Colloquium 2(62)/2026
ISSN 2081-3813, e-ISSN 2658-0365
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DOI: http://doi.org/10.34813/21coll2026

CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF MIGRANT STUDENTS. STRENGTHS, DIFFICULTIES AND POSSIBILITIES OF OVERCOMING THEM[1]

Adaptacja kulturowa studentów migrantów. Mocne strony, trudności i możliwości ich przezwyciężania

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Abstract

The subject of the article is the issue of cultural adaptation in the perspective of temporary migrants – students universities with an international profile in the aspect of planning the future (and a possible perspective of settling in Poland) strengths, difficulties and possibilities of overcoming them. The study consists of two parts – a theoretical part: presenting the research workshop and the research results obtained as a result of its application.

The research procedure aimed to obtain answers to the following research problems:

1. How do temporary migrant students perceive Poland as a country of temporary or possibly permanent residence related to future professional work and planning the future?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of their stay in Poland?
3. How do they try to overcome the difficulties experienced?

The empirical research used a qualitative procedure in the form of a diagnostic survey. It was carried out using the in-depth interview technique. The research procedure involved 11 female and 10 male students from Azerbaijan, India, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, 3 people from each country. The choice of the university as the research area and the people studied was purposeful. As a result of the research, it turned out that only one participant of the research, coming from Ukraine, is seriously considering staying in Poland after completing her studies and taking up professional work. The students listed the following as the strengths of their stay in Poland: low tuition fees as a significant reason for choosing the university and relatively low living costs in relation to the possibility of getting a job.

The greatest difficulties related to their stay in Poland were listed by migrants as: the burdensome formalities at the Immigration Office and the insufficient knowledge of English by the service staff when dealing with everyday matters. The students considered that the opportunities to overcome difficulties

[1] This text was created as part of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education's Science for Society II project for 2024. Project title: A model of social support in the context of the cultural adaptation strategy for migrants in Poland. Project contract number: NdS-II/SP/0044/2024/01.

included patience with the formal requirements related to obtaining a visa, using their stay to learn another foreign language (mainly German) and to practice sports.

Keywords: cultural adaptation, migrant students.

Streszczenie

Tematem artykułu jest problematyka adaptacji kulturowej z perspektywy studentów-migrantów czasowych uczelni o profilu międzynarodowym, w aspekcie planowania przyszłości (i ewentualnej perspektywy osiedlenia się w Polsce), mocnych stron, trudności i możliwości ich przezwyciężenia. Opracowanie składa się z dwóch części – teoretycznej: prezentującej warsztat badawczy oraz empirycznej omawiającej warsztat badawczy i wyniki badań uzyskane w wyniku jego zastosowania.

Projekt badań miał na celu uzyskanie odpowiedzi na następujące problemy badawcze:

1. Jak studenci-migranci czasowi postrzegają Polskę jako kraj tymczasowego, ewentualnie stałego pobytu związanego z przyszłą pracą zawodową i planowaniem przyszłości?
2. Jakie są mocne i słabe strony ich pobytu w Polsce?
3. W jaki sposób starają się przezwyciężyć doświadczane trudności?

W badaniach empirycznych zastosowano procedurę jakościową w postaci sondażu diagnostycznego. Przeprowadzono je techniką wywiadu pogłębionego. W badaniu wzięło udział 11 studentek i 10 studentów z Azerbejdżanu, Indii, Kazachstanu, Tadżykistanu, Ukrainy i Uzbekistanu, po 3 osoby z każdego kraju. Wybór uczelni jako obszaru badań i osób objętych badaniem był celowy. W wyniku badań okazało się, że tylko jedna uczestniczka badania, pochodząca z Ukrainy, poważnie rozważa pozostanie w Polsce, po ukończeniu studiów i podjęciu pracy zawodowej. Studenci jako mocne strony pobytu w Polsce wymienili: niskie czesne jako istotny powód wyboru uczelni oraz relatywnie niskie koszty utrzymania w odniesieniu do możliwości podjęcia pracy w czasie studiów.

Wśród największych trudności związanych z pobytem w Polsce migranci wymieniali: uciążliwe formalności w Urzędzie Imigracyjnym oraz niedostateczną znajomość języka angielskiego przez pracowników obsługi niezbędną przy załatwianiu codziennych spraw. Studenci uznali, że możliwości przezwyciężenia trudności to cierpliwość w spełnieniu wymogów formalnych związanych z uzyskaniem wizy, wykorzystanie pobytu do nauki kolejnego języka obcego (głównie niemieckiego) oraz uprawianie sportu.

