

Adjustment and Adaptation of Female International Higher Education Students: A Qualitative Study

Zeynep Mercan¹

Abstract

Deciding to be an international student is challenging, and adjusting to a new culture is even more so for women from collectivistic cultures. Despite some attention to women's adjustment and adaptation to different cultures, limited attention has been given to the specific challenges faced by women from diverse collectivistic backgrounds. This qualitative study explored the cultural adaptation experiences of 5 Chinese, 2 Azerbaijani, and 3 Turkish international master's students through semi-structured interviews. Using the thematic approach, four main themes emerged from the data regarding how female students adjust to the new culture: educational adaptation, formation of social groups and language learning, understanding identity and gender, and emotional involvement in the new culture and future planning. The implications for psychological well-being and future career decisions are discussed in detail.

Keywords: *International Students; Adjustment; Adaptation; Female Higher Education students*

Introduction

Over the past century, there has been a dramatic increase in students studying abroad due to advancements in communication and transportation technologies, which have made traveling cheaper and less time-consuming. International students, or sojourners (temporary settlers who will eventually depart) derive benefits and experiences by studying abroad and bring several advantages to their host country (Berry, 1997). The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, BIS, 2013) report indicates that in 2011/2012, international higher education students paid around £3.9 billion for tuition alone, and when combined with living costs and additional spending, the estimated total economic impact on the United Kingdom is approximately £11.3 billion. Moreover, the BIS (Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 2013) report highlights the British government's recognition of the growth in international students joining higher education institutions. Recent reports demonstrate that as of 2021-2022, the UK economy's net benefit from international students is £37.4 billion (Cannings et al., 2023). Economic gains are not the only benefits to the host country; local students also have the opportunity to engage with cultures they might not otherwise encounter (McDonald, 2014). Many students come from diverse family, educational, social, and cultural backgrounds, providing local or "home" students with the opportunity to enhance their communication skills and build cross-cultural networks that would otherwise take years to establish (McDonald, 2014). According to the 2021 Census, there are currently 373,600 international students in the UK, of whom approximately 55% are women and 40% are born in the Middle East and Asia (Noble & Fitch,

¹ Zeynep Mercan, Van Yuzuncu Yil University, Türkiye. E-mail: zeynepmercan@yyu.edu.tr



2023). Therefore, to sustain economic growth and improve the lives of international students, understanding the adjustment and adaptation processes of female international students with Asian backgrounds is crucial.

According to Anderson (1994, as cited in Ramsay, et al., 2006), individuals require a certain level of social adjustment to their host culture to fit into their new environment. Failure to achieve this adjustment can lead international students to experience adverse outcomes such as low grades (Armes & Ward, 1989), distress (Grove & Toribiorn, 1985), poor physical health (Shim et al., 2014), and stress-related somatization (Modin et al., 2015). The adjustment process may be influenced by an individual's cultural intelligence (Karroubi, et al., 2014) and the time spent in the host country (Hannigan, 1988), as well as the cultural distance between the host country and the country of origin (Ward & Kennedy, 1993), and the specific situations in which students find themselves (Lysgaand, 1955).

The impact of cultural orientation on international students' adjustment and happiness is a complex interplay influenced by various factors. Recognizing the challenges of adjustment, universities have implemented various strategies to support international students. According to Bochner et al. (1985), universities often integrate host countries and international students in shared accommodations and organize social events aimed at fostering intercultural interactions (Burdett & Crossman, 2012; Lowinger, et al., 2014). The goal of these events is to mitigate homesickness and facilitate a sense of place attachment—an emotional bond to the new environment (Lee & Pistole, 2014; Terrazas-Carrillo, et al. 2014).

According to place attachment theory developing friendships with co-national or host country peers can reduce homesickness and distress (Low & Altman, 1992, as cited in Johnstone & Conroy, 2008). Although studies indicate that co-national social groups initially serve as sources of support and stress reduction for international students (Ward, et al. 2005), overreliance on these groups may impede long-term adjustment, particularly in terms of language acquisition and integration into the host culture, as they might not be open to initiating communication with host country students (Lu & Hsu, 2008).

