

Acculturative Stress, Cognitive Functioning and Role of Social Support among Overseas Students

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Abstract

Acculturative stress can be a substantial psychological challenge experienced by the overseas students while adjusting to novel socio-cultural and academic environment in the receiving culture. The course of adaptation can effect cognitive functioning of the students. On the other hand, social support can mitigate these effects by acting as a protective buffer. Therefore, this research examines the role of acculturative stress and cognitive functioning in overseas students enrolled in Pakistani universities, while examining the extent to which the social support contributes to coping with acculturative challenges by employing a cross sectional research design. The sample comprised 181 overseas students (108 males, 73 females) aged 18 to 35 years, enrolled across multiple universities were recruited through convenient and snowball sampling techniques. Acculturative stress was evaluated using the Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students. Cognitive Failures Questionnaire was employed to assess cognitive failures and Personal Resource Questionnaire-2000 was used to assess social support. In bivariate analyses, higher level of acculturative stress was negatively associated with poor cognitive functioning and positively correlated with social support. Furthermore, an independent-samples *t*-test indicated a statistically significant difference in acculturative stress, cognitive functioning and social support scores between male and female students. This research concluded that overseas students experiencing acculturative stress are more prone to experience decline in cognitive functioning. The study also provided evidence that acculturative stress escalates the individual's attempt to access more social support. The poor cognitive functioning hinders the initiative to access social support in the aftermath of acculturative stress. This study highlighted the increased need of counselling programs, focusing multicultural aspects of counselling and social interaction with local students by group oriented activities.

Keywords: Acculturative stress, cognitive functioning, social support, overseas students, higher education

1. Introduction

Globalization has transformed education into a borderless, interconnected system that expands access to global knowledge, artificial intelligence advancement, drives cross-cultural understanding, and prepares a technologically skilled workforce. However, it also introduces challenges like unequal access to digital resources and the risk of cultural homogenization. Overseas students while studying in the host country get benefit from new learning environment, cultural and research experiences alongside they also encounter challenges of home sickness, unfamiliar academic environment, language barriers, cultural and social shock along with routine pressures of university education. Additionally, the overseas students encounter adjustment problems over the course of their studies that include acculturative stress (AS) (Crockett et al., 2007). Traditionally acculturation has been stated as the phenomena by which any individual grasp, comprehend and absorb tenets, opinions, and behaviours of the host culture into their native perception (Padilla, 1980). Psychological acculturation entails variations that ensued equally in the behaviour of the persons and the culture of the group. The students experience acculturation both individually and mutually when they settle down in a foreign milieu, apart from their native land (Maddhesia, 2022). Although AS is typically most pronounced among refugee populations, empirical evidence indicates that overseas students experience comparable levels of psychological distress (Samuel, 2009). Often arriving in the host nation with limited adaptive resources, overseas students face marked challenges in sociocultural adaptation, frequently exceeding the acculturative difficulties encountered by established ethnic minority groups (Castro, 2026).

In today's contemporary era, the university education is shaping itself by evolving cross-cultural challenges, career opportunities, technological and artificial intelligence advancement. Since the last couple of decades, an exponential growth in Higher education in Pakistan has been observed following the establishment of HEC in 2002 (Kayani, Ahmed et al. 2015). HEC has planned to steadily increase the intake of foreign students in order to achieve the vision of diversification across an extensive range of cultural and demographic dimensions (Zakaria, Janjua et al. 2016). Therefore, extensive studies are needed to get an insight regarding the experience of overseas students in Pakistan. Most of the overseas students encounter adjustment problems over the course of their studies that include AS (Jarrar and Nweke 2025). The chief vulnerabilities of overseas students in the host country surrounds academics, acculturation and social support (Vora 2023).

University adjustment poses substantial challenges to overseas students, who frequently sense pronounced internal and external pressures for academic excellence (Cho and Haslam 2010). Due to the recurrent difficulties of the students with the English language and with the cultural differences in academic process, for instance more idiosyncratic style is practiced in Pakistani universities, academic stresses are especially difficult to manage. Specifically, the AS can be as daunting as educational stresses. It is vital to learn and practice new social norms, a few of which might be opposing to the life-long experience of socialization in the country of origin. Numerous aspects can be realized to play their role in contributing to the difficulties that overseas students navigate through including psychological stressors (e.g. homesickness and reduced cognitive functioning), interpersonal difficulties (inadequate social support system) and environmental adversities (perceived discrimination, cultural detachment, and intergroup anxiety). The link between stress and cognitive functioning relies on the composite of both stress and physical health aspects (Sandi 2013), for instance the stress severity and the milieu in which stress occurs.

