

**HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOURS AMONG INTERNATIONAL
HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS**

Master's thesis

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Intercultural Communication

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>The aim of this study is to identify the help seeking behaviors among higher education students. The underlying assumption is that international students of all caliber face one issues or another during their sojourn in a different country. The study looks at acculturation as studied over the years in relation to international students then goes to tackle the coping strategies as used by foreign students.</p> <p>The study is qualitative in nature. Eight interviews were conducted and the data analyzed through the deductive method. The findings show that higher education students rely on formal and informal networks for support during their stay in Finland. This paper offers recommendations on how these channels can be better utilized by universities to extend help to students.</p>	
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1. Introduction

The globe is in motion, in fact throughout history, the human race has been on the move, and thus migration and acculturation have been a facet of the human experience (Bornstein, 2010). Immigration brings one culture into another. Immigration refers to the formalities of leaving one country to live in another (Lakey, 2003). Culture in this respect refers to the shared meanings and references amongst a group of people (Shore, 2002).

Acculturation is what happens when group of people with varying cultural backgrounds interact continuously with others culminating in changes in the cultural practices for either or both sides (Spector, 2008). This is a process that practically all sojourners have to face one way or another, regardless of whether the immigration we are looking at is short term or long term, or voluntary or involuntary. This study looks at the specific population of international students.

The number of International students registered at institutions of higher learning in Finland doubled from 10,066 in 2005 to 21,061 in 2015 (ICEF, 2015). Seventy five percent of these international students hail from non-EU countries. Globally, the number of international students in 2015 was 4.1 million. The most popular destination for international students in that year was the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia (ICEF, 2015) Countries that sent out the most students internationally were China and India (UNESCO, 2016).

Like many other sojourners, international students face a number of challenges during the acculturation process. Acculturation related challenges stem for example from having a language barrier, longing for one's home country, problems in academics and perceived discrimination or racial injustice (Yan & Berliner, 2009). The process by which international students attempt to balance challenges in the new environment is called adjustment (Makarova & Birman, 2015). If

the environment is stable, that is the conditions on the ground are favorable combined with a long length of stay, acculturation develops into adaptation (Ward, 2013).

Stress refers to the unpleasant situation when stimuli affects a person's homeostasis (Folkman, 1984). This forces an individual to respond to the stimuli with the available resources (Särvimäki, 2009). The rule of thumb is that the more resources available to an individual, the more the capacity to handle stress (Schcherbakov & Turcotte, 2004). The need to develop coping strategies to handle stress requires that an individual acknowledges that a problem exists in the first place (Schcherbakov & Turcotte, 2004). However, sojourners may feel pressured not to reveal the fact that they are experiencing stress (Rueger&Malecki, 2011). This issue will be explored later in this paper.

In social research, attribution refers to the process of rationalizing the world where individuals seek explanations for a behavior or an event (Malle, 2011). There isn't just one attribution theory but many attribution theories since explanations for behaviors or events are just as many. Most of the attribution theories' literature that has been published worldwide on international students has been done by researchers, who are mostly based in the academic meccas of the world namely the United States of America, Canada, Great Britain and Australia. Very few of the work done has focused on say countries like Russia, Sweden, Finland and France which attract in their own right a significant amount of international students. From such studies, universities and in particular the organs at the universities that are responsible for international student's affairs get to know the kind of acculturation stresses faces by intentional students and thus come up with tailor made solutions, with the aim of preventing international students falling into isolation or clinical depression. The findings of these studies should also help universities when creating orientation programs for International students. Cultural shock and the stress that comes with

being in new environment can never be fully mitigated. However, orientation programs, if well designed and well targeted, should help to lessen that burden on international students. The international students are able to trust the university authorities which is crucial in the adjusting stage for beginners.

1.1 The aim of the study

This paper aims to look at the help seeking behaviors among international higher education students in trying to combat and overcome these acculturation challenges. A relevant and comprehensive literature review is presented in the second section with the aim of summarizing the different areas underpinning this study. The third section discusses the methodology used in this study. Individual semi structured interviews were conducted. The fourth section discusses the findings. The last section discusses the impact and the relevance of the results.

This paper seeks to ask and answer two main questions

- a) What are the help seeking behaviors among international students?
- b) What are the factors for the preferences in the help seeking behaviors among international higher education students?

2. Literature review

2.1 Acculturation in the context of higher education

Intercultural adaptation can be seen as psychological stress that stems moving from one's home country to a foreign land, which may strengthen the level of fitness to meet the demands of a new cultural environment (Kofman, 2003). Intercultural adaptation is divided into four main stages (Muecke, Lenthail, and Lindeman, 2011).

- a) The honeymoon stage. In this stage, international students, still new to their new surroundings are mesmerized by the new culture and sometimes the cultural differences are viewed as comical or funny.
- b) The rejection stage. Having spent some time in the host culture, the differences in culture as well as the different way of doing things start to get to a sojourner. The old ways in his or her home country do not work in this new environment. Feelings of hopelessness start to develop as do anger and depression.
- c) Resolution stage is the stage the sojourner is slowly coming to terms with his or her new reality. The sojourner starts to slowly adopt the ways of the host culture as he or she starts to find his or her way in the new environment.
- d) Acculturation stage. The sojourner at this level feels much more comfortable and at ease in the host culture. The sojourner is able to navigate through the differences and is able to find his or her own way.

For the purpose of this study, international higher education students are viewed to as sojourners or as a sub category of sojourners. A sojourner is a person who goes to a foreign land for the purpose of employment or education on a temporarily basis (Gullekson & Vancouver, 2010). Thus the assumption that an international student is a sojourner.

Acculturation is understood to be the changes that occur as a result of blending cultures (Sam & Berry, 2010). During the early days of studying the phenomenon, social scientists looked at acculturation from the group-level prism, however from the early 1960's onwards a greater interest developed in looking at acculturation at an individual level (Graves, 1967).

The two main models of acculturation are the U-curve theory and the Culture shock theory. Both theories advance very similar methods of looking at acculturation. The U-curve theory advances the idea that sojourners at first find the adoption process very easy, this is then followed by slump which is dominated by feelings of hopelessness, anger, and longing for one's home country. This is then followed by a period in which the sojourner begins to feel more comfortable in the host environment (Lysgaard, 1955). A number of criticisms have been leveled against the U curve hypothesis (Bernado, 2006) argues that the hypothesis does not fit third culture kids (These are children who spend a significant amount of their early years in a country which is not their parent's homeland) or international students who have an immigrant background for example a Finnish student of Somali origin studying in Australia. The U curve model does not always reflect reality as there is a lot of variability among individuals and thus is not predictive of all individuals.

