



Article

Academic, Social, and Institutional Adaptation of Turkish Graduate Students in U.S. Higher Education

Ömer Cem Karacaoğlu^{1,*}

¹ Department of Educational Sciences, Aydın Adnan Menderes University, Turkey

* Correspondence: okaracaoğlu@adu.edu.tr

Abstract

This qualitative study explores the academic, social, and institutional experiences of Turkish graduate students at the University of Delaware to understand their adjustment processes within an intercultural educational context. Through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with eleven Turkish doctoral students, the study explores challenges related to academic adjustment, teaching and learning practices, social and cultural integration, institutional support systems, and professional development opportunities. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns and insights and to highlight significant differences between the Turkish and United States (US) graduate education systems. Findings indicate that Turkish students face significant challenges in adapting to the flexible, research-oriented, and student-centered structure of US programs, primarily due to the rigid, exam-focused nature of Turkish education. Cultural barriers, language proficiency gaps, and systemic challenges in daily life further complicate the adjustment process. Despite existing support mechanisms, students emphasized the need for improved mentoring programs, comprehensive orientation sessions, and culturally sensitive psychological services. The study contributes to the broader discourse on global student mobility and intercultural competence development by providing valuable insights for policy makers and higher education institutions to develop more inclusive and effective strategies for international student support.

Keywords: Turkish graduate students; international student experience; higher education; cultural adaptation; institutional support

Practitioner Notes

- International graduate students benefit from structured, long-term orientation programs that go beyond general information.
- Peer mentoring programs significantly improve social integration and academic adjustment for international students.
- Language proficiency support should include discipline-specific academic communication training.
- Institutions should prioritize culturally sensitive psychological services tailored to international student populations.
- Flexible, student-centered program structures and interactive teaching methods facilitate intercultural academic transitions.

Academic Editor: Frank Bahati
Rwiza

Received: October 29, 2025
Revised: December 01, 2025
Accepted: December 14, 2025
Published: December 26, 2025

Citation: Karacaoğlu, Ömer C. (2026). Academic, Social, and Institutional Adaptation of Turkish Graduate Students in U.S. Higher Education . *Journal of Current Social Issues Studies*, 3(1), 22–40. <https://doi.org/10.71113/JCSIS.v3i1.471>

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

With globalization, the process of internationalization in higher education has accelerated and international student mobility has become strategically important for both the development of individual students and the international prestige of institutions. According to OECD (2023) data, more than 6 million students worldwide receive higher education outside their own country. This trend is characterized by a particularly intense flow of students from developing countries to developed countries. Over the years, there has also been a steady increase in the number of students coming from Turkey to the United States (US) for graduate education.

The USA (United States of America) stands out as an attractive destination for international students with its academic opportunities in higher education, research infrastructure, globally recognized universities and postgraduate career opportunities (Altbach, 2013; Bound et al., 2021; Glass & Cruz, 2023). However, international students from different cultural, academic, and social backgrounds face multidimensional challenges in the process of integrating into the U.S. education system. This process is not limited to language barriers or academic qualifications; students' social adaptation, cultural adaptation, and access to institutional support mechanisms also bring complex dynamics (Andrade, 2006; Aw et al., 2015; Ma, 2022).

When examined specifically in the context of Turkish graduate students, there are significant differences between Turkey's more traditional and theoretically focused educational approach based on centralized exams and the flexible, applied, and student-centered academic structure of the U.S.. These differences constitute a critical area of research in terms of understanding the adaptation challenges that Turkish students face in their transition to graduate education in the U.S.. Although there are limited studies in the literature examining the international education experiences of Turkish students (Andrews & Aydin, 2024; Bektaş, 2004; Erturk & Luu, 2022; Yıldırım, 2014), it is seen that there is a need for qualitative research, especially in the context of the U.S..

In this context, the aim of the study is to deeply examine the academic, social and cultural experiences of Turkish graduate students in the USA; to reveal the difficulties they face, their adaptation processes and their perceptions of institutional support mechanisms through thematic analysis method. Within the scope of the research, program structures, teaching methods, intercultural interactions, social integration processes and professional development opportunities will be taken as the focus. In addition, suggestions developed based on the experiences of the students are among the important outputs of the study. The results of this study will shed light on the unique experiences of Turkish students in the internationalization process and will contribute to universities' development of international student policies and designing more inclusive support mechanisms.

This research aims to examine the experiences of Turkish students receiving doctoral education at the University of Delaware in the USA and to compare the education systems of Turkey and the USA. In line with this purpose, the following questions were sought.

Research Questions

1. What are the main academic and personal challenges that Turkish students face in their doctoral education in the USA?
2. What are the structural differences between graduate programs in the USA and Turkey?
3. What differences are observed between the teaching methods applied in Turkey and the USA?
4. How effective do Turkish students find the support systems (advisory, student organizations, mentoring, etc.) at the University of Delaware?
5. How does doctoral education in the USA affect the personal and professional development of Turkish students?
6. What are the experiences of Turkish students about university life and campus culture in the USA?

7. In which areas should improvements be made so that the University of Delaware can better meet the needs of international students?
8. What are the reasons why Turkish students prefer doctoral programs in the USA?

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study was designed as a qualitative research to understand the higher education experiences of Turkish graduate students in the USA. The qualitative research approach was chosen as an appropriate method to deeply examine the subjective experiences, perceptions and challenges of individuals. Data were collected through semi-structured individual interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis method.

2.2 Participants

The sample of the study consisted of eleven (n=11) Turkish graduate students who were continuing their doctoral education at the University of Delaware in the USA as of the 2024-2025 academic year. Participants were selected voluntarily from different academic disciplines and demographic profiles through maximum variation sampling. In-depth individual interviews lasting an average of one hour were conducted with each.

2.3 Data Collection

The data collection process was carried out in accordance with the semi-structured interview form and each interview was conducted one-on-one. During the interviews, students were asked questions about their academic, social and cultural adaptation experiences, the difficulties they encountered and institutional support mechanisms. All interviews were audio-recorded, then transcribed and made ready for analysis. Participants were presented with an informed consent form within the framework of confidentiality and voluntariness principles and explicit consent was obtained from all participants.

2.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the thematic analysis method developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). In the first stage, the data were read in detail, meaningful data pieces were coded, and themes and subthemes were determined in line with the codes. The themes obtained were interpreted in relation to the research questions and presented in tables in the findings section.

3. Results

The thematic analysis of Turkish graduate students' experiences at U.S. institutions, specifically the University of Delaware, reveals multifaceted challenges and perceptions across academic, social, and institutional domains. Eight primary themes emerged, each encompassing distinct yet interrelated sub-themes that collectively illustrate the complexities of international student adaptation in a cross-cultural academic environment.