As conceptualized by Cohen et al. 1995 perceived stress escalates when environmental demands surpass an individual's adoptive capacity. Understanding this psychological construct is essential, as it exerts a primary influence on cognitive functioning. Cognitive functioning in the framework of this study refers to day to day cognitive performance including: routine slips and mistakes related to memory and attention for example overlooking names and schedules, unable to perceive traffic signals (Boals and Banks 2012). These errors are often stated as routine cognitive failures (Broadbent, Cooper, FitzGerald, & Parkes, 1982). While undergoing AS, forming new friends, handling loss of social support, and evolving a new social support system is a gruesome task for overseas students. Absence of social support specifically have been recognized to disrupt cognitive processes and lead to impair academic performance (Pedersen, 1991). It was established by the Yeh and Inose (2003) that overseas students experienced reduced AS when they were contented with their social support system. Likewise, it has been described that students with greater sense of social support experienced reduced AS (Poyrazli et al, 2004).

Subsequently, shifting to a new country unexpectedly divests people of their formerly recognised support system (Pedersen 1991) and shape them less self-assured, confused and more anxious (Hayes and Lin 1994). Extensive research has highlighted social support as a vital protective buffer against stress-induced physical and mental health indicators (Chen 2025). For overseas students in particular, the disruption of social support systems employs a profound negative influence on mental health (Lerias, Ziaian et al. 2025). Concurrently, overseas students may lack social support network that classically elevate their self-esteem and self- concept and extends vital social and emotional security (Mallinckrodt and Leong, 1992; Sandhu, 1995). As a result, they may become disoriented and estranged in the unaccustomed atmosphere (Pedersen, 1991). Although pursuing higher education abroad offers overseas students profound academic, cultural, and personal enhancement; nonetheless, navigating an unaccustomed socio-cultural environment frequently induces considerable psychological stress.

Acculturative stress may arise from language barriers, cultural differences, homesickness, discrimination, changes in social networks, and difficulties adjusting to new academic expectations. Prolonged AS may negatively influence students' cognitive functioning, including attention, concentration, memory, decision-making, and academic performance. Social support from family, friends, peers, and educational institutions may help students cope with these challenges and reduce the adverse effects of AS. However, the extent to which social support protects cognitive functioning during acculturation requires further investigation. Furthermore, the manifestations and severity of AS may vary significantly across gender groups, driven by differential coping strategies, distinct social expectations, and diverse cross-cultural adjustment experiences. Despite growing recognition of these disparities, the specific interplay between stress mechanisms and cognitive outcomes among overseas populations remains a key research gap. To address these empirical gaps, the present study investigates the impact of acculturative stress on the cognitive functioning of overseas students, evaluates the buffering role of social support in mitigating stress-related cognitive deficits, and examines gender-based variations in the experience of AS.

2. Methodology

To evaluate the association between AS and cognitive functioning, a cross-sectional survey design was implemented within a sample of N = 181 overseas university students. Participants

for the study were overseas students studying in various Pakistani universities, who were recruited, through convenient and snow ball sampling techniques. The overseas students were initially approached via respective university's international student office. The participation for the study was ensured to be voluntary and response anonymity was maintained. Prior to the data collection, participants were fully informed of the research aims, the voluntary nature of their participation, and confidentiality measures. Generally the sample comprised of International students, who were enrolled in various academic programs. The inclusion criteria for participants in this study was; age must be 18 years and above and duration of study in the university must be at least one semester. Only those participants were recruited in the study who were proficient in English language.

3. Instruments

All of the psychometric measures employed in this research have been utilized in previous researches and have established psychometric properties. AS Scale for International Students ASSIS (Sandhu and Asrabadi 1998), was used in order to determine the AS of overseas students. It has 36-items on a 5-point likert-type scale with seven subscales. The overall scores ranges from 36 to 180; higher values correspond to elevate AS. Scale reliability for the ASSIS is well-established, with previous overall internal consistency estimates ranging from .87 to .95 (Duru and Poyrazli 2007). In the current analysis, the total 36-item instrument demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = .91$).

