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Adaptation and Coping Strategies for International Students' Experiences in India

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ABSTRACT: *This paper critically examines the academic and sociocultural challenges encountered by international students in India, and interrogates the often-celebratory narrative of internationalization in higher education. While India's emergence as a host destination is frequently framed in economic and institutional terms, insufficient attention has been given to students' lived experiences of adjustment. Drawing on a qualitative case study based on in-depth interviews with a diverse cohort of international students, this study reveals persistent structural and institutional gaps. The participants reported difficulties arising from rigid pedagogical practices, opaque assessment systems, linguistic barriers, and experiences of racial discrimination. Rather than being adequately supported by host institutions, students rely heavily on informal networks, personal resilience, and religious affiliations. The findings problematize the assumption of seamless integration and highlight the uneven burden placed on students to navigate systemic inadequacies. This study calls for a more critical rethinking of internationalization practices within the Indian higher education context.*

Keywords: International students, adaptation, higher education, in-depth interview, qualitative, India

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization and internationalization of higher education have significantly increased cross-border student mobility, making it crucial for accessing better opportunities abroad. As a result of globalization, a growing number of foreign students are leaving their home countries to pursue their aspirations of pursue higher education (Daly & Brown, 2004). Students believe that they will receive better and higher-quality education abroad, leading them to choose to move abroad (Faleel et al., 2012). To obtain better education, learning foreign work skills, building multicultural relationships, exploring new places,

trying out a different educational system, and so forth are some of the common reasons why students choose to study abroad (GulRaihan & Sandaran, 2017). Scholarships, study incentives, and better educational facilities are just a few of the tactics that nations and educational institutions employ to draw in overseas students. In actuality, having international students at an institution is regarded as a crucial part of the internationalization of higher education (LATIPOV et al., 2017).

The number of international students pursuing higher education has more than doubled since 2000, reaching approximately four million in 2012 (O.E.C.D. 2013). By 2030, it is anticipated that more than 10 million international mobile students will pursue degrees outside of their home countries (Goodman & Martel, 2024). With internationalization, India has emerged as a popular destination for international students from Western nations, Africa, and neighboring countries, including Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, and Myanmar. India's high ranking in international education is largely attributed to government and educational institution initiatives aimed at attracting foreign students. India's "Study in India" initiative, introduced in 2018, seeks to establish India as a leading destination for international education, with enrollment rising annually. In, 2011-2012, 33,151 foreign students were enrolled in Indian universities and colleges (AISHE, 2011-12); however, the number of foreign students enrolled in Indian universities and colleges increased to 46,144 in 2017-2018 (AISHE, 2017-18). According to the most recent figures from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), from January to December 2021, 23,439 foreigners entered India on student visas, up from 20,561 in 2020. 74,689 was the figure in 2019. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has released data showing that international students come from 168 different countries. The majority of overseas students are hosted by nearby nations, with Nepal accounting for 28.1%, Afghanistan for 9.1%, Bangladesh for 4.6%, and Bhutan for 3.8%. The 10 nations with the highest percentage of students (2.7 percent) are Sudan (3.6 percent), the United States (3.3 percent), Nigeria (3.1 percent), Yemen (2.9 percent), Malaysia (2.7 percent), and the United Arab Emirates (2.7 percent).

The academic and social challenges faced by foreign students in western nations, where many international students from developing nations travel in search of academic and socioeconomic opportunities, have been the subject of numerous studies. However, international students from African, Western, and South Asian countries have been migrating to India for higher education. Students face several obstacles in their quest for higher education as a result of this exposure. Despite the increasing number of international students in India, studies on international students have received little attention, with few studies (Kaur & Pany, 2018; Khyati et al., 2020; Shinde & Ngan, 2022) being conducted in the country. Additionally, a number of studies have used quantitative methodologies to examine the difficulties faced by overseas students. These studies highlight the difficulties faced by these students by exposing them to a variety of stressors, including financial hardships, discrimination, culture shock, communication and language barriers, disparities in educational systems, loneliness, homesickness, and the loss of social networks and established support (Rice, 2007; Grayson, 2008; Collishaw et al., 2010; Lee & Perry, 2016; Iorga et al., 2020; Kristiana et al., 2022), and they are confined mostly to western countries (the USA, the UK, Australia, and Canada) (Oduwaye et al., 2023). The pressures posed by international students may hinder their acclimatization process, potentially negatively affecting their academic and health outcomes.

