

The Challenges Experienced by International Nursing Students in Nursing Education: A Qualitative Study

Uluslararası Hemşirelik Öğrencilerinin Hemşirelik Eğitiminde Yaşadığı Güçlükler: Niteliksel Bir Çalışma

Hülya ELMALI ŞİMŞEK*¹
Ece KARALI²
Günay ARSLAN³



¹Fenerbahçe University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Nursing, İstanbul, Türkiye

²The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, UK

³Üsküdar University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Midwifery, İstanbul, Türkiye



*Yazarın yeni kurumu: *Ankara Medipol University, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Nursing, Ankara, Türkiye*

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Sorumlu Yazar/Corresponding author:
Hülya ELMALI ŞİMŞEK
E-mail: hulya.elmali34@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The study aimed to determine the challenges experienced by international nursing undergraduate students during their education period.

Methods: A phenomenological research design was used. The study was conducted with 20 international nursing students enrolled in a foundation university in Türkiye. Colaizzi's phenomenological data analysis method was employed in the study.

Results: Based on the study's results, three main themes, 'Learning in a different environment', 'Challenges', 'Solution-Non Solution' and 'System difference, Language problems in clinical practice, Broad nursing curriculum, Facilitators, Language barrier, Feeling homesick, Racism and discrimination, Housing difficulties, Lack of funding, Instant solution, Failing to find a solution sub-themes themes were created.

Conclusion: It has been observed that students experience different environments, uncertainties, and various challenges, and that these situations directly affect their education and success. To that end, both the institutions they receive education and the academicians must support the students in various ways.

Keywords: International education, qualitative, nursing education, nursing students

ÖZ

Amaç: Araştırmanın amacı uluslararası hemşirelik lisans öğrencilerinin eğitimleri süresince yaşadıkları zorlukları belirlemektir.

Yöntemler: Fenomenolojik araştırma deseni kullanılmıştır. Araştırma, Türkiye'deki bir vakıf üniversitesine kayıtlı 20 uluslararası hemşirelik öğrencisi ile yürütülmüştür. Çalışmada Colaizzi'nin fenomenolojik veri analizi yöntemi kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular: Araştırmanın sonuçlarına göre 'Farklı bir ortamda öğrenme', 'Zorluklar', 'Çözüm-Çözumsuzlük' olmak üzere üç ana tema ve 'Sistem farkı, Klinik uygulamada dil sorunları, Geniş hemşirelik müfredatı, Kolaylaştırıcılar, Dil engeli, Memleket hasreti, Irkçılık ve ayrımcılık, Barınma zorlukları, Finansman eksikliği, Anında çözüm, Çözüm bulamama' alt temaları oluşturulmuştur.

Sonuç: Öğrenciler, farklı ortam, çözümsüzlükler, çeşitli zorluklar yaşadıklarını ve bu durumların eğitim ve başarılarını doğrudan etkiledikleri görülmüştür. Bunun için hem eğitim aldıkları kurumların hem de akademisyenlerin öğrencilere destek olmaları gerekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslararası eğitim, nitel, hemşirelik eğitimi, hemşirelik öğrencileri



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INTRODUCTION

International education involves a student's education abroad. Many factors, such as education costs, international kinship relations, foreign language expertise, academic achievements of universities, visa procedures and post-education work opportunities affect students' mobility.¹

While trying to adapt to their new lives in a foreign country, students may confront many sociological, psychological, or cultural problems. This include language, dressing, nutrition, accommodation, social activities, and interpersonal relations.

International nursing students also adapt to a new and country-specific education, healthcare system and a new language. This situation may cause educational challenges between international and national students. This apparent disparity for international nursing students illustrates the need for academic personnel to consider extra support for these students from the perspective of students' educational equity.²

A study regarding the challenges experienced by international nursing students suggested that students assessed being an international student in Türkiye as a complicated process due to language barrier. Therefore, they expressed economic issues, communication problems, and the difficulty of theoretical courses as adverse experiences.³ In other studies, international nursing students revealed that they experience social isolation and communication problems. This communication problem was intensified due to the language barrier, especially in clinical practices.^{2,4-6}

The problems experienced by the students render it difficult for them to adapt, and their academic success can be adversely affected. Therefore, specifying the challenges experienced by international nursing students during their education, seeking solutions for them and supporting them as educators is critical.