Słowa kluczowe: adaptacja kulturowa, studenci migranci.

Introduction

Globalization is transforming the landscape of international higher education. Over the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of international students – those who have crossed borders to study (OECD, 2022, 2022a), from 1.9 million in 1997 to over 6.1 million in 2021 (UIS Statistics, 2022). Students who are motivated to develop intercultural competences through studying abroad (Jackson, 2015) face several challenges that prevent them from fully benefiting from this experience in the future. Examples of these challenges include communication difficulties, cultural and educational obstacles that impact their adaptation, socialization, and learning experiences (Andrade, 2006), psychological stress (Smith and Khawaja, 2011), or social isolation, as well as difficulties with immigration and visa extensions caused by travel restrictions (Hope, 2020). Analysis of cross-cultural adaptation theory and empirical research (Andrade, 2006; Smith & Khawaja, 2011) confirms the critical importance

of language skills (especially English), communication skills, and assimilation into the host country's culture for successful academic and broader social life.

However, the literature on the subject lacks research on the subjective assessment of migrant students' functioning at international universities, particularly in terms of potential career planning in the host country and the strengths and weaknesses associated with their temporary stay in Poland. Therefore, the author of this study undertook an analysis of their cultural adaptation.

Adaptation and the Dynamics of the Cultural Integration Process of Migrant Students

There are many definitions of the adaptation process. According to the classic sociological approach presented by Jan Szczepański (as cited in Żarczyńska-Dobiesz, 2009, pp. 139-140), it is a process of conscious, and subconscious, modification of acquired social characteristics, so that they conform to the pattern of characteristics considered normal and desirable in a given environment, allowing for the resolution of coexistence problems as freely as possible. Adaptation is the process through which cultural integration occurs.

Research on cultural integration began in the 1930s. Since then, several diverse theories and models of intercultural integration have emerged in various fields. For example, Lysgaard proposed the "U-curve" theory, concluding with the acculturation achievements of researchers in the United States (Li, 2016). Drawing on her findings, Kalvero Oberg proposed the concept of culture shock, taking into account the process of individual change in psychological feelings (as cited in Cummings et al., 2014). Subsequent developments include the “cross-cultural adaptation” model proposed by Berry (1997, 2005), which distinguishes four types of acculturations (integration, separation, assimilation, and self-marginalization).

Subsequent researchers added cross-cultural adaptation, consisting of two aspects of psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation, and proposed an “acculturation process model” (Zhu et al., 2022). In addition to introducing and referencing the above-mentioned well-known models of cultural integration with far-reaching impact, new models similar to those cited have also emerged.

Analyzing the literature on the cultural integration of international students, it can be observed that the initial stage of research begins primarily with research issues focusing on individual feelings and psychological adaptation. The second stage of the research focuses primarily on the external environment and, to a large extent, analyzes the standard of social life. In the third stage, the research analyzes the overall adaptation of the external environment to the psychological and academic adaptation of international students, and examines the cultural integration of international students as a whole (Zhu et al., 2022).

Cultural integration of international students as a macrosystem encompasses the observation of the social environment, characteristic holidays, traditional culture, and

other ideological and cultural indicators. According to Bronfenbrenner, macrosystems concern what children should be taught and consciously shaped (Bronfenbrenner, 1988, p. 23). In this sense, applying the macrosystem to the functioning of students – temporary migrants – the social environment refers to the atmosphere of cultural exchange and their life circle on the one hand, and the influence of cultural migration from the home country on the other (Bethel et al., 2020). Ran (2020), a representative of the latest stage of cultural integration, proposed the concept of cultural adaptation for international students, examining changes in their sensitivity and the influence of external factors, thus enriching theoretical models of research on the cultural integration of international students (Ran, 2020). According to this author, academic adaptation has a significant impact on cultural integration.

