Challenges Faced by International Students in Pursuing Doctoral Study: A Case Study of Saudi Students in American Higher Education Programs

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Many international students aspire to seek admission to higher education and pursue their studies, especially in the US. Therefore, institutions in general and American institutions in particular must realize the students' perspectives and offer support so they can face their unique problems during their education. This review aims to look into specific learning and adaptation-related experiences of international higher education students during a challenging transition to a large, public research university in the United States. The study was conducted at an American university in the southwest. The program enrolls students worldwide seeking master's and doctoral degrees in languages and social studies. Students may select from a wide range of concentrations, such as teaching English as a Second Language, bilingual education, and social justice, to name a few. These students are often encouraged to study interdisciplinary subjects to improve their understanding of the realm of education and how it is affected by society and politics. Professors teaching these interdisciplinary subjects who descend from various countries and teach in multiple disciplines hold controversial and sometimes even contradicting visions on education and research

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issues. This review explored the challenges and problems that Saudi international students face while pursuing higher education. A qualitative data collection and analysis method was followed to arrive at conclusions. 6 Saudi students were interviewed in detail. Study findings revealed various academic, social, cultural, financial, and family implications. It is concluded that Saudi international students encounter specific difficulties in US institutions, such as mentoring hardships, adjustment to a new educational system, lack of administrative support, and communication gaps between the supervisors and the researchers.

1. INTRODUCTION

The number of international students studying in the United States of America (nearly one million for the academic year of 2014-2015) exceeded the total number of international students studying abroad in other nations altogether [1,2]. Wetherill and Clayton [2] indicated in their study that the population of international students represents 4% of the total population of students in the United States of America. However, nations like the United Kingdom and Australia have succeeded in obtaining and sustaining higher retention rates of international students than the United States of America [3]. As an international graduate student who pursued his higher education in the United States of America, what factors are at play that contributed to such a paradox between America and other nations in terms of the retention rate? What supporting components need to be added or fixed for international students in the U.S. but were successively made available and efficiently functioning in other nations? Why do international students in the United States of America seem to need help in their academic journey? Is the problem pertinent to academic readiness?

From my own experience, I believe that a significant and logical reason behind the presence of those international students in America (or any other nation) is their exemplary academic excellence back home; otherwise, they would not have been nominated, selected, and sponsored by their governments to represent their nations in international universities. A considerable number of international students, at least those I was privileged to meet, have reached a certain degree of fluency and eligibly passed some achievement tests that qualified and legitimized their admitted status at American schools. Therefore, the probable cause of such a struggle that some international students in the U.S. endure goes beyond their academic aptitudes. It is probably factors that deal with the new educational structure, academic life, and social world the international students have just entered [4]. Their struggle revolves around issues intersecting with their cultural and national boundaries and expectations more than the lack of a specific set of academic skills. It was noted in the recent past that Saudi students face many challenges of different types: cultural issues, adaptation problems, family responsibilities, financial crises, general health, social and emotional problems, and language and academic challenges [5]. While Alasmari [6] confirmed adaptation-related issues.

1.1 Problem Statement

This paper endeavors to critically tap into some obstacles and issues that international students are confronting in the United States of America. Its ultimate goal is to help school administrators and academic advising services better understand this group of students. It also aims to assist the school administrators in tailoring their future initiatives towards more equitable comprehension and inclusion of this minority group of students and to alleviate the issues and obstacles they face. It mainly studies the advisor-advisee relationship and communication breakdowns/malfunctions between international students and their committee members or advisors. As a graduate student, I have realized that international students are more likely to experience more hardships than their American fellows due to cultural differences and the education system. So, this paper strives to inform stakeholders (school administrators, faculty, and international students alike) and disclose some of the hardships lived by and discrimination against international students regarding their access to fair use of school advisory resources. All school resources should guide students' professional development in a way that helps them 'read the world' in which they live.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 A Review of Multiple Factors

