

Original Article

COMMUNICATION CULTURE SHOCK AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES OF NIGERIAN POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE UK

Precious Chinyere Obi and Emeka Ifeanyi Uche

Department of Linguistics and
Communication Studies, University of Port
Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13944340>

This study explores the challenges faced by Nigerian postgraduate students in the UK, focusing on culture shock's impact on communication and adaptation. Addressing a gap in literature, it examines the communication techniques used by these students to navigate cultural differences. Anchored in Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and Social Identity Theory, the study analyses how students adjust their communication styles and how group identity influences adaptation. Utilising a survey research design, data from 381 Nigerian postgraduate students reveal various communication strategies, such as speaking clearly and embracing feedback, to overcome barriers. The study also maps the emotional stages of adaptation using Oberg's U-Curve Theory. A survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of this study was made up of Nigerian postgraduate students in Scotland, United Kingdom. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2023), the number of Nigerian postgraduate students in the United Kingdom between the year 2017/2018 through to 2021/2022 is 51,815. Keyton's formula for sample size determination was used to and the sample size of this study was 381. The snowball sampling was used in different stages. Data were gathered using the copies of the questionnaire which were administered on the respondents virtually. Quantitative data analysis was adopted in this study such as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and percentages. The findings have significant implications for educational institutions aiming to support international students. By enhancing communication skills and cultural awareness, institutions can better facilitate the integration and academic success of Nigerian postgraduate students. This research recommended that.

Keywords: Communication Accommodation Theory, Social Identity Theory, international students.

Original Article

Introduction

The globalisation nature of education has led to an increasing number of students pursuing postgraduate studies in foreign countries, offering them the opportunity to gain international experience and advanced academic credentials. The United Kingdom, known for its prestigious universities and diverse academic environment, has become a popular destination for Nigerian students seeking to further their education. However, while the academic opportunities are abundant, the transition to a new cultural and educational setting can be challenging, particularly in terms of communication. Communication culture shock is a form of culture shock that arises from differences in communication styles, norms, and practices which can significantly impact the academic experiences and outcomes of these students.

Communication culture shock occurs when individuals are confronted with unfamiliar communication patterns in a new cultural environment, leading to confusion, anxiety, and difficulty in effectively engaging with others (Hosftede *et al.*, 2010). For Nigerian postgraduate students in United Kingdom, these challenges are often rooted in differences in verbal and nonverbal communication, academic discourse, and the expectations surrounding students-teacher interactions. Nigerian students may find the more indirect and nuanced communication styles in the UK academic context difficult to interpret, leading to misunderstandings and a potential sense of alienation (Olanrewaju, 2019).

One of the key areas where communication culture shock manifests is in classroom interactions. In Nigerian universities, classroom participation is often more hierarchical, with students deferring to their lecturers as authority figures. In contrast, the United Kingdom academic environment encourages more egalitarian and interactive participation, where students are expected to engage in critical discussions and challenge ideas openly (Brown & Hallaway, 2008). Nigerian students may struggle with this shift, finding it difficult to assert themselves in discussions for participation, which can hinder their academic performance.

Moreover, the academic writing conventions in the United Kingdom can be a source of communication cultures shock for Nigerian students' academic writing in the UK places a strong emphasis, originality, and the ability to construct well-supported arguments, often in contrast to the more descriptive or narrative styles that may be common in Nigerian academic contexts (Ezeh, 2020). The differences in writing expectations can lead to difficulties in meeting academic standards, resulting in lower grades and increased frustration for Nigerian students as they attempt to navigate these new academic demands.

The adaptation process to these communication differences is not straightforward. Nigerian postgraduate students often employ various strategies to cope with the challenges of communication culture shock, including seeking out support from fellow Nigerian students, attending academic writing workshops, and utilising university support services (Adebola, 2021). However, the effectiveness of these strategies can vary, and not all students are equally equipped to manage the transition, leading to disparities in academic success among this group.

Institutional support plays a crucial role in helping Nigerian students overcome communication culture shock. Universities in the UK typically offer a range of services aimed at supporting international students, such as orientation programmes, academic skills workshops, and counselling services. However, the extent to which these services address the specific needs of Nigerian students, particularly in terms of communication adaptation, remains a critical area for exploration (Andrade, 2006). The effectiveness of these support mechanisms in helping Nigerian

Original Article

Students adjust to the UK academic environment can significantly influence their overall academic experience and success.

The psychological culture shock cannot be overlooked. The stress associated with adapting to a new communication culture can lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety, and even depression, which can further impede academic performance (Sawir *et al.*, 2008). For Nigerian students, who may already be dealing with the pressures of being far from home and adapting a new educational system, the added challenge of communication culture shock can exacerbate these issues, making it difficult for them to fully engage with their studies and achieve their academic goals.

Additionally, the impact of communication culture shock on academic pursuits extends beyond the individual level, influencing group dynamics in academic settings. Nigerian students may find it challenging to collaborate effectively with peers from different cultural backgrounds due to misunderstandings or differing communication styles, which can affect group work outcomes and overall academic performance (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). These challenges highlight the importance of fostering an inclusive academic environment that is sensitive to the diverse communication needs of international students.

Given the significant impact of communication culture shock on the academic experiences of Nigerian postgraduate students, it is essential for UK universities to develop targeted interventions that address these challenges. This includes providing tailored support services that focus on helping students adapt to the UK communication culture, as well as promoting culture competence among faculty and staff to better understand and support the needs of Nigerian students (Leask, 2009). Such efforts are crucial for ensuring that Nigerian students can fully participate in and benefit from their academic experiences in the UK.

