



East African Journal of Education Studies

eajes.eanso.org

Volume 7, Issue 1, 2024

Print ISSN: 2707-3939 | Online ISSN: 2707-3947

Title DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-3947>



EAST AFRICAN
NATURE &
SCIENCE
ORGANIZATION

Original Article

Support Services for International Graduate Students at Makerere University

Winifred Namuwonge^{1*}

¹ Makerere University, P. O. Box 7062 Kampala, Uganda.

* Author for Correspondence ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-2129-935X>; Email: winniekabumbuli@gmail.com

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.7.1.1694>

Date Published: ABSTRACT

16 January
2024

Keywords:
*Support
Services,
International
Graduate
Students.*

Makerere University is focused on being a research-led university, which necessitates it embrace an internationalisation agenda to fit into the global research network. There is a need to boost the number of international graduate students to help Makerere University realise her vision. This qualitative study explores how international graduate students are supported at Makerere University. The following objective guided it: to explore how international graduate students are supported at Makerere University. The study was anchored in the interpretivism world view, subscribing to the transcendental phenomenology of Edmund Husserl to uncover the support given to international graduate students. Eight international graduate students at Makerere University were interviewed and selected from different academic disciplines categorised according to Becher and Biglan's classification of academic disciplines. Both unstructured interviews and documentary check data generation strategies were used in this study. Data analysis followed a thematic approach whereby various forms of support were provided to international graduate students at Makerere University, and how it is provided was identified. It was concluded that those international graduate students received non-academic and academic support at Makerere University. This study recommends that Makerere University Management provide financial, human, and physical resources to the International Office as ways of facilitating international graduate students to complete their study programs and attracting many more to join the University. The International Office may work with the Office of the Dean of Students to organise events for graduate students to facilitate interactions between international and domestic students, and they may also put in place peer mentors for new international graduate students to foster a sense of community. This study recommends that the International Office work very closely with the schools in the different Colleges of Makerere University, especially establishing a desk officer in each of the Dean's Office to handle issues of international students as this may improve their numbers at Makerere University. Finally, the university management should strengthen and streamline the activities of the International Office at Makerere University.

APA CITATION

Namuwonge, W. (2024). Support Services for International Graduate Students at Makerere University *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 7(1), 39-60. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.7.1.1694>.

CHICAGO CITATION

Namuwonge, Winifred. 2024. "Support Services for International Graduate Students at Makerere University". *East African Journal of Education Studies* 7 (1), 39-60. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajes.7.1.1694>

HARVARD CITATION

Namuwonge, W. (2024) "Support Services for International Graduate Students at Makerere University", *East African Journal of Education Studies*, 7(1), pp. 39-60. doi: 10.37284/eajes.7.1.1694.

IEEE CITATION

W., Namuwonge "Support Services for International Graduate Students at Makerere University" *EAJES*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 39-60, Jan. 2024.

MLA CITATION

Namuwonge, Winifred. "Support Services for International Graduate Students at Makerere University". *East African Journal of Education Studies*, Vol. 7, no. 1, Jan. 2024, pp. 39-60, doi:10.37284/eajes.7.1.1694

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 50 years, there has been increased international student mobility, resulting in high enrolments in higher education institutions globally (Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016). In the present times, the global outlook of higher education sector is highly characterized by continuous increase in the volume of students who desire to pursue higher education from foreign countries so as to enhance international experience, soft skills learning and cross-cultural competences that suit international job market (Pedró, 2021). It is also noted that the international student mobility in higher education is still largely considered in terms of a westernized, Anglo-Saxon that is predominantly by English-speaking states (De Wit, 2020). Sabzalieva and Pedró (2022) show that the number of mobile students grew from two million in 2000 to six million in 2019 globally. However, international students' mobility trends and volume have transformed significantly into multidimensional experiences such as academic stress, language barriers, and isolation. Once international students arrive at a particular institution in their host country, they are expected to integrate academically and socially into the new society. This calls for support from the host country because international students face many challenges adjusting to and coping with their new learning environments (García et al., 2019; Neves & Hillman, 2017).

In Uganda, the history of internationalization of higher education can also be traced way back from 1922 when Makerere University was founded as a technical college by the British Colonial Administration (Makerere University, 2019). While some of the Makerere University academic and administrative staff was hired from Europe,

there was also a regional structural enrollment of students mainly from Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia (Ayebare, 2021). Internationalization of education at Makerere university was later identified as an important element in the strategic plan of 2008/2009 to 2018/2019 (Makerere University, 2008) This was further supported by the international office which was established in 2005 to spearhead and coordinate internationalization activities at Makerere University (Makerere University, 2008). Many other public and privately owned universities have emerged in Uganda overtime and most of them have put forward efforts to attract international students (Bisaso & Holtta, 2017; Wamai, 2021). Previously, Uganda was one of the advanced knowledge hubs in Africa that attracts a large number of students mainly from the neighbouring countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia (Bisaso, 2017) and the country has about 5626 mobile students abroad which accounts to 0.1% on the global scale (Sabzalieva & Pedró 2022). Since the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic, the numbers of international graduate students seem to be declining at Makerere University. Therefore, there was an urgent need to explore experiences and support services provided to international graduate students at Makerere University which prompted the study on which this article is based.

Statement of the Problem

International graduate students bring diverse perspectives, enriching academic environments with cultural variety, fostering global collaboration, and enhancing research by incorporating different viewpoints and experiences (Kiiza, 2019). As such, Makerere

University has positioned itself as a research-led institution that seeks to advance relevant social and economic development research through internationalisation (Bisaso & Nakamanya, 2018). Makerere University has also invested heavily in driving stakeholders in this strategic direction through strategic plans, providing policies, and supportive institutional structures to advance the University's internationalisation strategy (Bisaso & Nakamanya, 2018). Therefore, as a research-led institution with an internationalisation agenda, Makerere University is expected to recruit and retain international graduate students to benefit the University's global reputation and research output (Bisaso, 2017). This notwithstanding, international students' enrolment is declining at Makerere University. Statistics show that whereas 4183 students enrolled in 2008/ 2009, their number declined to 657 in 2012/2014 (Bisaso, 2017). This situation worsened by 2021, whereby the enrolment of international students had declined to 600 (Makerere University, 2021). If this situation persists, it will likely negatively impact Makerere University's global research collaboration and reputation, possibly obstructing its progress towards becoming a research-led institution. Though some studies have been conducted on international students (Kiiza, 2019; Ssempebwa et al., 2014), they have not concentrated on how they are supported at Makerere university. It is against this background that this study explored support services provided to international graduate students at Makerere University.

Research Question

How are international graduate students supported at Makerere University?

RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical Review

This study was guided by the International Student Adjustment Framework developed by Aguirre in 2019. According to this framework, international students go through four stages in a university setting: vulnerability, self-awareness, alliances, and synergy. Whereas the vulnerability

stage entailed academic stress, language barriers, gender, and major, the self-awareness stage encompassed culture. The Alliance stage included international colleagues and a supportive network. The synergy stage was about the university environment (Aguirre, 2019). The framework suggests that the categories are flexible and progressive because people's experiences are contextual based on studying overseas. This framework illustrates the influence of students' experiences and the support measures that facilitate their adjustment (Bimpong, 2023). Yet, students' willingness to adapt results from their acquaintances, personal traits, self-assurance, social support, length in the country, and participation in college student support programs (Bochner, 1986).

