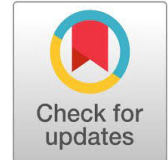
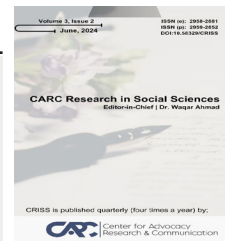




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# Academic Adjustment, Perceived Social Support and Psychological Well-being of International Students at HEIs in Hungary

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the correlation between academic adjustment, perceived social support, and psychological well-being of international community of students studying at universities in Hungary. The hypothesis stated that there is a chance of the presence of a positive correlation amongst academic adjustment, perceived social support, and psychological well-being of the students that can easily be predicted by these factors. In addition to this, perceived social support will increase the strength of the relationship amid academic adjustment and psychological well-being. Data was collected from five public universities through non-probability purposive sampling from 153 international students enrolled in different programs. The students predominantly belonged to an age group of 18 to 35 years ( $M = 24.54$ ,  $SD = 4.1$ ). However, academic Adjustment Scale (AAS; Anderson et al., 2016), the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet et al., 1988), and Ryff's Psychological Well-being Scale (RPSWS; Ryff, 1989) were utilized to gather data, and the analysis employed included Pearson product-moment correlation and hierarchical regression. It was revealed that academic adjustment, perceived social support, and psychological well-being are positively correlated. However, the perceived social support as well as academic adjustment can positively predict the psychological well-being. Furthermore, correlation between psychological well-being and academic adjustment was moderated positively by the perceived social support. The results indicate the significance of effective processes for academic adjustment and delivery of efficient methods to provide assistance to safeguard the well-being of students studying overseas.

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## INTRODUCTION

With the increasing globalization, going abroad to get a foreign degree has become a very common practice for students all around the world. According to statistics, the number of such students is increasing rapidly in European countries including Hungary. This is done through exchange, mobility, and other full-degree scholarship programs. It was reported by the Office of Education (2019), that an increase

has been observed in the proportion of students coming from foreign countries from 7% to 12% within the period of 2012-2017 in Hungary (Szasz, 2019). In a survey conducted by Eurostat (2012) among international students attending Hungarian universities, 64% of students are European, 23 percent come from Asia, and around 7% are from Africa. Furthermore, Eurostat (2019) indicated that the proportion of students acquiring higher education in Hungary between the age ranges 30-34 has increased up to 23% from 2010 to 2017. Hence, given the increase in the international student ratio in Hungary it has become essential to focus on studying aspects such as psychological, educational and sociocultural experiences of this population so that the process of academic adjustment and their psychological well-being can be better catered to.

One of the major reasons of why it is essential to research these factors is that education systems vary around the world and when one switches from one system to another, students are faced with academic, sociocultural,

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and psychological adjustment issues (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Whether a student will overcome these issues or not, the duration of adjustment and settling in will be determined by such factors. For instance, the higher level of perceived social support a student experiences may ease the adjustment process and positively impact the psychological well-being of an individual (Cheng, 2015). It was found in a research that student issues were alleviated and coping became better for many who developed a good social support system. Hence, it is essential that these issues should be acknowledged so that some approaches can be introduced to assist the students.

As a student switches from one academic setting to another one of the most common problem is the academic adjustment. It is a composite of setting academic goals with a positive attitude, finishing the requirements of academia, how effective the efforts are towards the set goals of academics, and success in the academic environment (Baker & Syrik, 1999). It is essential for academic adjustment that a student has enough motivation and a clear purpose to acquire knowledge that meets their academic demands. International students may experience additional stressors and challenges with regards to pedagogical structure, teaching and evaluation methodology, culture, language, social ethics and etiquettes, and possible discrimination, etc.

Furthermore, humans being social animals have the need to communicate and interact with other beings and receive their support throughout their lives. Social support helps an individual survive, it helps an individual face and cope with situations that are stressful as well as develop problem solving skills (Aydin et al., 2017). Perceived social support includes the awareness that someone cares for the individual, they have access to help obtainable from people, and that one is an important member of a supportive (Vaux, 1990). Social support can be received from several groups for example friends, or family, even people from the neighborhood, peers, and acquaintances (Jibeen, 2015). It was found in a study that students who are new to an environment and perceive themselves as unaccepted show lower levels of self-esteem and satisfaction, while showing high levels of withdrawal from involvement in social activities (Awang et al., 2014). Moreover, Cohen and Wills (2000) in their study proposed that perceived social support acts as a buffer among an individual's perceived stress and their overall well-being in a particularly stressful situation.