Statement of the Problem

The influx of Nigerian postgraduate students into the United Kingdom's higher education institutions has highlighted the diverse challenges these students face, particularly regarding communication culture shock. This phenomenon, characterised by the difficulties in adapting to different communication styles, norms, and academic practices, poses a significant barrier to the academic success of Nigerian students. While the UK offers a rich academic environment, the stark contrast in communication styles between Nigerian and the UK often leaves these students struggling to effectively participate in academic discourse, understand lectures, engage in classroom discussions, and produce written work that meets the expected standards.

The problem is compounded by the fact that communication culture shock can lead to broader issues of academic underperformance, social isolation, and mental health challenges. Nigerian students, accustomed to different educational and cultural norms, may experience feelings of alienation, frustration, and anxiety, which can further impede their ability to adapt and succeed academically. Despite the presence of support services within UK universities, these services may not be adequately tailored to address the specific communication challenges faced by Nigerian students.

The gap in understanding and support for these students is significant, as the existing literature does not sufficiently address the nuanced experiences of Nigerian postgraduate students dealing with communication culture shock in the UK context. Without a clear understanding of the extent to which communication culture shock impacts their academic pursuits and the effectiveness of current support mechanisms, there is a risk that these students will continue to face unnecessary obstacles to their academic success. Therefore, this study seeks

Original Article

to examine the impact of communication culture shock on the academic pursuits of Nigerian postgraduate students in the United Kingdom.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study aims to ascertain the impact of communication culture shock on the academic pursuits of Nigerian Postgraduate students in the United Kingdom. The objectives, however, are to:

1. ascertain the type of culture shock experienced by Nigeria postgraduate students in the United Kingdom
2. examine factors which lead to culture shock among Nigerian postgraduate students in the United Kingdom
3. investigate ways in which culture shock affects the academic pursuit of Nigerian postgraduate students in the United Kingdom

Literature Review Culture

Peterson (2004) said that "Culture is the relatively stable set of internal values and beliefs that groups of people in countries or regions generally hold, and the notable impact that these values and beliefs have on people's external behaviours and environment" (p.17). There has been a lot of attention to cultural issues in educational settings. A large number of researchers share the common idea that culture plays a significant role in education practices (Gu, 2010). Culture is divided into two types: a large culture of "C" and a small culture of "c." Lee defines the large culture of the "C" as a set of arts, history, geography, industry, education, festivals and customs statistics of target-speaking society." The little 'c' culture, meanwhile, "is the invisible and deeper meaning of an objective culture such as values, norms and suppositions" (Lee, 2009: 87).

Culture Shock

The concept of culture shock is attributed to/and conceptualized by Oberg (1960). The proponent defines it as "da malady and an occupational disease of many people who have been suddenly transplanted abroad" (1960, p.142). Oberg also described culture shock as "the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (p.142). The importance of symbols, signals, and signals, such as language, gestures, norms, and customs, are ignored by most in their daily life. Only when a person lives with different people in another environment is this importance recognized. In simple situations that seemed to appear evident in his country, he or she feels confused and anxious, as those signs of social communication and connections acquired throughout his/her life have changed in this new setting. Frustration and anxiety grow in such situations and serious problems arise regardless of how the person is. Cultural shock is not abnormal, but in some ways, a common phenomenon affects visitors when they arrive in a new environment. Oberg thinks that the new entrant experiences real problems with the temperature, the weather, and strange food. Other issues that contribute to increased anxiety and confusion are communications and other odd customs, besides these physical problems.

Cultural shock is defined in this study as a result of strain and anxiety due to contact with a new culture and the feelings of loss, misunderstanding, and impotence due to loss of usual cultural indications and the social norms. Newcomer(s) to culture (including migrants, residents, and international students) experience physical and psychological reactions involving a physiological, emotional, interpersonal, cognitive, and social element with consequences that are due to changes in socio-cultural relationships. People particularly those who do not have their homeland family or friends as a support network, could avoid social occurrences, show little to nothing but interest in what is at home, isolate themselves from others, complain about being tired, and end up being a sign of depression (Winkelman, 1994).

Original Article

International Student Adjustment to the U.K Culture

Leaving home for college students, particularly students studying abroad, is an important step. International students are the students who leave their homeland with the unique objective of studying and moving to another. The two terms "international students" and "foreign students" differ from each other. The first refers to students who cross borders for study, as has already been mentioned. The latter is, however, used to describe non-citizens registered outside of their home country in educational institutions. As an international student, two major conditions are necessary:

- 1) Permanent residence: The international student does not live permanently in the country of the host.
- 2) Prior training: international students must have adequate entry into their current host country level.

In the higher education field, pull & push factors to play a big role. International students rely on many Pull and Push-like factors, and numerous research studies have examined the motives of international students in pull & push. Pull factors are defined according to Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) as "factors that work within the home country and make the decision of a student to conduct an international study" (p.82). Pull factors can be the lack of a program of study in the country of residence, the failure to access home universities, and poor quality of education in the country of residence. Pull factors, however, are factors that attract international students such as interesting cultural events, living standards, socio-economic conditions, improved career prospects, and immigration opportunities in the host country or the institution that is involved in these events.

Cultural Communication Shock

1) Cultural Differences and International Students

Students from abroad have to understand and work within a new environment while maintaining their own identity. In their daily interactions, cultural differences are always present (Brilliant, 2000). Culture is a complex structure with many characteristics, including the identity of individuals and groups, values, language, communication, cognition, and patterns of behaviour (Hofstede, 1984). Our life, personalities, and our views of other people and civilizations are influenced by the culture we grow in. Our individual cultural identity is characterized by the role that certain traditions and religions play in our lives and by the values, standards, and economies of our home countries. There are various ways to categorize culture; the individualism-collectivism is the one dimension most frequently used (Brislin, 2000). In individual societies, individuals are more focused and independent of their own goals. This culture is found in most Westernized industrialized countries, but in relation to others and within one group are individuals of more traditional cultures (e.g., Africa, Asia, and the Latin United Kingdom).

