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Home and Beyond: Third Culture Kids navigating between their Cultural identity for an answer of where is home?

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Home and Beyond: Third Culture Kids navigating between their Cultural identity for an

answer of where is home?

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Abstract

Third Culture kids are as a person who has spent a significant part of their development years outside their parent's culture. This research paper tackles different perspectives of Third Culture Kids' life and the challenges that they face. Including a deeper understanding of the main cause of these challenges and their relation to personal and cultural identity by searching for an answer to the most confusing question for a Third Culture Kid which is Where is home?

This paper can be considered as a guide for Third Culture Kid to understand their identity and how to accept their confusion around the question of where is home? giving them a chance to learn and understand more about their social identity along with getting the advantage of the way they were raised. In addition to a design solution that will give a chance to be fully aware of how this experience can be unique on its own.

Home and Beyond: Third Culture Kids navigating between their Cultural identity

Introduction

"Where are you from?" is a very easy question to answer. It may take less than one second for a regular person to answer, but some people may take a couple of minutes to answer. Some of these people can be called Third Culture kids. According to David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken in their book *Third Culture Kids the Experience of Growing Up Among World* Third Culture Kids can be defined as a person who has spent a significant part of their development years outside their parent's culture. Third Culture kids are usually a result of a parents sojourner who traveled to another country for temporary residence for a specific period of time. Third culture kid parents usually travel for the sake of better work choices and better living, so basically they didn't take the decision themselves rather than that they followed their parent's decision. (Plamondon & Peterson, 2009)

This paper will answer the question of where is home? that Third Culture Kid usually asks. Along with tackling different perspectives of the Third Culture Kid experience and how it helped them create and navigate between their cultural identity.

Understanding sojourner's life perspectives is a good starting point for this research as it's very important to understand that there are a lot of terms and definitions regarding the topic of people moving from country to country as it may result in confusion. For this purpose, Third Culture Kids is a part of a wider term called Cross Culture Kids, which generally includes the kids who interacted with two or more cultural environments (Reken, 2002), and this includes

A. Traditional TCKs Children who move into another culture with their parents due to a parent's career choice

B. Bi/multi-cultural/ and/or bi/multi-racial children —Children born to parents from at least two cultures or races

C. Children of immigrants —Children whose parents have made a permanent move to a new country where they were not originally citizens

D. Children of refugees —Children whose parents are living outside their original country or place due to unchosen circumstances such as war, violence, famine, and other natural disasters

E. Children of minorities —Children whose parents are from a racial or ethnic group that is not part of the majority race or ethnicity of the country in which they live.

F. International adoptees —Children adopted by parents from another country other than the one of that child's birth

G. "Domestic" TCKs —Children whose parents have moved in or are among various subcultures within that child's home country.

As mentioned in Third Culture Kids: Prototypes for Understanding Other Cross-Cultural Kids By Ruth E. Van Reken's article. With this in mind, the Third Culture Kids term itself used to have a narrower definition that has been used earlier by *Dr. Ruth and John Useem* in their research, in the 1960s about Third Culture Kids that the term is limited only "To describe the three cultures that American children occupied living in India. The first culture referred to the country of origin of the parents (i.e., the United States). The second culture referred to the host culture (i.e., India), within which existed the third culture (which has no relation to the Third World). The third culture was occupied by a transient community of expatriates, including other families from around the world who availed themselves of American and British international schools, recreational clubs, commissaries, and other amenities." (Plamondon & Peterson, 2009) .

This description now goes under the term "Domestic" TCKs which is mentioned earlier. Alternatively, the Third Culture kid (TCK) term has been modified according to *Pollock and Van Reken* in their book *Third Culture Kids the Experience of Growing Up Among World* to include a wider definition which Dr. Unseen herself now refers to it, accordingly adding all the people who spent the formative years in a culture different than their parents' culture " These then broaden the definition of TCK to include the children of refugees, immigrants and those whose experience domestic not global" (Pollock & Van Reken 2001).

In addition to this, the third culture term is now referred to the culture that the person develops, so a person will have the first culture as their parent's culture, the host culture as the second culture, and the third one which creates their personality is more of a result of their experience as Dr.Useem stated " the lifestyle that is created, shared and learned by those who are from one culture and in process of relating to another" (Pollock & Van Reken 2001)

Considering all the information above, a better understanding will be provided to understand the challenges that Third Cultural Kid may face and how it can be resolved.

Chapter one: Research Question: Where is home?

Considering the increase in global mobility and the high growth in their numbers (Pollock & Van Reken 2001) (Spencer 2021), it is extremely critical to discuss and understand different perspectives and life patterns to better understand humans. Consequently, a better understanding of Third Culture Kids will be provided to share ideas, feelings, and experiences with people who have similar patterns. (Pollock & Van Reken 2001 p.6) It is very important to understand that each person of TCK has a different story, and goes through different patterns and life stages, this made them different but yet similar as they share a lot in terms of feelings and

social patterns and yes, they know each other and do understand what a person goes through. (Waal & Born 2021)

For this reason, it's very important to mention some main terms that TCK lives, shares and relates to. The first term of all, Cultural Identity is the key object of this research and the main discussion of TCK's life struggle. Psychologist, Anthropologists, and Sociologists agree that culture is what mainly controls a person's behaviors and influence their decision (Durkheim, 1895 as cited in Sablonnière & Usborne, 2014)

According to Daphne A. Jameson in his article Reconceptualizing Cultural identity And Its Role Intercultural Business communication, "Cultural identity is an individual's sense of self-derived from formal or informal membership in groups that transmit and inculcate knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions, and ways of life."