In addition to this, Friedlander et al. (2007) perceived social support in students played an active protective role against stress in their academic and social environment. Students perceived social support in an international environment is an indicator of the available social support to deal with stress and difficult situations. Since, international students move to a different country their capital of social support including friends and family may become weaker in a new society (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002). According to Apker and Ray (2003) supportive communication and interaction acted as dimension of social support for sojourner students who were experiencing difficulty in acculturation. This facilitated improved coping, while reducing the perception of threat and uncertainty. Hence, it could be concluded that perceived social support

plays protective role in situations that may be stressful by buffering the impact of a stressors importance and aids in maintaining the mental wellbeing of the overseas pupils.

Thus, the main motive of this study is to identify how academically adjusted are the international students studying in public universities in Hungary, influence of perceived social support and the overall impact on the mental wellness of this student population. This research will add to the quality of international educational experience and benefit the system in developing policies or programs that can help make the internationals feel at home and maximize productivity.

## Objectives

- To investigate if a correlation existed among psychological well-being of students, academic adjustment, and perceived social support
- To find out if the students' well-being could be predicted by academic adjustment and perceived social support
- To find out if perceived social support had a function in moderating the correlation amongst academic adjustment and psychological well-being

## Hypotheses

- H<sub>1</sub>: Perceived social support and academic adjustment can be in a positive correlation with the psychological well-being.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Psychological well-being of students can be positively predicted by the perceived social support as well as academic adjustment.
- H<sub>3</sub>: The relationship amid psychological well-being and academic adjustment will be strengthened by perceived social support.

## METHOD

### Research Design

The study was carried out with a correlation technique in order to check how the academic adjustment, perceived social support, and the psychological well-being were related in overseas students at public universities in Hungary.

### Sample

The sample included 153 students of the age range 18–35 years (Male = 74 and Female = 78), which consisted of students from all over the world, enrolled in different courses at public universities in Hungary. Five universities were selected randomly for this purpose. The method employed for collecting data from students was non-probability purposive sampling succeeding the inclusion and exclusion criteria discussed below.

### Inclusion criteria

- Students enrolled in public sector universities
- Students in the first year of their respective degree programs

### Exclusion criteria

- Students with special needs

- Students with previous international experience
- Students on self-finance
- Students with relatives in Hungary

**Table 1**

Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Variables (N=153)

Variables	f	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	74	48.4
Female	78	51
Prefer not to say	1	7
<b>Education</b>		
Bachelor	74	48.4
Master	67	43.8
PhD	12	7.8
<b>Continent</b>		
Asia	86	56.2
Europe	40	26.1
South America	7	4.6
Africa	20	13.1
<b>Residence</b>		
Private Flat	38	24.8
Shared Flat	75	49
Dormitory/Hostel	40	26.1
<b>Relationship Status</b>		
In a relationship	51	33.3
Not in a relationship	102	66.7
<b>Current GPA</b>		
Sufficient	11	7
Satisfactory	27	17.6
Good	89	58.2
Excellent	36	23.5

**Note:** For Gender, 1=male, 2=female; Education level, 1=Bachelors, 2=Masters, 3= PhD; Continent, 1=Asia, 2= North America, 3=Australia, 4=Europe, 5=Ant-arctica, 6=South America, 7=Africa, 8=Oceania; Residence, 1= Private flat, 2= Shared flat, 3= Dorm/Hostel; Relationship status, 1=in a relationship, 2=Not in a relationship, Current GPA, 1=Fail, 2=Sufficient, 3=Satisfactory, 4= Good, 5= Excellent

## Assessment Measures

In this study, various instruments primarily utilised for assessments are given as:

### Demographic sheet

The demographic sheet contained personal as well as education-related data. It consisted of gender (male and female), age (in years), family income (USD), continent, education level (Bachelor, Master, and PhD), residence, current grade, and relationship status.

### Academic Adjustment Scale

The AAS (Anderson et al., 2016) encompasses 9 items that are subdivided into three further subscales that include academic lifestyle, academic achievement, and academic motivation. Academic lifestyle is defined as the compatibility between the individual and their student role. Academic achievement comprises of contentment with ones scholastic achievement and growth and academic motivation is a students' determination to strive and complete his educational sojourn.

