

Navigating Multiple Worlds: A Phenomenological Study on the Lived Experiences of SDA Third Culture Kids

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ABSTRACT

Third Culture Kids are individuals who have spent a large part of their formative years outside of their parent's home culture and passport country, often due to the international work of their families, such as being missionaries. Such an eclectic upbringing nourishes intercultural sensitivity, adaptability, and a global mindset. While studies support the efficacy of transition training for TCKs, much is left to be desired in a serious exploration into their phenomenological experiences in understanding how these experiences are taken up and shape identity and any possible cultural ideals. This research draws on social identity theory and intersectionality theory and utilizes hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate the lived experiences of Seventh-day Adventist TCKs. The study utilized phenomenological interviews among five school-aged children of expatriate families in Papua New Guinea and the Philippines. Utilizing van Manen's framework for data analysis, this study determined 12 themes within five elements of the lifeworld: relationality, corporeality, spatiality, temporality, and materiality. Overall, findings showed that TCKs navigate their transition as a shared journey with family and God. Moreover, the future for TCKs was incomprehensible, full of possibilities to be explored and learned about the world. In conclusion, these findings of the study may explain valuable cross-cultural skills and a world outlook that can be very useful in today's interconnected world. Understanding their experiences is paramount to creating supportive environments that value their unique challenges and strengths, ultimately helping the adjustment and navigation into multiple worlds.

Keywords: third culture kids, hermeneutic phenomenology, Seventh-day Adventist

INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, the societal feature of TCKs, or children who spend a part of their developmental years out of their parents' culture, has become much more noticeable (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Therefore, many of these individuals grow up between two cross-cultural perspectives, relating to multiple cultures without identifying with

one culture. This unique upbringing can profoundly impact their identity formation, social skills, and overall development (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2017).

Adventist communities, emphasizing global mission and cultural sensitivity, often find themselves uniquely positioned to support TCKs. The Seventh-day Adventist Church—with a very real global presence and multicultural congregations—provides an accepting space in which the TCKs sort out their multitudinous identities. According to Satterfield (2013), because Adventist institutions and families are inclusive-oriented, serve others, and take a world focus, they can provide TCKs a sense of belonging and purpose. Through church activities, international schools, and youth programs, TCKs can connect with peers who share their experiences, helping them integrate their multifaceted backgrounds into a cohesive personal identity (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

The study stems from the need to address the gaps in understanding how TCKs experience and interpret their multicultural upbringing. Although several aspects of the TCK life have been captured by previous research, no insight into how these individuals make meaning of such complex lives and, subsequently, how it would affect their overall well-being has been indicated. Following Bhawuk and Brislin's (2000) and Fail et al.'s (2004) works, the present study focuses on TCKs' lived experiences, with special attention to personal narratives and a sense of identity formation. While the literature on TCKs is growing, there are significant gaps in nuanced individual experiences.

Some guiding questions involved are: 1) What are the lived experiences of Seventh-day Adventist TCKs? 2) What is the context of the lived experiences of TCKs? 3) How do TCKs view the future? By addressing these gaps, researchers can deepen their insight into the challenges and resilience factors defining the Seventh-day Adventist TCK experience. Focusing on such personal experiences, the present study contributes to the literature on cross-cultural identity and adjustment and offers insights into informing support strategies.

This research draws on hermeneutic phenomenology, an appropriate methodology for investigating subjective experience, thereby allowing an in-depth analysis of meanings that TCKs attribute to their experiences, emphasizing context and interpretation. This approach deepens the understanding of the complexities surrounding identity formation and belonging among TCKs, capturing the essence of their lived experiences (Tan et al., 2021). The study aims to contribute to TCK research by elucidating these lived experiences and their implications for supporting TCKs' well-being and adjustment, informing targeted interventions and resources for this unique population. The study provides important insights illuminating the complexities of TCK experiences and helps educators, mental health professionals, and families support better TCK journeys through identity formation and cultural adjustments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

TCKs have emerged as a significant study area in the context of globalization and increased international mobility. Historically, the term was first introduced by Ruth Hill Useem and John Useem in the 1960s, who identified the "third culture" arising from expatriate families' interactions (Useem & Useem, 1967). Existing literature highlights various aspects of TCKs' lives, including their characteristics, educational experiences, and spiritual development (Pollock & Van Reken, 2010; Tan et al., 2021).