Students reported significant difficulties adapting to the U.S. educational system, particularly due to differences in program intensity, structural design, and expectations regarding mathematical and analytical competencies. Language barriers, especially in academic English proficiency and terminology, further exacerbated these challenges. Moreover, discrepancies in academic practices such as thesis writing, research methodologies, and scholarly conventions highlighted the need for more comprehensive preparatory support for incoming international students. A pronounced divergence between Turkish and U.S. instructional approaches was evident. Turkish graduate education remains predominantly lecture-driven, with limited student engagement and assessment focused on final examinations. In contrast, U.S. programs emphasize

interactive learning, continuous assessment through projects and assignments, and extensive use of digital tools. The flexibility in course selection and the promotion of interdisciplinary learning in the U.S. stand in stark contrast to the rigid and exam-centric Turkish model.

Students expressed challenges in navigating the social and cultural landscape of U.S. campuses. Adjusting to campus life, forming new social networks, and overcoming cultural barriers in communication were frequently cited concerns. While international student organizations provided valuable support, underlying differences in academic hierarchy and social norms complicated the adaptation process. The contrast between the hierarchical academic culture in Turkey and the egalitarian dynamics of U.S. classrooms was particularly striking. Practical difficulties related to housing and everyday life surfaced as notable stressors. Students faced obstacles in securing accommodation due to lack of credit history and financial documentation. Transportation challenges and the absence of initial housing support from the university compounded these difficulties, underscoring systemic barriers in daily living arrangements for international students. The role of institutional support systems emerged as critical in facilitating student integration and success. U.S. universities were commended for their accessible academic advising, proactive faculty engagement, and robust student organizations. However, gaps remained in areas such as peer mentorship, targeted orientation programs, and culturally sensitive psychological support. These shortcomings highlighted opportunities for enhancing institutional responsiveness to international student needs. U.S. graduate education was perceived as instrumental in providing hands-on research and teaching assistantship opportunities, thereby fostering personal and professional growth. Internships, campus employment, and exposure to academic and industry networks were identified as key factors enabling students to align their career trajectories with global standards. Conversely, the lack of similar opportunities in Turkey limited professional development pathways. Decisions to pursue graduate studies in the U.S. were primarily influenced by the opportunity to work with specific advisors and research projects, as well as the availability of financial support through assistantships and scholarships. The geographic and living conditions of the university location also played a role. Furthermore, the perceived alignment of U.S. education with post-graduation employment prospects was a significant motivator. Students proposed actionable recommendations to enhance the international student experience. These included establishing structured mentorship programs for newcomers, providing university-sponsored housing for initial semesters, and organizing culturally integrative social events. Additionally, students emphasized the need for academic bridging programs and specialized career counseling tailored to international students' unique challenges.

The data obtained as a result of the qualitative analysis of each theme that emerged from the thematic analysis of Turkish graduate students' experiences at the University of Delaware is presented in the tables below. Table 1 summarizes the structural differences of graduate education programs in Turkey and the US in terms of program design, degree pathways and admission processes.

Table 1. Structural Orientation of Graduate Education

Sub-theme	Turkey	U.S.	Key Insight
Program Structure	Graduate programs are predominantly theory-oriented, offering a limited number of elective courses.	Graduate programs are project- and research-based, providing a wide selection of elective courses.	While Turkey follows a theoretical and exam-driven approach, the U.S. emphasizes practical and flexible program design.
Program Structure	Opportunities to take courses outside the primary department are highly restricted, with minimal interdisciplinary flexibility.	Cross-departmental course enrollment and interdisciplinary collaboration are common, fostering a flexible academic environment.	Interdisciplinary learning is supported in the U.S., whereas Turkey offers limited options beyond departmental boundaries.
Degree	Graduate admissions primarily rely	Admission processes include personal	Turkey prioritizes standardized test

Sub-theme	Turkey	U.S.	Key Insight
Pathways	on centralized exams (such as ALES, YDS) to assess student qualifications.	evaluations like research proposals, statements of purpose, and recommendation letters.	scores in admissions, while the U.S. places greater emphasis on individual academic potential.
Degree Pathways	Graduate education in Turkey is predominantly exam-focused, with limited opportunities for project-based or applied learning.	Doctoral students are expected to develop grant proposals, manage research projects, and enhance practical skills.	The U.S. promotes project- and research-driven development, contrasting with Turkey's exam-centered progression model.
Admission Processes	Assistantship and scholarship opportunities are limited; admissions largely depend on official test scores and academic performance.	Assistantships are widely available, integrating students into university operations while providing financial support.	The U.S. offers more accessible assistantship and scholarship opportunities, facilitating academic and financial integration.
Admission Processes	Advisor assignments typically occur at later stages, with no standard practice of early advisor-student matching.	Applicants are expected to initiate direct contact with prospective advisors and are admitted based on project alignment.	Early advisor-student matching during the application process enhances research compatibility in the U.S., whereas in Turkey this happens at a later stage.

Table 1 examines the structural differences between graduate programs in Turkey and the USA. The findings reveal the fundamental differences between the approaches of the two countries in terms of program design, degree paths, and admission processes. It is seen that graduate programs in Turkey are predominantly based on theoretical foundations and that elective course options are quite limited. Programs generally proceed in a monotonous, interdisciplinary structure and do not allow for flexible orientations according to students' interests. In contrast, programs in the USA are research and project-oriented. Wide pools of elective courses and interdisciplinary study opportunities offer students a more flexible and applied learning process. This structure allows students to develop multidimensional perspectives by gaining knowledge from different fields. Admission and progression processes in graduate education in Turkey are largely based on central exams (such as ALES, YDS). While students' academic success is measured during the application process, individual potential and project production capacity remain in the background. In the USA, qualitative elements such as research proposals, letters of intent, and references are more decisive in applications. This approach emphasizes students' research competencies and personal academic vision. In Turkey, assistantship and scholarship opportunities are limited, and candidates' success criteria are mostly based on official exam scores. In the US, assistantship positions are widely offered, students are actively included in the university system, and financial support is provided during this process. In addition, in the US, direct contact is made with advisors during the application phase and the admission processes are shaped in line with project compatibility. In Turkey, the appointment of advisors is usually left to the stages after admission.

These findings show that Turkey has a more centralized, exam-oriented, and structured approach to graduate education, while the US adopts a system that is practice-based, flexible, and focused on individual potential. While programs in the US offer students broader opportunities in both academic and professional development, a more restrictive and traditional approach is prominent in Turkey.

Table 2 reflects the main pedagogical differences between teaching methods, student engagement, assessment practices and classroom culture in Turkish and US graduate education.

