



**PERCEPTIONS OF INCLUSION, WELL-BEING, AND
IDENTIFICATION WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION AMONG
UKRAINIAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

**SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF
INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS**

<https://ukrastud.eu/>

Lecturer PhD Eng. Ancuța PRISACARU
Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava

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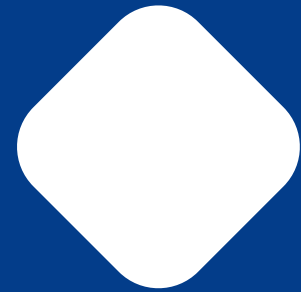
Introduction



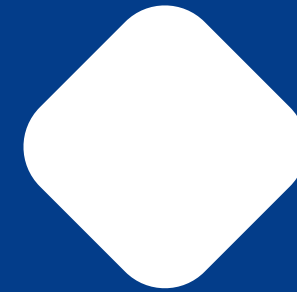
- The social well-being of international university students has become a central topic in higher education research, particularly in the context of increasing global mobility.
- Recent studies show that studying abroad involves complex processes of **acculturation, adaptation and identity negotiation**, as students adjust to new academic and social environments.

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This transition is often associated with several key challenges, including:



**stress, anxiety and
uncertainty**



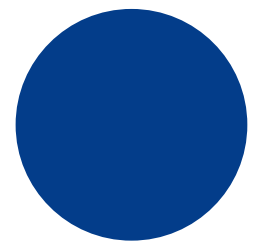
**challenges in building social
connections and belonging**



**language and
intercultural
communication
difficulties**

Social support, self-efficacy and integration play a key role in shaping students' well-being and academic success.

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Research approach



This presentation is based on a **desk research analysis** of recent peer-reviewed studies.



The selected literature focuses on:

mental health and emotional
well-being

social integration and sense of
belonging

academic and institutional support

environmental and contextual factors



The analysis also draws on theoretical frameworks such as the **Social Cognitive Model of Well-being.**

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Mental Health Challenges

Research consistently shows that international students are at **higher risk** of experiencing mental health difficulties compared to domestic students.

Studies highlight:



increased levels of anxiety and depressive symptoms



psychological distress during transition and adaptation periods



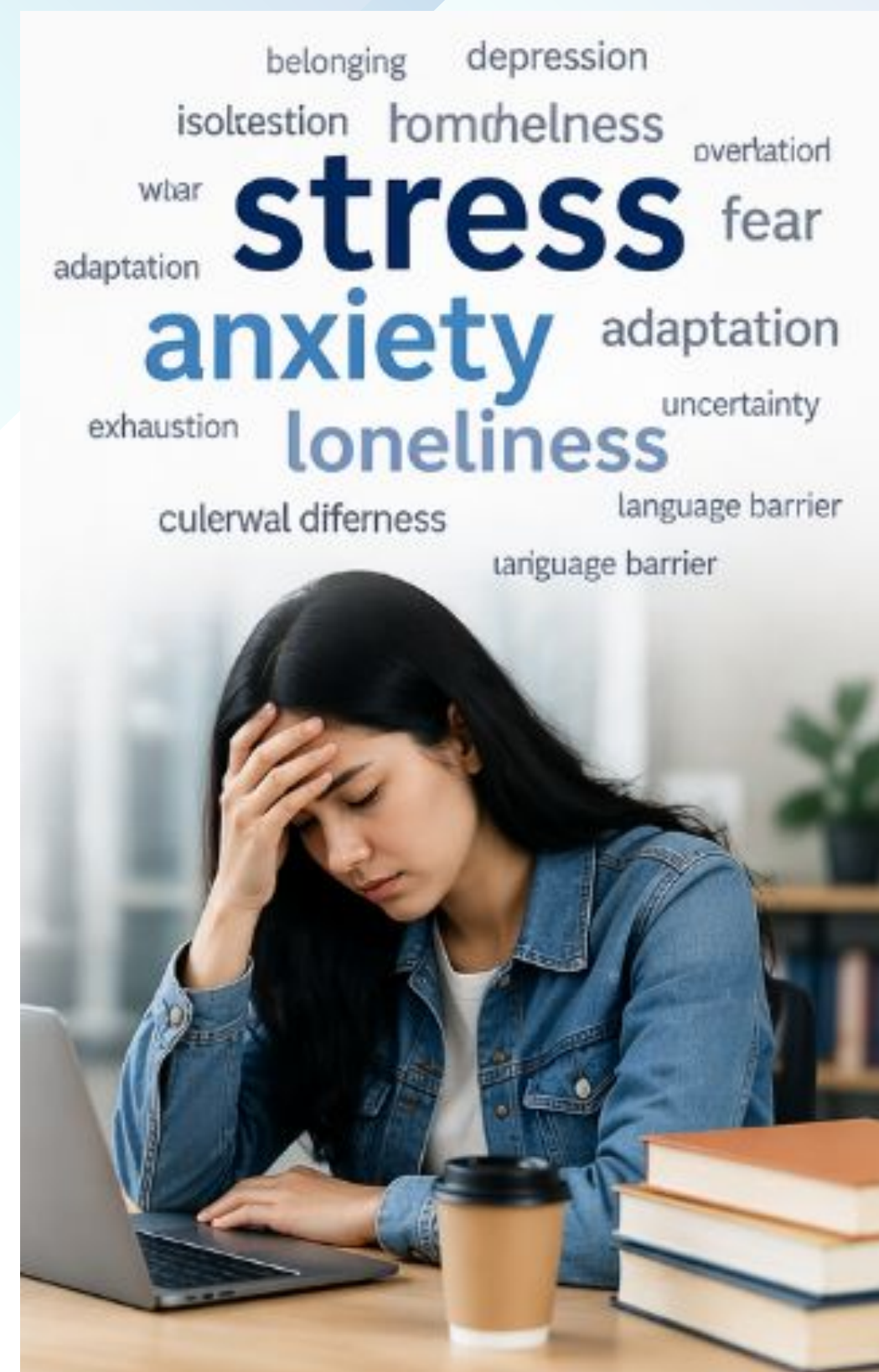
emotional vulnerability in unfamiliar cultural and academic environments

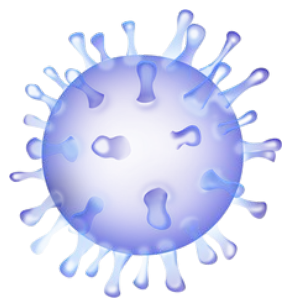
Research in psychology and higher education also indicates that:

perceived stress related to academic and social demands significantly affects well-being
lack of social support and limited **sense of belonging** increases the risk of mental health problems
difficulties in adaptation can negatively influence both emotional stability and academic performance

Mental health challenges among international students are shaped by a combination of academic, social and environmental factors, highlighting the need for **timely support and culturally sensitive interventions**.

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Impact of the Pandemic

Recent empirical studies, including longitudinal analyses conducted among international students in China, highlight the significant impact of the **COVID-19 pandemic** on student well-being.

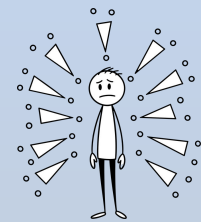
Findings show

that:

Mental health levels declined significantly during the pandemic period



Increased social isolation led to higher levels of emotional distress and loneliness



uncertainty, mobility restrictions and lack of control intensified anxiety and stress



In addition, the **transition to online learning** and **reduced face-to-face interaction** further affected students' **sense of belonging and academic engagement**.



These findings confirm that international students are **particularly vulnerable to external stressors and global crises**, which can amplify existing adaptation challenges.

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Social Isolation and Financial Stress

Research indicates a strong link between **economic conditions** and students' **social well-being**, particularly in the case of international students.

Findings suggest that:

Financial insecurity

reduces opportunities for social participation and engagement

Housing conditions, such as overcrowding or instability, negatively affect psychological comfort

Economic stress

contributes to increased feelings of isolation and insecurity



In addition, studies show that financial difficulties can:

limit access **to social and academic resources**

increase stress related to daily living and academic responsibilities

reduce overall **life satisfaction**



As a result, financial stress can indirectly impact **academic engagement and performance**, reinforcing the challenges faced by international students in adapting to a new environment.