The second term will introduce belongingness, belong can be referred to as home, either the place or the feeling. "Belonging is mostly regarded as a personal feeling of belonging to a certain group, place or social location" (Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974 as cited in Waal & Born 2021). Accordingly, these two words will control most of this paper discussion, as TCK will usually have an error in feeling or understanding either belonging or identity especially cultural identity as its part of belonging. (Waal & Born 2021) In other words, they can't relate to any culture, in particular, they can't build a cultural identity which results in not belonging. The only time they had a connection or could feel a sense of belonging was when they met another TCK that have gone through the same experience and maybe felt alike. (Waal & Born 2021) (Pollock & Van Reken 2001).

On the condition that every person reacts and responds differently to understand their personality regarding belonging and identity, Third Culture Kids adapts four different ways to

relate to culture. As mentioned by *Pollock and Van Reken,* they may react as foreigners which they think and look different than their host country's culture, Adopted TCK which they look different but they think like the host country's culture another way when they look alike but think differently as their home country's culture and they are called hidden immigrant, and finally, the TCK mirror when they look and think alike as their host country's culture. (Pollock & Van Reken 2001)

Chapter two: Perspectives of Third Culture Kid life: Understanding the life of TCK

As an important starting point, the earlier life experience of the Third Culture Kid affected their life whether with good advantages or challenging results. Most of these challenges are formed around belonging and identity. According to Pollock and Van Recken, "TCKs often experience a 'lack of full ownership' in any one culture, frequently leading to feelings of rootlessness and restlessness as adults".

To demonstrate this idea more, cultural balance is one concept that can help us understand more about third culture kid life. Cultural balance means the sensing and understanding of a specific culture that made you fully aware of what is considered right or wrong (Pollock & Van Reken 2001). The culture balance is mainly what creates confusion for a third culture kid; for example when they are raised in a certain place and they are fully aware of their culture, now they moved to another country and need to figure it all over again. Pollock and Van Reken stated in their book commenting on cultural balance "It's as if we are still figuring out the fingering for the scale on the piano while others around us are playing a Rachmaninoff concerto" So they start learning from scratch all over again, and they change their culture along with either each country they are moving to or simply between their parent's culture and the host

culture (Pollock & Van Reken 2001). This will leave us with another confusion point which is Culture shock.

According to Scientific Research, "Culture shock is which is the unexpected and often negative reaction of people to new environments" (Furnham, 2019) Another interesting definition for Culture shock is described as "The anxiety and emotional disturbance experienced by people when two sets of realities and conceptualizations meet", according to Rachel Irwin in his article Culture shock: negotiating feelings in the field. This status is usually adopted by a TCK whenever they leave or enter, either the host or home country. So basically they don't have enough time to make the adoption of one culture, their mind is usually divided between the two cultures. (Thomas, Humeidan, Barrack, & Huffman,2021). This usually develops confusion and struggle for them as it results in questioning where actually they fit in since they perceive culture differently from everybody else and of course from one TCK to another. (Waal, Born,2021) Paul Hieber defines culture as "The more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel and do" (Hieber, 1986) and as every TCK has their own experience the definitely will receive culture differently.

In connection to this, cultural identity can be introduced to have a deeper look at why and how this confusion is created and what are its results for them. As the TCK will be introduced to new people, behavior, and traditions this will shift their cultural identity and belonging and it will depend on their age, their length of stay in the host country, and when it is expected to return home (Sussman,2000 as cited in Waal, Born,2021)

Sussman mentioned that "personal values, cognitive maps, and behavioral repertoires can change and are part of the process of a cultural identity shift" (Sussman, 2000 as cited in Waal,

Born, 2021) and the continuation of this shift will create disturbance in self-concept and can be a

threat of their sense of belonging which are an essential part of person's cultural identity. (Waal,

Born, 2021) Once their sense of belonging is threatened an identity crisis may be shown and a

question of identity is raised. (Waal, Born, 2021) TCK usually finds it hard to understand or

relate to any of the cultures and they start to think about whether they are representing their

Home culture, Host culture, their parents, or only themself. (Miller, Wiggins, & Feather, 2020)

Here comes one of the hardest times when they actually need to define home, where they

belong, where I am from?, and Where do I fit in more? This confusion is created because of all

the reasons stated above, there is a personal and cultural identity question along with a lack of

sense of belonging. Third Cultural Kids usually try to overcome this confusion through their

relationships and their home is usually defined by relationships. (Pollock & Van Reken 2001)

Without a doubt, their first relationship will be with their parents, researches shows that TCK has

a very strong bond with their parents as a way to belong to something along the lines of parent

support and achieve a cultural balance. (Peterson, Plamondon, 2009) In addition to this, it is the

only stable and granted relationship as they are moving around together. (Pollock & Van Reken

2001)

Even though relationships can be one way to define home, it's a double-edged sword.

Despite their relationship with their parents, TCK has a huge problem with sorting out

relationships or getting involved in any of them. Their mobility results in ending a lot of

relationships and creates pain for them. What is considered interesting is that this idea usually

ends up with a large number of relationships, they get to know new people and friends easily

along with breaking up with a school friend or job partner. But each TCK might perceive this in

a different way, some of them jump directly to the conclusion of acting like we are a really good

friend, while the others may approach the new friendship with fear of loss, so they try not to come closer to anybody because they know that they will be leaving sooner or later. This creates results in unsolved grief. According to David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken in their book *Third Culture Kids the Experience of Growing Up Among World,* Unsolved grief is considered the second greatest challenge for Third Culture Kids, even though they have a very interesting life but they still feel the grief for everything they have lost and most of the time it is unrecognizable. The Authors mentioned that TCK feels grief for the Loss of their world when they move from one place to another, the Loss of status, Loss of lifestyle, Loss of possessions, Loss of relationships, Loss of role model, Loss of system identity, and Loss of the past that was and that wasn't. All of these are not physical losses but rather felt ones, that is why they are called hidden losses. Sometimes it is hard to express this feeling of grief because of how TCK as a person, Lack of comfort, time to process it, and permission are some of the things that made it challenging for a TCK to express their grief as they mostly refuse to feel the pain (Pollock & Van Reken 2001)