Table 2. Teaching and Learning Practices in Turkish and U.S. Graduate Education

Sub-theme	Turkey	U.S.	Key Insight
Course Delivery	Courses are predominantly lecture-based, with limited student participation and interaction.	Interactive presentations, case studies, and student-led presentations are commonly used in classes.	While Turkish courses are instructor-centered, U.S. classes emphasize active learning methods that encourage student engagement.
Student Participation	Students often remain passive listeners and tend to be hesitant in asking questions.	Students actively participate in discussions, with a focus on critical thinking and open dialogue.	Classroom discussion and critical thinking are well-established in the U.S., whereas Turkish students may exhibit more reluctance to engage.
Assessment Practices	Academic success is primarily measured through final exams, with few assignments or projects.	Continuous assessment is standard, incorporating assignments, projects, presentations, and class participation.	Turkey relies on exam-based evaluations, while the U.S. adopts a process-oriented and multidimensional assessment approach.
Classroom Culture	Academic hierarchy is prominent, making students reluctant to challenge or question instructors.	Students are encouraged to engage in equal-level discussions with faculty and freely express their opinions.	The U.S. fosters a horizontal and democratic classroom culture, while Turkey emphasizes respect for authority and hierarchy.

Table 2 analyzes the prominent differences in terms of teaching methods, student participation, assessment practices and classroom culture in graduate education processes in Turkey and the USA. The findings show that there are significant structural and pedagogical differences between the educational practices of the two countries. In graduate courses in Turkey, a faculty-centered teaching model prevails. Courses are generally conducted with a focus on the instructor, and students' active participation in the course is limited. In contrast, interactive presentations, case studies and student presentations are important in courses in the USA, and students play an active role in the production of course content. This shows that the teaching approach in the USA is participatory and student-centered, while in Turkey, a traditional structure based on transfer continues. In Turkey, students are generally passive listeners in the classroom. There is a reluctance to ask questions and participate in discussions. In the USA, a culture of critical thinking and discussion is systematically encouraged, and students are expected to express their opinions and produce ideas. This difference is shaped not only by pedagogical but also cultural norms.

In Turkey, student success is mainly measured by end-of-term exams, and process-oriented assessment tools such as projects and homework are secondary. In the USA, a continuous assessment model is applied, and students' performance is evaluated multidimensionally with homework, projects, presentations and in-class contributions. This difference reveals the paradigmatic difference between the USA's approach to learning that is based on continuous development and Turkey's approach that is focused on results and exams. Academic hierarchy is quite strong in Turkey. Students are reluctant to directly criticize faculty members or exchange ideas. In the USA, on the other hand, equal communication with faculty members and open expression of opinion are encouraged. This situation shows that the democratic communication environment in the classroom is more developed in the USA, while in Turkey it is based on respect and distance from authority.

These findings reveal that Turkey continues its traditional, authority-based and exam-oriented teaching practices, while the USA adopts an educational approach that is student-centered, process-oriented and supports critical thinking. These structural differences explain the difficulties experienced by Turkish students in the process of adapting to the US education system.

Table 3 shows how Turkish students perceive multiculturalism and experience intercultural communication in US graduate classes.

Table 3. Multicultural Experiences and Global Perspectives in U.S. Graduate Education

Sub-theme	Turkey	U.S.	Key Insight
Perception of Multiculturalism in Classrooms	Classrooms in Turkey are culturally homogenous, with a low proportion of international students.	U.S. classrooms typically feature a multinational student body, representing diverse cultures naturally.	Multicultural interaction is an inherent part of daily education in the U.S., whereas diversity in Turkish classrooms remains limited.
Intercultural Communication Experience	Opportunities for in-class interaction with students from different cultural backgrounds are limited in Turkey.	Group projects and classroom discussions in the U.S. foster collaboration with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds.	Intercultural communication is actively practiced in U.S. education, while such experiences tend to remain superficial in Turkey.
Global Perspective	The global outlook in Turkey is usually confined to course materials and the instructor's vision.	Global perspectives are expanded through international case studies, examples, and student presentations.	In the U.S., global topics are enriched by student contributions and practical applications, whereas in Turkey they remain largely theoretical.
Acceptance and Respect for Diversity	In Turkey, respect for diversity varies based on social norms and is less institutionalized.	In the U.S., diversity and inclusion are actively promoted through university policies and classroom culture.	Institutional-level diversity and inclusion are prioritized in the U.S., while in Turkey such efforts are more dependent on individual initiatives.

Table 3 compares the experiences of graduate students from Turkey in multicultural classrooms in the USA, their perceptions of intercultural communication, global perspective and approach to diversity. Classroom environments in Turkey are generally culturally homogeneous. The proportion of international students is low and multiculturalism remains at a theoretical level in course content. In contrast, in US classrooms, a multinational student profile is naturally represented and cultural diversity becomes an organic part of daily education. This difference has a direct impact on the development of students' worldview and intercultural awareness.

In Turkey, opportunities for in-class interaction with students from different cultures are quite limited. In the USA, on the other hand, students have the opportunity to constantly communicate with individuals from different cultural backgrounds through group projects, discussion environments and in-class collaborations. These practical interactions develop students' intercultural communication skills and enable them to gain global collaboration practice. In Turkey, awareness of global issues is generally limited to course materials and the individual vision of the faculty member. In the USA, the global perspective is enriched in a multidimensional way with applications such as international examples, case studies and student presentations. Thus, students are encouraged to establish global connections not only on a theoretical but also practical level. In Turkey, the approach to differences is largely shaped by social norms, and diversity policies are rarely implemented at the institutional level. On the other hand, US universities actively encourage respect for diversity and inclusivity through institutional policies and classroom culture. This systematic approach allows students to develop perspectives that are more sensitive and inclusive to differences.

These findings show that graduate education in Turkey is shaped within the framework of cultural homogeneity, theoretical multiculturalism and limited intercultural interaction. On the other hand, the USA offers multicultural environments integrated into daily academic practices, active communication and opportunities to develop a global perspective. This difference is one of the main reasons for the transformational experiences Turkish students have while adapting to academic and social life in the USA.

Table 4 comprehensively summarizes the main academic and personal challenges Turkish students face during the transition to graduate study in the US.

Table 4. Academic and Personal Challenges in Transition to U.S. Graduate Education

Sub-theme	Turkey (Initial State)	U.S.(Transition Challenges)	Key Insight
Academic Adjustment	Turkish education emphasizes theoretical knowledge and exam performance, with limited exposure to project-based or applied learning.	U.S. graduate programs prioritize research, project management, and applied analytical skills, posing challenges for students in these areas.	Turkish students possess strong theoretical foundations but face difficulties adapting to the application- and project-oriented academic expectations in the U.S.
Language and Academic English	English education in Turkey is exam-focused, with limited practice in academic writing and speaking.	Language barriers significantly hinder academic presentations, paper writing, and classroom discussions during the initial period.	Although students meet formal language requirements, they experience substantial adaptation challenges in academic and everyday communication.
Social Integration	Social environments in Turkey are culturally homogenous, fostering a strong sense of community.	In the U.S., social relationships are more individualistic, leading Turkish students to experience feelings of isolation and challenges in social integration.	Turkish students need to invest more effort in building new social networks in the U.S., making the adjustment process more demanding.
Cultural Differences	Respect for hierarchy and authority is deeply embedded in academic and social interactions in Turkey.	Student-faculty relationships in the U.S. are more egalitarian and democratic, which can initially feel unfamiliar.	Cultural differences can delay Turkish students' adaptation to academic and social communication styles in the U.S. context.
Housing and Daily Life	Turkish students typically rely on dormitories or family support for housing.	In the U.S., practical challenges such as credit scores, rental processes, and transportation present significant obstacles.	Systemic differences in managing everyday life pose major adaptation barriers for Turkish students in the U.S.