English Nursing education in Türkiye has been increasing in recent years. In parallel, the number of international students is also increasing. In this sense, there are not many studies conducted in Türkiye regarding the evaluation of students. In terms of evaluating the situation in Türkiye, this study will contribute to the literature and attract the attention of a wide international audience.

AIM

The study aimed to determine the challenges experienced by international nursing undergraduate students during

their education period in Türkiye.

Research Question

- What are the difficulties international nursing students experience while studying nursing in a foreign country?

METHODS

Study design

A descriptive phenomenological design was used for the study. Phenomenological study reveals the meaning of experiences regarding a concept or phenomenon for individuals. When presenting a phenomenon, it is necessary to focus on explaining the common aspects of all participants. The most important role and responsibility of a researcher who prefers the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research approaches, is to understand, investigate and reveal the effect of the research question on the "lived experiences" of the participants. Through qualitative phenomenological research, participants are given the opportunity to present their stories, have their voices heard, and make sense of the shared phenomenon. In a phenomenological research tradition, the number of participants can range from two to 25.⁷

The literature states that researchers conducting qualitative phenomenological studies should ask only one or two central questions and then support the central questions with a maximum of five to seven sub-questions.⁷ It aimed to address the question, "What are the most common negative experiences that international nursing students encounter during their nursing education, and how are students affected by these experiences?" The Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Studies (COREQ) was used as a tool due to their relevance in qualitative studies.⁸

Participants

The research was conducted in the English Nursing Program of a foundation university located Türkiye in the 2021-2022 academic year. The research population comprises twenty one international students. At the time of the study, there were a total of 21 enrolled students. Since one of them did not accept to participate in the study, the study was conducted with a total of twenty students. A purposeful random sampling was used in the research. Twenty international undergraduate nursing students who agreed to participate (P) in the study were included.

Data collection

Methods and Tools: In this study, the focus group interview method was used. Information Form and Semi-Structured Interview Form were used to collect data. The interview was conducted face-to-face and the purpose of the study

was explained before the interview. The information about using a voice recorder during the interview was given. The interviews consisted of a moderator and a recorder. The moderator asked the questions and moderated the conversation. The researchers were two nursing academics who speak a foreign language. The research began with students who agreed to participate, and the study was concluded when saturation was reached, with the same answers being given to the research questions by groups of 7-8 people. The themes were not predetermined and were created as a result of data analysis.

Information Form: The form had seven questions regarding gender, age, duration of stay in Türkiye, duration of studentship in the nursing department, and Turkish proficiency.

Semi-Structured Interview Form: The form comprised the following four semi-structured interview questions prepared by the researchers.

- What are your thoughts about studying in a foreign country?
- What are the positive and negative experiences you have had during your nursing education?
- What are the difficulties you experience while studying nursing in a foreign country?
- How do you solve the challenges and problems you experience?

Focus group is a technique that aims to collect data by creating a polyphonic environment where participants do not feel the need to hide their true thoughts, usually carried out with participants with some common characteristics and a moderator. It is stated in the literature that the interview group should be between 6 and 12 people and that interviews should be conducted with at least three different groups for the research.⁹ Data collection was conducted through three focus group interviews. There are 7-7-6 students in the groups. Focus group interviews were conducted in the presence of a moderator researcher and a reporter who were sitting at a round table in a room where only the participants and researchers were present. Each group was interviewed face-to-face for approximately 45–60 minutes. Care was taken to obtain the opinions of each student, and the students who remained silent were called by their names and encouraged to participate. Interviews were conducted in English. The study was finalized when the data started to repeat, in other words, when it reached saturation.¹⁰

Data analysis

During the analysis of the qualitative data, all the answers, reactions, and silences of the participants were recorded. They were transcribed, all researchers read the transcript,

and the participants were asked to read the transcript and make necessary corrections to increase the validity of the data. The data were de-identified by removing names and the research findings were presented with numerical identifiers instead of personal identifiers.