Enhancing English proficiency is crucial for fostering a stronger connection between individuals and their host country (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Nyland and colleagues (2013) emphasized the importance of active networking for international students in establishing friendships, highlighting language proficiency as a crucial factor in this process. Perceived language proficiency is consistently linked to the frequency of communication with host country students (Yeh & Inose, 2003; Liu & Rollock, 2011). Acculturative stress, defined as stress resulting from encountering unfamiliar cultural issues (Berry et al., 1987, as cited in Yeh & Inose, 2003), is significantly influenced by the perceived language proficiency of international students. Heiman and Precel (2003) noted that academic stress reduces learning capacity and impedes language development among international students. The reluctance of international students to engage in communication stems from a perceived lack of proficiency, which creates a self-perpetuating cycle of stress and failure to adapt for the students (Lu & Hsu, 2008).

Diener (2000) highlighted that individuals from individualistic or collectivistic cultures perceive happiness differently, which sets the stage for understanding how students from different backgrounds adapt to new environments. Gender is also an important aspect that can be used to predict adaptation behaviors. For example, female Asian students generally



exhibit better adaptation and socialization skills than male students (Lee, et al. 2009; Lowinger et al., 2014). However, cultural differences between host countries and countries of origin can also lead to feelings of alienation among female students who comply with their own cultural norms (Lee & Pistole, 2014).

On the other hand, Turkish students, despite living in a country with a blend of Eastern religious influences and Western governmental structures, do not neatly fit into traditional cultural classifications like individualism or collectivism (Göregenli, 1995; Erben, 2009). Turkey demonstrates characteristics of both individualistic tendencies, especially among its educated population, and collectivistic values, particularly within family contexts (Göregenli, 1995; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1996). Thus, the adaptation challenges they face might differ from those faced by Chinese students. The number of students that China and Turkey send differs vastly, potentially influencing their adjustment processes (Swami, 2009; Silva, et al. 2012). Also, having a smaller number of Turkic-speaking students could force Turkic-speaking students to form international connections instead of trying to find other Turkic students to befriend in the UK.

This study explores the adaptation experiences of female international students from contrasting Asian countries within the higher education system in the UK. Specifically, this study investigates how Chinese and Turkic-speaking female students form social networks, navigate homesickness, and manage language proficiency challenges in the UK integrate into academic and social spheres. Comparing these experiences will shed light on the role of co-national support in facilitating socialization and adjustment processes.

Research Questions:

- Q1) What are the lived experiences of international students as they negotiate friendship and wider socialization out with their home country?
- Q2) How does the perceived success or limits of this experience impact their wider adjustment and assimilation into life in their home country?
- Q3) What are the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to either Chinese or Turkic nationality in the context of friendship and wider socialization?

Methodology

Participants

This qualitative study involved Asian female students currently enrolled at a university in the United Kingdom, all of whom were international students. Students from Turkey and Azerbaijan were grouped due to similarities in ethnicity and language. Selection of Turkish students was influenced by their relatively small representation in the UK, with only 1,741 Turkish higher education students recorded in 2010-2011 (National Educational Statistics, 2013) compared with 87,895 Chinese students studying between 2013 and 2014 (UK Council of International Affairs, 2015).

A total of 10 single international female students participated in the study, comprising 5 Chinese, 2 Azerbaijani, and 3 Turkish students. Their ages ranged from 21 to 28 years (Mean=24.3, SD=2.06), and all were pursuing postgraduate studies in the UK. Participants were recruited using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling methods.

Procedure

Participants received an informed consent form before the interviews. Before data collection, a pilot interview was conducted to ensure the coherence and clarity of the interview questions and to allow the researcher to refine her interview technique. The pilot interview was excluded from the final research analysis. All participants were given a code name to make the analysis and reporting easier and to protect their anonymity.

Semi-Structured Interview. Participants were informed of the tape-recorded interviews and were assured of confidentiality. Participants signed a consent form indicating their voluntary participation. Prior to the interview, the participants completed a brief demographic survey on gender, age, country of origin, and educational level. The semi-structured interviews consisted of 13 open-ended questions (i.e. Could you tell me the reason for you decided to study abroad?) were designed to explore participants' experiences of adjusting to a new country and culture. Questions were adapted to facilitate discussion and address language barriers. Additional questions were posed based on individual responses, resulting in unique interview dynamics. The interview durations ranged from 18 to 50 minutes. Voice recordings were transcribed using "Express Scribe Transcription Software," and analysis was conducted using NVivo. To ensure confidentiality, the names of all participants were changed in the transcriptions.

