



4. Cultural Programme as an Essential Activity for Enhancing Cohesion and Inclusion among Students: A University-Level Study

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Abstract

Cultural activities are one of the potential sources for promoting cohesion and inclusion among people at different levels of society and institutions. This research article mainly explores the impact of cultural programmes on the social cohesion and inclusion of the students, research scholars, and others who have participated in cultural activities such as music, drama, dance, and other activities that are organised at Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Bihar on the occasion of Deeksharambh induction ceremony and the occasion of other special days. There are twenty-eight participants including students (UG & PG), research scholars, and office staff who are interviewed through a purposive sampling technique to fulfil the objective of this study. The SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solutions) Software is used to analyze the collected response. Analyzing the collected data, the current study shows that cultural programmes have a positive impact on the personality of students improving their communication skills and presentation skills.

Keywords: Culture, Values, Cohesion, Inclusion, Deeksharambh, University

1 Introduction

Education is the medium by which the holistic development of human is ensured through applying various teaching and learning methods. It helps individuals to engage in various developmental activities along with getting job-oriented skills (Krishnamoorthy, 2019) whereas university is one of the major institutions where students come to study from different localities with diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds which leads the feelings of culture shock along with a few other hurdles but as they spent their time in university, students are assimilated with one another along with academic and administrative integration (Farrell-Felici & Panesar-Aguilar, 2021). The

integration among students, research scholars, academicians and administrative staff is possible due to the potentiality of various cultural activities which are organized on different occasions. Thus, this study significantly provides strategies to create an inclusive environment in the different institutions through organizing cultural activities as organizing cultural programmes facilitates regular interaction among students, research scholars and other individuals.

The historical roots of organizing cultural programmes like music, dance, drama (Natak) etc. in academic discipline can be traced back to ancient times following which the National Education Policy 2020, has given special attention to creating such kind of educational curriculum in which students can be aware of various kind of traditional and cultural activities along with completing academic syllabus. The history of the cultural programme at Mahatma Gandhi Central University was started in the year 2016 when it came into functioning mode whereas its foundation day, induction ceremony, Swachchhata Pakhawda and other activities are continuously celebrated every year. There is a literary society “Harmony” works under the English department to bring creativity among students and research scholars. The literary society provides opportunities for symposiums, debates, celebrations, play, poetry, recitations, fine arts & crafts and some other activities to the students and researchers that bring a harmonious environment within the campus (Singh, 2021) whereas the department of Social work plays a crucial role to organize election awareness campaign through conducting Nukkad Natak (street play) by involving students in this play.

1.1 Key Terms Used in this Study

According to Tyler (1870), culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society whereas culture shock is a process that refers to the feeling of a new, unfamiliar situation or environment where someone is required to develop new modes of symbolic representation and perspective on self to understand others and the environment (Cupsa, 2018). On the other hand, Jane Jensen (1998) defined social cohesion as a process more than a condition or end state...it is seen as involving a sense of commitment, and a desire or capacity to live together in harmony while Cambridge Dictionary defined inclusion as the idea that everyone should be able to use the same facilities, take part in the same activities, and enjoy the same experiences, including people who have a disability or other disadvantage whereas social capital is the features of social networks which is based on norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively towards to getting shared objectives (Lin, 1999).

2 Methodology

This study is framed under the qualitative research design to explore the impact of cultural and social programmes on the social cohesion and inclusion of students, research scholars and others in which the purposive sampling technique is used to collect the responses from the students,

research scholars and technical staff of Mahatma Gandhi Central University who have participated in different cultural programmes organized on different occasions in the University. Twenty-eight participants have participated in this study and the majority of respondents are those who have participated in the cultural programme currently organized on the occasion of the Induction ceremony. The collected responses of the participants are analyzed in the form of frequency percentages by using SPSS Software, and the output of data is presented in tabular and chart form whereas the impact of the cultural programme on cohesion and inclusion is measured in terms of bonding, network, equality, positivity in personality and inclusive environment.