Based on his research, this researcher concluded that academic teachers' professional and social competences, as well as the appropriate expression of emotions during classes with foreign students, are the most important forms of cultural integration, which can enhance interaction between teachers and students, promote rapid knowledge acquisition by international students, and strengthen their sense of accomplishment and belonging. Group classes and informal discussions after classes can also provide more opportunities for contact and communication with the local community and accelerate the integration of international students with representatives of local social structures. Therefore, it can be expected that this is an important element in the sense of well-being of migrant students raised in countries of origin with slightly different or distinct social conditions and cultures.

Elements of Cultural Adaptation

In considering the process of cultural integration, which takes place through the adaptation process, the authors distinguish cultural adaptation in its cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects (Ryou & Kim, 2022).

Cultural Adaptation

Kim (1988) defines cultural adaptation as a process of personal transformation that occurs alongside other socio-environmental changes. An individual's motivation to adapt increases as they participate more in the host society and culture, and their sense of difference decreases. Transformation in the context of cultural adaptation refers to increased familiarity with the language, norms, ways of thinking, behavioral patterns, knowledge and values of the host culture, and a co-orientation of cultural identity (Kim and Abreu, 2001). While the literature debates the dimensionality of this concept, it is currently accepted that cultural adaptation is a three-dimensional process encompassing changes in cognition, emotions, and behavior that occur through acculturation experiences (Ryou & Kim, 2022).

The Cognitive Aspects of Cultural Adaptation

Cross-cultural researchers point to the complexity of a foreigner's cognitive structure as one of the most important factors influencing cultural adaptation. Among other factors, communication and social competence have been considered equally important (Kim, 2001; Hippler et al., 2017). Similarly, Huang (2021) argues that knowledge of the host culture's language helps improve various aspects of acculturation, particularly by increasing intercultural communication competence (Huang 2021, Kim et al., 2021) and adopting a different perspective on reality (Kim, 1988). Another author, Gudykunst (1983), also shares the view that communication is key to reducing uncertainty and increasing trust and attraction towards counterparts from another culture. Research also indicates that reducing uncertainty leads to increased satisfaction with the host culture (Sun-Kyu & Jae-Sue 2000) and the intention to adopt its new cultural values and behaviors. This means that competence in the host culture's language can also lead to cultural adaptation in the area of affective and behavioral components discussed below (Luek, 2011). Unfortunately, international students, excluding students from Ukraine, relatively rarely demonstrate an interest in mastering Polish during their stay in Poland to enable them to communicate effectively, even in everyday matters.

The Affective Aspect of Cultural Adaptation

The affective dimension has been studied as another key element of cultural adaptation (Gao and Gudykunst, 1990). Newcomers experience psychological barriers while adapting to the new sociocultural environment, and in response, feelings of frustration and isolation, homesickness, and stress emerge (Taušová et al., 2019).

Anxiety, in particular, is known to delay cultural transformation, reducing the willingness to interact with people in the host country (Samochowieca & Florack, 2010). Affective adaptation refers to overall psychological well-being, defined as the effectiveness of coping with emotions or reduced experience of negative emotions. Key predictors of affective adaptation include the level of understanding of the host country's culture, trait-level cultural competence (Safdar et al., 2021), local language competence (Luek, 2011), perceived coherence and similarity between one's own culture and the host country's culture (Kim, 1988), anticipated social mobility (Iibeen and Khalid, 2010), social support from both peers and local residents' attitudes toward immigrants (Gudykunst, 1983). Migrants staying temporarily in Poland generally speak positively about Poles (Górny et al., 2010).

The Behavioral Aspects of Cultural Adaptation

Behavioral adaptation refers to the acquisition of new behavioral patterns or competencies appropriate to a new cultural context (Berry, 1997, 2005). The development of interpersonal relationships, dietary preferences, and the ability to adhere to cultural norms in various interpersonal or social contexts often serve as barometers of the level of behavioral adaptation. Kim and Abreu (2001) and Berry (1997, 2005) emphasize the importance of the behavioral dimension, as it can provide a direct assessment of the degree of cultural adaptation. Information and communication technology plays a significant role in this dimension (Akter et al., 2024).

Information and communication technology has been used by various communities in foreign cultures to support the process of acculturation and cultural adaptation (Hoffmann et al., 2022; Pang, 2020). Given the popularity and ubiquity of social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, WeChat, YouTube, Tic-Tok, Instagram, and LinkedIn, individuals can now expand their social networks and connect with ideas and information previously unavailable in their host countries (Choudhary et al., 2019; Hossain, 2019; Zaw, 2018).

