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The Experience of Arab International Students in Universities in the UK

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ABSTRACT

Many UK universities are actively working to attract more international students, including those from Arab countries. Due to the differences in languages, religious beliefs, and social priorities between Arab and British societies, Arab students have faced various challenges here. This review examines the experiences of Arab students, focusing on their expectations, challenges, and interventions implemented by universities. Prior to enrolment, they anticipate gaining cutting-edge knowledge, improving English proficiency, career advancements, and a supportive academic environment. However, upon arrival, they encountered language barriers and financial strain, as well as cultural differences, accommodation and supervision difficulties, affecting their personal wellbeing. Despite these challenges, interventions such as financial aid, accommodation support, cultural events, and language initiatives have enhanced their experiences. Active supervision and mentoring further contribute to their study success. Ultimately, this review addresses the challenges and suggests the implementation of successful supportive measures to enable Arab students to thrive in the UK.

Keywords: Arab students, international students, university experience, student challenges, language barrier

INTRODUCTION

The UK is currently the destination with the world's second highest number of international students behind the US (Bolton et al., 2023). The number of overseas students in the UK has reached 605,130 in 2020/2021 according to the British Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2023). Furthermore, many UK universities have planned to attract more students from abroad to increase diversity, finance, and to meet student targets. The demographics of international students in the UK include those from the Northern and Southern Americas, European Union, Asia, Africa, Australia, Arab world, and others (HESA, 2023). The Arab world is comprised of 22 countries distributed among Middle East and North Africa. In 2020/2021, Saudi Arabia (8,750 students) and United Arab Emirates (8,054 students) were ranked 8th and 9th respectively in the highest number of international student populations in the UK (HESA, 2023). The international population is only actively growing since then.

Like other international students, Arab international students in the UK face specific challenges along their study journey, including pre-study, in-study and post-study (Benaïda & Arif, 2013; Khanal & Gaulee, 2019). These challenges are mainly associated with finance, language, social habits, health and food behaviours, and cultural differences (Al-Hazzaa et al., 2013; Benaïda & Arif, 2013; Khanal & Gaulee, 2019). For the latter, Arabs differ culturally from the British in three core areas: (1) language and communication standards; (2) religious beliefs as the majority (more than 90%) of Arabs are Muslims; and (3) social life priorities as the Arab community is more family-oriented with collectivist cultures, prioritising social bonds between siblings, friends, and social groups (Benaïda & Arif, 2013).

In recent years, Arab students in the UK have also faced evolving challenges related to the global political landscape. Factors such as changes in home-country economies and increased international networking opportunities have reshaped the expectations and experiences of these students. In this review, the experience of Arab international students in the UK universities is studied based on the articles published to date, by addressing students' expectations and anticipations, challenges faced, and the actions taken by UK universities to overcome these challenges. It is worth noting that despite the linguistic and cultural similarities shared among many Arab populations, there are also dissimilarities across the 22 countries, especially at the social, educational, dress coding, and gender equalising levels (Benaïda & Arif, 2013). Due to unevenly distributed articles available, this review provides a general view of the experience of Arab international students in the UK.

METHOD

The articles selected for this review included expectations and challenges faced by Arab international students enrolled or have been enrolled in UK universities, and any interventions applied or recommended by the universities. No restrictions were applied on the study types (which include literature reviews, critical reviews,

questionnaire or survey-based studies, case studies, and conference reports) and databases (which include Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Journal Storage (JSTOR), Education Research Complete, ScienceDirect, UK universities databases, Saudi universities databases, and Google Scholar). Grey literature from official sources like national press, national committees, or university reports was also considered. Literature in both English and Arabic were reviewed. Articles were included if they focused on Arab students' experiences in UK higher education, specifically addressing academic, cultural, and social challenges. Studies that were not directly related to the Arab student population or did not take place within the UK context were excluded. After selecting the relevant articles, we utilised a thematic synthesis approach to analyse the findings. This process involved reading each article carefully and extracting key themes related to the academic, cultural, and psychological experiences of Arab students.