2) Personality of International Students and Cultural Adjustment

While the research focuses on personality characteristics as influencing the adjustment of international students, empirical research has been very limited in particular. Poyrazli *et al.* (2002) surveyed the loneliness levels, assertiveness, academic self-efficacy, and adjustability of 122 international graduate students and found that assertiveness and academic self-efficacy were among variant students. The most important thing, particularly for Asian students when they enter the UK culture, is an affirmation. The author says that 56% of all international students in the United States are from Asia, and many of them are not used to express themselves assertively and are privately held, trying to deal with the problems themselves, and the article entitled "Woman Support Group for Asian International Students" (2003) by Journal of the United Kingdom's College Health (2003). At the same

Original Article

time, assertiveness in other cultures where women are not raised as assertive as men may be gender-sensitive. This finding shows that Asian international female students in particular could benefit from a support group for women. Such a support group could help you become more committed, if not essential, to adjusting and succeeding in the United States (A Women's Support Group, 2003).

3) Language Difficulties of International Students

Given the multi-faceted process of cultural shock and adaptation to a new culture, not only the duration of your stay, the age of arrival, and ethnic cultural identity, but also the language skills are important. The ability to communicate in English is one of the stress factors of international students coming to the USA. Many students may have studied English for several years, but when entering the UK, they realize that the difference between language study and communication is very significant. It should also be considered that ways of communicating and approaching people rely heavily on personality factors such as self-confidence, self efficiency, assertiveness, and extraversion (Poyrazli *et al.*, 2002). Students who are able to communicate in English may be better off than those who have difficulties. Language skills can also be an important part of the social skills of international students (Constantine *et al.*, 2004).

4) Social Support Network of International Students

Socially, successful communication depends not only on language but also on intercultural knowledge and skills. Students going abroad lose their social status, as they are unable to maintain their social role in their countries of origin. A new definition of who they are in a new culture is needed for environmental change. The adjustment of international students to college life and culture in the UK is a key issue for administrators from different universities. Counsellors on campuses are faced with the loss of social networks among these students and are encouraged and needed to help them to establish new social contacts (Hayes & Lin, 1994).

5) Difference in Weather

For many international students, it is a challenge to study in countries with time areas and very different weather conditions in their home countries. Its bodies need to adapt to the conditions of the weather. In the colder climate, female cultures such as the United Kingdom are somewhat more likely. Moderate and cold countries tend to be more individualistic. In this period of adaptation, many international students experience disorientation, confusion, and spiritual displacement (Myburgh *et al.*, 2002). Besides, problems associated with food acclimatization can make it diminish.

6) Information Management Systems

Managing information across various geographical boundaries is a challenging task because it is sometimes difficult for sojourners and students to identify, and even more difficult to value and deploy relevant information to gain a competitive advantage in their various institutions of learning (Dutta, 1997). An important role is played by incentives to share information. Research by Wolfe and Loraas (2008) showed that an incentive to encourage full information sharing should be considered sufficient whether the incentive is monetary or not. To conceptualize information various people from different cultures, use various metaphors. They may also sometimes use the same word, but this word can refer to completely different concepts of the concept of information. This means that knowledge and related terms mean different cultures. The differences in the information management system are therefore a source of cultural shock. The term information is understood differently by different cultures and the value of their knowledge differs considerably. Important aspects of

Original Article

academic activities are understood differently as success, accountability, and performances, which impact the performance of individuals involved in school activities.

7) Food

First of all, daily diet, particularly food, is the most obvious aspect of the issue: "Weight changes can indicate a person has a culturally shocking effect. Thus, the washing or cleaning can increase obsessively. They will not eat anything or eat anything less than before and will then think these kinds of foods don't suit their taste. (Barker, 2012) At the beginning of their new life, they'll eat nothing or eat less than before. For example, many international students, after a week or month, become thinner the first time they go abroad; they don't like Western food, not just cheap but not healthy people in Asian countries, who like rice, noodles or dumplings, like staple food, cook a few different vegetables or soup, that's their habit, of course. They will feel extremely homesick because they cannot get their ideal diet. At the start of a new environment, you cannot find shops in your native countries for your home food, the food price perhaps higher than in your country, and you will usually feel hungry and anxious to come home and enjoy an amazing dinner with your family members.

8) Difference in Transportation System

Transport in the United Kingdom is facilitated by various mediums such as road, air, rail, and water networks, which Nigerians are not typically used to. The majority of Nigerians are familiar with road transport but are exposed to culture shock by the variations of transportation options available in foreign countries. The need to show a boarding pass and identity in various transports poses a threat to Nigerian students who are typically not used to this (Hickman & Banister, 2007).

9) Differences in General Lifestyle

Differences in individual character, gender roles, and stigma or prejudice have varied in the scope of those social challenges (Hayes & Lin, 1994). International students with more extraversion have more successful relations and social support networks development and maintenance. Individuality and creativity, a stable identity, sensitivity towards others, social maturity, persistence, social intelligence, and instrumental competence characterize extraversion (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Gareis, 2000). In comparison to students who show shyness, lack of self-esteem, pessimism, cynical attitudes, intergroup anxiety, and rigid and common cultural characteristics, relations and social networks are less successful in developing and maintaining (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Gareis, 2000). Women were usually educated to be warmer, pity, and nutritious than men (Hayes & Lin, 1994). Women, therefore, had higher systems of support than men who were generally not identified as supporting (Hayes & Lin, 1994). This means comparatively less social difficulties for female international students than for their males (Hayes & Lin, 1994).