An international student's ability to succeed in an American college no longer solely depends on his/her intellectuality, intelligence, or linguistic competence. It is also contingent upon and intertwined with so many factors. The path to success in foreign universities is more complicated than it appears. From my experience, it takes more than a sophisticated and well-formed set of academic skills to persist in the American educational system. I, and others with whom I was pleased and privileged to meet, have felt a sense of alienation and frustration, especially in our first year of studies. These sentiments were echoed by first-generation doctoral students, as revealed by [7]. A sense of belonging, which academic advisors can cultivate, is a very influential factor [8]. Affiliating with some community dramatically enhances one's self-esteem and efficacy. As a human being, feeling and gaining that sense of belonging and respect is significant to succeed in a context whereby all surroundings, communication patterns, and expectations look challenging and entirely novel. The advisors' appreciation, acceptance, and respect of the international students' backgrounds enhance the international students' outcomes on the personal and academic levels alike [9]. The findings of the latter accord with others in which effort, personal and academic development, and improved learning outcomes were found to be three influential factors that an advisor of international students can inspire and accomplish by being more attentive and appreciative of the students' backgrounds and funds of knowledge [10].

The criticality of the college level is emphasized in this article because, to me, a college is a place where first-hand unfamiliar spaces and identities are enormously created, given the increasingly multi-ethnic, racial, and cultural demographic in which one has to blend [2]. In higher education programs level, international students are often obligated to cross the boundaries of their comfort zones to engage in unexplored experiences that could challenge their ability to thrive academically. New campuses and novel national experiences can be overwhelming [4]. This unfamiliarity that international students undergo in college threatens and undermines their life chances because the college level is a critical crossroad. One avenue for students to escape this maze is to utilize counseling/advising resources through which navigating this complex educational system becomes possible, as Petress explained that there is a close connection between academic performance and comfort level. He mentioned some crucial factors contributing to the student's quality of life and achievement [11].

In a very racially and ethnically diverse educational context, as is the case of any campus in most American universities, it is expected that a decent advising service is made available for students, which is, to a large degree, the case in most American schools in the U.S. However, the fact that these counselling services were made 'accessible' may not necessarily evoke positive outcomes. Perry, Weatherford, and Lausch [12] have revealed that international students have experienced more difficulties collaborating with their academic advisors. Their study produced results that corroborate the findings of a great deal of the previous work of [13,14], who showed that international students exhibited more concerns about their advisor-advisee relationship than their western-students peers.

The heterogeneousness of students' cultural backgrounds and expectations of what a decent counselling experience should entail and look like represents a challenge to school administrators. This heterogeneity results from the distinct dispositions and habitus that students bring with them. What I mean by habitus is "the embodiment of what one brings to bear on a particular moment of being with the other in life and classroom: all the intellectual tools, languages, perspectives, social practices, and so on that one has acquired or learned" [15].

It is uncommon for students' preferences on advising to come to a consensus. Research has revealed that some students found it more beneficial when advisors are known for their technical competencies rather than personal merits [16]. Other students value a healthy advisor-advisee relationship at the expense of other technical competencies [17]. Nevertheless, regardless of how inconsistent the students' preferences for advising are, research has shown some broad grounds amidst these diverse expectations of advisors. These broad expectations are twofold: An advisor as an academic developer and a personality mentor. These two merits are what students usually seek out in their advisors. However, to some extent, literature has highlighted these two features for

advisors to acknowledge. Why is it still a fact that breakdowns between international students and their advisors are still persistent and prevalent? This inquiry is addressed in this paper.

2.2 Socio-cultural Problems

It has always been challenging for international students to settle down in a country with a different language and culture from their home country, especially when the educational setup is unfamiliar. [18]. However, Jameel et al. [19] found that most Saudi students were finally happy in Australia.

2.3 Financial Issues

Financial problems are always considered significant because students almost always need money for different reasons. In this context, it is not that crucial for Saudi students because most of them receive funds as financial aid from the Saudi government [20]. Aldossari [21] and Alhajjuj [22] conducted similar studies and supported Alremaih's findings. However, Alhajjuj [22] and Alremaih [20] noted that married students having children are more likely to face financial challenges because they have to utilize the facility of nurseries for their young kids. Albeshir [5] also confirmed specific difficulties, including finance, which Saudi international students face in the US.

2.4 Family Responsibilities

Most doctoral students live with their families during their studies in the US. Males have multiple family responsibilities that they want to do, but it is hard, especially at the beginning of the study, to find the time that they need to do household chores. Female students face issues, too. Managing time between their responsibilities toward family and education can be challenging. Female international Saudi students said they need nurseries to keep their kids safe while they are away for studies on campuses. However, many nurseries are too expensive and difficult to afford, especially in populated cities [23,20].