The unresolved grief along with their identity confusion and questions have negatively affected Third Culture Kids' mental health. According to research and studies, Third Culture Kids has a high risk of suffering from depression, high level of stress anxiety, burnout, and eating disorders (Miller, Wiggins, & Feather, 2020) (Schubert and Powell, 1987 as cited in Melles, Frey, 2014) (Pollock, Reken 2001)

In the article, *Mindfulness, Stress Reactivity, and Depressive Symptoms Among "Third Culture Kids" in the United Arab Emirates* by Justin Thomas, Majeda Humeidan, Carmen Barrack and Kelly L. Huffman mentioned that "Stress reactivity is the degree to which individual experiences heightened emotional and physiological reactivity in response to stressors. Research suggests

that adolescence is a critical developmental time in which patterns of stress reactivity are shaped

in the nervous system (Romeo, 2010) These patterns, once established may carry lifelong

consequences (Romeo, 2010; Spear 2009)" (Thomas, Humeidan, Barrack, & Huffman,2021)

So the way they are raised or effected by the circumstances can be one reason of there bad

mental health experience.

Another experience that may affect most TCK mental health is a reaction that they may

face from people from the other culture. The rejection step considers part of the entering stage

that TCK experience when they come to a new culture. According to Pollock and Reken, it is

part of the transition experience that starts with the Involvement stage, leaving the stage, the

transition stage followed by the Entering stage which includes the rejection part, and then it ends

with reinovement stage. Our focus on the rejection part followers a new perspective of how TCK

can be affected by the new culture. They mentioned that TCK usually is worried about how

people will look at them, they consider that part of that they have a different cultural mindset that

could make them look stupid or boring.

All of these points are considered as challenges that Third Culture Kid face and

considered an obstacle between them and self-understanding and acceptance. By knowing them

and accepting them, a better view of the TCK experience will be provided and taken advantage

of it.

Chapter Three: Adults Accomplish as Third Culture Kids

In this chapter, the phrase Adult - third culture kid will be introduced. The word kid is used here to refer to them living earlier experiences as third-culture kids and describes the actual meaning which is "developmental years". The word adult is added to refer to the life stage of an adult who had an experience of living as a third culture kid. This chapter will be discussing how being a TCK has affected adolescent decisions and how it structured their adult life in different aspects.As cited in Growing Up Globally: Third Culture Kids' Experience with Transition, Identity, and Well-being "A study by Abe (2018) identified that later in life, TCKs often show normal changes in personality, higher multicultural engagement, and overall greater well-being than within their adolescent years, compared to non-TCKs. While these are positive outcomes for TCKs, they often do not occur until well into adulthood and usually do not match the typical identity development phase of life (Rameker 2006)." (Miller, Wiggins, & Feather, 2020)

This study clearly shows that the Adult Third Culture Kid usually overcome the challenges that they already faced before and as mentioned earlier in this paper. Adult Third Culture Kids have a lot of characteristics and skills that can help them focus on how their experience made the interesting people. First of all, due to their high mobility, ATCK has easy adaptability as they can easily fit in or adjust their life based on the current circumstances. ATCK are the ones who truly understand the importance of now, they live instead of thinking or deciding. They are also considered precise observers which in fact makes them qualified for a lot of job offers.

As cited in (Westropp, Cathro, and Everett, 2016) "Tarique and Weisbord (2013) suggest that hiring ATCKs for expatriate roles is a salient organizational strategy." They mentioned also that ATCK has been influenced by high self-efficiency and learning goal orientation along with

their language skills, high acceptance, openness to experience, and their variety of worldwide

experiences. (Westropp, Cathro, and Everett, 2016)

It should be noted that the way and the challenges that TCK went through made them

more open-minded and understanding person, usually ATCK is the best choice to be connectors

or teachers. Not to mention their high social skill and the ability to communicate and create new

friendships. At this stage, ATCK had gone through all of the questioning stages and has "known