A) Language Proficiency

Their incapacity to speak the host language makes social participation in their home countries difficult for international students (Haiwen *et al.*, 2006). Most international students can pass standardized tests of proficiency but they cannot understand lectures, express ideas, or write reports. Language skills are a major factor in international students' academic success (LuzioLockett, 1998).

B) Academic Requirements and Expectations

The problems facing international students arise from the differences in academic requirements and expectations, the culture in the classroom, and the professorships and student relationships in the host countries as well as from

Original Article

the problems facing them (Wong, 2004). These challenges arise from differences in education systems, language skills, and culture between the USA and international students' home countries.

C) Alienation and Loneliness

International students found social challenges to be a big problem (Klomegah, 2006). Most of these students have a deep feeling of loss due to the distinction between their common identity and family and peers. This feeling of loss often led to loneliness, confidence loss, tension, less leisure time, and confusion about how you can enjoy your new environment (Gareis, 2000). As a result, international students have created strong, ethnic groups; they join various social networks over time, each serving a specific psychological role (Gareis, 2000). Mono-cultural networks consist of students from the same country (connationals) who embrace ethnic and cultural values. Secondary networks are created for special purposes with host nationals such as academic and professional support and a tertiary network consisting of other international students for recreational purposes (Gareis, 2000). While these cultural subgroups have enabled international students to develop a sense of belonging to others who have similar beliefs and values, they have the disadvantage of isolation from contact with nationals of host countries (Hayes & Lin, 1994). The host society is selectively engaged in economic and academic development according to John Arthur (2000) cited in Hume (2008). Cultural integration is not important to them.

D) Discrimination and Stereotypes

Host countries' prejudices and stereotypes of international students have further hindered these students' ability to develop, maintain and support relations with host country nationals (Constantine *et al.*, 2005). For instance, the researchers found that Ray and Lee (1989) in their study of international students from Nigeria discovered a negative relationship between the students' race and identification with African-Americans (Hayes & Lin, 1994). This study also found that other international groups like students from Iran, Taiwan, and Venezuela considered being a foreigner, rather than their race, the biggest obstacle to integration (Hayes & Lin, 1994). Alienation is at greatest risk in foreign students of non-Western and Eastern Europe who are of a different normative attitude from in the United States (Dadfar & Friedlander, 1982). Asian students followed by African students are the most at risk of alienation. Students in Africa have found significantly higher levels of depression than those in Asia.

E) Sojourner Homesickness

The topic of homesickness has received renewed theoretical and empirical attention, as mentioned in the previous chapter. In a review of the literature Hannigan (1999) identified several homesickness-related factors:

- 1) Language skills: the student is inevitably isolated by being unable to speak the host language and overly dependent on compatriots.
- 2) Jobs: almost all students have part-time jobs in certain countries, which provide their students with money, time structures, and useful working contacts. In the previous literature, it appears that part-time work is important as a source of self-respect and as an important opportunity for cultural learning.
- 3) Self-identification: All scientists have found that study abroad often takes place in a critical period in a young person's life cycle, notably to identify himself. Friends and families in the culture of the home help this process but if this support doesn't only increase homesickness, difficulty in establishing clear self-esteem and self-worthiness may continue to be a problem.

Original Article

4) Social bonds: Individual factors related to trust and integration may relate to the patterns of domestic disease in foreign students based upon ideas of attachment theory. Gender roles, skin colour, diet, and religious observance are all about how much integration into the local community is easy for foreign students.

5) Stress: The stress and consequent homesickness which foreign students experience depend frequently on realistic educational expectations, emotional characteristics, flexibility/tolerance, and the religious engagement.

Theoretical Framework

Lysgaard and Oberg's U-Curve Theory

Lysgaard and Oberg's U-Curve theory of adjustment is a prominent model in the study of cross cultural adaptation. First proposed by Norwegian sociologist Sverre Lysgaard in 1955, and later expanded by American anthropologist Kalervo Oberg, the theory outlines the stages of adjustment experienced by individuals when they move to a new cultural environment (Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960). Lysgaard developed a theory called "U-curve theory," by studying the experiences of Norwegian scholars in America in 1955. At first, scholars were optimistic that the new culture fascinated. Then they were frustrated, confused, and anxious. Finally, the researchers learned how to handle the cultural shock and adapt it to the new environment. "All expressed in a graphical form, the initial feeling of euphoria, the subsequent crisis, and the final adjustment gave a U pattern.

Also, the U-Curve theory's emphasis on the sequential nature of cultural adjustment can inform the design of communication strategies aimed at easing the adaptation process for Nigerian postgraduate students. Recognising that communication barriers often peak during the crisis phase, universities can implement proactive measures to facilitate effective intercultural communication. These measures might include language support programmes, intercultural communication workshops, and peer mentoring systems that pair new students with those who have successfully navigated the adjustment process. By addressing the specific communication needs at each stage of the theory, educational institutions can enhance the overall adaptation experience, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for Nigerian students in the UK.

Empirical Review

Kim (2007) conducted a quantitative study on the influence of the cultural shock caused by loan use for students across the racial and ethnic field and socio-economic status (as determined by parental dependent or independent status). There were 3,251 students at a four-year university, who were involved in the past study conducted by the National Center for Statistics on Education. The findings have shown that Black students are less likely to graduate with more loans. Thus, loan debt can have an influence on academic motivation and achievement. Clearly, it is important for Black students to be immersed in an atmosphere that stimulates student development. Ward and Rana-Deuba (2001) studied acculturation modes between the dimensions of the host country and the country of origin in a study carried out by 104 international residents in Nepal regarding its relationship to psycho-cultural adaptation. Increased psychological well-being while strong host national identifiers were associated with better social cultural adaptations predicted strong co-national identification. The relationship between psychological and socio-cultural adaptation changes according to acculturation circumstances—the relationship increases as the host culture becomes more closely linked or integrated. Those who adopt an integrated style have experienced considerably less psychological distress than others using Berry's four acculturation strategies. Answers who preferred the style of assimilation reported less social problems.

