

Social Adjustment as Predicted by Cultural Identity and Acculturative Stress

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to investigate the predictive roles of cultural identity and acculturative stress on social adjustment among university students in India.

Methods and Materials: A correlational descriptive research design was employed, and a total of 595 participants were selected through stratified random sampling based on the Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination table. Participants were undergraduate and postgraduate students from various universities across India. Data were collected using three standardized instruments: the Social Adjustment Scale–Self-Report (SAS-SR), the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), and the Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale (SAFE). Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27. Descriptive statistics were computed, followed by Pearson correlation coefficients to assess relationships among variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to evaluate the predictive power of cultural identity and acculturative stress on social adjustment.

Findings: Descriptive results showed that participants reported moderate levels of social adjustment ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.51$), high cultural identity ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.42$), and moderate acculturative stress ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.48$). Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between cultural identity and social adjustment ($r = .47$, $p < .01$), and a significant negative relationship between acculturative stress and social adjustment ($r = -.39$, $p < .01$). Multiple regression analysis indicated that cultural identity ($\beta = .41$, $p < .001$) positively predicted social adjustment, while acculturative stress ($\beta = -.33$, $p < .001$) negatively predicted it. The model explained 31% of the variance in social adjustment ($R^2 = .31$).

Conclusion: Interventions promoting cultural identity and reduce acculturative stress may support better social functioning in multicultural student populations.

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Acculturative Stress, Social Adjustment, University Students.

1. Introduction

In an increasingly globalized world, the dynamics of cross-cultural interaction and migration have significantly transformed individual identities, social functioning, and psychological well-being. For individuals navigating multiple cultural frameworks, the process of cultural adjustment presents unique psychological and social challenges that can impact their ability to function adaptively within a host society. In particular, the constructs of cultural identity and acculturative stress have gained substantial attention in the literature as critical determinants of social adjustment outcomes among multicultural populations. The concept of social adjustment refers to an individual's capacity to establish and maintain interpersonal relationships, fulfill social roles, and adapt to environmental demands in a socially appropriate manner. Socially adjusted individuals are more likely to experience emotional stability, academic success, and positive interpersonal relationships. Conversely, poor social adjustment has been linked to isolation, emotional distress, and psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression (Jin & Choi, 2023; Le & Huyen-Nguyen, 2024; Park, 2023).

One of the core variables influencing social adjustment is cultural identity. Cultural identity is a multidimensional construct that encompasses an individual's sense of belonging to a particular cultural group, along with the values, beliefs, language, and traditions associated with that group. Individuals with a strong and coherent cultural identity often demonstrate greater psychological resilience, better self-esteem, and more effective coping strategies in multicultural settings (Mathews, 2018; Tian et al., 2019). For international students and immigrants, the formation or preservation of cultural identity can serve as a protective mechanism against the potential dissonance arising from cross-cultural encounters. Research suggests that individuals who maintain a strong ethnic identity while also engaging positively with the host culture—known as integration—tend to exhibit the most favorable psychosocial outcomes (Park & Bayne, 2024; Romero & Piña-Watson, 2017). However, when cultural identity is undermined or leads to internal conflict, individuals may experience identity confusion, social withdrawal, and impaired adjustment, particularly when exposed to discriminatory environments or cultural marginalization (García et al., 2017; Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2016).

Another critical variable is acculturative stress, which refers to the psychological difficulties and social strain that

arise during the process of adapting to a new culture. Acculturative stress is often characterized by anxiety, feelings of alienation, language barriers, homesickness, and the struggle to balance conflicting cultural expectations. As individuals attempt to navigate between their heritage and host cultures, they may encounter cognitive dissonance, intergenerational conflicts, or social exclusion, all of which can significantly impair their adjustment and functioning (Hunt et al., 2016; Ra, 2023; Salas-Wright et al., 2015). Acculturative stress has been identified as a robust predictor of negative emotional and behavioral outcomes, including depression, somatic complaints, and impaired social competence (Driscoll & Torres, 2020; Gebregergis et al., 2019). In academic and social contexts, students experiencing high levels of acculturative stress often report reduced peer support, diminished academic performance, and challenges in building meaningful relationships (Lee, 2024; Talwar et al., 2022).