As a result, this review was generated using 18 articles listed in **Table 1**. Seventeen of them were published in English (British or American), while one article was published in Arabic language.

Table 1: Studies included in this literature review

Author	No of participants	Information extraction
Obaid and Abdullah (2023)	67	Questionnaire (67) and interview (9)-based
Monaghan and Gormley (2023)	14	Interview-based (14)
Hailat et al. (2022)	40	Interview-based (40)
Al-Qahtani et al. (2022)	23	Interview-based (23)
Albhlal and Alotaibi (2020)	100	Questionnaire-based survey (100)
Alabdulaziz (2020)	300	Questionnaire (300) and interview (32)-based
Hajar (2020)	7	Interview-based (7)
Alsuhaybani et al. (2020)	12	Interview-based (12)
Guest et al. (2020)	253 (mixed backgrounds)	Interview-based (253)
بن علي الخليفة et al. (2020)	157	Questionnaire-based (157)
Khanal and Gaulee (2019)	None	Literature review
Miles and Benn (2016)	34	Questionnaire (34) and interview (6)-based
Alyami (2016)	117	Questionnaire (117) and interview (20)-based
Drbseh (2015)	22	Questionnaire-based (22)
Badwan (2015)	8	Interview-based (8)
Hajar (2018)	7	Interview-based (7)
Ahmed et al. (2010)	20	Questionnaire (20) and interview (20)-based
Rich and Troudi (2006)	5	Interview-based (5)

EXPECTATIONS OF ARAB INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

A student's expectations of their education institution are largely related to the to the academic, social, and administrative aspects of the university (Ariffin et al., 2022; بن علي الخليفة et al., 2020). Effective communication from the university admission team or the student's supervisor, high university ranking, and good library services have a direct positive outcome on Saudi students as they feel more confident about starting their study journey (بن علي الخليفة et al., 2020).

In the Arab world, being a university student in the UK is highly motivated by the opportunity to learn recent advances within a particular subject, to engage with ideas, strategies and tools which are inaccessible in the Arab countries, and interacting with world-class academics (Alsuhaibani et al., 2020; Hajar, 2020; بن علي الخليفة et al., 2020). It is suggested that this is a result of the world-renowned academic reputation of the UK, such as universities rankings here are among the top worldwide, and many famous scientists and Arab prominent figures have studied in UK universities (Alsuhaibani et al., 2020; Howida Baz, 2019; بن علي الخليفة et al., 2020).

Research suggests that colonial history significantly affects how students from former colonies view UK universities. The familiarity with British culture, language, and educational values contributes to a sense of connection and trust in the UK system. This sense of historical continuity can foster a perception that UK universities offer high-quality education, which is often viewed as superior to that of universities in the students' home countries. (Eze & Inegbedion, 2015; Khanal & Gaulee, 2019). In a study by Hailat et al. (2022) which included interviewing students from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, it has been revealed that many of them believe that obtaining an educational qualification from a reputable UK university will strengthen their chances of holding leadership positions when they return to serve their home countries. Questionnaire-based research by Hajar (2020) studied the factors to influence the participants' strategic learning efforts when they took part in a pre-session course in the UK, which surveyed participants from five different Arab countries, prior to their enrolment in UK universities as postgraduate students. The study showed that nearly every member appeared to have grandiose objectives, inspired by the prestigious image of UK universities described above, however, little consideration was given as to how they may achieve them.