Cognitive Failures Questionnaire (CFQ) (Broadbent, Cooper et al. 1982), was administered to assess the cognitive functioning of the individuals. CFQ is a self-report measure which was employed to assess cognitive failures, including memory, perception and motor function. The CFQ comprised of 25 items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (0 = never, 4 = always). Composite scores range between 0 and 100, with higher values indicating greater cognitive failure. It has been reported that in a recent study (Boals and Banks 2012) .CFQ had internal consistency score of .85 measured by Cronbach's alpha. In the current study, the internal consistency of the measure was $\alpha = .86$.

The Personal Resource Questionnaire-2000 (PRQ) (Weinert 1987), was administered to assess the social support. The PRQ comprises 15 items estimated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree). The composite score of the questionnaire ranges from 15 to 105, the elevated scores reflect greater degree of perceived social support. Previous iterations of the scale demonstrated acceptable test-retest reliability ($r = .72$). More recently, (Hovey 2000) reported a strong internal consistency for the PRQ-2000 scale as ($\alpha = .85$). For this study, the internal consistency of the measure was $\alpha = .88$.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic characteristics of sample

Participants for the study were comprised of 181 foreign students studying in Pakistani universities including 108 male (59.7%) and 73 female students (40.3%). The age range of the participants was between 18 years to 35 years. The proportion of single students was high among international students (72.4%), as compare to students in a relationship and married students. A vast majority of the overseas students belonged to middle class (51.4%) in contrast to upper middle, lower and upper class. Students living on campus (79.6%) were more than off

campus housing, whereas the higher number of students were living with other students (69.6%) as compare to living alone, living with non-student roommates, and living with parents/guardian/relatives and with a spouse. Academically a huge majority of international students sample were enrolled in bachelors program (69.6%) as compare to masters, doctoral and diploma programs. The self-reported English proficiency was average (50.8%) while most of the overseas students were successfully able to socialize with both Pakistani and non-Pakistani students. In terms of ethnic background Chinese (20.4%) formed the largest group, followed by Thai, Afghan and Somali. The other ethnic groups included Indonesians, Nigerians, Turkish, Sierra Leone, Kenyan, Ugandan, Sudanese, Iranian and Algerian respectively. Table 1 illustrate the frequency and percentage of the demographic characteristics of the participants for the study.

Table 1 Demographic characteristics

Variable	Category	Participants	
		n	%
Age	18-25	126	69.6
	26-30	47	26
	31-34	6	3.3
	35 or older	2	1.1
Gender	Male	108	59.7
	Female	73	40.3
Marital status	Single	131	72.4
	In a relationship	30	16.6
	Married	20	11
Socioeconomic status	Lower	10	5.5
	Middle	93	51.4
	Upper middle	72	39.8
	Upper	6	3.3
Current living	On-campus	144	79.6
	Off-campus housing	37	20.4
Living situation	Living alone	27	14.9
	Living with students	126	69.6
	Living with non-student roommates	8	4.4
	Living with parents/guardian/relatives	15	8.3
	Living with spouse	5	2.8
Class standing	Bachelors	126	69.6
	Masters	50	27.6
	Doctoral	3	1.7
	Diploma	2	1.1
English Fluency	Very high	19	10.5
	High	55	30.4
	Average	92	50.8
	Low	13	7.2
	Very low	2	1.1
Socialization	Pakistanis	25	13.8
	Non-Pakistanis	53	29.3
	Both groups equally	103	56.9

Nationality	Afghan (n=31; %17.1), Algerian (n=1 ;%0.6), Chinese (n=37;%20.4), Indonesian (n=18; %=9.9), Iranian (n=1; %=0.6) Kenyan (n=2; %=1.1) Nigerian (n=12; %6.6), Sierra Leone (n=7; %=3.9), Somali (n=28; %=15.5), Sudanese (n=1; %=0.6), Thai (n=33; %=18.2), Turkish (n=8; %=4.4), Ugandan (n=2; %1.1).
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4.2.Summary Statistics

The estimated values of both measure of central tendency and measure of dispersion are computed through mean, standard deviation and reliability coefficients, the estimates are illustrated in Table 2. The estimated value of Cronbach's alpha is above then 0.70 in most variables, which indicated that the results of estimated are reliable for discussion making, as the reported results of ASSIS, CFQ and PRQ-2000 indicated that Cronbach's alpha coefficients are 0.91, 0.86 and 0.88 respectively. However, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.43 to 0.76 for the seven subscales of ASSIS. The low alpha coefficient of Guilt sub scale ($\alpha=0.43$) of ASSIS may be ascribed to the smaller number of items on it.

