Socio-cultural and Academic Adaptation by International Students: An Impact Study in Indian Context

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the socio-cultural and academic adaptation of international students in the Indian context, employing a convenience sampling method. The research utilizes various statistical tools, including the chi-square test, descriptive analysis, and regression analysis to analyse the collected data. The study tries to find the relationship between socio-cultural and academic adaptation among international students and aims to reveal significant results indicative of the challenges and successes in their overall adjustment. The use of convenience sampling ensures a diverse representation of participants, allowing for a comprehensive examination of adaptation experiences. The application of the chi-square test helps in assessing associations between socio-cultural and academic variables. Descriptive analysis and graphical representation aid in understanding and measuring the status and mood of the respondents. The interpretation of findings sheds light on key factors influencing adaptation, contributing valuable insights for academic institutions and support services. The study explores some of the impactful factors, in the adaptation journey, providing a basis for tailored interventions and support mechanisms for international students in the Indian educational landscape.

Introduction

Knowledge is a vital part of India's cultural story, covering ancient wisdom to modern achievements. This historical emphasis on intellectual capital establishes a symbiotic relationship between migration and education. The migration phenomenon is not unique to contemporary India; it has happened throughout history. As far back as human civilization itself, scholars travelled geographical boundaries to discover new things and gain knowledge (Cohen, 1995). Ancient Indian centers of learning, such as Takshashila in 5 B.C. and Nalanda in the first to fourth century AD, exemplify this tradition. At its peak, Nalanda was a top choice for students and scholars from many countries like China, Greece, Persia, Korea, and Central Asia, creating a diverse global academic community. Despite the absence of targeted policies, India's age-old academic reputation sustained its appeal to international students in the years following independence.

Where India's vibrant threads meet, in Odisha's whispers of wisdom, sleeps a forgotten titan – Pushpagiri. Before Nalanda became famous for academic discussions, Pushpagiri was a source of knowledge in Odisha around the 3rd century BC. This intellectual hub attracted scholars from distant places, where the corridors echoed with discussions on Chinese philosophy, Tibetan tantras, and Japanese calligraphy. Within its premises, the wisdom of Odisha seamlessly blended with global knowledge. The cross-cultural interactions made Pushpagiri a global hub of learning in ancient times.

After the 4th century, Nalanda and Puspagiri experienced a decline in their reputation as prominent centers of education. Consequently, there was a noticeable decrease in the influx of students from various nations seeking education at these renowned institutions. After Independence, due to less Government intervention and interest in attracting foreign students and collecting their data, no such reservoir of data could be made in the past. As criteria to improve their rankings to come out Globally, Indian Universities gradually started to attract foreign students to enroll in their institutions. The data presented on the Government website shows that there, was a gradual increase in the number of foreign students enrolled in Indian universities as well as from Universities in Odisha from 2012 to 2020. The database shows the number of foreign students in 2012 was 34,774 in India and 23 in Odisha. At the end of 2020, it has reached 48035 in India and 2180 in Odisha. By 2020, there was a rise of 38% in Foreign students in Indian Universities and a remarkable rise of 9378.26% in foreign students in various Universities in Odisha. Students across all levels, from integrated programs to doctoral research, engage in a variety of academic streams.

With the influx of international students from various parts of the world, it is critical to investigate the influence of their presence on the social and academic dynamics of Indian educational institutions. Understanding the challenges and opportunities that international students encounter during their adaptation process can provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders in the field of higher education and can develop more effective support systems and strategies to ensure the holistic adaptation and success of these students. This collaborative effort between students and educational institutions will not only benefit the students themselves but also promote greater cultural understanding and global connections within the Indian educational landscape.

Past studies on the education of international students have mainly concentrated on educational administration and cross-cultural adjustment in a broader context. However, there has been limited focus on sociocultural adaptation and satisfaction among international students in a specific context. Ongoing research stresses the significance of social support and the impact of support services provided by the university in aiding the satisfaction of international students within Odisha. Thus, the objective of this research is to investigate the factors that influence the academic and social experiences of international students in the host country.

Literature Review

The decision-making process influencing international students is a complex interplay of push and pull factors, encompassing both motivations to study abroad and attractions to specific destinations (Jianvittayakit, 2012). Gamage et al. (University of Newcastle, Australia) conducted a study examining service quality perceptions in Thai and Japanese private institutions and identified seven key predictors of student satisfaction: education, social, technological, economic, housing, safety, and prestige. Similarly, Suh Li Phang's research highlighted three primary factors affecting international students' choices – communication, location, and social aspects – emphasizing the significance of online and offline communication, study destination appeal, reputation, available programs, language, international atmosphere, and costs.