Thematic Approach. The analysis employed a thematic approach inspired by Braun and Clarke (2006), facilitating an in-depth exploration of complex themes. Semi-structured interviews enabled a dialog between the researcher and participants, allowing flexibility to explore emerging topics (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith, 2010). The analysis proceeded through three stages: (1) transcription review for accuracy, (2) detailed reading with annotated notes for each transcript, and (3) thematic development highlighting differences between the Chinese and Turkish participants.

Results

The analysis yielded four main themes; Table 1 presents these themes along with their respective subordinate themes. Each theme is comprehensively explored in this section, supported by verbatim quotes from the interviews.

Table 1

Main themes of Female Higher Education students' adjustment and subordinates

Main Themes	Subordinate themes
Theme 1 Educational Adaptation	1.1 Comparing the Educational System of Home Country and UK 1.2 Home and UK 1.3 Studying Peers
Theme 2 Forming Social Groups and Language Adaptation	2.1 Socialization and Friends Choices 2.2 The Language and Acculturation
Theme 3 Identity and Culture	
Theme 4 Emotional Adaptation	

Theme 1 Educational Adaptation

Educational adaptation has emerged as an important aspect of selecting countries to study with experienced differences.



Theme 1.1. Comparing the Educational System of the Home Country and UK. All participants had a Bachelor's degree in education, with only one participant having obtained a Master's degree in her home country. Consequently, when asked to provide a comparison, respondents hesitated, noting the difficulty of doing so. However, the participants expressed strong views when discussing the educational systems of their respective countries compared to that of the UK. A recurring observation from both cultural perspectives was the crowded nature of classrooms and the lack of interaction between students and instructors. Turkic students particularly appreciated the less crowded environment in the UK as a positive aspect of their educational experience.

"...[In] Turkey, at least when I was in my Bachelor's, we were like 600 people in one class, so there were people I never, met... in person talk[ed] to my professors, so they never knew my name..."
(Jessica-Turkic)

When compiling the responses of Chinese students, common themes emerged regarding the competitive nature of Chinese education. Participants frequently commented on the longer school days and the requirement to learn all information during class time, without the option of completing assignments at home. One participant noted that each student's grades were publicly accessible, thus contributing to a highly transparent academic environment. The shift to a more private and new learning system in the UK may have had a negative impact on these participants, as almost all expressed dissatisfaction with their academic results.

"...Almost everything you need to learn is [thought] by your teacher [in China]." (Cara-Chinese)

"...in China may be we pay more attention to teaching because we have much more classes in the undergraduate..." (Eva-Chinese)

"...[In] China, some people, your colleagues or your classmates, know your grade, and I think in China the atmosphere for study is [stricter]...when I was in China, I [was] getting higher scores..."
(Daisy-Chinese)

Although difficulties with homework were reported by both groups, both groups stated that the information they were receiving in the UK was familiar, and one student from the Turkish group, Heidi, stated that the school system was similar to what she observed in the UK. The participant believed this similarity was because her university was specifically adapting the system of the United Kingdom. The feeling of similarity may have a positive effect on her academic improvement.

"[UK] University where I study, this university education system is similar to my old university where I [studied] in my country, but in our country, other universities' education system[s] w[ere] not like my way. I [studied], yes their assessment was always like with [a] the test method, but here [a] the writing method. My university was alone [in] [universities] in Azerbaijan [in that it was] based on [the] UK education system..." (Heidi-Turkic)

Theme 1.2. Studying with Peers. Studies have reported that successful adaptation to new learning environments requires the concurrent development familiarity with the surroundings, including the formation of friendships (Lee & Pistole, 2014). In this sense, the distinct difference between Chinese and Turkish students emerges from this subordinate theme. Except for one person from each group who indicated that they preferred studying alone, the general pattern was in favor of having somebody else study with. Chinese students reported

forming close and consistent peer relationships with those from their own countries. Turkish students were also motivated to form peer networks with those from their own country but were often unable to do so due to the lower proportion of peers from Turkey. Only one Turkish student reported that she had a study partner from the same program and in the same accommodation as her.