A more relevant view is Kim's model of intercultural adaptation, which suggests that adaptation is more cyclical, "two steps forward, and one step back "(Lee, 2010). A sojourner goes through a cycle of stress-adaptation-growth dynamics whilst trying to adjust to a new cultural environment (Lee, 2017). Adaptation to a new cultural environment may led to a fundamental change which may be described as a rebirth (Anderson, 1994). The main difference between the old fashioned models of cultural adaptation and Kim's model is the emphasize on the growth process.

At the acculturation stage, the individual is assumed to be able to somehow function in the host culture. There are four acculturation strategies as listed as by Berry (1990)

a) Integration

- b) Assimilation
- c) Separation
- d) Marginalization

The assimilation strategy is defined as when people do not seek to keep their cultural practices but instead willingly seek to interact with other cultures, with the intention of adopting those cultural practices. When people seek to maintain their cultural practices and simultaneously avoid interaction with members of the host culture, this is defined as the separation strategy. Integration is understood to be when individuals maintain their original culture while still having daily interactions with members of the host group (Weber et. al 2015). The last strategy, marginalization is defined as when people who do not seek to keep their cultural identity and at the same time do not interact with members of the host culture. (Hasmi et al.2014).

The process of Acculturation mainly depends on the physiological adjustment and the cultural adjustment of a sojourner (Ward et.al, 1998). The physiological adjustment refers to the emotional state of the sojourner and factors such as personality, and social support available goes a long way to impact the emotional state of a sojourner. It has also been reported that experiences of prejudice and discrimination has a significant negative on a person's wellbeing. Racism affects the individual during the process of acculturation as well as being a mental health risk factor (Berry, 1997).

Cultural adjustment refers to one's ability to cope or function in the host culture (Ward et. al, 1998). International students have to contend with novel social structures, educational structures, economic structures (Zhou et al., 2008). This is difficult for all students but especially for those

who arrive to a new country with the assumption that the new environment is the same to their home countries’.

According to Zhou et al., (2008) traditionally, most research on international students in host countries has focused on the non-positive effects of exposure to a new culture. It has looked at how the deficiency of social support networks and differences in values caused stress and mental health related issues among international students (Zhou et al., 2008). However, with time the mental changes that emerge as a consequence of the migratory experiences have begun to be viewed as a learning process.

According to Bochner (1982), cultural mediation is the process through which some international students and other sojourners synthesis both their original culture and the new host culture so as to create a bi-cultural identity. Factors affecting this synthesis include the familiarity of the host culture, degree of cultural similarity with country of origin, personal attitudes towards the host culture and host attitudes towards the sojourners (Gudykunt & Kim, 1984).

Finnish universities hosts of a significant population of international students compared with a decade ago. The higher education students provide benefits to Finland such as social capital as well as employability skills. In return the higher education students get higher education plus an experiences that are hard to replicate. Despite the fact that this opportunity to study oversees presents new challenges to international students, how they face these challenges will go a long way in determining their perceived failure or success in this endeavor.

Bochner (1982) outlined that international students identify with three major social networks with each having a specific psychological purpose. The first social network is the primary network which consists of people from the home culture. (Zhou et al., 2008). This helps to

maintain some sense of familiarity and a reminder of home. The second social network consist of host-based students, teachers and counselors who help the international students to learn culturally relevant skills, which go a long way to facilitate their academic success. The third social network is made of non-compatriot foreign students where they can source mutual social support in the alien environment. All in all these social support networks alleviate the feeling of home sicknesses among international students.

Sojourners will try to use this social networks for emotionally support as well as for information (Williams & Johnson, 2011). In this regard the idea of social capital is important. Social capital refers to the idea of investing in human relationships with the expectation of getting returns. (Coleman, 1988). In this case, sojourners will overtime build relationships expecting to get emotional support as well as information from these human networks. There is also the idea of the strength of these relationship. Some of them are weak and some are strong. Strong ties are the relationships the sojourner has with very close friends and confidants (Ye, 2006).

These relationships are viewed a strong and trustworthy as the people involved in this kind of ties generally have the same beliefs and attitudes as the sojourner. On the other hand, weak ties are simply acquaintances of a sojourner. Coleman (1988) describes weak ties as social ties that bridge a sojourner to social networks that he or she may not have access to, for example contacts in the local cultural setting.

Studies have shown that social capital is related to the emotional and psychological wellbeing of a sojourner (Bergh & McKenna, 2004). Sojourners with a higher number of close friends and stronger personal relationships reported higher levels of life satisfaction.

Social networking sites

In early 2004, thousands of university students from preselected universities joined a new social networking site called 'Facebook '(Boyd &Ellison, 2008). In just over a decade the number of Facebook users has grown to over one billion (Number of active Facebook users, 2015).

Facebook is example of a web based service that allows people to create individual profiles and maintain a link between themselves and others in the shared online sphere (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

A study conducted in American institutions of higher learning showed that students in general used Facebook to increase their knowledge of people they already knew about in the tangible world (Ellison, Seinfeld, Lampe, 2007). However the major difference is how people from various cultural backgrounds used Facebook. American students generally used Facebook to create huge social networks of mostly weak ties while Asian students' Facebook social network was smaller but consisting of strong ties (Choi, Kim, Sung & Sohn 2011).

Social networking sites enable international students to maintain relations with friends and family in their countries' of origin and at the same time build relationships with individuals that they have met in the host country (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). However, as international students begin to feel more comfortable in their host cultures they rely less on communication from home sphere for support (Yeh, 2006).

2.3 Help seeking and coping strategies

2.3.1 Help seeking

The online Oxford dictionary describes

Help as “relief”, “assistance “or “remedy”

Seek as “to go in search or quest of “or “to look or search”

According to Lee (1997), help seeking as a process is three fold. First, there is the assumption that the sojourner is facing a specific problem that requires to be solved. The second part is that the sojourner himself or herself goes out to seek for a solution for his or her problem. The third is that idea that help seeking is a proactive process, that is to say that the channels from which the sojourner is seeking help from are expected to respond.

Help seeking resources in a university at the informal level may include friends, counselors lecturers and family, while at the formal level, resources available may include psychiatrists and other medical staff at the institution of higher learning.

Eckersley (2001) argues that Western societies have been transformed to individualist entities to the point it is causing social dysfunction and increasing rates of depression which have been linked to societal individualism (Schwartz, 2000). As cultural values are also reflected in a society’s institutions, a university can be seen as manifestation of individualism, where personal freedom as well as self-efficacy are promoted (Hargreaves, 1980). The university focuses primarily on the academic growth of an individual where tasks and assignments are expected to be accomplished on time and most of the times, independently.