Arambewela and Hall (2008) employed a structural equation model to assess student satisfaction, revealing strong predictive relationships among education, social life, technology, economy, housing, safety, and prestige. The concept of cultural distance, as articulated by Ward (1996), signifies the disparities between the culture of origin and the destination, with greater dissimilarities indicating higher cultural distance. Samovar and Porter (1991) illustrated the maximum sociocultural differences between Western and Asian countries, exemplified by the United States and China.

Empirical evidence underscores a robust relationship between cultural distance and psychosocial distress during cross-cultural transitions (Ward, 1996). Blass, Jasman, and Shelley's (2010) study on international students in the UK underscores diverse prior experiences, including exposure to different educational systems, cultural settings, and languages. Barber, Donnelly, and Rizvi (2013) noted social environmental challenges faced by foreign national

students, encompassing difficulties in adapting to a new culture, language barriers, and communication issues.

In the realm of sociocultural challenges, comparable studies suggest that international students often encounter limited social support, resulting in heightened feelings of loneliness and homesickness (Heng, 2017; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). Rudd (1990) posited that transitioning individuals seek social support by cultivating new friendships in unfamiliar environments, and the absence of such support amplifies feelings of hopelessness and stress (Leong, 2015). Acculturative literature underscores the impact of personality traits, language proficiency, and effective communication on students' sociocultural adjustment (Chennamsetti, 2020; Jackson et al., 2013; Mahmood & Burke, 2018).

Consequently, drawing insights from these studies, the present research formulates the following hypotheses:

(H_{01}): There is no statistically significant association between duration in the present university and satisfaction in the academic program.
(H_{02}): There is no statistically significant association between work experience and access to resources.
(H_{03}): There is no statistically significant association between pre-departure orientation and change tends to belongingness.
(H_{04}): There is no statistically significant association between financial support and comparison between home and host country.

(H_{05}): There is no statistically significant association between traveling abroad and ease of communication in the local language.
(H_{06}): There is no statistically significant association between age and challenge in the Indian academic curriculum.
(H_{07}): There is no statistically significant association between work experience and challenges with the Indian academic curriculum.

Methodology

The study employs a quantitative survey method of research. The primary data consists of responses from 114 international students from different countries. The students were enrolled in full-time higher education programs in three selected universities namely KIIT, SOA, and CGU. The initial phase of responses comprised 132 responses out of which 18 responses were found to be irrelevant for the study. Thus, the final sample consists of 114 respondents. This gave a return rate of 86% (n=114).

The study adopts convenience sampling for data collection. The purpose of using convenience sampling is the quick availability of responses from the selected universities. The survey was conducted during the academic year 2023-24. The respondents consisted mostly of students from various developing countries of Asia and Africa.

Analysis

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Gender	114	1	2	1.18	.389
Age	114	1	4	1.57	.852
M_Status	114	1	2	1.85	.358
Duration_pr_Unv	114	1	3	2.09	.815
High_edu	114	1	4	2.16	.858
Formal_edu_home	114	10	20	13.96	2.273
Travelled_abroad	114	1	2	1.74	.442
Work_exp	114	1	2	1.51	.502
Work_exp_year	114	0	4	1.31	1.546
Financial_support_India	114	1	2	1.76	.427
Financial_support_host	114	1	2	1.51	.502
Edu_exp_meet	114	1	4	2.93	1.260
Predepart_orient	114	1	2	1.77	.421
Mentorship_Ind_insti	114	1	2	1.39	.489
Current_edu	114	1	3	1.61	.847

| Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Study_mat	114	1	5	3.96	1.441
Tech._availability	114	1	5	3.85	1.403
Accessible_resource_sup	114	1	5	3.35	1.105
Change_academ_env	114	1	5	3.30	1.021
Language_support_app	114	1	3	1.90	.977
Conf_adopt_academ_env	114	1	5	3.57	.902
Change_tendto_belonging	114	1	5	3.25	.974
Satisficat_acdem_program	114	1	5	3.75	.860
Current_to_home_Rank_compar	114	1	5	3.44	.903
Challenge_Ind_academ_curriculm	114	1	5	2.89	.935
Soc_activity_participation	114	1	4	2.11	.880
Interact_comfort_diverse_stud	114	1	5	3.78	.817
Challenge_making_friend	114	1	5	1.70	.892
Support_service_by_Ind_insti	114	1	5	3.45	.951
Stress_culture_change	114	1	5	2.01	1.179
University_support_deal_difficulty	114	1	5	3.68	.847
social_integrate_local_std	114	1	5	2.96	1.038
Diversity_inclusivity_current_insti	114	1	5	3.39	1.157
Communicate_ease_local_lang	114	2	5	3.72	.867
Further_education_home_country	114	1	5	3.18	1.221
Recommand_other_study_in_India	114	2	5	3.77	.842
Valid N (listwise)	114				
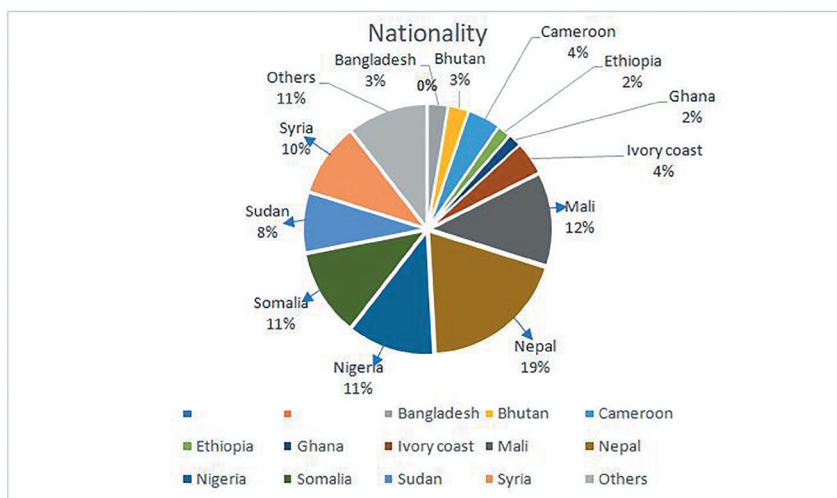
Figure 1. Distribution of Nationality at the Indian universities

Frequency

Figure 1. Distribution of Nationality at the Indian universities.
The figure 1 shows the distribution of Nationality at the Indian University. out of 114 respondents 19% students belong to Nepal, 12% students belong to Mali, 4% students belong to Ivory Coast, 2% students belong to Ghana, 2% students belong to Ethiopia, 4% students belong to Cameroon, 3% students belong to Bhutan, 3% students belongs to Bangladesh, 10% students belongs to Syria, 8% student belong to sudan, 11% students belongs to Somalia, 11% belongs to Nigeria and 11% from other countries.

The figure 2 shows the distribution of primary language among foreign nationals studying at the Indian university. Out of 114 respondents, 13% of students speak Somali, 7% of students speak Nepali, 2% of students speak Portuges,3%speak Bambara,2%student speak
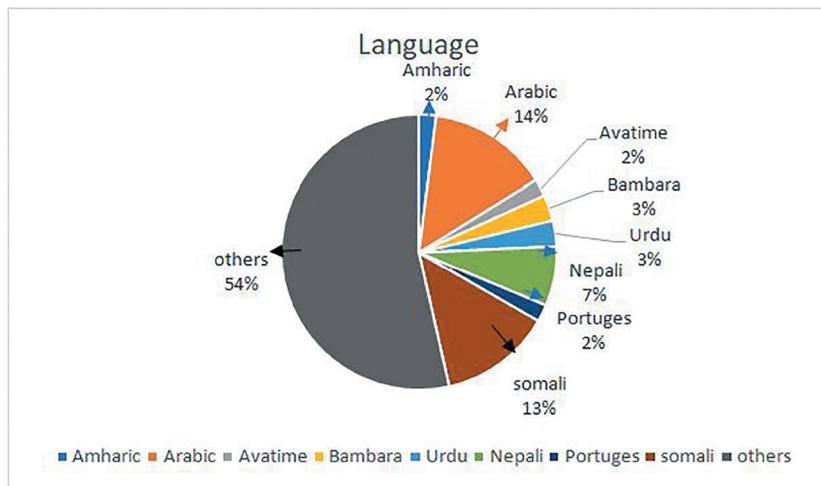
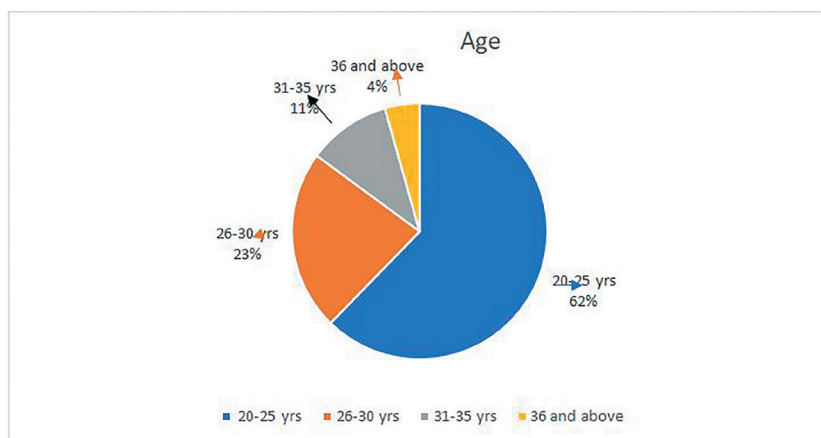**Figure 2.** Distribution of primary language among foreign nationals studying at the Indian universities

