

Effects of stress on international post-secondary students

[Profession](#), [Student](#)



Students endeavor to improve their knowledge by opting to study abroad. There are many western universities which host many international students. As Smith & Khawaja stated that “ International students are not only a valuable financial asset to universities in developed countries, they are individuals who also enrich these countries with their diverse heritage and perspectives, thus serving to increase cultural awareness and appreciation. However, studying abroad can be challenging as students endure an incredible amount of stress and their mental health which often been neglected results in anxiety.

Stress plays a vital part in a student’s academic success. It causes negative thoughts and induces feelings of insecurity. Post-secondary students go through a lot of stress during their studies such as grades, group assignments, homework, exams and more. Moreover, they have to deal with situations like cultural differences, homesickness, language barrier etc. On the other hand, they also have to look after themselves by indulging in daily chores and working part-time to gain work experience. Some students cannot handle so much pressure and hence decide to drop out or change course or settle for a low grade.

Our report will focus on the role of stress in post-secondary international students’ lives and how it is affecting them and what recommendations we can provide to Thompson Rivers University to improve the current situation of stress.

Background/Context

Students attending postsecondary institutions in Canada is on the rise. In Canada, as per the research was done by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, RBC Economics Research, it shows that “ The number of international students enrolled in postsecondary studies in Canada has surged in the past decade. It hit nearly 415K in 2016, up from 350K a year earlier and more than double the 180K recorded in 2007”.

According to Wheeler, the word “ Stress” was originated from physics and it refers to the amount of force used on an object and the relation of this force on human life and its impact.

The four major aspects of stress are as follows:

Language

One of the factors of stress among international students is the Language barrier. Smith & Khawaja argues that “ second language anxiety is a stressor that interacts with other stressors in both academic and sociocultural domains”. Majority of the international students come from countries where English is not the first language. Therefore, it takes time for them to adapt to the English speaking study environment. Some students find it difficult to follow the lectures and keep up with their studies, hence, affecting their grades.

Homesickness

Another important factor which causes stress among international students is loneliness. Students tend to feel alone as they are miles away from home

as they don't have their friends and family around with whom they can spend time. This sentiment makes them isolated as they have no one to talk to or to share their feelings.

Cultural differences

As Winkelman stated that " Cultural (or culture) shock is a multifaceted experiences resulting from numerous stressors occurring in contact with a different culture. Cultural shock occurs for immigrant groups (e. g., foreign students and refugees)". Cultural differences can be observed the moment you land in a different country and feel the atmosphere and the way people

Mental Health:

As per Ontario College Health Association study " Most postsecondary students fall into the highest risk age group for mental illnesses and substance dependence. According to Statistics Canada, teenagers and young adults aged 15-24 were the most likely to report mood disorders and substance dependence problems (18% in comparison with 12% and 8% in 24-44-year-olds and 45- 65-year-olds respectively)".

Findings

" Over the past 30 years, studies have found the levels of stress reported by students to be on the rise. Not surprising, reports of the frequency and severity of mental health problems reported by post-secondary students are also increasing (ACHA, 2005). Not having effective coping mechanisms to manage stress that results from the demanding environment has been found

to be correlated with depression, poor college adjustment and general life dissatisfaction and even more disturbing are reports of increased rates of suicide". As per the research done by Versaevel, responses from the question about level of stress (NQ37) indicated that 1. 1% of students reported no stress, 7. 0% experienced less than average stress, 34. 5% reported average stress, 45. 5 % reported more than average stress, and 12. 1% indicated they experienced tremendous stress.

Conclusions

Stress is an issue that needs to be addressed on post-secondary campuses as it has the potential to impact the physical and mental well-being of students as well as their academic success. Hence, students should be given proper counseling specially the ones who are on the edge. As Flynn & Chow said that by recognizing respect and esteem among students could prove to be a vital internal resources. This could be achieved by providing organized training, experience or therapy. This could have a positive impact on post-secondary students' lives and to reduce the level of stress.