There is unfortunately some stigma associated with help seeking (Prior, 2012). One such stigma is the idea that seeking help might be a sign of weakness or laziness, therefore violating the expectation that university students ought to have self-efficacy and be self-reliant. Depression then kicks in as a result of students of having to deal with academic challenges, living away from home and feeling lonely (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009). Stress can be categorized into two forms

(Biddle et al, 2007) “normal mental stress “and “real mental stress”. The normal mental stress is the type of stress which is seen as being a result of everyday life, it is temporary in nature and is well accepted as a part of life. The real mental stress involves long bouts of depression and occasionally mental breakdown that renders a person incapable of studying or working. It is this perception of “normal stress “as being part and parcel of everyday life that perpetuates the individualistic idea of overcoming one’s challenges without the help of other and in doing so prevents some international students from seeking help (Prior, 2012)

Thus if an international student can conceal his or her symptoms of stress, this reduces the likelihood of experiencing stigma. Refusing to ask for helps the International student to maintain a positive representation of self.

2.3.2 Coping strategies

International students go through major psychological issues during their acculturation process in a new host environment (Mori, 2002). Coping with these challenges in key to their adoption into the host society.

It has been studied that International students with a high self-efficacy levels tend to display higher levels of acculturation levels, since self-efficacy helps individuals deal with stressful situation without burning out (Bandura, 1985). Perceived self-efficacy also plays a key role in helping international student create social networks as well as friendships (Poyrazli et al., 2002)

Having strong language skills plays a role in reducing acculturation stress (Yeh & Inose, 2003) Fluency in the English language enables an international student to confidently participate in class room discussions, ask questions in class, and participate in extracurricular activities such as a sports, while students will lower English fluency levels will tend to be meek and less likely to

seek out for help. This scenario works well in Anglo-Saxon countries where English is the official language of the country. It does not however in countries where English is not an official language but still hosts international students who study in English like Finland. Participation in extracurricular activities or cultural activities may sometimes require Finnish or Swedish skills. More often than not most international students lack these skills, but those who learn the language are able to get local friends and are also able to participate to a certain degree in cultural and extracurricular activities, hence slowly but surely reducing acculturation related stress.

Spirituality has also been linked to overcoming acculturation stress in that international students facing academic stress and personal challenges turn to religion or other forms of spirituality for comfort and answers (Bowen-Reid & Smalls, 2004). On the other hand Winterowd et al. (2005) notes that high levels of anger and stress have been noted among university students who have higher levels of spirituality. However, this could be attributed to the assumption that some university students with high levels of stress do turn to spiritualism for stress relief and as a coping mechanism.

2.4 Attribution theories

Attribution theories are pertinent to this study because international students just like all immigrants attempt to rationalize their new surroundings. For example, when an international student is thriving in their new surroundings, he or she credits their 'success' to their own abilities while on the other hand if an international students is having a hard time in their new environment, he or she blames the hardships on the external factors in the surroundings. The

main take way is that more often than not individuals will interpret their life situations in a manner that preserves a positive self-image.

There is no single attribution theory but rather a cluster of approaches used in contemporary research (Petri & Govern, 2004). Attribution theories are a family of theories that are intent on understanding and explaining the world (Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008). The central theme being how individuals try to evaluate the reasons for what is happening to them or in their environment. How individuals attribute events and life situations is based on their personality (Haslam, 2007). Mayer (2005) defines personality as system found in an individual which is responsible for developing and maintaining the mental, emotional and cognitive state of the individual.

There are four dimensions in attributions (Nagourney, 2008). The first is internal-external dimension which infers that an event is due to internal factor found within the individual, for example “he has a short temper”, or an external factor “school work is frustrating him”. The second dimension, stability, infers a person’s behavior to factors that will not likely change over time, for example “School work is always stressful”, the third dimension specificity, infers a person’s behavior to certain factors for example, “he is gifted in Chemistry”. Finally the fourth dimension, control assumes responsibility of action to the individuals themselves for example “he does not try to control his emotions”.

In attribution theories, it is proposed that individuals will attribute their failures to external factors while attributing their successes to their own initiative (Augoustinos, 2005). This is referred to as the attribution bias. According to some researchers, if a student has a smooth sailing through his or her studies, he will attribute that his or her own agency, however if an

student faces multiple challenges and hurdles during his or her schooling, the student will attribute that to external factors such as perceived discrimination, perceived racism or inadequate resources (Manusov & Spitzberg, 2008)

Help seeking is a long process that begins with the recognition of a problem (Cauce et al, 2002), then followed by the decision to seek help, which is influenced by attributions, and finally an individual looks at where to look for help, for example family or friends. According to Fisher & Taylor (1991), if an individual attributes his or her problem to an internal factor, the chances for seeking help are lower since perception of self is low, on the converse if an individual evaluates that his or her problem is a result of external factor, chances of seeking help are high.

A help seeker will also want to attribute the motivations of the individual giving the assistance (Fisher et al., 1983). A help seeker and in this case an international student seeking for help may think that;

- a) The help giver is acting out of genuine concern
- b) The help giver is acting out of ulterior motives
- c) The help giver's position or job demands that help be given

In attribution theories, an attribution may be referred to as stable or unstable. A stable attribution means that the same outcome is likely given that conditions of a specific situation are met. For example, if an international student feels that weak language skills have prevented him or her from participating satisfactorily in a class room setting or in extracurricular activities, he or she will reason that the weak language skills will always be a hindrance to their participation in the future. Thus this is an uncountable factor. If an attribution is unstable, it means that the explanation of a situation may not necessarily apply to future situations. For example, if the same

international student improves their language skills, they will participate much more satisfactorily in extracurricular activities or in class.

3. Methodology

Data for this study was gathered from eight interviews. The eight interviewees were recruited using various approaches. Five participants came from the researcher's own networks while three of the participants were recruited through the snowball method i.e. through some of the participants' own networks. The use of convenience sampling in this case was sensible due to the fact that people in the researcher's own private networks were interested in participating in the study. This seemed advantageous given the assumption that a good interview highly depends on the willingness of an interviewee to share information.

Six of the interviews were conducted at a study room in Rentukka, Kortepohja (The University of Jyväskylä's student village) booked in advanced by this researcher. Two of the interviews were conducted at the interviewees' home. The interviews took place in a one on one fashion while this researcher audio taped these interviews with the permission of the participants. The average duration of an interview lasted between twenty minutes and one hour. I did not place any restrictions on the duration of the interviews.