Empirical Review

Successful management and operation of support services for international graduate students enhances a university's global dimension, attracts and retains international students, and builds momentum for future recruitment of high-quality students (Arthur, 2017; Choudaha, 2016). International graduate students require exceptional institutional support to enjoy a fruitful and dynamic study experience in the host countries (Skinner et al., 2019). Navigating the language barrier, cultural shock, academic stress, and visa regulations requirements require resilience and a well-structured support system (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2018; Skinner et al., 2019). Support services to international graduate students have taken on greater importance in today's international education context, hence a need for universities to provide support services to assist these students in their academic and personal endeavours (Martirosyan et al., 2019; Perez-Encinas & Ammigan, 2016). Therefore, universities offer various specialised services designed to support students' social adjustment, academic achievement, and language development in ways that lead to greater retention and international student engagement (Martirosyan et al., 2019). Perez-Encinas and Ammigan (2016) recommended four key areas to

provide the best student experience: welcoming, adjusting services and programs to meet their needs, facilitating integration between international and other students, and assessing students' experiences. Support services provided by institutions in each country were defined by and aligned with the type of student mobility; while some international student support services include enrolment management functions, most focus on providing immigration and employment advising services and programs that promote academic success, international understanding, acculturation sessions, and campus and community engagement. In some cases, health and accommodation information and language support services are addressed (Ammigan & Jones, 2018; Skinner et al., 2019).

The international and Dean of students' offices are the most essential structures designed to support students in their academic, cultural, and social transition to campus. They provide various services, from orientation and advising on immigration compliance, academic, employment, financial, and personal issues to hosting social and cultural programs that help with the adaptation and acculturation process (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021). The arrival days of international graduate students are crucial for their engagement and integration with the University, the new culture, the environment, and new friends (Ammigan & Perez-Encinas, 2018; Perez-Encinas & Rodriguez-Pomeda, 2017). On this note, there should be collaboration between support offices across campus and participation by their staff. All stakeholders within the University need to understand the importance of internationalisation and be provided with relevant training and knowledge to be able to provide the best services possible to international students (Kim & Cronley, 2020; Martirosyan et al., 2019; Nachatar Singh & Jamil, 2021).

International graduate students are provided with orientation support on their arrival in their host countries in higher education. They receive the necessary information regarding their social and academic conduct while at the University and the

various contact offices and departments in case of any need (Ammigan & Jones, 2018). Considering the international graduate students' diverse cultural backgrounds at a given institution, orientation programs are designed to benefit all students (Nada & Araújo, 2019; Wu et al., 2015). Further, this familiarises them with various support services and other campus activities, which assist them in integrating successfully. Though universities conduct orientation programs, Penman et al. (2021) argue that these programs are short, insufficient, and confined to the orientation period. They cater for a homogeneous group of international students and are not focused on areas of study. They thus comment that these orientation programs have limited value, particularly for international students who require more support, mentoring, and sufficient time to adjust to the university environment. In corroboration, Forbes-Mewett and Sawyer (2019) shared that students were given excessive information during orientation much too early in their stay. Hence, Penman et al. (2021) recommend universities should organise orientation beyond that orientation week to benefit the students. Universities can play a crucial role in promoting the well-being and success of international students by providing cultural transition programs, enhanced orientations, intentional roommate pairings, bridging programs, and support services (Penman et al., 2021).

Another arrival support to international graduate students revolves around the day-in and day-out routines of living, like food, transportation, and student housing in higher education (Choudaha, 2016). Despite the importance of accommodation, a study by Newton et al. (2021) reported that international students often have difficulty sourcing stable, safe housing that is not overcrowded and within reasonable proximity to the University. These housing stressors may compromise students' academic performance and negatively impact their mental health. Related to housing, Skinner et al. (2019) affirm that having stable, affordable housing, the ability to get to where you need to go, and access to food that

meets dietary and cultural needs must all be firmly in place for a student to feel secure and stable in a new environment. Housing is a big challenge to international graduate students, especially those living off campus. Some landlords take advantage of students being foreigners; some require them to pay full year rent upon signing a contract; in some cases, they experience discrimination (Rice et al., 2016). In their study on housing for international students, Skinner et al. (2019) found out that few students stay on campus, and the majority live off campus because the availability of on-campus housing is lower for graduate students. Students admitted that finding housing is more challenging than they expected and were also dissatisfied with the cost of housing both on and off campus. Their study recommended that universities that could not offer more affordable housing rates or build more housing could set up an off-campus housing website for individuals affiliated with the University. Such information can also be posted to students to clearly direct them on obtaining housing. Institutions can support students by informing them what to expect from landlords and what their rights are as tenants in the state. However, students reported being satisfied with the housing price (Ammigan & Jones, 2018).

Scholars (Ammigan & Jones, 2018; Colyar et al., 2023; Skinner et al., 2019) suggest that international students in higher education should be supported to master local transportation options to and from school and places around town. Transportation poses a big challenge to international students, and this takes different forms, like cars, bikes, and buses. Interestingly, institutions offer support to international students as far as local transportation is concerned. Some even offer from the airport, providing clear information on public transport options, how to use them, the cost, and where to purchase transit passes (Colyar et al., 2023). Similarly, Skinner et al. (2019) emphasises that the ability to buy food that meets both dietary and cultural needs is a crucial aspect of daily living. It is vital to find food that nourishes the brain and the body and gives the comfort of home with familiar recipes and dishes that are served. Though this is vital, finding food

to meet all these requirements is not easy. Their study revealed that many international students could not find food that met their needs on campus. Therefore, institutions can support international students by offering a wide variety of food to meet numerous needs.

Furthermore, Kiiza (2019) posited that peer mentoring was an effective support service provided to international graduate students in higher education. Peer mentoring helped them in addressing experiences related to cultural differences and lack of resources. Initial challenges international students face are dealt with better through friends from the same country, and friendships are formed more closely with nationals (Arthur, 2017; Collins & Leader, n.d.). The authors further share that peer relations strengthen student experiences and well-being on campus as students adjust and integrate into the university environment. Hence, given the critical role of peer relations in international graduate students' experiences, institutions need to encourage and facilitate relationships between students and break down pockets of isolation (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021; Skinner et al., 2019). Despite the importance of peer relations, international graduate students admitted that they do not have a strong social network at their universities and struggle with creating robust social networks (Calikoglu, 2018; Colyar et al., 2023; Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021). They further assert that this speaks volumes to institutions to help strengthen these social networks since they are crucial for student success, reflecting on the institution's academic outcomes and career trajectories. They can also lead to higher levels of engagement and even increase stronger alumni relations. This concurs the findings that mentoring programs were positively associated with international graduate students' academic performance and overall well-being (Li et al., 2019).

International graduate student's ability to manage perceived academic and psychosocial demands is strongly linked to social support, which is intertwined (Arthur, 2017). Therefore,

counsellors are integral members of a student services team available to international students to support their academic success and well-being (Arthur, 2017). Guidance and counselling are a professional field with a broad range of activities and services whose main objective is to assist individuals (staff and students) in higher education institutions to understand themselves, their problems, their school environment, and their world (Lasode et al., 2017). This points to the fact that given the social interaction and learning challenges, one needs such services at any point. The cognitive, affective, and systemic issues that the students encounter within a university setting invite everybody to appreciate the role of guidance and counselling.

Getachew (2020) viewed guidance and counselling as a process of planned intervention within a school system by which the total development of students is stimulated in areas relating to their personal, social, career, emotional, and academic concerns. The foregoing fits well within what Roberts and Dunworth (2012) defined as student support services, referring to them as all those services established by the institution to support students' cognitive, affective, and systemic needs. Therefore, International students are the most vulnerable since they find themselves in precarious conditions socially, culturally, and in many unusual situations. Much as universities are making such counselling services available, some international students do not make use of these services because they associate counselling with mental health or weakness (Hyams-Ssekasi et al., 2014). As a result, they feel more comfortable when sharing their frustrations or receiving advice from their elders, parents, older friends, and senior students from their home country rather than using the counselling services put in place by the University (Dominguez-Whitehead, 2018).