Academic, sociocultural, adaptation, economic and other aspects of international student challenges have been previously investigated (Trice, 2003; Zhou & Zhang, 2014; Adeoye-Agboola & Evans, 2015; Alfattal, 2016; Xiao et al., 2019). International students face a sense of alienation, feelings of isolation, loss and loneliness in their host society (Lewthwaite, 1996; Sawir et al., 2008; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Wu et al., 2015; Newsome & Cooper, 2016; Pepanyan et al., 2019; Wilczewski et al., 2021), which can impede their ability to adapt to their new surroundings (Hofhuis et al., 2019). Language barriers and educational system discrepancies (Singh et al., 2003) as well as various ranges of sociocultural challenges impact the academic success of international students (Lee & Ciftci, 2014; Ralarala et al., 2016). As a result, these factors make various aspects of international students' lives more stressful (Stallman & Hurst, 2016, as cited in Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). The way that international students respond to these stressors

associated with adjustment may affect their overall health (Msengi, 2007; Hirai et al., 2015; Szabo et al., 2016). In addition, physical stressors can lead to psychological issues such as sadness, anxiety, and stress among international students (Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Saravanan et al., 2019). However, social contact, such as networks of friends with local students and natives (Miller, 2000; Perkins, 2004; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Dewey et al., 2013) helps them adjust as well as build relationships with their teachers and advisors (Mesidor & Sly, 2016). Additionally, personality traits are linked to improved adjustment through flexibility and interpersonal abilities (Mesidor & Sly, 2016).

The number of overseas students enrolled continues to increase despite numerous obstacles. In addition to boosting the economy, these students help their host countries' higher education budgets (Schleicher, 2020). Few studies, however, recognize that these students face financial challenges, and in particular, no studies have addressed the financial hurdles faced by international students. For international students, paying tuition and providing sufficient research assistance are the greatest financial obstacles (Harman, 2003; Shah et al., 2019). Achieving their goals, obtaining an international education, and advancing their professional prospects have never been easy for international students. Therefore, it is crucial that we recognize and address these challenges to enhance international education practices.

Theoretical Framework

The concept of adjustment to university life is intricate and multidimensional, encompassing a range of demands that differ in kind and intensity. It necessitates the use of many coping mechanisms that incorporate numerous aspects beyond academic achievement (Baker & Siryk, 1984). Three categories of adjustment were established by Baker and Siryk (1984) and include the academic, social, personal-emotional, and environmental problems associated with university attendance (Fernández et al., 2017). Academic adjustment refers to students' ability to meet the many learning requirements imposed by the institution. Learning objectives, students' academic self-efficacy and skills, self-perception, motivation to study, and degree of satisfaction with the classroom are closely related (Baker & Siryk, 1989; Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). The ability of students to manage the pressures, interpersonal obligations, and lack of confidence that come with college life is referred to as social adjustment. Personal emotional adjustment encompasses mental and physical health during the transition to university, affecting overall functioning, stress management, and academic success (Baker & Siryk, 1989). Both the degree to which students are dedicated to their university and the quality of their relationship with their institutions are measured by institutional attachment (Baker & Siryk, 1989).

The study also used the stress and coping theory developed by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). According to Lazarus (1990), coping strategies are a means of mediating between an individual and their surroundings, and international students use them to manage emotional, social, and academic difficulties. The three primary coping techniques people typically use are emotion-focused, problem-focused, and avoidance-focused coping, according to the paradigm (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984a). While emotion-focused coping focuses on methods to control emotional reactions, problem-focused coping involves proactive attempts to alter stressful circumstances. The techniques used to overcome the situation and prevent stress are part of avoidance-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984b).

RESEARCH METHOD

A qualitative approach was chosen for the research. A qualitative technique was determined to be more suitable for conducting this study since it would allow for more comprehensive and in-depth answers regarding people's experiences, views, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. (Mears, 2012; Austin & Sutton, 2014). Qualitative research permits the investigation and comprehension of intricate events from each person's subjective point of view (Hancock et al., 2001), and qualitative approaches are especially appropriate for understanding individuals' and groups' subjective views (Fossey et al., 2002). To examine

the collected data, a specific qualitative method called reflexive theme analysis (RTA) was employed. Furthermore, data saturation was achieved with 10 interviews (see Constantinou et al., 2017). The author carefully considered that the participants did not feel compelled to participate in the study. By obtaining their agreement and granting them the option to leave the study at any time, the author ensured this. Additionally, the volunteers received assurances that their identity would be protected at all costs.