The interviewees hailed from the Philippines, Spain, France, Greece, England, Northern Ireland and Bangladesh. Out of the eight participants six of them were male while two were female. The youngest interviewee was twenty five years old while the oldest of them was forty two years old. All of the participants had lived in Finland for a minimum of one year. They studied different fields namely, Education leadership, Sports management, Music therapy, International cooperation, and Corporate environment management.

3.1 Case study design

A case study is a research carried out to look into a particular research problem (Gerring, 2004). It narrows down the research to specifics rather than looking into general themes. The case study design is useful for the testing of a specific theory in the real world. Models can also be tested using this method of research. It is a useful design when not much is known about the research problem.

The intended objective of this research is to look into issues of acculturation and help seeking among students at the University of Jyväskylä. Naturally, this is a case study that is focusing on a very particular research issue and thus not generalizing to include students across Finland or the overall student experience. No research on help seeking and acculturation has been done on international students at the University of Jyväskylä.

3.2 Data collection techniques

3.2.1 Interviews

According to Silverman (2000), interviews in qualitative research are meant to explore beliefs, feelings or experiences to as to provide the researcher with a deeper understanding of the topics under scrutiny. Interviews in this study is necessary as it offers the researcher a chance to dive into the topic area and at the same time providing the respondents with anonymity and privacy. Respondents also have a chance to seek clarification on a question.

3.3 Reliability of techniques

This refers to the idea that a research instrument used, under the same conditions, multiple times should give the researcher the same kind of results. It can then be included that the research instrument has lower amounts of errors, hence can be referred to as being reliable.

3.3.1 Interview Questions testing

Conducting a pilot interviews enables a researcher to see how sensible and relevant the interview questions are. It is impossible to create a one hundred percent perfect list of questions, as every interviewee is different and things may not work out as intended. After I created my initial interview questions, I approached two individuals and requested their help in testing my questions. The said individuals were students known to me. The pilot stage tested how sensible my questions were, time-constraints and how well the recording device worked. This testing gave me a chance to improve the interview questions after getting feedback from my two participants in the pilot stage.

3.4 Sampling

Webster (1985) refers to sampling as a set of population selected from the wider population for the purpose of conducting research. This set of population then becomes a representative part of the whole population with the intention of determining the characteristic of that whole population. The set of population could be groups of individuals, objects or even items. Sampling is a clearly a cheaper method to observe a part of population rather than a whole population and it saves on time on the part of the researcher

3.4.1 Sampling techniques

Sampling technique used in this study was convenience sampling. The convenience sampling method was used due to its' ease in sampling in that the target population, in this case international students at the University of Jyvaskyla, is within the researcher's reach.

The method also saves on time as data can be collected within the shortest amount of time compared to other methods, since only a handful of individuals who are easily approachable, are required. Thus eliminating the need for an exhaustive study of a whole population.

I recruited my first two interviewees in the Kortepohja sauna and they later referred me to my other interviewees. I approached the two individuals and asked them if they would like to participate in my research. Once I interviewed them, I asked them to ask their friends if they would be interested in my research.

3.5 Target Population

According to Palton (1990), the target population can be described as a totality of people whom may be sampled in an interview research. In this research the target population was international higher education students at the University of Jyvaskyla.

3.5.1 Sample size

For the purpose of this study, the sample size was ten students, all of them international students at the University of Jyvaskyla.

3.6.1 Data analysis techniques

The deductive approach is useful when a researcher is testing an already existing theory, with the aim of finding out if the theory has predictive power (Silverman, 2013). This process entails the researcher designing a strategy to test the theory, then looks for themes in the data by identifying and labeling the data. Identifying and labeling parts of the text, enables the retrieval of relevant information in a sea of rich data. If a link seems to be implied by a particular case, then it might true in all or many of the cases.

Deductive analysis was used in this research, because it gives the possibility to this researcher to measure and explain various concepts related to this study qualitatively and to also generalize research findings to a certain extent while drawing conclusions.

In this research, content analysis was used as a tool in developing a coding scheme and identifying common patterns. The coding scheme was developed deductively basing it on the literature review as well as the interview questions. I transcribed the interviews the old fashioned way. The recordings were on my mobile phone. With a cup of tea by my side, I listened to all the recordings and wrote down the interviews word for word. The transcribing took almost two weeks.

4. Findings

Eight categories in this research were identified as indicated below,

Table 3

Common themes in this research

4.1 Homesickness

4.2 Motivations for studying abroad

4.3 Expectations and knowledge about Finland before arrival

4.4 Expectations vs reality

4.5 Typical challenges faced by students

4.6 Help seeking and support networks

4.7 The perception of stigma related to help seeking

4.8 Impact of the move abroad

4.1 Homesickness

In the interviewed group, all the participants missed their family as well as their friends. This obviously being every human being support base from birth. The absence of this familiar support base being uncertainty and nervousness hence the longing for them. The participants also missed popular foods from their countries of origin as well as specific cultural traits from their home countries such as perceived “friendliness” and the spontaneous trait the of people. This also is a bemoaning of the loss of the familiar.

“Well, living abroad, I don’t get to see my family as often as I would like to. Family is on top of the list. Greek weather is quite different too but I miss mostly family”

“I miss the openness of the Greek people. They are quite open and easy going. They start to chat with you no matter who you are. They say hallo to you on the streets, that’s what I miss “

“I miss how open people are when you first meet them. In Finland, they take a long time to open up but back home the interactions are open from the first time”

Participants expressed the view that people from their home countries were much more outgoing and spontaneous when compared to the locals. This probably has contributed to the feeling of homesickness and longing for the familiar i.e. a people who are more social and outgoing. I suspect that this idealizing of issues back home may be a symptom of something or it may be a way of dealing with life in the new environment. Participants kept contact with family and friends in their countries of origin through social media as well as phone calls through Skype, Messenger and mobile calls. Through this, they tried to alleviate the feeling of homesickness. This of course forms a self-fulfilling prophecy where the students withdraw from the local contacts and look back home for comfort thus making it impossible for new local contacts to emerge. The

local contacts would provide the sojourners with emotional as well as social support. This support is critical in acculturation as at this stage major changes are happening in a sojourner's life. Without local contacts the sojourners fall through the cracks. The sojourners may attribute their failures in the acculturation process to themselves which in turn reduces their self-efficacy and self-worth. It is also possible that they might also blame the environment for their perceived misfortunes and their spite and dislike for the environment grows and this greatly affects their adopting process negatively. It is important to stress that contact with friends and family back home is key to a sojourner's life as long as it is not the only support base that they have.