As regards immigration issues, the international office staff are responsible for helping students adapt to the new environment while providing them guidance on several issues, including immigration regulations. According to

Martirosyan et al. (2019), some universities make an ombudsperson available as an advocate to assist students with visa processing and scholarships. However, due to increasing immigration regulations and federal compliance standards for international students around the world, emphasis has been put on staff and student advisors to have extensive legal and regulatory knowledge (Ammigan & Jones, 2018; Perez-Encinas & Rodriguez-Pomeda, 2018). Despite this, international students face challenges when navigating the immigration process due to insufficient guidance. Yet, the visa acquisition process can be stressful as applicants are never guaranteed visa approval, yet they still incur significant costs throughout the process (Jibreel, 2015).

In addition, many universities provide financial support to international students through scholarships, donor-based awards and campus-based jobs often in peer-mentorship roles, career services, academic advising, and campus-life activities. They also receive financial support from their families and/or communities to attend college, which puts them under great pressure. Hence, they feel compelled to make sufficient income from various sources and succeed academically. However, financial support is one of the main sources of dissatisfaction for international students, though administrators may sometimes demonstrate a limited understanding of the financial challenges (Colyar et al., 2023; Martirosyan et al., 2019).

The stress and other challenges faced by international students influence international students' overall health and well-being. They faced diet-related health issues because of unusual foodstuffs. Therefore, Universities provide informal peer networks on food and nutrition and wellness information to international students (Forbes-Mewett & Forbes-Mewett, 2018; Martirosyan et al., 2019; Newton et al., 2021). Students noted mental health issues resulting from their experiences at the University, like isolation and loneliness. Universities are also providing mental health support to help students cope with

their mental health struggles. The pandemic also added to the list of health-related challenges faced by the students, including difficulty in accessing the vaccines and depression. They also face issues of suicide, homicide, obesity, and precancerous lesions (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2019). Despite the support, some students fear to utilise it because they have a misconception that exposing their problems may lead to the loss of their student visa, and others are constrained by the language and a feeling that they can manage on their own (Colyar et al., 2023; Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2019; Newton et al., 2021).

As far as recreation is concerned, in some universities, mainly in Europe and America, several social and cultural activities purposely to integrate international students are organised, for instance, International Education Week, global festivals, world fairs, heritage and cultural celebrations, meet-and-greet receptions, sightseeing trips, weekly coffee hours, a global sibling's program, and a global student mentors programs (Colyar et al., 2023; Martirosyan et al., 2019; Skinner et al., 2019). On top of those activities, Lyons (2022) contributed that campus recreational sport assists international students with acclimating to their new environment. Their study revealed that international students use their campus recreational sports participation in various ways, for instance, to maintain cultural identity, cross cultural boundaries, and acclimate to a new multicultural environment. However, some students expressed elements of exclusion and marginalisation about campus recreational sports programs (Colyar et al., 2023). Sports give chances to socialise with other international students with similar or comparable cultural backgrounds. Sports spectatorship also provides international students opportunities for social networking, gaining insight into other cultures, and building trust and mutual appreciation between diverse ethnic groups—all these focus on promoting international understanding and building support for international education exchange. There were also cultural exhibitions and demonstrations, which included food from all

over the world, all intended to help students survive in the host countries.

Faculty are the backbone of academic programs delivered at higher education institutions and, therefore, contribute to institutions' reputation as well. Excellent teaching and access to quality faculty are likely to influence international students' high satisfaction rates with their University's reputation as a whole (Skinner et al., 2019). Faculty are significant since they ensure that students stay focused on completing their studies, which is done by guiding them about campus knowledge, academics, and social perspectives of the college (Marijanovic et al., 2021; Zhai & Razali, 2022). They assist and encourage students to participate in numerous activities and provide information on their needed resources. Hence, to cope with the demands of their new academic environment, international graduate students received support from lecturers and supervisors (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021). Some researchers (Skinner et al., 2019) also found that faculty and quality of the academic experience are highly important to international students in higher education. Faculty were conscious that international students face more challenges than domestic students, especially the language barrier. They found out that students were satisfied with the quality of teaching at the University and their academic programs. Divergently, the findings reported negative experiences with faculty as they lack awareness and knowledge about what international students go through. Bianchi (2013) reported that there are unsupportive staff members who fail to reply to emails or do not answer questions, have insulting behaviour, are uncooperative and are a source of dissatisfaction for international students. Students recommended that faculty receive training in managing and supporting international students in their classes. Also, there were cases of racism, stereotyping, and hostility, yet the ability of these students to change lecturers was not always possible (Marijanovic et al., 2021).

According to Bianchi (2013), universities must provide support through high-quality installations

and attractive campuses. This refers to the international students' perceptions regarding the buildings and classrooms, well-equipped library, high-tech computer laboratories, gym, and attractive campus with shops. International students are highly satisfied with these installations because they allow them to spend the whole day on the university campus and facilitate their learning process. In addition, universities provide spiritual support to their international students. Spirituality plays a central role in heightening psychological, cognitive, and social functioning and affects students' performance in the academic environment (Philip et al., 2019). Religion also positively influences students because it is a source of spiritual support and helps students overcome adjustment problems and tolerate their situation better (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021).

Due to the divergent student demographics, English language support programs were the most prevalent cross-cutting programs offered at universities. Most of these English language programs offered classes at various fluency levels aimed at developing listening, speaking, and academic writing and reading skills, practical English tutorials and accent reduction sessions (Martirosyan et al., 2019; Penman et al., 2021). The authors added that other support programs are offered to enhance students' academic work, including counselling, academic tips, research methodology tips, workshops and webinars detailing academic integrity, classroom expectations, and success in their general academic work, tutoring both in face-to-face and online sessions and supplemental instruction, and they are mandatory. Lastly, Choudaha's (2016) study reveals that although countries successfully attract international students, they still struggle to allocate adequate resources and expertise needed to meet their expectations, potentially leading to lower satisfaction and negatively impacting future recruitment. Correspondingly, (Singh, 2021) stated that although various initiatives, programs, interventions, and services are designed to help international graduate students upon arrival, the ratio of international students and support services

is never balanced. This is due to limited resources and the reality that faculty are always busy with their schedules.

All in all, several scholars (Ayebare, 2021; Gomes et al., 2014; Nada & Araújo, 2019; Ratshilaya, 2017; Ssempebwa et al., 2014; Zhou & Zhang, 2014) have emphasised the important role of university support services for international student success in higher education. However, none of the above studies explored support services provided to international graduate students in Uganda, particularly Makerere University. Wamai (2021) observed that University support programs tend to focus on academic support services and overlook the social aspect and well-being of international students in the new university environment, access to appropriate accommodation and feeding services especially in the early days of their admission. Lack of such initial social and academic support can potentially create negative experiences among international students and hinder their academic performance (Wu et al., 2015). This study seeks to close this gap by comprehensively examining the support services provided to international graduate students at Makerere University. Eight participants were purposively selected from different colleges of Makerere University in accordance with Biglan's classification of academic disciplines 4 were pursuing masters' degree while 4 were on PhD programs. All the participants selected had been on the course for a period of not less than 3 years.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative approach. Specifically, a single case study research design was used. The population of this study included international graduate students at Makerere University from the available nine Colleges and one School which include College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES), College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT), College of Education and External Studies (CEES), College of Health Sciences (CHS), College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS), College of Business and

Management Sciences (CoBAMS), College of Computing & Information Sciences (CoCIS), College of Natural Sciences (CoNAS), College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal resources and BioSecurity (CoVAB) and School of Law. Available evidence indicates that there are 2006 international students at Makerere University. Purposive sampling technique was used, this was due to the need to gain insights from international graduate students that are information-rich with lived experiences of this phenomenon. The sample size comprised of 8 international graduate students at Makerere university selected in accordance with Biglan's classification of academic disciplines. Five male and three female international graduate students participated in the study. I considered gender, academic discipline and the number of years a student had spent on the program. The interview and document check methods were used in this study. Data were collected using instruments such as an unstructured interview guide and a document checklist, thematic analysis was used in this study.