“...We have [a] three person group, we all talk about our essay and just like exams or we will divide the task...” (Bella-Chinese)

“...I think I [would] study hard if I had a study partner, but I do not have one, so most of the time I ask my friends if they are going to [the] library to go with them...” (Jessica-Turkic)

Theme 2 Forming Social Groups and Language Adaptation

Theme 2.1. Socialization and Friends’ Choices. There is a clear difference between Turkish and Chinese students in terms of socialization with other students, whereas for native UK students, the majority of participants adopt the same degree of diffidence toward host country students. Participants stated that they did not feel sufficiently confident in their speaking abilities to communicate with native students, and as a result, they did not expand their peer network.

“...for native speakers they always talk too quick, so it is difficult for me...” (Bella-Chinese)

“...with native peers I do not have that much relationship, because to communicate with them you need to have proper English, and otherwise they may feel bored...” (Faith-Turkic)

Fait and Bella had given them the mind-set and anxiety about being left behind in the conversations. The word “bored” indicates Faith’s perception of her own self-shaming of her language abilities. She tries to follow-up conversations, and when she feels behind while understanding, she starts blaming herself and cutting contact with people with better English.

Only two Turkish students reported having a preference for talking with native students and stated another type of language-related reasoning; however, when questioned about their friend’s choice, they did not mention any connection in their private life.

“...I prefer to speak with native speakers. I would like, for example, to hear each word’s pronunciation from their speaking-it is better for me...” (Heidi-Turkic)

Heidi thinks every conversation is a process of learning. She prefers to stay in conversations, so she does better with time. She is aware of her lack of knowledge; however, unlike others she chooses to face them.

Living in the U.K., participants desired to have more connections with native speakers, but this desire was not reflected in reality. Daisy expresses her desire to form friendships with UK students but is unable to form meaningful friendships. She identifies the feeling of differentiation she gets from Caucasian people; she does not classify them in a group with herself. As apart from sharing school related activities; Daisy makes no effort to be with Europeans and just describes the situation as having no connection with them.

“...students from [the] UK or other European countries, I think the relationship just at the surface, like all you, we are in a group, we are the same group, or we were [finishing] the project together. [But] I think we never share living, the things in life, yeah, because maybe we are just friend[s], we



are just classmates but not friends, I think at the beginning I really [wanted] to make friends with [them]..." (Daisy-Chinese)

More Turkish students reported having Chinese friends than Chinese students who had international friends. The mention of international friends was also different; while the Chinese students reported international students as casual acquaintances, whereas Turkish students reported deeper international friendships.

"I think in my personal life and personal life, yes." I am getting [on with] them well. Outside the school sometimes we had lunch together..." (Alice)

"I have really close friends here, and I mean one friend from China, one friend from Egypt, one friend from Argentina, and they are my best friends ..." (Gwen)

A Chinese student gave a reason for not having international friends. She described a fear of "cultural conflict" since she experienced a situation she referred to as "conflict". Alice thinks that by communicating with a person from an unknown culture, she can hurt them. As a person who values her traditions as an "unlucky color" might have negatively affected her psychology because she believed the object was unlucky. Even though she made herself believe this was an unfortunate coincidence, her second "conflict", in which a person refused to eat her treat for religious reasons, increased her caution toward socializing with other cultures.

"...maybe communicating with them is still difficult, kind of difficult for me because. It is not an automatic skill... She did not eat pork, yes, but a dumpling is made of pork. She did not say anything but others told me. I thought, wow, it is a cultural conflict... This girl sent me a card to celebrate yeah, but the card has a white cover like the paper, and just say[s] that in Chinese culture we prefer red, especially for the spring festival, and white is for something gone... we prefer to wear red, and prefer [when] red comes to our life [on] that day, so when she sent me the white envelope with the card..." (Alice-Chinese)

Azerbaijani students from a small community in the UK also indicated that they prefer to stay away from people from their own country, thinking that their connection with them has negative effects on their language development. One student also reported that her connection with her peers from her home country helped her feel less free. Azerbaijan has collectivistic family values that might affect students who prefer to stay in groups and act according to their home country's values. However, when female students refuse to comply with their home country's values, they report keeping people from their home country.

