Adjustment Issues of International Students in the Czech Republic: Prevailing Social Conditions and Financial Challenges

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The inflow of international students into the Czech Republic has significantly increased over the past decade, contributing to the country's cultural diversity and academic richness. However, these students experience various forms of challenges as they adjust to life in a new environment. This paper explores the adjustment experiences of international students in the Czech Republic, focusing on roles of financial stability, the prevailing social conditions in their adjustment and inclination to complete the study abroad programme. The study uses a mixed research method to gather and analyse data gotten from 112 international students from the Masaryk University in the Czech Republic. 102 of these participants provided data through a survey via a questionnaire which was analysed, while 10 students provided data via interviews carried out with the use of the Zoom application. From the results of this study, the study will explore the role of universities and the Czech society in facilitating the adjustment process of international students.

Keywords: *International students; adjustment; employment; prevailing social conditions; culture shock; financial stability; Czech Republic*

Introduction

Migration has become an integral aspect of daily life, driven by significant growth in global trade, commerce, information technology, education, research, and development. The increase in migration has also led to a notable rise in the

number of international students worldwide[1]. As a key factor in migration, international studentship has had a substantial impact on social changes, influencing not only the education systems of host countries but also their economies, policies, cultures, and more[2]. A change in one part of the world creates a ripple effect elsewhere, highlighting the interconnectedness of nations globally[3]. Migrating to a new society can be exciting and has a lot of benefits for both the outbound and inbound countries, such as economic partnerships and remittances, expansion of knowledge, cultural awareness and diversity, opportunity to meet new people, experiences with new food and exotic sights. With all that fascination and excitement of migration comes new challenges which includes culture shock, language barrier, financial instability and employment, migration documentation and processing, and so on.

The number of international students has increased exponentially in the Czech Republic over the past decades and have attracted nationals from all over the world. The Czech Republic, like other post-communist region in Central Europe that experienced communism had their migration processes conditioned, including the relations among the émigrés within and between the various diasporas[4]. Seidlová noted that up until the late 1990s, the Czech Republic had almost no international population, however, the Velvet Revolution' of 1989, ushered in a new political, economic, and social era that enabled a free democratic society and massive transformation and globalisation of the Czech society[5]. The European Commission stated that the European Union formed policies that allowed for the internationalization of tertiary education in its member states in 1994, having recognized its benefits and the bid to address the ageing population in Europe[6]. This policy prompted the adoption of the Council Resolution that allowed also third-world nationals to study within the EU. There is very little research that shows exactly when international studentship started in the post-communist Czech Republic, but the earliest

[1] Andrade, M. S. (2006). International Students in English-speaking Universities: Adjustment Factors. *Journal of Research in International Education, 5*/2, pp. 131–154. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240906065589

[2] Marginson, S. – Sawir, E. (2011). *Ideas for Intercultural Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[3] Vertovec, S. (2004). Migrant Transnationalism and Modes of Transformation. *International Migration Review, 38*/3, pp. 970-1001. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00226.x

[4] Mazurkiewicz, A. 2015. Political Emigration from East Central Europe During the Cold War. *Polish American Studies,72*/2, pp. 65-82. Retrieved from: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/poliamerstud.72.2.0065

[5] Seidlová, M. (2018). The Birth of a Country of Immigration: The Case of the Czech Republic. *Demografie, 60*/4, pp. 348-359. https://www.czso.cz/documents/10180/61449036/13005318q4_348-359.pdf/e11317ea-2fc1-461c-989c-2c2b5abfc837?version=1.0

[6] European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice (2023). *Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe – 2023: Equity in School and Higher Education*. Eurydice report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

national monitoring of international studentship in the Czech Republic was in 1999 with a notable increase in the number of foreign students since then[7] .
There is more awareness about the benefits of internationalization of education due to the high rise of enrolment into the study abroad programmes[8]. More countries around the world are opening to the idea of creating and adjusting policies to accommodate international students within their societies, hence the need to study associated factors connected to the success of the study abroad programme. These factors which could be seen as challenges could range from social to psychological. More interest from host institutions and societies could help to make the adjustment process of international students, from the transitionary stage until graduation, less problematic, with emphasis on the need for physiological and psychological health.
Prevailing Social Conditions: Prevailing social condition is used in this text to describe the situation of the host environment when the international student begins the study abroad programme. This could also be seen as the culture shock that happens upon contact with a new environment. Culture shock can be defined as the reaction an individual express in response to an unfamiliar environment[9]. The moment of first contact with a new environment brings a sense of loss of orientation and coordination, which has been defined as culture shock. Culture shock can generate stressful conditions and a feeling of disconnection. A total sense of loss is commonplace for most sojourners as they face unfamiliar territory, new languages, new culture, new values, and different climatic conditions. Okusolubo is of the opinion that the sense of one's own culture disappears in the face of such huge changes, which could also be referred to as culture shock[10]. These differences, depending on the degree between the home and host societies are responsible for culture shock[11].
Consequently, the international student has to embark on a cultural learning process and find their relationship to the cultural practices in the new environment. Shu, et al. adopted Berry's 2015 acculturation Model which postulates that adjustment for sojourners can be supported by creating a balance between their personal cultural identity and incorporating features from their

[7]UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2018). "*Education Data*." UIS Stat. database: http://data.uis.unesco.org/

[8] Knight, Jane. (2015). Internationalization Brings Important Benefits as Well as Risks. *International Higher Education*. 10.6017/ihe.2007.46.7939.