FINDINGS

According to this study, support entails all activities, strategies, practices, and programs for international graduate students. This support is categorised as accommodation, research supervision, orientation, study resources, immigration, interpersonal connections, health support, international office, psychosocial, financial, student leadership, language, spiritual and research workshops.

This study's findings indicate that Makerere University offers on-campus accommodation options for international graduate students, making their transition to Uganda easier. It was found that participants identified accommodation as one of the most critical support services that Makerere University provided. It was revealed that participants were accommodated within the university post-graduate hall of residence and Mugenyi Flats, which made them comfortable at the University. Participants appreciated the University's effort to put in place a residence for graduate students, and those who were

accommodated mentioned its advantages like easy access to academic resources like the library, unlike their counterparts who stayed out of the University. For instance, IGSM4 shared that:

I enjoy my stay at DAG, it is near to my college, and it is convenient for me when I must check on my samples in the laboratory at any time. PhD students are supportive of master's students, they share with us study resources, ideas and this has contributed to making my academic journey at the University more enjoyable and successful.

From the above quotation, it is apparent that international graduate students try to cope with academic issues by developing strong academic supportive networks with people they feel more connected with. Additionally, the participant is from a hard-applied discipline and may require much time in the laboratory. This may help to explain why the participant enjoyed her stay in DAG. Therefore, the location was convenient and secure for her to access the laboratory and other study resources.

Conversely, participants who stayed out of the University's post graduate hall complained about failure to use the library, insecurity, and being overcharged out of the University. For instance, IGSM2 asserted that:

I have not used the library because we have many lectures that end late, so instead of going to the library, I must hurry to go home, which is insecure and far from campus.

Participants agreed that interpersonal connections were critically viable to international graduate students because they enhanced their integration and adjustment, reducing feelings of loneliness, improving mental health and providing opportunities for collaboration and personal growth in the University. The interpersonal connections included student-to-student, student-to-community, relations with fellow international students and interaction with staff. For instance, a participant (IGSM3) from the soft pure discipline shared how fellow students supported her until she got used to the environment. She stated that:

I greatly relied on my friends I found in Uganda and those that I made when I joined the University. They oriented me to different useful areas and the university systems. This helped me fit in since I had missed official university orientation and noted poor communication in the concerned offices.

The participant's response illustrates the importance of forming alliances to ease international student adjustment in the host environment. IGSM3 probably preferred to rely on friends for help because they could have faced similar difficulties and overcome such barriers. Additionally, during the interview, she revealed that she failed to get information from the relevant offices when she needed it, perhaps this helps to explain why she resorted to fellow students for guidance.

Orientation is a crucial support service that should not only be provided to international students but be made a must support in higher education institutions because transiting from home to another country is very complex and daunting. If students are not comforted at the entry point, they may fail to adjust to the new environment and fall out of the system. Participants viewed orientation as a platform for welcoming them and providing information and directions. IGSP4 from soft pure discipline opined that:

Our college oriented us and briefed us on what to do to succeed in our academic journey. They educated us about the dos and don'ts of the college and the university rules and regulations. They took us to the vital offices around the college in case we needed assistance.

A participant (IGSM2) from the hard pure discipline had a different perspective on the orientation program. She asserted:

The program organised to facilitate international graduate students' orientation was disorderly, it lacked proper arrangement and key topics were rushed through without providing us with complete information. The information was unclear, schedules were

confusing and there was hardly any assistance for navigating life in a new country. It was quite overwhelming.

There was a contradiction regarding orientation; some participants attested that they were fully oriented, yet others verified that they never had any orientation. This may have resulted from arrangements for the different colleges and schools that they needed their students to know and follow. Though there was a general university orientation, some colleges went the extra mile to organise college orientation. However, some students still missed out because they reported late to the University after the orientation activity was closed.

International graduate students acknowledge the importance of study resources as part of their experiences at Makerere University. Participants noted that libraries provide access to academic materials such as books and journal articles that support research, while laboratories offer hands-on learning and experimentation crucial for the science disciplines. For instance, a participant (IGSM4) from the soft pure discipline opined that:

I am not complaining about the academic resources because they are very available at our disposal. We have enough books in the library that is easily accessible, the laboratories are also very well stocked. The internet is very clear and stable at our college at all times.

In contrast, a participant (IGSP3) lamented that:

Some of the laboratory tests I had to conduct needed having state-of-the-art laboratories with specialised equipment which are not available here. This was a big setback to my research work because I had to export samples to other countries which was challenging because I had to incur a lot of costs even though the approval process was so bureaucratic. The participant comes from the hard applied discipline which requires access to modern and specialised equipment to conduct scientific experiments. He comes from a country which probably has

specialised equipment and possibly he could have had prior experience in well-equipped laboratories in his home country. This might explain his dissatisfaction with the laboratories at Makerere University.

Participants also paid attention to the international Office as a support mechanism provided by the University. For instance, a participant (IGSP2) from the softly applied discipline reported that:

The lady I found in the international service department very helpful, she listened to me and responded carefully, I respected her personality. She helped me with my Visa application, my visa had expired and therefore even my telephone lines were blocked. Even when I go back home, I call her, and she responds and assists me accordingly.

Conversely, a participant (IGSM3) lamented that:

The Office is expected to give international students assistance, but when I was still at home, I called this Office, and emailed several times but no one responded to me, they had no information on their website. Due to lack of a response from the international Office I decided to travel to Uganda as a tourist and sort things when I am in the country. My friends in Uganda received me and was admitted later to the University.

The role of the international Office as regards graduate international students' presence at the University is crucial. Despite this, study findings revealed contradictory results about the Office as indicated by the voices of the above participants. The contradiction about the Office was probably a result of the character and nature of the staff who serve in the international Office. Possibly, they lacked competence in handling the hurdles of the Office.

Psychosocial support is another mechanism offered to international graduate students at Makerere University. This support was viewed by participants in terms of mental, social, and emotional well-being. For instance, a participant (IGSM3) from the soft pure discipline opined that:

I have used the psychosocial support services at the University; the Counsellor was great and helpful to connect with. However, not even the Ugandan students knew the centre was there. I was always running around helping my fellow students to connect to the Office. I had issues with stress and loneliness, I admired my friends who would go back home with a shoulder to lean on, I did not have anyone, so I cried a lot. However, the Counsellor became my shoulder to lean on.

The participant comes from Germany, where psychosocial support is a common service and is perceived positively, unlike in Uganda, where it is perceived as a centre for people with mental illness. Students tend to have a stigma about it. This may explain why she had to seek counselling services when she faced many problems, especially loneliness, that inevitably needed support from counsellors.

However, a participant (IGSP4) from the softly applied discipline said that:

I have never had any issues. I have a support network of my peers at the college and always encouraged to share. I have a good group around me, I feel there is a sense of community. Even when I feel stressed, I know I am not alone. Even our professors encourage us that stress is normal.