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Language and Social Integration

Language proficiency is one of the strongest predictors of social integration and overall well-being among international students.

Research in language education and psychology shows that:

higher language proficiency increases confidence in communication and participation

interaction with local students enhances the sense of belonging and social inclusion

language barriers can lead to both social isolation and academic difficulties



In addition, studies highlight that limited language skills may **reduce students' willingness** to engage in class discussions and social activities.

This aligns with research on **acculturation and intercultural communication**, which emphasises that **effective communication** is essential for building relationships, adapting to new environments and developing a sense of identity within the host culture.

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Academic Support and Communication

Institutional support plays a **crucial role** in shaping the academic experience of international students, but it is not always perceived as sufficient or accessible.

Research findings show that:

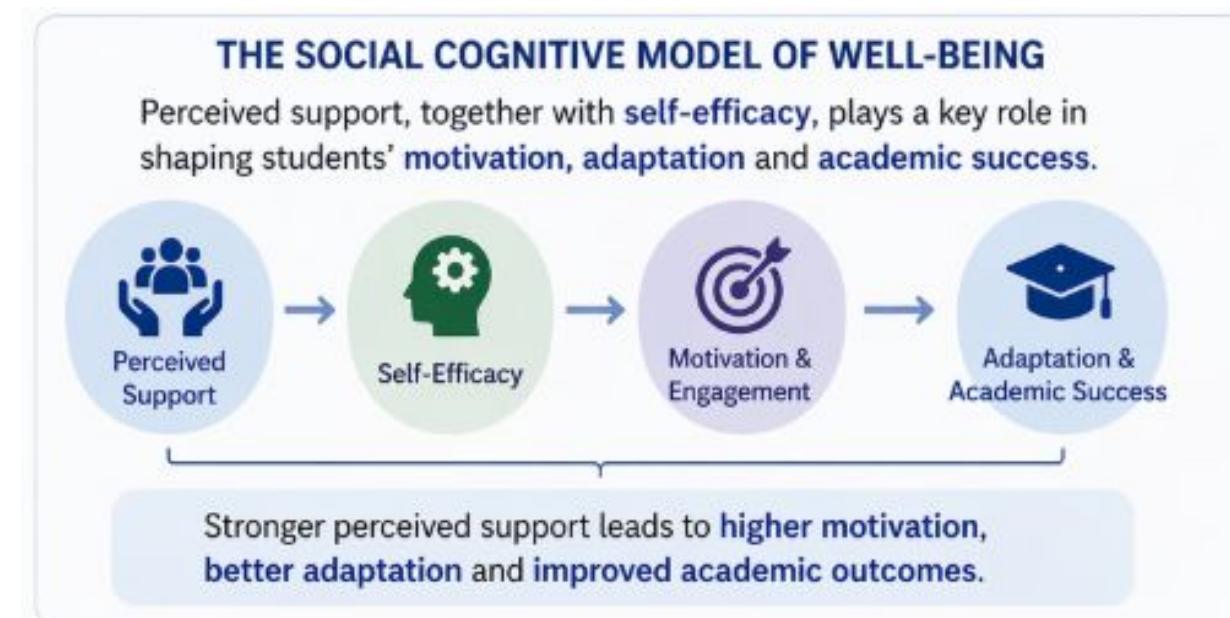


International students may perceive support services as difficult to access or not adapted to their needs

Cultural differences and communication barriers can reduce students' engagement with available support systems

Lack of clear information may lead to underutilisation of academic and counselling services

Effective and responsive academic support is associated with higher levels of satisfaction and overall well-being



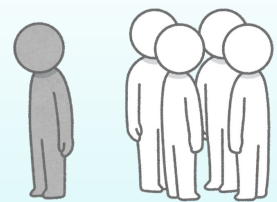
In addition, studies suggest that the **quality of communication** between institutions and students significantly influences students' **sense of inclusion and trust**.

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Emotional Experiences

Qualitative studies provide valuable insights into the **lived experiences** of international students, highlighting the emotional challenges associated with studying abroad.