Participants

The study included 10 international students, 6 of whom were male and 4 of whom were female. They were 32.1 years old on average ($SD=12.01$). Only 10% of them were married, while the majority (90%) were unmarried. They had lived in India for an average of 2.5 years ($SD=1.20$). The participant demographics are displayed in Table 1. The participants were enrolled in various faculties and years. The participants were from different regions, such as Namibia (2), and Bangladesh (2), and from Ghana, China, Zimbabwe, Japan, Thailand, and the United States (1 from each country). There were 2 undergraduates, 4 graduate students, and 4 research scholars among the participants. The demographic information for the study included name (pseudonyms), sex, nationality, academic status, and total time spent at an Indian university. Their average stay on the campus runs between two and three years, as shown in the table below. All the names associated with the comments are pseudonyms.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of the Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Country of Residence	Program Enrolled	Year of Study
Adele	F	29	Ghana	MLIS	2
Liam	M	43	Thailand	Research Associate	4
Lee	M	29	China	Research Associate	5
Kate	F	36	Namibia	Research Associate	2
Dustin	M	63	United States	Research Associate	3
Ajay	M	23	Bangladesh	BA LLB	3
Dev	M	24	Bangladesh	MA Sociology	2
Max	M	27	Namibia	M.Sc. Microbiology	1
Caroline	F	21	Zimbabwe	BSPH	2
Sara	F	26	Japan	MA Sociology	1

Note. F = female; M = male; MLIS = Master of Library and Information Science; BA LLB = Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Legislative Law; MA = Master of Arts; M.Sc. = Master of Science; BSPH = Bachelor of Science in Public Health.

Instruments

The probes used in this study were divided into two sections. The first question posed to the participants concerned the sociocultural and academic challenges they had faced as soon as they arrived in India. Second, participants were asked how they cope with these challenges in their new environment.

Data Analysis

The data were examined using thematic analysis. One method for identifying, analyzing, and summarizing themes in data is thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process is divided into six steps: getting to know the data, creating the first codes, looking for themes in the codes, reviewing the themes, giving the

themes names and meanings, and creating the final report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher classified the themes that appeared often across the data into emerging patterns.

The final grouping of codes into themes is as follows:

- (1) Academic challenges
- (2) Sociocultural challenges
- (3) Coping strategies of the participants

RESULTS

Academic challenges faced by the participants

The following section discusses the challenges that participants faced while pursuing higher education during their stay in India. A lack of confidence in their second language prevents international students from participating in class discussions, and language hurdles often make it difficult for them to grasp lectures.

When asked about the issue of concern, Kate from Namibia commented in a disturbed voice about her earlier experience during her master's program in India, stating, the following:

When I was pursuing my master's degree in Uttar Pradesh (UP) before coming to NEHU, Shillong, some of the professors gave class lectures in Hindi rather than in English, although international students were present. This was one of the most difficult academic challenges I have ever faced.

Liam, a Thai student enrolled in the PhD program in Hindi, talked about the challenges he had while pursuing his master's degree and the challenges he has now with his research. Liam stated that,

In my first year of Master of Arts in Hindi, I struggled to understand many of the fundamentals because Hindi is not my first language. Therefore, I need to put forth extra effort in my study to catch up with my classmates. There were times when I would like to ask my teachers about my doubts but felt hesitant because I used to be the odd one as there were no international students who opted for Hindi. However, I had finished my Master of Arts in Hindi with distinction.

Liam continues to express that he is happy that he could finish his Master, but he said that he is having a hard time with his research. He argues that,

Doing research is much more difficult now than that of Master, I have to do most of my work alone. Although my supervisor helps me, I still need to rely on myself. However, I am hopeful that I would be able to complete soon.

Compared with Indian students, international students might have a distinct learning experience in the classroom. Teaching techniques and approaches that differ from those used by international students in their home cultures may cause intricacies (Andrade, 2006).

Adele from Ghana who is enrolling in a Master's program in India said,

In terms of academic challenges, the only issue I have had is with the marking system in India, and I'm not the only one who has had this problem; some of my other African friends have also complained about the marking system. In India, you are expected to write four or five pages for a single question. However, in my opinion, the context should take precedence over the number of pages (Adele).