3. METHODS OF THE STUDY

3.1 Setting of the Study

The study was conducted at an American university in the southwest. The program enrolls students worldwide seeking master's and doctoral degrees in languages and social studies. Students may select from a wide range of concentrations, such as teaching English as a Second Language, bilingual education, and social justice, to name a few. These students are often encouraged to study interdisciplinary subjects to improve their understanding of the realm of education and how it is affected by society and politics. Professors teaching these interdisciplinary subjects who descend from various countries and are majoring in various disciplines hold controversial and sometimes even contradicting visions on education and research issues. So, students find themselves urged to encounter different social, cultural, and even academic and scientific challenges, having to deal directly with professors unrelated to their academic interests or beliefs. The study followed the qualitative method for data collection and analysis.

3.2 Participants

A group of six international students were recruited in 2016. These students were pursuing their higher education at an American university in the Midwestern region and descended from different ethnicities and genders. The group comprised three males and females. All of them have advanced in their coursework phase. Four of them had their program of studies finished and the other two were about to complete their courses. All but one of the participants were married and had teaching experiences of at least four years. Four of the participants have children. All participants are in their mid-thirties of age. The participants' advanced position in their programs of study will inform the tentative findings in this project as the participants have experienced and gained adequate and rich knowledge about the nature of academic relationships in the American educational structure. It is also worth mentioning that the participants and the researcher shared a solid academic relationship. We used to attend many conferences and professional developmental workshops that the school used to organize. The next pseudonyms refer to the participants in the findings/discussion sections: Michel, John, Zizo, Suzan, Sarah, and Brittney.

3.3 Instrument and Implementation

To collect data for this paper, an 'interview' was designed and implemented to collect qualitative data. As a researcher, I wanted to collectively discuss and shed light on some critical aspects

that some of us (international students) might have or are currently experiencing. I offered the interview at different times and days to best suit each one's time. The participants have agreed on the location and date for the interview. Unofficial consent forms (invitations) were also sent to the participants. The participants were also informed that our discussion would be recorded. Two of them attended the interview, while the rest responded via Zoom.

3.4 Research Questions

The research aimed to explore the following questions:

1. What challenges, if any, do international students experience in graduate studies?
2. Are you content with the academic support you received in your graduate studies?
3. To what extent do Saudi international students face financial concerns?

4. RESULTS

4.1 Analysis of Qualitative Data

Data were recorded, transcribed, and coded as per the norms of thematic analysis. Thus, themes were finalized based on the objectives and research questions of the study. Five major themes were finalized, and analyses were done accordingly.

4.2 Thematic Analysis of the Interview

Theme.1- Mentoring hardships & cultural differences: Based on the interview responses and available literature it can be said that there are many educational differences between the two countries such as the U.S. and Saudi Arabia [24,22,25,26]. It also was noted that various academic challenges arose due to many reasons, both cultural and academic of kind. On the one hand, students found difficulties selecting their academic advisors because the latter had a rigid set of culturally related expectations that international students still needed to meet. So, most participants experienced disappointment with the quality of advisory services they received from their academic mentors. It took a long psychologically daunting process to get a mentor who accepted the participants for who they were. On the other hand, many participants still had to compromise many of their research interests to get accepted. Many participants agreed that their mentors needed to see more

added value in the research areas suggested by international students. It was uncommon in American education to explore the topics that interest international students. This process of being different from the "norms" of what is expected to be worth exploring in the American higher educational system costs the participants psychologically. Many participants felt that power dynamics infiltrated and, therefore, they felt unsupported academically. It is also a fact that while seeking admission to American universities, the candidates keep such differences in mind, and are ready to accommodate or adjust [24,25] unless the issue becomes 'religious' which a Muslim may not tolerate [23]. It took the participants some time to settle and adjust to studying in the American higher education system. Adjustment issues are not only associated with cultural factors but also linguistic as some participants struggled to meet the expectations of their mentors in using the English language for academic purposes [27].