Characteristics of Third Culture Kids

A key trait of TCKs is their exceptional cultural adaptability, which allows them to navigate and thrive in diverse social environments. They rapidly learn and adjust to new cultural cues, akin to a chameleon adapting to different surroundings (Doherty & Appriou, 2017). This adaptability is nurtured through constant exposure to different cultures and languages, often making them bilingual or multilingual, contributing to connecting with people from diverse walks of life (Dewaele & Van Oudenhoven, 2009).

Regardless of these many strengths, there are significant challenges that TCKs face. One primary problem is rootlessness or a lack of stable cultural or geographical identity. This rootlessness alone may create a sense of alienation, making it difficult to form lasting connections because TCKs may struggle to relate to peers with more stable cultural backgrounds (Pollock & Van Reken, 2017; Davis et al., 2015). Additionally, TCKs often experience restlessness, a constant craving for change, or new experiences driven by their upbringing in environments marked by frequent relocations (Roman, 2021). This restlessness can result in a fear of commitment and difficulties maintaining long-term personal and professional relationships (Davis et al., 2015).

On the positive side, TCKs generally gain very high multicultural competence, facilitating their potential to work effectively across various cultural contexts (Pollock & Van Reken, 2010). The global perspective, fostered by early exposure to multiple cultures, endows them with a much deeper understanding of global issues and interconnectivity. A global perspective often provides rootlessness, as TCKs may struggle to find a particular culture to identify themselves (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011). While these intercultural skills and insights comprise a treasure trove for individuals and communities, TCKs must contend with convoluted emotional topographies around identity and belonging.

Educational Experiences of TCKs

Research has shown that TCKs are generally high academic achievers who bring an international perspective to classroom discussions and group work (Collier & Petty, 2006). This can facilitate collaborative learning processes since, through TCKs, barriers to communication across cultural lines may be bridged, and their peers also benefit from serving as a cultural bridge (Pollock & Van Reken, 2010). This multicultural competence benefits not only the TCK but also the educational community. Despite their advantages, TCKs also encounter specific challenges in their educational journeys. Frequent relocations can disrupt their academic progress and social relationships, making it difficult to establish a consistent educational path (Collier & Petty, 2006). The constant need to adapt to new curricula and teaching styles can create additional stress, as TCKs may need to catch up on material they missed during transitions.

Spiritual Development among TCKs

Many TCKs demonstrate remarkable resilience in their spiritual journeys. Exposure to various cultures and belief systems can foster a broader understanding of spirituality, allowing TCKs to develop a more inclusive and flexible approach to their beliefs (McClure, 2022). As they engage with different religious practices and philosophies, TCKs often cultivate a sense of spiritual curiosity that encourages exploration and personal growth.

For some TCKs, this exploration leads to a more individualized spiritual identity transcending traditional religious boundaries. They may embrace a syncretic approach, integrating elements from multiple faiths or philosophies into their spiritual practice (Marchal

Jones et al., 2022). This adaptability can empower TCKs to create a spiritual framework that resonates with their unique experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and purpose.

Relevant Theories on TCKs

Social Identity Theory, proposed by Henri Tajfel and John Turner in 1979, states that the individual derives his identity from membership in groups and that this leads to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination. This theory is particularly relevant for TCKs, who often navigate multiple identities due to their diverse cultural backgrounds, finding community in international schools or expatriate groups (Pollock & Van Reken, 2010), but sometimes feeling isolated when their experiences are not understood (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011). Additionally, intersectionality theory, introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), examines how various social identities intersect to create unique experiences of privilege and oppression, highlighting that TCKs' experiences can vary significantly based on factors like gender and socio-economic status (Prins et al., 2015). These theories underscore the complex dynamics of identity negotiation for TCKs, influencing their sense of belonging and acceptance in different social contexts (Compton-Lilly et al., 2017).

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically hermeneutic phenomenology. It is a qualitative research methodology that incorporates features of both phenomenology and hermeneutics in exploring the lifeworld experiences of individuals. With this approach, the meanings of experiences, as perceived by the individual, are understood to be situated contextually, culturally, and historically (Cohen et al., 2007; Lavery, 2003).