4.2 Motivations for studying abroad

The reasons for coming to Finland varied from person to person, however the common theme among the participants was, they felt that they would get a "better deal" compared with their home countries or another countries in terms of education. Some of the participants could not get into the master's degree program of their choice due to the very high entry requirements for example, some master's degree program required three years' work experience. While for others they could not find the master's degree program they wanted to pursue in their home countries, so this is a great push factor.

In general Finland has a very good reputation in the field of education, where the country is well respected for providing quality education. According to the Pisa student assessment tests for example, Finland constantly receives high test scores in Mathematics, science and reading (OECD, 2016). Finnish universities are also held in high esteem worldwide for example Helsinki University being ranked 91th worldwide (Times higher education, 2017). A higher education qualification from a well-regarded country such as Finland opens doors in the job market for the

sojourner. A foreign degree also demonstrates that an individual has had exposure which is today's job market is considered an asset. The assumption being that the sojourners get an opportunity to experience new cultures, new perspectives as well as language skills while studying abroad. Upon finishing their studies, these new skills and experience are attractive to employers because they seek persons with diverse experiences who can bring to the table different perspectives on issues which then evoke alternative solutions. The thinking is that different ideas can be tested against each other and during that process new ones are brought forth. The employer hopes to harness the amalgamated strengths of individuals who have studied abroad to increase productivity in his or her organization.

“I did my bachelor's in the Netherlands and I was looking in the Dutch universities and there were quite interesting Master's programs but the finances were quite high. In addition to that, I needed to do a bridging program. The bridging program was more costly than the Master's program. After a discussion with my thesis advisor from my previous university, he recommended Finland and this university in particular, when it comes to sports, he said that it was one of the best. Coming here for a two year Master's here would cost less than a one year's Master's program in the Netherlands. “

Cost was another “pull factor “for students from non-European union countries who came before, Fall 2007. Before the said date non-European union citizens were exempted from paying tuition fees which made Finland a cheaper destination compared to other European Union countries. However, with the introduction of tuition fees, this pull factor is likely to be weaker than before. Non-European citizens who hold a Finnish permanent residency permit or the Finnish A permit are still exempted from paying tuition fees. (JYU, 2018)

4.3 Expectations and knowledge about Finland before arrival

All participants at one stage or another tried to acquire some general information about Finland before applying to study here. Some participants sought advice from their friends who had lived in Finland. Other participants had some prior knowledge of the country through their interest in music or documentaries.

“I got in touch with some French people who had lived in Finland, who painted a picture for me. It is full of nature, they told me that people are not easy going. They did kind of prepare me, they said it is quite cold “

“I have a friend who had lived in Pori and I asked her how life was in Finland. I liked the musical aspect as well. I like heavy metal so I was attracted to the Nordic culture because of the heavy metal “

The participants view Finland as sort of an “exotic” land, this was true even for European students. Finland being a small country tucked away in Northern Europe, is shrouded in mystery and receives little media coverage, hence no surprise that the country is viewed as destination for those who want a unique adventure or are daring.

Choosing where to study abroad is not an easy task. Sojourners usually take into account their own personal interests such as hobbies. For example, if a person loves to ski or winter sports in general, coming to study in Finland then makes sense or if an individual likes hard rock music, then he or she will definitely like the music scene here. Other than personal interests, sojourners have to decide what kind of lifestyle they want. Do they want to have a city life in their future study destination or do they want a small university town life? This means that they have to look at the practicalities of life in both options, such as the living costs and career options. Some

sojourners when they can, do visit the country of interest before they apply to a university in the said country. This presents an opportunity to get to know the country better, the mentality of the people as well as the culture. That being said, visiting a future study destination can be an expensive endeavor. For example, a prospective student holding a Bangladeshi passport who wants to study in Finland in the future and wants to visit the country beforehand, will have to go through the hustle of getting a visa and not mentioning the cost of the plane tickets and hotels.

A short visit to a country may sometimes give a wrong impression of life in the long term. For example, if a student wants to study in Jyväskylä but visits Helsinki, will get a false view of life in Finland since capital cities generally do not reflect life of a country. On top of that the joy of being in a new country may also cloud the judgment of an individual, since everything looks nice and cuddly.

If visiting proves to be expensive, a potential sojourner can look at YouTube videos about a said study destination or even a virtual tour of a city or a campus which gives the future student a small idea of what is in store.

4.4 Expectations vs reality

As stated before Finland is generally shrouded in mystery and thus stereotypes linger.

Participants talked of the stereotype of the “quiet Finn” which they had heard before their arrival.

The participants during their stay however, realized it was more of a “personal space issue” rather than being quiet or taciturn. The interviewees also talked about the famed nature of Finland with its thousands of lakes and forestry.

“The nature that I expected was there, the people are not approachable. It does not mean that they are not friendly. They just need time to open up before getting to know them. It was quite

cold, that was true, very many lakes, the education level is higher than I expected. Everything was just I expected. “

Some of the participants talked about how Finland is famed for its socialistic welfare system that takes care of the environment as well as its citizens from cradle to grave, but have faced dissonance in the sense that have noticed a strong sense of individualism in Finland instead of a strong sense of community.

When going abroad some sojourners think that they are going to acquire a lot of international friends in their new student environment. In reality, the majority of the first friendships are with people from their own country or people in their own degree program. This is because being from the same home county or same study program is lowest common denominator which creates bonds in a new unknown environment. It is only when the sojourners step out of their bubble and enter a space that allows them to interact with people of the host country or from other parts of the world.

Some other sojourners expect to learn the host language and become fluent in it in a couple of months, especially if they had done basic courses of the said language in their home countries. Those expecting to master the host country's language that quick will certainly face disappointment as learning a new language takes at least a couple of years. Most language have different dialects and accents depending on the region as well as use of informal language i.e. slang. Such nuances affect the pace and complexity of leaning a new language. Furthermore, studying abroad means that a sojourner will come into contact with individuals from other parts of the world who speak English as well as other languages. This reduces the ability to be fully immersed in the language the sojourner seeks to learn. To further complicate this situation,

members of the host culture will want to practice their English language skills with the sojourner making it even further difficult for him or her to learn the host country's language.

4.5 Typical challenges faced by students

Participants who studied abroad before had an easier time in adjusting into their new environment as they could be able to draw experiences from their previous student experience. They faced the same issues previously for example getting friends, acquainting with a new educational system or a new climate, and thus the next time they went to study abroad again. They were able to draw from their previous experiences.

“Before leaving the home I talked to my professor and I told him that I was nervous and he told me that some people are doing this (Studying abroad) for the first time and that I am doing it for the second time. He is right, I know what to do in order to cope like reminding myself why I came here.”