[9] Kurek-Ochmanska, O. – Luczaj, K. (2021). 'Are You Crazy? Why Are You Going to Poland?' Migration of Western Scholars to Academic Peripheries, *Geoforum, 119*, pp. 102-110. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.12.001

[10] Okusolubo, G. S. (2018). Academic and Social Challenges Faced by African International Students in Collegiate institutions in America. *International Journal of Economics and Management Sciences, 7*/2, pp. 1-8. DOI: 10.4172/2162-6359.1000514

[11] Alsulami, N. D. (2018). The Challenges of Studying in Australia for Saudis Male International Students. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research, 8*/2, pp. 17-28. DOI:10.30845/aijcr.v8n2p3.

new environment[12]. The authors illustrated that the "Demand-Control-Support Stress Model" by Karasek could be applied to explain that stress for most international students hinged on the need to overcome stressors associated with relocating to a new environment. The need for the international students to adjust to and interact with the new environment is great, and yet they have no idea what to expect, especially when dealing with unclear social norms and rules of speaking and greeting the locals, national stereotypes, not to mention limitations in recreation, as is the case of international students who are non-Russian speakers in Belarus[13].

Additionally, culture shock could occur as a result of extreme variance in weather conditions or the social conditions prevalent at the moment. A major social condition in recent times was the COVID-19 pandemic, which some of the students in this study experienced while studying abroad, amidst other situations that were already challenging their adjustment in the Czech Republic. For international students from warm climate regions, moving to cold regions could create a sense of disorientation as discussed by Okusolubo, with reference to African students who moved to certain states with the US. Overcoming culture shock is an internal mechanism that involves individual personality, the ability to adopt coping techniques, resources and acculturation behaviour. Acculturation stress according to Pekerti, et al. foremost, stems from having to deal with more than one culture concurrently which may vary depending on specific situations and experiences[14]. The authors noted that while some people manage stress effectively and find ways to cope or access necessary resources, others may not share the same level of stress management. Successfully managing the intricacies responsible for acculturation will result in personal development and cultural learning.

Subsequently, sudden changes in social conditions that happen during the study period will also require some readjustment by the international students. Drastic changes in the society such as the pandemic of 2019 or the Russian-Ukraine war of 2022 brought about the displacement of individuals across Europe including international students. Such immediate changes could be considered shock triggers in adjustment for both the displaced persons and receiving societies.

Financial Instability*:* Money is important for any endeavour, including education. International students in the Czech Republic whose language of instruction is not the Czech language are required to pay annual tuition fees for

[12] Shu, F. – Ahmed, S. F. – Pickett, M. L. – Ayman, R. – McAbee, S. T. (2020). Social Support Perceptions, Network Characteristics and International Student Adjustment. *International Journal of International Relations, 74*, pp. 136-148. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.11.002

[13] Marinenko, O. – Snopkova, E. (2018). Challenges Facing International Students During Study in Belarus. *The New Educational Review*, pp. 144-154. DOI: 10.15804/tner.2019.58.4.11

[14] Pekerti, A. A. – van de Vijver, F. J. R. – Moeller, M. – Okimoto, T. G. (2020). Intercultural Contacts and Acculturation Resources among International Students in Australia: A Mixed Methods Study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 75*, pp. 56-81. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2019.12.004

the duration of their study programme, as the Czech system of education does not offer foreign language courses for free. Lindell, et al. in their study explained that so many parents are unable to provide high levels of financial support often required by their emerging adults, who are often within the college age. There are many reasons including economic status, room for autonomy and identity exploration[15]. The authors are of the opinion that financial stress significantly contributes to students' mental health problems and receiving financial support from parents or others is particularly important for students' emotional adjustment. Supporting this, Kerkmann, et al. opined that stress caused due to economic factors such as unemployment always appears to be accompanied by increased hostility, which adversely affects relationships and general stability of individuals[16].

The basic need for the international student to "self-sponsor", have made it necessary for many of them to seek employment in the countries of their study abroad programme. Many international students struggle with financially, which is one of their greatest concerns with studying abroad[17]. For students receiving financial support from home, the exchange rate for countries with weaker currencies compared to the host community will also face financial hardship during their study abroad, necessitating the need and demand for a job[18].