Social media are a central element of this digital world, as they allow migrants to benefit from various sociocultural and economic practices and acculturation. The potential impact of social media on cultural adjustment should also be considered. A significant amount of research has been conducted on foreign workers, refugees, minority groups, international students, and other migrant populations who use social media to meet their acculturation needs (Choudhary et al., 2019; Lai et. al., 2022; Nguyen, 2023; Pang, 2020).

The mission of every higher education institution is to prepare students to function effectively in the labor market, which is linked to the successful completion of the professional adaptation process (e.g., Liu et al., 2023; Akkermans et al., 2023).

The importance of professional adaptation and future career vision in the lives of temporary migrant students

The issue of professional adaptation is related to specific theories of professional development, which explain the mechanisms of success or failure in finding and maintaining a job (e.g., Myszka-Stachalska, 2017). For immigrants, adapting to work significantly determines their functioning, as it not only determines their financial and living situation but also plays a significant role in how they establish and maintain social relationships, psychological balance, and the related coping skills.

The fundamental motivation behind the professional adaptation process is the following partial goals:

- developing future employees' knowledge of the functioning of institutions and enterprises, as accessible, potentially friendly workplaces, and in positions appropriate for them (Krugiełka et al., 2023);
- adapting future employees to the prevailing norms, behaviors, and customs of the organization;

- developing in future employees an accepted approach to their tasks and responsibilities, as well as a positive attitude toward the company and their future career. The issue of professional development, as a continuation of earlier interdisciplinary considerations addressing the issue of professional career, has become a subject of discussion over the past decade or so by authors such as Cybal-Michalska (2016) and Savickas (2012, 2013). Savickas' conceptualization draws on the work of Super and his team (Super et al., 1981) and assumes that individuals construct their own representation of reality, which triggers their adaptation to the environment. His concept is characterized by complementarity in terms of professional development, permanence, and dynamics resulting from changes occurring in the environment and the subjective nature of each individual's career.

In this author's understanding, individuals attribute meaning to their own experiences while simultaneously pursuing their own professional aspirations. Therefore, international students and migrants, by gaining experience not only in their country of origin, construct their own professional career plans, in which their stay in Poland constitutes a significant stage and can contribute to the awakening of professional ambitions.

Individual and Social Conditioning of the Cultural Adaptation Process

An analysis of studies referring to the literature on the subject indicates that an individual's level of education has a significant impact on their adaptation process, further considerations have shown that young, highly intelligent, and educated people adapt more successfully than those who lack these qualities (Ryou & Kim 2022). Although, considering human personality traits, researchers point out (e.g., Bilewicz et al., 2012) that there are no universal human traits or a set of specific characteristics that facilitate the process of adapting to any culture, they also point out that extroverts who prioritize universal values, individuals with a strong cultural identity, and those who understand and respect the norms, traditions, and customs of the new culture adapt better.

An important factor influencing the process of adapting to a new culture is the individual's readiness for the changes that await them and the development of motivation for adaptation. From a psychological perspective, people who consciously and willingly try to integrate into another group change. People who are ready for change in a multicultural society tend to have greater contact with the local population, which reduces their level of culture shock. When defining group factors, researchers suggest paying attention to the characteristics of the cultures themselves, particularly their differences and commonalities. The cultural distance index includes: language, religion, family structure, education level, material comfort, climate, clothing, and other. Analysis of these indicators suggests that the process of adapting to a new culture may

be less painful if the new culture shares much in common with the native one (Grzymała-Moszczyńska & Nowicka, 1988).

Separate factors influencing the process of cultural adaptation are the cultural characteristics of the host country. It seems obvious that migrants find it easier to function in countries where policies of inclusiveness, cultural pluralism, principles of equality, freedom of choice, and partnership in the treatment of different cultures are more fully respected at the state level. Social practice has shown that monoethnic societies are less tolerant of other cultures and their representatives. Research and the resulting analyses have shown that specific situational factors also significantly influence the adaptation process, such as the level of political and economic stability in the country, the crime rate, and the state's social policy (Lesińska, 2011). Regardless of these considerations, further analysis of the literature reveals little data that would allow for a diagnosis of the situation of students as temporary migrants.