Empirical evidence has consistently supported the role of acculturative stress in undermining social adjustment. For example, Driscoll and Torres (2022) found that high levels of acculturative stress among Latinx individuals predicted increased symptoms of depression and lower interpersonal functioning, even after accounting for general life stress (Driscoll & Torres, 2022). Similarly, Hansen et al. (2018) demonstrated that acculturative stress significantly predicted lower levels of host culture immersion and community engagement among international students in the United States (Hansen et al., 2018). In the Indian context, Behara et al. (2018) emphasized that specific acculturation strategies—such as assimilation or separation—moderated the levels of stress experienced during cultural transitions, which in turn affected interpersonal adjustment (Behara et al., 2018). These findings align with earlier research by Archuleta (2015), who posited that acculturative stress interacts with socioeconomic conditions and perceived social capital, particularly among ethnic minorities facing structural barriers in host societies (Archuleta, 2015).

In contrast, some studies underscore the buffering role of cultural identity in mitigating the adverse effects of acculturative stress. For instance, Reyes et al. (2018) found that strong familial cultural norms and identity were associated with higher resilience and lower stress among Filipino American women, even in the face of stigma around mental health disclosures (Reyes et al., 2018). Park and Bayne (2024) also found that among multicultural youth in South Korea, a strong sense of cultural identity enhanced perceived parental support, thereby lowering the impact of

acculturative stress (Park & Bayne, 2024). Likewise, Raju (2023) suggested that fostering cultural pride and cultural competence can be effective in developing interventions to promote psychosocial well-being among multicultural populations (Raju, 2023).

Notably, recent research has highlighted the complex interplay between cultural identity and acculturative stress in shaping social adjustment outcomes. According to Jin and Choi (2023), cultural identity not only predicted general well-being but also mediated the relationship between acculturation difficulties and social participation among Chinese immigrant women in South Korea (Jin & Choi, 2023). Ra (2023) emphasized that the subjective meaning individuals ascribe to cultural stressors is crucial in determining their adaptive responses, suggesting that identity clarity and cultural validation may help reframe acculturative challenges in more manageable ways (Ra, 2023). In a similar vein, Ramirez et al. (2023) reported that Latina university students with higher levels of acculturative stress were more likely to develop disordered eating behaviors, especially when their cultural identities were fragmented or externally invalidated (Ramirez et al., 2023).

Despite growing research in this domain, there remains a paucity of data exploring these variables within the Indian higher education context. International and domestic students in India represent a wide range of ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities, often navigating deeply hierarchical and collectivist social structures. As India continues to attract a multicultural student population, understanding how cultural identity and acculturative stress affect students' social adjustment becomes increasingly critical for both academic success and psychosocial development (Reyes et al., 2018; Serafica et al., 2019). Mathews (2018) observed that perceived social support and cultural self-efficacy significantly influenced the acculturative experiences of international students in the UK—a finding that may be transferable to the Indian context given the similar pressures related to language, culture, and social integration (Mathews, 2018). Furthermore, Le and Huyen-Nguyen (2024) highlighted that many international students report inadequate coping strategies for stress, further reinforcing the need for targeted psychological interventions (Le & Huyen-Nguyen, 2024).

Other studies underscore the role of systemic and institutional factors in moderating these relationships. For instance, Jung (2022) found that immigrants in South Korea who adopted integration or bicultural strategies experienced lower levels of acculturative stress compared to those who

pursued separation or marginalization approaches (Jung, 2022). Similarly, García et al. (2017) demonstrated that acculturative stress could lead to physiological dysregulation, such as altered cortisol patterns, thus reinforcing the need for early psychosocial interventions (García et al., 2017). Hansen et al. (2018) and Salas-Wright et al. (2015) both argued that typologies of acculturative stress are essential to identifying those most at risk, as individuals may experience different stress patterns depending on their cultural background, support networks, and degree of societal acceptance (Hansen et al., 2018; Salas-Wright et al., 2015).