According to Marinenko and Snopkova, the status of employment for international students is considered a problem for non-scholarship students[19]. To meet basic needs, it is necessary for international students to find employment and at the same time be psychologically stable to focus on their career paths. General living expenses such as being able to afford good accommodation and food, finding support services within and outside the institution, and emergency savings for threat to safety or health, are of great concern to international students. Certain factors discussed in this paper that

[15] Lindell, A. K. – Killoren, S. E. – Campione-Barr, N. (2021). Parent-Child Relationship Quality and Emotional Adjustment Among College Students: The Role of Parental Financial Support. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 38*/2, pp. 459-481. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407520964870

[16] Kerkmann, B. C. – Lee, T. R. – Lown, J. M. – Allgood, S. M. (2000). Financial Management, Financial Problems and Marital Satisfaction Among Recently Married University Students. *Journal of Financial Counselling and Planning, 11*/2, pp. 55-65. Retrieved from: https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/financial-management-problems-marital/docview/1355865408/se-2

[17] Alsulami, N. D. (2018). The Challenges of Studying in Australia for Saudis Male International Students. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research, 8*/2, pp. 17-28. DOI:10.30845/aijcr.v8n2p3.

[18] Okusolubo, G. S. (2018). Academic and Social Challenges Faced by African International Students in Collegiate institutions in America. *International Journal of Economics and Management Sciences, 7*/2, pp. 1-8. DOI: 10.4172/2162-6359.1000514

[19] Marinenko, O. – Snopkova, E. (2018). Challenges Facing International Students During Study in Belarus. *The New Educational Review*, pp. 144-154. DOI: 10.15804/tner.2019.58.4.11

influence the employment and financial capabilities of international students in the Czech Republic include language barriers and issues with social support. As we consider the annual increase in the number of international students in the Czech Republic and worldwide, it is important to understand factors that could contribute to financial instability, which include:

Tuition Fees and Cost of Living: One of the primary factors contributing to financial pressure among international students is the cost of tuition fees. Unlike domestic students, most international students are often required to pay tuition fees which may be expensive in some countries, creating a significant financial burden, for the students[20]. Budgeting for study abroad has become a cumbersome affair. In addition to the tuition, there is budget for the cost of living, including housing, food, transportation, health insurance, proper clothing, health and police reports, and so on[21]. In the Czech Republic, for instance, while tuition fees for some programmes might be relatively lower compared to other European countries, the overall cost of living in major cities like Prague remains a challenge for many students. Yang and Wang are of the opinion that reduced tuition or tuition-free policies could be an important advantage for the host country in attracting more international students. However, this will be accompanied by a fiercer competition for top universities within the region, as high-quality education is sought after especially by foreigners from less developed countries. Naidoo established an inverse relationship between tuition fees and student mobility to some regions than others and is of the opinion that effective tuition fee strategy and management is important for growing and maintaining the international student market[22].

Access to Employment Opportunities: International students are seen as valuable human capital for host countries; however, they often encounter more challenges finding employment opportunities[23]. Certain host countries have policies that exclude foreigners from fully accessing the labour market[24]. In many countries, including the Czech Republic, there are certain restrictions such as the necessity to obtain specific permits, and non-willingness of the labour office to provide services and resources to foreigners including international

[20] Arthur, N. (2017). Supporting International Students Through Effective Counseling and Advising. *Journal of International Students,* 7/3, pp. 895-911. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293876

[21] Wilson, S. – Hastings, C. – Morris, A. – Ramia, G. – Mitchell, E. (2023). International Students on The Edge: The Precarious Impacts of Financial Stress. *Journal of Sociology, 59*/4, pp. 952-974. https://doi.org/10.1177/14407833221084756

[22] Naidoo, V. – Roy, R. – Rabbanee, F. K. – Wu, T. (2022). Drivers of Tuition Fee Setting Practices for Higher Education Institutions Involved in International Student Recruitment. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/08841241.2022.2076274

[23] Lu, W. – Härkälä, T. (2024). International Student Experience of Employment Integration in Finland. *Research in Comparative and International Education*. https://doi.org/10.1177/17454999241238172

[24] Wilson, S. – Hastings, C. – Morris, A. – Ramia, G. – Mitchell, E. (2023). International Students on The Edge: The Precarious Impacts of Financial Stress. *Journal of Sociology, 59*/4, pp. 952-974. https://doi.org/10.1177/14407833221084756.

students. These restrictions can prevent students from earning enough to cover their expenses, leading to financial stress. Even when part-time work is available, other looming issues such as language barriers or discrimination, limits their job prospects[25]. The authors established that despite stated commitments to innovation and diversity in work practices supporting globalization, employers predominantly sought staff who aligned with their existing staff profiles representing homogenous workforce.

