

Introduction to the 5th Global Issues Conference Special Edition

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The fifth edition of the Global Issues Conference in 2020, which took place in virtual space between 30 March and 3 April 2020, was positively surprising both due to the number of presenters and active members of the audience, and to the quality of the presentations. Both students and their supervisors participated in lively discussions, asking numerous questions through the conference chat, and the presentations on a broad range of truly global subjects came from virtually all continents.

The current journal issue brings a small selection of papers from the Global Issues Conference 5. The papers do reflect the globality of issues and the variety of partners, and come from Algeria, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, and United States. The authors discuss the issues of interest for practically everyone - environmental protection, proper nutrition and health care for adolescents, political propaganda, national stereotypes as well as virtual teaching.

Specifically, Anila Alam, Aliya Fazal and Karamat Ali from Pakistan carry out a scientific study of the impact of the glacial melting each year in the mountainous surroundings of the Ishkoman basin, which is generally the result of human activity. In their paper they emphasize the need to inform people and work against the depletion of local vegetation. Adeela Rehman from Pakistan discusses the importance of the awareness of proper diet among girls and boys, and based on a statistical study she draws attention to the fact that while girls are more aware of proper nutrition, they do not practice it, while boys engage in risky behaviours and ignore proper nutrition, too. Femi M. Olufunmilade from Nigeria discusses the content of “promotional” videos broadcast online by the terrorist group Boko Haram, who want thus to “promote” their name in public and lure young people to join their ranks. Aleksandra Brzana, Paulina Szot and Justyna Warchoń from Poland (notably, this is Szot and Warchoń’s second publication with the journal – see issue 8.1) analyse the stereotypes Poles have of three nearby countries, Russia, Hungary and Czech Republic, pointing out historical and current ideas they have as well as the reasons they have them, and conclude that negative stereotypes can be fought with promoting mobility and simply knowledge of other cultures. Nidhi Sharma and Sachiyo M. Shearman from the United States discuss the impressions that students from Saudi Arabia had of their stays in the US, based on the interviews with them – the authors hope to be able to use the results of their study to help other students face the imminent challenges better. Finally, Nouredine Mouhadjer, Mohammed Kheladi, and Amine Belaid from Algeria discuss their

experience in the Global Understanding classes, emphasizing their role in fostering reflection on intercultural differences as well as the importance of respect and tolerance for the view of others during those classes.

I would like to thank the authors for their participation and dedication to the conference and journal's goal, which is to provide a safe forum for students worldwide to exchange ideas and promote international cooperation and understanding. The papers reflect the global nature of the Global Partners in Education as an international organization, in the way the authors approach their topics and analyse their data as well as their excellent use of English as an international language of communication.

I would also like to recognize the following colleagues at Carpathian State College in Poland for their assistance in reviewing the articles:

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Impact Analysis of Glacial Lakes on Land Use Land Cover Dynamics of Karakoram Using Satellite Imagery from 1998-2018

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Abstract

Land use land cover change (LULCC) detection is vital for managing natural resources and monitoring environmental changes. Ishkoman valley being a part of glaciated region is facing the problem of altered land features. Natural disasters triggered by human activities are altering the land cover of the basin. The valley is facing the floods, GLOF and landslides almost every year from glacier melt due to temperature fluctuation.

Present exploration is to identify LULC dynamics in context of the creation of an artificial lake in Ishkoman basin which had blocked the flow of Immit River. GIS and RS techniques were applied for geographic and temporal evaluation of land use modifications in the Ishkoman basin from the year 1998 to 2018. It is identified that barren land and vegetation cover of region declined significantly in twenty years while snow and glacier cover was increased.

1. Introduction

Land is one of the dynamic natural resources hosting all natural and anthropogenic activities. Although Land use and land cover (LULC) are separate features of the earth surface but they are very interrelated. Each parcel of land is distinctive in the cover it possesses (Meyer, 1995). LULC of a region is controlled by natural and socio-economic factors. Natural disasters like drought, rainfall, forest fires, and fluctuations in climate can cause alterations in land cover. The continuous pressure on land to meet the needs of a growing population and several demands driven developmental activities have imposed stress on the earth's land (Foley et al., 2011; Weinzettel et al., 2013). The changes in the traditional land use pattern caused by growing human population are higher than ever (Hansen et al., 2010). Lack of scientific analysis and evaluation of resources resulted in unsustainable use of land resources. Therefore information on the geographic and temporal allocation of LULC is an important

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prerequisite for management and monitoring programs at the local and regional level (Fan et al., 2007).

The LULC information acquired by GIS and RS for identification of hazard and risk from glacier lakes in the Karakoram must be explored. The purpose of the study is to create LULC classification maps for Ishkoman valley of Gilgit - Baltistan, Pakistan from 1998 to 2018, and to analyze the impacts of glacial lake on LULC dynamics of Ishkoman. Generated data will assist policy makers in updating their planning for Ishkoman Basin.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Area

Ishkoman is a splendid valley situated at 36.5677° North and 73.7426° East, in north of Ghizer district of Gilgit-Baltistan (Fig. 1). In the Hindu Kush and Karakoram hills, Ishkoman is one of the high mountain valleys, located at an altitude of 7,000 and 12,000 feet.

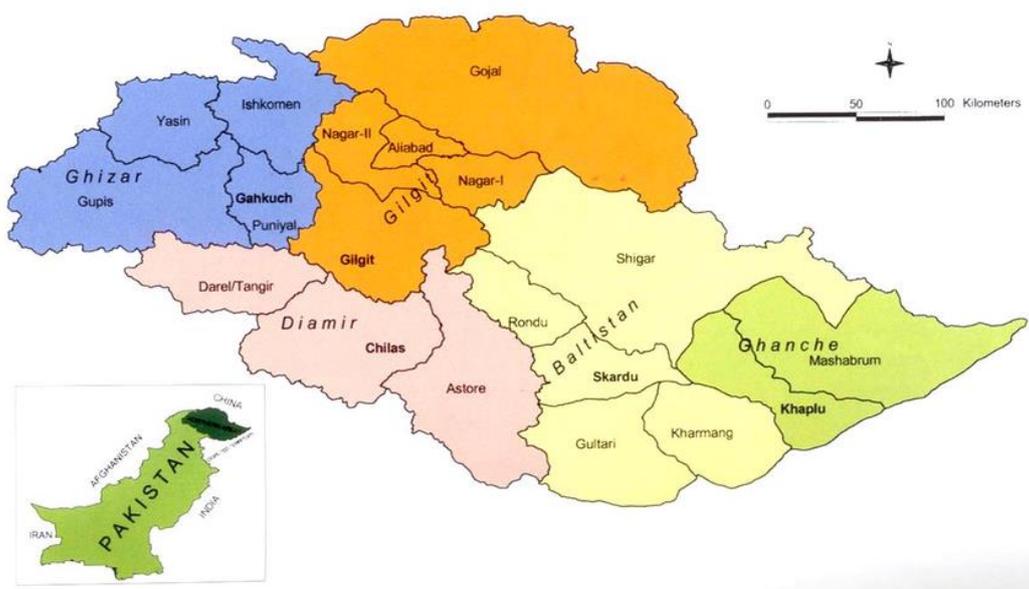


Figure 1: Map Showing Geographical Location of Ishkoman

At a distance of 140 kilometers from Gilgit, valley is known for beautiful natural lakes, alpine pastures, huge glaciers, and blue ice-cold water. It is a host to several mountain paths and treks from glaciers that makes it a popular tourist destination. The valley includes approximately 25 villages with a population of 30,000 inhabitants. It has a desert climate because it gets little monsoonal rain from June to September. Temperature variation throughout the year is about 26.9 °C. During summer season, many streams increase dramatically, transporting 20 % more water than in winter because of the melting of glaciers and snow.

2.2 Glacial Lake of a Valley

In Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtoonkhawa, more than 3,044 glacial lakes have already been formed of which 33 are considered hazardous (UNDP estimate). A glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) event occurred on 17 July 2018, struck Immit, Bilhnaz and Badswat villages of Ishkoman basin (Fig. 2).



Figure 2: The glacial lake image of 26th July 2018 (Source: [AKDN](#)).

A lake was formed in Badsawat village and resulted in the destruction of many houses and blocked 10 villages. Two people were killed during the initial rush of floodwaters and more than 1,000 people were evacuated to safer locations before this catastrophic event (Dawn news 20th July 2018). Flooding is one of the severe problems in and around the Ishkoman valley. These particular natural hazards have made Ishkoman subject to flooding.

2.3 Study Method

This research is focused on analyzing the satellite imagery of the Ishkoman watershed. Since the study aims to detect the LULC changes in Ishkoman Basin from year 1998 to 2018, so the Landsat was the best available option.



Figure 3: The glacial debris image of 26th July 2018 (Source: [Pamir Times/Twitter](#)).

Landsat multispectral imageries of valley for said years with a spectral resolution of 30 m were acquired from the earth explorer of United States Geological Survey (2014). Real time data is very important while analyzing remotely sensed data. Therefore field observation was carried out despite of the rough terrain, unusual weather, very cold temperature, and remoteness. In addition, acquiring satellite images for the expected interval of time was a difficult task because of cloud cover. Landsat images of Ishkoman Basin were acquired for September 1998. Selection of this month for acquisition of Landsat images is made due to melting of heavy snow. Snow melting starts from June and continues till August. All the images downloaded were either from the July or early August to keep the analysis free from the impact of seasonal variability.

Two separate images for each year were downloaded to cover the whole basin. Acquired input data was imported to Earth Resources Data Analysis System (ERDAS Imagine 13 software). The different bands were stacked using layer stack in order to generate a false color composite (FCC) image of the acquired tiles of the image. Landsat Satellite images were selected on the basis of the quality of images with low cloud cover (Fig. 4). For georeferencing, World Geodetic System (WGS 84) and the North Coordinate System of the Transverse Mercator Zone 35 were used. Suitable band combinations of Landsat 4-5 and 7-8 were selected. For the Landsat 4 - 5 bands of image display on the channel of red, green, blue and near infrared were used while for Landsat 7-8 band 1,2,3,4,5 were selected. ARCMAP software was used to clip the study area and Histogram equalization has been used as the primary technique in the current research to enhance image contrast.

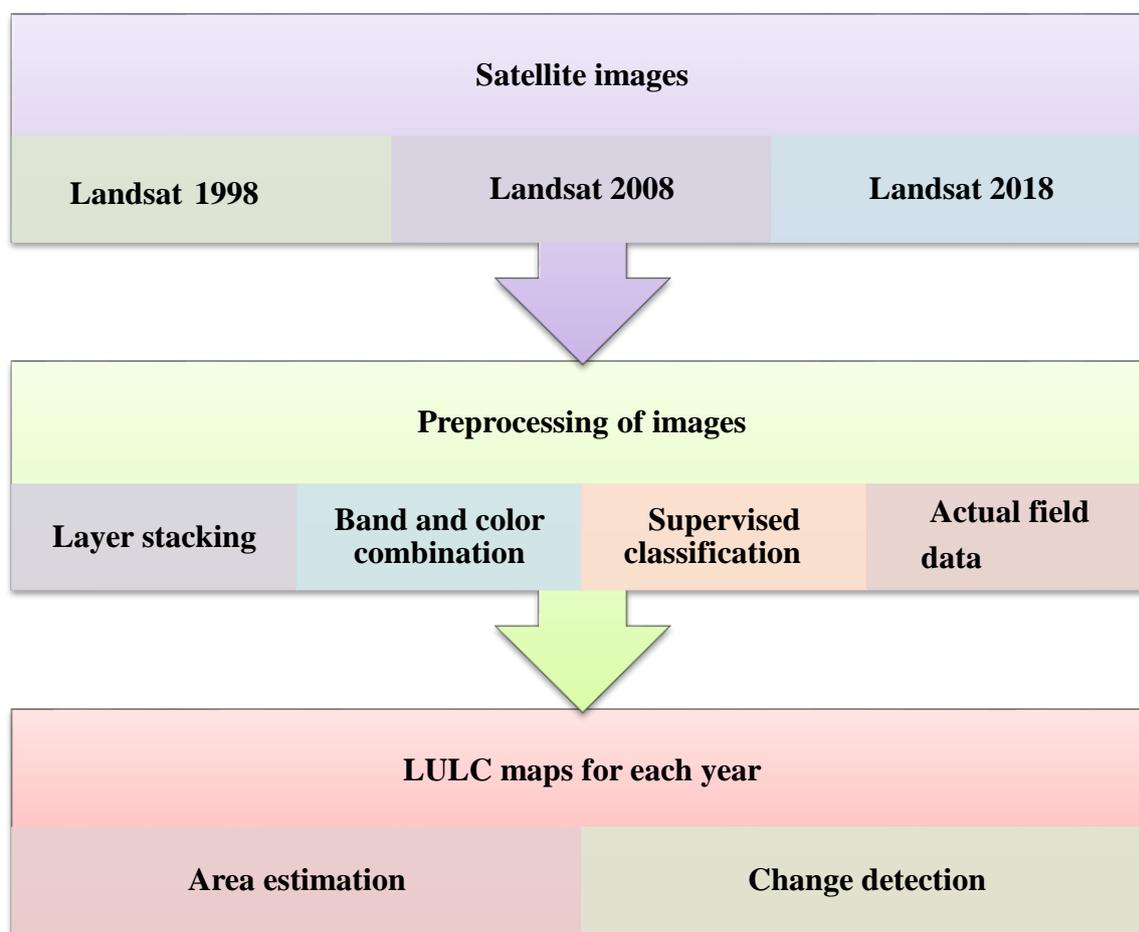


Figure 4: Flow Chart showing the method used in the study

In order to determine the LULC changes supervised classification following the maximum likelihood algorithm was used in ARCMAP software to classify the images of three different time periods. On the basis of the major types of LULC of an area, a classification scheme was thought-out (Table 1). Based on the information from local inhabitants in a field study LULC classes considered are barren land, snow and glacier, vegetation, water bodies, and settlements. Based on the pixel number and total area the area of each LULC class was calculated.

Table 1: Classification Theme for LULC Classes

Elements	Description
Barren land	It comprises bare soil, sand, rocks, strip mines and quarries
Snow & Glacier	It includes glacial lakes, ice and snow

Vegetation	It covers land under crop fields, fallow, plantation, rangelands, scattered plants, forests, meadows on the mountains
Water bodies	It includes surface water e.g. lakes, canals, ponds, streams, rivers and reservoirs
Settlements	It includes residential area and cattle homes

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 LULC Maps of Ishkoman Valley

Anthropogenic activities and its consequent LULC change have become an important issue for the present time that risks the environmental degradation (Gamble et al., 2003). Ishkoman basin's LULC analysis for past twenty years revealed some important transformations (see Fig. 5).

