

*RUSUDAN VADATCHKORIA, AHISHTAN FEBRIAN NISHANTHAN*  
**SOME ASPECTS OF ADAPTATION PROCESS OF INDIAN STUDENTS  
 STUDYING IN GEORGIA**

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*რუსუდან ვადაჭკორია, აჰიშტან ფებრიან ნიშანთან*  
**ინდოელი სტუდენტების ადაპტაციის პროცესის ზოგიერთი ასპექტი**  
**საქართველოში სწავლის პერიოდში**  
 საბუნებისმეტყველო მეცნიერებათა და ჯანდაცვის ფაკულტეტი;  
 ბათუმის შოთა რუსთაველის უნივერსიტეტი, საქართველო

### რეზიუმე

**აქტუალობა:** მსოფლიოს სხვადასხვა ქვეყანაში, მათ შორის საქართველოშიც, უმაღლესი განათლების სისტემაში ჩართული საერთაშორისო სტუდენტები შეადგენენ გლობალურად მზარდ პოპულაციას. თუმცა, ლიტერატურული მონაცემები და ემპირიული მტკიცებულებები მათი ჯანმრთელობისა, სოციალური და ფსიქოლოგიური კეთილდღეობის შესახებ, ჩვეული ცხოვრების სტილის შეცვლასთან დაკავშირებული, მეტად შეზღუდულია.

წარმოდგენილი კვლევის ძირითადი მიზანია საქართველოს რეზიდენტ - ინდოელი სტუდენტების ადაპტაციის პროცესის შეფასება და ამ პროცესთან დაკავშირებულ მათი ფიზიკური ჯანმრთელობის ცვლილებების შესწავლა და გაანალიზება. ორი წლის განმავლობაში ჩატარებულმა კვლევამ გამოავლინა წამოჭრილი საკითხების მეტად მწვავე აქტუალობა და მნიშვნელობა, რაც ითვალისწინებს კვლევის გაღრმავებისა და დიაპაზონის გაფართოებას, რათა, საბოლოო ჯამში, მიღწეულ იქნას არსებული პრობლემების მტკიცებულებების შეგროვება, მონაცემების გაანალიზება, პრობლემის ღრმა გააზრება, წინადადებების და რეკომენდაციების შემუშავება და ქმედებების განხორციელება საერთაშორისო სტუდენტების ადაპტაციის პროცესის გასაუმჯობესებლად.

**მეთოდი:** შემუშავებულ ონლაინ კითხვარის საფუძველზე, საქართველოს რეზიდენტ - ინდოელი სტუდენტების (n=500) ონლაინ-გამოკითხვა, მათი ფიზიკური ჯანმრთელობის მდგომარეობის შესახებ ინფორმაციის მიღება, მიღებული მონაცემების სტატისტიკური დამუშავება, გაანალიზება, შედარება, შეფასება.

**კვლევის ამოცანაა** უცხოელ სტუდენტთა ფიზიკურ, ფსიქოლოგიურ და სოციალურ კეთილდღეობაზე ზრუნვა, აკულტურაციის სტრესის შემსუბუქება, ჯანდაცვის სერვისის ხელმისაწვდომობა და ადაპტაციის სხვა ასპექტების შესწავლა, ზოგადად საერთაშორისო სტუდენტებისათვის მიმართ და ინდოელი სტუდენტებისათვის საქართველოში კერძოდ. გარდა ამისა, ეს კვლევა ფოკუსირებულია ფიზიკური, სოციალური, ფსიქოლოგიური პრობლემების, აკულტურაციული სტრესის, ჯანდაცვის სერვისების ხელმისაწვდომობისა და სოციალურ-ეკონომიკური დეტერმინანტების გავრცელების სხვადასხვა ასპექტზე.

**კვლევამ გამოავლინა** ჯანმრთელობის მდგომარეობის გართულებები, გამონვეული ადაპტაციის სირთულით და, გარდა ამისა, ადაპტაციის უამრავი სხვა ასპექტი, რაც ხაზს უსვამს ადაპტაციის ინტეგრირებული პროგრამების შემუშავების ძლიერ აუცილებლობას, საერთაშორისო სტუდენტების თანადგომის განვითარების ცხოვრების ახალ პირობებში.

