



A STUDY ON ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS OUTSIDE OF THEIR HOMETOWN FOR STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Higher education often requires students to leave their hometowns and enter places they may not have been before, be it cities, states, and perhaps even other countries. While this can be opportunity for student development (e.g., academic, social, and personal), it can also introduce challenges that may hinder students' academic performance and overall well-being. The study investigates challenges students encounter while they are in school far from home, with the following challenges specific to this research financial challenges, cultural and language challenges, emotional and psychological challenges, housing challenges, and navigating new educational spaces. A mixed-methods approach will be used to attend to students' experiences in conjunction with expert opinion. These findings will contribute to the larger conversation surrounding student well-being and institutional support to further understand challenges that inform students, instructors, policymakers and academic institutions. The aim of the research is to address the information gap while informing possible interventions that promote student academic and personal development

Keywords: Higher education, issues students face, financial issues, cultural barriers, language barriers, emotional well-being, psychological distress, housing issues, adjusting to the educational system, well-being of students, institutional support, mixed-methodology, academic achievement, personal growth.

Introduction:

Higher education often requires students to leave their home towns for better educational opportunities, specialized academic programs, or prestigious institutions. Generally, this is done with an urge to foster development as well as the career itself: all the decisions that need a real new phase in students' lives. Moving out of their places for education is extremely benefitting since it opens doors for advanced learning environments, offers students fresh exposure to state-of-the-art facilities, and facilitates interaction with a sound peer and mentor group coming from very diverse backgrounds. Each of these experiences greatly builds the intellect and personality of students on their path toward preparing for global competition.

Yet, this transition is not without any obstacles. Moving farther away from the comforts of any supportive family, friendly society, and the familiar community zone places many under extreme pressure to cope with the surroundings and learn to survive in the new environment. The sheer enormity of settling into an entirely different city, state, or country can mean students are possibly faced with an added burden of personal adaptation, on top of the academic pressure. Troubles on this path differ from person to person but generally the pressure to perform well academically within an alien environment that is often more competitive than their home sphere can be much too overwhelming for those hitting teaching methods they haven't known before, bubbling over language constraints, or facing curriculum expectations that are not at all familiar.

Upon relocation to the new host environment, students begin to witness cultural and socio-economic deprivation processes in their new surroundings that can affect their ability to integrate within the host area. Some embrace a cultural norm those students are moving into, for example, some forms that are not typically looked upon in their hometown. At some point, this might get their hearts racing with isolation and sickness and have it hard for them to connect with the people. For international students, would further include language barriers, coupled with at times experiences of discrimination or bias. Economic disturbances within the life of relocated students contribute to one of the primary impediments in their way of life. They can stress parental or student support due to the growing burden that tuition fees, staying, daily expenses, and unseen emergencies have thrust on any student from humble families. Many students try to combine work with their studies, usually tending to develop a feeling of general strain and general mental- or physical- breakdowns.

Psychologically, changing a familiar setting and entering an unknown place can be greatly stressful and anxiety-inducing. The students are not backed up with any family or friends when they face this scary situation; this makes them susceptible to regard the mental health threat of loneliness, depression, or even burnout. A number of those who move perhaps get a very first experience of complete freedom, where they would be required to learn vital life skills of planning time, managing finances, and making decisions without any apparent training or prior experience.