"Actually, I do not have that m[any] peers here [from] my country, but when I was in London, I was trying to get away from them, to be honest, because of English. Because if you are in a different country, you need to learn [a] a new language, so that is why you should not speak in your language, just to learn proper English and the culture of the new country..." (Faith-Turkic)

"...they do not like that I am talking to them or interacting with them, but I know like, just pay attention. They [are] more traditional, and they want to do everything in the way that we have back home, but I do not want [to]..." (Gwen-Turkic)

Theme 2.2. Language and Acculturation. Chinese students reported choosing the UK because of the language, and they refused to communicate with home country students again because of their perceived language proficiency. The students with the most reported

connection with other cultures in English reported the most improvement; however, the general language improvement pattern for Chinese students was improvement in reading and writing because they are continuously using those two for studying.

“...I think my reading and writing and listening have much improved after I [studied in the] UK, but maybe because I am not confident to speak to others so my spoken English is still weak...”

(Eva-Chinese)

In addition, confidence in using the second language for social interaction questions revealed individual differences rather than national differences. Although all participants reported having started with a lack of confidence, two Turkish and three Chinese students reported still having a lack of confidence when talking to foreigners. However, other language abilities like writing or reading reportedly improved for everyone.

“...first when I came, it was difficult because you did not know how to talk. It is like you feel shy, but now you are completely fine. I have no problems about that.” (Gwen-Turkic)

Almost all participants accepted that their language was improving through interaction with other people, apart from feeling less confident in talking with natives and finding the conversations challenging. A Chinese student reported saying that she received emotional support from one of her Chinese friends, that making mistakes is “OK”. She did not report actually having native friends, but she stated that she would be able to talk with local people without social fear.

“...friends told me it is OK because the grammar, the vocabulary maybe is not so important, [that] you can express yourself is the most important, and in most cases people can [understand] what you want to express ...” (Daisy-Chinese)

The lack of friends leads the participants to a feeling of being with native students. Some participants reported feeling alienated by native students. Their self-evaluation of English proficiency was higher than that of most participants; thus, it may not be related to their speaking abilities. Both of them agreed that the people who made them feel alienated actually did not do it intentionally or were part of racial discrimination. The point was that they were second language speakers; they fell behind in conversations with natives, and natives did not realize their discomfort with the situation. This situation might explain why even students with high self-reported proficiency do not have friendships with local students.

“...have I ever felt discriminated [against?] I think it was not [in] particular because of my [nationality,] but I felt discriminated [against] because I am [a] foreigner [from] time to time... [When] we [were] having an academic discussion. I was slower than the others in terms of understanding... I think maybe they were not aware of it, but at some point, they just ignore you because you are not keeping up with the discussion...” (Jessica-Turkic)

Theme 3 Identity and Culture

Three Chinese participants identified themselves as traditional Chinese, whereas the others regarded themselves as more modern than their friend groups. Participants with cultural identification reported having more connections with cultural celebrations, and only one of them, Daisy, reported not celebrating Chinese festivals, such as the Chinese New Year or Spring Festival, due to their college workload.. She also expressed disappointment at not being able to celebrate a Western holiday in the UK.



“...when I was young I really want[ed] to experience Christmas Day in Western countries like [the] UK...” (Daisy-Chinese)

The sharing behavior might indicate the collectivist values and traditional connectedness of students; when they are unable to reflect the nature of their traditions, they share it with a larger crowd. On the other hand, Turkish students reported no interest in a holiday without their families.

“festivals are important because it’s an opportunity to meet family...” (Jessica-Turkic)

Theme 4 Emotional Adaptation

Participants expressed emotional struggles in adapting to the new culture emotionally. The biggest aspect that has affected adaptation to the UK is homelessness for the family, rather than the country as a whole. All participants expressed a rise in their homesickness when they felt pressured by their classwork or exams.