Figure 3. Distribution of age among foreign nationals in the Indian universities
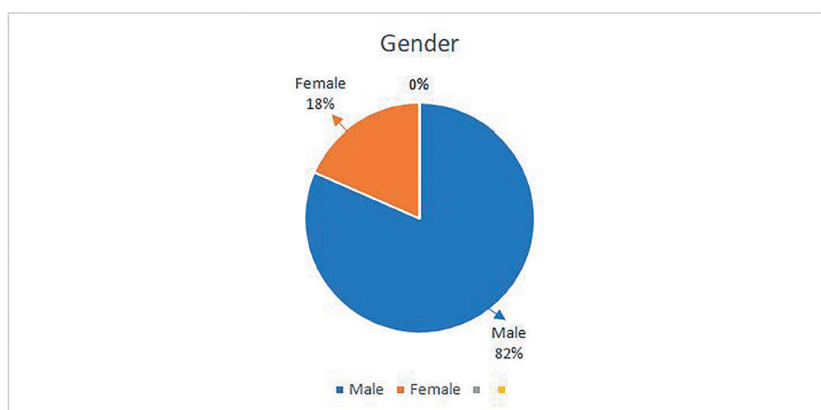

Figure 4. Distribution of gender among the foreign nationals at the Indian universities

Avatime,14%student speak Arabic, 3% of students speak Urdu,2%student speak Amharic and 54%student speak other languages.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of age among foreign nationals in the Indian University.62% of the respondents belong to the category of 20-25 years 23% of the respondents belong to the age category of 26-30 years,11% of the respondents belong to the age category of 31-35 years and 4% of the respondents belongs to the category of 36 and above.
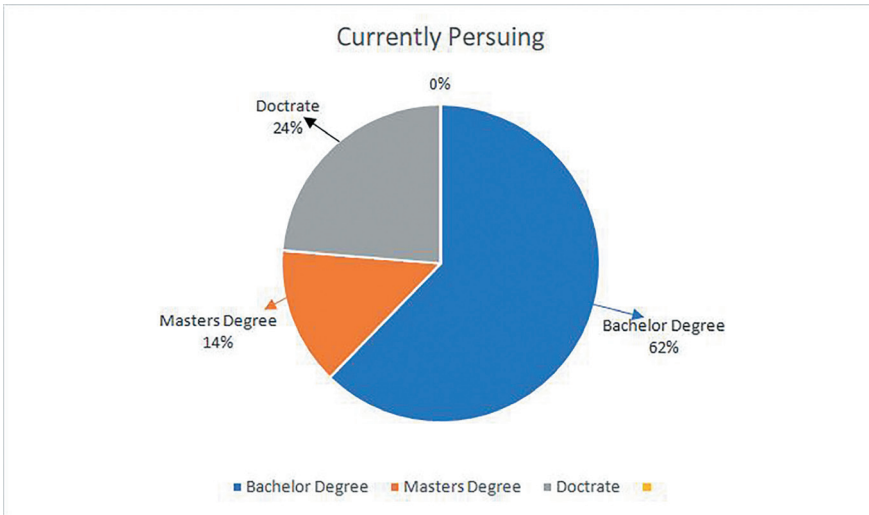
Figure 5. Distribution of academic programs at the Indian universities
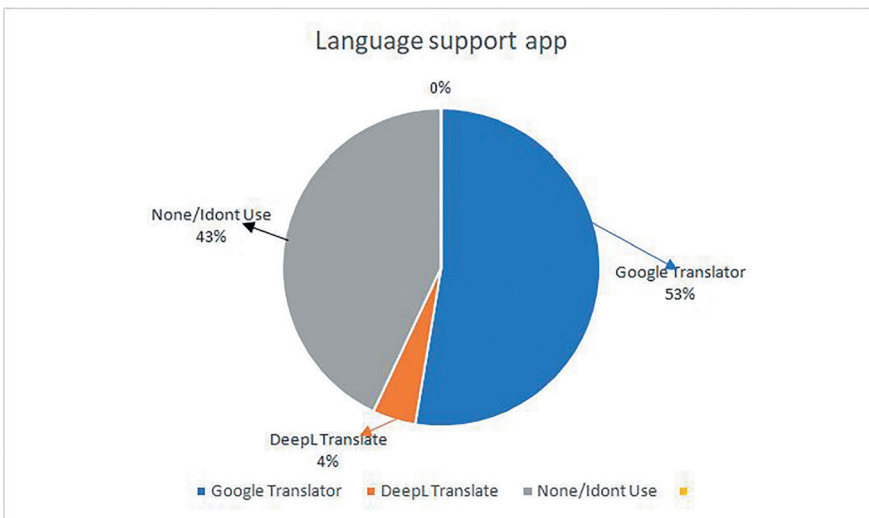