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients and variable distribution of study variable (N=181)

Variables	M	SD	α	No. of items	Range		Skewness	Kurtosis
					Actual	Potential		
ASSIS	109.71	498.78	.91	36	2.20 - 3.58	1.62	-.223	-.248
PD	24.55	30.93	.72	8	2.71 - 3.43	1.23	-.001	-.534
HS	10.53	9.99	.51	4	2.20 - 3.07	1.39	-.114	-.535
PH	16.64	14.45	.66	5	3.14 - 3.46	1.1	-.164	-.044
Fear	12.55	13.53	.71	4	2.98 - 3.24	1.08	-.142	-.255
ST	8.36	7.76	.64	3	2.68 - 2.92	1.09	-.016	-.347
Guilt	5.93	4.43	.43	2	2.73 - 3.19	1.16	.092	-.634
Miscellaneous	31.15	50.58	.76	10	2.59 - 3.58	1.38	-.45	.048
CFQ	48.94	205.70	.86	25	1.60 - 2.43	1.51	-.186	-.497
PRQ-2000	72.72	14.80	.88	15	4.57 - 5.24	1.14	-.364	-.459

Note. ASSIS= AS scale for international students; PD= Perceived discrimination; HS= Homesickness; PH= Perceived hate; ST= Stress due to culture change/shock; CFQ = Cognitive failure questionnaire; PRQ= Personal resource questionnaire-2000.

4.3. Correlation between the study variables

To assess the relationships among the study variable, for the identified sample, correlations were computed. Following hypotheses were tested for the relationship between study variables:

1. AS and cognitive functioning are negatively correlated.
2. AS and social support are positively correlated

Table 3: Correlation matrix of study variable (N=181)

	ASSIS	CF	SS
ASSIS	-	-.497**	.279**
CF		-	-.228**
SS			-
M	109.7	48.94	72.72
SD	22.33	14.34	14.8

Note. ASSIS= AS scale for international students; CF = Cognitive functioning; SS= Social support.

**p < .01.

Results revealed negative correlation between AS and cognitive functioning which advocates that overseas students who experienced elevated level of AS were also more expected to experience decline in cognitive functioning. Pronounced AS is associated with a high level of social support i.e. overseas students tried to seek more social support as the AS increased in order to survive in the host culture. However, poor cognitive functioning is also significantly decreasing the social support.