Original Article

Methodology

A survey research design was adopted for this study. The survey research design was also considered because it was more economical than other designs for the population of the study that was widely dispersed. The population of this study is made up of Nigerian postgraduate students in Scotland, United Kingdom. According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (2023), the number of Nigerian postgraduate students in the United Kingdom between the years 2020/2021 through to 2023/2024 is 51,815. This data was obtained from the Higher Education Statistics Agency in June, 2024. According to Keyton’s (2001) recommendation, the sample size of this study is 381. For a population size of 51,815 that fell between 50,000 and 100,000, as suggested levels in the Keyton’s table, the corresponding sample of 381 respondents for a population of 51,815 is applicable to this study. The snowball sampling was used in different stages. The snowball sampling technique, also referred to as the "chain method" as per Polit-O'Hara and Beck (2006), offers an effective and economical approach to reach Nigerian postgraduates in the UK who might otherwise be challenging to locate. In this methodology, the researcher initially identifies a few participants, typically through snowball sampling, and subsequently inquires if they could recommend other individuals who share similar perspectives or circumstances who might be interested in participating in this study. The questionnaire was the gathering instruments for the study. Data were gathered using the copies of the questionnaire which were administered on the respondents virtually. This included emails, Google form document as well as online surveys application. Quantitative data collection and analysis was adopted in this study and computation such as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Percentages were used determining the values to the responses.

Result and Discussions Table 1: Types of Culture Shocks

Type of culture shocks	Frequency	Percentage (%)
(n=381)		
Desperate/ Depressed	135	35.4
Anxiety/ Fear	86	22.6
Homesickness/ Isolation	119	31.2
Loneliness/Confusion	41	10.8

The data in table 1 reveal that desperation, depression, anxiety, fear, homesickness, isolation and loneliness, and confusion are the types of culture shocks Nigeria post graduate students experience in the United Kingdom. Table 2: Environmental Shock

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	SPD	Decision
Much colder and wetter in the United Kingdom	187 (49.1)	41 (10.8)	51 (13.4)	2.82 (26.8)	10.92		Agree
Slightly colder and wetter in the United Kingdom	81 (21.3)	126 (33.1)	95 (24.9)	79 (20.7)	2.55	1.044	Agree
No Significant difference	0 (0)	0 (0)	69 (18.1)	312 (81.9)	1.18	0.386	Disagree
Total	268 (23.4)	167 (14.6)	215 (18.8)	493 (43.1)	2.18	1.218	Disagree

Original Article

Data shown in table 2 shows that respondents agree that environmental conditions, as it is much colder and wetter (and slightly colder and wetter, because these means are greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. However, respondents disagreed that there is no significant difference in weather conditions because the mean is less than the criterion mean of 2.5.

Table 3: Factors that lead to Culture Shock

Items (n=381)	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	STD	Decision
Accent barriers in communication	120 (31.5)	150 (39.4)	60 (15.7)	51 (13.4)	2.89	0.981	Agree
Different cultural norms and values	94 (24.7)	93 (24.4)	103 (27)	91 (23.9)	2.50	1.106	Agree
Lack of social support	88 (23.1)	103 (27)	93 (24.4)	97 (25.5)	2.48	1.106	Disagree
Differences in Rules/ Laws	66 (17.3)	160 (42)	77 (20.2)	78 (20.5)	2.56	1.002	Agree
Total	368 (24.2)	506 (33.3)	333 (21.8)	317 (20.7)	2.61	1.049	Agree

It is clear that Table 3 reveals several factors contribute to culture shock among Nigerian postgraduate students in the UK, with accent barriers in communication being the most significant. A high percentage of respondents agree or strongly agree that accent barriers impact their communication, supported by a mean score of 2.89. Different cultural norms and values are also notable, with nearly half of the respondents acknowledging their impact, and a mean score of 2.50. However, the lack of social support received mixed responses, with a mean score of 2.48 indicating slight disagreement. Differences in rules and laws are recognized by a majority as contributing to culture shock, reflected in a mean score of 2.56. The overall mean score of 2.61 across all factors suggests a moderate agreement that these elements collectively contribute to culture shock. The standard deviation values indicate varying degrees of response variability, with accent barriers and social support showing more spread in opinions.

Table 4: Factors, with the Greatest Impact on Personal Experience of Culture Shock

Items (n=381)	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	STD	Decision
Accent barriers: Many Nigerian postgraduate students do not speak English with most of the accents used in Britain like the Scottish accent and the Liverpool accent. This can make it difficult for them to communicate with their classmates, professors, and other people with ease.	106 (27.8)	107 (28.1)	107 (28.1)	107 (28.1)	2.31	1.067	Disagree

Original Article

Different cultural norms and values:68	189	89	35 (9.2)	2.76	0.851	Agree
British norms around punctuality,(17.8)	(49.6)	(23.4)				
queuing, personal space, politeness, and formality may contrast with Nigerian norms. The typical British reserve might also be different from the often more expressive and warm Nigerian style of interaction.						
Lack of social support: Nigerian65	100	189	27 (7.1)	2.53	0.857	Agree
postgraduate students often lack	(17.1)	(26.2)	(49.6)			
social support when they first arrive in the UK.						
Differences in Rules/ Laws: 132	249	0	0	3.35	0.476	Agree
Differences in traffic rules, laws, and (34.6)	(65.4)	(0)	(0)	regulations, and the strict adherence to them in the UK, can also be a part of the culture shock experience.		
Total 331	645	379	169	2.75	0.92	Agree
(21.7)	(42.3)	(24.9)	(11.1)			

In Table 4 with the greatest impact on personal experience of culture shock is differences in rules/ laws follows by different cultural norms and values, lack of social support and accent barriers in communication respectively, because these means are greater than the criterion mean of 2.5.

