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Abstract

The growth in the number of 'international' students in higher education is a phenomenon of increasing importance to educators, researchers and policymakers worldwide. This multi-methodological study explored factors associated with their adjustment, successful or otherwise. It integrated associations across three domains of enquiry which had hitherto usually been pursued separately - psychosocial, intercultural and educational adjustment. Specifically, the study investigated associations between a broad range of outcome indices - academic grades (for both taught and research assignments), psychological well-being, and satisfaction with life in the new environment - and, as contributory factors, participants' intercultural competence, language proficiency, and the degree, quality and patterns of social contact during their sojourn. Participants were 108 non-UK postgraduate students from a wide range of countries undertaking MA programmes at a British university. Of these, 102 completed a questionnaire with both quantitative and qualitative responses, and a further six took part in semi-structured interviews over their programme of study.

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Findings indicated strong associations between participants' academic achievement, satisfaction with life in the new environment and psychological well-being, and aspects of their intercultural competence, contact with non-co-nationals, including hosts, and with their language proficiency. Implications of these findings, and a future research agenda, are discussed. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)