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Comparison of School Connectedness, Adjustment and Academic Buoyancy in Iranian and Afghan Elementary Students

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study was to compare the sense of belonging, adjustment and academic buoyancy among Iranian and Afghan students in elementary schools. To this end, a causal-comparative design was used. The statistical population included all Iranian and Afghan primary school students who were studying in one of the primary schools in the 11th district of Shiraz, Iran in the 2020 academic year. The sample consisted of 60 Afghan and Iranian male and female students who were selected by random sampling method. To collect data, HosseinChari and Dehghanizadeh Academic Buoyancy Scale, Brew et al. students' sense of connectedness with school scale and the Student Adjustment Scale were used. Data analysis was done using univariate and multivariate analysis of variance. Findings indicated that the scores of sense of connectedness with school, the adjustment (general adjustment, emotional adjustment, social adjustment and academic adjustment) and the feeling of buoyancy in Iranian students are higher than Afghan students. Cultural differences and immigration of Afghan students may be the possible explanations of the findings.

Keywords: Sense of connectedness with school, adjustment, academic buoyancy, elementary students.

Introduction

At the end of elementary school, significant psychological and physical changes occur in students that affect the child's attitudes, values, and behavior. This period is a sensitive and important stage for the desire to work and progress in the individual. Elementary school changes have lasting effects on adult development. This period, called the age of assimilation by psychologists, is the age of group orientation in the individual. One of the influential factors in education is the sense of belonging to the school. It refers to actions that make the student adapt to a particular activity, and increase the student's sense of comfort and well-being, and reduce the student's anxiety. Belonging to school has six components including the Teacher support, Belonging with peers, Fairness and safety, Academic engagement, Relatedness of self with school and Engagement in community (Safara & Rafiee, 2020).

Goodenow (1993) believes that a student who feels a sense of belonging to the school considers himself / herself as a participant who is committed in school activities and this increases the motivation of the student to achieve the desired goals of the school. Morrison, Cosden, O'Farrell, and Campos (2003) argue that having this feeling improves students' academic achievement. Participation in school activities affects students' learning as well as their motivation. In other words, it makes the student adapt to the school environment. The most important elements of this affiliation are the effective relationship of individuals with members of the school community, the extent to which individuals belong to

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collective goals and inclusion, or the extent to which members are involved in social activities. This approach tries to look at the school as a part of society. According to this approach, the school should have a system that respects all people with different beliefs and ethnicities (Rowe, Stewart, & Patterson, 2007). Another approach to defining school affiliation is the psychological approach, which describes school affiliation as a psychological state in which students feel that they and other students are cared for and supported by the school (Shochet, Smyth, & Homel, 2007).

Another important feature of elementary school is academic buoyancy. Academic buoyancy is defined as the student's ability to successfully meet the barriers and challenges underlying the normal course of academic life (Martin & Marsh, 2008). Academic buoyancy also refers to a positive, constructive, and adaptive response to the types of challenges and barriers experienced in the ongoing field of study (Putwain, Connors, Symes, & Douglas-Osborn, 2012).

The study of the effects of migration on children and adolescents has always been of interest to researchers and experts in the field of psychology and education. In the phenomenon of immigration, people from different cultures and ethnicities move to another country with the intention of citizenship and residency, and this increases the diversity of students in the classroom (Bratti, De Benedictis, & Santoni, 2014). Bacon (2011) in a study found that learners' attitudes toward school physical condition were directly related to their sense of belonging to the school. Ohinata and Van Ours (2013) found that when native students study with immigrant students in the same environment, they feel faced with an unfavorable learning environment, and this may affect their academic adjustment. Babaei Zarch (2011) also found that the presence of immigrant students in normal schools has an adverse cultural, health and behavioral effect on Iranian students. Therefore, native students studying with immigrant students may have poor adaptation and less satisfaction with the learning environment.

Peterson, Baker, and McGaw (2010) also believe that when people migrate and enter a different cultural environment, they are forced to adapt to the culture of that environment upon arrival and may experience cultural shock. This can disrupt students' adjustment in school and lead to their academic failure or make them anxious and depressed.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education of Iran, 14 million and 750 thousand students were studying in Iranian schools in 2019, of which 480 thousand were immigrant students from neighboring countries and about 460 thousand students were Afghan immigrant students. Therefore, majority of immigrants are Afghans, and in the next ranks, the other immigrants are from Iraq, Turkmenistan, Armenia and Turkey (Statistical Yearbook, 2011). Therefore, according to the mentioned cases, the present study was conducted with the aim of comparing the sense of belonging to school, adjustment and academic buoyancy in Iranian and Afghan primary school students.