Colaizzi's¹¹ phenomenological data analysis method was employed in the study: (1) The interviews were transcribed in the original English language, and all were read. (2) To understand the emotions and experiences conveyed in the interviews and thus extract essential statements, the transcripts were read repeatedly, and crucial statements were identified. (3) The statements related directly to the phenomenon of interest were coded in manual thematic analysis. (4) Sub-themes and themes were grouped by the researchers. (5,6) Researchers independently translated sub-themes and expressions into Turkish, and inconsistencies were checked. (7) To verify the themes, a copy of the transcript was given to the students and they were asked to read it.¹⁰ Finally, the themes and subthemes were validated by the participants.

Descriptive analysis was performed in SPSS.18 program for sociodemographic data.

Ethical considerations

In order to implement the study, ethics committee approval from the Fenerbahçe University Ethics Committee at 04.13.2022 (2022/E-67888467-204.01.07-7870), institutional permission from the institution, and written permission from the participants declaring that they agreed to participate in the study were obtained. Students were willing to share their difficulties and were able to express their opinions openly. The personal information of the participants was kept confidential.

RESULTS

Characteristics of the participants

Students chose a school in Türkiye due to high-quality education system even though only a few know Turkish. The descriptive characteristics of the students revealed that their ages range between 18 and 34. Most are women; their stay in Türkiye is between 1-3 years, and most come from African countries (Table 1).

Thematic Analysis

The focus interviews suggested that three main themes were formed: "Education" (Table 2).

Theme 1: 'Learning in a different environment'

Under this theme, students expressed their educational experiences while studying nursing in another country. First, they mentioned the differences between the education system in their own country, and Turkish education system. Moreover, they acknowledged the

language barrier, some educational facilitators, and the broad nursing education curriculum.

Table 1. Findings of Students' Descriptive Characteristics (n=20)

Characteristics	n	%
Age		
18-24	19	95
25-34	1	5
Gender		
Female	14	70
Male	6	30
Class		
First-year	20	100
Length of stay in Türkiye		
Less than 1 year	3	15
1-2 years	16	80
3 years	1	5
Country		
Nigeria	14	70
Somali	3	15
Dubai	1	5
Iranian	1	5
Lebanon	1	5
Reason for choosing a school in Türkiye		
Good education system	10	50
Desire to gain a different experience	1	5
Working in Türkiye	1	5
Affordable tuition fee	2	10
Be a beautiful country	2	10
Having scholarships to study in Türkiye	4	20
Turkish proficiency		
I can hardly understand	11	55
I know	2	10
I do not know	7	35

System differences

In this sub-theme, students compared the differences between their own country and the education system in Türkiye. They stated that the education system was different and that educators sometimes could not understand them due to the language barrier.

“Interesting, just me, like for me, I am limited in different ways. Moreover, survival in a strange land is a big factor. Education System is another big factor. The first and the most challenging part is how we study and the school. Most of the time, it looks like this, it is teachers centered. The whole attention is paid more to the teachers, and less to the students. Because these are international students, many things differ from where we come from. It is not even easy for us. But at the end of the

day, because of the policy, or the management rules, we do not have a choice but to bring ourselves to that region or that place to do what needs to be done. Therefore, it is like, for me, it is like, Teacher-Centered and not the student setup. Because most times the students have little or nothing to say when the academic is going on, you just come to class, study that and just listen.” (P14)