Each of these subscales is composed of three items, thus either one can use the sub-scale individually or academic adjustment as a whole depending on the requirements of the study. Examples of academic lifestyle items include, "I sometimes worry I do not have the academic skills needed to enjoy being a student." for academic achievement, "I think I am as academically able as any other student" and for academic motivation, "The reason I am studying is to lead a better lifestyle". The sum of all 9 items on each subscale is computed to obtain the level of academic adjustment. It has test-retest reliability coefficients of  $r > .72$ . Scoring is on 5 point Likert scale (1=lowest, 5=highest). High scores indicate high academic adjustment (Anderson et al., 2016).

### Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) (Zimet et al., 1988) was developed to measure the perceptions one has regarding the support they get from three main resources i.e. Family, Friends, and a Significant Other. This scale has twelve items in total. Each subscale has four relevant items. Examples of the family support subscale includes "My family is willing to help me", for

friends subscale includes “My friends really try to help me” and the significant other subscale includes “There is a special person who is around when I am in need”. The responses are on a 7 point Likert Scale (1=disagree to 7=very strongly agree). The sum of all 12 items concludes the final score. MSPSS is internally consistent, with Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$  for significant other,  $\alpha = .87$  for Family, and  $\alpha = .85$  for Friends. The test-retest reliability is .72 for significant other, .85 for Family, and .75 for Friends. The overall reliability of the scale is .85 (Gregory Zimet, 1988).

#### Ryffs Psychological Well-being Scale

Psychological well-being was measured using Ryffs Psychological Well-being Scale (Ryff, 1989). This scale originally consisted of 42 items that measured five domains of psychological well-being i.e. autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations, self-acceptance, purpose in life, and personal growth. For example: “Most people see me as loving and affectionate”. We used the 18-item shorter version. There were negatively phrased items: Q1, Q2, Q3, Q8, Q9, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q17, and Q18 which needed to be recorded while scoring (i.e., if the score is 6 in one of these items, the adjusted score is 1; if 5, the adjusted score is 2 and so on...). The answer categories are on a point scale ranging from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly agree; 2 = somewhat agree; 3 = a little agree; 4 = neither agree or disagree; 5 = a little disagree; 6 = somewhat disagree; 7 = strongly disagree). The reliabilities range from .71 to .88. Scores that were high were indicative of a high psychological well-being.

#### Procedure

The research was conducted in a systematic way; firstly the permissions were acquired from authors of the scale and the universities for data collection. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed and used to make selection of the sample of students. The questionnaires were sent to students via Google survey forms; hence the data was collected online. Each of the contributors received a form of consent indicating the confidentiality and use of their data for research purposes only. They had also previously been informed of their free will to discontinue their

involvement with this research at any time they wanted. The questionnaire was administered after this protocol.

#### Ethical Considerations

- Permission was taken from the authors of scales before administration.
- Informed consent was taken from the authorities concerned with the research as well as participants.
- Confidentiality and anonymity of the collected information was established.
- The right to withdraw was communicated to the research participants.
- Accurate reporting of results was done.

#### RESULTS

The findings of the this study are revealed for the perceived social support, academic adjustment, and psychological well-being of the overseas student at public universities in Hungary. Sum of each scale or subscale indicated the total score on that scale. The information was assessed in three major steps. The first one consisted of measuring the reliability carried out for all scales and the Cronbach's alpha value was stated. The Pearson product moment correlation was utilized in the second step, for the assessment of interrelationships between the demographics, and key variables i.e. academic adjustment, perceived social support and psychological well-being. Furthermore, hierarchical regression analysis was utilized for the assessment of predictors of psychological well-being as well as for studying how the perceived social support moderates the correlation amid academic adjustment and psychological well-being in the final step. Results were reported accurately.

#### Reliability Analysis

Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of the study variables employed in the following research are given in the Table 2.