The findings of the same study made by Hajar (2020) showed that many pre-session Arab students were surprised by the fact of routine use of essay-based assessments in UK institutions, since they are used to having multiple-choice or direct questions in their home countries (Hajar, 2020). On the other hand, they were pleased with the unconventional style of learning English, which include radio-listening homework and newspaper-based discussions (Hajar, 2020). This indicates that these students, with differing personal experiences, will have to adapt to the educational and exams systems when they arrive in the UK. It has also been observed that most Arabic master's students had optimistic perceptions on the amount of support to be provided in their dissertation projects. They expect

their supervisors to provide significant guidance on the execution of the projects, as well as offering excellent communication and checking dissertation drafts (Hajar, 2018). For doctoral studies, Arabic students appeared to also expect receiving a considerable amount support from their supervisors to complete the doctoral degree on time (Alabdulaziz, 2020). Also, there appears to be a general assumption that lecturers and supervisors would be more supportive and less strict than their counterparts in the Arab world (بن علي الخليفة et al., 2020).

Expectations about the healthcare system

The healthcare experience in the UK for 20 Arabic-speaking students was studied in a Scottish university, and this study revealed multiple presuppositions by the participants (Ahmed et al., 2010). They expected the same time of physical examination or quicker than in their home countries. It has been noted there was an expectation that antibiotics were going to be prescribed regularly. They did not expect the difficulties in conveying their feelings and health complaints in English terms. For cultural differences, most students were also expecting UK healthcare providers to respect their culture, religion, privacy, and gender restriction. It is worthy to mention a quote in by one of the students which reads “It is necessary to involve culture competency in medical education” (Ahmed et al., 2010, p. 25).

Expectations about social life

Many Arab students expect a study and living environment where they can establish friendships with British students (Alsuhaibani et al., 2020; Hajar, 2020; Monaghan & Gormley, 2023). They have genuine interest in the people and culture represented by other groups (Drbseh, 2015), and some Saudi students were excited about the opportunity to explore other cultures (Alsuhaibani et al., 2020). In contrast to this, other students were not interested in engaging with the UK society as they were mainly there for an academic mission (Alsuhaibani et al., 2020). The authors interpreted this as understandable given the conservative Muslim environment from which the Saudi students originated, as well as the differences in the cultures and social lives. Moreover, the majority of Saudi students obtain financial support from Saudi Arabian organisations, who require them to return home once their studies are over. Because of this, these students typically view their stay in the UK as a passing phase and do not recognise the value in interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds (Alsuhaibani et al., 2020). Around 81% of a total 157 (17 bachelor, 68 masters, and 72 PhD) Saudi students have also agreed that their selection of British universities is affected by the comforts of city life and how conducive the environment is for them to live in. These include safety, presence of entertainment activities especially at night other than pubs, and the availability of Arabic food choices (بن علي الخليفة et al., 2020). Also, around 72% supported that it is necessary for the location of studies to be close to UK biggest cities (بن علي الخليفة et al., 2020).

Expectations about the English language

Many Arab students have expected to spend their time in the UK speaking in British English and to have a majority of native English-speaking academics, to help with the result of mastering the English language in the way they have hoped for (Hajar, 2020; *بن علي الخليفة* et al., 2020). Moreover, in a study made on four foundation year students and four master's students, learning English while studying is one of the key drivers for Arabic students to choose the UK to further their studies (Badwan, 2015). This can be a result of the unique consideration of English language in some Arab countries where English proficiency is associated with securing better employments and relieving themselves from cultural pressure and governmental discrimination (Badwan, 2015; Drbseh, 2015).

CHALLENGES FACED BY ARAB INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Several challenges are faced by international students in comparison to domestic students. Recent research has explored how the unique challenges faced by international students, including Arab students, shape their academic and social experiences, particularly in culturally diverse environments like the UK (Hong et al., 2025). These studies emphasise the importance of understanding the intersectionality of cultural background, academic expectations, and the social integration of students (Hong et al., 2025). In the Arab world, challenges may start as early as the decision-making stage to pursue higher education abroad, since the individual's life is highly family-centric (Benaida & Arif, 2013). The challenges and struggles experienced by an Arab international student in the UK are noted below.