Table 4 evaluates the main academic and personal challenges that Turkish graduate students face during the transition from Turkey to the US higher education system. The findings reveal a wide range of challenges experienced by students, from academic adjustment to social integration, from language proficiency to daily life practices. The education system in Turkey is theory and exam-oriented, and project and application-based learning opportunities are quite limited. Therefore, Turkish students initially have difficulty adapting to the environment in the US, which requires research, project management and applied analysis skills. This situation shows that students need to be supported in the transition from passive learning to active production. Turkish students' English proficiency is generally based on written test success, which results from the exam-oriented education system. However, in the US, the effective use of academic language in academic writing, presentation and classroom discussion processes stands out as an important skill. In this context, students experience serious adaptation problems in their early years due to language barriers.

While the homogeneous social environment structure in Turkey allows students to easily find a place in a sense of community, in the US, more individual and independent social relationship styles are at the forefront. For Turkish students, establishing new social networks and adapting to different cultural norms requires time and effort. Loneliness and feelings of exclusion are frequently expressed as difficulties during this process. While hierarchy and respect for authority are clearly felt in academic relations in Turkey, egalitarian and democratic student-faculty relations are common in the US. This cultural difference makes it difficult for Turkish students to adapt in terms of communication styles and academic interaction styles. Initially, they experience alienation and shyness. While students in Turkey generally rely on family support or state dormitories for accommodation, in the US, daily life practices such as credit scores, lease contracts and transportation impose individual responsibilities on students. These systemic differences make it difficult for Turkish students to adapt to daily life as well as the social integration process.

These findings show that Turkish students experience multidimensional difficulties in academic, linguistic, social and cultural areas during their transition to the US. Paradigm differences in educational approaches and structural differences in daily life practices are the main obstacles that students face during the adaptation process. The need for special support mechanisms during this transition process is clearly evident.

Table 5 compares the impact of institutional support systems (advising, student organizations, psychological support) on international student integration in Turkish and US universities.

Table 5. Institutional Support Systems Facilitating International Student Integration and Success

Sub-theme	Turkey	U.S.	Key Insight
Academic Advising and Mentorship	Advisors in Turkey generally maintain hierarchical relationships, making students hesitant to approach them directly.	In the U.S., advisor-student relationships are more egalitarian, with regular one-on-one meetings and open communication.	The U.S. advising process provides proactive guidance, whereas Turkish students struggle to take initiative due to hierarchical norms.
Faculty Accessibility	Faculty members in Turkey are typically approached through formal channels, with direct communication being rare.	U.S. faculty maintain office hours, adopt open-door policies, and respond promptly to emails.	The accessibility of academic staff in the U.S. enhances student motivation and success, while formal procedures in Turkey slow down this interaction.
International Student Organizations	Student clubs and support groups specifically for international students are limited in Turkey.	The U.S. hosts numerous international student associations, cultural events, and integration-focused programs.	Institutional support structures facilitating social integration are more active in the U.S., whereas they remain limited in Turkey.
Mentorship and Peer Matching Programs	Mentorship practices are uncommon in Turkey, leaving new students with limited support mechanisms.	Peer mentorship programs pairing new international students with senior students are widely implemented in the U.S.	Student-centered mentorship systems in the U.S. significantly accelerate the adaptation process of international students.
Psychological and Social Support Services	Although psychological counseling services exist in Turkish universities, access is limited and demand may be low.	U.S. universities offer comprehensive psychological support, counseling, and wellness services specifically tailored for international students.	In the U.S., psychological and social support are integral to university policies, whereas in Turkey, such services are reactive and limited.

Table 5 examines the effectiveness of institutional support systems encountered by Turkish graduate students in the US, particularly at the University of Delaware. Differences between Turkey and the US in areas such as advising, faculty accessibility, student organizations, mentoring programs, and psychological support services are commented on. In Turkey, academic advisors are generally positioned in a hierarchical relationship, and students are reluctant to reach out to advisors directly. In the US, advisor-student relationships have a more horizontal and accessible structure. Students' academic development is actively supported through regular one-on-one meetings, open communication channels, and a guiding approach. This shows that students are removed from a passive position and placed at the center of the process during the advising process.

While formal and indirect channels are used to reach faculty members in Turkey, faculty members in the US are more easily accessible to students through office hours, an open-door policy, and rapid e-mail responses. This difference directly affects students' academic motivation and sense of belonging to the university. Support groups and student clubs for international students in Turkey are limited in number and generally inactive. In the US, special associations, cultural events and organizations that promote social integration for international students are widely active. Such structures facilitate the social integration of students and support

multicultural interaction. In Turkey, mentoring systems are not institutionalized and are based on individual initiatives. In contrast, peer-mentorship programs are systematically implemented for new international students in the US. These mechanisms accelerate both the academic and social adaptation processes of students. Although there are psychological counseling services at universities in Turkey, access to these services is limited and the content of cultural sensitivity is weak. In the US, comprehensive services such as psychological support, welfare services and stress management workshops specially designed for international students are provided. These supports play an important role in students' academic success and psychological well-being.

These findings show that the institutional structures supporting the academic and social integration of international students in the US higher education system are strong and accessible. In Turkey, such support mechanisms are more limited and based on individual efforts and initiatives. Therefore, student-focused support systems implemented in the USA make the adaptation process of Turkish students more efficient and sustainable.

Table 6 reveals how campus culture and social infrastructure shape Turkish students' educational and intercultural experiences.