Theme.2- Family Issues and Dependence: Most of the Saudi students at higher education level study in the US when they are married. They depend on each other. Sometimes they feel more independent in the US. Females felt more independent in their daily lives [28-30,24]. While they are independent to a great extent, It becomes challenging for some female students to balance family responsibilities and studies. In this connection, the female students were found as more indifferent towards their para-academic responsibilities because they were overburdened with their studies. Out of many challenges for female students, one is related to children's education as there are not many available nurseries or elementary schools near the international students' residences [23,20].

Theme.3- Financial difficulties: Financial issues are not a big issue for Saudi international students studying in the US for those who get funds from the Saudi government [20-22]. However, those with additional family responsibilities face real financial challenges, especially those with young children to be educated [20,22]. Nursery in the US is not free like in the KSA. Moreover, not all students can work part-time due to regulations and a shortage of time.

Theme.4- Academic challenges related to the English language: English language education has been noticed as one of the crucial challenges for Saudi International students [31-

34,24-26]. Many Saudi students agreed that their inadequate English language proficiency has adversely affected their academic achievement [35]. In addition, reviews of studies revealed that thesis and project writing is also a challenge, especially for those who could improve at academic writing [24,22,34,36,37,26]. As perceived by many professors, the academic writing skills of many scholars could be better; therefore, supervisors are not entirely happy [24,38,37]. On the other hand, some researchers have explored that by the time students advance and progress, they face fewer academic reading issues [32,24].

English language issues are related to all the skills, including listening and speaking. The fluency issue is quite crucial [35]. Language anxiety and hesitation are other factors that hamper such skills, especially when there is a big audience [39,22,33,34].

Theme.5-Academic Admission: Another significant challenge Saudi students encounter is admission approval from American universities. It has been noticed that some students are not satisfied with many universities' administration in the U.S. and their admission requirements, such as the high score in the TOEFL, which is very difficult for quite many Saudis [38,40]. International Saudi students have felt a lack of quality support and coordination.

5. DISCUSSION, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Discussion

Many of the critical aspects that were taped into during the interviews concerned exploring and critiquing power systems. One of the critical points deliberated in this article was the vital role of language in perpetuating the status quo of the power dynamics predominant in interpersonal relationships in school settings. I sparked the discussion by briefly exhibiting the potential of language and its powerful effect in shaping our social relationships, how a specific and dominant ideology can be manufactured and carried over by language, and how language has created a set of norms for students to follow. Then, normativity in schools (especially in the advisor-advisee relationship) has become a significant aspect of our discussion. We exchanged insightful deliberations and engaged in informed discussions about how language and norms in the school, as a social structure, dictate human

subjectivity and agency, leaving them in a false consciousness [1]. In addition to the specific questions asked and answered, the participants reflected on their stories. They showed how it was difficult for them not to follow the "norms" when approaching their advisors. "I always overthink what to tell my advisor a thousand times and ahead because I do not want to make her feel like I disobeyed."

It became clear that through language and social structure, members are unconsciously commanded to follow the socially reproduced, preconditioned, and looked-for "norms" [41]. We also agreed that critical literacy is a practice that involves resistance in social contexts. The participants could articulate their feelings and share their experiences while dealing with their advisors. Through critical reflection, we came to a consensus that there was a vacuum in the educational system that nurtured the occurrence of these obstacles between the advisors and their international advisees. When the participants were asked to bring on their experiences in this regard, one of the participants took the initiative and said, "I do not know where to start. It has been tough. I mean, um, can you believe that for two years, I was not allowed to register for the courses I wanted to have? I mean, it is unbelievable. My advisor is very knowledgeable in my area, but this does not give her the right to treat me like an undergrad."

It is clear from this example that the Saudi student felt intimidated by his advisor's authority and control and was confused and frustrated. Although a sense of respect seemed to feature the participant's relationship with his advisor, which can be inferred from his word "knowledgeable," a sense of being oppressed also coexisted, "does not give her the right to treat me like an undergrad." John echoed the same sentiment. One other participant (John) supported the former's disposition by saying: "I had the same experience, but I approached it differently. My advisor in my first year told me she was a directive person from the beginning. She imposed some courses on me, and I could not take it. So, I asked for another advisor".

Although all students agree that an advisor should always be "knowledgeable," "supportive," and "critical" in giving feedback, it is clear that these two examples indicate the exertion of authority over international students. Another powerful example is in Sarah's comment: "I need my advisor to deal with me as an adult who has

families, kids, and another life besides the one on campus (says Sarah in her stories/part of her interview). When I carefully analyze her words, it can be arguably inferred that there is a lack of understanding from the advisor. This lack of understanding was the catalyst for the resulting breakdown between the two.