a great sense of inner confidence and a strong feeling of self-reliance" (Pollock, Reken 2001)
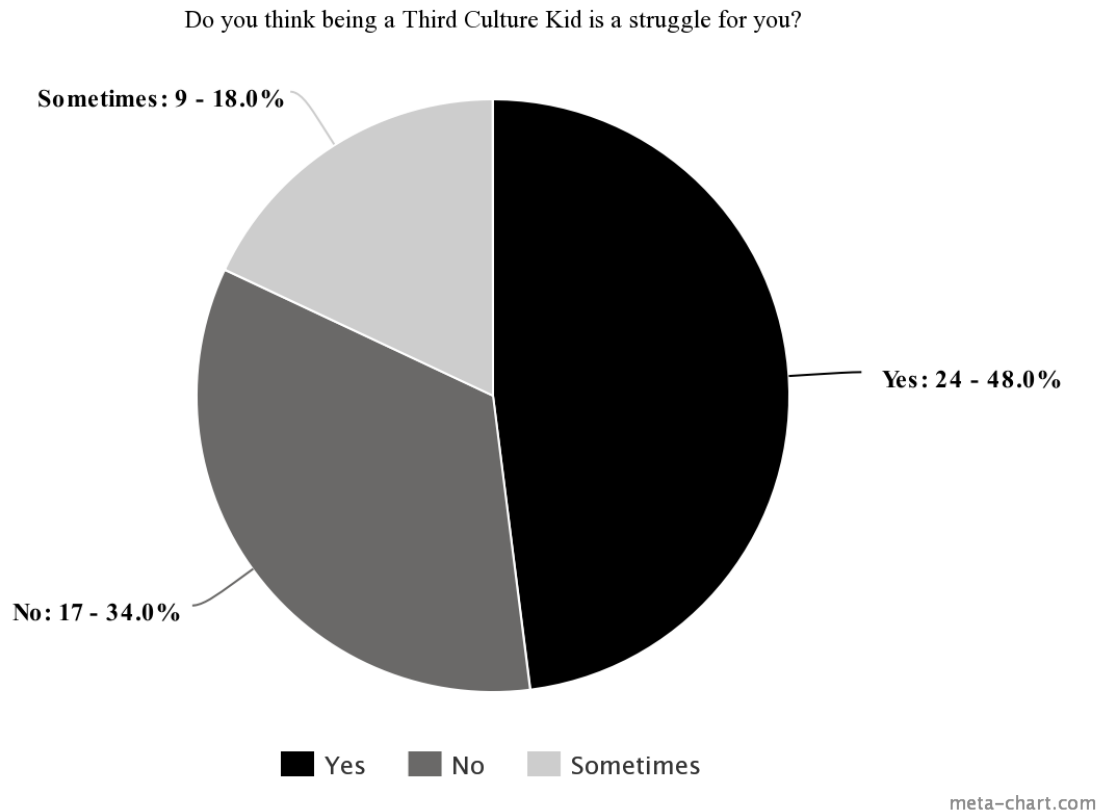
Chapter four: Findings and People interviews Results

" I feel like I want to tell my entire life story" said Arwa, one of the fifty TCK I have interviewed. This sentence was one answer to a normal question, how do you feel when someone asks you where are you from? As It was mentioned before, there was an increase in global mobility and high growth in their numbers (Pollock & Van Reken 2001) (Spencer 2021). Doing an interview with TCK was necessary to support, understand the research more and relate to all of the points that were tackled in different resources. The interview question targeted mainly university students as they are mostly the ones who got affected since a large number of them return to their home country to get their bachelor's degrees (Peterson, Plamondon, 2009). The Audience was between 18-24 years. fourteen people out of fifty answered neutral feelings toward Arwa's question, Five felt that they are proud. The rest of the answers were divided between either confusion or a similar direction to Arwa's answer.

Another interesting finding was the answer they think a passport defines their nationality. As provided below around half of the participants don't think that their passport defines their nationality.

Do you think your passport define your nationality?

Supposedly: 4 - 8.3%

Yes: 21 - 43.8%

No: 23 - 47.9%

■ Yes ■ No ■ Supposedly

meta-chart.com
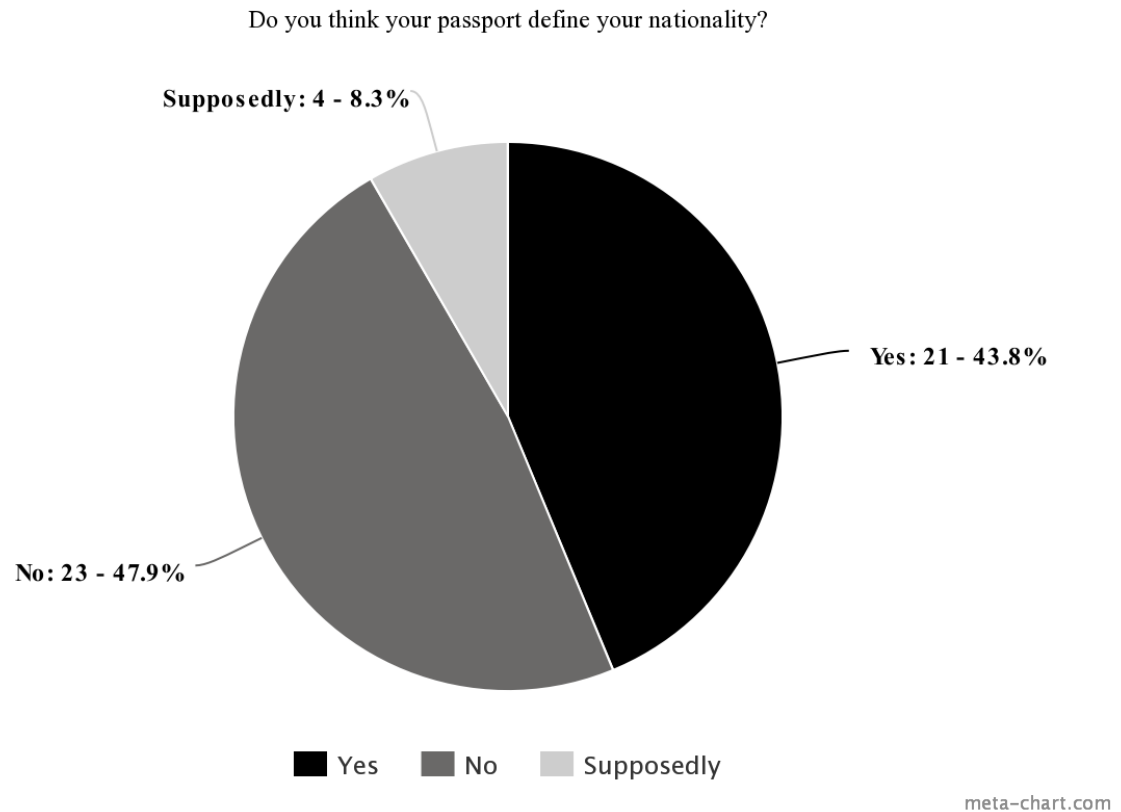
Their answers show clearly their confusion, and this was shown in their clarification as to why

they think this way, twenty-six of them thought that they have mixed nationalities exactly as the

definition of third culture kids, a combination of the host country culture and their home country

culture, creating a third culture.

