

The challenges of Serbian Immigrants in Ireland

-An examination of the process of acculturation-

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Abstract

The present study is a qualitative piece of research which explores the experiences of Serbian immigrants in Ireland. The study intended to identify how immigrants balance between two cultures, and which acculturation strategy occurs to be the most preferable. The careful analysis of the four main themes, led to conclusions that the most common acculturation strategy used by Serbian immigrants in Ireland is integration. The factors such as education, language proficiency and social circles were found to be the essential factors which lead to successful integration.

Introduction

As a part of the migration process, immigration is commonly seen as a movement of individuals to a new country caused by various push and pull factors such as the availability of services, levels of unemployment, safety and greater opportunities.

The change of environment commonly affects the behaviour patterns of individuals leading to acculturation and the reshaping of one's identity.

There are four main acculturation strategies applied by the individual, in order to adapt into a new environment: Assimilation, Separation, Integration, and Marginalisation. Based on two underlying issues, the maintenance of the culture of origin and the participation in the host society, it could be concluded which strategy is preferable by a specific immigrant. Also factors such as language, age, education, family relationships, cultural similarities, religion and socialisation are found to be significant in the process of immigrant adjustment in the foreign society.



Method

The qualitative research method is chosen for the present study in order to obtain data which will describe in detail personal life experiences among Serbian immigrants. The sample information was obtained conducting interviews from six immigrants, three male and three female, who were born and lived for a long period of time in Serbia, and then immigrated to Ireland. The interview format was semi-structured in design and based on open-ended questions. The digitally recorded face to face interviews lasted approximately 40min and they took place in various locations in Dublin. The data was examined through thematic analysis, which allowed certain themes to arise.

Results

As a result of the interviews, four themes emerged: Life as an immigrant, A comparison of life: Serbia v Ireland, Social circles and Approach to Language. The careful analysis of the themes, led to conclusions that the most common acculturation strategy used by Serbian immigrants in Ireland is integration. The factors such as education, language proficiency and social circles were found to be of the essential importance for adaptation into a foreign society. The findings of the present study highlighted the immigrants' full participation in Irish society, as well as maintenance of Serbian culture.

Discussion

There are several reasons which suggested that integration was the most preferable acculturation strategy among Serbian immigrants. The reasons for immigrating to Ireland were voluntary, based mostly on their relationship status, and need for change.

Also their language skills and educational achievement was on very high level, therefore they did not have any issues comprehending their situation and accepting potential differences.

It appeared that the majority of the immigrants believe that the ways of socialising (related to the drinking culture, easy going attitude and friendliness) are similar between Irish and Serbian cultures.

Additionally, the high levels of acceptance and tolerance of the Irish people, allowed them to feel included and welcomed into community.

As a result, the participants found it easy to adapt and evolve in Irish routines and social interactions.

References

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