3.1.1 For the Year 1998

The analysis of 1998 image showed that barren land covered the largest proportion of land in Ishkoman basin covering **68%** of the total land, followed by the snow and glacier (**18%**). The vegetation and settlement constituted **10%** and **3%** respectively while the water bodies showed coverage of **0.7 %**.

3.1.2 For the Year 2008

The assessment of 2008 image revealed the same trend as noted for 1998, that barren land covered about **64%** followed by the snow and glacier which accounts for **19%** of the whole basin. The vegetation constitutes **14%**, while computed values for settlements and water bodies are **3%** and **0.7% respectively**.

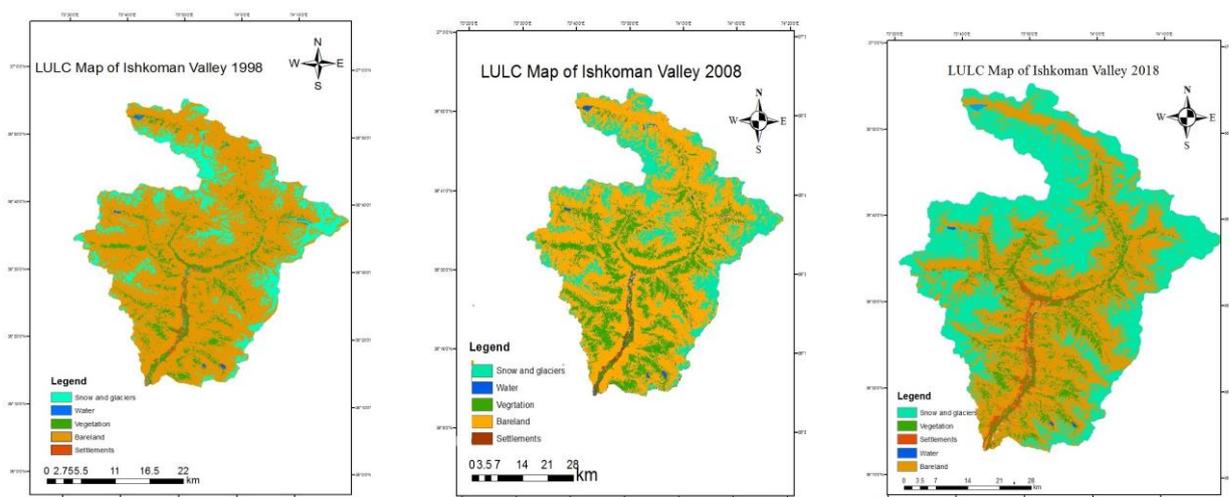


Figure 5: LULC Maps of Ishkoman valley for the Year 1998, 2008, and 2018

3.1.3 For the Year 2018

The scrutiny of 2018 image showed that Barren land accounted for the **40%** while snow and glacier covered about **38%** of the whole basin. The vegetation constitutes **16%**, while settlement and water bodies showed coverage value of **4%** and **0.8%** respectively.

Table 2: Area Transition for LULC Classes for Years 1998, 2008, and 2018

LULC type	1998		2008		2018	
	Area in Hectares	percentage	Area in Hectares	percentage	Area in Hectares	percentage
Barren land	195383.4	68.15%	182217.1	63.78%	108660.54	40.31%
Snow & Glacier	51436.58	17.94%	53213.33	18.63%	102772.67	38.12%
Vegetation	28200.7	9.84%	39714.78	13.9%	44128.02	16.37%
Water bodies	1909.54	0.67%	1934.39	0.68%	2259.99	0.84%
Settlements	7787.47	2.72%	8625.47	3.02%	9748.80	3.62%

3.2 Dynamics of LULC of Ishkoman Basin

Each class computed from LULC maps is presented in the Table 2.

3.2.1 Barren Land

As the land belongs to the individuals of a specific village in Gilgit-Baltistan, so the people of the village have the privilege of individual ownership and have the rights in areas contiguous to a specific village. In 1978 ownership rights were introduced on barren lands under cultivation. Still districts of Hunza, Ghizer and Diamer are unsettled in comparison to the districts of Gilgit, Astore, Skardu and Khaplu (Bhatti & Ali, 2016). This might be a reason for a larger share of barren land for the basin under analysis.

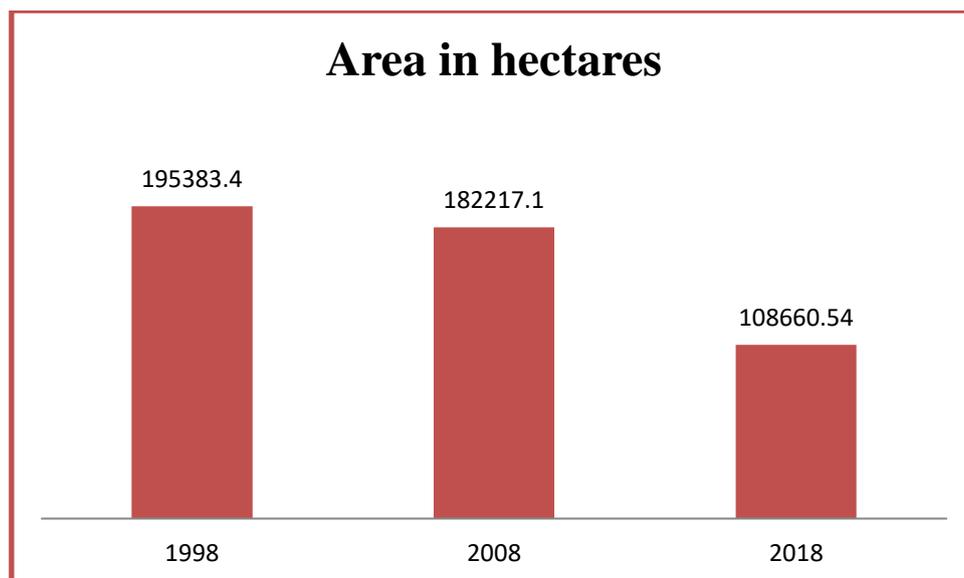


Figure 6: Barren Land Area Distribution of Ishkoman Basin

Continuous decrease in area is figured out for Barren land which was identified as largest in share. The decline is **4%** from 1998 to 2008 while **25%** from 2008 to 2018. Figure (6) reveals decreasing trend, probably caused by encroachment and conversion into other land use and land cover. The current study suggests shift of barren land area with snow and glaciers.

3.2.2 Snow and Glaciers

About **23%** of the Karakoram Range possesses ice reserves of about **2,387** km. Some **2,398** glaciers, including Siachen, Hispar, Biafo, Baltoro and Batura, are among the largest glaciers other than Polar glaciers (Ashraf et al., 2010). In the Karakoram Range, glaciers are stable/stagnant or even growing (Hewitt, 2005). This study also supports the same finding, from the year 1998 to 2018 snow and glacier cover was recognized enhancing from **51437** hectares to **102773** hectares in Ishkoman Basin. The area computed from 2018 map is simply double to the 1998 map. A significant increase of **51336** hectares was estimated for the 2 decades under comparison (Fig. 7).

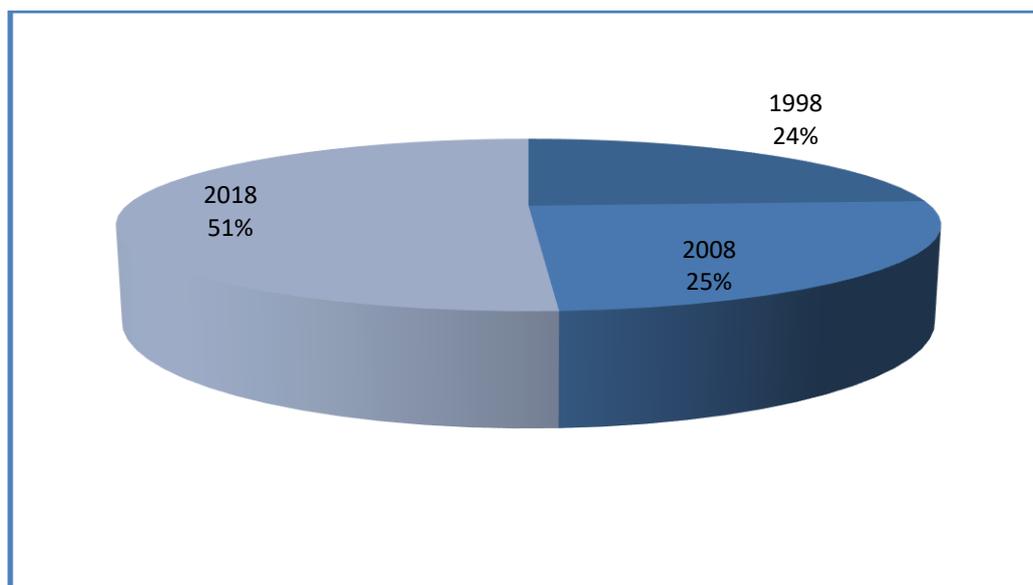


Figure 7: Snow and Glacier Area Distribution of Ishkoman Basin

3.2.3 Vegetation

In Gilgit-Baltistan the vegetation and interface areas constitute the third highest land cover after barren land and snowcapped mountains. It covers **2.34** million hectares of the land (Khan et al., 2013). Vegetation and pasture land of an ecosystem are not only essential for air and water regulation but also a great asset for continuous economic growth. The increase in area under vegetation for the 1st decade was more (**11514** hectares) than the 2nd decade (**4413** hectares). Increasing human population suggests growing need for livelihoods, which put stress on agricultural land and vegetation in terms of production and consumption. The improvement in vegetation cover is probably due to better practice of land ownership which restricts grazing in someone else land. Vegetation expansion was **4 %** from 1998 to 2008 while **2 %** from 2008 to 2018 (Fig. 8). GLOF disaster can change the land cover so that hectares of the agricultural land have been destroyed by GLOF under study. Seasonal crops like wheat, potatoes, and cereals were submerged creating a food shortage. The native people already suffered and this disaster had severely impacted their socioeconomic condition.

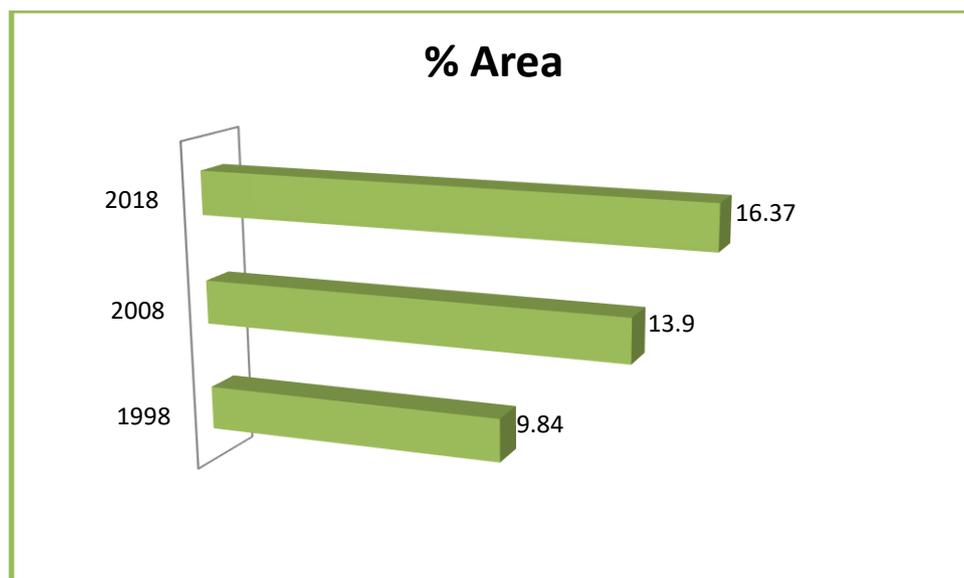


Figure 8: Vegetation Area Distribution of Ishkoman Basin

3.2.4 Settlements

Residential area covered about **7787** hectares in 1998, increased to **8625.47** hectares in 2008 that further increased to **9749** hectares in 2018 of the whole area. The LULC maps generated for settlements have shown an increase from **2.72%** to **3.62%** from 1998 to 2018 respectively. Due to the geographical location a slight increase of **1%** in residence for 2 decades was noted. The rangelands provide an extensive amount of fuel wood to meet domestic energy needs, fodder for livestock, and medicinal plants for traditional uses and sale purpose. In 1998, residential area was identified in the lower areas of the basin, but in the other two periods, it has shifted to the upper areas of the basin i.e towards the rangeland area. Field visits and responses from local inhabitants helped to reason out this shifting. Wood from the rangeland is the only source of fuel for them so shift to upper areas make collection of wood easier for them. Primarily this relocation of resident to safer places is a potential risk of more damage to downstream population due to GLOF events.

3.2.5 Water Bodies

Ishkoman River is the source of irrigation for the various villages in Ishkoman and Puniyal that drains into the Gilgit River. Water bodies increased from the initial **1910** hectares (1998) to around **1934** hectares (2008) leading in a total rise of **2260** hectares (2018).

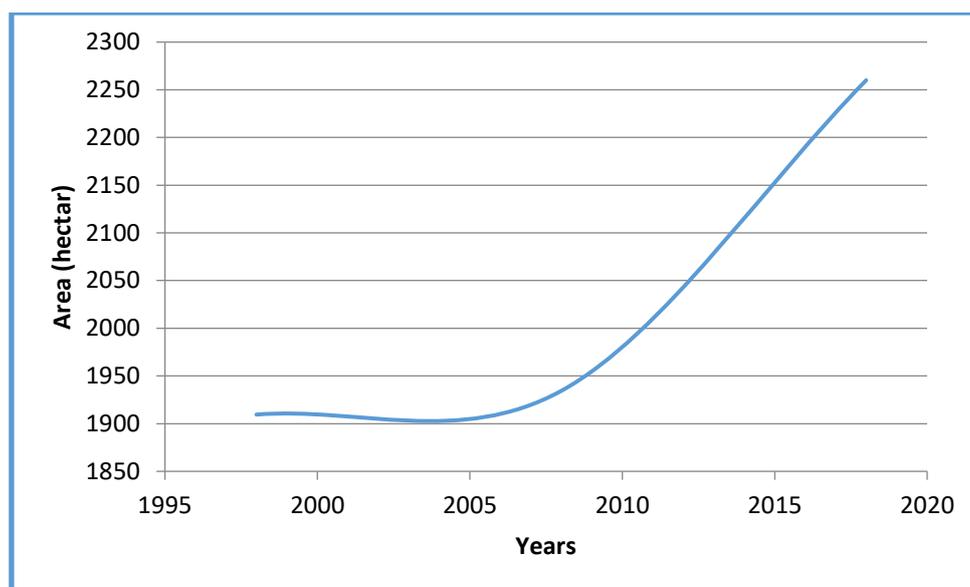


Figure 9: Water Bodies Area Distribution of Ishkoman Basin

3.3 Land Use Land Cover Changes and GLOF

Impact of climate change have been well observed in HKH region, in particular, with respect to the increase of the snowline, formation of glacier lakes and change in biodiversity in the ecosystem (Rasul et al., 2003; Dwarakish & Ganasri, 2015). Global circulation patterns and local topography influences greatly the occurrence of GLOF events. The topography of the Ishkoman river basin experiences various types of meteorological conditions according to elevation, aspect, slope and landforms (Khan et al., 2013). The mechanism for flood generation in the Northern Pakistan depends on extremely different variables. The contributing factors of LULCC for the area under study are natural disasters such as GLOF, rock sliding, avalanches, land slips, earthquakes, climate change, and trampling effects. Potential risk of outburst floods from 8 glacial lakes of hanging nature from Gilgit river basin has been reported by Ashraf et al. (2010). Several GLOF occurrences can be connected with more rainfall leading to rise in river level over the previous few years. In past years temperature and precipitation patterns has changed and directly affected the overall land cover. In the month of April and May, rainfall had occurred in Badsawat, Bilhanz and the other villages of Ishkoman. Due to heavy snowfall in last year's, the percentage of snow and glacier has somehow increased in 2018. The occurrence of any extreme GLOF incidence in the future is very difficult to predict due to rapid dynamics of glacial system. But effective monitoring and planning can reduce impact of natural disasters like GLOF.