The participant expressed that he had a strong support network of peers and faculty at his school that made him overcome stress and loneliness, and this may explain why he did not need psychosocial support from the counselling center. The participant revealed that he was sociable, which probably explains why he easily made friends with peers and professors. Relatedly, reports from the Dean of Students' Office also indicated that the Makerere University Directorate of Guidance and Counselling played a critical role in providing psychosocial support to some international graduate students who sought help with their Directorate, and this helped them to progress with their studies.

Student leadership is a vital support to international graduate students that helps them practice their leadership skills outside the classroom. Participants who interacted with this support confessed how it helped them in various ways at the University. A participant (IGSM1) shared thus:

I am a representative to the Guild Council, I am Chairperson of my place of residence, and I hence discuss matters that affect students in the guild house. This is a very good experience sitting in the guild house and meeting with university management.

From a different perspective, many participants did not participate in student leadership activities as they did not know anything about them and did not need it anyway. For instance, a participant (IGSM2) from the hard pure discipline noted that:

The Student Guild Union is only known to local students, not international students. We have not seen anything like support or awareness. Could it be we stay far. They do not do so much to reach us and yet we have a problem.

The students who did not participate in student leadership activities probably did not need it because they were mature graduate students and assumed that these were only for young undergraduate students. Perhaps the issue of age explains the two participants' active involvement; they were young, unlike their mature counterparts, but they were all graduate students. Importantly, the reports from the Dean of Students Office showed that it was indeed true that graduate students were represented on the Guild Council of Makerere University.

Research workshops came out prominently as another support for international graduate students at Makerere University. Students described this support in terms of the provision of cross-cutting courses in qualitative and quantitative research methods and academic writing. These courses were important in enhancing students' research skills and helping them understand the global context of their field.

For instance, a participant (IGSP1) a participant from the hard pure discipline said that:

The Directorate of Research and Graduate Training organises cross-cutting or short-term training like research methodology, data analysis, scholarly writing, philosophy, and professional technical training on molecular laboratory analysis procedures tailored to certain students, which are vital. Training will help me to be proud as a Makerere University alumnus.

The study findings revealed that all participants appreciated research workshops on research methods and academic writing provided by the Directorate of research and graduate training. This points to the fact that the Directorate is concerned about this service to the students, given its contribution to their research skills, hence wholly providing it. This is in line with the mission of the Directorate of Research and Graduate Training of managing graduate training and research in the university units by organising cross-cutting research seminars for the graduate students at Makerere University (Makerere University, 2022). This is also in line with the University's strategic direction of providing innovative teaching, learning, research, and services responsive to National and Global needs (Makerere University, 2020).

In this study, some participants revealed that recreation support was critical to their mental and physical well-being at Makerere University. An international graduate student (IGSM3) from the soft pure discipline reflected that:

After a day's work, I go for sports to the lawn tennis courts, play pick ball, and am on the university team. I do exercise to keep fit and healthy.

Contrary, a participant (IGSM3) expressed that:

Though I like volleyball, I fear to go and join the young and native students to play. I hence miss out on my friend who loves swimming.

The age difference between the two participants may probably help explain why

one engaged in university sporting activities and another one did not. IGSM3 is 25 years old and could easily relate with undergraduate students who participate more in recreation. This young international student easily forms alliances with peers which perhaps helps them adjust easily in the social environment and this may help to explain why IGSM3 was able to participate in sports

Participants alluded that they got involved in religious activities at the University that enhanced their spiritual well-being and helped expand their social networks. It was also evident from the voices that religion mitigates stress through the various activities organised by the chaplaincy. A participant IGSM4 attested that:

I am a Christian I go to church; I am lucky I found my church in the University I go and participate in the church choir and other activities. I get counselling services from the Reverends when I feel stressed, lonely, and broken or discouraged.

The above quotation indicates the importance of engaging with university support programs for dealing with academic issues and beyond the educational sphere. The above participants shared how the church helped them to calm stress and loneliness. This illuminates the importance of student engagement with university support services to enhance their emotional and social well-being.

Participants expressed that they encountered some form of language challenge in local and English languages. Some international students mentioned being left out in class discussions and during lectures when examples were given in the local language. Makerere University established language support services to help students fit in with the academic environment and the wider community. For instance, a participant IGSM3 shared that:

I got a private teacher from the language department at the University to teach me Luganda so that I am not left out in class and

outside but unfortunately the teacher was bad, but I had learnt something. I eventually abandoned the class.

The participant originated from Germany; she had no idea about Luganda, which was commonly used around her, and this possibly explains why she had to go for Luganda classes to get a grip on the language. The above quote also illustrates the importance of learning the host country's language for the academic and social adjustment process of international graduate students.

The above participant went for Luganda classes because it is the commonly spoken language within and outside the University, so she had to try to learn the language for a comfortable and smooth survival. This implies that the participants had developed self-awareness regarding communication in the host environment, which would facilitate easy adjustment to the Ugandan culture as suggested by the International Student adjustment framework (Aguirre, 2019).

Similarly, participants, IGSM4 went for English lessons. She revealed that:

I had to learn English from Department of languages at Makerere University to get familiar with what the lecturers were saying and colleagues in class. I was affected in class because I could get lost in a conversation when people spoke.

This quote indicates how vulnerable the international graduate student was in a host environment where a language foreign to her own was being used. The student said she could get lost in a conversation means she felt threatened and could not belong. The participant came from a French-speaking country and was not very conversant with English, which is used as a medium of instruction at Makerere University. This possibly explains why she got lost when English was used, forcing her to study to improve her understanding of the language. Therefore, this calls for the University to establish compulsory language programs for international graduate students. This language issue is also emphasised in the International Student Adjustment

Framework. International students with a prior full education in English were more likely to adjust to the host country's culture easily (Aguirre, 2019).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings in this study revealed that the University supported international graduate students through accommodation, orientation, study resources, immigration support, health, international office, psychosocial, financial, student leadership, language, spiritual and research workshops. Regarding accommodation support for international graduate students, the findings established that accommodation was crucial for international graduate students' academic focus, well-being, productivity and creating a supportive environment. This finding agrees with Paltridge et al. (2010) who observed that accommodation not only contributes to international graduate students' sense of physical security but also reduces the factors thought to undermine their social security. However, in the case of Makerere University, findings revealed that the issue of security, though important, is not given priority, which calls for more serious attention by university management to strengthen security. Findings further revealed that on-campus accommodation enhanced the academic and personal experiences of the participants. Though this seems true, the literature indicates that personal traits equally enhance international graduate students' academic and personal experiences (Aguirre, 2019).

Studies by Paltridge et al. (2010) and Singh (2023) indicate that participants who reside in university accommodations appreciate the supportive environment that gives them a sense of belonging. This resonates with this study's findings that on-campus accommodation created a supportive community where participants could connect with fellow graduate students, share experiences, and collaborate on academic and personal pursuits. The findings also revealed that university-on-campus accommodation enabled participants to easily access study resources such as the library, laboratories and lecture rooms, which reduced

commute times and hence led to proper time management, which is in congruence with scholars (Kovacs Burns et al., 2014; Naidoo, 2015) who emphasised that residing on campus makes it easier for international graduate students to access the necessary facilities.

The findings also show that participants who reside within the university were able to engage in university programs like participating in student leadership activities as student representatives to the Student Guild in their Hall of residence. These study findings corroborate with studies by some scholars (Calder et al., 2016; Kovacs Burns et al., 2014; Naidoo, 2015) who observed that the location of accommodation concerning a university campus could greatly impact students' daily life because proximity to campus makes commuting more convenient and provides better access to academic and social resources. On the contrary, the findings indicate that securing accommodation within and around campus was very expensive and difficult, which heightened participants' stress levels. This is in line with scholars (Newton et al., 2021; Skinner et al., 2019) who established that international students often have difficulty sourcing stable, affordable and safe housing within reasonable proximity of the University. This necessitates Makerere University to provide affordable accommodation because it not only helps international graduate students settle into a new environment but also fosters a sense of belonging, leading to stronger connections with peers and faculty. Findings further revealed that few international graduate students stay on campus. Most live off campus because there is limited campus accommodation for graduate students. This finding corresponds with Bimpong's (2023) observation that many international graduate students reside off campus due to limited accommodation space.