Table 5: Effect of Experience of Communication-related Culture Shock on Academic Performance

Items (n=381)	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	STD	Decision
Communication-related culture shock can have a negative impact on the academic performance of Nigerian postgraduate students.	16(4.2)	243(63.8)	122(32)	0(0)	2.72	0.534	Agree
Communication-related culture shock can lead to misunderstandings and conflict with professors and classmates, which can make it difficult for Nigerian postgraduate students to learn and succeed in their studies.	127(33.3)	126(33.1)	128(33.6)	0(0)	3.00	0.819	Agree

Original Article

Communication-related culture shock can cause Nigerian postgraduate students to feel stressed, anxious, and isolated, which can also impact their academic performance.	66(17.3)	180(47.2)	65(17.1)	70(18.4)	2.64	0.982	Agree
Nigerian postgraduate students who are experiencing communication-related culture shock may need additional support from their professors, classmates, and the university to succeed academically.	116(30.4)	264(69.3)	1(0.3)	0(0)	3.30	0.465	Agree
Total	325(21.3)	813(53.3)	316(20.7)	70(4.6)	2.92	0.795	Agree

Table 5, results showed that respondents agreed that communication-related culture shock can have a negative impact on the academic performance of Nigerian postgraduate students, can lead to misunderstandings and conflict with professors and classmates, which can make it difficult for Nigerian postgraduate students to learn and succeed in their studies, can cause Nigerian postgraduate students to feel stressed, anxious, and isolated, which can also impact their academic performance and Nigerian postgraduate students who are experiencing communication-related culture shock may need additional support from their professors, classmates, and the university to succeed academically, because these means are greater than the criterion mean of 2.5.

Table 6: Effect of Culture Shock on Ability to Succeed

Items	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	Mean	STD	Decision
(n=381)							
Is more difficult for me to understand lectures, participate in class discussions, and complete assignments.	17(4.5)	178(46.7)	93(24.4)	93(24.4)	2.31	0.891	Disagree
Feel isolated and homesick, which has made it harder to focus on my studies.	26(6.8)	221(58)	18(4.7)	116(30.4)	2.41	0.995	Disagree

Original Article

Work harder than I thought I would to succeed in the academic environment in the United Kingdom due to culture shock.	135(9.2)	209(54.9)	24(6.3)	113(29.7)	2.44	1.013	Disagree
Negative impact on my ability to succeed in the academic environment in the United Kingdom.	37(9.7)	214(56.2)	19(5)	111(29.1)	2.46	1.014	Disagree

Total	115(7.5)	822(53.9)	154(10.1)	433(28.4)	2.41	0.98	Disagree
-------	----------	-----------	-----------	-----------	------	------	----------

It is clear from Table 6, results revealed that respondents disagreed that culture shock has made it more difficult for them to understand lectures, participate in class discussions, and complete assignments, feel isolated and homesick, which has made it harder to focus on their studies, had to work harder than they thought they would to succeed and had a negative impact on their ability to succeed in the academic environment in the United Kingdom, because these means are less than the criterion mean of 2.5. In summary, the data highlights that although a significant number of Nigerian postgraduate students face challenges related to culture shock, the overall impact on their ability to succeed academically is perceived as moderate rather than severe.

Table 7: Effect of Culture Shock on Postgraduates Interactions with Professors and/or Academic Staff

Items	(n=381)	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	STD	Decision
interactions with professors and academic staff	35	35(9.2)	109(28.6)	125(32.8)	112(29.4)	2.18	0.959	Disagree
understand professors and academic staff, participate in class discussions, and ask questions.	23	23(6)	114(29.9)	120(31.5)	124(32.5)	2.09	0.927	Disagree
feel isolated and homesick, which can make it harder for them to connect with their professors and academic staff.	21	21(5.5)	234(61.4)	6(1.6)	120(31.5)	2.41	0.992	Disagree

Original Article

Nigerian postgraduates1(0.3)	252(66.1)	128(33.6)	0(0)	2.67	0.478	Agree	
who are experiencing							
culture shock may							
need additional							
support from their							
professors and							
academic staff to							
succeed academically							
Total	80(5.2)	709(46.5)	379(24.9)	356(23.4)	2.34	0.892	Disagree

Table 7 result revealed that respondents do not agree that interaction with their professors and academic staff, understanding their professors and academic staff, participation in class discussions, and asking questions, feeling isolated and homesick, which can make it harder for them to connect with their professors and academic staff. However, respondents agree that Nigerian postgraduates who are experiencing culture shock may need additional support from their professors and academic staff to succeed academically, because the mean is greater than the criterion mean of 2.5.

Table 8: Resources for Adjusting to Culture Shock in the United Kingdom

Items (n=381)	SA(%)	A(%)	D(%)	SD(%)	Mean	STD	Decision
University counselling services	93(24.4)	101(26.5)	98(25.7)	89(23.4)	2.52	1.099	Agree
Community resources	105(27.6)	59(15.5)	113(29.7)	104(27.3)	2.43	1.16	Disagree
Online resources	111(29.1)	115(30.2)	47(12.3)	108(28.3)	2.60	1.18	Agree
Nigeria consular services	10(2.6)	116(30.4)	69(18.1)	186(48.8)	1.87	0.94	Disagree
Total	319(20.9)	391(25.7)	327(21.5)	487(32)	2.36	1.135	Disagree

Results in Table 8 reveal that resources available for Nigerian undergraduate to adapt to culture shock in the United Kingdom are University counselling services and online resources because these means are greater than the criterion mean of 2.5. However, respondent do not agree that community resources, and Nigeria consular services are useful resources available because these means are less than the criterion mean of 2.5. In summary, while university counselling and online resources are seen as somewhat helpful, community resources and Nigerian consular services are perceived as less effective.