Table 6. Role of Campus Culture and Social Infrastructure in Shaping Turkish Students' Experiences

Sub-theme	Turkey	U.S.	Key Insight
Campus Culture	Campus life in Turkey primarily caters to local students, with limited cultural events and an academic-centric focus.	U.S. campuses host numerous international student organizations, cultural festivals, and diversity-promoting social activities.	U.S. campus culture fosters social integration and intercultural interaction, while Turkish campuses remain more homogenous and locally focused.
Social Interaction Spaces	Social spaces such as cafeterias and student centers in Turkey offer limited opportunities for interaction, with low student organization activity.	U.S. universities provide vibrant social hubs, collaborative workspaces, and active student clubs that encourage interaction.	Physical and social spaces in U.S. institutions play a significant role in facilitating the integration of international students, unlike the more restricted environment in Turkey.
Cultural Integration Activities	Cultural integration activities in Turkey are limited and generally not institutionalized, relying on student initiatives.	U.S. universities organize structured programs like orientation weeks, cultural exchange events, and international student celebrations.	Structured cultural integration programs in U.S. campuses actively support intercultural awareness and smooth adaptation, unlike the sporadic and informal efforts in Turkey

Table 6 evaluates the interactions of Turkish graduate students with the campus culture and social infrastructure in the USA, and analyzes how these elements shape students' educational and intercultural experiences. The main differences between Turkey and the USA are addressed holistically in terms of campus life, social interaction areas, cultural integration activities, and student relations. In Turkey, campus life focuses on local students, and cultural activities are limited and confined to academic activities. On the other hand, campuses in the USA host multinational student communities, and actively encourage multicultural interaction with cultural festivals, diversity-themed events, and social activities. This difference clearly demonstrates the contribution of US campus culture to students' social cohesion and development of intercultural awareness. Social interaction areas in Turkey (e.g. student centers, cafeterias) are limited in terms of interaction opportunities, and the activity of student communities is low. In contrast, in US universities, interaction between students is intensively supported through social centers, co-working spaces, and active student clubs. These physical and social environments facilitate the integration of students both to the campus and to each other.

There are significant differences, especially in terms of cultural integration activities. In Turkey, programs targeting cultural integration are limited and generally based on individual

initiatives. However, in US universities, cultural integration processes are supported at the institutional level with structured and systematic activities such as orientation weeks, cultural exchange events, and international student festivals. These practices enable international students to adapt to different cultures more quickly. In Turkey, international students mostly interact among themselves, and integration with local students is weak. In the US, on the other hand, active and continuous interaction is provided between students from different cultures through group projects, social events, and extracurricular activities. This environment allows students to develop their intercultural communication skills and accelerate their social adaptation processes.

In conclusion, the findings reveal that the campus culture and social infrastructure of US universities have a structure that supports multiculturalism, is inclusive, and open to interaction. In Turkey, these areas are more limited, locally focused, and passive. The physical and social environments in the US play an effective facilitating role in the cultural and academic adaptation processes of international students.

Table 7 summarizes the effects of US graduate education on Turkish students' personal development, identity negotiation and professional career prospects.

Table 7. Impact of U.S. Graduate Education on Turkish Students’ Personal and Professional Development

Sub-theme	Turkey	U.S.	Key Insight
Intercultural Competence	International interactions in Turkey are limited, and intercultural awareness generally develops at a theoretical level.	Continuous interaction with diverse cultures in the U.S. enhances students' cultural flexibility, empathy, and ability to adopt multiple perspectives.	In the U.S., intercultural competence develops naturally through daily life and academic practices, whereas in Turkey, this process remains constrained.
Identity Negotiation	Personal identity in Turkey forms within a more homogenous cultural context, with fewer encounters of diverse identities.	In the U.S., students frequently engage with different cultural, academic, and social identities, prompting self-reflection and redefinition.	The multicultural environment in the U.S. fosters increased identity awareness among Turkish students, encouraging continuous identity negotiation.
Personal Development	In Turkey, students primarily focus on academic achievement, with limited emphasis on developing self-confidence and independence.	U.S. education emphasizes individual responsibility, time management, and problem-solving skills.	U.S. graduate education significantly contributes to students’ personal growth, fostering maturity, confidence, and independence.
Professional Development and Career Expectations	Post-graduation employment opportunities in Turkey are more uncertain and heavily reliant on exam-based processes.	In the U.S., research opportunities, internships, and professional networks enable students to formulate clearer career plans after graduation.	U.S. education directly supports professional development through practical experiences and career-oriented opportunities, offering clearer pathways for future employment.

Table 7 analyzes the effects of Turkish graduate students’ educational experiences in the US on their personal and professional development. Differences between Turkey and the US are evaluated within the framework of intercultural competence, identity negotiation, personal development, and career expectations. Since international interaction is limited in Turkey, students’ intercultural awareness generally develops at a theoretical level. In the US, on the other hand, since students are in constant interaction with different cultures, they have the opportunity to develop cultural flexibility, empathy, and multiple perspectives. This process strengthens students’ communication and cooperation skills in a global context and enables them to internalize their intercultural competence through daily life practices. While individual identity in Turkey is shaped more within a homogeneous cultural structure, opportunities to confront different identities are limited. The multicultural environment in the US paves the way for

students to question, redefine, and reconcile their own identities with different perspectives. This process increases students' awareness of both individual and cultural identities and develops their self-awareness and adaptation capacity.

While students in Turkey go through an educational process focused mainly on academic success, the development of personal self-confidence and independence may remain in the background. The US education system, on the other hand, is geared towards developing students' individual responsibility, time management and independent problem-solving skills. In this context, students gain significant gains in terms of personal maturation, self-confidence and standing on their own two feet. In Turkey, post-graduation career opportunities are more uncertain and generally dependent on exam-focused processes. In the US, students can create more concrete and planned career goals after graduation thanks to research projects, internship opportunities and sectoral networks. Practical experiences and professional connections contribute to students becoming more competitive in the global job market.

These findings show that US graduate education has significant effects on Turkish students in terms of both personal development (self-confidence, identity awareness, independence) and professional development (practical experience, networking, career planning). These opportunities, which are more limited in Turkey, are systematically offered to students in the US and contribute to their development as well-equipped individuals on a global scale.

Table 8 summarizes how Turkish students evaluate the existing support mechanisms at US universities and their suggestions for improving these structures.

Table 8. Recommendations for Improving Institutional Support for International Students

Sub-theme	Current Observations	Student Recommendations	Key Insight
Orientation and Integration Programs	Orientation sessions for international students are typically brief and limited to general information, lacking focus on in-depth cultural and academic adaptation.	Long-term integration programs, intercultural workshops, and academic preparation courses tailored for international students should be offered.	Comprehensive and continuous orientation programs would significantly enhance students' adaptation and overall academic experience.
Mentorship and Advising Systems	There is no systematic mentorship program for new students; support relies largely on individual initiatives.	Structured peer-mentorship programs pairing new students with upper-year mentors, individual advising sessions, and peer-support groups should be established.	Well-designed mentorship mechanisms can accelerate international students' social and academic adjustment processes.
Social and Cultural Activities	Social events are not specifically designed for international students' needs and remain limited to general campus activities.	Events highlighting cultural diversity, language exchange groups, and international student festivals should be organized.	Targeted cultural and social activities foster a stronger sense of belonging among international students on campus.
Career and Professional Support	Career services for international students in areas such as internships and job placement are limited.	Specialized career advising services addressing work authorization, industry networking, and career planning for international students should be provided.	Tailored career support enhances international students' post-graduation success and integration into professional environment

Table 8 analyzes the observations of Turkish graduate students regarding the current institutional support structures at US universities (especially the University of Delaware) and their suggestions for improving these structures. The findings indicate the need for improvement in areas such as orientation, mentoring, social activities, career counseling, and psychological support services. Students state that current orientation programs are generally superficial and informative, and are insufficient in terms of in-depth cultural and academic adaptation. For this reason, long-term orientation programs, intercultural workshops, and academic preparation courses specific to international students are requested. Such programs, which will provide

detailed and continuous support, will significantly facilitate the integration of students into university life. Currently, there is no systematic mentoring program for newly arrived international students, and this process is left to individual initiatives. Students recommend mentoring systems paired with upper-classmen, individual counseling sessions, and the establishment of peer-support groups. The development of these structures will contribute to students' faster adaptation both academically and socially.