**Table 2**

Reliability Coefficients and Descriptive Statistics of the Scales used in the Present Research Study (N=153)

Variables	M	SD	K	$\alpha$	Range	
					Actual	Potential
Academic Adjustment	34.93	5.87	9	.69	14 - 45	9-45
Academic Life Style	10.93	2.46	3	.37	5 -15	3-15
Academic Achievement	11.91	2.74	3	.74	3 -15	3-15
Academic Motivation	12.08	2.71	3	.67	3 -15	3-15
Perceived Social Support	5.17	1.15	12	.88	1.42-7	12-84
Significant other Subscale	5.01	1.64	4	.91	1-7	4-28
Family Subscale	5.38	1.48	4	.83	1-7	4-28
Friends Subscale	5.11	1.43	4	.89	1-7	4-28
Psychological Well-being Scale	89.37	12.71	18	.65	61-120	18-126

Note. M= Mean; SD= Standard Deviation; k = No. of items;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha

Table 2 shows that Academic Adjustment Scale (academic lifestyle, academic achievement, and academic motivation),

Perceived Social Support (significant other subscale, family subscale, and friends subscale) and Ryffs' Psychological



Wellbeing Scale have yielded good reliabilities (i.e. .69, .37, .74, .67, .88, .91, .83, .89, .65 respectively). Moreover, the table exhibits the mean and scores of standard deviation all sets of scales, and reveals that the participant's score lies in between the potential range of scores.

### Main Analysis

It was also conjectured that there is a likelihood of a pos-

itive correlation amongst academic adjustment ( $M=34.93$ ,  $SD=5.87$ ) and psychological well-being. Likewise, there is also a probabailty of a positive relationship between perceived social support ( $M=5.17$ ,  $SD=1.15$ ) and psychological wellbeing ( $M=89.37$ ,  $SD=12.71$ ) in students. For the assessment of this interrelationship the Pearson Product moment correlation was used as given in Table 3.

**Table 3**

Inter-correlations among Demographic and Study Variables (N= 153)

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Gender	.03	.12	.02	.05	.07	-.09	.14	.18*	.05	.09	.26**	.11	.18*	.00	.08	.05
2. Age		-.08	.19*	.73**	-.15	-.26**	.28**	.21*	.14	.25**	.06	.12	.10	.17*	.00	.01
3. Family Income			-.20*	-.04	-.14	.02	-.11	.02	.08	.04	-.06	.09	.08	.12	.04	-.02
4. Continent				.09	.02	.02	.07	.04	-.01	.06	.04	-.01	-.01	-.01	.01	.04
5. Education Level					-.19*	-.14	.33**	.26**	.16*	.29**	.12	.19*	.13	.22**	.07	.17*
6. Residence						.17*	.01	.02	-.00	-.06	.11	.00	-.05	.82	-.03	-.14
7. Relationship status							-.14	-.05	.00	-.11	.00	-.01	-.31**	.15	.00	-.03
8. Current GPA								.23**	.14	.26**	.11	.06	.08	.04	.02	.07
9. Academic Adjustment									.71**	.82**	.69**	.13	.11	.07	.13	.29**
10. Academic Lifestyle										.47**	.17*	.03	-.00	-.00	.07	.39**
11. Academic Achievement											.33**	.19*	.19*	.06	.19*	.28**
12. Academic Motivation												.07	.05	.09	.03	-.02
13. Perceived Social Support													.79**	.69**	.79**	.32**
14. Significant Others														.26**	.48**	.21**
15. Family Support															.35**	.21*
16. Friends Support																.31**
17. Psychological Well-being																

**Note:** For Gender, 1=male, 2=female; Continent, 1=Asia, 2= North America, 3=Australia, 4=Europe, 5=Antarctica, 6=South America, 7=Africa, 8=Oceania; Education level, 1=Bachelors, 2=Masters, 3= PhD; Residence, 1= Private flat, 2= Shared flat, 3= Dorm/Hostel; Relationship status, 1=in a relationship, 2=Not in a relationship, Current GPA, 1=Fail, 2=Sufficient, 3=Satisfactory, 4= Good, 5= Excellent \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Results in Table 3 it was revealed that among the demographics, education level was positively correlated with mental helth of students implying higher the education level, higher would be the mental wellness of individuals. It was further revealed that academic adjustment is positively correlated to the psychological well-being. Moreover, perceived social support also has a positive correlation with emotional wellness of international students in Hungary, i.e., higher the academic adjustment and perceived social support of students, higher will be their psychological well-being. Hence, hypothesis was approved that a positive

correlation amongst academic adjustment, perceived social support and emotional wellness in international students is present.

In addition to this it was hypothesized that academic adjustment and perceived social support can predict the mental health in a positive way. Moreover, it was also assumed that perceived social support can act as a moderator amid academic adjustment and psychological well-being. For this purpose, hierarchical regression was applied to check the prediction of study variables.

