to the changing situations. Objectives of the research are to study the factors responsible for cultural shock and to analyse measures adopted by HR to cope with cultural shock effects. Dr A Feldman (2014) conducted a study to identify the Influence of cross-cultural leadership on organizational culture. The aim of this research was to determine the influence of cross-cultural leadership on organisational culture. A qualitative research design was used in this study to determine participant’s perspectives on organisational culture and leadership.

#### Factors of Cultural Shock

Cultural shock is the feeling of disorientation, insecurity and even anxiety from being continuously in a new and experiencing in a new and experiencing an unfamiliar culture. The causes of cultural shock are wide and varied and they depend heavily on how different the new culture is forming the travellers bold, familiar one. It is caused by an anxiety when experiencing new unfamiliar surroundings. The different cues like gestures, customs, idioms, language, beliefs etc. in the new environment and which are used in everyday situations and in communications

with locals have to be learnt and understood. The factors influencing the cultural shock is classified as personal factors, social factors, physical environment factors, company related factors and psychological factors.

Personal Factors

Table 4.1

Personal Factors

Sl. No	Factors	Factors levels					Median	Mean	SD	MPS	Decisions
		SA %	A %	N %	DA %	SDA %					
1	Language	27 (18)	50 (33)	21.2 (14)	15 (1)	-	4	4.03	0.74	80.6	SA
2	Food Habits	21.2 (14)	47 (31)	19.7 (13)	10.6 (7)	1.5 (1)	4	3.75	.96	75	A
3	Dressing Styles	22.7 (4)	25.8 (25)	28.8 (23)	16.7 (13)	6.1 (1)	3	3.4	1.19	68	A
4	Changesin Routine	6.1 (4)	37.9 (25)	34.8 (23)	19.7 (13)	1.5 (1)	3	3.27	.929	65.4	A
5	Cost ofliving	22.7 (15)	39.4 (26)	30.3 (20)	19.7 (4)	1.5 (1)	4	3.75	.929	75	A
6	Home Sickness	21.2 (14)	37.9 (25)	27.3 (18)	13.6 (9)	-	4	3.66	.966	73.2	A

Source: primary data [SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree]

From the Table 4.1it is easily understood that almost all of the respondents are agreed that language leads to culture shock. Majority of the respondents agreed that all of the personal factors lead to culture shock. The first factor that is, Language got 27% strongly agree, 50 percent agree, 15 percent disagree and 21 percent no opinion. MPS is 80.6. Therefore, it can be concluded that language problem is an important factor which leads to cultural shock. The second factor is Food Habits, that got 47 percent Agree, 21.2 percent Strongly Agree, 19.7 percent no opinion, 10.6 percent Disagree and 1.5 percent strongly Disagree and the MPS is 75 so the actual decision is agreed.

Company related Factors

Table 4.2

Company related Factors

Sl. No	Factors	Factors levels					Median	Mean	SD	MPS	Decisions
		SA %	A %	N %	DA %	SDA %					
1	Working time	13.6 (9)	51.5 (34)	24.2 (16)	6.1 (4)	4.5 (3)	4	3.63	.95	72.6	A
2	Responsibilities	19.7 (13)	43.9 (29)	22.7 (15)	9.1 (6)	4.5 (3)	4	3.65	1.04	73	A

3	Rule of behaviour in organisation	21.2 (14)	39.4 (26)	27.3 (18)	10.6 (7)	1.5 (1)	4	3.68	.979	73.6	A
4	Work load	25.8 (17)	39.4 (26)	28.8 (19)	6.1 (4)	-	4	3.85	.881	77	SA
5	Genderdiscrimination	24.2 (16)	33.3 (22)	22.7 (15)	15.2 (10)	4.5 (3)	4	3.57	1.15	71.4	A
6	Availability of leaves	21.2 (14)	34.8 (13)	28.8 (19)	6.1 (4)	9.1 (6)	4	3.53	1.16	70.6	A

Source: primary data [SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree]

Table 4.2 shows the influence of company related factors on culture shock. The first factor is working time of the organisation. 13.6 percent respondents strongly agree and 51.5 percent respondents agree that working time of the company will influence the culture shock. 24.2 percent of respondents does not have any opinion on this factor and 4.5 percent response were disagree. The second factor, responsibilities of the employees got 19.7 percent strongly agree and 43.9 percent agree. 22.7 percent of respondents give neutral opinion on this factor. 9.5 percent of the respondents disagree the statement.