It is stated that social activities are not planned sufficiently according to the special needs of international students and are generally limited to general campus activities. Students suggest that events emphasizing cultural diversity, language exchange groups and international student festivals should be organized. Such targeted events will support students in developing a sense of belonging in campus life. It is stated that special career counseling services are limited for international students in the internship and job search processes. Students demand specialized counseling services on work permits, sectoral networking and career planning. The development of such services will make it easier for students to achieve their job and career goals after graduation. Although existing psychological counseling services are accessible, the lack of special programs that take cultural sensitivity into account is expressed. Students suggest that psychological support services and stress management workshops designed with cultural awareness should be developed. The activation of these services will directly positively affect students' psychological well-being and academic performance.

These findings indicate that despite the existing support structures provided by US universities, international students need more targeted and systematic support programs according to their special needs. The suggestions made by the students indicate that institutions should develop more inclusive, interculturally sensitive and student-centered services.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study provide critical insights into the academic, social, and institutional experiences of Turkish graduate students at U.S. universities, with a particular focus on the University of Delaware. The results not only confirm existing literature on international student adjustment challenges but also shed light on unique contextual factors resulting from the intersection of Turkish and American educational cultures.

One of the most salient themes that emerged from the analysis is the striking contrast between the exam-centric nature of Turkish graduate education and the flexible, project-based approach common at US institutions. The emphasis on standardized tests (e.g., ALES, YDS) in Turkey reflects a more bureaucratic and homogeneous system (Akkan & Kara, 2024), while admissions processes in the US prioritize individual academic potential and research orientation (Goghari, 2022). This difference supports previous studies that emphasize the limitations of exam-focused educational systems in promoting critical thinking and practical competencies (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Ghaleb, 2024). For Turkish students, the transition to a self-directed, research-intensive environment requires significant pedagogical and cognitive adjustment.

Differences in teaching methodologies and classroom culture further exacerbate this difficulty of adaptation. Turkish students, accustomed to instructor-centered lectures and hierarchical academic relationships, often struggle with the participatory and discussion-oriented US classroom model. This is consistent with Hofstede's (1980) theory of cultural dimensions, where power distance remains high in Turkish academia and contrasts with the egalitarian ethos of American educational institutions. In this context, the concept of "power distance" in Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory is quite illustrative in understanding the difficulties Turkish students experience in adapting to classroom communication and academic interaction in the United States. The high power distance culture in Turkey leads students to behave distantly and timidly in their relationships with authority figures (e.g., advisors, faculty members). This situation, in transitioning to the horizontal and democratic classroom structure in the United States, causes students to avoid directly expressing their opinions and to hesitate to actively

participate in critical discussions. Students, especially in the early stages, expressed reluctance to ask questions or express opinions to faculty members. This, in turn, reduces classroom participation and makes it difficult for students to engage in active learning processes. Furthermore, when evaluated within the framework of Deardorff's (2006) intercultural competence model, Turkish students' adaptation process involves the development of not only cognitive but also behavioral and attitudinal competencies. Students' narratives indicate that their empathy has increased over time and that they have become more flexible and open to different cultures. This development directly corresponds to the levels of "intercultural attitude" (e.g., respect, curiosity, openness) and "behavioral competence" (e.g., culturally appropriate communication) identified in Deardorff's model. Group projects, intercultural social activities, and classroom interactions, in particular, have been the primary venues for students to experientially develop these competencies. However, when these processes are not supported by structured support mechanisms within universities, they are limited to students' individual efforts, and competence development can be delayed.

Similarly, R'boul (2021) argues that Westerners are more likely to have Western perceptions and communications, and this manifests itself in sub-representations of non-Western communities. Intercultural communication can provide an environment for reconciliation between Western ontologies and non-Western ones, and in fact, education appears to be one of the most effective means of this intercultural communication. Interest in intercultural competence has increased greatly in recent years, and institutions are seeking ways to develop globally ready students through study abroad, service learning, integrated curricula, or extracurricular activities (Deardorff, 2023). Active learning strategies, continuous assessments, and collaborative projects in U.S. graduate programs therefore require a shift from passive reception to active participation; this shift is not only academic but also deeply cultural. Participants' experiences influencing cultural and academic transitions varied significantly depending on the academic disciplines they studied. Students studying STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) stated that they adapted more quickly to technical course content, but they also expressed difficulty with teamwork in laboratory settings and language proficiency in oral presentations. Students in social sciences and humanities, on the other hand, experienced difficulties with course structures requiring more academic writing, critical discussion, and verbal participation, and reported a more intensive adaptation process, particularly regarding academic English. Furthermore, some participants' previous experience abroad provided an advantage in terms of social integration and adaptation to campus life. Students who had previously been abroad reported greater flexibility in interacting with different cultures and coping with feelings of loneliness more easily. Age and background differences also influenced the adaptation process; younger students integrated into campus life more quickly, while older participants reported being more determined to focus on academic success but more reserved in social interactions. However, due to the limited number of participants in the study, these findings are considered preliminary, and no generalizations can be made. However, these preliminary analyses may pave the way for future studies that examine interdisciplinary and demographic variables in more detail.

The findings also reveal critical challenges in social integration and intercultural communication. Turkish students' limited exposure to multicultural environments in their home institutions initially causes discomfort in the diverse, globally focused classrooms of U.S. universities. However, intensive exposure to multicultural interactions in the U.S. serves as a catalyst for developing intercultural competence, reflecting Deardorff's (2006) assertion that experiential learning is key to intercultural development. However, without structured support, this adjustment process remains fraught with emotional and social barriers. Students' experiences of language proficiency are not limited to General English skills but also show significant differences in their use of discipline-specific academic English. Students in STEM fields, in particular, reported greater success in laboratory reports, use of technical terminology, and visual-analytical presentations. However, these students struggled with fluency and conceptual

expression in oral presentations and classroom discussions. On the other hand, students in social sciences and humanities faced intense linguistic demands in areas such as critical reading, theory-based argumentation, and academic paper writing. This situation highlights the need to develop field-specific academic communication skills that cannot be measured solely by performance on standardized exams such as the TOEFL or IELTS. Participants stated that they struggled to actively use academic English in both written and oral production processes, yet these competencies improved over time. However, this development was often achieved through individual effort and experience. It was stated that universities should establish structures such as discipline-specific writing workshops, glossaries of field terminology, and academic speaking practice groups to support this process. These findings reveal that the general language support services offered by universities in a “same for everyone” format are inadequate and that more targeted, need-specific language support programs need to be developed.