Currency Fluctuations and associated Issues: Financial instability is further worsened by fluctuations in exchange rates of currencies from other countries. Many international students rely on financial support from their families in their home countries to cover the cost of living and studying abroad. When the value of their home currency declines relative to the host country's currency, it reduces its purchasing power, making it difficult for these students to meet their financial obligations. This issue is most applicable to students from developing countries studying in economically stronger countries. This is also true for students from developing countries studying in the Czech Republic. Such issues are bound to negatively impact students' overall adjustment and academic performance.[26]

In addition, associated issues such as exchange rate volatility, administrative costs associated with currency conversion and international money transfers can also contribute to the financial inconveniences encountered by international students. Many banks and other monetary services charge high fees for conversion and overseas transactions, which over time amounts to a substantial amount of money, thus reduces the usable funds of students. This especially affect students from lower-income families, as their already limited financial resources are further reduced by these additional charges. It becomes important to equip students with the knowledge on how to manage exchange rate risks and identify affordable financial services to reduce the financial instability caused by currency-related challenges[27].

Lack of Financial literacy: Financial literacy can be defined as the ability to understand and effectively manage one's finances. Many international students often lack the knowledge and skills to effectively manage their finances in a foreign country. Moving to a foreign country introduces new complex financial systems, including unfamiliar banking practices, tax regulations, ways of managing credit, and the need for meticulous budgeting in a new currency. Many students fail to anticipate or adequately plan for hidden costs, such as

[25] Lu – Härkälä (n 23).

[26] Marginson, S. – Sawir, E. (2011). Ideas for Intercultural Education. Palgrave Macmillan and Andrade, M. S. (2006). International Students in English-speaking Universities: Adjustment Factors. *Journal of Research in International Education, 5*/2, pp. 131-154. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240906065589.

[27] Arthur, N. (2017). Supporting International Students Through Effective Counseling and Advising. *Journal of International Students,* 7/3, pp. 895-911. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1293876, and Marginson, S. – Sawir, E. (2011). *Ideas for Intercultural Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

administrative fees, health insurance, or unexpected emergencies. Without proper guidance, students tend to overspend on unnecessary items or sometimes underestimate their monthly expenses, leaving them unable to sufficiently meet their needs and obligations. Research carried out by Arthur[28] and Andrade[29] both showed that international students who lack financial literacy experience more financial stress which is a distraction from their academics and social adjustment.

Furthermore, the lack of financial literacy can intensify the need to rely on loans and credit, leading to cycles of debt that become a huge problem as it progresses. Poor financial management can lead to overspending or difficulty in saving, compounding their financial difficulties. Financial literacy programmes tailored to guide international students are non-existent, leaving them to learn through trial and error. Many studies emphasize that improving financial literacy among international students can significantly enhance their ability to manage financial challenges, reducing stress and improving overall well-being[30].

Dependence on Financial Aid: Mwangi noted that most countries do not provide financial aid to meet the increasing number of students applying yearly for the study abroad programmes[31]. While the available scholarships and financial aid programmes can provide crucial support, they are often competitive and available for a limited number of applicants and particular courses only. Many international students receive only partial scholarships that do not cover their tuition and living expenses, resulting in the use of personal savings or loans. Also, delays in receiving scholarships or changes in funding policies from the state or universities can disrupt students' financial planning, increasing stress and hindering their academic performance. In an article by Kaniki & Hoh, the authors are of the opinion that institutions of higher education should develop enrolment systems that are linked to other functional areas such as financial aid, student orientation, housing, counselling, career planning and placement to ensure more enrolment and retention of international students[32].

[28] Arthur (n 27)

[29] Andrade (n 26)

[30] Zhou, Y. – Jindal-Snape, D. – Topping, K. – Todman, J. (2008). Theoretical Models of Culture Shock and Adaptation in International Students in Higher Education. *Studies in Higher Education, 33*/1, pp. 63-75. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070701794833, and Marginson, S. – Sawir, E. (2011). *Ideas for Intercultural Education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[31] Mwangi, C. A. G. (2013). The Impact of State Financial Support on the Internationalization of Public Higher Education: A Panel Data Analysis. *Higher Education in Review, 10*, pp. 61-77. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263655130_The_Impact_of_State_Financial_Support_on_the_Internationalization_of_Public_Higher_Education_A_Panel_Data_Analysis

[32] Kaniki, R. L. – Hoh, C. S. (2020). Student Financial Aid and Its Role in Stimulating Enrollment: An Empirical Study of Tanzanian Undergraduate Students' Experience. *Journal of Education and Practice, 11*/26, pp. 111-118. DOI: 10.7176/JEP/11-26-11

Unforeseen Expenses and Emergencies: Unforeseen expenses, such as medical emergencies and tests not covered by the insurance, challenging life situations, legal fees, or travel costs due to family crises, can place a significant strain on students' finances. The low saving rate of most people not only presents possible challenges for long-term financial insecurity, but also short-term concerns over the ability to meet unexpected expenses related to emergencies that are demanding on their finances[33]. Without adequate savings or access to emergency funds, these situations can lead to debt accumulation or force students to cut back on essential expenses such as food, healthcare, or study materials, or make them take breaks from the study programme or completely drop out of school.