Those participants who had not studied abroad before, faced a bigger challenge in acclimatizing in the new environment. In time, they modeled solutions to their various problems for example by joining sporting activities so as to make friends, spending time in the wild in order to rejuvenate their minds. The longer a student stayed in a certain environment the better life hack tools he or she acquired.

As discussed before, feeling home sick is a typical challenge faced by many international students. After the initial excitement waned off and reality set in, the lack of contact with friends and family started to bite and the longing for the familiar grew. Although the sojourners kept in contact with family or friends in the home country through Skype or Facebook, that itself could

not replace actual contact, although it does help in alleviating negative feelings caused by homesickness.

The language barrier also made the sojourner feel left out, although English is spoken widely in Finland for example, the Finnish language is still the local official language and as the locals tended to switch between the two languages comfortably. The sojourners lacked Finnish language skills thus tended to feel left out in a group. This lack of language skills among international students created an unintended language separation where by and large local students who were enrolled in Finnish language programs hung out in their own cliques while international students stuck in their own groups with the exception of the Finnish students who were in English speaking programs.

Sojourners also faced academic issues. The education system that they met here in Finland is different from what they have in their home countries. Some sojourners found it difficult to get used to the liberal system where for example the student teacher distance was fairly small. This meant that students were expected to view their lecturers as 'equals' and students addressed their lecturers on a first name basis. This proved to be difficult to students from conservative education backgrounds where the boundaries between the instructors and students are clearly demarcated. This liberal system took while to get used to.

Some participants talked about their experiences of being thrust into minority status. One of the participants who hailed from outside of Europe talked about their "acceptance" of suddenly being a minority and that in their view positive experiences are what that matters. The more positive experiences an individual has, the less race becomes an issue.

“I was the only brown person but it did not affect me. It was irrational to expect to see more people who looked like me and there was nothing that I could. It wasn’t a wrong that I could fix. Coming to Jyväskylä, I am like one percent of the international students. I do not think that it is about the amount of people who look like you, it’s all about the experiences that you have had. Exposure to direct and indirect experiences. I think that being the only one (non-white) could trigger negative feeling. I have faced only positive experiences, where people are curious and come up to me and ask me where I am from. I am very fortunate that I have had these positive experiences.”

A participant who already had experiences of being a minority in their home country talked about Finland offered them a different kind of life experience since they did not really feel at home in their home county due to his biracial heritage.

“I had some experiences with race in Finland. Nothing too serious. I have had some explicit experiences but they happen once in a while. Race is not that big of a deal. I think for me I don’t know where my home is. I guess it is due to being mixed race. “

4.6 Help seeking and support networks

Participants in general were aware that a system was already in place, from where they could seek help from. Help came from formal and as well as informal sources .The formal channels included for example lecturers whenever the students needed academic assistance, the informal sources included friends in the student community who could help out when a situation was tight.

“For legal reasons I could not buy things online during my first two years because I needed a Finnish identity card. To get a Finnish identity card, one has to have lived in Finland for a

minimum of two years” So my friends would buy train tickets on my behalf and I would pay them back with cash.”

The idea is that individuals can follow various steps to seek help. One of the steps in help seeking comes in the form of self-administration. This is when a sojourner who has perhaps very high levels of self-efficacy or is over confident decides to look inward to solve a particular problem in their life rather than look outward for help. The other option is of course to look for support outward i.e. in the community around them.

During the interviews it became clear that the international students were confident of the support given by the formal support networks found at the university. Participants for example appreciated the role by the goodies, who are basically people of trust whom a student can go talk to. Goodies at the University of Jyväskylä are members of the University staff chosen to provide support for students. The goodies are not trained experts or therapists. Their main role is to listen to the students and offer guidance with a promise of confidentiality. The issues that they handle range from emotional issues to study issues. Students can make appointments with the goodies through email and are free to choose goodies of their own sex. If the goodies cannot handle the situation, they can direct the student to other avenues of help, for example experts.

It was apparent to them that the university had invested time and energy into researching student life and the challenges facing them and how the challenges can be addressed. This was seen through the various surveys done by the university where, enquiring the students wellbeing.

“I have heard of the Goodies system which is a person of trust whom a student can go to talk to and it is confidential. I first heard of this system when I had some issues. We don’t have such a system back at home. I was surprised how much the university invests in the students. “

For international students who have access to the Finnish welfare system, as a result of holding a Finnish type A residency permit or a Finnish permanent residency permit, pointed out to the ease of getting an appointment with a professional. For one participant, going to the nearest general practitioner's office was all that was necessary to start his treatment on his depression. He also was grateful that the services were pocket friendly as they were largely subsidized by the Finnish social insurance institution (KELA).

"I was having a particularly difficult time and I went to my local GP (general practitioner) and I told her that things were going to get very bad, very soon unless I get some help. She referred me to a psychiatric service. I paid for the doctor's appointment and a few sessions but the whole thing is subsidized. I didn't know that I would get help there, it seemed to be an obvious place to start. These all services available to people who are part of the Kela system."

Drawing from the interviews the perception of constituted as support networks widely varied on the individual and the circumstance. For some their support network was themselves depending on the situation, for others social support come in the form of friends especially those friends whom they have strong and positive relationships with, while for others support come in form of institutional help i.e. programs related with the university or the state.

4.7 The perception of stigma related to help seeking

Participants acknowledged that seeking help may invite stigma. This is due to the idea that seeking help is admitting weakness and no one likes to admit weakness. Feeling of weakness reduces our positive self-worth i.e. how we view ourselves plus how we think other people view us. However, all were in agreement that help seeking carried stigma only if other people knew about it. In other words, if a person could get professional help for example for depression

discreetly such that people in his or her surroundings did not know then, then it didn't matter. Furthermore, some pointed out that they were more willing to seek professional help here than in their home countries since the environment here fosters a "mind your own business" attitude. They theorized that in such an environment the chances of a student seeking help would be higher since the whole thing would be confidential and discrete and thus the student would still maintain a positive public face.

"I guess when you go to seek help, it means that you are not capable of solving it. We then view ourselves as less, which does not have to be the case. I guess that it is stigmatized on the other hand, it is confidential, It is only stigmatized if the people know it (a person went to seek help)."

"Some of my friends have experienced mental health issues and they have used the student counselling services. There is even a chaplain service if you are religious. Me, personally I am kind of self-reliant, so I would not actually go out to seek help. There is a lot of stigma on mental health in my country, perhaps some conservatives would think that it is a sign of weakness if a man goes for counselling or that it is not effective. "

From the interviews, it was clear that self-imposed stigma the biggest factor as to why individuals hesitate to seek help. If an individual thinks that seeking help means that he or she is weak then the person automatically thinks that others hold the same view. This idea will stop the person getting help even though it may not be founded on reality. Knowing how to ask for help is a crucial skill. Most interviewees in this research felt that the world has changed in the sense that it is becoming more acceptable to talk about one's problems openly however they do admit that it is still difficult talking about one's problems to another party.