Discussions and Findings

Research question one: What type of communication culture shocks do Nigeria postgraduate students experience in the United Kingdom?

From the analysis of the data gathered for the study, the findings indicate that Nigerian postgraduate students face a myriad of communication culture shocks in the UK. Differences in communication styles, accents, dialects, social interactions, and non-verbal communication collectively contribute to a complex web of challenges. These aspects, as revealed in the results, highlight the need for targeted interventions to ease the adaptation and enhance

Original Article

the students' academic and social experiences. This finding is in agreement with the concept of culture shock and the Communication Accommodation Theory as a learning experience, encouraging students to adapt their communication styles to the UK environment, but not requiring them to abandon their own culture agreeing with Oberg (1960), can be seen as a temporary skill development for success among Nigerian postgraduates in the UK.

Research question two: What factors lead to culture shock that Nigerian postgraduate students experience in the United Kingdom?

It is clear from the data displayed in Table 4.3 that respondents agreed different cultural norms and values (including punctuality, personal space, formality, and expression) and differences in rules/laws (traffic regulations, strict adherence) are significant factors leading to culture shock.

This aligns with Oberg's (1960) U-curve theory, where initial excitement gives way to disorientation due to adapting to unfamiliar cultural expectations. This highlights the clash between familiar Nigerian customs and unfamiliar British cultural expectations.

Initially, Nigerian postgraduates may experience an excitement and honeymoon phase (euphoria) due to the novelty of the UK environment and new opportunities. This aligns with the initial rise in the Oberg's U-curve theory. As the honeymoon phase wears off, postgraduates may encounter the disorientation and challenges of adapting to different cultural norms and legal frameworks. This corresponds to the sharp dip in the U-curve, marked by frustration, confusion, and potentially stress.

Respondents disagreed that accent barriers in communication and lack of social support significantly impact culture shock. While communication challenges may exist, they seem less impactful than the clash of cultural norms and legal frameworks. Similarly, although social support might be valuable, it doesn't appear as crucial as adapting to fundamentally different cultural and legal environments. This suggests that adapting to a new legal system and regulations has a greater impact on culture shock than communication barriers or social support. This highlights the importance of universities providing guidance on navigating unfamiliar legal frameworks, potentially reducing the stress of adjustment.

Nevertheless, the respondents concur that among the agreed-upon factors, differences in rules/laws had the greatest impact on personal culture shock experiences. Navigating and adapting to a new legal system and regulations likely feels more pressing and impactful than adjusting to social interactions or communication nuances. Kim (2001) supports the notion that cultural norm discrepancies are significant contributors to culture shock. Kim's study found that Korean students in the US experienced culture shock due to differences in communication styles, social etiquette, and academic expectations. This parallels the challenges faced by Nigerian students adapting to British norms in the provided text.

The findings also suggest a need for targeted support mechanisms aimed at helping Nigerian students understand and navigate cultural norms and legal differences. Workshops, orientation programs, and peer mentoring initiatives could be helpful in this regard. While communication and social support may not be the key drivers of culture shock, they still play a role. Initiatives fostering intercultural interactions and building social networks within the university and local community could still be valuable in easing the transition. Oladejo and Ojo (2011) supports the importance of pre-departure workshops focusing on British cultural norms and expectations, particularly on aspects like communication styles, punctuality, and personal space for African students.

Original Article

Research question three: In which ways does culture shock affect academic pursuits of Nigerian postgraduate students in the United Kingdom?

Data gathered from the study, indicates that the respondents agreed that communication-related culture shock can negatively impact academic performance, lead to misunderstandings and conflict, and cause stress, anxiety, and isolation. This aligns with Ward *et al.* (2001) who found communication difficulties to be a major stressor for international students, impacting both academic performance and social integration. This highlights the crucial role of communication in successful academic engagement.

This finding suggests a need for interventions that address communication challenges, such as: Language support workshops, intercultural communication workshops: Increase understanding of British communication styles and expectations, Peer mentoring programs. Respondents also disagreed that culture shock in general made it harder to understand lectures, participate in discussions, or complete assignments. This could be due to individual resilience, adaptability, or prior academic experience.

However, respondents did recognize the potential effect of isolation and homesickness on focus and well-being. This suggests a need for support systems focused on fostering connections with other Nigerian students and local communities to combat isolation and provide access to counselling and support services to address stress and anxiety related to culture shock. While respondents generally did not report difficulties interacting with professors, they agreed that Nigerian students experiencing communication culture shock might need additional support to succeed academically. This highlights the importance of faculty and staff awareness of communication culture shock challenges and their potential impact on student success. This awareness can lead to adapting teaching styles and providing additional support to students experiencing communication related culture shock.

Conclusions

The study highlights the multifaceted nature of culture shock experienced by postgraduate students in the UK. The predominant dimensions of this phenomenon include feelings of desperation, anxiety, homesickness, and confusion. These emotional and psychological challenges underscore the significant impact of cultural transition on international students. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive support systems within educational institutions to facilitate smoother cultural adjustments and enhance the overall wellbeing of postgraduate students. the findings emphasise the need for targeted interventions to mitigate the negative effects of culture shock and promote a more inclusive and supportive academic environment.