Literature Review

- **Kitzrow (2003)** “The mental health needs of today’s college students” describes the psychological needs of college students while focusing regarding the rise in mental health challenges faced by college students. The study gives an understanding of students' emotional problems faced when students live away from home for schooling. Those feelings of isolation, anxiety, or stress may further complicate problems of mental health woes for the students and emphasize the call to develop support services within the institution.
- **Wilcox et al. (2005)** “The role of social support in the first-year experience of higher education” examine the role of social support on first-year students in university, elucidating the extent to which supportive interaction may determine a student's decision to stay or leave. They describe integration into university life that demands balance in terms of familiar and unfamiliar social surroundings. Over-dependence on ties with homes can cause some students to withdraw from university life. Although the part played by academic staff in encouraging student relationships is pivotal, the research also emphasizes the role of university estate departments and housing services in creating avenues for social integration.
- **Shaikh and Deschamps (2006)** “Life in a university residence: Issues, concerns and responses” investigates student experiences in university residences; students in there are not happy with the living situations in dormitories. Many students report ill health: stress, depression, fatigue, insomnia, and nutrition problems. Consistent sources of extra stressors that international students face include culture shock, language difficulties, and homesickness. The study mentions a worrisome trend of students' suicides, most notably among female students. Financial difficulties, academic pressures, and interpersonal struggles are cited as contributing factors. Many seek informal medical advice from friends, and self-medication is a common resort for those avoiding university health services because of insufficient knowledge or poor accessibility.
- **Doygun and Gulec (2012)** “The problems faced by university students and proposals for solution” have studied common problems of university students, mostly involving issues relating to nutrition and mental health. A good number of students feel that they do not consume a nutritious diet, and there are calls for counselling services. This research has also confirmed the substandard academic counselling services identified by Koser and Mercanlioglu (2010). The significance of systematic orientation programs and supportive services is highlighted as these significantly contribute to enriching the ongoing university experience and academic success for the students.
- **Park (2016)** “Social and educational challenges of international students caused by accented English in the Australian context: A sociolinguistic analysis of linguistic experience” looks into the social and educational predicaments some international students face in Australia with regards to accented English. These are broadly categorized under two points—an accented English as a linguistic barrier obstructing communication, and the prejudice and discrimination students with an accent experience. This research demonstrates that accent stereotyping is a kind of linguistic discrimination, where European students are least likely to come into contact with it. It also emphasizes that a preference for a specific native English variety leads to a gross rejection of all others, both native and non-native, in the Australian scene. Young (2016) looks at the issues that are confronting Asian international students, viewed through the perennial lens of Confucian cultural values. The misconception that these students are procrastinators, socially isolated or somehow intellectually dull is countered. To this day, many Asian students bear the shame of suffering in silence. Persistence is deemed to be an individual duty, so they rather not go out and seek support services for assistance. The study presses for training in cultural issues as an avenue to further onboarding the Asian internationals into societies whereby acceptance and hence less marginalization can be achieved. The initiatives recommended are meant to foster inclusionary consciousness among educators and administrators so that it will be possible to embrace global citizenship among the students.
- **Baklashova and Kazakov (2016)** “Challenges of international students’ adjustment to a higher education institution” study the problems that international students face during their adjustment to higher education institutions while pointing toward successful integration. This study identifies a need for schools to foster cross-cultural mobility, equal educational opportunities, and development in intercultural competence. They advise providing trainings for teachers and professionals that interact with pupils from other countries, offering individual consultations, and running tutoring programs to alleviate psychological stress. Orientation courses, guest lectures, and company visits are also suggested to aid international students in their adaptation and support their cooperation with the local community.
- **Smiljanic (2017)** “The role of attachment, travel experiences, and English proficiency in international students’ acculturative stress and depressive symptoms” investigates the connection between international students' acculturative stress, English competency, travel experiences, and attachment types. The research finds that attachment avoidance does not correlate directly with acculturative stress but attaches to increased depressive symptoms. One possible explanation behind this phenomenon is that students scoring high on the avoidance dimension could be minimizing in their perception of stress and homesickness in order to achieve greater independence. Another finding includes the role of language and cultural differences in acculturative stress, with Stress levels are greater among Asian and Central/Latin American pupils than among European students.
- **Ramachandiran and Dhanapal (2018)** “Academic stress among university students: A quantitative study of Generation Y and Z’s perception” examined the academic stressors among university students drawn largely from Generation Y and Z theorizing on how universities could gladly proffer help establishing programs to address mental health and the academic performance of the whole university life, thus able to focus on the attainment of set educational goals. Accordingly, a collaborative study refrained from recommending the creation of a

conducive environment for effective teaching with well-equipped counseling services and well-structured programs. Additionally, one could press upon outstanding support services within the university administration to disseminate awareness pertaining to the transition from high school to university life stupendous headaches and conduct training sessions to equip students on how to effectively manage and cope with stress. All these programs are geared towards minimizing psychological and social stress enabling students to have a rich experience while learning.