Ajay from Bangladesh who is enrolling in the LLB program, argued about the dissatisfaction he has with respect to academic settings. He said that,

Here in India, you are expected to attend the class on every working day. For me, the most important is not about attendance but the quality of the student output in their studies.

Lee a PhD student from China, expressed his academic hurdles. He expressed that,

From the beginning I am trying on my own to cope with academic expectations. Although I received guidance and support from my supervisor and faculty members, I still expect more from them.

Lee further states that,

At times, pursuing a PhD in a foreign country becomes challenging as one does not find many friends on whom one can rely.

In a new setting uncertainty, confusion and hesitancy can lead to dissatisfaction and disappointment; and language barriers, cultural differences, a lack of companionship, and even a loss of social support from the university could all contribute to this. It consequently leads to a great deal of anxiety, trauma, misconception, and sadness. These undoubtedly disrupt the psychological and sociocultural well-being of students (Talib, 2010; Rajab et al., 2014).

My department is very relaxed, as one of my professors says very liberal, but which he meant very permissive and lacks discipline. Therefore, it is not very strictly organized, which I'm not very used to. Even when I did my master, I organize myself in a very disciplined way. I sometimes find it difficult to obtain time from the professors to consult as the professors remain busy attending meetings and carrying out other academic activities. Frequent consultations would certainly enrich, as these interactions would provide academic insights (Dustin).

The participants' experience revealed that they did feel great differences in terms of academic standards and assessments, - from their home countries in terms of the marking system, departmental organizations and class lectures. The reasoning they mention involves different teaching methods, low language proficiency, academic standards and assessments that differ from those in their home countries. However, gradually, they have adjusted well with the academic system while pursuing their studies in India. As claimed by Lewthwaite (1996), global immersion in both learning and culture helps international students acclimate to their new surroundings while also assisting teachers in understanding multiculturalism.

Sociocultural challenges of the participants

International students face a number of difficulties, including racial discrimination, changes in their life status, dietary limitations, money, language barriers, accommodations, climatic and food differences, isolation from home, and disparities in educational systems (Singh et al., 2003). This section discusses the participants' experiences with the sociocultural challenges they faced in India.

India is a multilingual nation, with dialects and languages differing by region and even more drastically by state. Even Indians find it challenging to speak with one another in their own mother tongue when they travel through the nation and prefer to use Hindi and English. Since Indians themselves are not an exception, international students may experience communication challenges in such a situation. The results of the present study further corroborate these findings, as the data presented above demonstrate that international students, especially those residing off campus or engaging with the broader community, encounter significant communication challenges with local residents owing to language barriers.

Communication becomes a big problem whenever I go out from the university campus. I have difficulty communicating with locals especially when using public transportation such as buses and taxis (Lee).

Like Lee's experience, another participant expressed the hurdles he faced. He stated that,

As our accent is quite different. Moreover, as foreigners in India, we are seen as strangers, and we rarely receive the support and help we expect (Max).

Sometimes international students also face racial discrimination because of their physical appearance. It may also happen unintentionally as the racially offensive words such as *Negro* and *Chinki* are also used in public places. This also occurs in academic institutions such as in cafeterias, restaurants and other public places. Moreover, international students from African countries face more racial discrimination than any other international students do. Most of them opined that they received unnecessary attention, especially while they were traveling from the campus.

Resisting abuses one of the international students opined that when a racial slur was used on her, she confronted the person and noted how discriminatory that a racial slur is and hence that this type of word should not be used.

She expressed that,

“Is it the lack of knowledge? Is it ignorance? What makes someone walks up to you and say derogatory words? This is discriminatory. No one should ever use derogatory words or terms on anyone.” (Kate).

Another international student from Africa also opined how she received unnecessary attention outside the university campus.

She states that,

Whenever I go outside the university campus, people stare at me, and some even grab their phone and start taking selfies without my consent (Adele).

Surprisingly, the majority of international students have no problems with Indian or local cuisine. On the basis of the data, most international students are well adjusted with respect to Indian cuisine.

Supermarkets in the United States are often many times larger than those in India, and because the selection of products in the United States is generally much greater than that of Indian supermarkets, I can find products that I enjoy. However, because of the limited choice of products and stores in India, I had problems getting the items that I needed. Nonetheless, I am pleased because of the inexpensive price (dustin).