Material and Methods

The present study was a causal-comparative study. The statistical population of this study was all Iranian and Afghan primary students who were studying in one of the primary schools in the 11th district of Shiraz in the 2020 academic year. The research sample consisted of 60 Iranian and Afghan male and

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female students who were selected by random sampling method. At the outset of the study, informed consent form was obtained from the participants. The tools used in this study were as follows:

Hosseinchari and Dehghanizadeh Academic Buoyancy Scale (2013): In 2013, Hossein Chari and Dehghanizadeh developed the Academic Buoyancy Questionnaire as a 9 items inventory with 5-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) by modeling the Martin and Marsh Academic Buoyancy Scale, which had four items. Hosseinchari and Dehghanizadeh (2013) showed that the obtained Cronbach's alpha coefficients were equal to 0.80 and also the correlation range of the items with the total score was between 0.51 to 0.86. These results indicate that the items have a prper internal consistency and stability (Hosseinchari & Dehghanizadeh, 2013). In the present study, the reliability of this scale was 0.81.

Brew et al. students' sense of connectedness with school scale: Brew, Beatty, and Watt (2004) scale consists of 27 items in the form of 6 dimensions of Teacher support, Belonging with peers, Fairness and safety, Academic engagement, Relatedness of self with school and Engagement in community in a 4-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to completely agree). The score range is from 27 to 108. Brew et al. (2004) reported its validity and reliability at a satisfactory level. In Iran, Makian and Kalantar Koosheh (2015) examined the validity and reliability of this questionnaire by implementing it on 350 high school students in Tehran and reported the total Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire was 0.91, which is acceptable. The reliability coefficients for the components of sense of belonging to peers, teacher support, sense of respect and justice in school, participation in society, individual relationship with school and scientific participation were 0.80, 0.77, 0.75, 0.72, 0.80, and 0.86, respectively.

Student Adjustment Scale: This questionnaire has been prepared and compiled by Sinha and Singh (1968) in 60 statements in a Yes or No scale that discriminated students with good adjustment from poor students in three measures the area of adjustment (social, emotional and educational). The validity and reliability of this scale in Iran have been confirmed by Zahed, Rajabi, and Omidi (2012). In the present study, the reliability of this scale was calculated as 0.82.

Results

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of research variables in Iranian and Afghan students.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation of research variables in Iranian and Afghan students

Variables	Afghan students		Iranian students		Total	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Sense of belonging	49.43	7.15	74.07	6.14	61.75	14.07
Social adjustment	13	1.88	7.77	2.10	10.38	3.29
Emotional adjustment	12.50	1.31	7.50	1.96	10	3.01
Academic adjustment	12.67	2.19	7.90	2.26	10.28	3.26
Adjustment (total)	38.17	4.24	23.17	4.62	30.67	8.75
Academic buoyancy	19.40	2.82	29.20	3.69	24.30	2.92

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According to Table 1, the mean of sense of belonging of Iranian students is higher than Afghan students. In addition, adjustment problems (social, emotional, educational and total adjustment) are less common among Iranian students. In other words, Iranian students are more adjustable than Afghan students. Also, the mean of academic buoyancy of Iranian students is higher than that of Afghan students.

Considering that univariate and multivariate analysis of variance was used for testing the research hypotheses, it was necessary to check the main assumptions of univariate and multivariate analysis of variance. For this purpose, Levene's test was used to test the assumption of homogeneity of variance, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to test the assumption of distribution normality, and M-box test was run to test the equivalence of covariance matrices. Table 2 shows the results of Levene's test to examine the homogeneity of variance of research variables.

Table 2. Levene's test for homogeneity of variance of research dependent variables

Variables	F	DF1	DF2	*p*
Sense of belonging	.31	1	58	.58
Social adjustment	.11	1	58	.74
Emotional adjustment	2.54	1	58	.11
Academic adjustment	.23	1	58	.63
Adjustment (total)	.50	1	58	.48
Academic buoyancy	3.73	1	58	.06

According to Table 2, the homogeneity of variance is met for all the variables, and it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between the two groups in terms of variance of dependent variable error. Table 3 shows the results of the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test to investigate the normality of the distribution of research d variables.