4. Conclusions

The mountainous areas of northern Pakistan are rich in biodiversity, glaciers and key watershed of Indus River system. Effective assessment and monitoring is indispensable to capture land use land cover changes of the region. Present exploration is to identify the reason of land cover dynamics in the Ishkoman basin in context of creation of an artificial lake which had blocked the flow of Immit River. From the overall characteristics of land cover a significant change is measured for Snow and glaciers, vegetation and barren land while settlement and water bodies did not show any major transformation. Snow and glaciers cover were found accelerated along proportionate decrease to barren land and vegetation.

5. Recommendations

In the framework of adjustment to climate change, following are the suggestions to maintain the region's mountain ecosystem and manage land cover:

- As Ishkoman is disaster prone area, there is need to inform people about anticipated disaster hazards and set up an early warning system in Ishkoman
- Special measures are needed first and foremost to secure the built infrastructure of the basin from the impact of climate change,
- Climate resilient building methods must be drawn into account and promoted,
- Maintain an inventory of all significant climate-prone hydrometeorological events of region for tracking and formulation of risk assessments,
- Another step forward in protecting and restoring the vegetation would be providing incentives to the local people for guarding the new plantations, and
- A comprehensive watershed resource management is essential for the socioeconomic development of inhabitant in future.

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Author Notes

Ms. Anila Alam has completed her BS in Environmental Sciences from Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi in 2019. Her BS research work was “Identification of hazard and risk from glacier lakes in the Karakoram using satellite imagery from 2000-2018”. Right after graduation, she got involved in a base line survey conducted by ICIMOD in different regions of Gilgit-Baltistan. She has a keen interest to work as a meteorologist and wishes to pursue MPhil in the field of GIS and RS.

Dr. Aliya Fazal is currently working as Assistant Professor in the department of Chemistry, of Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi, Pakistan. She obtained her PhD degree in the field of Environmental Sciences from the same university in year 2012. Her PhD study was “Chemistry, kinetics and activation of biomaterials for waste water treatment”. Dr. Aliya has presented her research work in many international conferences and published research articles in diverse fields. Her research interests are metal nanoparticles synthesis & applications, biofuel production & desulfurization of fossil fuel, GLOF risk mapping, drinking water quality assessment, and pollutants remediation. She has supervised 17 BS students and 5 MPhil scholars in their research pursuit.

Dr. Karamat Ali is a lecturer in the department of Environmental Sciences, Karakoram International University (KIU) Gilgit, Pakistan. He has completed his MSc in Geography from Karachi University, MPhil from KIU and PhD in Environmental Sciences from Kathmandu University. His PhD study was “Flash flood hazard and vulnerability assessment in the Gilgit River Basin, Norther areas of Pakistan”. Dr. Karamat joined KIU as a contractual faculty in 2006 and become permanent in 2012. His research interest includes disaster risk assessment & reduction, GIS and RS based GLOFs risk assessment, Land use Land cover change & Climate change impact assessment. He has published a few papers on various topics and supervised more than 30 BS students and currently supervising 5 MPhil scholars. He completed three research projects as PI and Co-PI and is currently involved in the project titled “Scaling up and transferring community-managed rural water systems to urban” funded by British Academy Infrastructure Well-Being Project.

Nutritional Deficiencies among Adolescents: Challenges for Healthcare System

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Abstract

The individual's behavior, education and knowledge about nutrition are important factors to be considered in healthy living. The study aimed to explore gender differences in awareness about nutritional deficiencies among university students. Six public and private universities of twin cities (Rawalpindi and Islamabad) were selected to collect data through a formal questionnaire survey. The research covered issues related to the awareness of well-being and health risks, perception and attitude towards health and nutrition, prevalence and knowledge about nutritional food and healthy lifestyle. The data was analyzed by using different statistical tests and the results of the study demonstrated a significant difference between male and female students regarding the awareness and knowledge of well-being and health risks behavior. The findings of the study indicated that female students have more awareness of health-related matters like nutritional value of food, perception of their physical social health status, avoiding health risk behavior and adopting healthy lifestyle for enhanced wellbeing. Although female students do not have breakfast and generally go to university with empty stomachs, which adversely affects their health as well as diminish their activities, they are more aware of the foods which are more nutritious and better for health. On the other hand, male students are involved in some risky health behaviors such as smoking and dietary irregularities. The male students were more frequently involved in health risk behavior like smoking, drinking, eating out etc. It has been recommended from the study that comprehensive health educational programs should be incorporated into educational institutions to promote optimistic health seeking behavior among students.

Introduction

Nutrition is defined as the way the body processes and uses the essence of nutrients that the body needs for growth, repair and preservation of cells. Carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals and fats are the essential nutrients for a healthy body (Alters & Schiff, 2011). One of the simplest and most effective ways of improving health is to follow an adequate diet that satisfies the nutritional needs and a good supply of fresh clean water. Proper food high in nutrients is important for physically and mentally healthy living.

Health and nutrition problems are the effect of unsatisfactory food intake, severe and repeated infections or the combination of the two, and are closely connected with inadequate health service and unhealthy environment. In Pakistan, there is a significant difference in the economic status, lifestyle and nutrition between urban and rural populations, and between male and female children. The study conducted by Anwar & Awan (2003) comparing the nutritional status of rural and urban school children in Faisalabad District indicated that girls are often neglected by their families regarding health status as food of higher quality is given to male children. The reason for malnourishment of female family members in both urban and rural areas is illiteracy and poverty: girls are given less food than boys and families spend less money on girls' healthcare. Hospital records show that more boys than girls are brought in for treatment, while girls are usually admitted only when an illness has become critical.

Gender differences exist in the preferences of eating places. The study by Driskell, Meckna & Scales (2006) indicates that male students show a decided preference for eating lunch at fast food places as compared to female students. At fast food places mostly males prefer to take burgers and carbonated drinks, which do not have such nutritional values that are required for their health.

The research by Tirodimos et al (2009) conducted on nutritional and health habits of university students in Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece, provides further insights into the differences. The purpose of the study was to assess the eating habits and some health-related behaviors. The analysis of the data collected from 300 students indicates that the percentage of female students' awareness of health practices and nutritional eating habits was higher than the percentage of male students: 66.7% and 61.8%, respectively. Another research, conducted by Yahia et al (2008) on eating habits of Lebanese university students, indicates that female students show better and healthier eating habits than male students. 53.3 % of female students have a proper breakfast daily as compared to 52.1% of male students.

Boys consume significantly more products from the grain and meat groups than girls. While the average daily intake of fiber and micronutrients is significantly low for both boys and girls, there are significant gender differences in nutrient intake, with boys consuming greater energy, protein, carbohydrate, calcium, iron, phosphorus, and sodium than girls (Galloway, 2007). The research conducted by Liebman et al (2003) into gender differences in selected dietary intakes and eating behaviors in rural communities of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho indicates that women report higher intakes of fruits, vegetables (except for potatoes), and high-fiber cereals, but lower intakes of milk and sweetened beverages such as soft drinks in comparison with d men. The result of the study showed that the diets of female respondents were more nutrient and likely to be higher in dietary fiber. Women were generally seen to prefer food

prepared at home, with low fat and sufficient protein level. The overall gender differences in dietary intakes and eating behaviors were consistent among both male and female respondents of the study.

Another research conducted by Deshpande et al (2009) highlighted poor eating habits young generation because of taking more independent eating decisions. By doing so they do not focus on the timing, quality and type of food they are choosing, ignoring the nutritional requirements of the body.

Method

Objectives of the study:

- To find out gender differences in nutritional awareness and eating habits among university students.
- To explore the choices of nutritional food among students.

Research Design

In order to find out gender differences in health seeking behavior among university students in the twin cities, the present research applies quantitative approach.

Tool

The semi structured questionnaire was developed for the purpose of this research. The questionnaire was based on open-ended, close-ended, matrix as well as contingency questions. The questionnaire was filled by the students of different public and private universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Language of Instrument Instruction

The questionnaire was prepared in the English language because the students can understand English very well.

Research Locale

The study area for this research was public and private universities in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Sample Size

Four hundred students were selected as respondents of the study. The overall sample consisted of 175 males and 225 females.

Sampling Technique

This research was based on a probability as well as non-probability sampling technique. The universities were selected randomly and then sampled proportionately. The desired number of students was established using a convenient sampling technique, the study was conducted on the specified sample group.

Results

Table 1: Demographics characteristics of the respondents

Sex	Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Male	18-20	52	30
	21-23	88	50
	24-26	31	18
	27-30	4	2
Female	18-20	55	25
	21-23	132	59
	24-26	33	14
	27-30	5	2
	Education		
Male	Bachelors	72	41
	Masters	103	59
	Above Masters	0	0
Female	Bachelors	148	66
	Masters	66	29
	Above Masters	11	6
	Marital Status		
Male	Single	164	94
	Married	11	6
Female	Single	215	96
	Married	10	4
	Family system		
Male	Nuclear	145	64
	Joint	74	33
	Extended	6	3
Female	Nuclear	73	42
	Joint	92	53
	Extended	10	5

The above table indicates that 30% of the males belong to the 18to-20-age group as compared to 25% of the females, while 50% of the male are between 21-23 years old as compared to 59% of the females. It further indicated that 18% of the males are aged 24-26 and 14% of the females belong to this age category, while 2% of both males and females are aged 27-30.

The table also indicates that 41% of the male respondents have education up to the bachelor level as compared to 66% of the females, while 59% of male respondent have a master degree as compared to 29% of the females. Only 5% of the female respondents have higher degrees than master. Regarding the marital status of the respondents, it is indicated that 94% of the male respondents were unmarried as compared to 96% of the females. 64% of the males belong to nuclear families as compared to 42% of female respondents belonging to the same type of family.

Table 2: Eating timing of the respondents by gender with relation to their level of education

Sex	Education Level	Hungry % (f)	When free % (f)	Any time % (f)	Proper time % (f)	Total % (f)
Male	Bachelor	35(25)	30(22)	19(14)	15(11)	(72)
	Master	34(35)	14(15)	24(25)	27(28)	(103)
	Above Master	0	0	0	0	0
	Total					
Female	Bachelor	42(62)	15(22)	24(36)	19(28)	(148)
	Master	62(41)	7(5)	15(10)	15(10)	(66)
	Above Master	9(1)	37(5)		54(6)	(11)
	Total					
Chi-Square: 8.72 (M), 25.348 (F) DF: 3 (M), 6(F) Significance Level (SL): 0.041 (M), 0.000(F) Lambda:0.099 Standard error: .026 t value: .3.959 SL: .000						

The above table indicates that 35% of the males having education up to the bachelor level take their food when they are hungry while the rest of the male students take food when they have free time or at any time. Whereas 62% of the female students having master education take food when hungry and the rest of the female students take food at proper times, in their free time or at any time. The chi-square value indicates an insignificant difference between eating times of both male and female respondents.

Table 3: Level of education and eating timings among students.

Sex	Education Level	Hungry % (f)	When free % (f)	Any time % (f)	Proper time % (f)	Total % (f)
Male	Bachelor	35(25)	30(22)	19(14)	15(11)	(72)
	Masters	34(35)	14(15)	24(25)	27(28)	(103)
	Above Masters	0	0	0	0	0
Female	Bachelor	42(62)	15(22)	24(36)	19(28)	(148)
	Masters	62(41)	7(5)	15(10)	15(10)	(66)
	Above Masters	9(1)	37(5)		54(6)	(11)
Chi-Square: 8.72 (M), 25.348 (F) DF: 3 (M), 6(F) Significance Level (SL): 0.041 (M), 0.000(F) Lambda:0.099 Standard error: .026 t value: .3.959 SL: .000						

Table 4: Gender differences in prevalence of overeating among students (n=400)

Respondents	Overeating		
	Yes	No	Total
Male	56(99)	43(76)	44(175)
Female	51 (122)	45(103)	56(225)
Total	55 (221)	45(179)	100(400)
Chi-Square: .220 DF: 1 Significance Level (SL): 0.063 Lambda:0.000 Standard error: .009 t value: .633 SL: .527			

The table indicates gender differences in the habit of overeating among university students. The chi-square value shows an insignificant difference among male and female students regarding overeating, with both male and female respondents having the habit of overeating.

Table 5: Gender differences in causes of overeating among students

Respondents	Reasons of Overeating						Total
	Passions	Excitement	Stress	Anxiety	Lack of time management	Study pressure	
Male	21(37)	22 (39)	6(11)	7(12)	4(8)	7(13)	44(120)
Female	14 (31)	30 (67)	7(16)	4(10)	2(6)	9(20)	56(150)
Total	25(68)	39(106)	10(27)	8(22)	6(14)	12(33)	100(270)
Chi-Square: .220 DF: 1 Significance Level (SL): 0.053							

The results indicate that the majority of both male and female students overeat due to excitement in terms of their activities, achievements or other event. The chi-square

values indicate significant differences between the male and female reasons for overeating.

Table 6: Habit of intake of proper breakfast among students by gender

Respondents	Take proper breakfast		
	Yes	No	Total
Male	66(115)	34(60)	44(175)
Female	47 (106)	53(119)	56(225)
Total	55 (221)	45(179)	100(400)
Chi-Square: 13.77 DF: 1 Significance Level (SL): 0.000 Lambda:			

The table indicates that 66% of the male respondents have a proper breakfast, whereas 53 % of the female do not have a proper breakfast. The chi-square value indicates a significant difference between male and female breakfast intakes.