Table 2. Main Themes, Sub-themes and Codes

Main theme 1. Learning in a different environment	
Sub-themes 1	System difference
Code	The different education system Teaching lessons routinely and using the same method
Sub-themes 2	Language problems in clinical practice
Code	Being new to the country Communication difficulties
Sub-themes 3	Broad nursing curriculum
Code	The extensive curriculum Difficulty of course content
Sub-themes 4	Facilitators
Code	Amazing opportunity Quality education Clinical practice opportunity Positive attitudes of nurses
Main theme 2. Challenges	
Sub-themes 1	Language barrier
Code	Inability to communicate The Turkish language has different meanings
Sub-themes 2	Feeling homesick
Code	Missing home Communication problem
Sub-themes 3	Racism and discrimination
Code	Having racism problem Missing home People's prejudice
Sub-themes 4	Housing difficulties
Code	Landlords do not rent houses to foreign students Not enough student dormitories High house rent
Sub-themes 5	Lack of funding
Code	Much pressure Difficult logistics Inability to find a job
Main theme 3. Solution and Non-Solution	
Sub-themes 1	Instant solution
Code	Using translate programs Being silent to people
Sub-themes 2	Failing to find a solution
Code	Run away There is nothing to do Being silent

“Studying is quite great. It is interesting, though, because it is a big problem with the language barrier. Because back where I am coming from, when you are taught something, you get so many illustrations to explain, even before it goes into any topic. The teacher will narrate a story stating or explaining how something was done in the past or has been taught from there that will link up to the day's topic. Thereby it makes us understand fully. The explanation is not a direct definition of what the teacher is saying, only that only the Teacher is doing that you already have the insight or what the teacher is about. Explain or teach. I do not know if you understand. Thus, it is quite different from my type of teaching like the one. I understand that the language barrier may be causing the problem because not understanding or speaking English may lead to that.” (P7)

Language problems in clinical practice

Students declared that they had difficulty communicating with patients and hospital staff during clinical practice due to the language barrier. Only a few staff were able to communicate in English, and most patients spoke Turkish. The students suggested that communication was challenging during clinical applications.

“I feel that the nurses working at the hospital generally like us, I feel that they are trying to teach us something, but the language problem prevents this. Furthermore, we, of course, are students; we are still learning and eager to understand what is going on. Moreover, it is as if we are watching them without you having questions to ask.” (P4)

“It is about communication and language here. We are studying nursing and English, but there are nurses here who only know Turkish. Thus, we do not know how to communicate and learn from the nurses and ask about the cases at the hospital.” (P17)

Broad nursing curriculum

Students stated that the nursing education curriculum and the course contents were comprehensive, and they declared that they had difficulty learning it.

“It is too broad, nursing as a course, and the curriculum is extensive. Moreover, it is not like an easy course at all, so the language is also like even during the debate when we are in school. When we tell people to speak English, they have their own language. We feel like we do not understand, and we understand that. Teachers, they are not like native speakers of the English language teachers, but at least they are coping.” (P8)

“One semester is not really enough to pass a new certain course. One semester is not enough to know pharmacology and anatomy. Today, when I was reading,

someone asked, what, where is the iliac fossa? It is funny, and the if you do not know, and all that, it is because it is just for us. Then, we just focus on doing it.” (P14)

“We have tremendous pressure. When we said, please show some mercy. The only answer we get is that you are a student. It is your responsibility. You are here to say yes; I know I am spelling it. But please show some mercy. Like, you can make it a little easier for us because we are not normal students.” (P20)

Facilitators

The students evaluated the quality of the education they received, the facilities of the school, the university's culture, the clinical practice opportunities, and the nurses' positive attitudes toward them as facilitating factors.

“But then we have good teachers, and the laboratory is good. We do not have this back home; we do not have many schools like this school in our country, to be very, very honest.” (P2)

“Yes, well, we have the opportunity to be in the hospital and practice seeing patients' occupations; the evaluation form is, it really helped us to talk to patients one on one, that is really nice.” (P1)

“Even though there is the bad side, okay, suddenly the language, of course, is bad. But by the time we get used to it, we know how to like the essentials and say that. But the good side is like the nurses are really nice. Plus, I like the university culture, you know, like the universities that if you feel like an adult, you are not like in school.” (P9)

“At first, it was really, really difficult, but at the same time, because of some friendly and welcoming Turkish people, I had time to adapt to them.” (P10)

Theme 2: ‘Challenges’

The second main theme, challenges, includes the challenges many students face regarding language problems, housing difficulties, racism and discrimination, and lack of funding while living and studying in a different country. The students reported that they felt homesick, how studying in a foreign country was challenging, and they were exposed to racism.