Finances

According to the British Council, the average annual cost of studying in the UK is around £22,200 for undergraduate and £17,109 for postgraduate internationals (British Council, 2024). Self-funded students may find this cost expensive (Khanal & Gaulee, 2019). For scholarship holders from Saudi Arabia, the choice of programme and the level of education are highly decided by the financial sponsors, such as Saudi government or Saudi universities. Adhering to the deadline of scholarship applications and making the relevant academic choices can add on to the pressure (Alsuhaibani et al., 2020; Khanal & Gaulee, 2019). Upon arrival to the UK, the lack of specialised employees in student services who can understand Arab student situations may also put extra pressure on the students (Alyami, 2016).

Religion and cultural challenges

As a result of religious requirements regarding interactions between genders and dress codes, Arab students are reserved about sharing bathrooms or kitchens with students from other cultures and religions, and to share a flat with a different

gender (Miles & Benn, 2016). Saudi students tend to describe their attempts in finding a suitable accommodation as “struggles”, and they would arrive earlier than the semester’s start date to settle in the UK. This is particularly relevant for those with dependants such as family members and children, as considerations are needed to cater for the children’s nearby school and other family needs (Miles & Benn, 2016; Monaghan & Gormley, 2023).

It is also common for international students to experience “cultural shock” when they initially move abroad (Presbitero, 2016). For Arab students in the UK, many studies reported their participants experiencing “cultural shock” in the first few weeks of adaptation. For instance, students who have never left their countries would experience discomfort and feeling socially isolated (Obaid & Abdullah, 2023). Language barrier, also discussed later, is a common issue faced (Khanal & Gaulee, 2019; Monaghan & Gormley, 2023). Besides, some Saudi students were concerned about the repercussions of being considered as “international students” or “foreigners” in the society (Rich & Troudi, 2006). Moreover, it has been shown that postgraduate Arab students who brought children to the UK have faced challenges with the school culture in the UK, and other taught behaviours in schools, such as on privacy and gender (Al-Qahtani et al., 2022).

Cultural and religious challenges may begin as early as the pre-departure phase, with individuals experiencing a sense of being marginalised by the UK community due to Islamophobia and issues of “othering” (Guest et al., 2020; Miles & Benn, 2016; Rich & Troudi, 2006). In contrast to these perceptions, some female students have positively highlighted the general understanding on them wearing a hijab during physical activities (Miles & Benn, 2016). Furthermore, most students find it comfortable to practise Islam as a religion in the UK, as mosques are provided in most university campuses (Albhlal & Alotaibi, 2020; Guest et al., 2020; Miles & Benn, 2016). Other Saudi male students, however, complained how they have been contemptuously questioned by other students about Islamic rules and the Arab society (Albhlal & Alotaibi, 2020; Guest et al., 2020; Rich & Troudi, 2006). Al-Krenawi and Graham (2000) stated that social work interventions for Arab clients, particularly in mental health, must be adapted to accommodate the cultural and religious backgrounds that significantly influence their experiences and needs. These adaptations include understanding the role of family structures, gender expectations, and specific mental health stigmas prevalent in Arab communities. Universities can take a more proactive role in addressing cultural and religious challenges by fostering greater intercultural respect across all university functions, not just religious spaces. Peer-led initiatives, where senior Arab students mentor newcomers, could be an effective strategy for smooth cultural integration.

Academic challenges

In general, academic misconducts such as not paraphrasing sufficiently and not referencing are more likely to be unintentionally breached by international students than home students (Copland & Garton, 2011). Reasons for this could be either related to unfamiliarity to a new academic system to the students, or to the

language barrier resulting in not fully understanding the instructions (Copland & Garton, 2011; Rich & Troudi, 2006). Without understanding what “paraphrasing” truly means, international students can easily be subject to academic misconducts for “copying” (Rich & Troudi, 2006). On the other hand, once Arab students have adjusted to the exams and learning systems in the UK, it has been reported that most students have achieved significant academic and personal improvements compared to when they first arrive (Hajar, 2020; Monaghan & Gormley, 2023).