Do you think being a Third Culture Kid is a struggle for you?

Sometimes: 9 - 18.0%

Yes: 24 - 48.0%

No: 17 - 34.0%

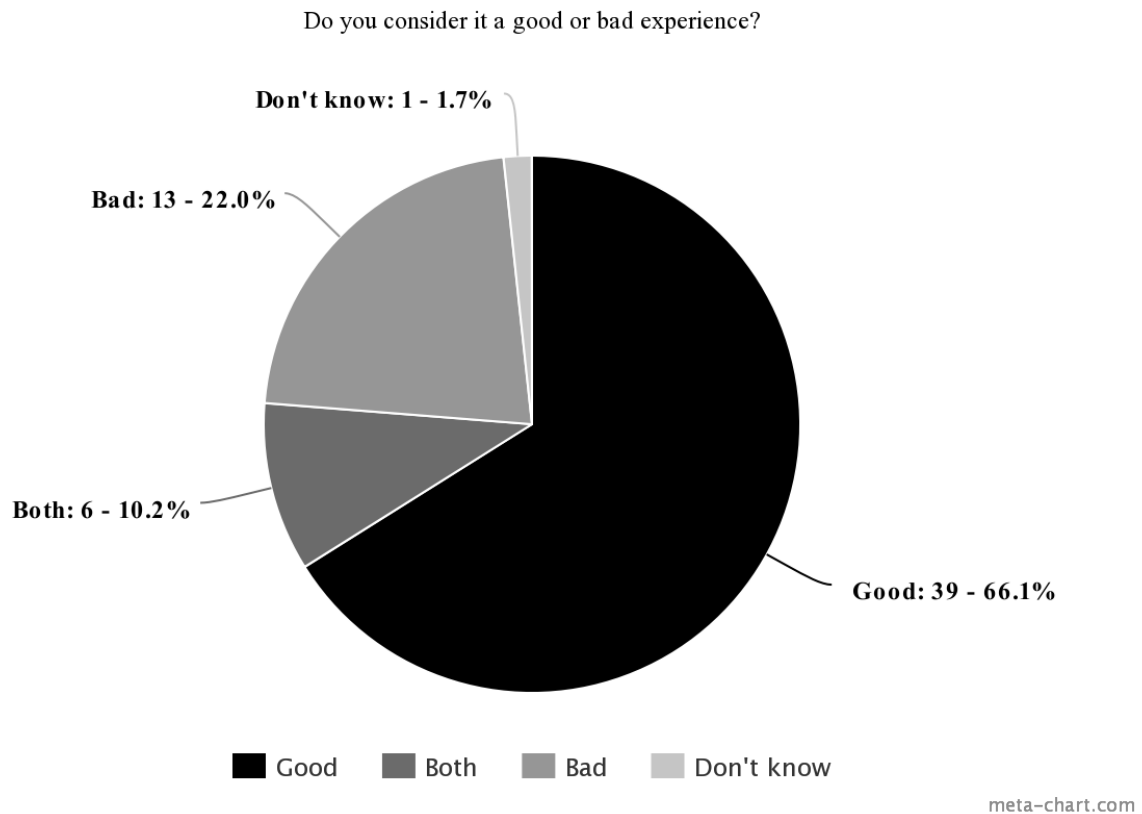■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Sometimes

meta-chart.com

Moving to the main question behind this research, whether they think being TCK is a struggle or not? As it showed the answers were divided between twenty-four as yes it's a struggle, nine as sometimes it may be a struggle, and seventeen as no it's not a struggle. Their clarification that being TCK is a struggle, goes around the idea of belonging and identity as they can't belong to one place and they can't identify the culture they belong to as well as their feeling towards each culture, especially since most of them returned to their homeland.
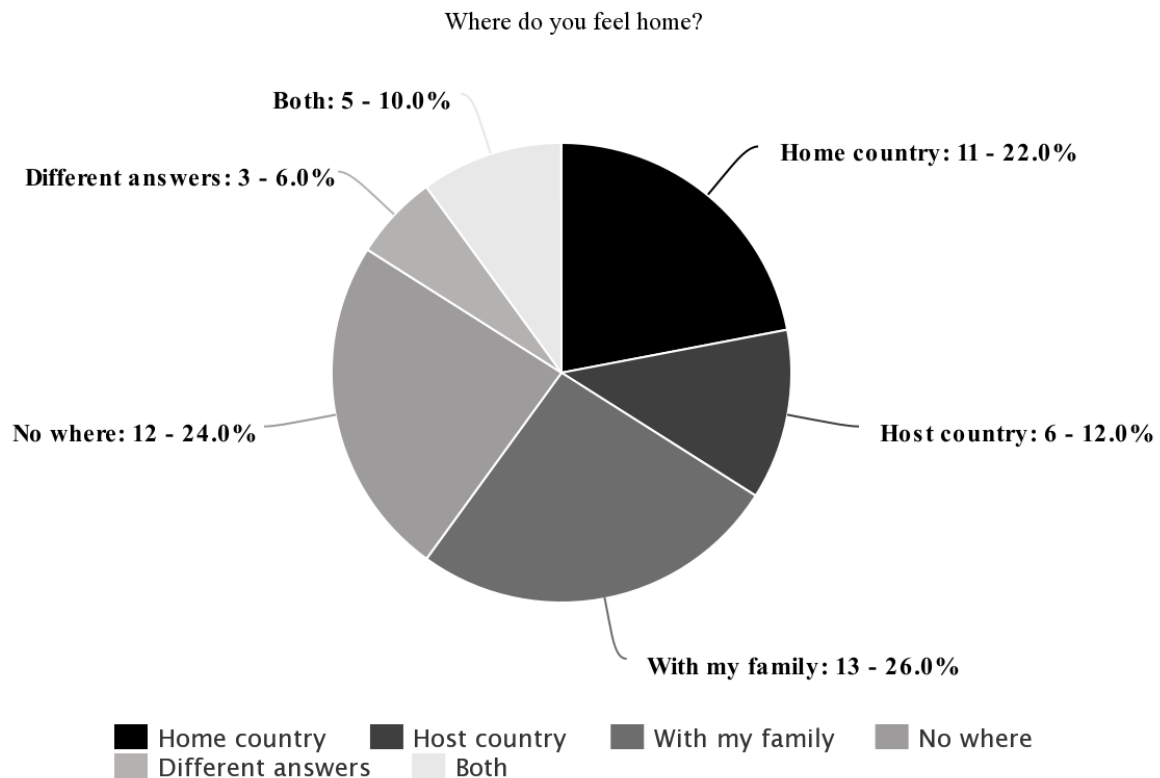
Where do you feel home?