Several authors such as Wilson, et al.[34], Lardi, et al.[35] and Moore, et al.[36] have discussed the severe impacts of financial instability and insecurities on the adjustment of international students in the following areas:

Academic Performance: Financial stress can divert students' attention from their studies, leading to lower academic performance. Students may skip classes to work extra hours or struggle to afford textbooks and other learning materials.

Social Integration: When students lack sufficient finances for basic needs, they would most likely opt out of social activities, reducing opportunities to build relationships and integrate into the host culture. This isolation can contribute to feelings of loneliness and homesickness.

Mental Health: The constant worry about finances can lead to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Financial instability often intensifies the stress of adjusting to a new academic and cultural environment.

Physical Health: Financially constrained students may not request for healthcare services in order to save money, negatively impacting their physical health.

Research Objective and Questions

The objective of this study is to investigate, discuss issues and find possible solutions to the influence of prevailing social conditions and financial instability

[33] Babiarz, P. – Robb, C. (2014). Financial Literacy and Emergency Saving. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues. 35*/10. DOI: 10.1007/s10834-013-9369-9

[34] Wilson, S. – Hastings, C. – Morris, A. – Ramia, G. – Mitchell, E. (2023). International Students on The Edge: The Precarious Impacts of Financial Stress. *Journal of Sociology, 59*/4, pp. 952-974. https://doi.org/10.1177/14407833221084756

[35] Larbi, F. – Ma, Z. – Fang, Z. – Virlanuta, F. – Bărbuță-Mișu, N. – Deniz, G. (2022). Financial Anxiety among International Students in Higher Education: A Comparative Analysis between International Students in the United States of America and China. *Sustainability, 14*/7, 3743. https://doi.org/10.3390/su14073743

[36] Moore A. – Nguyen A. – Rivas, S. – Bany-Mohammed, A. – Majeika, J. – Martinez L. (2021). A Qualitative Examination of the Impacts of Financial Stress on College Students' Well-Being: Insights from a Large, Private Institution. *SAGE Open Med*. doi: 10.1177/20503121211018122. PMID: 34094560; PMCID: PMC8141976.

faced by international students in their adjustment process in the Czech Republic. Specifically, the study is aimed to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any association between prevailing social conditions and the adjustment of international students at the Masaryk University?
2. How is financial instability associated with the adjustment of international students at the Masaryk University?

Methodology

This study adopts a mixed research method (Explanatory sequential mixed method) to help analyse both the quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the 112 international students from the Masaryk University, Czech Republic. A mixed research method is credible and reliable and can be explained through the definition provided by Creswell as the type of research that allows the researcher to use both the pre-determined method of the quantitative research method and the emerging methods of the qualitative research method[37]. The mixed research method uses both open and closed-ended questions and therefore has multiple methods of eliciting data. It has the advantage of completely achieving a holistic picture of the phenomenon studied, checking the limitations of using just one method[38]. The Explanatory sequential mixed methods allow the researchers to explain the results of the quantitative data using the data from the qualitative research.

The setting of this study is the Masaryk University in the Czech Republic, with over 7,300 international students. The participants of this study include 102 international students, who responded to a standardized test in form of a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, and 10 international students who volunteered to participate in interviews answering to open-ended questions.

Results and Discussions

The participants of this survey rated their experiences based on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from SA= Strongly Agree; A= Agree, N= Neutral/No opinion, D= Disagree, to SD = Strongly Disagree. The data is displayed in percentages according to the number of responses.

Prevalent Social Condition:

[37] Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches. (3rd ed.)* Singapore: SAGE Publications Inc.

[38] Hafsa, N. (2019). Mixed Methods Research: An Overview for Beginner Researchers. *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics, 58,* pp. 45-49. DOI: 10.7176/JLLL.

Table 1: International students' ability to adjust to prevailing social conditions

S/N	Statements	Response				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I consider myself an open-minded person	50 (49.0)	40 (39.2)	4 (3.9)	4 (3.9)	4 (3.9)
2	I always change my behavior to suit new social orders	12 (11.8)	36 (35.3)	31 (30.4)	18 (17.6)	5 (4.9)
3	I feel uncomfortable with changes in societal norms	7 (6.9)	17 (16.7)	31 (30.4)	31 (30.4)	16 (15.7)
4	I do not handle change so well	7 (6.9)	15 (14.7)	25 (24.5)	32 (31.4)	23 (22.5)
5	As an international student, socially restrictive conditions like the COVID pandemic made me feel alone and depressed	21 (20.6)	15 (14.7)	20 (19.6)	23 (22.5)	23 (22.5)
6	The newer people I see, the more difficult it is for me to adjust to a place	8 (7.8)	19 (18.6)	24 (23.5)	34 (33.3)	17 (16.7)
7	I easily adapt to changing population density	18 (17.6)	39 (38.2)	20 (19.6)	20 (19.6)	5 (4.9)
8	It is challenging dealing with the disruptions to routines	9 (8.8)	29 (28.4)	32 (31.4)	25 (24.5)	7 (6.9)
9	Helping others adjust helps my own adjustment	23 (22.5)	42 (41.2)	20 (19.6)	6 (5.9)	11 (10.9)

A significant majority of participants (88.2%) consider themselves open-minded, with almost half (49%) strongly agreeing with this statement. This suggests a prevailing mindset of receptivity and willingness to entertain new ideas or perspectives.