In contrast, Kate stated that,

As a vegetarian, I struggle with the indigenous cuisine in Shillong, India and because the bulk of restaurants or street vendors' menus include meat rather than vegetarian options, I have difficulties acquiring the foods I prefer.

Ali from Bangladesh shared his experience with regard to food habits and his adjustment and said,

I come from a Muslim family, so adjusting to the local cuisine is difficult for me because I only eat halal food. In addition, sometimes I am hesitant to take food outside if it is not halal, so I cook it myself using YouTube tutorials.

Another international student, Ajay expressed that there should be sufficient facilities for extracurricular activities. Narrating his experience, he said that

University campuses should have more cultural clubs, such as study clubs, and career clubs, which are essential for building offs of one's career.

It is quite natural for international students to expect more such recreational facilities inside the campus which will enhance both academic and personal development.

Caroline from Zimbabwe, who enrolled in a B.Sc. course in public health, described her difficulties with regard to hostel accommodations. She states that,

Hostel accommodation is a challenge for many international students. At the time of admission, most international students are promised proper accommodations, but after our arrival, we still have to struggle with accommodations.

She states that,

“The rooms provided are smaller than promised and we face spatial congestion.”

Adele narrates her strong connection with local classmates

I spent more time with my classmates who are the locals. Because we are occasionally in class together. As a result, I spend more time with them. In addition, even if I have to leave campus, they accompany me. As a result, I ended up spending the majority of my time with them rather than other students from the university.

Adele also shared her opinion on cultural shock and said that,

I believe that technology has made many things known and that those who are visiting a new location may know what to expect. As a result of the availability of information, there is no cultural shock for me.

Dustin from the United States who enrolled in a PhD program at North-Eastern Hill University gave his statement about his cultural shock when he arrived in Shillong and stated, the following:

Seeing open-air slaughterhouses for chicken, pigs and cows freaks me out a little because I think them unclean and have not gotten used to them yet.

The participants' experiences demonstrated that some of the difficulties they encountered during their higher education were social and cultural isolation, being away from family and friends, unfamiliar living situations (cultural shocks), personal anxieties, concerns about personal safety, an unfamiliar local healthcare system, difficulty adjusting to different weather and food, and challenges related to social and cultural isolation.

Coping strategies of the participants

This section discusses the coping strategies the participants adopted during their stay in India while they were pursuing their study. To grow personally, international students must adjust to this new academic system and social environment, and address the contrasts between their own ideals, cultural values, regulations, and traditions and those of their hosts (Kaur & Pany, 2018; Khyati et al., 2020).

Dustin from the United States, who is pursuing his studies in Shillong, narrated his experience when he arrived in Shillong. According to Dustin, new cultural practices sometimes create a sense of aloofness and it takes time for those who are alien to the place. For instance, Dustin said,

After arriving in India, we need to overcome various challenges, such as issues related to the emigration process, Indian stretched time (IST), academic ambience, and campus cleanliness.

Further narrating his personal experience, he states, the following:

Stray dogs are being a nuisance. Otherwise, my stay is pretty enjoyable and comfortable.

Another participant from Japan, Sara, who enrolled in the Sociology Program in Mizoram state of India, described her coping problems. Sara noted that she does not find many international students to interact. She explained that,

There are a few international students at our university. In addition, our school doesn't have an international student. In addition, there is no Japanese in my living area. However, this is the fifth time I have been to India. Therefore, I feel I'm adapting well and I don't have many problems.

However, it was observed that participants took at most one month to adapt to and socialize with native students before they began to associate with them.

The study additionally revealed that participants employed a variety of coping mechanisms, including recalling their indigenous culture, listening to their favorite music in their native language, or using WhatsApp, Facebook, and other social media platforms to remain in contact with family and friends. While some respondents met with other students from similar cultural backgrounds for meals and short outings, other respondents found solace in praying alone or at a mosque, church, or other public places. The

ambiguity and confusion they experienced when faced with the intricacies in a new location were momentarily alleviated by this familiarity.

On Sundays, I usually joined service online from my church back home. I went to a local church here in Shillong, but the service was very different from my home and I did find it very boring because there was not much clapping and dancing, which I am very used to back at home where everyone sings and claps. Therefore, I decided to stay in my room and participate in an online service that is conducted in my native language back at home (Adele).