"With my family wherever they are" This was the answer for Thirteen people out of Fifty when they asked where do you feel home. It's quite interesting that nearly the same number didn't find a home in either place. Twelve people said they don't feel at home anywhere either in their home country, host country, or anywhere else. Eleven mentioned that they feel home in their original home country but six people mentioned that they feel home in the host country. Three people found home in other different places like a different country than home and host country, or where life doesn't require a lot of effort to survive and the last one mentioned that she is still searching for home feeling. Based on these answers, they were asked about their definition of home.

The answers were similar as they mentioned that home is where they feel safe, accepted, comfortable, loved, and satisfied.

Do you consider it a good or bad experience?

Don't know: 1 - 1.7%

Bad: 13 - 22.0%

Both: 6 - 10.2%

Good: 39 - 66.1%

■ Good   ■ Both   ■ Bad   ■ Don't know

meta–chart.com

This chart shows that thirty-nine people out of forty-eight believe it was a good experience, and thirteen only thought being a Third Culture Kid is a bad experience. One person only couldn't decide whether its bad or good and six people thought its both good and bad depending on a lot of situations. This chart can introduce another similar chart which is the percentage of their answer to whether they think being a TCK helped them. The chart below shows that forty-one out of forty-four think that being a TCK helped them. Only three disagreed with that.

Do you think being a TCK helped you?

No: 3 - 6.8%

Yes: 41 - 93.2%

■ Yes   ■ No
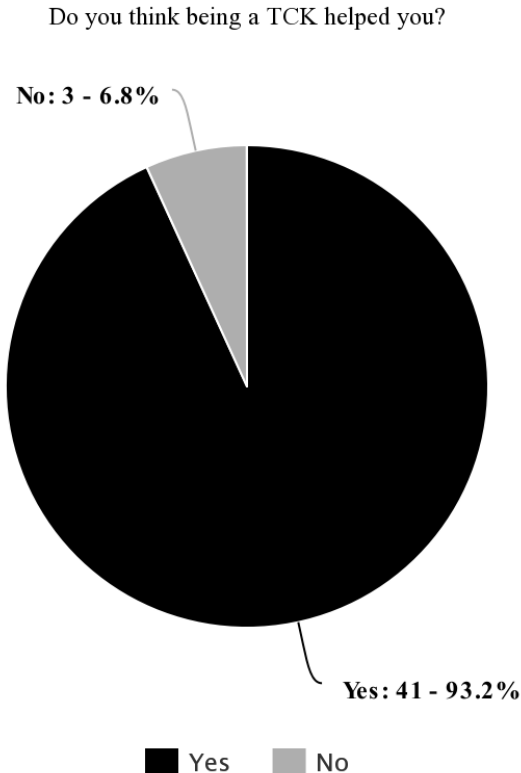
meta-chart.com

Their clarification for their answer to this question and the one before it were mainly mentioning that being a TCK made them more open-minded, understanding, and accepting of other cultures as well as people's differences. Taghreed said "I really learned to appreciate people and their backgrounds. I got to see and interact with people from almost everywhere and that taught me so much about their cultures which helped me be a more open and understanding person."

The chart below shows the most interesting answers in this interview followed by the question of whether they think it would be better if they were raised in one culture. Surprisingly, thirty-nine people mentioned that No they believe that this creates the best version of them. Eleven only felt that being raised in one culture is better.

Do you think it would be better if you were raised in one culture?