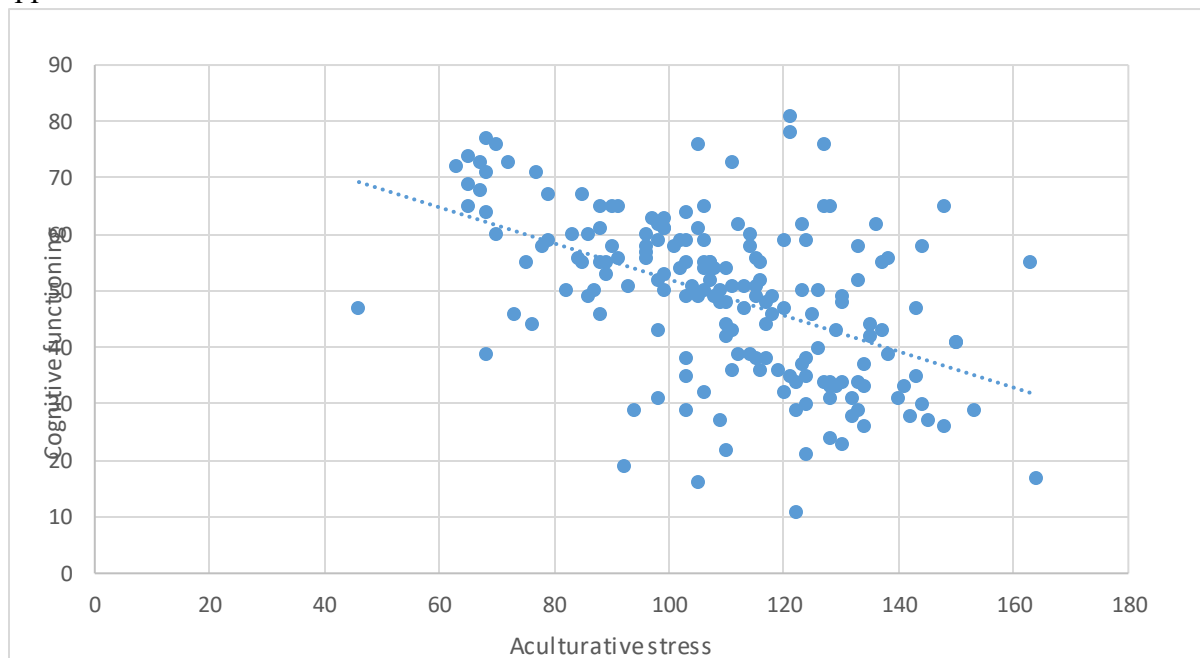


Figure 1. Negative correlation between acculturative stress and cognitive functioning

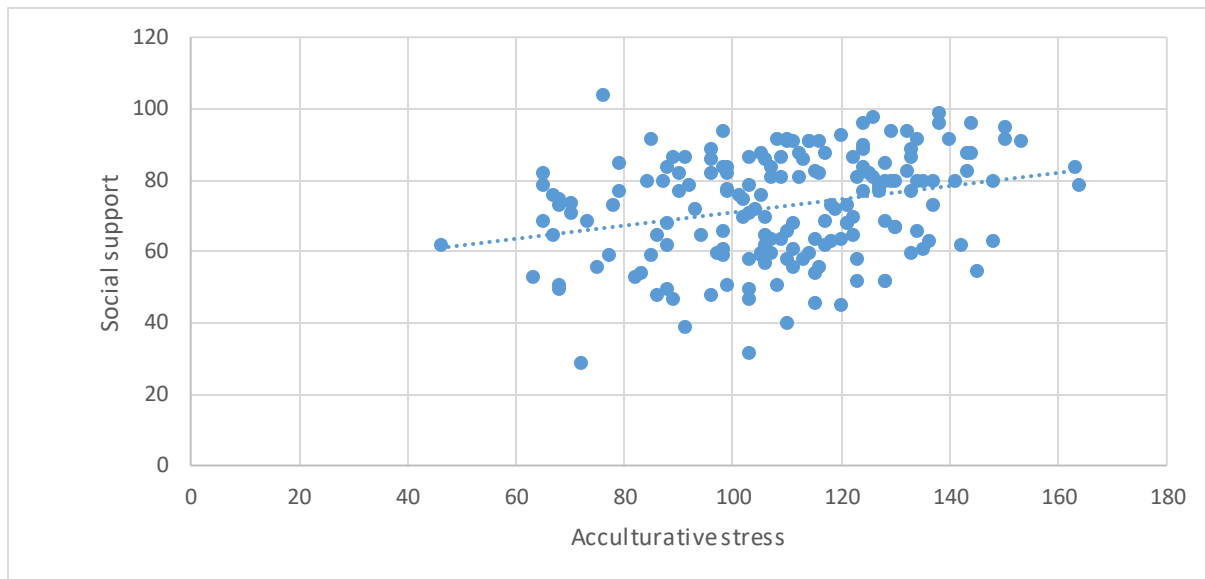


Figure 2. Positive correlation between AS and social support

Results of Table 4 presents the means, standard deviations, and inter-subscale correlation coefficients for the ASSIS. The internal consistency of ASSIS was further confirmed by computing interscale correlation among total and subscales of ASSIS. There was a positive and significant interscale correlation between subscales. Bivariate Pearson correlation analyses revealed statistically significant positive inter-correlations among all ASSIS subscales, as well as between each subscale (perceived discrimination, homesickness, Perceived hate, fear, stress due to culture change/shock, guilt and miscellaneous) and the total score, supporting the construct validity and internal consistency of the instrument. Findings indicated that the seven subscales were inter correlated moderately.

Table 4: Interscale correlation matrix, Mean and Standard Deviation of ASSIS

	ASSIS	PD	HS	PH	Fear	ST	Guilt	Miscellaneous
ASSIS	-	.850**	.670*	.652**	.797**	.719**	.703**	.927**
PD		-	.435*	.553**	.617**	.526**	.517**	.721**
HS			-	.240**	.431**	.562**	.559**	.581**
PH				-	.396**	.291**	.383**	.542**
Fear					-	.578**	.514**	.721**
ST						-	.444**	.619**

Guilt							-	.613**
Miscellaneous								-
M	109.7	24.5	10.53	16.6	12.5	8.3	5.9	31.5
SD	22.33	5.5	3.1	3.8	3.6	2.7	2.1	7.1