Students frequently experience

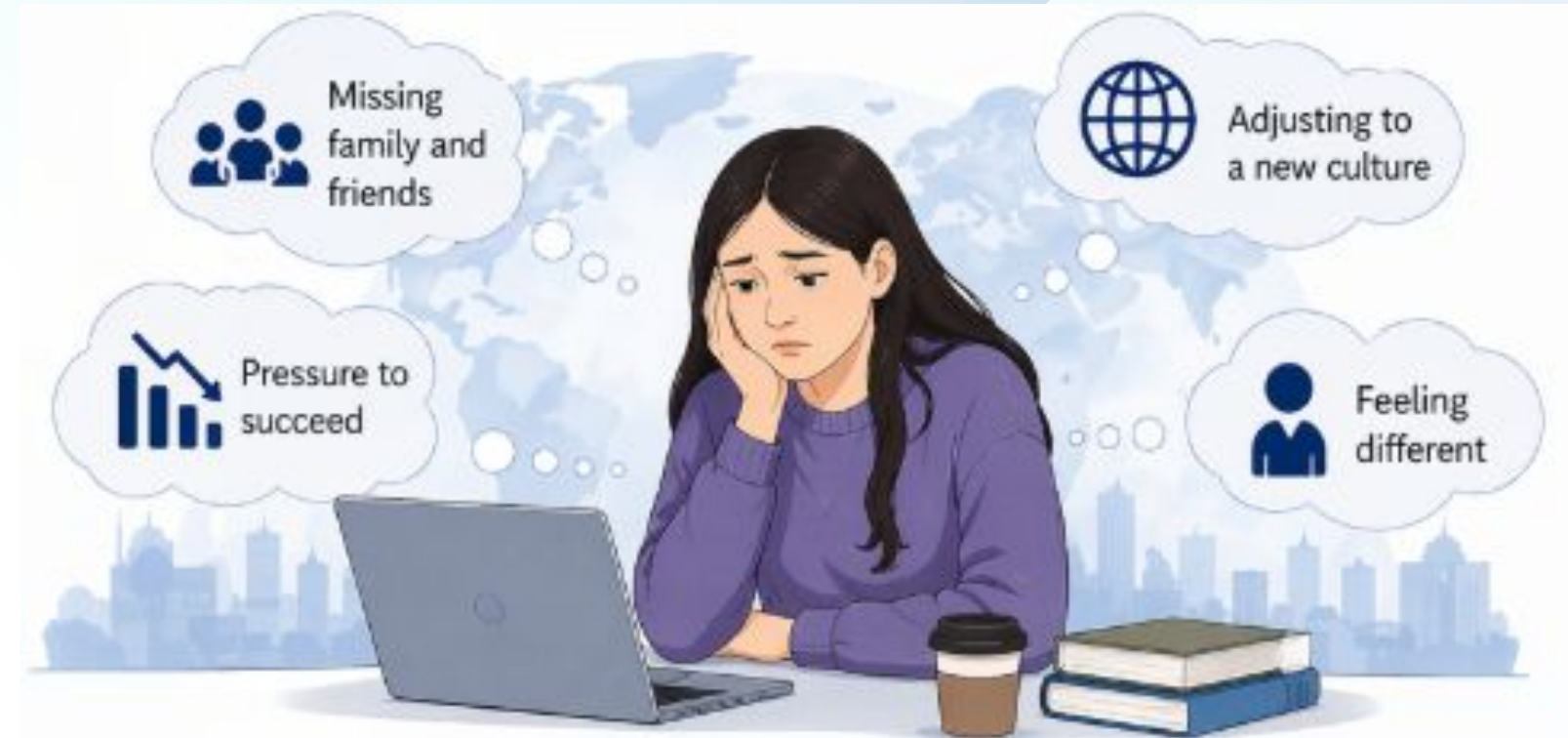


Loneliness and social exclusion, especially in the initial stages of adaptation

Academic-related stress and performance anxiety, linked to high expectations and unfamiliar systems



Uncertainty and discomfort caused by cultural differences and new social norms



These emotional experiences are often intensified by **language barriers** and **limited social networks**, which can reduce students' **sense of belonging**.