Psychological factors

Table 4.3

Psychological Factors

Sl. No	Factors	Factors levels					Median	Mean	SD	MPS	Decisions
		SA %	A %	N %	DA %	SDA %					
1	Confusions	21.2 (14)	57.6 (38)	16.7 (11)	4.5 (3)	-	4	3.95	.75	79	SA
2	Alienation	13.6 (9)	37.9 (25)	37.9 (25)	10.6 (6)	-	4	3.54	.86	71	A
3	Disorientation	12.1 (8)	54.5 (36)	21.2 (13)	12.1 (8)	-	4	3.66	.84	73.2	A
4	Anxiety	28.8 (19)	43.9 (29)	19.7 (13)	7.6 (5)	-	4	3.93	.89	78.6	SA
5	Depression	27.3 (18)	36.4 (24)	25.8 (17)	7.6 (5)	3 (2)	4	3.77	1.03	75.4	SA
6	Discrimination	12.1 (8)	37.9 (25)	30.3 (20)	15.2 (10)	4.5 (3)	3.5	3.37	1.03	67.4	A

Source: primary data [SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree]

Table 4.3 depicts the influence of psychological factors on culture shock. Confusion is the first factor influence the employees. 57.6 percent of the respondents agrees that they face confusions while working. 21.2 percent of the respondents strongly agree the statement. The MPS is 79 so most of the respondents strongly agreed that they face

confusions while working in the new environment. 37.9 percent of the respondents equally agree and neutral towards alienation. 54.5 percent of the respondents agrees and 12.8 percent disagree that they face disorientation 43.9 percent respondents agrees that anxiety will arise while working in the new environment. The MPS is 78.6 so most of the response is agree. Another psychological factor is depression.

#### Effects of cultural shock

The culture shock will affect the person and the organisation as a whole. When an individual is incapable to adjusting in the new environment then it will affect his personal and professional life. When people encounter a new culture and experience culture shock, change and unfamiliarity influences their own psychological adjustment and participation in a cultural environment.

#### Personal Effects

Table 4.12

#### Personal Effects

Sl. No	Effects	Factors levels					Median	Mean	SD	MPS	Decisions
		SA %	A %	N %	DA %	SDA %					
1	Feeling angry	15.2 (10)	43.9 (29)	30.3 (20)	1.5 (1)	9.1 (6)	4	3.54	1.06	70.8	A
2	Extreme home sicknesses	22.7 (15)	45.5 (30)	19.7 (13)	3 (2)	9 (6)	4	3.69	1.13	73.8	A
3	Intense feeling of loyalty to own culture	13.6 (9)	37.9 (25)	27.3 (18)	6.1 (4)	15.2 (10)	4	3.28	1.23	65.6	A
4	Loss of appetite	15.2 (10)	27.3 (18)	37.9 (25)	9.1 (6)	10.6 (7)	3	3.27	1.15	65.4	A
5	Depression	28.8 (19)	24.2 (16)	31.8 (21)	7.6 (5)	7.6 (5)	4	3.59	1.20	71.8	A
6	Loneliness	21.2 (14)	36.4 (24)	24.2 (16)	6.1 (4)	12.1 (8)	4	3.48	1.24	69.6	A
7	New Friendships	18.2 (12)	56.1 (37)	21.2 (14)	3 (2)	1.5 (1)	4	3.86	.801	77.2	SA

Source: primary data [SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree]