The participants consistently described social relationships as important resources for coping with loneliness, homesickness, and the challenges of adjusting to life in India. Friendships with classmates, fellow international students, and local peers provided both emotional and practical support, helping them develop a sense of belonging within the university community.

With respect to Dustin, spending time with friends helped reduce feelings of isolation. He explained that he and his friends "occasionally ate together in a hostel or at a café" and sometimes went on "short trips around Shillong" with a friend who owned a car. These shared activities created opportunities for social interaction and helped him adapt to his new environment.

Similarly, Ajay emphasized the importance of companionship after the COVID-19 lockdown. During the lockdown, he experienced loneliness because only a few international students remained on campus and he had limited opportunities to interact with others. However, as restrictions were lifted, he began spending more time with friends, which helped him feel "much better" and reduced his homesickness.

Maintaining relationships with family also emerged as a significant coping strategy. Kate from Namibia explained that she regularly contacted her family through video calls whenever she felt lonely or depressed. Although she deeply missed her daughters, staying connected with them and keeping herself occupied with academic work helped her manage the emotional challenges of living far from home.

Not all the participants experienced adjustment difficulties to the same extent. Adele described herself as highly independent, explaining that she could "adjust because I know how to do certain things by myself" and that she found it easy to interact with new people. Nevertheless, she also acknowledged the importance of social support, recalling occasions when friends wouldingly lent her money during delays in receiving her funds. Their assistance reinforced her sense of security and belonging within the university community. Similarly, Ali highlighted the supportive nature of his classmates, noting that they were always willing to help whenever he encountered difficulties. He remarked that his friends treated him "more like my brothers than my friends," illustrating how close interpersonal relationships fostered emotional well-being and eased the adjustment process.

These narratives demonstrate that social support operates at multiple levels, including friendships, peer networks, and family connections. Consistent with the broader literature on international student adaptation, these interpersonal relationships not only alleviate loneliness and homesickness but also provide practical assistance that strengthens students' resilience and facilitates successful sociocultural adjustment.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

These findings support the notion that there are certain sociocultural barriers and adjustment issues for international students pursuing higher education in India, and they are in line with earlier research (Lewthwaite, 1996; Hartshorne & Baucom, 2007; Cemalcilar & Falbo, 2008; GulRaihan & Sandaran, 2017; Nyaga, 2026; Mahmood et al., 2026). Furthermore, consistent with Mahmood et al. (2026), the present study shows that peer support and personal resilience play crucial roles in facilitating adaptation and psychological well-being. The greatest obstacle is the language barrier, which makes academic and social adjustment very challenging. According to previous studies (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Akanwa, 2015; Lee, 2017; Ali et al., 2020; Nazir & Özçiçek, 2022; Alasmari, 2023), this is consistent with the idea that the lives of overseas students are impacted outside of the classroom (Trice, 2007). The inability to communicate

with the host community in a language other than the local tongue is the most common language-related issues. This leads to misunderstandings and confusion between the host community and international students in public transit and service-related institutions.

This study also revealed that because of differences in culture, international students experienced cultural shock. These results were consistent with those of earlier studies on the cultural shock that international students encounter (Gaw, 2000; Poedjiastutie, 2009; Anjalin et al., 2017; Przylęcki, 2018). The participants in this study reported having feelings of homesickness, loneliness, nostalgia, and depression. These symptoms matched the descriptions of previous studies (Nooripour et al., 2013; Moeini et al., 2018; Sezer et al., 2021; Shoukat et al., 2021; Mekonen & Adarkwah, 2023) on the experiences of international students. In this study, international students from Africa reported engaging in sexual harassment both on and off campus because of their race. They disclosed instances of sexual remarks and verbal abuse. Nonetheless, the interviewees disclosed that they enjoyed good interactions with both professors and fellow students on campus. According to the interviewees, “teachers and colleagues” favorable attitudes may explain why participants may form connections with locals.

A variety of coping methods were employed by the study participants to overcome the challenges they faced while living in India. International students overcome their obstacles by maintaining a positive attitude, leaning on their local classmates during tough times, connecting with family via social media when they feel down or lonely, and cooking, and spending time with their friends.

The rapidly growing number of overseas students in India seems to contribute to the increasing diversity of higher education. Internationalizing curricula, mentoring programs, networking opportunities, cultural sensitivity awareness and training, diversity training, proper orientation for international students, and many other things are just a few examples of programs and support systems that educators, institutional administrations, and the government must prioritize to best meet the needs of international students.

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