HOWEVER, STUDENTS ALSO DEMONSTRATE RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION.

Many students develop coping strategies such as:



SEEKING PEER SUPPORT
and building social connections.



USING DIGITAL TOOLS
to maintain relationships and access resources.



DEVELOPING SELF-REGULATION
and problem-solving skills.

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Role of Social Interaction

Social interaction plays a key role in shaping the well-being and academic experience of international students.

Research shows that:

Peer relationships contribute significantly to emotional well-being and reduce feelings of loneliness

Collaborative learning environments enhance both academic engagement and social integration

Participation in social networks provides support, helping students cope with stress and adaptation challenges

Frequent interaction with peers and the academic community facilitates the development of **trust, confidence and communication skills**.



The concept of **sense of belonging** is central to student success, as it influences motivation, participation and overall satisfaction with the academic experience.



Higher motivation



Greater engagement



Better academic outcomes

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Environmental and Lifestyle Factors

Environmental and lifestyle factors play an important role in shaping the well-being of international students.

Research shows that:



Access to green spaces and natural environments contributes to improved mental well-being and emotional balance

Regular physical activity is associated with reduced stress levels and better psychological health

A balanced lifestyle, including adequate rest and healthy routines, supports cognitive functioning and academic performance



The quality of the living environment can influence students' **overall satisfaction** and **sense of comfort**, especially during the adaptation process.



These findings are supported by research in **environmental psychology** and **well-being studies**, which emphasise the interaction between physical surroundings and mental health.

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Key Factors Influencing Well-being

Social well-being is shaped by multiple interconnected and dynamic dimensions, particularly in the case of international students.



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Recommendations

Several key recommendations emerge for improving the well-being and academic experience of international students.



DEVELOPMENT OF MENTORING AND PEER-SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

- ✓ Connect students with mentors and peers.
- ✓ Facilitate social integration and a sense of belonging.
- ✓ Provide guidance, encouragement and emotional support.



STRENGTHENING LANGUAGE AND INTEGRATION SUPPORT

- ✓ Offer accessible language courses and resources.
- ✓ Help students overcome communication barriers.
- ✓ Promote activities that facilitate cultural adaptation and integration.



IMPROVING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- ✓ Ensure services are visible, accessible and confidential.
- ✓ Provide culturally appropriate and multilingual support.
- ✓ Promote mental health awareness and reduce stigma.



FOSTERING INCLUSIVE AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS

- ✓ Encourage respect, diversity and intercultural understanding.
- ✓ Provide training for staff and faculty.
- ✓ Create safe spaces where every student feels valued.

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Implications for Higher Education

Universities play a critical role in shaping the well-being, integration and academic success of international students.



ADOPT STUDENT-CENTERED SUPPORT STRATEGIES

- ✓ Understand diverse student needs through ongoing assessment.
- ✓ Provide personalised guidance and support.
- ✓ Empower students to take an active role in their well-being and success.



IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES

- ✓ Ensure information is clear, consistent and available in multiple channels.
- ✓ Make services easy to access, both online and on campus.
- ✓ Build trust through transparent and timely communication.



PROMOTE INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENTS

- ✓ Value diversity and encourage intercultural understanding.
- ✓ Train staff and faculty in cultural competence.
- ✓ Create a sense of belonging for every student.



SUPPORT BOTH ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC NEEDS

- ✓ Provide academic support and skill-building resources.
- ✓ Offer mental health, social and well-being services.
- ✓ Recognise that well-being impacts academic performance.

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Conclusion



The social well-being of international students is a **complex and multidimensional issue**, shaped by a wide range of psychological, social, academic and environmental factors.

While international students face significant challenges related to adaptation, integration and support, they also demonstrate a strong capacity for resilience and personal development.

Well-being is not only an individual matter, but is strongly influenced by the quality of the academic and social environment.

By providing appropriate support, improving institutional practices and fostering inclusive and supportive environments, universities can significantly enhance both students' well-being and their academic

success.

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Supporting international students means supporting not only their **academic journey**, but also their **overall well-being and successful integration**.



THANKS FOR BEING ATTENTIVE

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