“...it is not dependent on time, you know. I feel very tentative and I should finish the exam. I want to go back to China...” (Eva-Chinese)

All participants reported having some type of connection with their parents via cell phones or other technology to allow them to talk face to face. Apart from talking with their families, some participants reported crying or engaging in other activities that would suspend their attention from feeling homesick. Turkish students also reported calling a Turkish friend from another part of the UK if they felt homesick in the afternoon, while Chinese students reported meeting with friends. This could be because, in times of homesickness, students’ need for a co-national companion is increasing.

“...there is a Turkish friend of mine she studying in another city in UK so I call her and I talk her...” (Jessica-Turkic)

Although the participants perceived their education in the U.K. as an opportunity, none reported a strong desire to remain in the U.K. Turkish students wish to return to Turkey due to feeling overwhelmed by the UK education system. Turkish students also stated that having a UK diploma in Turkey is more advantageous than having a Turkish educational background in the UK when they are job hunting.

“...I came here [because] I was planning to do my PhD here, but after I came here I have change[d] my mind... I change and I [got] really scared...” (Faith-Turkic)

Turkish participants also reported more physical illnesses and indicated that they wanted to return because Turkey is causing the illness. No Chinese students reported any physical illnesses although some of them came from warmer parts of China. Thus, it is speculated that Turkish students may be experiencing somatization due to lack of co-national support.

“...I think it affected my health because I have some health issues here in the UK...” (Jessica-Turkic)

Participants accepted the difficulties of trying to stay in the UK for non-European people, and a Chinese student stated that if she were to stay in a foreign country, it would be somewhere like Australia, where it would be easier for Chinese people to obtain jobs or permission to stay. Thus, this might mean that students already have a specific acculturation

goal in mind, and when they reach a satisfactory level, they stop socializing. This could be a defense mechanism for them to be happier when they return.

"If I don't want to stay in China anymore [in] the future, I don't think it is a good [idea to] try to learn to study in [the] UK. for example, studying in Canada or Australia you have the opportunity to [stay] in the future" (Alice-Chinese)

Discussion

The aim of this study is to examine experiences affecting the acculturation and assimilation processes of female international students in higher education and to determine the importance of having friends from their home countries in their socio-cultural adaptation to the UK. The present study demonstrates that language proficiency, social environment, and academic improvement shape students' adjustment rates.

This study explored socialization patterns and academic experiences of Chinese and Turkish international students in higher education settings. Participants engaged primarily in two types of social interactions: close friendships with peers they spent significant time with, typically within school or accommodations, and acquaintanceships with others who they met occasionally. They reported closer relationships with accommodation mates than with classmates. Collaborative efforts in multinational project groups were common but rarely developed into enduring friendships beyond academic contexts, which aligns with existing literature suggesting limited cross-cultural friendships among international students (Bochner et al., 1985).

Regarding language proficiency, higher proficiency levels were correlated with significant improvements in speaking skills, whereas others noted advancements in academic writing, reading, and listening comprehension, which was consistent with the findings of Yeh and Inose (2003). Chinese students tended to socialize more within their communities, utilizing cultural events and support from fellow nationals to mitigate loneliness, despite experiencing occasional homesickness. In contrast, Turkish students reported befriending a broader range of international students but often felt isolated because of perceived cultural and linguistic barriers.

Academically, Chinese students benefited from cooperative study groups with fellow nationals, which facilitated learning and reduced academic pressure through shared study techniques and workload distribution, which was in line with the literature (Burdett & Crossman, 2012; Lowinger, et al. 2014). In contrast, Turkish students reported fewer cooperative study opportunities, possibly because language barriers hinder effective communication. These findings underscore the complex interplay among international students' social integration, language proficiency, and academic adaptation in higher education contexts.

The study revealed that Chinese students derive psychological support from their large community, but Rees and Klapper (2007) also reported that they struggle with spoken language skills despite having academic advantages. Turkish students, often identifying as "white," socialize more with their local peers but rarely form close friendships, reflecting cultural and geographic proximity that does not guarantee social integration. Both groups experienced perceived discrimination due to language barriers and cultural differences, which affected their sense of belonging and integration into local culture. Further research is required



to understand the interaction dynamics of international students and their impact on cultural adaptation in educational settings.