Figure 6. Language support services availed by the foreign Nationals.

The figure 4 shows the distribution of gender among the foreign nationals at the Indian University,82% of the respondents belong to the male category and 18% of the respondents belong to the Female category.

Figure -5 shows the distribution of academic programs at the Indian universities 62% of the respondents are pursuing Bachelor's degree,14%of the respondents are pursuing a Master's degree and 24% of the respondents are pursuing a doctorate program at the university.

Figure 6 shows the Language support services availed by the foreign Nationals.53% of respondents use Google Translator,4% of respondents use DeepL Translate and 43% of respondents don't use any language support services.

Table- Chi-square Test

Table 1. Duration in present course vs Satisfaction in academic program Cross-tabulation.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.527[a]	8	**.035***
Likelihood Ratio	19.341	8	.013
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.397	1	.122
N of Valid Cases	114		

a. 7 cells (46.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .87.
*: Significant at 5%

The result in Table 1 indicating the duration in the present University is linked with Satisfaction in the academic Program with Pearson Chi-Square significance.

The chi-square statistic was employed to assess the relationship between categorical variables. A significant association was observed between the duration of attendance at the current university and satisfaction with the academic program at a 5% significance level (χ^2 = 16.52, df = 8, p = .035). Since the p-value is less than 5%, the null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H1), indicating acceptance of the proposed association.

Table 2. Prior work experience vs Accessible resource support Cross-tabulation.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.841ᵃ	4	**.043***
Likelihood Ratio	10.031	4	.040
Linear-by-Linear Association	.917	1	.338
N of Valid Cases	114		

a. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.46.
*: Significant at 5%

The result in Table 2 indicates the work Experience is linked with Accessible to resources with Pearson Chi-Square significance.

Since the p-value is less than 5%, the null hypothesis has been rejected and in the favour of alternative hypothesis (H2), indicating acceptance of the proposed association.

A significant association was observed between work experience and access to the available resources at the Indian university at a 5% significance level (χ^2 = 9.841, df = 4, p = .043).

Table 3. Pre-departure orientation vs Change tends to belongingness Cross-tabulation.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.964ᵃ	4	**.027***
Likelihood Ratio	10.966	4	.027
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.089	1	.008
N of Valid Cases	114		

a. 3 cells (30.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.82.
*: Significant at 5%

The result in Table 3 indicating the Pre-departure orientation is linked with change tend to belongingness with Pearson Chi-Square significance .027

A significant association was observed between Pre-departure orientation and change tends to belonginess at a 5% significance level (χ^2 = 10.964, df = 4, p = .027). Since the p-value is less than 5%, the null hypothesis has been rejected and in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H3), indicating the acceptance of the proposed association.