Her analysis would examine their level of cultural adaptation in the context of their subjective assessment and functioning at a specific international university in Poland. It would be particularly interesting to learn about their career plans and the extent to which they associate their future life plans with their host country. Identifying their opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of studying in Poland is equally important. The empirical part of the article will be devoted to this issue.

Research Method

Research Issues

The following research questions were formulated in the procedure:

- How do student temporary migrants perceive Poland as a country of temporary or permanent residence related to future professional work and future planning?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of their stay in Poland?
- How do they attempt to overcome the difficulties they experience?

The study employed a diagnostic survey method and a structured, in-depth interview technique. Participants were asked questions stemming from the formulated research questions, which were further developed by the participants:

- (P1Q1) What are your professional and life plans after graduation, regarding the choice of a country of permanent residence and future professional work?
- (P2Q1) Why did you choose Poland as the country to begin and pursue your studies?
- (P2Q2) What benefits do you perceive from studying in this country?
- (P2Q3) What negative aspects do you experience while studying in Poland?
- (P3Q1) What actions do you take to overcome the difficulties you experience?

The chosen method and the opportunity to ask additional questions allowed for the exploration of a broader perspective and the collection of examples from everyday life. The responses were assessed by four competent judges (four experienced specialists in psychology and pedagogy). Analysis of the responses allowed for the identification of categories relating to the strengths and difficulties associated with studying in Poland, as well as opportunities for overcoming these difficulties. These categories are presented in Tables 1 and 2, in their respective order.

The selection of participants was purposive, due to the university being the largest in the country educating international students and the participants' assumed migration experience (at least two years). 11 female and 10 male students participated in the research: from Azerbaijan, India, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan, three from each country, with a balanced proportion of undergraduate (11) and graduate students, aged 21–25.

The university is located in the capital city and has approximately 12,000 students, approximately 80% of whom are international. Participation in the study was contingent upon the participants' consent. Participants were informed that they could withdraw their responses at any time.

Research Results

Career (and Life) Plans of Migrant Students Studying in Poland

When considering the merits of learning Polish, all of them, except for one person who has extended family in Poland and wishes to remain there after graduation, expressed no interest in learning Polish, assuming that they would leave Poland after defending their bachelor's or master's thesis (answers to questions P1Q1).

In turn, when planning a future outside Poland, they choose the most advantageous alternative in terms of finding a well-paid job and social security benefits relative to the cost of living. Here's a statement from a 23-year-old Indian student with a BA: "I wouldn't want to stay here after graduation. I have no chance of getting a well-paid job, although I think it's partly a matter of luck, but maybe I'll get an internship." A 24-year-old Tajikistan student with an MA:

> With my education and experience in Poland, I wouldn't be able to earn the high salaries I can in Germany or Sweden (...). I have friends there, and after graduation, I'll be looking for work, also considering the possibility of permanent settlement.

Both statements indicate a pessimistic outlook on future earnings prospects in Poland. Only one migrant (Ukrainian) expressed a desire to stay in Poland after graduation. Her decision was motivated by family and the ability to communicate daily in Polish (she had previously attended a Polish school).

The lack of desire to stay in Poland may stem from an assessment of availability and a calculation of the emerging opportunities to fulfill her life plans. Ambitious

students come to Poland, and at the same time, it can be expected that they carefully analyze their opportunities in the future European or American labor market.

As a result of this analysis, and taking into account their own resources (good English skills), our country, primarily for economic reasons, does not seem to be the most favorable or suitable place for future settlement.

Strengths and Weaknesses of International Students' Stay in Poland

Regarding the strengths of their decision to study in Poland, the surveyed students cited the opportunity to work and combine studies with work, and then obtain a diploma, whether at the bachelor's or master's level. The diploma will allow them to apply for better-paid positions in Europe, Western Europe, the United States, or Canada. When considering their choice of country and university, all students participating in the study emphasized the relatively low tuition fees and relatively moderate living costs. A significant asset of people from countries where English is the language of instruction practically from kindergarten is their fluency in the language, which allows them to easily find work both in Poland and abroad. Respondents also complained about the unpredictable decisions of the IO regarding obtaining residence permits for student candidates.