During master’s studies, many students shared that they have received exceptional guidance and support from their supervisors, and some were even excited about how their supervisors empowered their enthusiasm about a research topic (Hajar, 2018). However, some students complained that the process of selecting supervisors is not always by their choice, instead, they were allocated by the programme department. Additionally, some have reported not getting adequate attention from their supervisors, often only having limited time dedicated to project supervision. This resulted in emails not being answered due to other priorities (Hajar, 2018). Also, due to the limited face-to-face contacts between supervisors and students, Arab students tend to then seek support from their fellow Arab peers (Hajar, 2018). During doctoral programs, a majority of Saudi Mathematics students stated that they had a supportive research team of members (Alabdulaziz, 2020). However, some concerns were raised regarding uneven distribution of responsibilities by the main supervisor (Alabdulaziz, 2020). Since each doctoral student usually has two supervisors (primary and second), project methodology conflicts between the main and the second supervisor were also reported (Alabdulaziz, 2020). Between 65.7% and 95% of these participants expressed a desire for more support during the writing phase and in publishing their projects, particularly among those with limited English-writing skills. Interestingly, 71.3% strongly disagreed with the idea of receiving extensive feedback and criticism, as they believed it would delay the research project completion (Alabdulaziz, 2020). Alabdulaziz (2020) proposed that this may be an indication of a lack of guidance from supervisors to consult with other experienced individuals, contributing to students’ uncertainty regarding the appropriate steps to take when facing challenges in their academic pursuits.

Another major challenge for Arab students is time management and their struggles with deadlines (Monaghan & Gormley, 2023). Students have reported to struggle with balancing time between studies and life demands such as building relationships (Monaghan & Gormley, 2023) and meeting family needs (Al-Qahtani et al., 2022). However, many master’s students have stated that managing time was an issue only during the first two terms. Following that, they have then learnt and developed the skills for time management to work on their dissertations (Hajar, 2018).

Healthcare and legal challenges

In terms of healthcare accessibility, the majority of students who studied in Scotland were satisfied with the healthcare service, where their privacy and cultural habits were being respected. However, they wished there could be better

ways to comprehend the healthcare system in the UK (Ahmed et al., 2010). They also found it challenging to express their feelings in English terms, suggesting that universities may want to introduce healthcare guidance in Arabic language for inclusivity (Ahmed et al., 2010).

Meanwhile, in a study participated by 100 Saudi students in the UK, nearly half of them have appeared to face challenges to understand judicial and legal regulations in the UK (Albhhal & Alotaibi, 2020). Helping them to understand these regulations, especially the differences between Islamic law and Western practices, could help to enhance their experience living in the UK.

Language barriers and communication

Language remains as one of the major obstacles that affects the academic performance of international students in the UK, especially when the student has limited English proficiency (Eze & Inegbedion, 2015). In Arab world, theoretical and humanities majors are usually taught in Arabic language, and this puts extra efforts on Saudi students when they try to understand the related terms and lecturers in UK institutions (عبدالله بن علي الخليفة et al., 2020). For those with scientific majors, language is also reported as a challenge for them when they try to get involved in the scientific community (Al-Qahtani et al., 2022; Badwan, 2015; Monaghan & Gormley, 2023; عبدالله بن علي الخليفة et al., 2020). Although Arabic students would like to improve their English proficiency, it does not help when there are no native English speakers in their classes or in their accommodations (Hajar, 2020). Furthermore, some Arabic students have tried to hide their English unproficiency by avoiding discussions with their peers (Badwan, 2015). Another issue for Arab students is the talking speed and complexity of native English-speaking lecturers. In this context, some students preferred foreign teachers since they can understand their words better and interact more effectively in class (Badwan, 2015). Language proficiency does not only act as a barrier to academic success but also isolates Arab students from forming social connections with their peers, exacerbating feelings of loneliness. More focused language workshops tailored to discipline-specific jargon may prove beneficial, especially for students in technical fields.