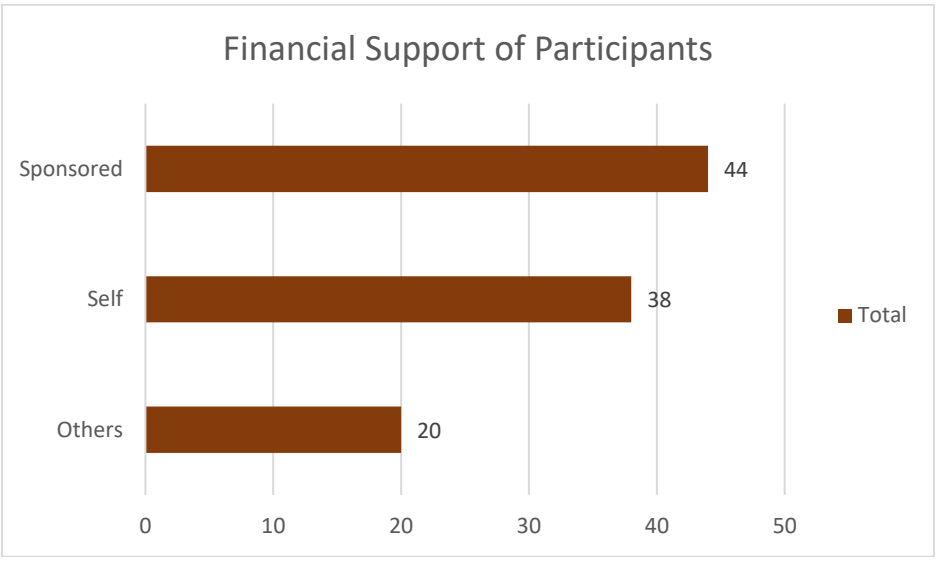
Regarding behavioral adaptation, nearly half of the participants (47.1%) indicate a propensity to adjust their behavior to suit new social orders, with over one-

third (35.3%) agreeing and a smaller percentage (11.8%) strongly agreeing. This underscores a level of flexibility and adaptability in various social contexts.
However, there's a notable discomfort with changes in societal norms, as expressed by 47.1% of participants, with 30.4% strongly agreeing with this sentiment. This suggests a degree of resistance or unease towards shifts in cultural or societal expectations.
Similarly, a significant proportion (46.2%) reports difficulty in handling change, with over one-third (31.4%) strongly agreeing. This highlights challenges in adapting to new circumstances or situations among the participants.
Opinions regarding socially restrictive conditions like the COVID-19 pandemic are divided. While 43.1% express feelings of loneliness and depression due to these conditions, an equal percentage disagrees with this sentiment. This indicates varied experiences and coping mechanisms in response to challenging social conditions.
Adjusting to new people appears to be challenging for many participants, with 50.2% finding it difficult and 33.3% strongly agreeing with this statement. This suggests struggles in forming connections or integrating into new social circles.
On a more positive note, the majority of participants (56.6%) express ease in adapting to changing population density, with nearly 20% strongly agreeing with this statement. This indicates a level of comfort and adaptability in response to fluctuations in social environments.
However, dealing with disruptions to routines poses challenges for a significant portion of participants (37.2%), with over one-quarter (28.4%) strongly agreeing. This highlights the impact of changes in daily habits or schedules on individual well-being and adjustment. A majority of participants (63.7%) agree that helping others adjust aids in their own adjustment process, with over one-fifth (22.5%) strongly agreeing. This underscores the reciprocal nature of social support and the benefits of collective adjustment efforts.
The results of the quantitative analysis correspond with the data obtained from the international students interviewed. The international students expressed the disparity in adjustment during different social conditions. They observed that restrictive social situations like the COVID period was a challenging time especially for those who had recently entered the Czech Republic during this period. They were faced with isolation and depression, except for the ones who came with their families. They talked about the difficulty securing jobs during this period, being unable to socialize and make friends, and ultimately making the separation from family at that time very difficult.
The post covid era was different for the international students as they were able to move more freely around the community and interact, amidst the other challenges discussed. The post COVID era allowed for exploration of the new environment which is necessary for adjustment. The post restrictive period helped the students obtain some form of normalcy in their lives
The first main enquiry of the interview was to briefly tell the researcher about their experiences coming into the Czech Republic. 5 participants entered the