Note. ASSIS= AS scale for international students; PD= Perceived discrimination; HS= Homesickness; PH= Perceived hate; ST= Stress due to culture change/shock

** $p < .01$.

4.4. Acculturative stress as predictor of Cognitive functioning and Social support

Linear regression analysis was performed to predict the impact of AS on cognitive functioning and social support. Table 5 indicates that AS significantly predicted poor cognitive functioning. So the AS predicted poor cognitive functioning among international students. It is also evident from literature that stress intensify cognitive functioning if it is elicited by the external environment. Table 5 also indicates that AS significantly predicted social support. So the hypothesis no. 4 that AS will predict social support also verified significant for international students. It showed that international students tried to adjust in host culture by seeking more social support as the AS increased.

4.5. Comparing the gender difference in the manifestation of AS

An independent-samples t-test was performed to determine whether levels of AS differed significantly between male and female overseas students (see Table 6). Result indicate that on average, male overseas students ($M = 114.58$, $SE = 19.99$) experienced higher AS than female overseas students ($M = 102.49$, $SE = 23.75$). This difference was significant $t(179) = 3.69$, $p < .001$; however, it represented a medium sized effect $d = .55$. Interestingly, the difference in level of perceived discrimination ($d = 4.75$) and homesickness ($d = 2.46$) was larger in females than males. However, perceived hate was insignificant for both genders. Fear, stress due to culture shock, guilt and other non-specific concerns are significantly higher. However, effect sizes of these differences vary between .30 (fear) to .5 (guilt) indicating small to moderate level of effect. In case of cognitive functioning, on average, female overseas students ($M = 55.27$, $SE = 13.91$) experienced more decline in cognitive functioning than male overseas students ($M = 44.67$, $SE = 13.03$). This difference was significant $t(179) = 2.61$, $p < .05$; though, it represented a medium sized effect $d = .78$. The difference in social support indicated that female overseas students ($M = 76.16$, $SE = 14.22$) gained more social support than male overseas students ($M = 70.40$, $SE = 14.80$). This difference was significant $t(179) = -5.22$, $p < .001$; though, it represented a small sized effect $d = .39$.

Table 5: Impact of AS on Cognitive functioning and Social support

Variable	CF					SS							
	B	B	t	p	95% CI		B	β	t	P	95% CI		
					LL	UL					LL	UL	
Constant	83.96				74.75	93.16	52.46					41.94	62.97
ASSIS	-	-	-	.000	-.401	-.237	.185***	.279	3.88	.000		.091	.279
R ²	.247						.078						
F	58.72			.000			15.06			.000			
ΔR^2	.247						.078						

Note. ASSIS= AS scale for international students; CF = Cognitive functioning; SS= Social support. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit. ***p < .000.

Table 6: Gender differences in ASSIS, CF and SS (N=181)

	Male		Female		t	p	95% CL		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD	(179)		LL	UL	
ASSIS	114.58	19.99	102.49	23.75	3.69***	.000	5.636	18.54	0.55
PD	25.64	5.04	102.49	23.75	3.29**	.001	1.088	4.32	4.75
HS	11.55	2.74	22.93	5.92	5.70***	.000	1.647	3.39	2.46
PH	16.71	3.872	16.52	3.720	.333	.739	-.947	1.332	-
Fear	13.12	3.06	11.71	4.31	2.56*	.011	.325	2.49	0.37
ST	8.90	2.37	7.58	3.15	3.21**	.002	.510	2.13	0.47
Guilt	6.35	1.94	5.30	2.19	3.38**	.001	.438	1.66	0.5
Miscellaneous	32.31	6.19	29.42	8.02	2.73**	.007	.801	4.98	0.47
CF	44.67	13.03	55.27	13.91	-2.61*	.010	-10.12	-1.40	0.78
SS	70.40	14.80	76.16	14.22	-5.22***	.000	-14.61	-6.60	0.39

Note. ASSIS= AS scale for international students; CF = Cognitive functioning; SS= Social support; PD= Perceived discrimination; HS= Homesickness; PH= Perceived hate; ST= Stress due to culture change/shock

CL = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

5. Discussion

The present research analysed the AS of overseas students in Pakistani universities. AS also measures through gender difference in the manifestation. Acculturation in the framework of this study is operationalized as a substitution of characteristics of native culture with the host culture, through the process of learning in the host country and cognitive functioning is conceptualized as a day to day attentional and memory based slips or errors for instance unable to notice traffic signs, forgetting names and appointments (Boals and Banks 2012). On the other hand social support is the information which makes the individual to believe that he or she is cared for, valued and is an esteemed member of a network of a shared responsibilities (Cobb 1976).