Feedback was a recurring theme in the interview. All the participants have agreed on its importance. What is worth mentioning, though, is Michel's and John's complaints and dissatisfaction about the inconsistency they have noticed in their advisors' amount of feedback. "I was not expecting such treatments from an advisor. I felt that my professional needs were not met and even not respected. I came to the U.S. to learn and improve my skills from expert professors, as everyone expects when he goes to a university in a leading country. I needed more feedback and a room for more discussions … to develop my research skills" (Michel, 2016).

John's narrative about feedback differed from Michel's in that he noticed his advisor's inconsistency and discrimination against him. When I asked him to clarify, his response was, "We students talk. And what I noticed is that my advisor is not consistent in treating all students. Some are getting critical feedback, and others' topics, I would say, are being laughed at" (John, 2016). He continues, "Every time I asked him for feedback, he would say "yes" and "sure" but would never get back to me. Furthermore, whenever I think of asking him, I think he will misunderstand me or get mad at me. Sad! What even makes me crazy is that every time I visit him in his office, he always has something more important to do and says, "Oh, I did not find time, and let us do that next time" (John, 2016)

John's and Michel's responses can be partially explained in light of the Expectancy violations Theory (EVT), which analyzes how individuals respond to unanticipated violations of social norms [42-44]. Although beneficial, this theory does not explain all the breakdowns and malfunctions between international students and their advisors. The EVT theory solely focuses on the expectations different interlocutors of a conversation have for each other. It overlooks the potential of power dynamics in creating and sustaining obstacles for international students. The examples mentioned above provide a compelling explanation of the role of the educational system in withstanding an oppressive cycle and power hierarchy in the

interpersonal relationship between advisor and their international students.

The participants' responses differed when encouraged to brainstorm to suggest a way out of this maze. On the one hand, some found this idea appealing. On the other hand, others deemed it challenging to designate a document or take an action that tolerates no discrimination against international students regarding access to and benefit of academic advisory resources. Brittney stated, "I would not write anything since I did not have any negative experiences with the advisors" (Brittney, 2016). Michel deemed it hard to "think of the document as an agreement"; he continues,... "The academia is a community of practice where its members share, exchange, discuss, and help each other without an agreement or contract" (Michel, 2016). However, John and Zizo had a different view in this regard. A common ground between the two is evident in Zizo's utterance: "If we were to suggest an agreement, we would make sure it includes the following [45-48]. First of all, new graduate students must meet with the department's head or anyone in charge to explain to them explicitly the rights and responsibilities between Ph.D. candidates and committee members" (Zizo, 2016).

Zizo's powerful utterance is one example that speaks to the participants' conclusion. Susan and Sarah proposed the establishment of a workshop to take place at the beginning of each academic year. "I think it would be great if we can get some from the department talk about, you know, what kind of assistance to expect from your advisor, like a bill of rights to be shared" (Susan, 2016). All the participants, except for Brittney who had experienced no obstacles at all, found their proposal appealing and reasonable that the school should consider organizing and designating a particular workshop in which the school representatives specify and demonstrate the students' and advisors' rights and obligations. This will preserve all parties' justice. Students complain about the "lack of feedback or "guidance," "acceptance and understanding of backgrounds," and undervalue of their "views and decisions" and many other issues they think their advisors must acknowledge and respect can be resolved if the school prearranges such workshops. When these workshops are publicly organized for students and advisors to attend, it becomes easier for students to identify and express any discrimination, prejudice, and injustice practiced against them because they

would have already learned what to expect and their rights [49].

5.2 Findings Summary

5.2.1 Research questions and findings

Research question.1- What challenges, if any, do international students experience in graduate studies?

A review of previous studies and the responses of the current study's participants confirm that most Saudi international students face different kinds of problems and challenges: cultural differences & adjustment, family issues and dependence, financial problems, academic and linguistic barriers, etc.

Research question. 2- Are you content with the academic support you receive in your graduate studies?