Five TCKs were purposively selected among students who have been TCKs for at least one year and were willing participants. These included Anna, a reserved 17-year-old who was from the Philippines but has since lived in Papua New Guinea and Australia; Blaine, 21 years old, finishing his certification course in Australia after living in the Philippines and Papua New Guinea, considered cultural transitions as opportunities for growth; Nathan, 19, who enjoyed cooking and music and was also studying in Australia after moving from the Philippines and Papua New Guinea; Amelia, from Indonesia, 21, an outgoing university student studying at an Adventist university in the Philippines; and Emily, 22, from Zambia, Africa, raised in Botswana, but now studying in the Philippines after traversing several countries in response to her family's work-related transfers.

The principal data collection method is the phenomenological interview, a particular form of qualitative research designed to obtain an insight into — and thus also understanding— how people experience their everyday world. Based on a phenomenological methodology, subjective experience forms the basis for analysis. As Bevan (2014) points out, this data collection approach allows researchers to explore how individuals both understand and experience their world by examining some of the significance associated with those events.

The analysis was based on van Manen's (1984) phenomenological research methodology, which describes the phenomenon in detail while bracketing off researchers' assumptions. We incorporated a horizontalization with themes clustered, textural and structural descriptions of the experiences generated before synthesizing to convey the essential message. In addition, the five lifeworld elements of lived experience (van Manen, 1990) were included in this study: relationality, corporeality, spatiality, temporality, and materiality.

This research complies with all ethical standards, including the protection of participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants could decline or withdraw from the study at any point without facing a penalty (American Psychological Association, 2020). Participants provided informed consent, fully explaining the study purpose, process, and associated risks/benefits (National Institutes of Health, 2022b). Confidentiality was maintained through anonymization and secure data storage (Journal of Research Ethics, 2023). Further, psychosocial and physical risks were carefully appraised (World Health Organization, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RQ 1: Lived Experiences of the TCKs

Five lifeworld elements capture lived experiences: relationality, corporeality, spatiality, temporality, and materiality. Table 1 presents the themes and categories in each of the lifeworld elements.

Table 1
Experiences of TCKs based on the Lifeworld Elements

Lifeworld Element	Themes
Relationality (<i>lived self-others</i>)	Theme 1. Transitioning through a strong support system
	Theme 2. Dealing with cultural loneliness
	Theme 3. Overcoming cultural chameleon syndrome
	Theme 4. Nurturing multicultural competence
	Theme 5. Finding solace in God
Corporeality (<i>lived body</i>)	Theme 6. Navigating the anxiety of uncertainty
	Theme 7. Embracing hope for enhanced opportunities
Spatiality (<i>lived space</i>)	Theme 8. Considering the home country as a comfort zone
Temporality (<i>lived time</i>)	Theme 9. Adapting to circumstance through time
Materiality (<i>lived things</i>)	Theme 10. Overcoming the language barrier
	Theme 11. Navigating the new academic landscape
	Theme 12. Settling for acceptance, growth, and spirituality

Theme 1. Transitioning through a strong support system

TCKs utilize support systems of family, schools, religious communities, home country connections with fellow missionaries, and local networks to assist in managing the challenges. In this context, Emily underscored familial support as contributing to cultural adaptability (Emily, phenomenological interview, lines 63–64). Blaine cited the importance of a supportive school environment (Blaine, phenomenological interview, lines 79-80) which is consistent with Hargreaves and Earl's study in 2002 as well. Second, religious and cultural communities play an important role in expediting adaptation (Nathan, phenomenological interview lines 94–96), as de Berry (2006) underscored. Anna explained that missionary families had made her feel “at home” (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 139-41), and Tannenbaum (2007), in turn, notes the community support of missionaries as important for social inclusion. These insights underscore how supportive networks profoundly impact TCKs' smooth transitions, offering emotional stability and belonging.

Theme 2. Dealing with cultural loneliness

The rich and varied lives of TCKs result in much loneliness; their different types of identities make it nearly impossible sometimes to relate deeply with others. Anna felt that she struggled with fitting in socially: “I feel like I am an outcast in literally any system of education” (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 118–121) and Nathan also described feeling overwhelmed and isolated in new environments (Nathan, phenomenological interviews line 12). This is backed up by the research of Lijadi and Van Schalkwyk (2017) and Moore and Barker (2017), who highlight that the cultural expectations placed on TCKs, accompanied by their frequent relocations, often result in feelings of loneliness. So, this emotional struggle can escalate to feelings of helplessness, as seen in Nathan’s homesickness and Emily’s alienation due to the language barrier (Nathan, phenomenological interview, lines 98–101; Emily, phenomenological interview, line 47). Dewaele and van Oudenhoven (2020) noted that language and cultural differences often lead to exclusion, enhancing loneliness among TCKs. It needs to be recognized that emotional challenges are an unavoidable part of their lives, and helping them process their emotions can only serve to create resilient agents of change who will use these experiences from youth into adulthood.