No: 11 - 22.0%

Yes: 39 - 78.0%

■ Yes   ■ No
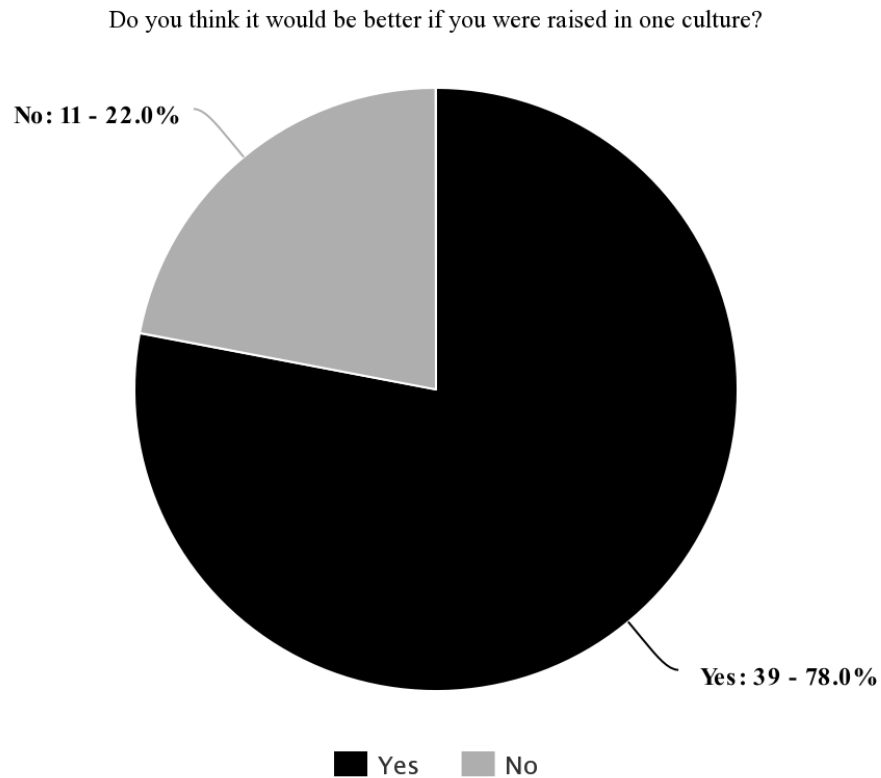
meta-chart.com

Their clarification and answers to why they think either way were exactly the opposite and were divided into someone like Karim when he said "Everything has pros and cons, and although I think living in a different country may have limited me it still is the reason I am who I am today and have added to my character a lot, and I don't think I would change that if I had the chance." and another one like Fajer when she answered, " I think I would understand my culture more".

Chapter five: Personal Experience: Me as a Third Culture Kid

Am I Jameela or Gamila? This was my first question to understand my identity. Is it possible to

have one name with two spellings that define two identities? This complex question was a result

of being a third-culture kid.

I thought that I'm the only one who is holding this feeling, the feeling of mixed cultural identity.

I didn't realize that a lot of people may share it. Where is home is a Question which deep down

triggered us. I clashed with the idea of where is exactly home, which one is my room (more) I

had the feeling that something is missing or I have lost something that I don't know.

While searching for its answer, I found that we are called TCK, Third Culture Kid. I was glad

that we had a title and our feeling is common, which made it easier for me obviously, to

understand that I am not alone, I am sharing this with a lot of people and I may help them

understand their feeling throughout this project.

 I did not realize that being a TCK was a challenge as I did not experience it until I decided to

return to Egypt, I spent 21 years in Kuwait, and I went through all the learning stages there. My

circle was quite closed as my parents were very protective. Besides, they wanted me to keep

everything related to our Egyptian nationality. I was wondering why? I want to be part of this

society as being living in it, I want to look like them, talk as they talk, and live like them. I was a

kid, I was not able to sort out or understand my feeling and why there is a difference. I did try to

cope as I caught the Kuwaiti dialect, and everyone thought I was Kuwaiti. I did not have a

problem with it until the next year's parents' meeting when my dad came and my teachers said;

you are not Kuwaiti? Well, Jameela developed a really good Kuwaiti accent. My dad was very

angry this day but he sat with me and communicate to me the idea of identity, and how I should

be proud of my Egyptian nationality and who I am as my family raised me. This ends here but it

was triggered again whenever I came to Egypt on every Holiday. I felt that there is a problem, I don't look like my other family members, and my relationship with them is weak, I don't know them and whenever I started to get close to them, we have to go back to Kuwait again. I was a teenager and I still did not understand what is this, I didn't think I am different, and what came across my mind that this is a temporary situation, everything will be sorted out soon. Unfortunately, it didn't. Again after 10 years, when I decided to leave Kuwait and start a new journey here in Egypt to a new university, I was already in college back in Kuwait so the idea itself was not the worst thing. I did hold all the old thoughts with me, I felt different here and there. I am not Kuwaiti nor Egyptian. The trigger for all of my thoughts was at their peak since I landed here alone, to complete my design degree. Everything was questioning my identity and who I am. The way I talk, the way I dressed, even my name, is it Gamila or Jameela? Who should I ask? I'm Jameela back in Kuwait, all my identity papers were identified with this name, but on the other hand, here in Egypt, I'm Gamila, I struggled a little bit because I feel more confident with how Jameela is written, but I don't like it when non-Egyptians call me Gamila, they usually say it with an accent that made me really hate my name.

Coming to Egypt made me question how I really wanted to look and how I want to be dressed. I don't look like the people around me, you can easily recognize that I am not one of them and I am not Egyptian. This, of course, made me uncomfortable in a lot of situations, especially with workers and drivers who immediately think I am Arab so they start to act in a weird, greedy way. Believe me, I loved the shock on their face when they hear my talking with a strong good Egyptian accent.

I had a culture shock, of course, the environment here is so much different than back in Kuwait. I miss how life was slow there, there was a routine and a plan for everything, even the meals and

what I can eat, but here in Egypt, life is open and fast, I live in chaos, I think what made it worse

is that I am also living alone. I think My parent used to guide me in my decisions back in Kuwait

and helped me understand some of my feelings.

Egypt for me was connected to questioning myself, who am I, and how I can be it. As I said am

alone and I have to discover it all by myself.

It took around 6 months to understand the financial situation and how money truncations work

here, one dinar doesn't mean one pound. So what one of each can buy me, well I figured it out

with chips packs, one dinar can buy me 10 but five pounds can buy me one, and it went this way.

The funny thing is I still have some difficulties as I usually change currency whenever I do a big

transaction to understand whether it's a good price or not. In addition to this idea, I still have a

problem buying things here, I still do shopping in Kuwait and only buy the essentials from here.