Table 7: Food choices of the respondents by gender

Food group	Sex	N	Mean	SD
Fruit & vegetables	Male	175	5.06	1.61
	Female	225	5.29	1.86
Dairy products	Male	175	16.58	5.27
	Female	225	16.22	4.55
T value -1.35 DF: 398 Significance Level (SL): 0.005				

The mean of male and female students choosing the food groups points at some differences between their foods choices. The test value also indicates differences at 0.005 level of significance.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that a difference exists between health seeking behavior of male and female university students. The results of the study point out that the majority of the students belong to the age group of 21-23 and are unmarried. Most of the students are at their master level of education having different socioeconomic backgrounds. The results of the study indicate that 60% of the female students prefer to take their food at home while a smaller number of the male students take their food at home. The remaining proportion of male and female respondents sometimes take their food at the university café, fast food places or other restaurant.

After gaining information about the nutritional value of the food, the researcher asked questions related to sources of vitamins. The answers indicated that the majority of the female respondents fulfill their vitamin requirements by food, whereas some of the females and the majority of the males take vitamin tablets and/or supplements. The difference between the sources of vitamin intakes used by the two gender groups may be caused by the lack of nutritional awareness among male respondents, as females tend to be more conscious about their health issues and aware of the importance of proper nutrition practices. This observation can be supported by the research into gender differences in wellbeing conducted by Babu, Balakrishnan & Ramani (2007) in South India, which indicates that females are more nutrition conscious than males.

Another research by Stock et al. (2001) indicates that female students have more knowledge and better intake of nutritional foods than male students. The results of that study show that almost one-quarter of respondents (35.6% females and 19.8% males; $p < 0.001$) take a keen interest in healthy nutritional food and related programs.

Further the present study show that a higher percentage of males overeat due to some passion, excitement, physical hard work, depression and work pressure. Females may have better management skills to cope with these problems, which leads to less prevalent overeating among them.

The data also suggests that the female intake of a proper breakfast is lower than the male intake of breakfast. Females do not have breakfast due to their habits and sometimes a lack of time in the morning, which may exert a negative effect on their health. Their performance at university can be weak due to their empty stomachs since they had their last meal the previous night. This also leads to a nutritional deficiency among women.

Conclusion

The results of the investigation show that there is a difference between nutritional knowledge, nutritional deficiencies and eating habits of male and female university students. Although females do not eat a proper breakfast, they have more knowledge about nutritional food than male students. The findings of the study also suggest that despite their preferences for fulfilling nutritional requirements from natural sources, females show nutritional deficiencies resulting from not taking the required amount and quality of food on time. The deficiencies do not only affect their own health, but also increase the burden for the healthcare system, due to the accelerating number of diseases.

In order to reduce the burden that falls on the healthcare delivery system, it is recommended that health education programs should be incorporated into the curricula of educational institutions at all levels. Nutrition should be a long-term national goal and not a short-term political one.

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Horrible Movies: A Content Analysis of Propaganda Videos of Boko Haram Terrorist Sect in Nigeria

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Abstract

In 2009, what was hitherto an obscure Islamic sect began its metamorphosis into a terrorist organization that became one of the four deadliest terrorist groups in the world. In 2009, leader of Boko Haram sect in the northeastern region of Nigeria, Muhammed Yusuf, was murdered extra-judicially while in the custody of the Nigerian Police. In revenge, Yusuf's followers, prominently including his deputy, Sheikh Abubakar Shekau, went underground to plot a jihad, which has left thousands dead and millions homeless in its wake for a full decade. The aim of this article is to underscore the fact that the horror videos released by Boko Haram periodically is indeed a powerful instrument of its campaign of terror. In this regard, the article analyses the contents of the periodic videos that are released by Boko Haram and identifies their objectives, ranging from luring young people into its fighting force to sending across the world message of its strength and omnipresence. It concludes that the videos are, indeed, propaganda tools aimed at set objectives in furtherance of the ultimate goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate.

Introduction

Nigeria, a country in West Africa with an estimated 200 million population, is made up of over three hundred ethnic groups welded together as one country through the instrumentality of British colonization. Since it became an independent country in 1960 from British rule, it has undergone series of internal conflicts most of which have their roots in ethnic antagonism among its multiplicity of ethnic groups. In terms of religion, the country is dominated by two major religions: Christianity and Islam. Both are almost of equal strength in terms of adherents. And aside occasional bickering by leaders of the two religions, there has never been a major conflict between the two. However, Nigeria has experienced serious religious conflicts. In the 1980s there was an Islamic sect known as Maitatsine that propagated an ideology opposed to Nigeria's secular order and without recognition of lawful authorities and allegiance to the Nigerian state. Worse still, it

embraced violence as a tool of actualizing its vision of what a society should be. Inevitably, the Nigerian authorities at the time had to deploy force to crush its advancement. Outside this case, there was no other religious upheaval in Nigeria until 2009 when a sect known as Boko Haram surfaced. Boko Haram literally means “Western education is sin”. Its modus operandi is to establish an Islamic Caliphate where the Qu’ran – the Islamic holy book – will replace Nigeria’s secular constitution. The sect first took root in the north eastern region of Nigeria in one of the country’s 36 states known as Borno, from where it gradually spread to nearby states of Yobe and Adamawa. Till date, it has not made any significant presence in any other state.

Boko Haram embarked on a jihad or campaign of violence against the Nigerian state in the year 2010. Initially, its attacks were construed as revenge for the extra-judicial killing of some of its leaders, prominently featuring its founder, Mohammed Yusuf, who died while in the custody of the Nigerian police in 2009. Later, it became clear that the goal was to capture enough Nigerian territories to establish its Islamic caliphate. In this regard, it has deployed diverse forms of violent acts ranging from suicide bombing to kidnapping, assassination to armed invasion of various communities. On the whole, its main mode of fighting oscillates between terrorism and insurgency.

A decade has passed since Boko Haram began its terrorist campaigns. While there have been claims by the Nigerian government that the sect has been “technically defeated” (BBC, 2015), the evidence suggests otherwise. Admittedly, the sect have, lately, been confined to the north eastern states where it had held sway ab initio. It no longer makes inroads into other areas such as when it bombed the United Nation’s building in the country’s capital, Abuja in 2014; when it detonated bombs and killed many innocent souls through suicide bombs at a motor park in Mararaba, Nasarawa state; and when its fighters invaded the Deeper Life Church in Okene, Kogi state, in the middle of a worship and gunned down a good number of those in attendance. But the sect has been recording successful attacks that leaves in their wake high casualties among the Nigerian armed forces in its regular sphere of engagement: the north eastern region. Examples include an attack personally witnessed by the theatre commander of Operation Lafiya Dole created specifically to combat the sect. Major General Adeniyi is seen in a video that went viral saying that the intelligence estimate that informed a particular operation was misleading and rather than facing an enemy that could be put out in a light operation, himself and his troops were confronted by a well-armed enemy carrying out bombardments on all flanks with the use of over a hundred rapid propelled guns (RPGs), mortars etc.

Boko Haram does not only engage in physical combats. It has also proved adept at psychological operations otherwise known as propagandawarfare. Of particular interest

to us in this article is its use of videos as an instrument of propaganda warfare towards the attainment of its ultimate goal of creating an Islamic caliphate based on its peculiar brand of Islamic doctrine. We refer to the videos as “horrible movies” as this is most apt to describe their contents. In the first place, they are movies because elements of drama is infused into them. As a matter of fact they usually give off the feeling that some sort of rehearsals had preceded their recording and broadcast. For example, in a video apparently done to depict the leader of the Boko Haram jihadist, Abubakar Shekau, as a redoubtable and invincible holy warrior, a video was recorded where he boasted that he was still alive despite the efforts of the Nigerian authorities and their foreign collaborators to get him. The collaborators included the United States that have placed a \$7 million bounty on his head for anyone with information that would lead to his arrest (Sanni, 4 March 2020). He then began a Rambo-like firing of a gun slung across his shoulders into the sky while making a mimicry of the gun shots with his name, shouting, “Shekau, kau, Kau, Kau, Kau”! Then he flung the gun away and made a solemn mutter of his name to end the footage, this time in a muffled voice note to give the effect of a denouement: “Shekau”! It all had the trappings of a movie from Nollywood. On the other hand, the movies are horrible because their sights and sounds are usually gory and fear-inspiring. They send messages that terrify and traumatize the audience.

The methodology of the article is content analysis of select videos of the Boko Haram sect. Content analysis in this context differs from the classical and prevalent approach to the method in social research that is fixated to the use of quantitative techniques facilitated by the coding of texts. Berelson’s (1952,18) definition is typical of the fixation to quantitative approach to content analysis: “A research technique for the objective, systematic and *quantitative* description of the manifest content of communication”. For the purpose of this article, however, the approach to content analysis is qualitative; not quantitative. Qualitative studies usually focus not so much on the content of a communication as rather on its underlying intentions or its presumable effects on the audience (Kracauer, 1953). To break down this remark by Kracauer, he is saying that picking certain words or features in a text (composed of alphabets, images, symbols etc, as the case may be) for coding and establishment of a pattern, as is the practice with quantitative techniques, is not the focus of the qualitative approach. Rather, it entails a critical interrogation of the more nuanced and not so obvious intrinsic element of a text – text in this context being video clips released by Boko Haram. In this regard, the technique of qualitative content analysis is critical thinking aided by the fact that the researcher has been a keen observer of the subject matter and is a Nigerian who lives in Nigeria throughout the period covered by the study (2009 – 2020).

Qualitative approaches to content analysis have their roots in literary theory, the social sciences (symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology), and critical scholar ship (Marxist

approaches, British cultural studies, feminist theory). Sometimes they are given the label interpretive. (Krippendorff, 2004). One of the characteristics of the qualitative approach informing the selection of sample here is that it requires a close reading of relatively small amounts of textual matter (Krippendorff, 2004). This is so because, unlike the quantitative approach that makes the examination of a large amount of sample possible through coding, qualitative approach can only permit the analysis of a few sample, especially when each sample will be subjected to thorough analysis. The sample size is four of the Boko Haram propaganda videos. The sample is purposive in the sense that each of the four videos represents one of the four objectives inferred from about 20 released so far by the sect. This will be further clarified in the main text.

The article is divided into three parts hence. The first clarifies the key concepts (terrorism and propaganda). The second part is the core of the article, while the third concludes it. In a nutshell, the overall aim of the article is to put in graphic details the point that the horror videos released by Boko Haram from time to time is an instrument of psychological warfare and a major component of its arsenal of terrorist campaigns.

Propaganda and Terrorism

Propaganda is normally associated with three things: war, advertising, and politics. It is neither new as a phenomenon nor as a subject of academic inquiry. It loomed large in the prosecution of World War I, and Hitler, in his book, *Mein Kampf*, lamented its efficacious deployment by the British in demoralizing German troops and considered it a contributory factor to German's defeat. Seven years after the end of World War I, a leading political scientist of the era, Lasswell (1928, 260 - 261), defined propaganda as "the expression of opinions or actions carried out deliberately by individuals or groups with a view to influencing the opinions or actions of other individuals or groups for predetermined ends and through psychological manipulations". The key phrase in this definition is "psychological manipulations". This is an apt, short definition of the way propaganda is packaged and deployed as an instrument of war. In fact, an alternative nomenclature for propaganda in military parlance is psychological warfare.

Propaganda can take diverse forms, but not every piece of communication qualifies as propaganda. There are four characteristics by which propaganda can be recognized: Persuasive function, sizeable target audience, representation of a specific group's agenda, and use of faulty reasoning and/or emotional appeals Shabo (2008, 5). These four are present in the Boko Haram videos under interrogation.

Next is establishing the nexus between propaganda and terrorism. First, what is terrorism? Opinion differs regarding what this rather contentious concept is. This is the thrust of the saying that one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter. In apartheid South Africa, Nelson Mandela was jailed by the apartheid regime for committing terrorist acts. But before the black South Africans, he was a freedom fighter. The implication of this is that there can be no universally accepted definition of terrorism. In her case, the British government has furnished a definition of the concept in line with the imperative of its circumstance. Section 20 of the British Prevention of Terrorism Act (1974), first in a series of British terrorism acts, defines terrorism as "the use of violence for political ends, including any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public or any section of the public in fear". This definition is a bit restrictive in the sense that it narrows terrorism to political use alone. It does not encompass other strands of terrorism such as the one in focus here: religious terrorism. But the definition is understandable because at the time of the promulgation of this Act, the British were contending with a civil strife in Northern Ireland characterized by violent attacks with separatist intent unleashed by the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

For the purpose of this article, we will rather explain what terrorism is than furnish any definition that may be constraining. Terrorism, a type of asymmetric or irregular warfare, is a fighting technique of a weak group confronted by a national army. Terrorism thrives on surprise attacks on usually soft targets such as individuals and a meeting point of large number of people: market, church, aircraft, train, stadium etc. It can be described as a low intensity warfare in contradistinction to conventional warfare where regular armies in military fatigues and in diverse specializations, ranging from armor to intelligence, artillery to infantry etc., engage each other. Terrorist fighters also make use of propaganda. On the heels of the horrendous September 11 attack in the United States, Al-Qaeda terrorist Islamic sect, was quick to post a message via diverse media that it was responsible.

Analysis of Four Videos

Each of the four videos here share the four characteristics of propaganda outlined by Shabo (2008, 5). First is "persuasive function" - meaning there is an inherent attempt to persuade the audience to the message the author of the propaganda is trying to pass across. Second is a "sizeable target audience", which, of course, implies that every propaganda material must have an audience for which it is specifically designed. Third is "representation of a specific group's agenda", which underscores the fact that for a material to qualify as propaganda it must have a source and that source must have a mission it seeks to promote. Finally, the use of "faulty reasoning and/or emotional appeals". This last characteristic is core to any propaganda material in aid of terrorism. It does not have to make sense to a normal person. It can be laced with half-truths or

outright falsehood. The intent is to manipulate the audience to believe the implausible by working on emotions and sentiments.