Table 1.
Positive and negative aspects of migrants' stay in Poland, in connection with their study program

No./Question	Category of Statement	Country of Orgin	Quoted Statements
1./(P2Q1)	Low tuition fees as a significant factor in choosing a university	Student from India, 23 years old, BA studies	The choice of university was due to the availability of tuition fees.
		Student from Ukraine, 23 years old, BA studies	"Poland was the closest to me and my parents, who are doctors, had no problems paying the tuition, although now I try to support myself"
2./(P2Q1)	Relatively low living costs and the possibility of finding a job during your studies	Student from Zimbabwe, 25 years old, MA	"For me, in order to study abroad and not rely on family support, it was important that I found a job. In fact, I didn't have a problem with that, I work at a bank"
		Student from Tajikistan, 22 years old, BA studies	"I work at McDonald's and currently don't see any way to support myself without a job. I decided to come here because a friend of mine also had a job while studying in Warsaw and raved about it. I can't imagine not having a steady income and just studying"
3. /(P2Q1)	University offerings in relation to the cost of education or obtaining an education outside of Poland	Student from India, 22 years old, BA studies	"When choosing to study abroad, my first consideration was the tuition fees with my parents, comparing them to Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. Furthermore, I liked Warsaw"
		Student from Ukraine, 24 years old, MA studies	"I couldn't afford to study in Western Europe. Poland seemed closer to me culturally, and I speak a little Polish. However, the most important factor was the financial calculation"

4. /(P2Q1)	Assessment of relations with Poles	Student from Zimbabwe, 25 years old, BA	” I have a positive view of my relationships with people from this country. They're friendly, but they often don't speak English. I also appreciate my relationships with academics at our university, which is why I'm here”
		Student from Azerbaijan, 24 years old, MA studies	“I feel quite comfortable in Poland; people are generally well-disposed. The teachers are friendly and fair”
5. /(P2Q1)	Ability to receive medical and psychological care	Student from Uzbekistan, 22 years old, BA studies	“I get colds a few times a year. I don't always seek medical help. I have medication my mom sent me, but I know I can go to the doctor if I need it…”
		Student from Tajikistan, 24 years old, BA studies	“I visited the university psychologist and I'm happy with the advice. I had a difficult time at the beginning of my stay, although I'm better now. I'd never sought help from a psychologist before and didn't believe someone like that could help me.”
6. /(P2Q2)	The burden of formalities at the Immigration Office	Student from Ukraine, 23 years old, BA studies	“I was ‘sent away’ three times. I had to show expenses and receipts and go to the Immigration Office during exam time, and although I consider living conditions in Poland good, it's still burdensome for me”
		Student from Uzbekistan, 24 years old, MA studies	“Visits to the Immgration Office regarding visa extensions require patience; sometimes I get very nervous”
7. /(P2Q2)	Insufficient knowledge of English by service staff when dealing with everyday matters	Student from India, 22 years old, BA studies	“Sometimes it's hard for me to explain what I mean in everyday matters—what products I'm looking for, what ticket I want to buy, what I need to do at the bank. Older people don't speak English, and younger people seem afraid to speak and often don't understand me. When it comes to getting to specific places, I use a translator app on my phone, but it's not always enough, but overall, it's not bad”

		Student from India, 22 years old, BA studies	"For me, the barrier is that only young people in Poland speak English. Sometimes it annoys me when I waste time on what I want"
8. /(P2Q2)	The need to know the difficult-to-learn Polish language	Student from Azerbaijan, 22 years old, BA studies	"I think that if I knew Polish, I could consider looking for a job after graduation. However, Polish is a difficult language to master. Besides, I don't know how long it would take me to master it, and I have extensive career plans"
		Student from Zimbabwe, 24 years old, MA studies	"I started learning Polish, but I gave up because I thought it would take too much time, and it's a local language and not easy. I have no guarantee that I will stay in Poland permanently"
9. /(P2Q2)	The need to get used to the climate	Student from Azerbaijan, 22 years old, BA studies	"It's too cold for me. This is my second time in this part of the world, but if I had to choose, I prefer southern Europe"
		Student from Zimbabwe, 23 years old, MA studies	"It's difficult for me to live in this part of the world; it's cold during the day and there's little sun. Therefore, I would choose Spain or Italy for permanent residence, but on the other hand, they're not the wealthiest countries"

Source: own research

The positive assessment of migrants' relationships with Poles seems significant. This may be due to genuinely positive experiences in everyday contacts with city residents or peers, or perhaps even peers from university. However, observations from practical experience do not indicate frequent friendships between Polish university students and foreigners, as evidenced by the barrier of fluency in English. Another reason for the positive assessment of relationships with Poles may be the desire to please the interviewer, who is Polish.