I still get confused by light switches places here and there. Not to mention the major things like

the national Kuwaiti anthem, that I can recite, but I only know a couple of words from the

Egyptian ones. I know the name of the Kuwaiti cities along with their number but not the

Egyptian ones. Besides the huge lack of Egyptian history information compared to every

historical event that Kuwait had gone through which I have known and memorize it. Moving to

the little things such as the electricity plugs here where we have two edges plugs but there which

is three edges. I always felt that I am staying temporarily here in Egypt, even though I hated it

there. But I miss the calm, the planned life, and how I had my shit together. I remember one time

when I met one of my friends who has exactly experienced everything as me. She was telling me

something, and she is still referring to her home here as if she is in Kuwait regarding the location

and spaces, we laughed when we recognize that we are in Egypt and we should refer to it, but

deep down it triggers the question again where is home?

I hated this feeling, I had so much going on regarding this question, I even hated it more when I go back to Kuwait again on vacation, it usually unlocks memories and situations I am still not healed of. Here we go again, I did not settle down for 6 months always going back and forth. One time it really touched me that made me panic, it was in the middle of Covid-19, and I was totally alone, doing nothing, I was left with my thoughts, and they kept screaming, should I return to Kuwait? at least I will be with my parents, maybe I would feel more stable if I took this decision, I even thought of returning back to my old university. But then I asked myself would it solve this problem? Is it really a problem? Or some sort of accepting and letting go?

But I was lucky enough to have the courage to dig for an answer. It started when I took this course with Dr.Ghalia Elsrakbi, the struggle was real back then, it was shouting in my head and I did hear its echo, we were asked to design a poster for a problem. I was 100% sure that design will help me again to express my feeling, and communicate the ideas and thoughts that I have. The bigger picture was the identity crisis, and it led me to form the question of where is home, Kuwait or Egypt.

Dr. Ghalia helped me when I was picturing my feeling in a very random unorganized way. She advised me in one of the feedback sessions to design the positive instead of focusing on the negative part and calling it a crisis, let's not see it as a problem as it can be a challenge, and this is how I started to call it, as it has a lot of advantages as well as disadvantages. I figured out that life is not only black or white it has hundreds shades of gray.

I focused on the positive part, how this experience made me who I am. It was a matter of accepting and understanding. I did feel that maybe I am special in this way. I remember when I did a summer abroad in Italy it was not for a long time, but my roommates felt homesick, some of them stayed for two weeks in the bedroom because they don't feel good about going out to a

new culture. I did not understand why at first, but then I recognized maybe they are not used to

leaving their home for a long time? Maybe it was their first time not being around their family?

This made me feel sorry for them, but I found that I didn't feel the same as I have been used to

this or maybe they are questioning themselves for things I have already found earlier their

answers. I tried to help them in seeing the new experience we are living together now, with my

vision and their fear.

And that is what made me the person I am. This is who I am, I am Jameela and Gamila

both personalities, I have two homes, I can talk to two delegates and speak proper Arabic, and I

can deal with different types of money. I know Kuwaiti history very well but I am very curious to

know more about Egyptian ones. I have also thought about how I can accept differences easily, I

have experienced cultural differences and understand them, I can fit in different circles, and I

always have something to talk about. I will always have interesting stories to tell about myself

and the way I was raised. I can cope with any environment easily, I can be Kuwaiti or Egyptian

or both, depending on my mood and finally, I enjoy airplane rides at least 4 times a year.

I did search for home, but not in a place. I search for it in a feeling, where my parents are around.

In a worm dish, my mom used to cooked when I was a little kid, around my friends, where they

accept my differences and clumsiness, and how I react to things. I can conclude with a quote I

wrote, home is a feeling you can carry around, not a place or destination you reach.

Chapter six: Possible Solutions and Deliverables:

According to David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken in their book *Third Culture Kids the Experience of Growing Up Among World,* it's very important to title your feelings so you can understand them (Pollock & Van Reken 2001), understanding that adults third culture kids have different and challenges can create a safe place and environment.

This will introduce the idea of social identity. According to Tajfel and Turner in An integrative theory of intergroup conflict, the stated that theories that humans feel more powerful when they can identify themself with the group that they share have the same experience, and contribute to their concept. (Tajfel& turner,1979 as cited in Thomas, Humeidan, Barrack, & Huffman, ,2021)

One suggested solution to help TCK was mentioned in the article, *Mindfulness, Stress Reactivity, and Depressive Symptoms Among "Third Culture Kids" in the United Arab Emirates* by Justin Thomas, Majeda Humeidan, Carmen Barrack, and Kelly L. Huffman men, which provided the mindfulness meditation concept. "Mindfulness has been defined as paying attention to present moment experience in a receptive and non-judgmental way (Kabat-Zinn, 1994)." as cited in (Thomas, Humeidan, Barrack, & Huffman,2021) They mentioned also that these practices help reduce stress and depressive symptoms or acts.

What I thought of introducing and delivering to the TCK community was designing a survival kit to help them have a better look at who they are. Maybe help them go through the who I am journey but in a more gentle way. While searching on this topic I found a really interesting video on TedTalks by a guy called Eric Pak, Food: A Third Culture Kid's Sense of Identity. He basically shows his journey of self-understanding and acceptance through food, and it was as simple as that. Another example of using food as a personal identity is a book called

The Language of Baklava by Diana Abu-Jaber, the book itself doesn't talk about the same topic, but in a lot of parts, she showed how they lived as Americans but in Kitchen, they are all Jordanians. Here where comes my idea of designing an interactive book where you can choose which dish can be used as identification for yourself. You will be able to draw a flag that can be hung above all of your ideas and plans. This book will include possible ways that can make you feel at home and reach comfort.

To conclude, this paper was a self-discovery and deep understanding of a personal experience, there were a lot of personal questions that were raised, and researching, forming, and writing was a great way to communicate the idea and pass it to others. Finding that this experience is not one personal story but rather a lot of people's experiences not only this but also that they can be referred to as Third Culture Kid was my great achievement.

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