The first public video released by Boko Haram was titled “Harvest of Spies” (Zaimov, 2015). In this video, two men alleged to be spying for the Nigerian security agencies were executed. This particular video was meant to send a message of fear down the spine of the Nigerian civil populace among which the terror sect’s operatives and foot soldiers mingled to plot and execute horrific attacks, particularly, suicide bombing. In the video, one of the two purported spies was in a kneeling position while the second one with his right leg amputated was seated on a chair. Standing behind them were their executors in military fatigues and hooded. Of these, the main executioner held a sword while the rest carried a rifle each. The exact moment of the beheading was not shown. The footage simply jumped to the scene where each of the executed men lay lifeless with his severed head placed on his chest. The whole essence of the video is to warn existing informants of Nigeria’s security agencies and would-be ones of the dire consequences that awaited them should they be caught. It made the price to be paid by electing to be an informant against Boko Haram. This was a strategic propaganda because at this time Boko Haram had not morphed into an insurgent group marked by conquest and control of territories. They were only a terrorist group whose survival depended largely on how best they could hide themselves within the populace in their theatre of operation.

The second video for analysis is about abducted schoolgirls. On 14 April 2014, girls numbering 276 were abducted from a high school in Chibok, a predominantly Christian town in the northeastern region of Nigeria, by Boko Haram jihadists. It was a most shocking development among a series of terrorist acts so far perpetrated by the extremist Islamic sect. The sheer number of the abductees and the fact that they were of the female gender drew global attention to the abduction. A worldwide movement with the slogan “Bring Back Our Girls” began and featured many international figures, including America’s First Lady, Michelle Obama, photographed holding a cardboard on which the slogan was etched. The abduction was a major publicity breakthrough for Boko Haram as it catapulted it from a relatively obscure group to global limelight almost on par with Al-Qaeda. On 13 April 2016, about two years into the abduction, the sect released a video (CNN, 2016) at a time concerns were rife about the safety of the girls. The video was not meant to allay the fears of anyone about the girls’ safety, though. It was rather a carefully-packaged propaganda instrument aimed at achieving a mix of objectives.

The first objective obvious from the video was the portrayal of the sect as a true crusader of Islam. The girls, mostly Christians, were attired in Islamic apparel called hijab – a loose and commodious gown that covers a lady ensconced in it from head almost to the toes, leaving only the face open. All the girls without exception were uniformly attired. The video

passes the message that the sect has successfully converted a group of infidels into the Islamic faith. Of course, not every Muslim will be cajoled by the gimmick but it will have an impact on the illiterate and homeless mass of male youths in northern Nigeria known as *almajiri*, who earn their living by begging while they are supposed to be undergoing training in Islamic theology under a cleric. Boko Haram needs the *almajiri* as recruits for its jihadist warfare. It is thus good public relations to appeal to them that the sect is a rallying point for Islamic proselytisation. Last but not the least, it offers the attraction of prospects of settling with a woman to the boys. The leader of the sect, Abubakar Shekau, announced in one of his videos he was marrying off the girls to his boys.

The third video (AFP, 15 January 2018) showed the abducted Chibok girls dressed exactly the same way they appeared in the first video, except that some of them were hooded in the orthodox Islamic way. At least three of them carried a baby each – meaning they had either been raped or married off under duress. They said “we won’t return”. Apparently, they must have been told to say this by their captors and they, of course, had no choice than to comply. The message of the video was to give a false impression to the watching audience that the girls had found fulfilment and home in the Boko Haram camp and way of life, and, whereas, they were taken by force from their community, now they had willingly embraced the Boko Haram way of life so much that returning home would be unthinkable. This message is, particularly, targeted at the impressionable youths among whom the sect drew most of its recruits. They were meant to think that there was a hidden pleasure and bliss in the Boko Haram camp, wherever it may be, and to aspire to be a part of the idyllic Islamic life.

The fourth video focuses on the Boko Haram leader. On 9 November 2018, Abubakar Shekau, leader of the Boko Haram sect, released a video meant to project his person as an invincible holy warrior. This was against the background of news making the rounds in Nigeria that he had been killed. In this video, he appeared in a military fatigue alongside four bodyguards similarly clad, except that they wore face masks while his own face was bare (SaharaTV, 2018). All of them had a rifle strung across the shoulder such that it rested on the chest. In the video, Shekau showered praise on his troops for their success in capturing some Nigerian towns such as Kumshe and Gulumba in the crisis-torn northeast region of Nigeria. He then, importantly, boasted about his invincibility – that he was alive contrary to the wicked expectation of “those that said I have died”. This video is a morale booster to Boko Haram fighters, especially those faraway from Shekau, operating in diverse secret cells. It reassures them their commander is alive and, not only that, he is victorious as evidenced by his claim of capture of new territories. The visual message passed across by his dressing and the guns is that of a battle-ready, fearless commander who is actively fighting himself just as he expected them to do, risking their

lives to attack the Nigerian military, manufacturing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and detonating same on selected targets, kidnapping innocent people for forced conversion to Islam and huge monetary ransom, as the case may be, and so on.

Conclusion

We have established, using four videos as samples, that Boko Haram – a sect whose name means “Western education is a sin” – is heavily reliant on Western technological innovation such as videos for its propaganda warfare. We have also established the fact that each video is not a happenstance but a carefully packaged tool of communication to targeted audiences for specific goals.

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Stereotypes in Polish Culture

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Abstract

Prejudices, stereotypes, hostile attitudes - they are all derived from a source. Some of them may ring true while some can make no sense. Still others are the result of historical or social events, not just part of someone's imagination. In this article we will discuss these phenomena in terms of Poland's relationships with some European countries. We will try to explain where the opinions come from, whether they can be regarded as true or not and how they have affected our cooperation with those countries. In addition to politics, we will also mention daily life, during which some prejudices can be damaging.

The main focus in this article is on the Polish-Russian, Polish-Czech and Polish-Hungarian relations and stereotypes which derive from them. The reasons for choosing those three countries were different. Many Poles hear about Hungary and their friendly attitude towards Poland thus we were curious to see where it derives from. We decided to write about Russia because our history seems rather complicated and we often hear similar opinions about them and Poles from foreigners. The Czech Republic was chosen for the opposite reasons – they are our neighboring country, although we do not know much about them. We will aim to explain political situations, social relationships and concentrate on certain historical events which changed or shaped the way we view these countries and affected their opinion about us - Poles. However, it is best to start with explaining what a stereotype is. A number of researchers have long been trying to account for it, although there is still a relative lack of a satisfactory definition. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, it is “a set idea that people have about what someone or something is like, especially an idea that is wrong” (Stereotype, 2020). According to Cardwell (cf. Walas, 1995), a stereotype is a fixed, overgeneralized belief about a particular group or class of people.

1. Hungary

To understand where stereotypes in the Polish-Hungarian relations come from, it is crucial to investigate some important historical matters.

The vast majority of both nations have positive attitudes when it comes to the Polish-Hungarian relationship. Andrzej Sieroszewski (cf. Walas, 1995) describes the stereotype of a Hungarian as shortened, simplified and evaluative.

The first person that was important for both Poles and Hungarians was Saint Adalbert of Prague. Thanks to him both countries were Christianized and could practice the Christian religion. For Poland, it was especially significant since it was the beginning of the nation (Sroka, 2015).

Another crucial historical factor are Polish rulers who ruled in Hungary and Hungarians who ruled in Poland. The first Polish king to sit on the Hungarian throne was Géza, the grandson of Bolesław I Chrobry – the first Polish king. He reigned from 1074 to 1077. After his death, the crown was given to his brother - Ladislaus, known in Poland as Saint Władysław Węgierski. He ruled from 1077 to 1095. He was Christian and contributed immensely to the spread of Christianity in Hungary (he was canonized in 1992) (Sroka, 2015).

One of the best known monarchs of Poland is Queen Jadwiga. She was crowned king, because the Polish law at that time did not allow queens to be rulers. She was the daughter of Louis I of Hungary - the preceding Hungarian ruler of Poland (Sroka, 2015). King Casimir the Great, who had ruled in Poland between 1333 and 1370, had not had a male descendant. He reached a deal with Louis I of Hungary which stipulated that if one of them died, the other one would become king in both countries (Rhode, 2020). It was a sign of great respect and trust. Jadwiga was very well educated and understood the political matters in Poland. Together with her husband, she established a new dynasty in Poland - the Jagiellonians (named after her husband, who was her successor).

The first person who mentioned a similarity between Poles and Hungarians was Gregory of Sanok in the 15th c. There was a dispute in Hungary in Jan Vitez's property, who at that time was the bishop of Oradea (a town in today's Romania). Gregory was asked to explain where Poles came from and his answer was surprising. He claimed that both Poles and Hungarians originated from the same place. His reasoning was based on the similarity between Poles and Hungarians, e.g. in fighting, religious views or politics (Sroka, 2015).

The saying "Pole and Hungarian cousins be, good for fight and good for party" was mentioned for the first time in Jan Zachariasiewicz's novel called *Sąsiedzi* (Eng. *The Neighbours*) in 1856. Today, this novel is not particularly popular, but the saying is still commonly known both among Hungarians and Poles. Unfortunately, there is no evidence when it was first used among people (cf. Walas, 1995, Csaplaros 1964).

The aforesaid novel is not the only one in which the Polish-Hungarian relations are mentioned. The Polish-Hungarian friendship is also mentioned in Sándor Petőfi's poem "Armia Siedmiogrodzka", in Hungarian "az erdélyi hadsereg," from 1848, written right before the breakout of an uprising in Hungary. The leadership over the Hungarian army was given to Józef Bem – a Polish general and under his command Hungarians won many battles. Thanks to that, Bem became a heroic icon for Hungarians. His monument in Budapest is a symbol of peaceful demonstrations (cf. Walas, 1995).

Another example of this special bond between the two countries in literature are such collections of short stories as *Węgrzy* (1956) and *Przeprowadzka* (1967), written by Jerzy Stefan Stawiński and Jan Józef Szczepański, respectively. In both collections, Poles are shown as full of sympathy for Hungarians and as eager to help their friends in need. There are also some literary works in which Hungarians are described. One of them is a novel by Teodor Tomasz Jeż entitled *Szandor Kowacz* from 1861, where a Hungarian is shown as a handsome, tall and strong man who exudes courage (cf. Walas, 1995, Jeż 1898).

The political situation became complicated after 1956. Janos Kadar, prime minister of Hungary and the first secretary of Hungary's Communist Party (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020), considered this friendship dangerous (Walas, 1995). In the fall of 1956, the Hungarian Uprising broke out, which was a call for freedom and peace. It was ruthlessly suppressed by the Soviet army (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2018). In the meantime, Poles showed their support for Hungarians - poets, writers and journalists wrote about it, while ordinary people donated blood, food and clothes to be sent to Hungary. Neither Soviet nor Hungarian politicians liked it, and yet, Polish support for Hungarians uplifted common people.

The official dislike of the Polish-Hungarian relation was the beginning of negative Polish stereotypes. Hungarians were taught by the officials that Poles were lazy and reluctant to work. Since those stereotypes had already existed in other countries, it was easy to bring them to Hungary. This attempt was not very successful and the remaining stereotypes about Poles are mostly positive (Walas, 1995).

2. Russia

Poland and Russia share several centuries of history during which we had some ups and downs. However, it cannot be denied that our neighbor is a country that significantly influenced the history of Poland and left an imprint on it. Historical events and the memory of them affect myths and stereotypes. They are particularly permanent and influence the image of the Polish neighbor already at the early stage of school learning.

In the stories read by Polish children, Poland and Russia are shown to share common Slavic roots. In the legend of Lech, Czech and Rus, the founders of these three nations are brothers and travel together to find a place where they can establish their burghs (Chotomska, 2012). This could already tell us that our relations should be quite warm since we have the same, Slavic roots, but the reality is much more complicated. Although our relations are influenced not only by historical events but also by the media, our own experiences and the current political situation, it is the former that is a determinant. The image of Russia has been formed over the centuries. It is recorded in various texts and stored in the memory of Poles. To find out the reasons for Russian stereotypes and understand why such an image has become established, we need to reach for various sources, subjective and objective. Some stereotypes have faded, and some are still vivid (Handke, 2000).

The earliest “stereotype” of Muscovites was outlined by Mikołaj Rej, a Polish Renaissance poet, in 1568:

*“Moscow, we already know, what kind of men those are,
We know them by their traditions, We know them through conversations,
The serf, like a bird locked in a cage, can sing,
But he can’t express in words what he is thinking.”* (Uściłowicz, 2008, p. 28)

As it will be shown later in the text, the concept of Russia as “the cage”, existed even in the sixteenth century. Rej also described the serfs as stupid people with very little brains but at the same time quite clever (Uściłowicz, 2008).

2.1. Polish -Russian relations in the 17th and 18th centuries

The image of Poles in the 17th century manifests itself in diverse texts with some ambivalence depending on social groups, as well as the historical period. In Russia, at that time there was a dynastic crisis, and Polish kings tried to take over the Russian throne, although without success as strong opposition came from members of the Russian society.

Avraamy Palitsyn in his work presented Poles almost only negatively: as the deceitful enemies of Russia. The Polish army was associated only with evil: both the purpose of the fight and its commanders were unholy. Poles occupied Moscow for a couple of years, and they were accused of introducing their own lifestyle, regardless of public opposition. The image of a Pole as enemy, invader, non-Christian, and not respecting Orthodox traditions was consistently shaped (Moczałowa, 2000). In many works, Poles appeared as heretics, outsiders, and even pagans, and this happened because their authors were mainly Protestants, not Catholics, and they had a different point of view. The Russian society was also brought up in the spirit of hatred of Catholicism, represented as a symbol of everything foreign. These events shaped the first Russian stereotype of a Pole – a dandy, Catholic, and at the same time a sneaky plunderer (Moczałowa, 2000).

Poles had an equally unfavorable opinion about the Russians. *The Diaries* by Jan Chryzostom Pasek are a great mine of information about Russians. In his work, there is an extract in which the author, unfairly treated to vodka of inferior quality, refers to the outrageous behavior of the perpetrator by calling him *grubianitas*, which is a Latinized version of the Polish word “grubiański”, whose meaning is close to the English word “boorish”. It meant that the Russians lacked in courtesy and manners and could not behave at the table. The diplomatic ceremony there was also in a deplorable condition. According to Poles, Russians were obsessed with respecting the person of the tsar. Pasek in his diaries wrote how he received a sheet of paper with titles of the tsar so that he could learn them (Pasek, 1836, p.113).

2.2. Polish -Russian relations in the 19th century

In the 19th century, Polish people did not hold much affection for the Russians, and strong dislike was the feeling that grew at that time. The clash of two cultures, Orthodox and Christian, could be the reason for the exacerbation of aversion. The Russians believed that the Orthodox religion was the only right religion that Slavs should practice. What is more, Poles were fascinated by the West, especially France and England, and they desperately wanted to be part of Western culture, although they were closer to the East and the Slavic roots. Poles deemed themselves to be admirers of democracy and excessive freedom, calling it “golden freedom”, while they considered Russia a lawless state (Giza, 2000).