3 Opinions of the Participants

Eight participants among the twenty-eight have given their opinion in response to an open ended question, and the opinion of the participants is relevant to the importance of the cultural programme especially at the academic level. These opinions are coated below in the words of participants:

- 3.1 Cultural programmes enable students and researchers to experience different cultures, traditions, and activities. The programme also provides an immense opportunity for all to learn new things and acquire leadership skills, which are very important in today's world. I hope the university will keep organizing such activities.
- 3.2 The drama and dance that I performed in university helped me overcome my stage fear and also added a new identity to my personality. The two subjects helped me gain deep knowledge about drama and dance, making me feel as if the character I was playing was within me.
- 3.3 Culture is a manifestation of human behaviour intellect and other social activities with programme strategies of its organization, it helps humans to understand the human-human relationship, human-culture relationship and the evolution of anthropological and ethnographical stages. Participating in the cultural programmes organized by universities (like MGCUB) helps us understand these perspectives of real existence in society as well as on the earth. Therefore, there should be more encouragement and providence from the institutions to make the programmes run more significantly.
- 3.4 Every university, college, or educational institution, whether it is a central or state government body, should treat all students equally and give them equal opportunities, but this does not happen everywhere. Universities and educational institutions should be the best examples of secularism.
- 3.5 Cultural programmes or activities play an important role in the lives of participants, they enhance the personality, remove hesitation, give confidence, and provide happiness in a stressed environment.

- 3.6 The university should increase the frequency of cultural and social events and more over form a society in the university also they can form various societies like public speaking, debating etc. and the university should give some academic courses to students so, they join or participate more in these events.
- 3.7 Cultural programmes create a healthy relationship and environment among students. It makes university life more joyful and healthy. We must organize and participate in the extra curriculum like cultural programmes.
- 3.8 Cultural programmes improve the university's environment. They give students positive energy, fill the communication gap among students from different departments, and remove all hesitation.

4 Data Analysis and Discussion

Twenty-eight participants have participated in this study from various disciplines of undergraduate, postgraduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes of which two participants are from undergraduate courses, fifteen participants are from postgraduate and eleven participants are from M.Phil or Ph.D programmes.

There are nine participants who belong to the 18-23 years of age group, twelve participants who belong to the 24-29 years of age group, and seven participants who belong to the 30-35 years of age group whereas on the grounds of gender; sixteen participants are from the male category and twelve participants are from the female category.

The frequency percentage of respondents who have participated or assisted in cultural activities like song, dance, and drama are as; 21.4% data of response is found as frequency distribution that refers to the respondents who have participated in singing, 21.4% of the frequency distribution refers to the participation of the respondents in dances whereas 32.1% of the frequency distribution highlights those participants who have participated in drama whereas few of the respondents have technically assisted in the cultural programmes. There are 21.4% of the frequency distribution of response denotes the participation of respondents in more than one organized activity. The frequency distribution of the song, dance and more than one option has the same value which means the respondents who have participated in the song have more possibilities that they have also participated in the dance.

Table 1

Strength of Relationship

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, significantly	23	82.1%
Yes, somewhat	3	10.7%
No, not really	2	7.1%
Total	28	100.0

Table 1 shows the strength of relationships with colleagues after successfully participating in the various cultural programmes. As a response, there is an 82.1% frequency distribution reflecting that the majority of respondents feel that their relationships are significantly strengthened after participating in the cultural program whereas a 10.7% frequency distribution of response highlights the somewhat positive change in the strength of relationships with colleagues while the low-frequency percentage (7.1%) of response showing that their relationship with colleagues is not really strengthened after participating in the cultural programs.

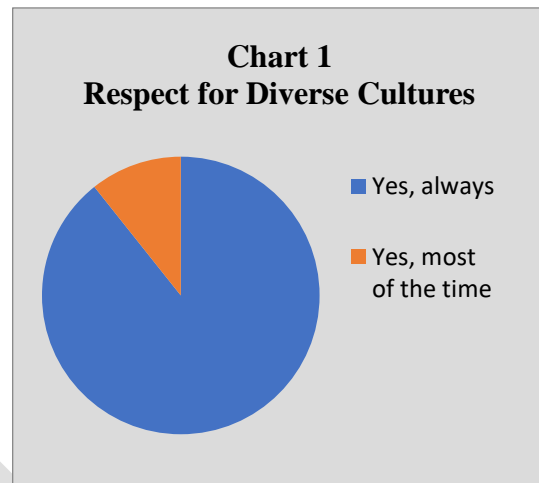
The high-frequency distribution of positive responses reveals that engagement in the cultural program is fruitful in developing and strengthening relationships of students, research scholars, and others, as (Crooks et al., 2015) studied the improved relationships among students due to cultural engagement in which they addressed that participating in the cultural programme potentially provide opportunities to develop networks and make new friends and develop students' healthy relationship skills and communication skills.

Table 2		
Inclusive Environment		
Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, definitely	26	92.9%
Yes, to some extent	2	7.1%
Total	28	100.0

In Table 2, there is 92.9% of the frequency distribution of responses shows that cultural activities definitely help in creating an inclusive environment in the university whereas 7.1% of frequency distribution indicates that cultural activities help to some extent in creating an inclusive environment in the university. The high-frequency percentage of responses reflects the significant role of cultural activities in creating an inclusive environment at Mahatma Gandhi Central

University; as previous studies also highlight to the incorporation of cultural value helps in creating an inclusive environment under the campus of the university (Hurtado et al., 2015).