As regards orientation, the study findings indicate that there were some efforts by the University to orient international graduate students, which is a very good undertaking as emphasised that orientation is one of the crucial support services that should be provided to international graduate

students because it gives information regarding the social and academic environment in the host institution (Ammigan & Perez-Encinas, 2018). It is, therefore, necessary for the University to strengthen orientation for international graduate students.

This study's findings revealed that some participants were fully oriented. They were introduced to rules and regulations in the University and briefed on how they could reach out to markets and other useful places, while others were oriented by their academic departments to inform them about the dos and don'ts. This finding agrees with studies by Ammigan (2022) that adjusting to a new university environment can be intimidating for all students as they seek to familiarise themselves with their new campus. In response, host institutions must organise orientation and transition programs to help them feel welcome and secure a sense of belonging, which can lead to long-term academic and personal success. Controversially, study findings revealed that the way orientation activities were organised was lacking. This finding concurs with scholars (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2019; Penman et al., 2021) who observed that orientation programs are short, insufficient, and confined to the orientation program. The findings also established that students were given excessive information during orientation much too early in their stay. In such a situation, Penman et al. (2021) recommend an extended orientation program for at least a period, not more than one week, to benefit international graduate students. This study's findings consistently underscore the critical need for improved orientation programs for international graduate students at Makerere University. Based on these study findings, there is a need for the University to implement effective orientation programs that ease the transition, provide clarity on academic expectations, and offer a support system that emphasises that international students who undergo effective orientation feel confident, integrated and engaged, ultimately leading to higher retention rates and a vibrant international

community on campus (Ammigan & Jones, 2018; Penman et al., 2021).

Bianchi (2013); Bianchi and Martini (2023) argue that study resources such as classrooms, well-equipped libraries, laboratories, and stable internet are vital for international student academic success in the university environment because they facilitate and ease the learning process. This agrees with this study's findings that availability and easy access to study resources enhance international graduate students' academic goal attainment. Nevertheless, the findings revealed that some participants in the hard pure and hard applied disciplines were dissatisfied with the inadequate modern equipment, which negatively impacted their academic goals due to perpetual failure to carry out their laboratory tests. This suggests that the University should endeavour to modernise its infrastructure, especially in the hard pure and hard applied disciplines.

The findings in this study established that there are efforts by the University to provide immigration support to facilitate international graduate students to attain study visas for the period they are in the country pursuing their studies. However, there is an immigration requirement to renew these study visas annually, which constrains international graduate students financially from having an international office to spearhead all internationalisation activities in the University. Although immigration support is crucial to enable international graduate students to have the necessary documentation to study and work legally in a host country, participants lamented the complex visa and immigration processes that they found very stressful. This is confirmed that international students face challenges when navigating the immigration process as a result of not getting proper guidance, and they affirm that the visa acquisition process can be stressful and costly to international graduate students (Colyar et al., 2023; Jibreel, 2015). Therefore, Makerere University should provide relevant training in immigration processes for staff in the international and Dean of

students' Office to enable them to stay current on changing immigration laws enable them to provide the required information to international graduate students.

The findings of the study revealed that international graduate students appreciated the health support provided by the University. This is in line with Newton et al. (2021) observations that international graduate students recognise the importance of good health and well-being to achieving their goal of completing their university studies. In addition, providing good health facilities enhances student well-being and academic success (Colyar et al., 2023; Forbes-Mewett & Forbes-Mewett, 2018; Newton et al., 2021). On the other hand, the findings reveal that some participants were dissatisfied with the health facilities. The University should provide a sufficient budget to the university hospital to facilitate the efficient provision of health care services to students, and international students should be prioritised.

Studies indicate that the international Office is one of the most important structures that support international students in their transition to campus because it provides a wide range of services from orientation to cultural programs (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021). Similarly, the study findings revealed that the University has an international office that is very supportive in providing timely information to participants when needed. Nevertheless, the findings revealed some participants' misgivings about the international Office. These findings echo the study by (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021) who established that the international Office was unhelpful to students and called it a 'white elephant'. The study findings implicitly reveal that the international Office provided insufficient support for international graduate students. This critical issue highlights the need for significant improvements in their services to assist international students' academic pursuits better. The Office must reevaluate its support programs to create a more conducive environment for the diverse needs of graduate students seeking assistance.

Scholars established that psychosocial support is vital for international graduate students to enable them to manage challenging social and academic demands, enhancing their academic success (Arthur, 2017; Lasode et al., 2017). In line with the above findings, Makerere University provides psychosocial support through mentorship, guidance, and counselling, enabling students to overcome stressful situations. Despite its existence, some participants claimed to be unaware of its existence, while others were aware but did not make use of it because it is associated with people with mental breakdown. These findings cohere to studies by various scholars, which observed that some international students do not make use of psychosocial support, as it is associated with mental health or weakness (Getachew, 2020; Hyams-Ssekasi et al., 2014).

There is a need to create awareness about the availability of psychosocial support services and their benefits to international graduate students, particularly during orientation week. Newton et al. (2021) revealed that psychosocial support is vital to solving students' mental health issues. These issues result from a lack of strong social networks and connections that lead to loneliness and homesickness, which negatively impact students' mental health.

However, in some host universities, international graduate students are financially supported through scholarships, donor-based awards and campus-based jobs (Colyar et al., 2023; Martirosyan et al., 2019). This aligns with the study findings, which exposed that participants received scholarships, donor-based funding, and campus jobs. Conversely, the study discovered that international graduate students who were self-sponsored faced financial difficulties. These study findings corroborate with scholars (Bimpong, 2023; Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2019) who opined that international graduate students, particularly those on self-sponsorship, experienced intense financial pressure. Makerere University needs to consider providing financial assistance through scholarships and part-time employment as research fellows.

Findings indicate that international graduate students are encouraged and facilitated to attend language classes, specifically those who come from non-English speaking countries attend English language classes while others attend local language classes as a strategy to facilitate cultural and academic adjustment. This aligns with scholars (Bimpong, 2023; Wu et al., 2015) who observed that supporting international students' language proficiency and cultural integration could enhance their academic learning and participation in society. In addition, Akanwa (2015) argues that facilitating international students to become proficient in the English language enables them to overcome communication barriers that would impede their academic achievement. This, therefore, suggests that there is a need for Makerere University to strengthen its language support programs for international graduate students who are non-English speakers.

Spirituality plays a central role as a source of comfort, provides a sense of belonging and bridges the gap between international graduate students and their local peers, leading to a more inclusive and diverse academic environment (Udah & Francis, 2022). The scholars above concur with the Study findings, which established that religious activities helped participants overcome stress by participating in religious activities provided by the chaplaincy and the university mosque. The study findings agree with literature that emphasises the importance of religion as a key factor influencing adjustment into the social and academic environment (Kasese-Hara & Mugambi, 2021). As a crucial part of students' academic success and overall study experience, identifying ways to strengthen well-being- physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually is therefore critical in enabling international graduate students to cope with the challenges of studying abroad and achieve their potential as human beings.