**Introduction.** For international students, studying abroad can be an exhilarating and life-changing experience, but it also results in several physical and psychological changes [2]. The health of foreign students may be greatly changed by their time abroad, and these changes can be both positive and negative [6]. Numerous sources indicate that international students frequently experience several health issues when studying overseas. Among them are: 1. Physical health challenges: A change in diet, lifestyle, and climate can all have an impact on an international student's physical health. They could find it difficult to adjust to new dietary options or to changing weather patterns. 2. Psychological health challenges: For

international students, studying overseas can be overwhelming and stressful. They might experience difficulties like homesickness, language barriers, cultural shock, and the pressure to academically succeed while being away from their support system. These psychological difficulties may significantly affect their general health and mental state. For international students, the absence of familiar healthcare providers and support networks might make these health issues worse. To protect international students studying abroad, it is critical that both the host institutions and the students acknowledge and address these health concerns. Additionally, raising awareness and offering resources for mental health support can have a significant positive impact on international students' general health while they are studying abroad [3].

**1.1 Importance of understanding international student adaptation.** International students are more common than ever before in higher education institutions in today's increasingly globalized environment [7]. For several reasons, it is imperative that we comprehend and take care of the modifications that overseas students need.

**1. Cultural Competence:** Institutions can provide a more inclusive and culturally competent atmosphere by learning about the adaptations made by international students. This entails understanding their distinct histories, experiences, and potential difficulties adjusting to a new way of life and school system.

**2. Academic help:** By comprehending how overseas students adapt, educational institutions can offer the right kind of help for their academic needs. This can involve extra resources to support international students' academic success, specialized tutoring, or language support.

**3. Mental Health Support:** International students may face significant mental health challenges due to the stressors of cultural adjustment, language barriers, and being away from their familiar support systems. The reason why Indian students' aspects of international students in Georgia is imperative is because for the past few years Indian students' population has been exponentially rising in Georgia. [4]. However, no substantial data or research has been done on their health status yet. Therefore, understanding their adaptations is essential to provide the appropriate mental health support and resources needed to promote their well-being.

## **2. Literature review**

**2.1 Overview of international student population trends/mobility.** The international student population and mobility have been subject to significant changes and trends in recent years. Furthermore, as globalization has increased, and people of all nationality have spread across the globe and so to meet their health requirements the globalization of healthcare systems and information has increased the importance of international learning and mobility programs in healthcare education to become more culturally competent to give the best health benefits to patients [9]. And so evidently Asian doctors were invited to work for the National Health Service in the 1960s, which resulted in a significant increase in South Asian students. 40% of students in some medical schools today are Asian [10]. The Times of India reports a significant surge in Indian students opting for education in Georgia, with approximately 8,000 enrolled in 2021. The attraction lies in Georgia's affordability and safety, particularly appealing to those pursuing medical studies. Over 20 universities in Georgia, recognized by India's National Medical Commission, offer degrees accepted by the World Health Organization. Renowned institutions like Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, David Tvildiani University and Tbilisi State Medical University provide Indian students with rigorous coursework and practical patient experience essential for their medical careers [4].

**Adaptation Challenges Faced by International Students.** International students, including Indian students studying abroad, face numerous adaptation challenges when venturing into a new educational

and cultural environment. Indian students abroad, including those in Georgia, face various challenges such as language barriers, homesickness, cultural differences, academic expectations, social integration, and mental health issues. These challenges include adapting to a new university environment, coping with stress and loneliness, and navigating uncertainty in a foreign country. Transitioning from their high school system to university can pose academic preparation challenges. Language barriers, homesickness, and cultural differences can exacerbate feelings of isolation and alienation, impacting their mental health. Universities must provide robust mental health support to address these challenges and ensure the well-being and success of international students.

### 3. Methodology:

**Objective:** the focus of this cross-sectional study is to learn about the, variables affecting their physical health and psychological well-being, lifestyle factors, and access to healthcare.