Theme 3. Overcoming cultural chameleon syndrome

TCKs are particularly susceptible to Cultural Chameleon Syndrome, the tendency to adapt their behavior and personality to fit into various cultural contexts, often leading to a lack of a stable sense of self (Gardner, 2014; Lijadi, 2019). Emily's reflection encapsulates this: "I struggle with still to this day because when you ask me where I am from, I say Zambia, but in all honesty, I do not think I fit in culturally" (Emily, phenomenological interview, lines 66-70). This highlights how the desire to adapt can create feelings of disconnection from one's original culture and uncertainty about identity. While TCKs often view their adaptability as a strength, it can hinder their ability to establish a true cultural balance (Pollock et al., 2017) and may lead to an identity crisis as they grapple with differentiating their values from the prevailing norms of their current environment.

Theme 4. Nurturing multicultural competence

Nurturing multicultural competence is vital for TCKs to navigate their diverse backgrounds. Anna notes that exposure to different cultures enhances cognitive skills and self-awareness (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 181-182), while Nathan emphasizes that adaptability can challenge their cultural balance (Nathan, phenomenological interview, lines 177-181). To foster this competence, TCKs should self-reflect, seek peer support, and interact with diverse groups to improve communication skills and cultural sensitivity. Research shows that while TCKs can connect with various cultures, they often struggle to identify with any specific one (Limberg & Lambie, 2011; McGregor et al., 2013). Key strategies include encouraging self-reflection, providing peer support, and addressing identity development. By implementing these strategies, educators, and communities can better support TCKs thriving in a multicultural world while maintaining a strong sense of self.

Theme 5. Finding solace in God

Finding solace in God is crucial for many TCKs navigating their multicultural experiences. Emily reflects, "It made me rely on God more... my anchor is God because he is where I move" (Emily, phenomenological interview, lines 77-79), illustrating how faith

provides a sense of identity and belonging that transcends geographical boundaries. Blaine adds, "I firmly believe God prepared this plan for us" (Blaine, phenomenological interview, line 91), emphasizing that their experiences serve a divine purpose. Such spiritual grounding reassures TCKs that God understands their struggles, offering purpose and direction amid chaos. Engaging in prayer and community worship helps them process grief and foster connections with others who share similar experiences. By nurturing their faith, TCKs can develop resilience and a deeper understanding of their identity, ultimately finding peace in an uncertain environment (Bikos et al., 2009; King, 2003).

Theme 6. Navigating the anxiety of uncertainty

TCKs often experience significant anxiety when moving to a new country, facing challenges in adapting to unfamiliar cultural norms and educational systems. Anna described her fear of the unknown regarding a potential relocation to Papua New Guinea, stating, "I had never heard of Papua New Guinea before, and I felt quite scared because the only place I have lived and known was my hometown" (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 83-85). Her anxiety extended to academic challenges, as she struggled with new mathematical methods, noting, "I had a hard time understanding and excelling in them. This made me very worried and confused" (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 123-124). Similarly, Amelia expressed her apprehension about adapting to a new environment and language, stating, "I was scared that I could not do it because of the different language and lifestyles" (Amelia, phenomenological interview, lines 46-47). The concept of liminality, as outlined by Turner (1969), helps explain the disorientation TCKs face during such transitions, often leading to uncertainty and identity crises, underscoring the need for supportive interventions to ease their emotional burden (Hitching, 2019).

Theme 7. Embracing hope for enhanced opportunity

TCKs often view relocation as a pathway to better opportunities, with families moving for job offers promising higher salaries and improved living conditions. Anna expressed her willingness to move to Papua New Guinea, stating that the job offer "would give us advantages in life and better opportunities" (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 87-90). This sentiment motivates TCKs to navigate challenges and exposure to diverse systems. However, hope coexists with emotional challenges, as TCKs face feelings of loss, confusion, and anxiety when leaving familiar surroundings. Research indicates TCKs develop resilience in adapting to changing environments, but this adaptability can lead to identity crises and struggles to differentiate their values from new norms (Lam & Selmer, 2019).