Language barrier

The students stated they had no difficulty during lectures because their theoretical lessons were 100% English. However, the language problem outside the school was reported to be severe. Additionally, some students whose native language is not English revealed great difficulty in theoretical lessons.

“The language is a barrier. It is not easy consider to speak and how to communicate with other people.” (P13)

"Studying is quite great. It is interesting, though, for the language barrier, because it is really a big problem." (P7).

"I think it is the first country I have been to outside Nigeria. It has not really been a good experience because they have, like, completely different reasoning from ours. It is much more difficult, especially when someone is talking to you and you do not understand the talking. They tend to get upset at somebody not understanding them. Yes, and also, even as we are foreigners now, we are missing out on different opportunities. Some of them say conferences or occasions they are holding in school everything, including the advertisement in Turkish." (P11)

Feeling homesick

Another problem students experienced personally was that they missed their country, home, and family. The majority said living in a foreign country and being away from home was difficult.

"Since it is my first time so far from my mother, and, exactly, it is my first time that I am traveling alone by myself. Moreover, it is the first foreign country I have lived in; it is hard. Usually, I go out at night. Thus, I do not want to talk to anyone because it makes me uncomfortable. Nonetheless, studying may be hard for me because English is not my mother tongue. But it is an opportunity because I can develop every talent myself. I feel like I am growing." (P20)

"Honestly, being in a foreign country is like an amazing opportunity. You see many different people, but it is hard. It is hard because you miss your country first. Furthermore, there is much stuff here, like when you are in a foreign country; you do not know anyone. You are still new to the country; you do not know the language. If we do not want to talk specifically in Türkiye, it is because there are few English speakers. Hence, it is difficult but interesting overall and fun for me." (P9)

Racism and discrimination

Most students stated that they were exposed to racism many times, especially African students saying they were more exposed to racism because of their skin color.

"First of all. The education system is nice. Yes, the education facilities are okay. Because I have a problem with racism, it sometimes makes me miss my home. It keeps reminding me that I am not like I am either feeling." (P1)

"Well, it is because I' am in a new country. Thus, there is nothing I can do. Hence, it was very, very bad. I felt so humiliated at that point." (P7)

"Personally, I feel I have experienced the racism stuff countless times at the shops, at the banks, on the bus, and all of that. But the one I was talking about, I think it is one of the reasons why I and some of my other brothers and sisters were transferred to the school we are currently studying. Yes, because the first time we came to Türkiye, we spent about eight months in a city called..., and I had the firsthand experience, like that was like, three weeks or four weeks when I just got sick. I experienced that. Because of that, up to this moment, it has given me the impression that Turkish people generally do not like me as a black person. Moreover, I dislike most of them because of their attitude toward us." (P4)

Housing difficulties

The students stated that they have a housing problem due to the lack of dormitories. House prices were reported to be higher, and landlords did not want to lease their house to international students. They expressed that they could only rent a place in the suburbs of the city.

"They ask you your name, and once they hear you are a foreigner, they do not give you the house. Some even increase the price of the house just because you are a foreigner. Furthermore, they want to cheat you." (P6)

"You try so hard to contact the landlord. For example, if something breaks down in the house, it seems they do not care about us. Dormitories are always full; we have to rent a house. Finding a home is also difficult. It becomes our biggest problem." (P5)

"The truth is distance. Distance from where you live to school greatly influences education in different ways. Thus, the distance has really affected me; personally, it really affects me. I know it is affecting the blood of our students. It affects students; if somebody really comes to school, the distance from the school to your house is about two hours. Then you are supposed to go home and study because of the distance and the problem you will encounter. While going home, you get tired, and you cannot sleep." (P14)

Lack of funding

The students and their families were covering the financial expenses such as tuition fees and accommodation fees. Furthermore, students suggested they had a tough time funding themselves because they did not have enough financial resources.

"Because I am sponsoring myself for school. Thus, it is challenging for me to work after school. I have too many things piled up from Monday up to Thursday. Only on Fridays do we have free time. There is definitely no place

where I can just work one day and make a living.” (P7)

Theme 3: ‘Solution and Non-Solution’

The last theme, *Solution and Non-Solution*, was created based on the answers by the students to the question of how they solved the problems they experienced.