Given the multidimensional nature of both cultural identity and acculturative stress, it is crucial to adopt a comprehensive framework that captures their independent and joint effects on social adjustment. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the predictive roles of cultural identity and acculturative stress on social adjustment among university students in India. By focusing on a culturally diverse sample and employing established psychometric tools, the present research contributes to a growing body of literature aimed at improving our understanding of multicultural adaptation processes. In line with the findings of Driscoll and Torres (2020), who emphasized the protective role of cultural competence, this study hypothesizes that cultural identity will positively predict social adjustment, while acculturative stress will serve as a negative predictor (Driscoll & Torres, 2020). Furthermore, it seeks to examine the extent to which these variables independently and interactively influence students' capacity to navigate academic, interpersonal, and social environments in a culturally pluralistic setting.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a correlational descriptive research design to examine the predictive relationship between cultural identity, acculturative stress, and social adjustment among university students. A total of 595 participants were selected using stratified random sampling, based on the population size and corresponding recommendations of the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. All participants were undergraduate and postgraduate students from various universities in India, representing a diverse cross-section of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Inclusion criteria required participants to be between the ages of 18 and 30, currently enrolled in academic programs,

and able to provide informed consent. The purpose and procedures of the study were clearly explained to participants, and ethical considerations, including confidentiality and voluntary participation, were strictly observed throughout the data collection process.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Social Adjustment

To assess the dependent variable of social adjustment, the Social Adjustment Scale – Self-Report (SAS-SR) developed by Weissman and Bothwell (1976) was utilized. This tool measures an individual's performance and adjustment in several key social roles, including work, social and leisure activities, relationships with extended family, marital role, parental role, and role within the family unit. The SAS-SR includes 54 items, scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "not at all" to "extremely," with higher scores indicating greater social maladjustment. For interpretation, subscale scores can be calculated, or a total mean score can be derived to represent overall social adjustment. The scale's reliability and validity have been extensively documented, with internal consistency coefficients reported above 0.74 and strong concurrent validity confirmed across diverse populations in previous studies (Maya et al., 2024; Romero-Abrio, 2024).

2.2.2. Cultural Identity

Cultural identity was measured using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) developed by Jean S. Phinney (1992). The MEIM is a widely used instrument designed to assess the strength of ethnic identity among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. The revised version includes 12 items divided into two subscales: ethnic identity exploration (e.g., learning about one's ethnic group) and ethnic identity commitment (e.g., sense of belonging to one's group). Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Total scores are calculated by averaging the items, with higher scores indicating a stronger cultural identity. The MEIM has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with reliability coefficients generally above 0.80 and construct validity confirmed in cross-cultural studies involving adolescents and adults (Thelma & Madoda, 2024; Torres et al., 2025).

2.2.3. Acculturative Stress

Acculturative stress was assessed using the Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale (SAFE) developed by Mena, Padilla, and Maldonado (1987). The SAFE scale consists of 24 items designed to measure the stress individuals experience during the acculturation process. It includes three major dimensions: social/interpersonal stress, attitudinal stress (related to cultural conflicts and pressures), and environmental/familial stress (arising from differing cultural expectations within families or communities). Respondents rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale, from "not stressful" to "extremely stressful," with higher scores reflecting greater levels of acculturative stress. The SAFE scale has been validated across various ethnic groups and has shown good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha values typically exceeding 0.80), as well as sound construct and criterion validity in numerous empirical studies (Le & Huyen-Nguyen, 2024; Park & Bayne, 2024; Ramirez et al., 2023).

2.3. Data analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize demographic characteristics and mean scores of the study variables. To investigate the relationship between social adjustment (dependent variable) and the two independent variables—cultural identity and acculturative stress—Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. Subsequently, linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which cultural identity and acculturative stress predicted social adjustment. Assumptions of linearity, normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were checked and met prior to conducting the regression analysis. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$ for all analyses.