Theme 8. Considering the home country as a comfort zone

TCKs like Anna and Nathan express strong feelings of attachment to their familiar environments, viewing them as integral to their identity and sense of belonging. Anna's sadness about moving to Papua New Guinea reflects deep emotional ties, as she associates her home country with stability and comfort (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 99-100). Similarly, Nathan articulates a sense of loss at the thought of leaving a place where he has lived comfortably for 15 years (Nathan, phenomenological interview, lines 75-77). These reflections illustrate how home countries serve as anchors in the lives of TCKs, providing a sense of identity often challenged by their transient lifestyles. The implications of viewing the home country as a comfort zone extend to the identity development of TCKs, influencing their social

interactions, coping mechanisms, and overall well-being. The emotional security that home provides can heighten feelings of loss and dislocation as TCKs transition to new environments.

Theme 9. Adapting to circumstances through time

The narrative focuses on the transformative journey of TCKs as they adapt to new environments and face challenges. While transitioning to unfamiliar settings can be daunting, many TCKs reflect on their resilience and growth through these experiences. They encounter obstacles like cultural differences and language barriers but report a gradual adaptation process marked by patience. Blaine notes, "I could not understand some of what they were saying, but slowly got used to it and learned how they speak" (Blaine, phenomenological interview, lines 74-75), while Nathan shares, "I struggled with understanding the words that came from them, but as time passed, I slowly adjusted and understood" (Nathan, phenomenological interview, lines 103-105). These narratives highlight TCKs' capacity to adapt, emphasizing that resilience is developed through persistence and exposure to new cultures (Pollock & Van Reken, 2010). Recognizing and celebrating these journeys is essential as TCKs navigate their diverse cultural landscapes (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011).

Theme 10. Overcoming the language barrier

The most drastic are often the language barriers for the TCKs, which can bring about isolation and frustration. Anna expressed, "I could not relate to the conversations they talked about because it was in half English and half their language" (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 119-120), whereas Amelia expressed, "It was not always fun initially. I was not fluent in English, so I had some embarrassing moments" (Amelia, phenomenological interview, lines 51-53). These aspects complicate communication and adjustment, but making a breakthrough with the language barrier enriches personal growth, making an individual resilient. Amelia said, "What I did with these challenges is I tried to push myself. Thank God I got to adapt because I had some basics of English from Indonesia" (Amelia, phenomenological interview, lines 65-68). Such a process provides an increase in linguistic abilities and empathy toward cultures. For example, Emily stated, "When I finally started to communicate in the local language, it felt like a door opened to new friendships" (Emily, phenomenological interview, lines 56-58), exemplifying how resiliency for TCKs leads to valued friendship development with people from different cultures.

Theme 11. Navigating the new academic landscape

Adaptation to the new academic environment can be difficult for TCKs due to largely unfamiliar subjects and methods of teaching. It may also cause misunderstanding and frustration among them (Brewer, 2019). Anna commented about her difficulties: "The methods of doing mathematical topics were different, and the subjects taught were also very new to me" (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 121-123). The resilience of TCKs is there; they have bodies that easily adapt. Anna elaborated, "To succeed, I tried to be attentive in class and follow each instruction. Apart from that, I observed the other kids as they were doing their schoolwork and asked many questions about things I did not know" (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 124-126). Such a proactive approach fosters an understanding of new material among TCKs and fosters connections with peers, thus creating an enabling environment for learning. In effect, this plays a vital role in nurturing self-growth in children.

Theme 12. Setting for acceptance, growth, and spirituality

The search for belonging leads to tremendous self-discovery and spiritual awakening in many TCKs. The embracing of changeable environments helps the TCK seek comfort within oneself, as relayed by Anna identifying enjoyment in her university campus (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 106-107). This represents growing acceptance and adaptability. The TCK usually possesses a tremendous amount of personal development coming from cross-cultural experience. Amelia said that her time in the Philippines changed her perspective (Amelia, phenomenological interview, lines 84-85). Nathan added that his childhood drew him closer to God (Nathan, phenomenological interview, lines 149-150). The literature says these experiences would foster resilience and identity (Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2017; Pollock & Van Reken, 2010). TCKs develop empathy and a strong sense of self by going head-first through challenges and finding a home within themselves.