- **Girmay and Singh (2019)** “Social isolation, loneliness, and mental and emotional well-being among international students in the United States” studied the cognitive and physical health constraints placed upon foreign pupils due to poor acculturation in the United States. They underscore the necessity of enabling cordial relations between international and national communities so as to mitigate social isolation and loneliness. Findings unveil great urgency for universities in attending to the physical and foreign students' mental health, which is meant not only to establish but also to sustain throughout their duration of stay.
- **Wawera and McCamley (2019)** “Loneliness among international students in the UK” assess the prevalence and effects of loneliness encountered by overseas students in the United Kingdom, leading to a result that 72.13 percent of students felt loneliness at some point during their stay. The study indicates that lonely feelings are amplified during the transition phase or when students experience changes in social networks. Furthermore, findings speak to confirm how students cope: initially isolating themselves, resorting to home comforts, and maintaining relationships with friends and family. As the moods begin to improve, however, these students engage in distractions and other activities at the university during which they meet new friends and combat bouts of loneliness.

Research Methodology

A mixed-method technique is used in this study, which includes both qualitative and quantitative data. This research involves Undergraduate and postgraduate students studying outside their hometowns, college going students which includes foreign nationals. The study was conducted mostly in the city of Vadodara in the Gujarat area.

Universe of study

Undergraduate and postgraduate students studying outside their hometowns.

Sample size

Sample size of 60 students from various university

Sampling technique

A snowball sampling method is used to ensure diversity in the sample, covering different academic disciplines and geographic background.

Data collection method

Through Google Forms, a structured questionnaire comprising both closed-ended and open-ended questions was sent to the selected students.

Sources of Data

A questionnaire was used to gather primary data, while studies, journals, and other sources were used to gather secondary data..

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this research are:

- To understand the issues faced by students living outside for study purpose
- Examine the mental and physical health of the students
- To understand the impact of migration
- To empathize with the students who are facing issues like lack of social skills or failing to network.

Significance of the study:

Fears are understood out-of-state students face it makes all the difference for them in higher education, their holistic development, and consequently, their better academic performance. Attention to these issues will further improve student retention, promote harmony in the campus community, and ultimately contribute to the well-being of the student community through educational institutions and policymakers. This study also aims to shed light on the need for mental health services, help with cultural understanding, and financial aid programs necessary in buffering adverse effects of relocation on students.

Thus, it calls for the study to be a voice to express the issue of students who have moved to study away from home, to galvanize all efforts pulling together in their academic and personal life. By knowing the challenges this can be the starting point in beginning a avenue for an equitable and accessible educational system for the various needs of a student.

Findings and Discussion:

The research findings indicate that accommodation problems are a major concern for students, with 85% of respondents reporting difficulties. Of these, 46.7% agree and 38.3% strongly agree that they face housing challenges, while only 15% remain neutral, and none disagree. This underscores the widespread nature of accommodation issues, highlighting the urgent need for better student housing options and support programs to address this critical concern.

Financial difficulties are another significant issue, affecting 86.7% of students, with an additional 8.3% experiencing occasional financial struggles. Only 5% of respondents report having no financial problems. The most common financial difficulties include running out of funds before the month ends (11.7%), inability to track expenditures (11.7%), and overspending (10%), with 63.8% of students facing all of these challenges combined. Other financial struggles include borrowing money, delayed rent payments, and receiving funds late. These findings highlight the need for enhanced financial aid programs, budgeting assistance, and financial literacy training to support students in managing their finances effectively.

The research also reveals that many students experience mental health challenges, with homesickness being the most commonly reported issue. Other significant concerns include depression, anxiety, and mental breakdowns. Although academic distress (5%) and fear (1.7%) are less frequent, they are still notable concerns. These findings emphasize the necessity of mental health support programs, including stress management initiatives, peer support groups, and counseling services, to help students cope with psychological challenges and improve their overall well-being.