Table 4. Financial support host vs Current to home Rank comparison Cross-tabulation.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.592ᵃ	4	**.048***
Likelihood Ratio	10.396	4	.034
Linear-by-Linear Association	8.980	1	.003
N of Valid Cases	114		

a. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .49.
*: Significant at 5%

The result in Table 4 indicates the financial support is linked with the academic ranking between home and host country with Pearson Chi-Square significance .048

A significant association was observed between financial support and academic ranking between home and host country at a 5% significance level (χ^2 = 9.592, df = 4, p = .048). Since the p-value is less than 5%, the null hypothesis has been rejected and in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H4), indicating the acceptance of the proposed association.

Table 5. Traveled abroad vs Communication ease in local language Cross-tabulation.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.035ᵃ	3	**.045***
Likelihood Ratio	7.546	3	.056
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.175	1	.278
N of Valid Cases	114		

a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.63.
*: Significant at 5%

The result in Table 5 indicating travel abroad with satisfaction with ease of communication with local language with Pearson Chi-Square significance .045

The chi-square statistic was employed to assess the relationship between categorical variables. A significant association was observed between traveling abroad and ease of communication with the local language at a 5% significance level (χ^2 = 8.035, df = 3, p = .045). Since the p-value is less than 5%, the null hypothesis has been rejected and in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H5), indicating the acceptance of the proposed association.

Table 6. Age vs Challenge in Indian Academic Curriculum Cross-tabulation.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	22.156[a]	12	**.036***
Likelihood Ratio	23.337	12	.025
Linear-by-Linear Association	.010	1	.921
N of Valid Cases	114		

a. 14 cells (70.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .22.
: Significant at 5%

The result in Table 6 indicates age is linked with challenges in the Indian academic curriculum with Pearson Chi-Square significance .036

A significant association was observed between age and challenge with the Indian academic curriculum at a 5% significance level (χ^2 = 22.156, df = 12, p = .036). Since the p-value is less than 5%, the null hypothesis has been rejected favoring the alternative hypothesis (H6), indicating the acceptance of the proposed association.

Table 7. Work exp vs Challenge in Indian Academic Curriculum Cross-tabulation

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.301[a]	4	**.001***
Likelihood Ratio	24.391	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.768	1	.029
N of Valid Cases	114		

a. 4 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.46.
: Significant at 5%

The result in Table 7 indicating work experience is linked with challenges in the Indian academic Curriculum with Pearson Chi-Square significance of .001.

A significant association was observed between work experience and challenge with the Indian academic curriculum at a 5% significance level (χ^2 = 19.301, df = 4, p = .001). Since the p-value is less than 5%, the null hypothesis has been rejected and in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H7), indicating the acceptance of the proposed association.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research aimed to explore factors influencing the academic and social experiences of international students in the host country. Contrary to initial hypotheses, all relationships examined revealed statistically significant associations. Duration in the present university correlated with satisfaction in the academic program, while work experience related to accessibility to resources. Predeparture orientation impacted change in belongingness, and financial support affected the comparison between home and host countries. Additionally, having travelled abroad was associated with ease of communication in the local language, while age and work experience influenced challenges with the Indian academic curriculum. These findings suggest a complex interplay of various factors shaping the experiences of international students, highlighting the importance of considering multifaceted aspects in supporting their academic and social integration in host countries.

In conclusion, we can infer that most of the foreign students adapt and adjust with the new socio-cultural and academic environment, as studied in this paper, in the context of Odisha, India. However there exists a significant mismatch between the expected 'academic administrative support and other facilities' and what is being available in reality, in many cases.

The study's findings hold practical implications for educational institutions and policymakers. Recognizing the significant associations between diverse factors and the experiences of international students allows for targeted interventions. Institutions can tailor support programs based on student's work experience, financial situations, and pre-departure orientation. Policymakers can use these insights to develop inclusive policies that address the nuanced needs of international students, fostering a more supportive and enriching educational environment. By understanding these associations, educational stakeholders can enhance the overall well-being and success of international students during their academic journey in host countries.

Limitation and future scope of research

Although the study provides valuable insights, it has a few limitations to keep in mind. Firstly, because it looks at a specific point in time, it can't establish cause-and-effect relationships. Studying the same group over a longer period (longitudinal studies) would help us understand changes over time better. Additionally, the study focused only on one group of international students, so the findings might not apply to everyone. Future research should include a more diverse group of participants to get a broader understanding. Also, since the information comes from what people report about themselves, there might be some bias. To improve this, future studies could use more objective measures. Exploring other factors like how people adapt to a new culture or the support they get from friends could give us a more complete picture of international students' experiences. Despite these limitations, this study is a good starting point, encouraging researchers to look more deeply into the various aspects of how international students fit into academic and social life.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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