Table 3. Results of Kolmogorov–Smirnov test to investigate the normality of the distribution of dependent variables

Variable		Kolmogorov–Smirnov Z	DF	*p*
Sense of belonging	Afghan students	.11	100	.20
	Iranian students	.13	100	.20
Social adjustment	Afghan students	.12	100	.08
	Iranian students	.14	100	.12
Emotional adjustment	Afghan students	.11	100	.26
	Iranian students	.14	100	.11
Academic adjustment	Afghan students	.16	100	.06
	Iranian students	.15	100	.07
Adjustment (total)	Afghan students	.10	100	.20
	Iranian students	.15	100	.10
Academic buoyancy	Afghan students	.15	100	.09
	Iranian students	.14	100	.12

According to Table 3, the assumption of normality is met for all the variables. Based on the Table 3, it can be concluded that it is possible to use the one-way analysis of variance test to compare Iranian and Afghan students. In addition to the above hypothesis analyses, the equivalence of covariance matrices of academic adjustment components was examined. According to the results, Box's M and F's values

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are 10.41 and 1.64, respectively. As it can bee seen in the Table 3, F's value is not significant (p <. 13). As a result, the equivalence of covariance matrices of components of academic adjustment is not significant. Therefore, it is possible to use multivariate analysis of variance to compare Iranian and Afghan students in terms of components of adjustment.

Hypothesis 1: There is a difference between Iranian and Afghan students in terms of sense of belonging to school.

In order to investigate the first hypothesis of the study, one-way analysis of variance was used. Table 4 shows the results of this analysis.

Table 4. One-way analysis of variance to compare the sense of belonging to school between Iranian and Afghan elementary students

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	*p*
Group	9102.02	1	9102.02	699.82	.001
Error	2575.23	198	13.001		
Total	11677.25	199			

According to Table 4, there is a significant difference between Iranian and Afghan elementary students in terms of the sense of belonging to school ($p < .0001$). According to the means reported in the Table 1, it can be concluded that the level of sense of belonging to schools in Iranian students is higher than Afghan students, therefore, the first hypothesis of the study is confirmed.

Hypothesis 2: There is a difference between Iranian and Afghan students in terms of total adjustment.

In order to investigate the second hypothesis of the study, one-way analysis of variance was used. Table 5 shows the results of this analysis.

Table 5. One-way analysis of variance to compare the total adjustment of Iranian and Afghan elementary students

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	*p*
Group	3375	1	3375	171.6	.001
Error	1138.33	198	19.63		
Total	4513.33	199			

According to Table 5, there is a significant difference between Iranian and Afghan elementary students in terms of the adjustment problems ($p < .0001$). According to the means reported in the Table 1, it can be concluded that the level of adjustment in Iranian students is higher than Afghan students, therefore, the second hypothesis of the study is confirmed. Also, multivariate analysis of variance was used to compare the two groups in terms of adjustment dimensions. Table 6 shows the results of this analysis.

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Table 6. Multivariate analysis of variance to compare the dimensions of adjustment in Iranian and Afghan students

Source	Variable	SS	df	MS	F	*p*
Group	Emotional adjustment	410.82	1	410.82	103.88	.001
	Social adjustment	375	1	375	135.09	.001
	Academic adjustment	340.82	1	340.82	68.79	.001
Error	Emotional adjustment	229.37	198	3.95		
	Social adjustment	161	198	2.78		
	Academic adjustment	287.37	198	4.95		
Total	Emotional adjustment	640.18	199			
	Social adjustment	536	199			
	Academic adjustment	628.18	199			

According to Table 6, there is a significant difference between Iranian and Afghan primary school students in terms of all three dimensions of emotional, social and educational adjustment at the level of 0.0001. According to the Table 1, the mean adjustment scores of Iranian students in all three dimensions are lower than Afghan students. Considering that a lower score in the adjustment questionnaire means more adjustment, it can be concluded that the level of adjustment of Iranian students in the mentioned dimensions is higher than Afghan students.

Third Hypothesis: There is a difference between Iranian and Afghan students in terms of academic buoyancy.

In order to investigate the third hypothesis of the study, one-way analysis of variance was used. Table 7 shows the results of this analysis.