Research supervision and access to quality faculty influence international students' high rates of satisfaction with the reputation of their University

as a whole (Skinner et al., 2019). Faculty are significant since they ensure that students stay focused on completing their studies, which is done by guiding them about campus knowledge, academics, and social perspectives of the college (Marijanovic et al., 2021; Zhai & Razali, 2022). The study findings agree with the above observations. However, some participants expressed dissatisfaction with how research is conducted, which sometimes contributed to their prolonged stay on the course. This finding coheres to a study by Skinner et al. (2019) which reported negative experiences with faculty who lack awareness and knowledge about what international graduate students go through. Correspondingly, Bianchi (2013) reported that there are unsupportive staff members who fail to reply to emails or do not answer questions, have insulting behaviour, and are uncooperative. These study findings highlight that it is important for faculty to be involved in international graduate students' academic success and subsequently in their persistence outcome and degree completion. This will enable Makerere University to achieve its strategic goal of becoming a research-led institution.

The study established that the University organised workshops for graduate students to enhance research skills and academic writing organised by the Directorate of Research and Graduate Training. These research workshops enabled particularly students pursuing doctorates by research who were not exposed to such information in the classroom (Martirosyan et al., 2019; Penman et al., 2021). The findings illuminate how research workshops are a valuable investment in international graduate student's academic and professional development, offering skill acquisition, networking and exposure to new ideas, ultimately contributing to their academic success. There is a need for academic units to expand the range of workshops to cover various research methodologies, data analysis tools, and interdisciplinary topics to cater for the diverse interests of graduate students, furthering the University's interest in becoming a research institution.

Studies indicate that various recreation activities are provided to international graduate students in the European and American contexts to enhance their social-cultural integration (Colyar et al., 2023; Martirosyan et al., 2019; Skinner et al., 2019). Similarly, the study findings revealed that Makerere equally provides several recreation activities. However, some of these are not known to international graduate students, yet they are vital regarding students' social integration. These findings resonate with a study by Lyons (2022), which established that campus recreational sport assists international students with acclimating to their new environment. Their study revealed that international students use their campus recreational sports participation in various ways, such as maintaining cultural identity, crossing cross-cultural boundaries, and acclimating to a new multicultural environment. He added that some students expressed exclusion and marginalisation about campus recreational sports programs. The study findings revealed that mainly undergraduate students participated in recreational activities. This creates a need for the University to consider organising inclusive activities that embrace diversity and create a welcoming environment for all students.

CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that international graduate students were supported in terms of accommodation, research supervision, orientation, study resources, immigration support, health support, international Office, recreation, psychosocial support, financial, student leadership, language, spiritual, and research workshops at Makerere University. This study, therefore, concludes that those international graduate students received non-academic and academic support at Makerere University. Such non-academic and academic support enhanced the well-being of those students and contributed significantly to their academic success and overall satisfaction during their tenure at Makerere University. There was consensus that providing accommodation support had positively impacted the living standards of those international

graduate students by fostering a comfortable and inclusive environment. This helped them create alliances and engage with university support services, enhancing their adjustment and academic success. Such support also helped them cope with the adverse experiences they encountered while studying at Makerere University.

Recommendations

The university management should strengthen and streamline the activities of the international Office. A desk is needed to be dedicated to international students' services. The international Office needs to organise cross-cultural training for faculty and staff to ensure a culturally sensitive and inclusive campus environment, as this will enable them to understand what international graduate students go through at Makerere University. The university management also needs to renovate the existing accommodation facilities for graduate students. The accommodation space for international graduate students may be increased by collaborating with local landlords for affordable housing and establishing a support system to help them navigate the housing market.

Academic units should enhance supervision for international graduate students by implementing regular progress meetings, providing clear expectations, and fostering open communication. Regular workshops on research methodologies and writing skills are needed to support the academic development and course completion of international graduate students at Makerere University. Academic units also need to create mentorship initiatives that connect international graduate students with experienced faculty members. This mentorship can extend beyond academics, including guidance on navigating the research landscape, career advice, and networking opportunities. This will foster a supportive environment where students feel comfortable seeking advice and guidance. Areas for Further Research

There is a need to conduct studies in the following areas: the impact of cultural adaptation on the well-being and academic performance of international graduate students. How international graduate students integrate into the academic and local communities and the factors contributing to or hindering this process. Studying these areas will provide useful insights that may strengthen the support measures provided to international graduate students.

REFERENCES

- Aguirre, H. C. C. (2019). International Student Adjustment Framework: Improvement through Educational Leadership. *Journal of Educational Leadership in Action*, 6(1), 4.
- Akanwa, E. E. (2015). International students in western developed countries: History, challenges, and prospects. *Journal of International students*, 5(3), 271-284.
- Ammigan, R. (2022). Understanding the experiences of Mauritian students at institutions of higher education overseas. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 10(1), 33-46.
- Ammigan, R., & Jones, E. (2018). Improving the student experience: Learning from a comparative study of international student satisfaction. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 22(4), 283-301.
- Ammigan, R., & Perez-Encinas, A. (2018). International student services. *Encyclopedia of international higher education systems and institutions*, 1-4.
- Arthur, N. (2017). Supporting international students through strengthening their social resources. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42(5), 887-894.
- Ayebare, J. (2021). The Effect of Internationalising the Student Community on Graduate Students' Global Citizenship. *International Journal of African Higher Education*, 8(1), 1-26.
- Bianchi, C. (2013). Satisfiers and dissatisfiers for international students of higher education: An exploratory study in Australia. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 35(4), 396-409. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2013.812057>
- Bianchi, I., & Martini, L. (2023). Academic and Social Integration of International Students in Higher Education: A Review of the Literature and Implications for Practice. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews*, 4(5), 1502-1507.
- Bimpong, B. K. (2023). Challenges Facing African International Students at Research Universities in the United States. *Journal of Education and Teaching Methods*, 2(4), 1-16.
- Bisaso, R. (2017). Makerere University as a flagship institution: Sustaining the quest for relevance. *Flagship universities in Africa*, 425-466.
- Bisaso, R., & Hölttä, S. (2017). International collaboration for capacity development in higher education leadership and management: the Uganda-Finland Initiative. *International Journal of African Higher Education*, 4(1).
- Bisaso, R., & Nakamanya, F. (2018). Internationalization of higher education research and careers in Africa. *Encyclopaedia of International Higher Education Systems and Institutions*, Springer, Dordrecht. doi, 10, 978-994.
- Bochner, S. (1986). Coping with unfamiliar cultures: Adjustment or culture learning? *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 38(3), 347-358. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/00049538608259021>
- Calder, M. J., Richter, S., Mao, Y., Burns, K. K., Mogale, R. S., & Danko, M. (2016). International Students Attending Canadian Universities: Their Experiences with Housing, Finances, and Other Issues. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 46(2), 92-110. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/international-students-attending->