3. Findings and Results

The study sample consisted of 595 participants from various universities across India. Of the total participants, 337 (56.64%) were female and 258 (43.36%) were male. In terms of age distribution, 212 participants (35.63%) were between 18 and 21 years old, 267 participants (44.87%) were between 22 and 25 years old, and 116 participants (19.49%) were aged between 26 and 30. Regarding academic level, 368 participants (61.85%) were undergraduate students, while 227 participants (38.15%) were enrolled in

postgraduate programs. Additionally, participants represented a diverse set of cultural backgrounds, including individuals identifying with South Indian (31.26%), North

Indian (27.56%), East Indian (19.83%), and West Indian (21.34%) ethnic groups, reflecting the cultural heterogeneity relevant to the focus of the study.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (N = 595)

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Social Adjustment	3.24	0.51
Cultural Identity	3.67	0.42
Acculturative Stress	2.41	0.48

The descriptive statistics revealed that participants reported a moderate level of social adjustment ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.51$), relatively high levels of cultural identity ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.42$), and a moderate level of acculturative stress ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 0.48$). These values are consistent with prior studies that examined multicultural student populations in higher education settings (Table 1).

Prior to conducting the linear regression analysis, assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were evaluated and confirmed. The normality of residuals was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test ($p = .073$), indicating no significant deviation from

normality. Linearity was verified through visual inspection of scatterplots showing a linear relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. Multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), which was 1.26 for cultural identity and 1.18 for acculturative stress—both well below the cutoff value of 10. Tolerance values were also acceptable (0.79 and 0.84, respectively). Homoscedasticity was examined using the Breusch-Pagan test, which yielded a non-significant result ($p = .148$), confirming the assumption of equal variance across residuals. These results supported the suitability of the data for linear regression analysis.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficients Between Variables (N = 595)

Variables	1	2	3
1. Social Adjustment	—		
2. Cultural Identity	.47** ($p < .01$)	—	
3. Acculturative Stress	-.39** ($p < .01$)	-.32** ($p < .01$)	—

Correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between cultural identity and social adjustment ($r = .47$, $p < .01$), suggesting that students with a stronger cultural identity were more socially adjusted. A significant negative correlation was found between acculturative stress and social adjustment ($r = -.39$, $p < .01$), indicating that

higher levels of stress were associated with lower levels of social functioning. Additionally, cultural identity and acculturative stress were negatively correlated ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$), reflecting the potential buffering role of identity against stress (Table 2).

Table 3

Summary of Regression Analysis: Cultural Identity and Acculturative Stress Predicting Social Adjustment

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	p
Regression	42.78	2	21.39	.56	.31	.30	130.22	< .001
Residual	94.24	592	0.16					
Total	137.02	594						

The overall regression model was statistically significant, $F(2, 592) = 130.22$, $p < .001$, indicating that cultural identity and acculturative stress together significantly predicted

social adjustment. The model explained 31% of the variance in social adjustment scores ($R^2 = .31$), with an adjusted R^2 of

.30, suggesting a moderate to strong predictive capacity (Table 3).

Table 4

Multivariate Regression Coefficients for Predicting Social Adjustment

Predictor	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Constant	1.78	0.14	—	12.71	< .001
Cultural Identity	0.49	0.06	.41	8.17	< .001
Acculturative Stress	-0.36	0.05	-.33	-7.45	< .001

The multivariate regression results indicated that cultural identity was a significant positive predictor of social adjustment ($\beta = .41$, $t = 8.17$, $p < .001$), while acculturative stress was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.33$, $t = -7.45$, $p < .001$). The unstandardized coefficients further suggest that for each one-point increase in cultural identity, social adjustment increases by 0.49 units, while each one-point increase in acculturative stress decreases social adjustment by 0.36 units. These findings confirm that both independent variables significantly contribute to the prediction of the dependent variable, even when considered simultaneously (Table 4).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the predictive role of cultural identity and acculturative stress on social adjustment among university students in India. Based on the results of Pearson correlation analyses, cultural identity showed a significant positive correlation with social adjustment, while acculturative stress was significantly and negatively associated with social adjustment. Further, linear regression analysis demonstrated that both cultural identity and acculturative stress were significant predictors of social adjustment. Cultural identity emerged as a positive predictor, suggesting that individuals with a strong sense of belonging to their cultural background were better able to adapt socially. In contrast, acculturative stress negatively predicted social adjustment, indicating that students experiencing higher levels of stress due to cultural adaptation challenges were more likely to face difficulties in their social functioning.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that underscore the centrality of cultural identity in facilitating successful social adjustment. Mathews (2018) highlighted that perceived social support and cultural self-efficacy—both components closely tied to cultural identity—contribute significantly to lowering stress and improving