Table 7. One-way analysis of variance to compare the academic buoyancy of Iranian and Afghan primary school students

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	*p*
Group	1440.6	1	1440.6	133.47	.001
Error	626	198	10.79		
Total	37496	199			

According to Table 7, there is a significant difference between Iranian and Afghan elementary students in terms of the academic buoyancy ($p < .0001$). According to the means reported in the Table 1, it can be concluded that the level of buoyancy in Iranian students is higher than Afghan students, therefore, the third hypothesis of the study is confirmed.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to compare the sense of belonging to school, adjustment, and academic buoyancy in elementary students in Iran and Afghanistan. The results showed that the level of the sense of belonging to school, adjustment and its dimensions, and academic buoyancy in Iranian students was higher than that in Afghan students.

Moreover, the findings showed that the level of sense of belonging in Iranian students was higher than that in Afghan students. The findings are in line with previous research findings. Brew et al. (2004)

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concluded in their research that the sense of belonging to school is formed in learners when there are positive interactions between people in the school. Security is another influential variable in the sense of belonging to the school. Also, students' participation in school group programs increases their sense of belonging to the school. Engin (2020) also deals with the relationship between school belonging, motivation and academic achievement of students in elementary school. The results showed a significant relationship between academic performance and how learners interact with each other on the sense of belonging to school. Khosravi, Bahadori, Geravand, and Ahmadi (2019) in their research concluded that interaction and respect for immigrant students can increase their adjustment in foreign schools. The most important indicators of a student's belonging to the school include the quality of the student's relationship with other members of the school, the extent of the student's commitment to school goals, and the degree of student involvement in school activities. Therefore, it seems that although our culture has accepted Afghan students, but due to higher level of communication of Iranian students, the level of belonging to school of them is higher than that in Afghan students.

Also, the research findings showed a significant difference between Iranian and Afghan students in adjustment and its dimensions. Accordingly, Iranian students had a higher rate of adjustment than Afghan students. The results are in line with previous research findings. Mahallāti and Abolmaāli (2016) compared the dimensions of academic adjustment and academic performance in Iranian and immigrant high school students according to their nationality, type of school and gender. The findings showed that the main effects of nationality, type of school and gender on academic performance and adjustment were significant. Panchanadeswaran and Dawson (2011) found that discrimination against immigrants is associated with a decrease in their self-esteem. Decreased self-esteem is often associated with decreased academic achievement. Rumbaut and Portes (2001) found that the average score of immigrants' academic performance is lower than that of non-immigrant students. It seems that school conditions can determine the academic achievement of learners, which is consistent with the results of the present study. Also, Jadidi (2020) showed that students who have more academic adaptation have a higher position in their desire to learn. Kagan, Snidman, and Arcus (1992) found that in families with low interaction and emotional relationships and social activities, children's emotional, social and educational adjustment is low. In the present study, due to the minority of Afghans in Iran and the low level of social interaction, they had lower social and emotional adjustment than Iranian students.

Finally, according to the findings, the rate of academic buoyancy of Iranian students was higher than that in Afghan students. This finding is also in line with previous studies. Martin and Marsh (2008) showed that self-efficacy, control, planning, low anxiety and perseverance and effort are important predictors of students' academic buoyancy. Hirvonen, Putwain, Määttä, Ahonen, and Kiuru (2020) showed that higher levels of academic buoyancy predict positive and negative emotions. Experiencing positive emotions helps people with buoyancy to cope better with everyday stress. Miller, Connolly, and Maguire (2013) showed that academic buoyancy is directly related to educational achievement in primary school students. Collie, Ginns, Martin, and Papworth (2017) showed positive emotions predict

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high academic buoyancy and life satisfaction. In the present study, the academic buoyancy of Iranian students was significantly higher than that in Afghan students.

Based on the results of the present study and by comparing the sense of belonging, adjustment and its dimensions and academic buoyancy in Iranian and Afghan primary school students, it was determined that due to cultural differences and immigration of Afghan students in Iran, all the variables studied in Iranian students were reported to be significantly higher than Afghan students. Therefore, in order to improve the sense of belonging, adjustment and academic buoyancy in Afghan students, using the results of this study, further studies can identify the cause of these differences.

Despite efforts to do the present research correctly, this research, like other studies in the field, had some limitations that overcoming them in future research can achieve more valid results. Also, this study has been conducted on urban elementary school students and its generalization to other groups should be accompanied by considering these differences.

It is suggested that ministries, organizations and institutions related to immigrant affairs study the educational, psychological and motivational status of immigrant students and to solve the problems of these immigrant students by providing the necessary support.

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