**Table 4**

Moderation Analysis through Hierarchical Regression predicting Psychological wellness of Students (N=153)

Predictors	B	95% CI for B		SE B	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$
		LL	UL				
Step 1 Education Level	3.32*	.14	6.51	1.61	.17*	.03*	.03*
Step 2 Academic Adjustment	.51**	.17	.84	.16	.24***	.11***	.09***
Step 3 Perceived social support	3.02***	1.35	4.69	.84	.31***	.16***	.14**
Step 4 AA x PSS	2.02***	1.60	8.45	.95	.41***	.23***	.17***

**Note.** CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; AA=Academic Adjustment; PSS= Perceived Social Support; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Results revealed that after controlling demographic variable (i.e. educational level) in step 1, moderator i.e., perceived social support in step 2, Independent variable i.e. academic adjustment in step 3 and interactions in step 4, overall model explained 44% of variances for psychological well-being. For step 1  $F(1, 151) = 4.25$ ,  $p < .05$ , for step 2  $F$

$(3, 148) = 5.5$ ,  $p < .001$ , for step 3  $F(3, 145) = 9.7$ ,  $p < .001$  and for step 4  $F(1, 151) = 31.1$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Academic Adjustment and perceived social support positively predict psychological well-being. Furthermore it was revealed that perceived social support acts as a moderator in between academic adjustment, including its

subscales and psychological well-being. In addition to this, the academic lifestyle subscale of academic achievement was found to be a positive predictor of psychological well-being. Additionally, the friends support subscale of perceived social support was also found to be a positive predictor of mental health.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Following is the summary of findings.

- Education level has a substantial positive correlation with psychological well-being of students.
- A substantial positive interrelationship is present

between the academic adjustment and mental health.

- There was a substantial positive correlation amongst perceived social support and mental well-being.
- Academic adjustment can positively forecast the psychological well-being.
- The psychological well-being can also be forecasted by perception of social support
- Perception of social support can also play its role in moderating relationship amid the academic adjustment and psychological well-being.

## Finalized Research Model

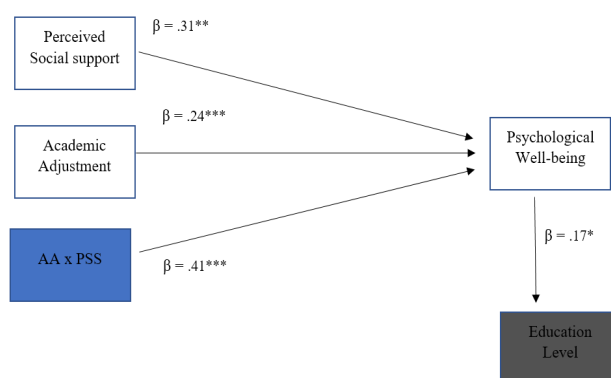


Fig. 1. Finalized model of the study

## Discussion

The primary purpose of the following study was to discover the interrelationship between academic adjustment, perceived social support and international students' psychological health in the public universities of Hungary. The hypothesis suggested that there are chances of the presence of a positive correlation amongst the academic adjustment, perceived social support and psychological well-being. It was also hypothesized that academic adjustment along with perceived social support could have the potential to positively predict psychological well-being of the students from all over the world. In addition to this, perceived social support was hypothesized to have a positive moderation effect on the relationship between academic adjustment and emotional stability.

The results of this study verified all three hypotheses i.e. the academic adjustment and psychological well-being had a positive correlation and similar is the case with psychological wellness and the perception of social support. Furthermore, both the academic adjustment and perceived social support had the ability to positively predict psychological well-being of international student. In addition to this, one of the sub-scales of academic adjustment i.e. academic lifestyle was found to be a positive predictor of psychological well-being in students' as-well. It was also revealed that perceived social support did have a positive moderating effect on the correlation between academic adjustment and mental health. Furthermore, education level among the demographics was found to be

positively interlinked with the psychological well-being. The findings of the following study are further discussed with reference to the literature as follows.

As the results revealed that education level is in a positive correlation with the mental well-being of students, it is supported by previous literature. In a study conducted by Liu et al. (2019) on a sample of Chinese college students it was revealed that the anxiety levels observed in the first three years of a degree were not normal. There were significant differences regarding mental health conditions including depression and anxiety from different university years, i.e. students from lower education levels showed higher symptoms of psychological distress as compared to students from higher levels of education, in which improvements in mental health were observed. This suggests that higher the education level of students in an international environment, higher will be their psychological well-being. One of the reasons behind this correlation can be the fact that a student is much more mature and may develop higher levels of adaptability and perseverance after having already experienced the stressors that students face at lower levels of education when they have just started universities. These students may also have low levels of anxiety regarding their career planning and future orientation after being exposed to the practical aspects of their educational curriculum such as internships and placements. Furthermore, another study by Panahi et al., (2013) revealed that there were significant differences in the personal growth and positive relationship, both being dimensions of emotional wellness in graduate students

from different semesters in Malaysian university.