This study underscores the profound impact that diverse cultural norms and regulations have on the experiences of postgraduate students in the United Kingdom. These influences shape various aspects of students' academic and social lives, often posing significant challenges to their adjustment and overall wellbeing. To enhance the postgraduate experience, it is essential for educational institutions to recognise and address these cultural differences through comprehensive support programmes and inclusive policies. By fostering a more culturally sensitive environment, institutions can help mitigate the challenges faced by international students, thereby promoting their academic success and personal growth.

This study establishes the critical impact of communication-related culture shock on the academic performance of postgraduate students. The challenges associated with this type of culture shock result in conflicts, elevated stress levels, and hindered interactions with professors and staff. These factors collectively impede students' ability to fully engage in their academic pursuits and achieve their potential. To address these issues, it is

Original Article

imperative for educational institutions to implement targeted strategies aimed at improving cross-cultural communication skills and fostering an inclusive environment. Enhanced support systems and training for both students and staff can mitigate the adverse effects of communication-related culture shock, ultimately contributing to more supportive and effective academic experience.

Recommendations

Given the findings and conclusion reached in this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Universities in the UK should develop and implement comprehensive cultural orientation programs for Nigerian postgraduate students before and during their stay in the UK. These programs should address communication styles, accents, non-verbal cues, and social norms. Also, Nigerian postgraduate students unions or associations in the UK should provide practical insights into the specific challenges faced by Nigerian students and tailor the programs accordingly.
2. Universities in the United Kingdom should also organize workshops focusing on legal frameworks, cultural norms, and values unique to the UK. These sessions should help Nigerian postgraduate students understand and adapt to the rules/laws, enhancing their awareness of the British legal system and cultural expectations. Collaboration with legal experts and cultural specialists in the UK and Nigeria can enrich these workshops.
3. Universities in the UK counselling services should offer culturally sensitive and linguistically diverse support because the primary responsibility lies with the universities as they manage the counselling services and online resources. Universities can also improve support for Nigerian students by working with communication professionals. These professionals can help train counsellors in intercultural communication and active listening skills, allowing them to better understand students from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, communication professionals can collaborate with content developers to create clear, concise, and culturally appropriate online resources specifically tailored for Nigerian students. Their expertise ensures information is effectively communicated and considers cultural differences.

References

- Adebola, O. (2021). Navigating cultural transitions: Strategies employed by Nigerian students in UK universities. *Journal of International Education Research*, 17(3), 122 – 124.
- Andrade, M. S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities: Adjustment factors. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 5(2), 131 – 154.
- Brilliant, J. J. (2000). Issues in counselling immigrant college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 24(8), 577-586.
- Brislin, R. (2000). *Understanding culture's influence on behaviour* (2nd ed.). Harcourt College Publishers.
- Brown, L., & Holloway, I. (2008). The adjustment journey of international postgraduate students at an English university: An ethnographic study. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 7(2), 232 -249.

Original Article

- Constantine, M., Okazaki, S., & Usey, S. O. (2004). Self-concealment, social self-efficacy, acculturative stress, and depression in African, Asian, and Latin American international college students. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 74(3), 230-241.
- Dutta, S. (1997). *Family business in India*. SAGE Publications Pvt. Limited.
- Ezeh, C. (2020). Academic writing challenges faced by Nigerian postgraduate students in the UK. *International Journal of educational Research*, 18(4), 245 -260.
- Gu, Q. (2010). Variations in beliefs and practices: Teaching English in cross-cultural contexts. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 10(1), 32-53.
- Hayes, R. L., & Lin, H. (1994). Coming to America: Developing social support systems for international students. *Journal of Multicultural Counselling and Development*, 22(1), 7-16.
- Hickman, R., & Banister, D. (2007). Looking over the horizon: Transport and reduced CO2 emissions in the UK by 2030. *Transport Policy*, 14(5), 377-387.
- Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Sage Publications.
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., & Minkov, M. (2010). *Cultures and organisations: Software of the mind: Intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival*. McGraw Hill.
- Kim, Y. H. (2001). Acculturation and adaptation of Korean graduate students in the United States. *International Education*, 30(2), 119-134.
- Leask, B. (2009). Using formal and informal curricula to improve interactions students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(2), 205 – 221.
- Lee, C.-F. (2009). An investigation of factors determining the study abroad destination choice: A case study of Taiwan. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 18(4), 362-381.
- Luzio-Lockett, A. (1998). The squeezing effect: The cross-cultural experience of international students. *Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 26(2), 209-223.
- Lysgaard, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fulbright grantees visiting the United States. *International Social Science Bulletin*, 7, 45 – 51.
- Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural shock: adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology*, (7), 77-182.
- Olanrewaju, M. (2019). Communication culture shock: Nigerian students' experiences in UK universities. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 48(1), 15 – 30.

Original Article

- Poyrazli, S., McPherson, R., Arbona, C., Pisecco, S., & Nora, A. (2002). Relation between assertiveness, academic self-efficacy, and psychosocial adjustment among international graduate students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 43(5), 632-641.
- Sawir, E., Marginson, S., Deumert, A., Nyland, C., & Ramia, G. (2008). Loneliness and international students: An Australian study. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 12(2), 148 – 180.
- Spencer-Oatey, H., & Franklin, P. (2009). *Intercultural interaction: A multidisciplinary approach to intercultural communication*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ward, C., Bochner, S., & Furnham, A. (2001). The acculturation of international students in Britain: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 25(3), 391-402.
- Wolfe, C., & Loraas, T. (2008). Knowledge sharing: The effects of incentives, environment, and person. *Journal of Information Systems*, 22(2), 53-76.
- Wong, J. K. (2004). Are the learning styles of Asian international students culturally or contextually based? *International Education Journal*, 4(4), 154-166.