- canadian/docview/1824507888/se-2?accountid=169196
- Calikoglu, A. (2018). International Student Experiences in Non-Native-English-Speaking Countries: Postgraduate Motivations and Realities from Finland. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 13(3), 439-456. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499918791362>
- Choudaha, R. (2016). Campus readiness for supporting international student success. *Journal of International students*, 6(4), I-V.
- Collins, N., & Leader, S. W. T. (n.d.). Building social comfort for student success.
- Colyar, J., Pichette, J., & Deakin, J. (2023). Matching Rapid Growth with Adequate Supports: How Colleges and Government Can Enhance International Student Experiences in Ontario. *Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario*.
- De Wit, H. (2020). The future of internationalization of higher education in challenging global contexts. *ETD Educação Temática Digital*, 22(3), 538-545.
- Dominguez-Whitehead, Y. (2018). Non-academic support services and university student experiences: adopting an organizational theory perspective. *Studies in Higher Education*, 43(9), 1692-1706. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1287168>
- Forbes-Mewett, H., & Forbes-Mewett, H. (2018). International students and food security. *The New Security: Individual, Community and Cultural Experiences*, 197-216.
- Forbes-Mewett, H., & Sawyer, A.-M. (2019). International students and mental health. *Journal of International students*, 6(3), 661-677.
- García, H. A., Garza, T., & Yeaton-Hromada, K. (2019). Do we belong? A conceptual model for international students' sense of belonging in community colleges. *Journal of International students*, 9(2), 460-487.
- Getachew, A. (2020). Assessment of guidance and counselling service centre in higher education institutions: A qualitative research. *Int J Sch Cogn Psychol*, 7(2), 1-6.
- Gomes, C., Berry, M., Alzougool, B., & Chang, S. (2014). Home away from home: International students and their identity-based social networks in Australia. *Journal of International students*, 4(1), 2-15.
- Hyams-Ssekasi, D., Mushibwe, C. P., & Caldwell, E. F. (2014). International Education in the United Kingdom: The Challenges of the Golden Opportunity for Black-African Students. *SAGE Open*, 4(4), 2158244014562386. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014562386>
- Jibreel, Z. (2015). Cultural identity and the challenges international students encounter. (23). https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/engl_etds/23?utm_source=repository.stcloudstate.edu%2Fengl_etds%2F23&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages
- Kasese-Hara, M., & Mugambi, J. (2021). Experiences of African international students in a South African university—A qualitative study. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 35(4), 116-137.
- Kiiza, K. A. (2019). *Pull-push factors and international student experiences in Uganda: a case study of two universities* [University of Pretoria].
- Kim, Y. K., & Cronley, C. (2020). Acculturative stress and binge drinking among international students in the United States: Resilience and vulnerability approaches. *Journal of American college health*, 68(2), 207-218.
- Kovacs Burns, K. K., Richter, M., Mao, Y., Mogale, S., & Danko, M. (2014). Case study of a post-secondary institution and its response to student homelessness. *International Journal of Case Studies*, 3(9).
- Lasode, A. O., Lawal, O. O., & Ofodile, M. C. (2017). Students' need for, awareness,

- perception and use of guidance and counselling services in federal university of agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, 75(2), 170.
- Li, J., Wang, Y., & Xiao, F. (2019). East Asian international students and psychological well-being: A systematic review. *Journal of International students*, 4(4), 301-313.
- Lyons, L. M. (2022). Culture to Culture: An Education Abroad Experience from Two Different Racial Learning Perspectives. In D. L. Walker, L. M. Lyons, & S. Vaught (Eds.), *Historically Underrepresented Faculty and Students in Education Abroad: Wandering Where We Belong* (pp. 53-79). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-13056-4_4
- Makerere University. (2008). Makerere University Strategic Plan 2020-2030. In Kampala: Makerere University.
- Makerere University. (2019). Makerere University Factbook 2019. In Kampala: Makerere University.
- Makerere University. (2020). Makerere University Strategic Plan 2020-2030. In Kampala: Makerere University.
- Makerere University. (2022). Makerere University Fact Book, 2021. In Kampala: Makerere University.
- Marijanovic, N., Lee, J., Teague, T., & Means, S. (2021). Advising experiences of first year international doctoral students. *Journal of International students*, 11(2), 417-435.
- Martirosyan, N. M., Bustamante, R. M., & Saxon, D. P. (2019). Academic and social support services for international students: Current practices. *Journal of International students*, 9(1), 172-191.
- Nachatar Singh, J. K., & Jamil, H. (2021). International education and meaningful contributions to society: Exploration of postgraduate international students' perspectives studying in a Malaysian research university. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 81(C).
- Nada, C. I., & Araújo, H. C. (2019). 'When you welcome students without borders, you need a mentality without borders' internationalisation of higher education: evidence from Portugal. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(9), 1591- 1604. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2018.1458219>
- Naidoo, D. (2015). *The experiences of in/exclusion and marginalization of international students at a private higher education institution* University of the Witwatersrand, Faculty of Humanities, School of Education].
- Neves, J., & Hillman, N. (2017). Student academic experience survey. *Higher Education Policy Institute and Higher Education Academy*, 12, 47-48.
- Newton, D. C., Tomin, A. J., & LaMontagne, A. D. (2021). Exploring the challenges and opportunities for improving the health and wellbeing of international students: perspectives of international students. *JANZSSA: Journal of the Australian and New Zealand Student Services Association*, 29(1), 18-34.
- Paltridge, T., Mayson, S., & Schapper, J. (2010). The contribution of university accommodation to international student security. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 32(4), 353-364. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2010.491109>
- Penman, J., Malik, G., Chu, E., Kett, G., Hampton, K., Thomacos, N., Ebrahimi-Zanjani, M., Zhong, Y., & Mckenzie, W. (2021). Empowering International Students to Succeed: An Innovative and Beneficial Initiative for Health Professions. *Journal of International students*, 11(4), 832-852.
- Perez-Encinas, A., & Ammigan, R. (2016). Support services at Spanish and US institutions: A driver for international student

- satisfaction. *Journal of International students*, 6(4), 984-998. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1879953>
- Perez-Encinas, A., & Rodriguez-Pomeda, J. (2017). International Students' Perceptions of Their Needs When Going Abroad: Services on Demand. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 22(1), 20-36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315317724556>
- Philip, S., Neuer Colburn, A. A., Underwood, L., & Bayne, H. (2019). The Impact of Religion/Spirituality on Acculturative Stress Among International Students. *Journal of College Counseling*, 22(1), 27-40. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1002/jocc.12112>
- Ratshilaya, A. J. (2017). *Exploring the social and academic experiences of international students in South African Universities* [University of Pretoria].
- Rice, K. G., Suh, H., Yang, X., Choe, E., & Davis, D. E. (2016). The advising alliance for international and domestic graduate students: Measurement invariance and implications for academic stress. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 63(3), 331.
- Roberts, P., & Dunworth, K. (2012). Staff and student perceptions of support services for international students in higher education: a case study. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 34(5), 517-528. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2012.716000>
- Sabzalieva, E., & Pedró, F. (2022). Achieving mutually inclusive internationalization of higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean. Introduction to the Dossier B. *Revista Educación Superior y Sociedad (ESS)*, 34(1), 390-395.
- Singh, J. K. N. (2023). Enhancing international student experience: pre-support support services provided to postgraduate international students in a Malaysian research university. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 27(8), 972-986.
- Skinner, M., Luo, N., & Mackie, C. (2019). *Are U.S. HEIs Meeting the needs of international students?* <https://www.wes.org/partners/research/>
- Ssempebwa, J., Mulumba, F. N., & Nakaiza, J. (2014). Foreign Students' Perception of the Quality of Service Delivery in Ugandan Universities. *Huria: Journal of the Open University of Tanzania*, 16, 172-192.
- Udah, H., & Francis, A. (2022). Vulnerability and well-being: international students' experience in north queensland, Australia. *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education*, 14(5), 171-196.
- Wamai, E. W. (2021). *The Influence of an Adaptive Culture on the Competitive Advantage of Mobile Telecommunication Companies in Kenya* [University of Nairobi].
- Wu, H.-p., Garza, E., & Guzman, N. (2015). International Student's Challenge and Adjustment to College. *Education Research International*, 2015, 202753. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2015/202753>
- Zhai, X., & Razali, A. B. (2022). International Chinese Postgraduate Students' Adaptation Strategies for Oral English Communication Practices in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions. *Education Research International*, 2022, 6439726. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/6439726>
- Zhou, G., & Zhang, Z. (2014). A study of the first year international students at a Canadian university: Challenges and experiences with social integration. *Comparative and International Education*, 43(2).