During the partitions, many uprisings took place to break free from the Russian yoke. The Russian historian, Nikolay Karamzin, was known for his aversion to Poland and Poles. “Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia” (Zapiska o drevnei i novoi Rossii, 1811) is one of his books where he writes that Poland should not exist. He emphasized in his works that Poles were infidels and prone to betrayal, condemned them, disapproved of their service to Napoleon and deepened the hostility (Shkandrij, 2001). According to Russians, during the fighting of 1830-1831, Poles behaved like cowards and all commanders were inept. After the Kościuszko Uprising, a stereotype of a dishonest, duplicitous, hypocritical, and haughty Pole arose.

Before the Polish–Russian War of 1830–31, the idea of romantic Slavic brotherhood, known as Panslavism, existed, but after this historic event, it collapsed. Alexander Pushkin, an outstanding Russian poet, created a poem where he said that there would never be an agreement between the two nations. He was the first to note that Poland and Russia always fought against each other:

*For ages past still have contended,
These races, though so near allied:
And oft 'neath Victory's storm has bended*

*Now their, and now our side.
Which shall stand fast in such commotion
The haughty Liakh, or faithful Russ?
And shall Slavonic streams meet in a Russian ocean? –
Or il't dry up? This is point for us. (Pushkin, 1831)*

However, in Polish literature there was a stereotypical image of the enemy, who was usually Russian. Adam Mickiewicz used it, in *Forefathers* – his famous poetic drama – when talking about Senator Novosiltsev, and such references also appear in *Konrad Wallenrod* (1828), where the enemies and tyrants are old and look like monsters, and the defenders of the homeland are young and innocent. The tsar, in the opinion of the people in *Forefathers*, is a faithful disciple of Satan. In the works, the keywords are “victim, revenge, guilt and punishment.” Interestingly, Mickiewicz does not blame Muscovites for what the government does. He even writes the poem “To my Muscovite Friends”:

To my Muscovite Friends
*Do you remember me? Whenever my mind traces
The story of my friends' deaths, jailings and banishments,
I remember all of you, and your foreign faces
Possess, in all my musings, the rights of citizens (Mickiewicz, 2016 [1832]).*

3. Czech Republic

We should also take a closer look on Polish-Czech relations and the stereotypes that started to shape around the 18th century and are still present among people in both countries.

As it turns out, a lot of different factors have had an influence on the perception of Polish-Czech relations. The main factors are historical events, literature, own experiences of people from both countries, and also politics and politicians. To understand how these stereotypes were shaped throughout the years, we need to go back to the late 18th century, when Russia, Prussia and Austria signed a treaty that partitioned Poland.

Austria acquired the regions in the south of Poland, known as Galicia. At that moment, Galicia became a part of Habsburg Empire, just like Austria and Hungary. Czech lands were also under the influence of the Empire, which resulted in migrations of Czechs to work in Galicia, which, at that time, was the poorest and the least developed part of

Poland. It was an amazing opportunity for Czechs, who were well-educated and enterprising people. Those who came to Poland were mostly doctors, professors, police officers, craftsmen and musicians. They did a lot to economically develop Galicia (Walas, 1995).

However, the very first Czechs, who came to Galicia, were “strict officials”. They were usually people unsuccessfully looking for a job in their home country, novice clerks, or people having problems with the law. In the Polish community, a stereotype (often true) of a conscientious Czech official appeared quickly, as well as a diligent Austrian citizen, to whom the national attachment of Polish society was alien. Thus, more and more difficulties in communication and problems between Poles and Czechs appeared (Kaleta, 2014). Czech officials created their own, modern administration, and Poles, who were not used to paying taxes, were outraged by the necessity to give their money to the state authorities (Walas 1995). That is when the first stereotypes about Czechs started appearing among Polish people. They saw Czechs as strict officials and submissive to those in power.

At the same time, many Czechs decided to join the Russian army. They idealized Russia and believed that Russians would help them gain independence. Polish people, who were terrorized by Russian invaders, felt betrayed by Czechs and started to see them as enemies and opponents of independent Poland (Kaleta, 2014).

However, thanks to the literature and well-known Polish writers from the 19th century, Czechs created many positive stereotypes about Poles, too. Józef Ignacy Kraszewski was so popular among Czech people that they did not consider him a foreign writer but their own. Later, Henryk Sienkiewicz became even more popular. His books were translated and published many times. His books led to the emergence of new stereotypes among Czech readers. They started to see Poles as people who always loved their homeland and were adventurous, brave, and chivalrous. This stereotype has actually survived to this day (Walas, 1995).

Relations between Poles and Czechs in the 20th century were very complicated. Lack of real knowledge about the other side caused some misunderstandings. Intellectuals, politicians as well as ‘ordinary’ people definitely too often relied on the stereotypes and that was the deepest root of the political quarrels (Przeperski, 2016a).

During the interwar period, Poles admired Czech organization and economic development, but on the other hand, showed contempt towards brutal Czech policy towards other nationalities of the region, naturally including Poles. But Czechs were, generally, no better. One of the most important Czech politicians, Tomas Masaryk treated the Polish state as a kind of ‘temporary state’. And from his opinions about Poles, Czechs developed many negative stereotypes, for example, about Poles being

focused too much on religion and entertainment rather than politics or important issues (Przeperski, 2016a).

Many stereotypes have disappeared throughout the years but still a lot of them exist among people in both countries. As it turns out, Polish people now do not have so many stereotypes about Czechs and, even if some of them are still present, they do not really affect the way Poles treat Czech people (Przeperski, 2016b). However, in the Czech Republic a lot of stereotypes from the 19th and 20th century have survived to this day. What is more, some of the new stereotypes appeared at the beginning of this century, and they were shaped by Czechs' own experiences of Polish-Czech relations. Unfortunately, many of these stereotypes are negative and most Czechs still rely on them. Latest statistics show that 17% of Czechs have a negative attitude towards Poles (Przeperski, 2016b). The most popular stereotypes about Poles among Czechs say that Polish people tend to be hypocritical and treacherous. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that the political relations between the countries are friendly, and Czech people living close to the Polish border often say that they do not imagine their daily lives without Polish friends. As it turns out, even these negative stereotypes present in Czech society do not have a big impact on everyday life and political relations (Przeperski, 2016b).

4. Stereotypes Nowadays

We have also conducted a survey among Polish students on national stereotypes about Russians, Hungarians and Czechs. The survey questions (in translation from Polish) were the following:

- Have you ever heard the stereotype about Russia/Russian? ___Yes ___No
- If so, what are they? _____
- Have you ever heard the stereotype about Hungary? ___Yes ___No
- If so, what are they? _____
- Have you ever heard a stereotype about Czechs? ___Yes ___No
- If so, what are they? _____
- Can you find that your views have changed based on the stereotypes you heard? ___Yes ___No
- If so, are they more tolerant or less tolerant? _____ more tolerant _____ less tolerant
- How often do you judge someone by stereotypes? ___always ___often ___rarely ___never

The aim of our survey was to learn what stereotypes about Czechs, Russians and Hungarians are the most popular among Poles, and if they truly influence the way Polish people assess their neighbors. This report analyses the results of the survey in which 30 respondents answered our questions connected with the topic.

Ninety percent of those questioned confirmed that they were aware of the existence of many stereotypes concerning the Russian people and were also able to enumerate many of them. As it turned out, most of the stereotypes were negative and presenting Russians in a bad light. Almost all respondents pointed out alcohol and a fondness for it in their answers. Responses mentioning poverty, aggressiveness and backwardness of the country appeared less frequently.

Slightly more than ninety-three percent of those surveyed did not know any stereotypes about Hungarian people. However, those who knew some of the stereotypes mainly enumerated very positive aspects of Hungarians. The responses mainly spoke of a friendly attitude towards Polish people.

Ninety five percent of people who participated in that survey were not aware of any stereotypes concerning Czechs. The rest of those questioned, however, wrote down very mixed stereotypes – half of them positive and half negative. Their sense of humor and language similarities were the most frequently quoted answers. The replies also spoke of the Czechs' negative attitude towards Poles.

Almost eighty-three percent of those questioned were sure that all the stereotypes they know have changed the way they perceive other nations. About 63% claim that the stereotypes they know have changed their views to be more tolerant.

Nearly seventy-six percent of the respondents claimed that they rarely let stereotypes influence the way they judge Russians, Hungarians, and Czechs. Also, seventeen percent of those surveyed said that they never judge others through stereotypes.

Overall, the results of this survey show that despite the existing stereotypes Poles are withdrawing from judging others and changing their views to be more tolerant.

5. Conclusions

Taking everything into consideration, the article has attempted to explain the most important factors that influenced the development of stereotypes concerning Hungary, Russia and Czech Republic. We presented the history of stereotypes that significantly influenced Poland's relations with those countries. In the past, as discussed in this article, stereotypes had a greater impact on people. Nowadays, as it turned out, there

are many positive and negative stereotypes present in Polish society, although they do not have such an impact on our approach to other nations, as shown in the survey. People are now influenced by education and raising awareness of the harmful influence of stereotypes on relations between people. Globalization has also contributed to the development of intercultural communication competence. Due to easy access to the Internet and social media, there is a possibility to contact other people, not necessarily paying attention to where they come from and focusing on common traits such as hobbies. Especially teenagers, who speak English, can verify if the stereotypes are well-founded. Moreover, mobility programs like Erasmus, educate young people about the culture of other countries, which makes the university stays even more valuable and allows them to develop intercultural communication competence.

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Culture Shock and Adaptation: A Narrative Analysis of Saudi Arabian Students’ Experiences at Tertiary Education Institutions

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Abstract

The United States has seen considerable growth in the number of Arabic speaking students over the last few years (Mitchell, 2020). Given the global rise in anti-Muslim sentiments in the world, however, many international students from the Middle East face complex challenges. There is an inevitable cultural shock that requires adaptations and adjustments. The authors of this paper conducted in-depth interviews with seven Saudi Arabian international students. We examined their shared narratives to gain insight and perspective into the challenges they face. They reported a variety of challenges, including the absence of family ties, lack of sense of community, religious practice differences, and difficulty navigating differences in verbal/nonverbal language differences and gender role expectations. This is consistent with the dimensions of cultural adjustment discussed by Kim’s (2001; 2005; 2017) Integrated Communication Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation. The results of this study can be applied to help orient international students.

Introduction

Culture is a pattern of meaning, a way of defining the world and living in it. Different cultures create quite different worlds (Nolan, 1990). As Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) claim, culture is like a software of our mind, which is shared among a group of people. Culture provides us with a framework for our worldviews, impacts perception, forms expectations, and shapes the shared reality of how members of a given group should be acting in a given context. When functioning within a mono-cultural context, we can be oblivious to these cultural differences. However, when one enters a different culture, all of the cultural differences become salient.

Moving to a new country is not an easy transition and can sometimes result in culture

shock. Culture shock is a multifaceted experience. One would experience culture shock at multiple levels - affective, behavioral, and cognitive (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). When one plunges into a different culture or stays in another country or a culture for an extended period, it can result in various stressful and depressing situations. An altogether different culture, language, customs, traditions, and people, requires adjustment in various contexts; it often demands that individuals enter new cultures to learn how to “acculturate” or adjust to a new culture. (Kim, 2002; 2005; 2017).

International students face this particular issue as they choose to navigate their academic career. International students who move abroad for their higher education are vulnerable to a variety of challenges related to cultural changes and language barriers. These international students need to know the cross-cultural differences in navigating both their academic and social lives (Morin, 2007). Although international students are prepared for academic tasks, they are not particularly familiar with differences in the use of nonverbal cues such as eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, paralanguage, and proxemics (Yang, 2015). Given entirely new circumstances in an unfamiliar environment, they may experience anxiety, confusion, depression, acculturative stress, conflicts, and various adjustment issues.

The number of Arabic-speaking English learners in the United States is on the rise (Mitchell, 2020). Adjusting to a new culture is difficult enough, but students from the Middle Eastern cultures face several challenges. Since the terrorist attack of September, 2011 (9/11) in the United States, anti-Islamic sentiment has stirred up, fostering anti-Muslim rhetoric in the media, and resulting in various instances of anti-Muslim violence (Gerteis, Hartmann, & Edgell, 2019). Abunab, Dator, Salvador, and Lacanaria (2017) reported that Arabic students, especially Arab-Muslim students who practice religious and restrictive cultural practices, face challenging times in the non-Muslim countries encountering discrimination, stereotyping, and basic misconceptions about them. Although it seems that the American society is embracing diversity and accepting multiculturalism, it seems that many minority members continue to face subtle forms of racism called microaggression (Sue et al., 2007; Sue, et al., 2009).

Arab-Muslim students are often at the receiving end of these microaggressions in the climate after 9/11. They are often a visible target due to their choice of faith, visible nonverbal cues such as head-coverings, or other religious practices. Given this background, the current study examined Saudi students’ experiences of culture shock and adaptation, as they navigate adaptation in their academic and social lives in tertiary education institutions in the United States.

Cross-Cultural Adaptation Process

Kim (2001, 2005, 2017) proposed the Integrated Communication Theory of Cultural Adaptation, which explains the process of cross-cultural adaptation. When an individual enters a new cultural environment for an extended period of the time, Kim (2001, 2005, 2017) claims that one will go through a continuous cycle of stress-adaptation process, during which one will gradually enjoy interpersonal and psychological growth. In a new cultural environment, one may experience some periods of stress. Then, one learns to adjust to a new environment as they learn to engage in a new way of processing information, handling problems, and behaving. Kim explains that “each stressful experience is responded to with a temporary setback, which, in turn, activates adaptive energy to reorganize and re-engage in the activities of cultural learning and internal change, bringing about a new self-reintegration. (Kim, 2017, p.934).”

At the initial stages of entering a new culture, one often faces intense culture shock, with more acculturative stress and challenges in adaptation. With time one learns to adapt to the new cultural environment and experiences less frustration. The intensity of the stress-adaptation process decreases with the passage of time as an individual gets adjusted to the host culture.

A variety of factors can have an impact on the process of adaptation to stress. Kim (2001) mentions six structural features that influence on cross-cultural adaptation processes. They include an individual's predisposition (e.g., preparedness, adaptive personality), host environment (e.g., receptiveness to strangers), host cultural understanding and communication competence (e.g., communication competence within the host society), engagement in social communication (e.g., engagement in host's interpersonal and mediated communication), ethnic identity and interpersonal and mediated communication (i.e., communication with members of the host culture in person and in mediated contexts), and identity transformation (functional fitness, psychological health, intercultural identity).

Often, international students may not be fully objectively aware of the factors that may affect their experience of culture shock or adaptation. In the current study, we attempted to hear from Saudi Arabian students' and understand their experience of adjustment at a public university in the United States. Specifically, we inquired about the types of challenges they faced in their academic and social lives in American higher education institutions and their attempts at adjusting to the new culture. Based on the Saudi

students' accounts of these challenges and ways of coping with them, we hoped to identify solutions that might help facilitate the cultural adaptation process of incoming international students.