This study underscores that Chinese and Turkish students share common study abroad goals but adopt distinct approaches to cross-cultural interactions. Both students prioritize graduation, language proficiency enhancement, and enjoying their international experiences. Chinese students' tendency to exclusively socialize with compatriots and exercise caution often hampers interactions with local peers, thus limiting their language growth. Conversely, Turkish students forge more diverse local and international friendships despite grappling with cultural barriers, but this does not mean stronger social adaptation. Language disparities between Turkish students and their peers foster psychological disconnect and heightened loneliness, which is exacerbated by limited connections with fellow nationals.

To support international students, universities can adapt the findings of this study. For example, diversifying housing arrangements to encourage cross-cultural interactions and incorporating students based on host culture with international students might improve their social adaptation and consequently their language skills. Cultural meetings, celebrations of cross-cultural festivals, and integrated events could also enhance social integration with peers from their home countries, improving their sense of belonging to the university. However, the study acknowledges limitations: economic factors, including financial stress, were not explored but likely impact students' overall adjustment and well-being differently based on their funding sources and cultural expectations.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous study has investigated the adaptation of Turkish and Chinese students to the UK. Future research could build on these findings and investigate the adaptation of Chinese students in Turkey or Turkish students in China to provide further insights into cross-cultural differences.

References

- Armes, K. & Ward, C. (1989). Cross-cultural transitions and sojourner adjustment in Singapore. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 129 (2), 273-275.
- Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology*, 46(1), 5-34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x>
- Bochner, S.; Hutnik, N. & Furnham, A. (1985). The friendship patterns of overseas and host students in an Oxford student residence. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 125 (6), 689-694.
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Burdett, J. & Crossman, J. (2012). Engaging international students: An analysis of the Australian universities' quality agency (AUQA) reports. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 20 (3), 207- 222.
- Cannings, J., Halterbeck, M., & Conlon, G. (2023). The benefits and costs of international higher education students to the UK economy. In *Higher Education Policy Institute*. London Economics. Retrieved August 10, 2023, from <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Full-Report-Benefits-and-costs-of-international-students.pdf>
- Department for Business, Innovation & Skills. (2014, July 10). *BIS annual report and accounts 2013 to 2014*. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bis-annual-report-and-accounts-2013-to-2014>
- Diener, E. (2000). Subjective well-being: the science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 34-43.
- Ebren, F. (2009). Susceptibility to interpersonal influences: A study in Turkey. *Social Behavior And Personality*, 37(8), 1051-1064.