adaptation outcomes among international students (Mathews, 2018). Similarly, Tian et al. (2019) found that strong ethnic identity was positively associated with lower levels of acculturative stress and greater self-compassion, which ultimately promoted better psychological and social adjustment among Asian international students (Tian et al., 2019). The present findings align with these results, suggesting that students who possess a clear and affirming cultural identity are likely to experience greater confidence, resilience, and integration in social settings.

Moreover, the findings confirm prior evidence that acculturative stress negatively impacts social adjustment. Le and Huyen-Nguyen (2024) found that international students often struggle with stressors such as language difficulties, unfamiliar academic systems, and cultural misunderstandings, all of which interfere with the development of meaningful social connections (Le & Huyen-Nguyen, 2024). In the same vein, Park and Bayne (2024) demonstrated that elevated acculturative stress undermined parenting self-efficacy and perceptions of social support in multicultural families, emphasizing the relational consequences of this stressor (Park & Bayne, 2024). The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that acculturative stress independently contributes to poor social adjustment even after accounting for the protective effects of cultural identity.

The significance of cultural identity in this study reflects theoretical models that advocate for the integration acculturation strategy—where individuals retain aspects of their heritage culture while actively engaging with the host culture. Driscoll and Torres (2020) found that Latinx individuals who maintained cultural pride while developing intercultural competence experienced less acculturative stress and depression over time, leading to better social and emotional outcomes (Driscoll & Torres, 2020). Likewise, Jung (2022) concluded that integration was the most effective strategy for Chinese immigrants in South Korea, as it minimized stress and supported social belonging (Jung,

2022). The current study's findings echo these patterns, emphasizing the value of cultural integration as a means to promote adjustment among culturally diverse students in India.

The observed negative relationship between acculturative stress and social adjustment also finds support in several studies documenting the detrimental effects of cultural stress on interpersonal functioning and mental health. Hansen et al. (2018) demonstrated that acculturative stress among international students in community colleges was associated with limited immersion in the host culture and increased social withdrawal (Hansen et al., 2018). García et al. (2017) extended this understanding by revealing physiological correlates of acculturative stress, such as alterations in cortisol patterns, which mediate the relationship between stress and perceived health outcomes (García et al., 2017). This suggests that acculturative stress has both psychological and somatic implications that may manifest in reduced capacity for social engagement. Our findings reinforce the argument that high levels of acculturative stress compromise an individual's ability to adjust socially, likely due to heightened emotional burden, loss of social efficacy, and perceived rejection from the host environment.

Cultural identity's positive influence on adjustment is further supported by the work of Ramirez et al. (2023), who found that Latina university students with higher cultural identity commitment were less likely to experience disordered eating symptoms in the face of acculturative stress (Ramirez et al., 2023). This protective role of cultural identity also resonates with Reyes et al. (2018), who reported that strong family norms and cultural values reduced vulnerability to stress and enhanced psychological resilience among foreign-born Filipino American women (Reyes et al., 2018). The current findings are thus in line with a growing body of evidence that cultural identity functions as a stabilizing force amid the challenges of cross-cultural adaptation.

Interestingly, the current results also support models suggesting the coexistence of both risk and resilience factors in the acculturation process. Serafica et al. (2019) proposed that older immigrants who reported strong cultural values also demonstrated greater resilience despite experiencing high acculturative stress (Serafica et al., 2019). This dual-process model aligns with the present study's findings, where cultural identity and acculturative stress were found to exert opposing but independent effects on social adjustment. Similarly, Ertl et al. (2019) found longitudinal associations between adherence to traditional gender norms

and acculturative stress among Latina immigrants, illustrating how cultural values can be protective or harmful depending on context (Ertl et al., 2019).