The challenges Arab students faced are not homogenous. Gender, socioeconomic background, and regional differences significantly influence how students experience and cope with these difficulties. For instance, Saudi students may experience distinct cultural expectations compared to students from other Arab nations, creating unique barriers to integration. Not only that Arab international students often experience significant acculturative stress when adapting to a new academic and social environment, this stress is compounded by reverse culture shock upon returning home, where they find themselves disconnected from their original cultural norms (Al-Krenawi & Al-Krenawi, 2022).

INTERVENTIONS TO HELP WITH ARAB STUDENTS' CHALLENGES IN THE UK

Interventions have been made by UK universities to minimise the challenges and difficulties faced by Arab international students. In particular, providing scholarships to international students studying in UK universities has been suggested to help self-funded students (Brooks & Waters, 2011). The offer of scholarships is not only limited to university institutions, but also by external funding bodies (Greenaway & Haynes, 2003). Advice to provide financial support can be through specialised advisors in the countries' affairs offices, as well as through university employees who are focused on the Arab demographics rather than a homogenised pool of students (Alyami, 2016).

Guidance interventions

It will be ideal if there were to be more options in university accommodations where gender segregation is applied. Furthermore, providing more guidance about the process of finding student accommodations, and guaranteed accommodations by universities, may save time and alleviate anxiety for students (Miles & Benn, 2016; Monaghan & Gormley, 2023). Orientation and induction sessions are useful for students to get used to the living and academic systems in the UK. Additionally, continuous follow-up with students may significantly help them understand their responsibilities in academia (Rich & Troudi, 2006). For furthering their learning techniques, more online information about a series of "how-to" steps can be made available to further enhance student experiences (Hajar, 2020).

Interventions to enhance cultural experience

UK universities and the government are continuously implementing new strategies to assist international students overcome their transitional period. These include organising more intercultural events, and designing curricula based on global needs (Kelly & Moogan, 2012). Despite these attempts, some international students still struggle with cultural challenges which may affect their academic performance (Presbitero, 2016). Given that most Arab students are Muslims, many of them appreciate that UK universities provide specific spaces for them to perform their Islamic daily activities and foster an environment where they could freely express their faith, particularly for females who wear the hijab (Albhlal & Alotaibi, 2020; Guest et al., 2020; Miles & Benn, 2016). Further efforts could help to enhance the perception of Islam and Arabic society among other students. These strategies include implementing more cultural events organised by Arabic societies, having Arabic/Muslim advisors in the universities, and fostering a culture of respect among students (Albhlal & Alotaibi, 2020; Guest et al., 2020; Miles & Benn, 2016). Events like cultural shows, sports events, and those specifically tailored for Arab students could help alleviate cultural pressures too (Al-Qahtani et al., 2022; Monaghan & Gormley, 2023).

Interventions to improve English language

There is no single solution that fully eradicate language barriers for international students (Eze & Inegbedion, 2015). Regarding cultural interaction, a study in Sheffield University by Zhao and Reilly (2021) showed that there are benefits of using information and communications technology such as instant messaging and translation tools during intercultural communications, and designing new tools may further help students to communicate effectively within the multicultural community (Zhao & Reilly, 2021). For academic communications, many UK universities have already included English language workshops to support their students (Zhao & Reilly, 2021). To improve Arab students' communication during classes, several recommendations can be made, including training native English-speaking lecturers to speak more slowly and use simpler language; ensuring that students understand the meaning of more unfamiliar English terms; providing safe environments for students to speak, regardless of their language proficiency level; and encouraging students' participation in class discussions (Badwan, 2015; Rich & Troudi, 2006).

Interventions to enhance the academic environment

Meanwhile, giving students the authority and freedom to select their master's research project directly improves their enthusiasm and engagement in their research work (Hajar, 2018). Besides, setting expectations and addressing students' responsibilities at the start of the projects can help to avoid ambiguity and confusions amongst Arab students (Hajar, 2018). Creating a safe and supportive environment, holding regular meetings, and taking time to listen to students' needs can encourage Arab students to become more enthusiastic about their projects (Hajar, 2018). In doctoral studies, initiating proper communication plan, ensuring fair distribution of responsibilities between team members, offering comprehensive writing guidance, and holding regular discussion sessions are highly recommended for Arab students to have a positive doctoral experience (Alabdulaziz, 2020).