AS effect the overseas students, who encounter difficulties that surrounds academics and acculturation in this process appear to be primary. (Salgado, Castañeda et al. 2012). Alongside AS gravely effect the cognitive functioning as the study indicates a significant relationship. Extensive empirical evidence indicates a clear association between stress and cognitive functioning, as measured by laboratory based instruments of cognitive functioning (Boals and Banks 2012), however the association between AS and cognitive functions that impairs the everyday mental process is the least studied phenomena and literature based evidences are also scarce, therefore the results of this study have established a negative relationship amongst AS and cognitive functioning which recommends that overseas students who suffered elevated levels of AS were likewise prone to endure decline in cognitive functioning. Prior studies have established that cognitive functioning is enhanced if stress is stimulated by the cognitive activity itself. Conversely, cognitive functioning gets disrupted if stress is elicited by the external milieu (Sandi 2013).

Moreover, the current study has also examined the significance of social support among overseas students in the course of AS and the results have indicated that as the AS escalates the individuals try to seek more social support in order to survive in the host culture. However, the impairment in the cognitive functioning is negatively associated with the social support which shows that poor cognitive functioning is simultaneously hinder the acquisition of perceived social support in response to AS. Prior research demonstrates that diminished social support adversely affects overseas students' psychological well-being (Baeza et al., 2022). Because establishing comparable support systems in a host country poses considerable challenges (Mallinckrodt and Leong, 1992) and these students frequently experience discontentment with their recently formed social networks. Differences in cultural perceptions of social support systems may significantly influence how overseas students assess their support networks, thereby impacting their vulnerability to AS. Throughout the transition process, overseas students consistently navigate varied stressors, including language barriers, visa and immigration constraints, culture shock, and homesickness. Concurrently managing these socio-cultural adjustment challenges can intensify feelings of social isolation and loneliness during the cross-cultural adaptation phase (Sümer, Poyrazli et al. 2008) to overcome these difficulties they try to seek more social support from their new environment in order to reduce the effects of AS.

For this study it was hypothesized that female overseas students would experience significantly higher levels of AS than males but the independent-sample t-test indicated medium size effect. A medium sized difference ($d = .55$) can be attributed to the gender disparity associated with AS which has previously resulted in partial or mixed results in immigrants (Xiao, Liu et al. 2019). For instance some studies have asserted gender disparity in the experience of AS (Berry, Kim et al. 1987, Neto 2002, Berry 2005). Berry and his associates (Berry, 2005) proposed that female immigrants might be at higher risk for complications in the course of acculturation phenomena since they "attempts to take on new roles available in the society of settlement may bring them into conflict with their heritage culture". Nevertheless, evidence across multiple studies remains equivocal as to whether female overseas students intrinsically experience elevated AS, or if observed differences are instead driven by confounding environmental and social contexts (Alzukari and Wei 2024). It can also be inferred from this study that females in Pakistani culture are respected and more protected and they experience a privileged treatment which may have resulted in lower level of AS than males.

6. Conclusion

This study concluded the key relationship among the acculturative stress, cognitive functioning and social support. The results indicated that the AS impairs cognitive functioning, thereby intensifying adjustment and adaptation challenges among overseas students in Pakistan. Specifically, overseas students who endured higher acculturative stress also pursued more social support in order to survive and ease their stay in the host country. However, the negative relationship between cognitive functioning and social support of these students has also highlighted the increased need of counselling programs, focusing multicultural aspects of counselling and social interaction with local students by group oriented activities. Findings of the study has also provided evidence of gender disparity associated with AS, cognitive functioning and social support. It can be inferred from this study that females in Pakistani culture are respected and more protected, therefore international female students experience a differential treatment which may have resulted in lower level of acculturative stress than males but higher perception of perceived discrimination and perceived hate.

7. Limitations

Several limitations of the present study require consideration while conducting future studies. First, Longitudinal studies across academic semesters would provide greater insight regarding overseas students manifesting acculturative stress and protective role of social support on cognitive failures. Second, while the sample of 181 overseas students provided adequate power for principal analyses, a greater sample size will provide deeper insight of the phenomenon.

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