While U.S. universities offer more accessible academic advising and student organizations than their Turkish counterparts, gaps persist in areas such as mentoring, personalized orientation, and culturally sensitive psychological services. This reflects Glass et al.’s (2015) findings that institutional support systems often fail to meet the nuanced needs of international students beyond superficial services. Turkish students’ recommendations for improved mentoring and integration programs highlight the need for targeted interventions that go beyond general international office services.

Beyond the academic realm, Turkish students face significant challenges in the U.S. related to housing, financial systems, and daily practices. Unlike Turkey, where family support or public dormitories are common, U.S. systems require independent navigation of credit scores, leases, and transportation. These systemic barriers, while logistical, profoundly impact students’ overall adaptation and mental well-being, supporting previous research on the importance of institutional assistance in the nonacademic aspects of international student life (Andrade, 2006; Bastedo et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2021).

On a positive note, US graduate education significantly enhances the professional development of Turkish students through research opportunities, internships, and extensive academic-industry networks. These findings align with studies by Knight & de Wit (2018) that emphasize the role of global higher education in equipping students with skills relevant to international labor market demands. The contrast with Turkey’s exam-centric, less industry-integrated graduate education highlights a critical gap in career preparation. However, it should not be forgotten that conducting employment through personal relationships, as in Turkey, will harm merit and may serve to increase favoritism and nepotism (Bayar & Koca, 2023). Many studies have shown that favoritism and nepotism lead to negative aspects such as low employee satisfaction, turnover and a toxic work culture in all companies (Kaushal et al., 2021; Mishra, 2021; Shah et al., 2025).

Students’ recommendations reflect a strong desire for structured, culturally sensitive, and practically supportive programs. Calls for comprehensive orientation, peer mentoring, personalized career counseling, and culturally aware psychological services emphasize the need for a holistic approach to international student support. These recommendations align with best practices in the international education literature, which advocates for multilayered, integrative support systems (Calder & Ho, 2024; Leask & Charles, 2023; Patel et al., 2024; Sakız & Jencius, 2024).

This study contributes to the existing body of research by providing an in-depth examination of the unique challenges and adjustment processes of Turkish students in U.S. graduate education. The findings highlight the need for contextualized support mechanisms that address not only the academic but also the social, cultural, and practical dimensions of international student life. For policymakers and university administrators, these insights highlight actionable areas to increase the inclusiveness and effectiveness of international student services.

5. Conclusions

This study has revealed important findings by examining the higher education experiences of Turkish graduate students in the USA from a multidimensional perspective, especially in the context of the University of Delaware. The research results show the existence of interconnected but differentiated challenges and opportunities at academic, social, cultural and institutional levels. The eight main themes obtained provide a holistic picture of the unique experiences of Turkish students in the adaptation process to the US higher education system. First of all, it was determined that the rigid, exam-oriented structure of graduate education in Turkey contradicts the flexible, applied and student-centered educational approaches in the USA. This structural difference causes students to experience serious adaptation difficulties in areas such as critical thinking, research-based work and active participation. In addition, problems experienced in language proficiency, cultural differences and social integration processes directly affect students' academic performance and psychosocial well-being. Although the institutional support mechanisms provided in US universities seem to be more systematic and accessible compared to Turkey, there are important gaps that need to be developed, especially in the areas of mentoring, cultural integration and psychological support for international students. The suggestions expressed by the students; There is an urgent need for practices such as more structured orientation programs, peer guidance systems, social activities that encourage intercultural interaction, and career-focused counseling services. The study also shows that multicultural campus environments and practical professional development opportunities in the US lead to positive transformations in areas such as personal self-confidence, intercultural competence, and career planning for Turkish students. In contrast, traditional and limited structures in Turkey limit students' opportunities to develop such skills.

In conclusion, the challenges that Turkish graduate students face in US higher education are directly related not only to individual competencies but also to structural and institutional differences between the educational cultures of the two countries. In this context, both Turkish and US higher education institutions should develop multidimensional and comprehensive support systems suitable for international student mobility and adopt holistic strategies that simultaneously support academic, social, and cultural integration. This study provides a contextual contribution to the literature on understanding the experiences of international students and points to concrete areas of development for policy makers and university administrators. These findings from the perspective of Turkish students will guide the sustainable and qualified management of internationalization processes.

However, it should be noted that this research has several limitations. The study sample consisted solely of 11 Turkish doctoral students at the University of Delaware. This limits the direct generalizability of the findings to different types of American universities (e.g., public/private; research-intensive/undergraduate institutions) or to Turkish students at different academic levels (master's/doctoral). Furthermore, the voluntary nature of participation may have increased the representation of students with more intense positive or negative experiences in the sample. This potential selection bias may have affected the homogeneity and representativeness of the data. Therefore, future studies with larger, multidisciplinary, and multi-institutional samples are expected to provide more generalizable and holistic results regarding the adaptation processes of Turkish students to the US higher education system.

The findings of this study show that the multidimensional challenges that Turkish graduate students face in their adaptation process to the US higher education system cannot be overcome solely through individual efforts and that comprehensive, holistic support mechanisms are needed. In this context, higher education institutions and policy makers need to develop strategies that simultaneously support the academic, cultural and social integration of international students. First of all, it is important to design long-term, phased and multidimensional orientation programs for international students. These programs should not be limited to academic information only, but also be enriched with content on intercultural awareness, academic writing, research skills

and daily life practices. In addition, it is recommended that structured peer mentoring systems that will facilitate the social and academic adaptation processes of new students and practices that encourage horizontal, accessible and continuous communication in student-advisor relationships be widespread. In order to increase the active participation of international students in campus life, regular and systematic organization of cultural exchange activities, language exchange groups and social organizations that support multiculturalism will contribute to the strengthening of the sense of belonging. In addition, it is of great importance to develop career counseling services specific to international students and to guide students in the processes of internships, work permits, job searches and sectoral networking. Restructuring psychological counseling and welfare services in a way that is culturally sensitive and suitable for the unique needs of international students is seen as critical for students' psychosocial well-being and academic success. On the other hand, higher education institutions in Turkey need to make their programs more flexible and qualified by adopting applied, interdisciplinary and student-centered educational approaches that are common in the USA. The widespread use of project-based course content, sector collaborations and process-oriented evaluation methods will contribute to Turkey gaining a stronger position in global higher education competition. All these recommendations provide a critical roadmap for developing an inclusive and sustainable approach that focuses on student experiences in internationalization processes.