While the implementation of scholarships and gender-segregated accommodations has alleviated some challenges, their effectiveness has been inconsistent across different regions and demographic groups. Additionally, technology-driven interventions, such as language support apps and virtual cultural orientation programs, present an untapped opportunity for improving student integration. Programs aimed at enhancing intercultural exchanges, such as virtual exchanges, have been shown to support the academic and social integration of international students. Such initiatives are particularly beneficial for Arab students, providing them with opportunities to engage with diverse perspectives while maintaining a connection to their cultural roots (Álvarez et al., 2025).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In general, future research should focus on longitudinal studies that examine the long-term impacts of studying abroad on Arab students' career paths and personal development. Comparative studies with other Western countries could provide valuable insights into how universities can better support international students. Future studies could examine how political and economic shifts in Arab countries influence the academic, social, and psychological experiences of students in the UK. Research could investigate how students from conflict zones or politically unstable regions face additional challenges during their stay in the UK.

Although some studies touch on the use of digital tools, there is limited research on the specific effectiveness of these tools for academic integration for Arab students across different disciplines. Research could investigate the role of digital tools, such as academic webinars or virtual peer groups, in enhancing Arab students' academic integration. Future studies could explore how these tools can be adapted to the needs of students from different disciplines and tailored to their language proficiency levels.

While gender is discussed briefly, there is a lack of in-depth studies that focus on the lived experiences of female Arab students and how gendered expectations affect their academic journey in the UK. Future research could focus on the unique gendered challenges that female Arab students face in the UK, including issues of safety, academic engagement, and social integration. Exploring the role of gender-specific support services and mentorship programs could also help improve the experiences of these students.

There is limited research on the long-term impact of studying in the UK on Arab students' career and life trajectories post-graduation, particularly focusing on how their educational experience in the UK has shaped their professional identity and career opportunities. Further research could explore the career outcomes of Arab students after they graduate, focusing on how studying in the UK affects their job prospects and personal growth. Additionally, examining how their academic experiences in the UK impact their reintegration into their home countries' job markets could provide valuable insights into the return-on-investment of international education.

Finally, many current studies often treat "Arab students" as a monolithic group, without considering the diverse cultural, educational, and social contexts from which they come. More research could include comparative studies between Arab student populations from different countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE, to understand the specific challenges each group faces and how UK universities can provide more tailored support services for each.

CONCLUSION

The expectations and challenges faced by Arab international students in the UK present a complex landscape that requires careful examination and consideration. Before enrolling in a university in the UK, the expectations of Arab students range from acquiring state-of-the-art knowledge to envisioning career advancements

upon their return to their home countries. They also anticipate easy access to university services, supportive staff, and a welcoming academic environment. Upon enrolment, these students encounter numerous challenges that impact their academic and personal experiences. In particular, language constraints pose a significant hurdle, and financial support, especially for self-funded students, leads to stress and anxiety. Accommodation issues and cultural differences further add to the challenges. Additionally, navigating educational rules and learning strategies in a new academic environment can be daunting, particularly for those not familiar with UK academic practices. Cultural and religious differences sometimes result in misunderstandings and feelings of isolation too. Despite these challenges, interventions can be implemented to support Arabic students and enhance their experiences in the UK. Providing financial support through scholarships and having specialised advisors in place can alleviate financial burdens. More accommodation options and guidance can help ease housing concerns. Intercultural events and support for cultural and religious practices can foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity. Increased awareness about learning strategies and academic rules, along with language support initiatives, can aid in academic integration too. Moreover, active supervision and mentoring can provide valuable guidance and support throughout students' academic journeys. By addressing these challenges and implementing supportive measures, UK universities can create a more conducive and inclusive environment for Arabic international students, allowing them to thrive academically and personally during their time in the UK.

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