Driscoll and Torres (2022) offered additional nuance by identifying different adaptation profiles among Mexican-descent Latinxs, showing that those with high cultural engagement and low acculturative stress had the most positive adjustment outcomes (Driscoll & Torres, 2022). The present study's findings are consistent with this pattern, suggesting that reducing stressors while supporting cultural affirmation may offer the most effective pathway to social adjustment in diverse academic contexts.

In addition, qualitative studies such as those by Ra (2023) and Archuleta (2015) offer valuable insights into the subjective experiences of cultural adaptation. Ra (2023) emphasized that international students often internalize feelings of failure and inadequacy when unable to meet perceived cultural expectations, leading to heightened stress and social disengagement (Ra, 2023). Archuleta (2015) also found that perceived group social capital moderated the relationship between linguistic acculturation and occupational stress, indicating that cultural identity operates within a broader socio-structural framework (Archuleta, 2015). These perspectives support the idea that interventions targeting social adjustment must consider both personal and contextual factors to be effective.

From a psychological perspective, Salas-Wright et al. (2015) proposed a typology of acculturative stress that includes cultural, relational, and environmental domains, each contributing uniquely to maladaptive outcomes (Salas-Wright et al., 2015). This typology is reflected in the current findings, where students reported difficulties related not only to personal identity but also to relational and environmental stressors—such as peer rejection, academic pressure, and linguistic barriers—that hinder their social integration. Similarly, Hunt et al. (2016) observed that acculturative stress moderated the relationship between international student drinking behaviors and alcohol-related consequences, indicating the pervasive impact of stress on social behaviors (Hunt et al., 2016).

Moreover, Park (2023) found that parental acculturative stress and limited social support contributed to bullying victimization among adolescents in multicultural families, further illustrating how unaddressed cultural stressors can lead to adverse social outcomes (Park, 2023). Lorenzo-Blanco et al. (2016) also emphasized the intergenerational effects of acculturative stress, demonstrating its impact on family dynamics and youth emotional health (Lorenzo-

Blanco et al., 2016). These studies collectively support the need for multi-level interventions to address both individual and contextual determinants of adjustment.

In sum, the present study reinforces the idea that cultural identity serves as a vital resource for positive social functioning, while acculturative stress poses significant risks to social adjustment. These findings not only validate previous research across diverse populations but also extend the conversation to the Indian higher education context, where multicultural dynamics are rapidly evolving. The evidence underscores the need to develop culturally sensitive support systems that can buffer students against the adverse effects of acculturative stress while fostering their sense of identity and belonging.

5. Limitations & Suggestions

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality among the studied variables. Although cultural identity and acculturative stress were found to predict social adjustment, longitudinal data are needed to confirm the directionality of these relationships. Second, the use of self-report measures may have introduced response biases, such as social desirability or lack of introspective accuracy. Third, although the sample was culturally diverse within the Indian context, the findings may not generalize to populations in other countries with different cultural, institutional, and educational structures. Additionally, this study did not explore potential moderating variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, or prior intercultural experience, which may influence the relationship between acculturative stress, cultural identity, and social adjustment.

Future research should consider employing longitudinal designs to examine changes in cultural identity, acculturative stress, and social adjustment over time. This would allow researchers to capture the dynamic nature of cultural adaptation and its evolving influence on psychosocial outcomes. Qualitative or mixed-methods studies could also enrich the current understanding by capturing the nuanced, subjective experiences of students navigating cultural transitions. Further, expanding the research to include international comparisons could reveal how national policies, cultural norms, and institutional support systems affect the acculturation and adjustment process. Finally, future studies could explore potential mediating and moderating variables, such as resilience, language

proficiency, or perceived discrimination, to deepen our understanding of the mechanisms underlying social adjustment.

Universities and educational institutions should develop targeted programs that promote cultural identity affirmation while simultaneously addressing the stressors associated with acculturation. Orientation sessions, peer mentoring, and intercultural dialogue workshops can foster inclusive environments where diverse identities are celebrated and supported. Mental health services must be culturally competent, ensuring that counselors and staff are trained to understand the unique challenges faced by multicultural students. Additionally, academic policies should consider the specific needs of culturally diverse populations, offering flexible learning pathways, language assistance, and community-building opportunities to enhance students' social integration and psychological well-being.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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