Some people are reluctant to ask for help because they are unsure if they can get sufficient help or because the help received in the past from official channels has been wanting. One participant bemoaned the sorry state of professional help services in their home country due to culture i.e. the system treats individuals who ask for help with suspicion. The idea is that many of these individuals seeking help if not many of them just wanted to scrounge the system and benefit from it. They told that not a single individual in the Finnish system questioned their sincerity, during their help seeking journey. Austerity measures which have been in place for years in their home country have also led to reduced availability and funding of such services, unlike In Finland where the Finnish state still subsidizes such services to a large degree.

“In my home country, there is a lot of stigma, there is a word for it. It means that you are somebody who is deliberately making something bigger than it is in order to benefit from the system and that is how generally the system treats you. In Finland, during this time that I have needed support, I felt supported. I am half way through my therapy. You are entitled to three years of therapy (for foreigners who are part of the Kela system) but at no point has anyone questioned that I needed this or what my motives were. This is the kind of services that are either not available in my home country or are underfunded. “

4.8 Impact of the move abroad

Interviewees pointed out how their outlook of life has have been influenced in one way or another after living in Finland. Most realize that they have become more independent compared to when they lived in their home countries. The more challenges they overcome the more their self-efficacy grows.

“I have become more masculine. I do things on my own, the independence makes feel manlier, and I am able to concentrate on sports and on my studies”

My interviewees expressed a view that levels of trust found in Finnish society are relatively high. Some of the participants hailed from societies with low while others hailed from societies with relatively high levels of trust, however all were in agreement that Finnish society has much higher levels of trust compared with their home countries. They reasoned that the relatively small population of Finland combined with its' strong welfare system encouraged this high levels of trust. The high trust levels found here in turn, have encouraged them to be more trustworthy by being better versions of themselves. They have seen this “better self” in their personal relations with others as well as how they handle other persons' property.

“One thing I appreciate about living in Finland is the trust. Three times since I have moved here, I have lost my wallet and three times I have gotten it back intact and all the cards have the intact plus the money. One time there was 200 euros in cash in the wallet when I lost it and it was all there when I got it back. I know absolutely for a fact that had I gotten my wallet back at home, the money would not have been there. It made me want to behave differently from the way I would normally do. I found money in a supermarket one time, it was Christmas Eve, and believe it or not I gave it to the cashier. I told her that I found it on the floor. “

Moving to another country to study is never easy and comes with its own baggage. Overcoming an emotionally challenging situation or event such as this is an important requirement for appreciating adversity. After ‘surviving’ the experience of teething problems, the sojourner may learn how to appreciate the ‘small things’ in life, for example taking walks in the nature or a nice cup of coffee with a friend. A sojourner may deliberately link past adversity to the deeper

enjoyment of the present. This is because after overcoming the different sets of challenges that come with moving to a new country, the sojourner learns a lot of himself or herself including personal strengths and weaknesses. They also learn about the opportunities and the limitation of life. This deeper understanding of self and life may create a sense of self appreciation and pride in the sojourner. This happens because the sojourner also looks back at how far they come compared to now, and the feeling of gratitude translates into meaningful life changes. The new habits and attitudes form so as to align with the new belief system.

5. Discussion

This study is built on the assumption that all international students at one point or another face challenges in their temporary environment. As an international higher education student myself, I am keenly aware of those issues one faces in a new environment. The analysis of the eight interviewees revealed three main categories related to coping:

- a) Seeking help from informal networks
- b) Seeking help from formal networks
- c) Self-encouragement

Interviewees in this study who had experienced problems related to mental health, said they had sought help from either ‘informal networks’ i.e. friends, goodies or roommates, ‘themselves’ i.e. self-encouragement, or from ‘official networks’ i.e. professional therapists. On average, participants in this study reported to have experienced some level of acculturation stress during their sojourn in Finland.

- a) Duration of stay

According to the results of this study, the rate of success of international students in a new host environment is determined by how open they are to embrace aspects and norms of the host culture, personal drive and duration of stay. Duration of stay may affect acculturation stress (Ward, 1998). Sojourners with short length of stay experience more acculturation stress since everything in the host culture is new and they may have a hard time to process it, while sojourners with long length of stay experience less acculturation stress. That being said, duration of stay does not have a direct impact on the willingness to seek help (Komiya, 2001). The simple passing of time does not make an individual much more willing to seek for help. Duration of stay however does to increase the chances of a sojourner forming networks i.e. friendships with people in his or her surroundings and reducing culture shock. The latter one may be influenced by the continuous exposure to the host nation's school system as well as general culture.

a) Stigma

The findings from this study concur with the findings of Kakuma et al. (2009) that suggest that stigma is a strong cultural barrier to seeking help especially from professional health services. Most participants were acutely aware that seeking help meant 'admitting' that a person could not take care of themselves or be mature enough to solve their problems which might reduce their social status among their peers. It was clear that there indeed the fear of being associated with being 'crazy' or 'not normal'. For a long time in popular culture, the idea of mental health and the word 'crazy' have gone hand in hand, and of course no one wants to seem in such light. Thus as a coping mechanism most students put on a façade that everything is alright and that they are happy so as to avoid losing friends and also not to lose face among their peers. The university while trying it's best to inform international students of the different counselling services that they provide, could use less stigmatizing language in its communication. For example, instead of

sending out emails or leaflets asking ‘are you depressed’ or stating ‘seek professional help for depression’, students could be encouraged to visit the university’s counselling units by saying ‘do you want to chat’ or ‘come have coffee if you feel overwhelmed. Such less threatening and less stigmatizing communication could help avoid stigma associated with being depressed.