RQ2. Context of the Lived Experiences

Family support is essential for TCKs during transitions, significantly enhancing their adjustment and resilience. Research shows that a strong family network is vital to function effectively and adapt successfully (Johnson et al., 2019; Taylor & Roberts, 2021). Nathan stressed that emotional support "strengthens relationships during adjustments" (Nathan, phenomenological interview, lines 156-175), while Anna noted that faith provides "purpose and stability" when everything seems uncertain (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 220-223). This agrees with Carter and Jackson's (2021) findings that spiritual support facilitates resilience.

Many TCKs consider their experiences as privileges. Amelia commented, "Being a TCK is an amazing opportunity" (Amelia, phenomenological interview, lines 164-166), which enhances intercultural competence (Useem & Downie, 2019). Transitions were taken as chances for growth, and Blaine notes these changes foster "a deeper trust in God" (Blaine, phenomenological interview, lines 111-112). This positive perspective is supported by research that indicates that a positive attitude enhances resilience (Smith et al., 2022).

Anna suggested "always be open-minded and positive" (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 204-206), emphasizing the importance of positivity to one's well-being (Ruch et al., 2019). She further emphasized being "grounded in your values" (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 218-219), suggesting that cultural values provide stability. TCKs have reported higher life satisfaction when their connectedness to their cultural values remains strong (Choi et al., 2018). For TCKs, family, spiritual support, and a commitment to cultural values provide an anchor in trying to solve the confusion of relocation and personal growth.

RQ3. Perception of the Future

TCKs believe that their future is a "mystery" constituted by the multicultural experience. In this respect, Nathan said his future now is "a mystery, a big concept that you will never know what happened later or tomorrow" (Nathan, phenomenological interview, lines 197-202). Such a view would tend to be flexible and open because of exposure to varied cultures. Even in uncertainty, TCKs are found to stay optimistic. Thus, they become resilient and agentive to go ahead and approach the future with determination and surety (Thurber & Walton, 2020; Fail et al., 2017).

The TCKs develop an inquiring and exploratory kind of mentality. Anna says, "My experiences have given me a more expanded international outlook on everything, so I will probably always be attracted to follow new possibilities" (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 252-254). Early exposure develops a stronger ability to adjust, fostering a lifelong interest in international experiences (Fail et al., 2017; Lijadi & Van Schalkwyk, 2017). They perceive their multicultural backgrounds as powerful building blocks for constructing and comprehending global dynamics.

The TCKs are flexible and easily make acquaintances. Anna contributes, "Being a TCK means that I have had to adapt quickly and often" (Anna, phenomenological interview, lines 247-249), while Blaine contributes, "I have learned to be more open to different cultures" (Blaine, phenomenological interview, lines 129-130). Nathan concludes, "The advantages of living in different countries are that I can see how different cultures function and use that in my future work life as a tremendous asset" (Nathan, phenomenological interview, lines 205-208). In summary, all the experiences that TCKs had influenced their resiliency, flexibility, and cultural awareness and thus prepared them for later success.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

The findings highlight the emotional complexities of TCK experiences, where excitement for new opportunities coexists with feelings of loss and anxiety. The significance of their home countries serves as a comfort zone amid cultural mobility. The study emphasizes the need to understand TCKs' experiences to create supportive environments that acknowledge their unique challenges and strengths.

The phenomenological experiences highlighted in this study of Seventh-day Adventist TCKs provide a series of implications that help in understanding these TCKs. The study first points out that TCKs see their transition as a journey with family and God. This suggests that family support and spiritual guidance are indeed certain means for dealing with all the complexities of their experience. The findings also show that, for TCKs, the future is incomprehensible but full of possibilities for exploring and learning about the world. To this avail, it can be judged that TCKs have a global mindset and are ready to adapt to new environments.

Based on the findings, several key recommendations were made in supporting TCKs. Institutions, family, and community organizations should provide mechanisms to support emotional complications that may arise due to changed cultures; there should be counseling services. Some initiatives that would assist the TCKs in integrating culturally and socially include mentorship programs and peer support groups. Educator training on special needs will create supportive learning environments. More research will be warranted to understand how the TCK's long-term experiences in identity and mental health are. Such recommendations increase the well-being and success of TCKs amidst varied experiences.

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