Funding: Not applicable.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: There is no new data associated with this article.

Acknowledgments: This international student research was ethically approved by the University of Delaware Institutional Review Board (IRB) under Exemption Category #2(i) on March 20, 2025, and was conducted with Exempt Status (IRBNet Reference Number: 2297126-1). Exempt Status indicates that the study involves minimal risk to participants and is exempt from federal policy requirements for the protection of human subjects. Despite this exemption, all phases of the research were conducted with strict adherence to the principles of voluntariness, confidentiality, and personal data protection. Participant anonymity was maintained, and all data were analyzed and anonymized. The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest regarding this study. This research received no direct funding; however, it was conducted during the author's research activities at the University of Delaware Disaster Research Center as part of the TÜBİTAK 2219 Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Program. Artificial intelligence tools were used only for final editing and language development, and all intellectual and analytical content was generated by the author. All work was conducted by a single author.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

1. Akkan, İ. N., & Kara, D. A. (2024). The enacted curriculum's impact on learner identity and inequities in Turkey. *Participatory Educational Research*, 11(Prof. Dr. H. Ferhan Odabaşı Gift Issue), 34-56. <https://doi.org/10.17275/per.24.93.11.6>
2. Altbach, P. G. (2013). *The international imperative in higher education* (Vol. 27). Brill.
3. Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities. *Journal of studies in international education*, 11(3-4), 290-305. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303542>
4. Andrade, M. S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities: Adjustment factors. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5(2), 131-154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240906065589>
5. Andrews, K., & Aydin, H. (2024). Academic Challenges and Cultural Adaptation: Insights from Turkish Refugees College Students in US Schools. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 1-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15595692.2024.2408642>
6. Aw, F., Glass, C. R., Wongtrirat, R., & Buus, S. (2023). *International student engagement: Strategies for creating inclusive, connected, and purposeful campus environments*. Routledge.
7. Bastedo, M. N., Altbach, P. G., & Gumport, P. J. (Eds.). (2016). *American higher education in the twenty-first century: Social, political, and economic challenges*. JHU Press.

8. Bayar, A., & Koca, M. (2023). The Perspectives of Teachers on Nepotism. *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 12(5), 2458-2479. <https://doi.org/10.15869/itobiad.1258638>
9. Bektaş, D. Y. (2004). Psychological adaptation and acculturation of the Turkish students in the United States (Doctoral dissertation, Middle East Technical University (Turkey)).
10. Bound, J., Braga, B., Khanna, G., & Turner, S. (2021). The globalization of postsecondary education: The role of international students in the US higher education system. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 35(1), <https://doi.org/163-184>. 10.1257/jep.35.1.163
11. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
12. Calder, C., & Ho, C. M. (2024). Navigating cultural crossroads: Supporting international students' mental health through the lens of transnational identity development. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 46(4), 291-312. <https://doi.org/10.17744/mehc.46.4.03>
13. Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of studies in international education*, 10(3), 241-266. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315306287002>
14. Deardorff, D. K. (2023). Intercultural competence: A definition, model, and implications for education abroad. In *Developing intercultural competence and transformation* (pp. 32-52). Routledge.
15. Erturk, S., & Luu, L. A. N. (2022). Adaptation of Turkish international students in Hungary and the United States: A comparative case study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 86, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2021.10.006>
16. Ghaleb, B. D. S. (2024). Effect of exam-focused and teacher-centered education systems on students' cognitive and psychological competencies. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Approach Research and Science*, 2(2), 611-631. <https://doi.org/10.59653/ijmars.v2i02.648>
17. Glass, C. R., & Cruz, N. I. (2023). Moving towards multipolarity: Shifts in the core-periphery structure of international student mobility and world rankings (2000–2019). *Higher Education*, 85(2), 415-435. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00841-9>
18. Glass, C. R., Kociolek, E., Wongtrirat, M. R., Lynch, R. J., & Cong, M. S. (2015). Uneven Experiences: The Impact of Student-Faculty Interactions on International Students' Sense of Belonging. *Journal of International Students*, 5(4), 353-367. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/534472942.pdf>
19. Goghari, V. M. (2022). Excellence, access, and the public good: Building socially responsive admissions practices for health science programs. *Psychiatry Research*, 311, 114497. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2022.114497>
20. Hofstede, G. (1980). Culture and organizations. *International studies of management & organization*, 10(4), 15-41. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00208825.1980.11656300>
21. Kaushal, N., Ghalawat, S., & Kaurav, R. P. S. (2021). Nepotism concept evaluation: A systematic review and bibliometric analysis. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 1A-27. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/395012345.pdf>
22. Knight, J., & De Wit, H. (2018). Internationalization of higher education: Past and future. *International higher education*, (95), 2-4. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2018.95.10715>
23. Leask, B., & Charles, H. (2023). Internationalizing the curriculum. In *Leading Internationalization* (pp. 65-72). Routledge.
24. Ma, J. (2022). Challenges and strategies facing international students and faculty in US higher education: A comprehensive literature review. *Gatesol Journal*, 32(1), 18-38. <https://doi.org/10.52242/gatesol.122>
25. Mishra, A. P. (2021). The effects of nepotism and favoritism on employee behaviors in the private and government organization in the period. *Hmlyn J Human Cul Stud*, 2(1), 13-18.
26. OECD (2023), *Education at a Glance 2023: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e13bef63-en>.
27. Patel, N., Calhoun, D. W., & Tolman, S. (2024). Understanding the role of cultural competence in peer mentorship programs for international students: a student development theory perspective. *Georgia Journal of College Student Affairs*, 40(1), 62-80. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1416733.pdf>
28. R'boul, H. (2021). North/South imbalances in intercultural communication education. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 21(2), 144-157. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2020.1866593>
29. Sakız, H., & Jencius, M. (2024). Structural components of inclusive counseling services for international university students. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 46(2), 402-425. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-023-09540-1>
30. Shah, S. M. A., Qamar, M. R., Ahmed, S., & Imran, M. (2025). Nepotism and Favoritism in HR Practices: Implications for Organizational Politics in Pakistan. *Journal of Management & Social Science*, 2(1), 177-194. <https://doi.org/10.63075/jmss.v2i1.65>
31. Thompson, M., Pawson, C., & Evans, B. (2021). Navigating entry into higher education: the transition to independent learning and living. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 45(10), 1398-1410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1933400>
32. Yıldırım, Ö. (2014). Adjustment problems of international students studying in the USA: The effects of English language and academic culture. *International Journal of Global Education (IJGE) ISSN: 2146-9296*, 3(4). <http://www.ijge.net/index.php/ijge/article/view/38>

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of ATRI and/or the editor(s). ATRI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.