Methods

Participants

Seven students from Saudi Arabia, two females and five males, were interviewed between the fall of 2019 and the spring of 2020. All of the students speak Arabic and English and identify themselves as Muslims. The respondents were all between 25 and 30 years of age. They are studying English as their second language at a public university in the Southeastern United States. All the respondents come from a conservative Muslim families in Saudi Arabia. In this paper, we will use pseudonyms (Fizza, Fahim, Hanin, Suhail, Bilal, Ahmed and Rahman) to protect the identity of the participants.

Procedures

In order to gain an insight into the real experiences of Saudi students in the world of American higher education, the authors conducted a semi-structured in-depth interview with the seven Arabic international students. One of the authors teaches an English as a Second Language course at a university and recruited students to participate in this interview study using a network sampling technique. The participants were informed with an IRB-approved informed consent before the interview. Each participant took one and a half hours to perform the interview, during which the interviewer took notes as well as reflective memos.

Instruments

The semi-structured interviews consisted of four sections. The first of them contained questions about demographic information, for example, national background, cultural/religious identity, etc. The next part concerned the culture shock experience and cultural differences perceived by the informants. The subsequent section discusses the misconceptions and stereotypes that American people may have about their culture as well as those that they have about American culture. It also discusses about how they adapted themselves to the American culture, and their suggestions as to how their transition to the American way of living can be improved. Simply put, the emphasis was placed on how international students, especially students from the Middle Eastern countries, deal with the challenges in adapting to the American culture.

Results

Given the qualitative responses provided by the participants, we utilized qualitative thematic analysis steps that included, (1) familiarizing with the data, (2) generating initial coding, (3) iterative process of search for themes/reviewing themes, and naming and providing details for the themes, and (4) producing the report comprising the quotes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first author reviewed the participants' responses twice, noting repeated topics and important themes. We collected a list of six topics and challenges, namely, communication/relation, physical environment, American culture, religion/worldviews, and gender role differences.

Sources of Culture Shock *Communication/Relation*

Language. Language is an essential factor in culture shock, since the competency level in the host language is often an integral part of cultural adaptation. All of the participants of this study were taking English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. In Saudi Arabia, the use of the English language is minimal, hence all the participants had used the Arabic language in schools. It often takes some time for international students to learn and adapt to American culture and get comfortable interacting with others in their daily lives (Morin, 2007). They face many verbal and non-verbal misunderstandings on a daily basis due to differences in the culture and language. Some examples of these include the following:

- Greetings: Saying 'hello', 'smiling', or greeting to a stranger is not a customary in Saudi Arabia. They had to get accustomed to the appropriate way of greeting in the US.
- Eye contact: Eye contact is considered as a sign of confidence, respect, or show of attention in the U.S., but it is considered rude in Saudi Arabia.
- Gestures: The participants reported that they were not used to using a variety of hand gestures such as a high five, handshakes, or victory signs used in the United States. In Saudi Arabia, people greet others by saying 'Wa 'alaykumu s-salam' which means 'may peace be upon you'. The use of curling fingers to mean 'come here' in the U.S., is considered rude in their culture.

Family Ties. Saudi Arabian culture is intertwined with Islamic worldviews. The society is highly conservative, religious, traditional, and family oriented. Saudi Arabian people stay together as an extended family, help each other, and oftentimes, domestic help is available to them. One participant, Fizza stated, 'I never had to worry about cooking food

or about the upbringing of my daughter in Saudi Arabia as we have household help and our mothers live with us. Here in America, from taking care of your children to cleaning the house, cooking, laundry, and studying, everything has to be managed alone'. Besides having domestic help, the younger family members have assistance from elders in the family. When they move to the United States to pursue their academic career, they face challenges and have to learn to handle everything independently. Buying a car, getting their driver's license, cleaning the house, doing the dishes, cooking, and grocery shopping - everything falls on their lap along with their education.

Physical Environment

Religious Practice/Sense of Freedom. The participants stated that they visited a mosque regularly in Saudi Arabia and pray five times throughout the day (dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and night prayers). Since moving to the United States, five participants responded that they did not have enough time to perform religious practices. They feel that they had more time for family and for following the traditions or religious customs in Saudi Arabia. As Bilal mentioned, 'I hardly get time to visit mosques or say 'namaz' here in the U.S. as there is so much homework to do'. Namaz is the holy prayer of Muslims. However, they liked the fact that in the U.S. there is a lot of emphasis on human rights and everyone has the freedom to follow their own religion. For example, Rahman was surprised to see a mosque in almost every city and that everything related to religious practice or grocery items are available in the U.S.

Social/Community Services. Currency differences and social services can be a big factor in cultural adjustment. All the respondents found everything rather expensive in the United States especially when they converted the prices into their own currency. In Saudi Arabia, education and healthcare are free for the citizens, so they found buying medical insurance and going to a doctor in the U.S. is highly expensive. Fahim mentioned that his daughter needed a dental treatment, though he was shocked with by the doctor's fee as in his country 'medical, dental, and education is all free for them'. He also stated that their education in the United States was also sponsored by their government as Saudi Arabians enjoy free education. In colleges, students are *paid* to attend school. He said, "It was shocking for us that medical is so expensive here. We took our daughter to a dentist and had to spend money even with the insurance. I find it weird that one has to take appointments to see a doctor here. We have free medical, dental and education in our country.

In Saudi Arabia, public transportation is widely available, whereas in the United States it is less common. Getting a driver's license, buying a car, and then buying insurance was indicated as requiring a lot of effort and cost a lot. When they choose to drive, they must

first become accustomed to driving on the right side of the road, as in their home country people drive on the left and they must learn all the road signs and traffic rules, unlike in Saudi Arabia where the traffic rules are not very strictly followed.

They also need to get adjusted to dealing with the differences in law enforcement. The participants liked the fact that in the U.S., 24/7 help from police is available by calling 911. On the other hand, in Saudi Arabia, the police do not intervene as frequently, especially when it comes to the case of domestic disputes. Suhail claimed that the police in his country does not interfere even if a husband is mistreating his wife as they say it is their personal matter.

Religion

Religious-Based Society. Saudi Arabia's culture is based on religion and strict rules. Judgements and personal opinions may not be publicly expressed. Often, Saudi Arabians do not choose whether to participate in the religion. Women are expected to wear an 'Abaya' in public, which is a robe that covers the face and only reveals the eyes. Women cover themselves as it brings more value to a woman to be hidden. Many women are expected to marry early and they move out of their family's house thereafter. Women are allowed to uncover their hair and faces at weddings and schools, since men and women are separated in those places. Girls have their own buildings, classrooms, cafeterias, and teachers at schools separate from boys. Instructors must be women, otherwise a male can only teach a class of girls through Skype where they cannot see the students. The 'Abaya' is only worn in public places where men are present, such as the grocery store or the mall. Companies in Saudi Arabia have separate workstations solely for women.

Physical Appearance. Saudi Arabia is a Muslim country and has very strict Islamic laws. Everyone living there must abide by those rules. Women must wear loose-fitting clothes and cover their bodies so that no other man can see their bodies. They cover their body with an 'Abaya', i.e. a robe-like dress, and wear a headscarf called a 'Hijab', and some even cover their face with a 'Burqa', i.e. an outer loose-fit garment that covers the body and the face. They can remove it only in front of their husbands, fathers or their brothers. Tsurui, Camara, and Sorrels (2012) report that international students' clothing choices impact their level of acceptance in the host culture. In the case of Saudi Arabian students' use of head/body covering, it is partly due to their religious beliefs, which is not something they can easily change to adjust to the host culture. Saudi Arabian participants believed that wearing the head/body covering is, to a certain extent a way of protecting and

respecting women, though this type of covering is seen as putting down women in the United States.

They all have a high level of pride in their religious beliefs and national identities, although they feel that in the U.S. sometimes people around them look at them differently. They stated they had to bear discrimination or being misunderstood due to their clothing as they were stereotyped as terrorists, based on their dress. Rahman mentioned, "we are looked at with suspicion at the airports and that is the reason why [sic.] we now wear jeans/t-shirts and not traditional dresses". Post 9/11, unfortunately, Muslim students had to face discrimination and racism, adding to the stereotyping challenges based by middle eastern students in the United States.

Gender Roles Expectations. In Saudi Arabia, gender role differences are respected. Men hold more power at home and in various functions in the society, because of the very strictly religious-based society. When making decisions, often women need permission from the person they are dependent which could be father, husband or brother, in order to travel abroad. It could be their father, husband, or even brother in order to travel to other countries. If a woman works, they do not contribute to the household as that is the man's duty. Women do all the household chores, raise kids, and go to work so that only men are responsible for all the household payments. All women have a maid that lives with them and helps the family with household chores as well.

In recent years, the Saudi Arabian society has transitioned from a traditional society into more of an equal opportunity society for women. Despite the changes, the expectations related to gender differences remain strong in the Saudi Arabian society, especially compared to the American society. In the United States, men's roles are very different as they know how to cook, clean, do laundry, and perform many other household tasks that women generally do in Saudi Arabia. Having a maid is not common in the U.S. as it is in Saudi Arabia, and even those with a maid do not live with the family. Without a maid or family help, Americans depend on themselves to get things done. Given this difference, participants in this study felt that life in the U.S. keeps them very busy, and it is hard to find time to simply enjoy the company of friends/family, aside from holidays.

In Saudi Arabia, men and women have separate buildings with teachers of the same gender. It has been hard for Hanin to adapt to mixed gender classes and professors here in the United States. To cope with this cultural difference, Hanin claimed that she chose to speak only to same gender professors as it was more comfortable. According to Hofstede's masculinity index (Hofstede Insights, 2020; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010), there are differences in perceived gender role differences and expectations. The participants felt that they had to adjust to different gender role expectations in the United States.

Culture in the host country: US Culture.

Diversity/Multiculturalism. The participants stated that they would describe the culture of the United States as diverse and open. This is because the United States is a melting pot for so many different countries, cultures and backgrounds. The participants noted that the United States has pride in its culture of freedom. They felt that Americans had the choice to be whatever they wanted to be and that they have the freedom to express themselves. The United States provides citizens freedom of speech and the right of their opinion, unlike in Saudi Arabia.

The participants noted that the United States was greatly individualistic. This was reflected in the following statement: 'Having friends come over to your house at any time of day is not okay here in the U.S. In Saudi Arabia, we have people come to our houses without calling beforehand and it is normal.' It was also indicated by the interviewees that they also noted that it seems like Americans prefer to have privacy between people and focus on taking care of oneself instead of others. One participant gave an example of a situation in which he asked his American friend for someone's phone number, and he was refused to pass the number before getting the person's permission. This simple gesture was deemed unnecessary to the participants, though in the U.S. the gesture is a sign of respect.

The culture in Saudi Arabia is more collectivist, as people get to know each other by inviting them to their homes. Trust is assumed, and mutual trust is assumed throughout the culture and country. Strangers are always willing to help in the same form they would help close family members. This is consistent with the principles of a collectivistic society detailed by Hofstede and colleagues (Hofstede Insight, 2020; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

Cultural Adaptation Process

Misconceptions of Saudi Arabia and the United States. According to the participants, Americans perceive Saudi Arabians as angry people and potential terrorists. The participants also admitted to having misconceptions about the American culture. For example, they believed that American food is of high quality, but a considerable proportion of it proved to be fast food. Another misconception/stereotype the participants had of the U.S. was that everyone is rich. They did not expect that Americans must work really hard to make money. In addition, participants thought racism was not a continuing social issue in the United States. The participants had only seen the racial issues in movies and did

not think it existed anymore. At times, adjusting their preconceived notions about American culture was something that they needed to overcome as they experienced the host culture.

Cultural Adaptation Strategies. In the interview, we asked the Saudi students about the different actions they took to adjust to the new cultural environment. Some of them claimed that getting involved in various clubs at the university helped them. For instance, Rahman said that he joined the International Students Association and was involved in various events, which helped him to make new friends and overcome anxiety. Fahim and Fiza spent time with their daughter, cooking food, and exploring the city together. This helped them stay busy, gain knowledge and get comfortable in the host country. Some said watching English movies, listening to podcasts, and participating in weekly conversation hours at the university helped them improve their English skills, which helped reduce the language barriers. Suhail, Bilal and Ahmed said going to the fitness center helped reduce their anxiety which also helped them maintain mental and physical stability.

Naturally, although there are individual differences as to which strategies are effective, each person attempted to find something that works for them. Kim (2017) noted three facets of internal change taking place in newcomers as they undertake the process of cross-cultural adaptation a) increased functional fitness in carrying out daily transactions, b) improved psychological health in dealing with the environment, and c) an increasingly intercultural identity orientation. The participants of this study were engaged in ways to connect with others and to figure out strategies that help reduce acculturative stress and maintain psychological health, while being functional and engaging in smoother cultural adjustment.

Conclusion

The study provides insights into the experiences of students from Saudi Arabia in the American tertiary education. Specifically, we obtained an in-depth understanding of the various factors that contribute to their acculturative stress and misconceptions. This helped us identify ways to help them with the transition. These struggles that the Saudi students shared here are also faced by other international students coming to the United States. Therefore, the insights that we obtained from this study can be useful in assisting incoming international students not just from Saudi Arabia but also from other parts of the world. Kim (2017) states that through active participation, and through cultivating the adaptive personality of openness, strength and positivity, one is more capable of overcoming temporary setbacks and attaining a level of functional efficacy one needs to pursue their personal and social goals.

Most of the participants in this study reported experiencing acculturative stress, yet they overcame the temporary setbacks and attained the level of functional efficacy they needed to pursue their personal and social goals. Their active participation in the host culture, willingness to accept new perspectives, and cultivation of strength in dealing with negative views and maintaining positivity all helped them adjust to a new cultural environment.

The current study will help us to underscore the point that it is normal to have these cultural differences and for anyone to face acculturative stress. Instead of attempting to deny acculturative stress, it is important to prepare oneself to face these challenges and adapt to a new culture. The paper will also provide some guidelines to the office, such as global affairs, to help assist the international students on the day of their orientation at any university. We believe it is critical that the colleges and universities should not only offer generic orientations for incoming students but also special orientations for incoming international students. It will not only help facilitate their adjustment in a new environment but also ensure their academic success.

By raising the awareness of these cultural differences and acculturative stress that international students face in the United States, American students can understand more about the cultural differences and to have empathy for foreign students. As the mission of many universities is to prepare graduating students for functioning in a global and diverse society, it is crucial for us to understand the struggles of international students while promote understanding and empathy among American students.