Discussions :-

Accommodation Challenges

Accommodation issues are a predominant concern, with 85% of respondents acknowledging difficulties in securing suitable housing. The fact that none of the respondents disagreed with experiencing such problems underscores the widespread nature of this issue. Given that a substantial portion of students either agree (46.7%) or strongly agree (38.3%) that they face accommodation difficulties, it is evident that housing remains a major struggle. This suggests the need for more affordable and accessible student housing options, as well as institutional initiatives to support students in securing proper living arrangements. Universities and policymakers should consider expanding on-campus housing facilities, providing rental assistance, or establishing partnerships with housing providers to alleviate these concerns.

Financial Difficulties

The data also illustrates that financial struggles are a significant problem for students, with 86.7% reporting financial issues and an additional 8.3% experiencing occasional financial difficulties. Only a marginal 5% do not face financial struggles. These findings highlight the necessity of financial aid programs, enhanced student loan options, and better budgeting guidance. The recurrent financial issues, including running out of funds before the month ends (11.7%), inability to track expenditures (11.7%), and overspending (10%), suggest that financial literacy programs could be beneficial. The fact that 63.8% of students face multiple financial difficulties at once further reinforces the need for structured financial education, emergency funding, and peer support systems to help students manage their expenses more effectively.

Mental Health Concerns

Mental health remains another significant issue among students. Homesickness is the most commonly reported concern, followed by depression, anxiety, and mental breakdowns. Academic distress and fear, though less frequently reported, still affect a small portion of students, with 5% experiencing academic distress and 1.7% dealing with fear. These statistics suggest a pressing need for mental health resources, including counseling services, stress management programs, and peer support groups. Universities should ensure that mental health services are accessible, affordable, and widely promoted to students, with trained professionals available to support their psychological well-being.

Conclusion and Recommendations :-

The study discussed the multi-dimensional problems and challenges facing students staying away from their hometowns and latterly defined as a physical, financial, emotional, and social hindrance. The findings suggested that migration brings literacy and career opportunities; however, it also provides a challenge to the quality of their lives and academic performances.

A focal point debate is built around the financial insecurity that most students face, from managing their expenses to delayed family finances to poor financial literacy. Accommodation and food insecurity turned out thus to be major issues: most students are contending with horrible living conditions and poor nutritious and affordable meals. Allies would thereafter confront some of these challenges, such as homesickness, depression, and academic distress, thus calling for resiliency in societal support.

The study also discussed infirm segregation, cultural and linguistic adaptiveness and a learning-conducive environment, with female students suffering specific safety-related issues that might need to be addressed in consultations. Students, notwithstanding such hurdles, also demonstrate resilience, with many opting for survival based on adaptation through seeking academic and personal direction.

Addressing these challenges would require inter-sectoral synergy among academic institutions, local authority, and policymakers. The convergence of improvement in financial aids, accommodation options, mental health services, and enabling environments will assist students in confronting the challenges of going away from home for studies. Such initiatives of building normalcy, community building, culture integration, and mentorship could contribute greatly to improving students' living standards.

This study stood for understandings and responsive-driven resolutions of the unique needs posed by students who study from outside their hometowns- however broad-spectrum-for their overall development and success.

Recommendations :-

1. **Expanding Affordable Student Housing & Rental Assistance** :- Increasing the availability of budget-friendly student housing helps alleviate financial stress and improves living conditions. Rental assistance programs can provide subsidies or financial aid to students struggling with housing costs. Partnerships with housing agencies and landlords can also ensure more accessible and secure accommodation options.
2. **Enhancing Financial Aid & Literacy Training** :- Expanding financial aid options ensures that more students can afford tuition, books, and living expenses without excessive debt. Providing financial literacy training equips students with budgeting, saving, and debt management skills. This combination helps students make informed financial decisions and promotes long-term financial stability.
3. **Strengthening Mental Health Support** Expanding access to counseling services, peer support groups, and stress management programs helps students cope with academic and personal pressures. A strong mental health support system promotes well-being, reduces dropout rates, and enhances academic performance. Creating a culture of openness around mental health encourages students to seek help without stigma

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