According to P. Goddu et al. (2018) found that stigmatizing language used to describe conditions in people may reduce motivation to seek help because it creates an identity dilemma among the target group. A person who may be suffering from depression does not want to be identified as part of the ‘depressed students’ or the ‘mentally sick patients’. Such identifies may lower a person’s self-efficacy as well as self-esteem.

b) Migration status

According to the findings of this study there seems to be a divide between students from the European Union and those from Non- European countries when it comes to seeking help from professionals. European students who came to Finland have the right to access subsidized health care just like in their home countries through their European Union health card, while Non-European Union students have no such right. Non-European union students are required to buy health insurance whose policy must be renewed yearly. Non- European union students often arrive with little knowledge of how the Finnish health and insurance system works, and as a result they are less willing to seek help from professional avenues due to the fear of costs involved. This illustrates how migration status maybe a key factor in help seeking. An open question for the future is whether Non- European students will gravitate more towards trying to solve their problems by seeking help from people from their home country, instead of relying on official support structures. The assumption here is that, other students from the same cultural

context i.e. country or region will form a support system where they can help each in the new cultural environment.

c) Social connections

The more socially engaged a student is to his or her environment, the more likely the student is willing to seek help is because contact with the surrounding environment is an important part of social connections (Poyrazli et al. 2004, Motti-Stefanind, et al. 2008). Decreased interaction with the surrounding environment among international students may led them to develop feelings of being disconnected, lonely and feeling isolated. If they are aware of the help resources and opportunities available to them, but feel isolated and not part of the community, then they will be less willing to seek help. If the students are not even aware of the resources and opportunities available to them, they might never resolve their issues.

International students who are socially active with others in the student community may be more aware of the help services in their locale. This study found that social support avenues are the most utilized form of help seeking. I thus forward the idea that peers are an important factor in disseminating information about help giving services among college students. International students who have positive experiences with professional counselling services may be used as a tool in trying to reduce the stigma attached with seeking help (Cornish & Campbell, 2009).

Looking at the findings of this study, one can propose that the international office being the first line of contact with international students, should avail themselves more to students and organize events or meetings which foster more interaction among the students. The international office could create a mentorship program where students have an opportunity to share their experiences with the newer students and thus serve as appoint of contact, if a student faces an issue.

It is possible that universities could provide culturally sensitive services to international sojourners, however the question to be pondered is how targeted can such services really be. If the services are too broad then the university could miss an opportunity to engage at a better level with international students. On the flipside, if the student services are too specific oriented towards specific cultures, will it stigmatize these groups? How will these students react to such services?

6. Conclusion

6.1 Limitations of the study

Interviews are very useful in getting the story behind a person's experience (McNamara, 1999). During interviews, the interviewer has the responsibility of pursuing in-depth information pertaining to the research from the participants. I prepared the interview questions thoroughly before conducting a pilot interview.

One of the study limitations was that the interviews were conducted in English which is not a native language of the researcher as well as all of the interviewees except two participants. Generally speaking, all participants in the study were able to talk about their lived experience here in Finland without a major glitches. However, most of them admitted that they would be better in expressing themselves in their mother tongue. The fact that English is not my first language probably made things easier for my respondents as well. I did do things a few things to make the situations easier for my respondents for example, I asked direct and short questions. I made sure that I spoke clearly and I would repeat the questions twice just in case.

Furthermore the interviews were conducted during the summer when students are their busy in their summer jobs, on holiday or traveling which put time and availability constraints.

Some people could not be comfortable discussing help seeking since it may mean they had to disclose very personal issues and perhaps the incentive to participate in such as research was probably not attractive enough to encourage them. This being a very sensitive topic, I believe that it may have prevented some of them from disclosing a lot of information, especially to a total stranger. This may have denied me a richer data set that may have had a different effect on the findings.

Domrow (2007) describes longitudinal data as data collected from individuals several times over a long period of time. This study lacks longitudinal data on the help seeking strategies used by the participants. Studying the same participants over a longer period of time may no doubt contributed to a better and deeper understating of the development and changes in the process of help seeking.

6.2 Suggestion for further research

The intended objective of this study was not to generalize the whole international higher education student population at the University of Jyvaskyla or in Finland. However, the results of this study may have implications for sojourners as well as those working in international services at higher education institution in that the lived experiences of the sojourners helps to create more awareness on the plight of the international sojourner.

Future research may look into help seeking patterns among higher education students in Finland, taking note of the cultural differences as well as life options between the European Union students and non- European students (especially those from a non. western background). It would not make sense to generalize all non-European students and out them in one basket. I

would call for individualized cultural studies on help seeking for example where a researcher (from any part of the world) looks at help seeking behaviors among African students in Finland, or Asian students in Finland or Iranian students in Finland. I propose the use of focus groups to identify the feelings and concerns of these target groups. It may also yield more fruit, if the measures used in future studies were formed and developed with a particular target group in mind.

The amount of research done on the help seeking behaviors of international higher education students in Finland as well as the Nordics countries is wanting. This is surprising since there has been a relatively large international student body in this region for quite some time. With the introduction of tuition fees in Sweden, Finland and Denmark for Non-European citizens, their representation in the International student body in the Nordic will significantly reduce

I thus fear that future research done on International students will tend be over represented by European Union students at the expense of Non-European union students.

According to the results of this study, higher education international students do value greatly the need of an orientation program at a higher institution of learning. Some even would like to see an online orientation process that begins in their countries of origin and continues in the new host culture after their arrival. Future research on acculturation and help seeking may want to look at the role and impact of orientation on the acculturation process.

Future research may also want to look at the acculturation and help seeking process of sojourners' spouses. This group of individuals are an important and integral part of a sojourner's life but for some reasons often overlooked in studies or by the institutions of higher learning.

Studies in the future could provide crucial solutions so that spouses of sojourners are

incorporated into some system that helps them with their acculturation in the new host culture. Maybe some institutions of higher learning do offer some help services to these spouses. Lack of utilization of these help services could lead to the deterioration of the functionality and wellbeing of marriages and relationships which in turn affects the sojourner's academic life and performance. It is of uttermost important that institutions of higher learning and other staff holders working with international students gain a better understanding of the various issues related to help seeking in order to provide sensible and cultural sensitive solutions to them.

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8) Appendix

Interview questions

Broad topic	Interview questions
The interviewee's background	Where were you born?
	How would you describe your birthplace/land?
	Where else have you lived? (other than your country of birth)
	What do you miss most from your country of birth or the place you regard as home

	How did you decide to come and study in Finland?
	How long have you lived in Finland? What do you study?
	How old are you?
Expectations vs reality	What were your expectations of Finland? (Academically, weather-wise, people wise).
	Where did you get these expectations from (Attribution)
	How much did the reality meet these expectations, specific example, (Academically, weather-wise, people wise).
	Why is that?
Challenges on the ground	What facet of your experience here has been most challenging? (academically, weather-wise, social life, finding food, finding good dancing places, finding a good carpet, a job)
	What do you attribute that challenge to?

Help seeking	In what ways do you deal with these related problems? Where do you look for help?
	Where do students seek for help, or ought to seek for help? (What channels).
	How much of a stigma is seeking help? How much of a strength or weakness is it?
	Do you think it is culturally based? (attribute worldwide phenomenon) would it apply to your home country)
Personal changes	How have changed as a result of living here?