Table 4.11 shows the impact of culture shock on personal life of the employees from different culture. The first effect is angry over minor inconveniences. 43.9 percent of the respondents agrees that they face angry because of the culture shock. 9.1 percent responses were disagreeing on the statement. 15.2 percent response was strongly agreeing and 30.3 were neutral. Second factor is the extreme home sickness. 45.5 percent respondents agreed that they face home sickness while working in Kerala. 9% respondents strongly disagree that they feel any home sickness. The MPS is 73.8 therefore the final decision of the respondents was agreeing. Third personal effect of culture shock is sudden intense feeling of loyalty to own culture. 37.9 percent of the respondents agreed that they have an intense feeling of loyalty to their own culture. 15.2 percent of the respondents disagreed the statement. 27.3 percent of the respondents were neutral about that. Another effect is loss of appetite on employees, the majority of

the respondents give neutral agreement. 27.3 percent of the respondents agreed that they loss their appetite while working in the new cultural back ground. The MPS is 65.5 so the most of the respondents agreeing the statement. 28.8percent of the respondents strongly agree that they are depressed in the new work environment. 24.2 percent of the respondents agreed that they are depressed and 7.6 percent respondents disagreeing. Another effect of culture shock on personal matters is loneliness. Most of the respondents agreeing that they felt loneliness due to cultural difference. 12.1 percent responses were disagreeing and MPS is 69.6 therefore most of the respondents agree that they felt loneliness while working in Kerala. The last effect of culture shock on personal matters is incapability to make new friendship. 56.1 percent of the respondents agreeing that they felt difficulties to make new friends in the new work place because of cultural difference. 21.2 percent response was neutral and 3 percent were disagreeing. The MPS is 77.2, therefore majority of the respondents agreeing that they face difficulties to make new friends in the work place. From the table 4.12, it is clear that culture shock leads a negative effect on the personal matters of the respondents.

#### 4.4.2 Job related Effects of Culture Shock

Table 4.13

Job related Effects

Sl. No	Effects	Factors levels					Median	Mean	SD	MPS	Decisions
		SA %	A %	N %	DA %	SDA %					
1	Diversity in thinking	18.2 (12)	51.5 (34)	16.7 (11)	7.6 (5)	6.1 (4)	4	3.68	1.05	73.6	A
2	Learning new ethnicity	25.8 (17)	31.8 (21)	30.3 (20)	4.5 (3)	7.6 (5)	4	3.63	1.14	72.6	A
3	Boredom	22.7 (15)	34.8 (23)	34.8 (23)	4.5 (3)	3 (2)	4	3.69	.976	73.8	A
4	Lack of motivation	12.1 (8)	28.8 (19)	43.9 (29)	6.1 (4)	9.1 (6)	3	3.28	1.06	65.6	A
5	Lacks Personal efficiency	13.6 (9)	31.8 (21)	37.9 (25)	7.6 (5)	9.1 (6)	3	3.33	1.100	66.6	A
6	Job stress	19.7 (13)	51.5 (34)	13.6 (9)	7.6 (5)	7.6 (5)	4	3.38	1.11	67.6	A

Source: primary data [SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree]

Table 4.13 express the job-related effects of culture shock. 51.5 percent of the respondents agrees that they face restrictions on diversity in thinking. 16.7 percent of the response were neutral. 7.6 percent of the respondents disagree the statement. The MPS is 73.6 so the conclusion is most of the respondents agree that they face difficulties

while working in new environment. On the second factor also most of the respondents give their agreements. The third job related effect is boredom. 34.8 percent of the respondents agreed that they face boredom in their job. They agreed that their job was boring. On the other hand, same percent of the response were neutral. The MPS is 73.8, that shows the agreement of respondents. Another factor that affect job related matters is motivation, most of the respondents agreed that they were not motivated to do the job. 43.9 percent of the response were neutral, they do not give any exact opinion. The fifth effect is lack of personal efficiency, 31.8 percent of the respondents agree that they face problem of lack of personal efficiency at their work place. 37.9 percent of the respondents do not give any opinion. 9.1 percent of the respondents were disagreeing. The MPS is 66.6 that shows the agreeing decision of the respondents. Job stress is another effect of culture shock on job related matters. 51.5 percent of the respondents agreed that they were stressed on their job. Job stress is occurred due to the contact in the unfamiliar cultural background of the organisation. 19.7 percent of the response were strongly agreed and 7.6 were disagreeing. From the table it is clear that the decision taken by the respondents are agreeing. It is clear that the culture shock will create an effect on the job-related matters.