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Virtual Environment and Social Skills Development

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Abstract

The use of the videoconference technology has recently become a promising field in network-based language teaching (NBLT). In the foreign language context, the significance of this technology lies basically in providing students with the opportunity to engage in meaningful speech interactions and, therefore, creating a supporting learning environment that enables them to develop real-life cross-cultural conversations, particularly with native speakers. On this basis, the present paper seeks to assess the impact of implementing such technology on students' social skills development. More importantly, it makes use of the Global Understanding Project to show the extent to which virtual intercultural encounters can affect the development of tolerance, respect and understanding among students in a world driven by its complex multiculturalism; a world within which successful communication means a great deal.

Introduction

Recently, language contact has been significantly facilitated via the introduction of new technological tools, affording EFL students the opportunity to engage in computer-mediated intercultural communication through approaches termed "telecollaborative". The present case study is one example of these telecollaborations. It is indeed a world-cultures course taught through virtual classroom. A virtual classroom is a "virtual place to meet" that connects teachers and students. It is a setting that allows students to engage in challenging discussions, test their knowledge, access multiple resources, and receive assignments and garner feedback from teachers. It is a truly engaging learning environment within which students can get remote assistance from teachers and education specialists.

In Global Understanding Project, the virtual classroom is a space wherein Internet is used to join partner countries from different corners of the world (Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas) and to have a direct personal experience through real-time videoconferencing, chat, and emails, i.e. synchronous and asynchronous communication. This paper is, therefore, an attempt to highlight the ways in which this project contributes to establishing an intercultural dialogue.

Interculturality

The Global Understanding Course provides a format for students from the 23 member institutions to communicate worldwide and exchange insights about their cultures via video-conferencing and instant chat technology. Therefore, one of the main objectives of this project is to create an intercultural learning environment and sustain a direct international experience among students from different educational institutions across the globe. The students (usually 16 in number) meet for 70 minutes for almost 16 weeks per semester. They are divided into two groups A and B, so that each class session includes discussion in both small groups for group A and one-to-one chat for group B. The discussions are usually centred on college life, family, the meaning of life, stereotypes, and prejudices.

The Global Understanding project aims at developing an atmosphere of trust and confidence that encourages the students to share knowledge, opinions, values, attitudes and emotions, and most importantly to develop effective collaborative skills. Through one-to-one collaboration, students become more reflective, and learn to identify themselves in comparison with others.

The Global Understanding Course generates and promotes an intercultural dialogue founded on respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups from different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. Such dialogue is characteristically built on mutual understanding, openness and a genuine respect for and appreciation of diversity, equal human dignity and equal human rights. It strongly acknowledges a positive attitude towards diversity, considering the meeting between people with different beliefs and cultural profiles as enriching for collaborators. It also conceives that individual identity is subject to development, change and adaptation within a globalized world where multiculturalism is prevailing. As such, intercultural dialogue is a crucial tool for achieving social cohesion within multicultural societies and for fostering a sense of inclusiveness in which individuals and groups cannot by no means be marginalized or characterized as being outsiders.

Intercultural Dialogue Requirements

Indisputably, respect and tolerance constitute the cornerstone of a successful intercultural dialogue. To illustrate this within the present research work, we will see in what follows instances from one of our classes that consisted of Algerian students and their American partners. The intention is therefore to spot the impact of cross-cultural interaction in consolidating and reinforcing mutual respect and tolerance.

Respect

Respect indicates a positive feeling of esteem and good opinion about someone or something. This feeling is then translated into specific actions and conduct representative of that esteem. Be it for a person or other entity (such as a nation or a religion), respect is identified by Jonathan Haidt as one of five fundamental moral values shared to a greater or lesser degree by different societies and individuals, and when someone fails to show respect towards someone else's belief and way of action, then there is no foundation for successful communication and achievement of their common objectives (see Haidt & Graham 2007).

In the following examples, we will demonstrate how respect is shown in our students' use of language during conversation. By following specific conventions, respect is manifested in curiosity, openness, and readiness to suspend stereotypes about others' culture. Algerian students will be referred to as TUA (Tlemcen University of Algeria) and American students as ECU (East Carolina University)

1)-TUA: in fact I study all eh the whole of the days in the week except the Thursday and Friday
ECU: wow!! that's a lot, that's good

2)-TUA: ... (leo) I haven't received a message from you, I don't know why?
ECU: ok to answer your question, I tried to email you but, I might have received the wrong email address
TUA: yes
ECU: but I wrote you a very long email and I'm very sorry that you didn't receive it
TUA: yeah because I think it was a mistake in my email at first, I don't know if you received the second one, but I'm going to try to send you the new one ... just to receive messages from you

3)-ECU: I study geology, ...and geology is the study of rocks and minerals on the earth
TUA: yeah

4)-ECU: I'm in, I'm in a club that is called the NAACP and I can explain to you what that is if you'd like.
TUA: yeah sure

5)-TUA: that's what I wanted to know
ECU: ok I was glad that I explained it

6)-ECU: you got a question for me or you want me to start?
TUA: if you want to start it's a pleasure to listen to you

7)-ECU: that's sad, I cried too when I went to the elementary school
TUA: so good ... I found somebody who is like me

8)-TUA: ok thank you

ECU: you're welcome, thank you

9)-TUA: nice to meet you today

ECU: you too ...do you want to start or do you want me to start?

10)-TUA: ok, what do you suggest as a topic for today?

ECU: it's an open discussion ... we can talk about anything you would like to.

11)-TUA: what do you think about us?

ECU: ah!!...for me it has been good ... I learned a lot because I, before I actually knew nothing, so this has been a great experience, I like you all.

12)-TUA: how did you find the experience with us?

ECU: the experience was very useful for all of us... I think we all learnt something new that we did not know before and it was a lot of fun getting to know people from the other side of the world...that was very interesting... how about you, what do you think about us?

TUA: it was a useful experience with you.

From the above examples we can notice that most of the speech encompasses special formulas that indicate respect on the part of the speaker. At times, respect was manifested through creating a shared understanding about a topic, like in the case of geology. The important thing for everyone was that each one understands what the other wishes to say as fully as possible while being very nice whether in making or in answering statements. Everyone was trying to empathize with their partners, in such a way that no feeling of disrespect was ever felt in the conversations. On the contrary, positive attitudes were displayed, and a willingness to suspend one's values, beliefs and behaviours and see how they might look from an outsider's perspective.

Tolerance

According to Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, in their document *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters*, the concept of 'tolerance' suggests "the need for people of different cultural backgrounds to develop the ability at least to endure the fact that others believe and live differently within a particular society, or in the wider world, although they might share some core values" (2009,p.10). But tolerance should not be confused with respect, since tolerance does not necessarily imply any positive feeling. It is "the practice of deliberately allowing or permitting a thing of which one disapproves. One can meaningfully speak of tolerating, i.e., of allowing or permitting, only if one is in a position to disallow" (Zagorin, 2003,p. 5). It may signify "no more than forbearance and the permission given by the adherents of

a dominant religion for other religions to exist, even though the latter are looked on with disapproval as inferior, mistaken or harmful” (Zagorin, 2003,p. 6).

In an intercultural setting, tolerance is even more important. It is the basis of intercultural competence since it controls the attitudes of the person interacting with people of another culture. A tolerant person is willing to suspend their own values, beliefs and behaviours, and not assume that they are the only possible and naturally correct ones. They are then able to see how they might look from the perspective of an outsider who has a different set of values, beliefs and behaviours. In the following examples there are some instances of tolerance:

1)-ECU: do you drink alcohol?

TUA: no, no it is forbidden in our religion

ECU: ah ok

ECU: hello it's Stacy number 14

2)-TUA: how do you consider the notion of family in the American society?

ECU: yes my mum, my sister, me and my dog... my closest family

TUA:=so where is your father?

3)- ECU: if someone was close to you, was secretive about being eh, homosexual

... eh would that change your view about them?

TUA: I will have pity of him of course

... but I'm not going to change my behaviour with him

... the relationship will stay as it is

4)-TUA: how do you consider the American Muslims and how do you accept them?

ECU: yeah, I honestly don't think that there are many people who really

... em for me personally seeing an American Muslim is just like seeing an American Jew or an American Christian ... that's just their faith and so it doesn't even really come up as a problem.

ECU: however , probably none of us think of anything when we see them

... but there are still a lot of ignorant people ... and I know that when a lot of people see American Muslims or Muslims in general the thought of a terrorist comes to their mind immediately...and it's just hard to, for people to realize that the general image that comes up when you think of terrorist is Muslim... and, and that's in general, but eh I mean eventually the majority of American people know that that's not true ... but there are still ignorant people out there and that's a common misconception

5)-ECU: what is the general opinion or general feelings towards premarital sex?

...does it happen, does it happen a lot or is just kept quiet? ... and is it looked down upon? ... sex before marriage... is that looked down upon?

TUA: hi... well in terms of having sex before marriage in our religion, the answer in religion, it's forbidden ...in religion it's forbidden to have sex before marriage

...but this doesn't mean that there is no practice of sex before marriage in all the

Arab societies ... there are some exceptions of course... and they are increasing day by day... but in our religion it's forbidden

6)-ECU: are people, are women who get pregnant before marriage looked down upon them?

TUA: there are some parents who don't accept this, and punish of course the girls as well as the boys ... but there are some other families who accept the fact

7)-TUA: what's your idea about the third world nations especially Algeria and if ever is this idea changed now?... have you changed your idea within the experience with us?... after this experience?

ECU: they are growing and they should be growing...I think there shouldn't be countries that are suffering so much that their citizens cannot live

... I think that's a good thing that you guys are trying to better yourself by going to college and hopefully you get a job... as a person you need to know who do you want to be and how you want to live and focus on that and not about other people.

From the above examples, we can notice that the communication was successful because students from both sides were able to accept ambiguity and lack of clarity from the other. In example 1, the ECU student did not discuss the TUA student abstinence from drinking alcohol. Likewise, TUA student, in example 2 did not discuss the fact that a dog can be a member of a family. Students' tolerance was even complemented by the skills of taking up another's perspective, of being able to grasp the ideas, feelings and intentions of the other. We can, clearly, see this in the remaining examples. Homosexuality, premarital sex, and premarital pregnancy are taboo topics in Algerian society, and in spite of this, TUA students were open-minded enough to discuss them. ECU students showed the same level of tolerance, for example when TUA student said she would feel pity for a homosexual friend. If these students did not have this tolerant attitude towards the way their partners act and what they believe, there would have been no communication and no achievement of joint objectives.

Tips to Develop Respect and Tolerance

In today's world of globalization, the world is certainly becoming smaller. People of various cultures and who have a set of beliefs that defines the code of conduct and values for their respective cultures are, nowadays, able to communicate freely. Though cultural differences distinguish societies from one another, they find different ways to express thoughts, ideas which can cross cultures through different forms of media like television, newspapers and the Internet. Many people believe that due to the advancements in science and technology, cultural differences tend to disappear through time.

However, in spite of all the good will in the world, miscommunication is likely to happen, especially when there are significant cultural differences between communicators. One important contributor, among many, to the cultural differences is the history of a particular region or country. The events of the past shape the moods and opinions of people living in that specific country and which are certainly different from another country, i.e. we make different meanings of the world, our place in it, and our relationships with others. This cultural difference may lead, in most cases, to miscommunication that may lead, on its turn, to conflict, or aggravate a conflict that already exists.

Unfortunately, most of the variables of cultural differences are much more complex than what we might think of them. Each of them affects the way people communicate, and can be responsible for conflict or the intensification of conflict when it leads to miscommunication or misunderstanding. For this reason, several different theories and models of cultural differences have been designed. These models are included in table A1 (see Appendix A)

To summarize, the main cultural differences that these models and others that have been discussed in other numerous theories, surveys, and investigations that focus on specific countries, regions, and organizations, we may group them in 5 variables:

- 1) *high context vs. low context*, where in a low context culture things are fully spelled out and are made explicit, and there is considerable dependence on what is actually said or written, whereas in a high context culture communicators assume a great deal of commonality of knowledge and views, so that less is spelled out explicitly and much more is implicit or communicated in indirect ways (Hall 1990).
- 2) *monochronic vs. polychronic*, where monochronic cultures like to do just one thing at a time and value a certain orderliness and sense of there being an appropriate time and place for everything, whereas polychronic cultures like to do multiple things at the same time (Lewis 1992).
- 3) *future vs. present vs. past orientation*, where future-oriented societies have a great deal of optimism about the future and think they understand it and can shape it through their actions, whereas past-oriented societies are concerned with traditional values and ways of doing things and tend to be conservative in management and slow to change those things that are tied to the past. Present-oriented societies, on the other hand, see the past as passed and the future as uncertain and prefer short-term benefits (Hofstede 1991).
- 4) *power distance*, where the extent to which people accept differences in power allows to shape many aspects of life, such as superior/subordinate

relationships. It can be **high** where individuals are deferential to people of authority and generally allow an unequal distribution of power, or **low** where individuals question authority and expect to participate in decisions that affect them (Hofstede 1991).

- 5) *individualism vs. collectivism*, where in individualist cultures a person is all the more admirable if he/she is a “self-made man/woman” or “makes up his/her own mind” or shows initiative or works well independently. In collectivist cultures, on the other hand, people are expected to identify with and work well in groups which protect them in exchange for loyalty and compliance (Hofstede 1991).

In order to engage in a successful intercultural dialogue, respect and tolerance are required. They need to be explicitly taught and learned and then practiced and maintained throughout life. They can be encouraged through the development of course content that revolves around intercultural differences. Being aware of these cultural differences like those mentioned above will equip individuals with all that is required to engage actively with people from other ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds.

Conclusion

The major advancements in technology have drastically contributed to promoting educational standards within a globalized world. Within this course of thought, videoconferencing has become an opportunity for educational interactions, saving then time and resources. This allows students to bridge relationships with partners from different cultures and backgrounds. A “telecollaboration” like Global Understanding Project is not merely a space for meeting or exchanging knowledge and experiences with others, it is rather a space to put one’s culture and identity at large under scrutiny. In so doing, students are very likely to develop a reflective stance by reinforcing similarities and understanding the sources of differences while interacting with others. They not only learn to accept and respect others’ beliefs, values, and behaviours, but they also show empathy to people and develop interest in what others feel and how they perceive situations.

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Appendix A

There are several models that describe cultural patterns. The following table summarizes the major ones used by intercultural researchers and scholars.

Table A1: Models for Cultural Differences

Model	Year	Dimensions
Hall	1959	Space, Material Goods, Friendship, Time, Agreement
Hofstede	1991	Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation
Lessem & Neubauer	1994	Pragmatism, Rationalism, Idealism, Humanism
Lewis	1992	Time
Trompenaars	1993	Universalism, Collectivism, Emotional, Specific, Status, Sequential, Inner-Directed

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