Czech Republic shortly after the COVID breakout and stated that it was a difficult period moving abroad. One of the participants who arrived during the COVID has a Czech spouse and was able to adjust despite the COVID with the help of his in-laws. This participant is quoted saying that "my in-laws helped me learn quickly and assimilate the Czech culture. My wife helped with all the paperwork when we decided to relocate for studies, reducing the stress of moving here form Australia". The other participants who arrived the Czech Republic experienced much tougher adjustment processes. One of the participants from during the COVID stated that "it was a very difficult period for me, emotionally. I could not bring my family along due to the many social restrictions at the time". The others reported that that it was not easy meeting people and looked forward to the end of the COVID era. The participants who arrived after the COVID had different experiences. Despite not encountering social restrictions, some of them experienced other forms of challenges upon arrival, like the extreme weather conditions during the winter.
Other challenges faced on arrival includes problems with changing their local currencies to the Czech crowns, which in this case was due to the time the participant entered the Czech Republic, hence creating issues with transporting the participant to his reserved accommodation and being able to buy food. Others reported that the process of entering the Czech Republic was considered chaotic due to the lack of guidance and assistance from the international office, hence the confusion with locating places such as the hostels, university buildings, tram stops and appropriate tram numbers. They, however, were able to figure them out after a few errors.

Financial Instability: The result of the study is displayed as follows: the source financial support received by the students and a Standard Deviation analysis into the factors influencing their financial stability within the Czech Republic.

Figure 1: Financial support of respondent



The data from the Figure above categorizes the 102 participants of the survey based on their sources of financial support, revealing that 20 individuals fall under the category of "Others," 38 individuals finance their education independently ("Self"), and 44 individuals receive financial support from sponsors ("Sponsored").

Table 2. International students' ability to get and maintain employment in the Czech Republic

S/N	Statements	Response				
		SA	A	N	D	SD
1	It was difficult to get a job.	9 (8.8)	27 (26.5)	39 (38.2)	18 (17.6)	9 (8.8)
2	Others are biased towards me	16 (15.7)	31 (30.4)	23 (22.5)	21 (20.6)	11 (10.8)
3	I am treated differently due to my gender	14 (13.7)	11 (10.8)	16 (15.7)	21 (20.6)	40 (39.2)
4	Many opportunities are denied me	9 (8.8)	22 (21.6)	25 (24.5)	25 (24.5)	21 (20.6)
5	I have a very high chance of losing my job	6 (5.9)	10 (9.8)	32 (31.4)	25 (24.5)	29 (28.4)
6	I cannot get jobs matching my qualification	17 (16.7)	19 (18.6)	30 (29.4)	16 (15.7)	20 (19.6)
7	I feel accepted and included at my workplace	29 (28.4)	24 (23.5)	30 (29.4)	10 (9.8)	9 (8.8)

The data provided offers valuable insights into the perceptions and experiences of individuals concerning job opportunities and workplace dynamics. A significant finding is that a notable proportion of participants, approximately 38.2%, are not certain of difficulty in securing employment, indicating potential challenges within the job market. Moreover, around one-third of participants, constituting 30.4%, express feelings of bias from others, suggesting potential barriers or prejudices impacting their professional opportunities. Interestingly, while the majority of participants strongly disagree with being treated differently due to their gender, representing 39.2%, a significant minority, about 20.6%, strongly agree, highlighting disparities in treatment that exist within certain contexts.

Furthermore, the data indicates that a considerable percentage of participants, roughly 24.5%, feel that many opportunities are denied to them. This perception of opportunity denial underscores potential obstacles individuals face in accessing employment or advancing within their careers. Additionally, concerns regarding job security are evident, with approximately 31.4% of participants expressing a belief in having a high chance of losing their jobs. This finding suggests underlying anxieties about job stability among the surveyed individuals.

Moreover, a significant proportion of participants, nearly 29.4%, indicate feeling unable to secure jobs that align with their qualifications. This discrepancy between qualifications and job opportunities highlights potential mismatches in the labor market, contributing to frustrations among job seekers. Despite these challenges, a noteworthy percentage of participants, encompassing 29.4%, report feeling accepted and included at their workplaces. However, it is noteworthy that a minority, comprising 9.8% of participants, strongly disagree with this sentiment, suggesting that there are still individuals who experience marginalization or exclusion within their work environments.

When asked about their employment status during the interviews, 8 out of the 10 participants stated that they were employed and currently working, with 2 of them working in their various departments of the university. The 2 participants working within the University reported that they had no issues communicating with their colleagues who were also international students and Czechs who could speak and understand English. The remaining 6 reported that it was difficult finding jobs within the Czech Republic as most of them required the ability to communicate in the Czech language. They eventually were able to find jobs that did not require the use of the Czech language, but not necessarily in the fields of expertise. Jobs were available for fast food services, call center representatives for international companies and language teachers. Some of the participants working within the town of Brno also reported that they were not expecting any form of promotions or improvements in the job either, because of the language barrier with management.