Cultural diversity is a unique identity of Indian society which can be observed at different levels in different forms but how much individuals have respect for one another culture is required to measure because respect for diversity of the culture is one of the major goals of the New Education Policy, 2020. Thus, the blue part of Chart 1 highlights that 89% of students or research scholars have a consciousness of other cultures. So, they always respect diverse cultures whereas 11% of frequency distribution shows that students or research scholars have an understanding or respect for other cultures most of the time.



Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, many	16	57.1%
Yes, a few	12	42.9%
Total	28	100.0

Table 3 is designed to show the networks of participants due to the potentiality of cultural events where four categories are defined in the variable section of the table but all respondents have given their responses by selecting the first and second variables thus; two other variables disappear from the table as output. As a frequency percentage of response, 57.1% frequency reveals that after participating in the cultural programmes students have made many new friends whereas 42.9% of frequency refers to the second variable in which a few friends are made by the students after participating in the cultural programmes.

The frequency percentage of response generally highlights less and more forming social networks which is a positive sign of social capital because forming social networks is beneficial in various forms due to embedded resources in social networks whereas the embedded resource is the major element of social capital. Thus, forming strong networks beneficial in the form of social capital for students or researchers and others (Lin, 1999). The immediate benefit of social networks is that

it conveys the idea of collaboration or cooperation of the connected individuals (Sánchez & Kaps, 2017).

Table 4		
Positivity in Personality		
Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, significantly	23	82.1%
Yes, somewhat	5	17.9%
Total	28	100.0

Personality is commonly associated with individual thinking, feeling, and behaviour that depends on their surroundings and biological traits. For example, whether individual thinking is positive or negative can be considered as thinking of the individuals, whether they feel comfortable or uncomfortable, whether their action is repeated or different etc. (Vazire, 2014).

The impact of surroundings on the personality is the major focus point for this table thus, Table 4 is designed to highlight the impact of cultural programs on the personality of students or research scholars. Thus, the first frequency percentage of response which is the highest frequency percentage (82.1%) denotes the positive impact of cultural programmes on the personality of respondents whereas 17.9% frequency distribution reflects the somewhat impact of cultural programmes on the personality of respondents. The high-frequency percentage of positive responses significantly addressed the importance of cultural programmes for individuals of any institution such as the students of Mahatma Gandhi Central University, to achieve better personalities and social skill.

Table 5		
Chance of Equal Opportunities		
Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, always	20	71.4%
Yes, most of the time	5	17.9%

No, not really	3	10.7%
Total	28	100.0

Chance of equality and equal opportunity is the feature of the Indian constitution that deals with different provisions, its silent features work to promote cohesion and inclusion within society at different levels. Thus, Table 5 addressed the equal opportunities of students, researcher and others at the university.

There are three categories in the variable section of Table 5 to assess the chance of equal opportunities for participating in cultural activities, the frequency percentage of the first category which is 71.4% denotes that students always get equal opportunities in organised cultural activities at university whereas 17.9% of frequency distribution highlights that students who are getting chance for cultural participation not always but they get chance most of the time while 10.7% frequency reflects that students are not really getting an equal chance to participate in the cultural activities that are the negative consequences and chance for the university to correct this drawback.

5 Conclusion and Suggestion

This study has focused on measuring the impact of cultural programmes on the social cohesion and inclusion of the students, researchers, and others who have participated in organised cultural programmes like dance, drama, music etc. at Mahatma Gandhi Central University. The overall findings of the study reveal that cultural programmes have a significant role in maintaining cohesion and inclusion within the university campus. There is a high frequency of responses reflecting that the cultural programs potentially help the students, researchers and others to understand personally and culturally each other which is essential in creating an inclusive environment in the university along with forming strong networks through friendships. The cultural programmes have a positive impact on the personality of students as it help to remove hesitation from students in public speaking or gathering and improve their communication skills and presentation skills.

The study recommends that the cultural programme should not be limited only to the academic boundary it should be also planned to organised beyond the academic boundary as social events by involving more and more students. The social and cultural programmes should be adopted as like as academic curriculum activities, not as extra curriculum activities by considering its significance. Cultural programmes should be organized at all kinds of institutions from time to time because organising cultural activities within campus helps to create an inclusive environment among individuals. Institutions should ensure bias-free selection of participants for cultural activities and should also motivate & encourage those students who have a fear of presenting

themselves in front of the public. This study motivates future researchers to do research on such kind of topic at a broad level because this study is conducted on a small scale.

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