It has been found from the responses of the participants that mentorship challenges and power dynamics infiltrated the program and impacted the student's study plans. Almost all participants had felt disappointment with the quality of academic supervision in a higher education program in a leading country. Some students suffered financially and spent more time than they wished only to obey their academic advisor. In short, it was noted that most students face such issues, and don't get enough support from any ends.

Research question.3- To what extent do Saudi international students face financial concerns?
Finance-related issues are crucial for international students. Saudi students also encounter such problems due to many genuine reasons. Saudi government provides funding in most cases, though.

5.3 Conclusions

This review studied different challenges faced by Saudi international students while pursuing higher education in the United States. The challenges were summarized under certain specific themes/heads. It is concluded that Saudi international students encounter certain difficulties in the US institutions such as mentoring hardships, adjustment to a heterogenous educational system, lack of administrative support, communication gap between the supervisors and the researchers,

family responsibilities, and financial crisis. Stakeholders in the American higher education system need to consider these challenges to provide tailored academic support for the increasing number of international students enrolling in American universities annually.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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APPENDIX

Appendix-A: A sample of interview questions & responses

Following is an example of questions asked to each of the interviewees:

- Do you face any social or cultural issues? If yes, what kinds?
- How crucial is the financial problems faced by you as an international student?
- To what extent is your family a factor that contributes further to challenges?
- Do you think living alone would be better than living with your family?
- Is English language/accent also a challenge? If yes, to what extent?
- Do you mix up with non-Saudis in gatherings? If yes, which nationalities do you interact with, and why?
- Did you find it difficult to choose a preferred course/program?

A transcription sample of the participants' responses:

*Do you face any social or cultural issues? If yes, what kinds?

Michel: yes, there are. We are identified as member of a different community, and sometimes treated differently.

John: Cultural identities are really crucial.

Zizo: Interactions outside campuses are limited because it is difficult to find the time to make friends.

Suzan: Local administration is perhaps not much aware or concerned with the Saudi international students.

Sarah: We face the loss of connectedness to important family members and the lack of local community support that perhaps increase their socio-psychological distress.

Brittney: Our collectivist cultural background lead to interactions and mixing up locally.

* How crucial is the financial problems faced by you as an international student?

Michel: The cost of life is quite high. It affects living in general.

John: Despite a good financial support from Saudi government, there is a need to be economic in all dimensions.

Zizo: Since we live with families (and children), nursery is also quite costly. We are used to frequent and even fun shopping which is not easy here in the US.

Suzan: We often face financial anxiety due to limited funds but extra needs.

Sarah: It's quite obvious in the US as we spend in dollars.

Brittney: Not much. I get financial support from my father too.

* To what extent is your family and kids a factor that contributes further to challenges?

Michel: I am living alone.

John: family responsibility is crucial because we have to do all the works alone.

Zizo: we are blamed for neglecting family especially children.

Suzan: I am not worried about. My husband takes care.

Sarah: maintaining a balance between education and family responsibility is really challenging.

Brittney: Ladies are supposed to take care families. Keeping a maid in the US is extremely expensive and sometimes unsafe.

* Do you think living alone would be better than living with your family?

Michel: No, it will be more troublesome.

John: not our culture to be away for a long time.

Zizo: It has advantages and disadvantages both.

Suzan: can't say exactly.

Sarah: Family is a big support.

Brittney: it affects anyhow: living together or not.

* Is English language/accent also a challenge? If yes, to what extent?

Michel: Yes, it is. Communication gap matters.

John: In the beginning for a few months, it was hard to grasp the accent, pitch and stress patters apart from vocabulary.

Zizo: English has different varieties so we need to understand.

Suzan: Well, sometime sound patterns negatively affect understanding and expression.

Sarah: sharing is caring.

Brittney: Though American English is different, not impossible to comprehend.

* Do you mix up with non Saudis in gatherings? If yes, which nationalities do you interact with, and why?

Michel: rarely.

John: sometimes (with my family)

Zizo: yes, when important.

Suzan: mostly not.

Sarah: We feel isolated and we are neglected too.

Brittney: not our culture to interact with strangers especially in private parties/gatherings.

* Did you find it difficult to choose a preferred course/program?

Michel: it was difficult in the beginning.

John: it was hard as we had not mustered enough support.

Zizo: we had to do everything, therefore exploring the right thing and right way was not easy.

Suzan: well, yes.

Sarah: I initially struggled.

Brittney: not exactly.