Instant solution

Most students revealed that they try to solve their language problems by attempting to learn Turkish language or using translation programs over the phone. They also try to find inexpensive housing from distant parts of the city to compensate for the lack of accommodation.

“I can try to translate even the google translation or using signs or maybe just make no definitely. I will let you luck and I try to make you understand what I am saying.” (P14)

“It is really hard for me to read and study in another language. I sometimes have to spend much time; I do not understand a sentence or a whole page. Thus, I have to translate it. I need to write a sentence word by word, which takes much time.” (P20)

“How do I deal with the language? It is just like demonstrating, but like my hands, if you could understand me, or I translate one of those. Then, what is the racism; how do I do with racism.” (P12)

Failing to find a solution

Students suggested that they could not solve language and communication problems most of the time. They stated that they had no solution for the racism issue, which was one of the severe problems they experienced. They preferred staying silent when they were exposed to racism. They declared that they strove to solve another big problem, the lack of scholarships, by working part-time jobs. Nonetheless, they had difficulty finding a job because they could not speak Turkish.

“Turkish language has different meanings. Thus, sometimes we try to pass this on to translate it differently and give you the wrong information. Then it makes one the level of the language even more problematic.” (P14)

“Turkish is really hard; you do not know how to speak Turkish.” (P12)

“Racism is not in me to solve because I am not doing the racism of the day. It is up to the people aware of it to make the changes themselves. It is a decision they have made in them that we cannot even change as a perception.” (P7)

“I run away from that.” (P20).

“When it comes to working in Türkiye, you have to speak Turkish in the first place. And even though you understand the something in Turkish, it's not helpful at all. Moreover,

we do not see many work opportunities requiring English. Hence, it is tough words, like thinking we will be studying nursing or any course and working. Thus it is the language barrier; it is hard for us to work in a job.” (P10)

“I feel since they do not like me, the only business I have here is just to study and to cope. So I feel very bad when it comes to that. And I try not to relate with Turkish people because of that experience.” (P4)

DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined the challenges experienced by international nursing undergraduate students during their education in Türkiye. The main themes included ‘*Learning in a different environment*’, ‘*Challenges*’, ‘*Solution and Non-Solution*’, and the sub-themes were determined based on the findings.

The literature suggests that international nursing students suffer from cultural, social, financial, human relations, and different educational content problems. Furthermore, students are exposed to racism and have communication problems due to the language barrier.^{2-6,10,12,13} According to Eden and et al’s¹⁴ literature review, international students have lots of problems such as language barrier, feelings of isolation, different teaching styles. The findings of our study align with the literature.

They prefer a university in Türkiye because the language of education is English, the fee for nursing education in Türkiye is lower than in other countries, and they think they will receive a better quality education than in their own country.

Concerning the ‘*Learning in a different environment*’ theme in our research, students complain that the education system differs from their countries’ system. Moreover, they have difficulty communicating with patients and hospital staff due to the language barrier they experience during clinical practice, and the nursing education curriculum is too broad and challenging. However, they suggested that the university’s education quality was satisfactory. They also stated that they had adequate clinical practice opportunities and were exposed the positive and supportive attitudes of the nurses and personnel in the hospital during clinical practices, which increased their motivation.

Based on the research conducted by Mitchell et al.² about the language and educational issues of international nursing students in Australia, students were reported to have problems with cultural adaptation and racism. Students also reported feeling excluded and having a language barrier due to English education, adversely affecting their theoretical and clinical studies. Kocayanak¹²

examined the international education experience of nursing students in Switzerland and the USA. Students stated that international education would positively affect their careers and could be an excellent opportunity. They also stated that clinical practices and nurses working in the hospital would improve their professional development, and the mentor support increased their adaptation to the clinical environment. However, they suggested that the language barrier adversely affected their education, causing difficulties in the written exams, thus suggesting that the education program could be more flexible for international students. Mikkonen et al.⁵ evaluated the clinical learning environment of international nursing students in Finland. They found that language and cultural differences were the most critical problems in clinical practice, and students felt stressed and uncomfortable. Levent et al.¹⁵ reported that students who spoke with an accent during clinical practice felt excluded.