#### 4.4.3 Organisational Effects

Table 4.14

Organisational Effects

Sl. No	Effects	Factors levels					Median	Mean	SD	MPS	Decisions
		SA %	A %	N %	DA %	SDA %					
1	Inability to cooperate with colleagues	10.6 (7)	59.1 (39)	15.2 (10)	10.6 (7)	4.5 (3)	4	3.60	.974	72.1	A
2	Lack of interest in work	21.2 (14)	36.4 (24)	27.3 (18)	7.6 (5)	7.6 (5)	4	3.50	1.13	70.1	A
3	No warm relation with colleagues	15.2 (10)	45.5 (30)	28.8 (19)	4.5 (3)	6.1 (4)	4	3.59	1.00	71.8	A
4	Conflicts in organisational role	10.6 (7)	34.8 (23)	37.9 (25)	6.1 (4)	10 (7)	3	3.28	1.09	65.7	A
5	Absenteeism	19.7 (13)	31.8 (21)	30.3 (20)	6.1 (4)	12.1 (8)	4	3.40	1.22	68.1	A
6	Timely completion of work	24.2 (16)	37.9 (25)	31.8 (21)	1.5 (1)	4.5 (3)	4	3.75	.993	75.1	A

Source: primary data [SA – Strongly Agree, A – Agree]

Table 4.14 depicts the effect of culture shock on organisational matters. The first statement ‘inability to cooperate with colleagues’ got 10.6 percent strongly agree, 59 percent agree and 10.6 percent disagree. The MPS is 72, therefore most of the respondents agree that they face the problem of inability to cooperate with colleagues in the organisation. Another organisational effect is lack of interest in work. 36.4 percent of the respondents agree that they loss their interest towards works because of culture shock. 27.3 percent of response were neutral. Third effect

was the relations with the colleague's 45.5 percent of the respondents agree that they face problems to make good relation with the colleagues. 28.8 percent of the respondents do not give any opinion. 34.8 percent of the respondents agreed that they face conflicts in the organisational role. 10 percent of the response was disagreeing. The MPS is 65.5 that shows the agreeing decision of the respondents. Another effect is the increase in the amount of absenteeism. 31.8 percent of the respondents agreed that culture shock leads to absenteeism in the organisation. 12.1 percent response were disagreeing. The MPS is 68 this depicts the agreeing decision of employees from outside Kerala. The last effect of culture shock is the timely completion of work, this factor got 24.2 strongly agree, 37.9 percent agree, 31.9 percent no opinion, 1.5 percent disagree and 4.5 percent strongly disagree. The MPS of all of the above statements lies in between 65 to 75, from this it is clear that majority of the respondents agreed that cultural shock create an effect on the organisational matters.

#### Findings of the study

- The most serious physical environment problem faced by the non-Keralite employees are the climatic conditions of Kerala, lack of availability of utility services and the lack of quality and non-availability of food and water.
- Non-Keralite employee's perception towards the factors of culture shock is not related with their age.
- Marital status of the non-Keralite employees is not related with the influence of the factors of culture shock.
- The important social factor influences the culture shock is the attitude of the society.
- The most important personal factors lead to culture are Language, dressing style, food habits and home sickness.
- It is found that culture shock leads to gender discrimination and work load at the working place.
- Marital status is independent of perception towards culture shock by non-Keralites in IT sector.

#### Conclusion

IT sectors in Kerala offers good job opportunities to qualified and skilled person from different cultural backgrounds. However, the work allotments and new working conditions are not suitable for the Non-Keralites because of the various physical and social issues. This study has been made to identify the issue and the effects of culture shock among them. The result of the study shows that the Non-Keralites are facing different personal, job related or psychological issues at work place because of the cultural differences. The effect of culture shock and the factors influencing culture shock were identified and also various measures to manage the culture shock were assumed



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