The present study also hypothesized the likely presence of a positive relationship between academic adjustment, perceived social support and emotional wellness which the findings of present study validated. The hypothesis has a strong research and theoretical backing. For example according to Ayele (2012) adjustment problems are multidimensional and they may include the areas of personal, emotional, academic, environmental, and other factors. The academic requirements and demands are increased when a student is enrolled in a university and new relationships are also formed. According to study, students with higher academic achievement are the ones who are better adjusted to their new academic and social environment and therefore have higher psychological well-being, and therefore lower academic achievement related to lower adjustment (Sangeeta & Chirag, 2012). Furthermore, Zimmermann and Neyer (2013) found that adjusting in college is an integral factor that determines academic success and thus concluded that poor college adjustment and poor academic grades were positively correlated, proving the established hypothesis of present study.

Furthermore, the part that academic stress plays on the mental wellness of students was examined. The findings demonstrated a favourable correlation between students' inability to cope with academic stress, or poor academic adjustment and their poor psychological and emotional well-being. In addition to this Kaur and Kaur (2016) conducted a research on the relationship between academic adjustment problems and negative emotions in students and found that they were strongly positively correlated, which means that higher the problems in academic adjustment, higher will be the experience of negative emotions in students. In a research performed by Seipp (1991) it was found that the learners who were well-adjusted in their academic environment showed reduced levels of anxiety and rebellious behavior against other people. In fact, they felt a sense of independence while being overseas and thus better overall autonomy and in turn mental health. In another research performed by Davis and Dupper (2004) it was revealed that the international students are considered academically low-risk students who constantly show best performance in academia and have particularly high achievement skills. According to this study adjustment to the environment was one of the main factors in these students contributing to their overall psychological well-being (Guiton et al., 1992).

Furthermore, according to this hypothesis, a positive relationship was present between perceived social support and mental health in international students. This was supported by results as well as previous researches for example according to Liu (2016) international students face the phenomenon of transition as they move from one academic environment to another. During this transition of adjustment, one of the most difficult factors students might have to deal with is isolation. If the students fail to develop healthy contacts with the university or networks with their peers, the chances of leaving university are higher, because of isolation, failure in establishing social connections and friendships or getting involved with the new environment.

Therefore isolation may lead to developing negative emotions and unhealthy mental state. It can there for be concluded that the more one is involved and more friends or connections one has, there are less chances of experiencing negative emotions.

In another study conducted by Yasin (2010) the relationship between social support and mental health issues was studied in 120 students enrolled in undergraduate studies. The study's findings demonstrated that social support and psychological problems were negatively correlated which indicated that higher the level of social support in students lower will be the psychological problems in them thus leading to a higher mental wellness, therefore proving the hypothesis of present study. Furthermore, another study was conducted on student experience of received social support and its contribution towards adapting to university ethos (Awang et al. 2014). Areas explored included the relation between social support in academic, social and emotional adjustment and its relation to student well-being. It was concluded that social support in these areas was positively associated with students' over-all wellbeing.

The hypothesis also stated that academic adjustment is likely to predict the emotional wellness of students. This was supported by results and is in line with multiple researches. Setiawati (2000) suggested in one study that the overall mental health of a student depended on their academic adjustment and experiences in the new environment than their personal characteristics thus pointing that academic adjustment is a forecaster of mental health of students. Furthermore, according to a study by Miller et al. (2004) adjustment was discovered to be an important indicator of the mental health of students. In addition to this, in another study the fact was unearthed that students with average to higher level of academic performance showed high levels of wellbeing, personal growth as well as purpose in life on the well-being scale. This further proves that academic adjustment plays a significant role in predicting the wellness of students (Turashvili & Japaridze, 2012).