The participant from Germany is quoted saying "*My greatest challenge at work is the language barrier. I am interested in a lot of other fields at work but cannot learn them or teach what I know because of it"*. The participant from Kenya had this to say, "*definitely, as many jobs in the Czech Republic requires the Czech language there are limited number of places to get employment. Eventually I got a job at a fast-food joint but can only communicate with one person*". The participant expressed feelings of frustration due to perceived mistreatment and harassment.

Discussions

The findings from the quantitative analysis reflected the concerns of the international students who participated in the interviews. The study showed that the students experienced significant variations in their adjustment during different social circumstances. They emphasized the challenges posed by restrictive social conditions, such as those during the COVID-19 pandemic. For students who arrived in the Czech Republic during this period, the experience was particularly challenging. They reported feelings of isolation and depression, which were less pronounced for those who had relocated with their families. Interviewees recounted difficulties in finding employment during this time, the inability to socialize or build new friendships, and an intensified emotional strain due to separation from their families, all of which compounded the challenges of settling into a new environment.

It has been determined that the international students who participated in this study had initially expressed confidence in their abilities to handle varying social conditions. However, a notable number of them expressed discomfort with changing societal norms and expressed some degree of resistance or unease towards shifts in cultural or societal expectations. Many of them reported that they do not handle change very well and found it challenging adapting to new social circumstances or situations. Socially restrictive conditions like the COVID-19 pandemic showed equal yet opposing opinions. Many participants who had already started their study abroad before and during this period expressed feelings of loneliness and depression due to these conditions, an equal percentage disagreed with this sentiment. This showed how different each person experiences and copes with challenging social changes. Most of the participants found it challenging adjusting to new people indicating a struggle in forming connections or integrating into new social circles.

Additionally, the international students who participated in this study revealed the following: a greater number of the participants faced challenges within the job market, expressing feelings of bias and prejudices that impact their ability to secure a job and advance in their career, in the Czech Republic. Some showed concerns about their job security and shows signs of anxiety and frustration regarding this, which may reflect on a person's performance at the job, with a considerable amount in mismatched jobs unable to secure jobs that align

with their qualifications. However, a small number of the participants reported that they felt accepted and included at their workplaces.

Conclusion

The Czech Republic has become home to an increasing number of international students from not only the European Union, but for students from all the continents of the world. This has contributed to the country's cultural diversity and academic richness. However, these students face a unique set of challenges in adjusting to their new environment which could be cultural, academical, or social[39]. In the Czech Republic, international students often encounter various challenges due to cultural differences, such as distinct social norms, language barriers, and difficulties in finding and maintaining suitable employment, and being able to build and sustain relationships.

Prevailing social condition and financial instability are major challenges that significantly affects the adjustment of international students. Adjustment is largely dependent on prevailing social conditions existing within the new environment of the study abroad programme. The social climate of every society at any given time, would determine what the individual must adjust to and the resources available to aid adjustment at said time. Ranging from the naturally induced social conditions such as the weather changes which induces culture shock, to the economic and social crisis like the COVID-19, the international students should be aided through guidance from host universities and societies to settle in. The participants of this study who relayed the little or no guidance received at their entrance into the Czech Republic struggled to adjust. Universities play a pivotal role in facilitating the adjustment of international students. By providing comprehensive support services, fostering an inclusive campus environment, and promoting intercultural dialogue, universities can significantly ease the transition for international students.

Factors associated with financial instability such as tuition fees, limited employment opportunities, exchange rate fluctuations, and the lack of financial literacy contribute to the financial challenges these students face, which could be detrimental to their well-being and success in the stud abroad programme. To understand how international students in the Czech Republic navigate this process, this study conducted surveys and interviews. The analysis of the data revealed that a significant number of participants faced difficulties in the job market, citing experiences of bias and prejudice that hindered their ability to secure jobs and advance in their careers. Some students expressed concerns

[39] Zhang, J. – Goodson, P. (2011). Predictors of International Students' Psychosocial Adjustment to Life in the United States: A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 35*/2, 139-162. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.11.011

about job security, displaying signs of anxiety and frustration, which could negatively affect job performance.

Additionally, many international students could only find jobs that did not match their qualifications. However, a small group of participants reported feeling accepted and included at their workplaces. Addressing these issues requires a collaborative approach involving universities, governments, and financial institutions to provide better support systems, including scholarships, financial literacy programmes, and flexible work regulations for international students. Ensuring financial stability is crucial for helping international students achieve their academic goals and fully engage in the cultural and social opportunities of their host countries. The inflow of international students is usually considered an increase in the labour market ensuring more economic development for any country, hence the need to assimilate international students to maximize their full potential.

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