- Goregenli, M. (1995). Individualism-collectivism orientations in the Turkish culture: A preliminary study [Kültürümüz açısından bireycilik-toplulukçuluk eğilimleri: Bir başlangıç çalışması]. *Turkish Journal of Psychology*, 10(35), 1-14.
- Grove, C. L., & Torbiörn, I. (1985). A new conceptualization of intercultural adjustment and the goals of training. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 9(2), 205–233. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(85\)90008-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(85)90008-2)
- Hannigan, T. P. (n.d.). Homesickness and acculturation stress in the international student. In M. A. L. V. Van Tilburg & A. J. J. M. Vingerhoets (Eds.), *Psychological aspects of geographical moves: Homesickness and acculturation stress* (pp. 63–72). Amsterdam University Press
- Heiman, T., & Prechel K. (2003). Students with learning disabilities in higher education: academic strategies profile. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 36 (3), 248-258
- Johnstone, M. L., & Conroy D. M. (2008). Place Attachment: The Social Dimensions of the Retail Environment and the Need for Further Exploration. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 35, 381-386.
- Kağıtçıbaşı, C. (1996). The autonomous-relational self: A new synthesis [Özerk-ilişkisel benlik: Yeni bir sentez]. *Turkish Journal of Psychology*, 11, 36-43.
- Karroubi, M., Hadinejad, A. and Mahmoudzadeh, S. M. (2014). A study on relationship between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment in tour management. *Management Science Letters*. 4, 1233–1244.
- Lee, J., & Pistole, M. (2014). International Student Sociocultural Adaptation: Gossip and Place Attachment Contributions. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 36(4), 345–359. <https://doi.org/10.17744/mehc.36.4.0402867150372t21>
- Lee, S. A., Park, H. S., & Kim, W. (2009). Gender differences in international students' adjustment. *College Student Journal*, 43(4), 1217–1227.
- Lowinger, R. J., He, Z., Lin M. & Chang, M. (2014). The impact of academic self-efficacy acculturation difficulties and language abilities on procrastination behavior in Chinese international students. *College Student Journal*, 48 (1), 141-152.
- Lu, Y., & Hsu, C. (2008). Willingness to Communicate in Intercultural Interactions between Chinese and Americans. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 37(2), 75–88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475750802533356>
- Lui, P. P., & Rollock, D. (2011). Acculturation and psychosocial adjustment among southeast Asian and Chinese immigrants: the effects of domain-specific goals. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 3 (2), 79–90.
- Lysgaand, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fulbright grantees visiting the United States. *International Social Science Bulletin*, 7 (1) 45- 53
- McDonald, I. (2014). Supporting international students in UK higher education institutions. *Perspectives Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 18(2), 62–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603108.2014.909900>
- Modin, B., Karvonen, S., Rahkonen, O., & Östberg, V. (2014). School performance, school segregation, and stress-related symptoms: comparing Helsinki and Stockholm. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 26(3), 467–486. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09243453.2014.969738>
- National Educational Statistics (2013). International education–global growth and prosperity: an accompanying analytical narrative. Retrieved August 01, 2023, from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/340601/bis-13-1082-international-education-accompanying-analytical-narrative-revised.pdf
- Noble, S. & Fitch, B. (2023). *The international student population in England and Wales: Census 2021 - Office for National Statistics*. Retrieved August 01, 2023, from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/people-populationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/theinternationalstudentpopulationinenglandandwalescensus2021/2023-04-17>
- Nyland, C., Forbes-Mewett, H., & Härtel C. E. J. (2013). Governing the international student experience: lessons from the Australian international education model. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 12 (4), 656–673.



- Ramsay, S., Barker, M., & Jones, E. (1999). Academic Adjustment and Learning Processes: a comparison of international and local students in first-year university. *Higher Education Research & Development, 18*(1), 129–144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0729436990180110>
- Rees, J., & Klapper, J. (2007). Analysing and evaluating the linguistic benefit of residence abroad for UK foreign language students. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 32*(3), 331–353. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602930600801860>
- Shim, G., Freund, H., Stopsack, M., Kammerer, A., & Barnow, S. (2014). Acculturation, self-construal, mental health, and physical health: an explorative study of East Asian students in Germany. *International Journal of Psychology, 49* (4), 295–303.
- Silva, L. C., Campbell, K., & Wright, D. W. (2012). Intercultural relationships: entry, adjustment, and cultural negotiations. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies, 43*(6), 857–870. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.43.6.857>.
- Smith, J.A. Osborn, M. (2007). Pain as an assault on the self: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the psychological impact of chronic benign low back pain. *Psychology & Health, 22*, 517–534.
- Smith, J. A. (2010). Evaluating the contribution of interpretative phenomenological analysis. *Health Psychology Review, 5* (1), 9–27.
- Swami, V. (2009). Predictors of sociocultural adjustment among sojourning Malaysian students in Britain. *International Journal Of Psychology, 44* (4), 266–273.
- Terrazas-Carrillo, E. C., Hong, J. Y., & Pace, T. M. (2014) Adjusting to new places: international student adjustment and place attachment. *Journal of College Student Development, 55*, 693-706
- UK Council of International Affairs (2015). International student statistics: UK higher education. Retrieved February 01, 2016, from <http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Info-for-universities-colleges--schools/Policy-research--statistics/Research--statistics/International-students-in-UK-HE/>
- Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2005). The psychology of culture shock. In *Routledge eBooks* (2nd ed.). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203992258>
- Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1993). Where's the “culture” in cross-cultural transition? Comparative studies of sojourner adjustment. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology 24*, 221–249.
- Yeh, C. J., & Inose, M. (2003). International students' reported English fluency, social support satisfaction, and social connectedness as predictors of acculturative stress. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 16*(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0951507031000114058>