The hypothesis further stated that perceived social support is likely to predict psychological well-being in international students. This was also supported by results and literature. In a study by Panahi et al., (2016) on graduate students studying in Malaysia, psychological well-being was significantly affected by support of significant other and friend scale among other variables proving that perceived social support plays a significant part in determining the psychological well-being of students. The perceived social support determines ones capacity to handle an event that is stressful, and thus helps deal with the perceived stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therefore, it is implied that perceived social support can be a good indicator of ones coping resources against a stressful event and in turn a predictor of our psychological well-being. (Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Moreover, it was also hypothesized that the perceived social support could moderate the correlation between academic adjustment and mental health. This was also proved by the results; perceived social support was found to reinforce the link between psychological well-being

and academic adjustment. These results are in line with previous literature for example according Chen et al., (2002) conducted a research on the moderating role of perceived social support resources between attachment patterns of East Asian international students and the impact of U.S. Racism and cultural distress, leading to a negative well-being. It was concluded that the attachment security in student related to the new supportive friendships in the United States which positively moderated the effect of racism perceived by international students. This hypothesis is also supported by one the models used in this study i.e. Menzies & Barons' (2014) model of student adjustment. This model has divided experience of transition into four main phases i.e. Pre-departure; Honeymoon; Party's Over and Healthy Adjustment. In the pre-departure stage the students exhibit a neutral mood. In the second phase called the honeymoon, which is said to last a few weeks, students arrive in the university and exhibit emotions of excitement, adventure and positive feelings.

After a few weeks, the third phase namely party's over begins when a student begins to experience shocks in the new environment such as social and academic environment, cultures and attitudes etc. It is during this third phase that a student may experience negative states such as isolation, anxiety, depression, confusion and stress. Lastly, in the fourth healthy adjustment phase, students become used to the new environment and learn to adapt with the changes through the help of university, friends, social support and personal resources. Thus the mood returns back to neutral and psychological well-being improves. Furthermore, the stress-buffering hypothesis (Cohen & Wills, 1985) also suggests that during the time of transition or change such as at the time of academic adjustment, social support is likely to play the role of a buffer for two situations i.e. it diminishes the level of perceived stress, and secondly it provides a protection against the negative psychological states resulting from the situations deemed stressful.

### Limitations

There are certain limitations of the given research are as follows:

- This research was restricted to students from all over the world in of higher education institutions of Hungary only because of the limited resources and time. So, the results cannot be generalized.
- Data was collected through survey based self-report measures, which are susceptible to exaggeration, biases, and respondents may leave information missing.
- Behavioral observations could not be made.
- Sample size was limited.
- Students were taken only from five HEIs in Hungary compromising the external validity and generalizability of the study.

### Suggestions

For further studies on similar constructs and populations the following suggestions can be taken into account.

- This research can be replicated on different samples

across cultures.

- Further studies can be conducted in different research areas in Hungarian institutes for comparisons and generalizability.
- Care must be taken to avoid biases.
- In addition to quantitative measures, qualitative methods may be employed for further investigation of the study variables.
- The sample size be increased for higher generalizability.
- More empirical researches need to be carried out in Hungary on this topic in-order to develop interventions for students' adjustment and psychological well-being.
- Considering the effects of culture on academic adjustment as well the perceived social support in international environment can help develop better counseling services for foreign students.
- Other antecedents of psychological well-being of students can also be studied.

### Implications

The present study indicated that there is a significantly positive relationship between academic adjustment, perceived social support and psychological well-being which indicates that by improving the adjustment of international students in their universities, and the influencing the perception regarding availability of social support will positively influence the psychological well-being of these students ultimately increasing their productivity and speeding up acculturation in a foreign country. Following are further implications of the study.

- Academic adjustment is a common phenomenon faced by a wide number of students who move abroad for educational purposes. The study showed how it affects the psychological well-being of students. Thus, educational institutions should place greater emphasis on mental health promotion to make the process of adjustment more efficient and effective.
- The study has helped in understanding that perceived social support is a significant aspect that contributes to the psychological well-being of students in an international environment and structures should be established that ensure them that they are not alone.
- This study would benefit the fields of teaching and educational psychology, helping to understand the concern of student sojourners with regards to academic adjustment and their perceived social support influencing their well-being, which would not only help the students, but also the institutions in increasing the productivity of their programs.
- On the basis of these findings, intervention studies and psychological training programs can be developed to improve the process of academic adjustment of the international students. These interventions could significantly contribute towards developing better coping strategies and providing the international students with relevant support for better academic



adjustment, so they may perform to their maximum potential while being psychologically well.

## Conflict of Interests

The authors has declared that no competing interests exist.

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