The inclusion of healthcare access by such young people is surprising. This situation may stem from negative experiences with health problems resulting from the need to adapt to the relatively cold climate in Poland.

Considering the difficulties associated with staying in Poland, the most bothersome circumstance identified by the respondents was the formalities related to

obtaining a residence permit, i.e., visas, which sometimes required several visits to the immigration office, followed by the insufficient English language skills of sales and customer service workers, which made it difficult for them to handle everyday matters. The interviewees also complained about the unpredictable decisions made by the Immigration Office regarding residence permits for student applicants in Poland. Furthermore, due to their insufficient knowledge of Polish and the difficulty of communicating with their interlocutors in English, they experienced difficulties in communicating in everyday life. They tried to compensate for this by using IT applications and automatic translators, but this was insufficient not only for casual conversation but also for handling everyday matters.

Overcoming Difficulties Related to Staying in Poland and Completing a Study Program by International Students

As a way to overcome difficulties related to staying in Poland, migrants recommended patience in meeting requirements and formalities, and then using their time in Poland to expand their cognitive resources. The respondents suggested learning another language, in the case of the students participating in the study, it was, in their opinion, German, the "language of business."

Such intentions demonstrate an ambitious approach to education, a willingness to invest in one's own competencies, and a commitment to market demand related to pursuing a future career.

When discussing emotional support, study participants cited their family, i.e., parents and/or siblings, and then colleagues from the same country as them.

Table 2.
Ways students overcome difficulties related to staying in Poland and completing a study program

No./Question	Category of Statement	Country of Orgin	Quoted Statements
1. /(P3Q1)	"Patience in "official matters" - regarding meeting formal requirements for the Immigration Office".	A female student from Ukraine, 24 years old, in her final year of MA (who just emigrated to Montreal).	"Sometimes I thought I'd never receive my residence card, but that moment finally arrived. And I would advise any student in a similar situation to remain calm"
		A female student from Uzbekistan, 22 years old, studying B A	"During the formalities with the Immigration Office, you should maintain your distance and be patient. You have to be prepared for several visits and a waste of time"

2. /(P3Q1)	Using your time in Poland to learn an additional language, or pursue postgraduate studies	Student from India, 22 years old, BA	"I'm using my time in Poland to learn German, which is the language of business"
		Student from India, 24 years old, MA	"In addition to my MA studies, I also chose postgraduate studies in real estate, which interests me, and I try not to waste time, even though I'm not bad here"
3./(P3Q1)	Active sports practice	Student from Ukraine, 23 years old, BA studies	"Sport helps me maintain balance. I go to training two or three times a week"
			"I buy annual gym memberships. I go every evening. It's worth it, and after an hour of exercise, I feel great and always sleep well. I can't imagine stopping"
4. /(P3Q1)	Using the support of family and friends	Student from Uzbekistan, 24 years old, MA studies	"I had health problems twice, a friend helped me, and my mom sent me my tried-and-true medications. I always knew I could count on them. That was important"
		Student from Zimbabwe, 23 years old, MA studies	"I had periods of breakdown. At the beginning of my stay, I had two breakdowns. I wanted to go home. My sister came from Germany and helped me. We were together for two weeks. After that, things got better"
5 /(P3Q1)	In situations of extreme difficulty, use of university support (financial assistance, assistance from a thesis supervisor, etc)	Student from Ukraine, 23 years of BA studies	"Once, after Covid, I asked for financial aid from my university, and I received it even though I didn't even expect it"
		Student from Ukraine, 22 years old, BA studies	"A friend from Ukraine received aid from our university right after the war started, which really helped him find new accommodations"

Source: own research

When discussing their experience of emotional support, study participants cited their family, i.e., parents and/or siblings, and then their friends from the same country as them. When asked if they were considering seeking help from a university psychologist, they vehemently rejected this option. This situation is likely related to the traditional perception of visiting a psychologist as a sign of pathology or "being abnormal."