In the theme of '*Challenges*' which is the second main theme of our research, the language problems of the students were seriously affected their daily lives as well as their education. Since the language of education is English, students do not feel obliged to learn Turkish. However, they experience serious language problems when they are outside of school. African students were specifically reported to be exposed to racism and discrimination. They also stated that they felt homesick and missed their families. They reported that they had issues finding accommodation, financing, and resources. The landlords, who understand that dormitories are inadequate for accommodation, demand higher rents. Because they were foreigners, the landlords did not want to lease their houses to students. Moreover, African students declared that they were excluded because of their skin color. However, they also remarked that being in a different country was an excellent opportunity for them, and they had gained experience. A study conducted by Sanner et al.⁶ found that Nigerian nursing students in the USA had problems regarding social isolation, exclusion, and rejection. Furthermore, students had communication issues due to their accented speech, they were exposed to racism, had no financial resources, and had to work and study simultaneously, thus making coping challenging. In the study of Green et al.¹², students stated that living in a different culture was a beneficial experience. However, students declared they experienced culture shock when they came to the country. Concurrently, they stated that being in a new country was challenging, and they had accommodation problems. However, solving these issues made them feel better and they felt more successful.

Students revealed that being away from their homes was stressful, and they felt homesick and lonely. The study also suggested that the host university's contact with students by telephone or e-mail reduced these feelings. Pross¹⁶ conducted a study in the USA and reported that international nursing students had cultural difficulties and communication problems. Tuzcu et al.³ conducted a study in Türkiye and reported that students describe being an international student in Türkiye as a complicated process due to the language barrier. Students stated that they had financial problems and that scholarships for international students were inadequate, which forced them to work.

In the third main theme of our research, '*Solution and Non-Solution*', the students declared that they found instant and temporary solutions for the problems they experienced. Nevertheless, they could not find a solution to some problems. Most students also indicated that they lived in a different country for the first time and had difficulties, but they felt stronger and more confident as they solved the problems. They revealed that they tried to find scholarships and jobs due to a lack of finance, but they needed to speak Turkish in order to find a job. They wanted to learn Turkish, but it was reported as a complex language. They used translation applications to solve the language problem they were experiencing and try to communicate with their body language. However, they could not solve racism and chose to remain silent in such situations. They usually rented a house from distant parts of the city for shelter, but it was also a problem in terms of transportation. In similar studies, students suggested that they had to work outside school hours due to a lack of funding and remain silent about language problems and social isolation.^{3,6} Students also reported that they feel better and more successful as they solve the problems they experience.¹²

Study limitations

The study results cannot be generalized to students studying at universities that provide similar education since this study was conducted at a single university. Since students of African descent were the majority, they may have experienced more problems than other students due to their skin color. This may have also affected the results.

As a result of the study, the main themes Learning in a different environment, Challenges, Solution and Non-Solution were identified. Under these themes, it shows that international nursing students may face many problems such as language barrier, housing difficulties, lack of funding, racism and discrimination. They tried to solve some of these problems themselves, but they needed help to solve the most of them. Therefore, the students' institutions and academicians should support their

students. Because nursing education is a challenging process comprising theoretical and practical parts, students can only be successful if they can focus on their education.

Based on these results, it can also be concluded that fostering a culturally inclusive environment and promoting social integration among international students can significantly enhance their overall academic experience and well-being, further contributing to their success in nursing education.

The following suggestions can be helpful based on our study's results:

Even if the language of instruction is English, students can be supported and given extra language courses to learn the host country's language. During the clinical practices, they should be working with guide nurses and exposed peer support. Moreover, with different teaching methods, theoretical lessons could be more engaging. Lastly, a viable international student unit at the university to offer counseling and support when needed may be beneficial.

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Hasta Onamı: Katılımcılardan çalışmaya katılmayı kabul ettiklerini beyan eden yazılı izin alınmıştır.

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