Discussion of the Results

The conducted research confirmed elements of the theory and selected concepts discussed in the theoretical part of the study. As previously demonstrated by Ran (2020), the study found a positive impact of academic adaptation on cultural adaptation. Some of the participating students expressed a positive opinion about the generally positive attitude of academic teachers toward international students, stating that they were helpful and friendly. Drawing on Berry's (1997, 2005) concept and analyzing the responses of the participants using the judges' method, three types of adaptation can be observed, ranging from integration, observed among Ukrainian students, through separation, demonstrated by migrants from Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, to assimilation, observed among migrants from India. However, the distinguished types were not "pure" or mutually exclusive; rather, certain symptoms could be identified.

Furthermore, the obtained research results confirmed the validity of Ryou & Kim (2022) diversification of the concept of cultural adaptation and the separation of its cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. In the case of the female migrants participating in the study, the cognitive aspect was completely distinct from the affective and behavioral aspects. Migrants, although they had been in Poland for 2.5 to 5 years due to their planned departure, did not make any effort to learn Polish when the university offered them such courses. Although this statement was not the main subject of the discussion or the purpose of the study, it was observed that they did not show any particular interest in the culture of the host country, regardless of the information provided about free admission to museums, exhibitions, etc. (of course, there is no guarantee that they would be interested in the culture of other countries, or even have the need to passively participate in culture). The discrepancy may result from differences in migrants' attitudes towards the host country, which may take the form of declared attitudes, burdened by social expectations and political correctness, expressed publicly, and actual attitudes, containing an emotional-motivational component (concerning experienced emotions and tendencies to act) and a behavioral component (manifested in specific actions) (cf. Bartkowiak, 1988, 2016). Migrants expressed positive opinions about Poles and their friendly attitude towards foreigners, but at the same time they did not participate in informal meetings with Polish students and did not establish friendships with them, assuming the existence of elements of mutual attraction. On the other hand, this may have been due to the insufficient knowledge of English on the part of Polish students, which made contact in this language more of an emotional burden than a pleasant conversation.

Conclusions

The research results showed that immigrant students coming to Poland treated the country as a temporary place of residence, allowing them to acquire skills and/or a diploma at a relatively low cost compared to other European countries, as an important element of

further professional development. They declared that they viewed their contacts with Poles positively, but economic factors influenced both their decision to choose a migration country and their plans for their future careers. Aware of their valuable English language skills, despite not rating living conditions in Poland as low, they preferred countries with higher national incomes and more favorable future earning opportunities.

Analysis of the participants' responses revealed differences between their declared (based on a cognitive component) and actual (motivational and behavioral components) attitudes (Bartkowiak, 1988, 2016) regarding Poland as a host country for migrant students and their future.

Differences in the assessment of the situation in Poland were observed in the interviews. They consistently rated Poland as a migrant-friendly country, devoid of any discriminatory attitudes. They claimed that Poles displayed a friendly attitude toward them (as a manifestation of the affective and behavioral aspects of adaptation), yet their statements merely expressed their attitudes toward the inhabitants of Poland. When asked if they had any Polish friends after at least two years of stay in Poland, they replied that they did not, and whether they would consider starting a family with a Polish man or woman, which is a manifestation of the internal contradiction or ambivalence of these attitudes (and, at the same time, reflects their actual attitudes).

Furthermore, when asked if they would consider starting a family with someone from a different cultural background, Muslim students replied that they did not consider such a possibility, and even if they did, their parents would never accept such a decision.

They cited the burdensome formalities at the Immigration Office and the insufficient English language skills of sales and customer service staff when dealing with everyday matters as negative aspects of their stay in Poland. Students identified patience with the formal requirements associated with obtaining a visa, using their stay to learn another foreign language (primarily German), and practicing sports as ways to overcome difficulties.

It can be expected that migrants coming to Poland constitute a select group of young people with above-average life aspirations, entrepreneurship, and a sufficient ratio to the average income in their country of origin, as well as the financial resources of their parents. Therefore, they are not representative of the community of people their age. On the other hand, the internationalization of Polish universities, regardless of whether they educate students for the country or not, is a factor in developing networking opportunities for Polish students.

The conducted research is not without limitations. These include the qualitative research procedure, based on information obtained during interviews with 21 temporary migrants, which prevents generalization of the obtained results, and the deliberate selection of participants for the study conducted at a single international university in the capital, where international students constituted a significant majority. When analysing the directions of further research, it would be necessary to consider the possibility of conducting verification studies on a larger research sample, taking into account possible conditions, e.g. the specificity of the country of origin, gender, etc.

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