**Method:** Participants: The study's data came from the online surveys conducted over the time of two years. The first survey with 130 participants was conducted in the year 2023, April 8<sup>th</sup>, for which the data analysis was made, and now the study now in its second year (2024), was conducted, acknowledging the urgent importance of the issues raised, has continued and expanded the range of observations to enhance the data, gain clearer understanding, develop proposals and actions to improve the situation with international students' adaptation process. This survey had 170 participants taking part. The study population consists of students from first to sixth year of study (Inclusion criteria: age from 18 to 25 years and above, both genders).

**Procedure:** The online questionnaire composed of 25 questions was based on the diseases they have suffered, psychological changes, health care access and external factors mentioned in the results of this scientific literature. And about the reasons for the faced challenges in their health. The questionnaire was created with Google form and distributed through personal contact and social media. About 170 respondents completed the questionnaire, which included questions on the frequency of health check-ups, chronic diseases, preferred consultation methods, and preferred types of medicine. The survey also covered types of diseases students suffered from, such as inflammatory conditions, seasonal flu, allergies, gastrointestinal, respiratory, urinary, dermatological, and psychological diseases. Additionally, it inquired about reasons for not accessing healthcare. Students rated their health from Perfect (No diseases) to Congenital Disease. Data analysis was conducted using Excel, and results were visualized with pie charts and bar graphs.

### 4. Results:

#### 4.1 Analysis of health status among Indian students in Georgia:

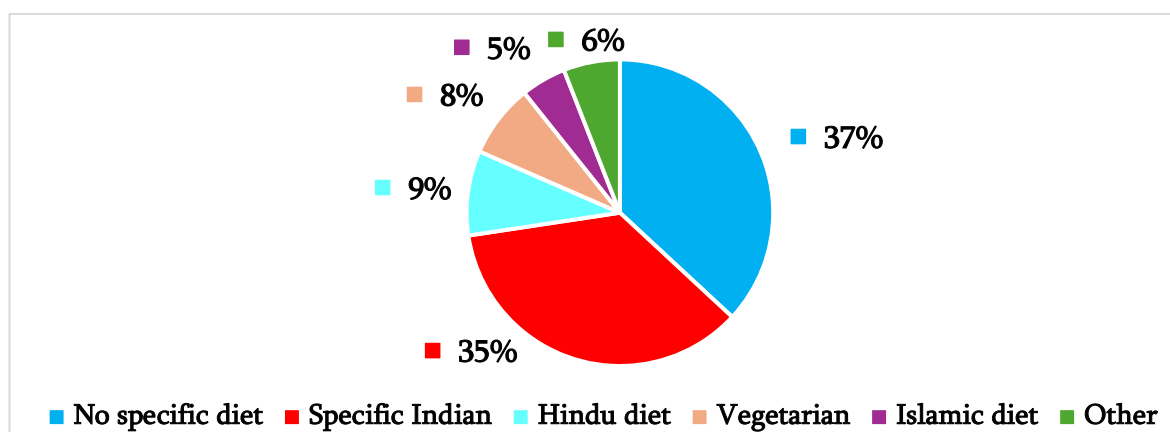
*Identification of physical, social, and psychological challenges:* Now, based on the data collected from the survey conducted over the past two years (2023 - 2024) the major challenges for Indian students in Georgia include dietary changes, language barriers, healthcare access, academic pressure, homesickness, career concerns, mental health, cultural adjustment, and legal/administrative hurdles. Acculturation stress involves dietary changes, language barriers, and cultural adjustments; socioeconomic determinants include academic pressure and legal/administrative hurdles; psychological factors include homesickness and mental health issues, with healthcare access being another important factor.

##### 4.1a. Assessment of acculturation stress

###### *Dietary changes:*

*Cultural Differences:* Students find the food significantly different from their home cuisine, which can be challenging to adapt to both in terms of taste and preparation methods. There is limited availability of familiar ingredients or ready-made meals that align with their cultural preferences [1].

*Dietary Restrictions:* Students have specific dietary restrictions (for religious, health, or cultural reasons) and find it difficult to navigate food options and ensure that their needs are met (Diagram 1).



**Diagram 1:** Type of meal preference

*Food Preparation:* International students might face challenges in learning how to prepare new kinds of food that are typical to the host country. And the survey shows that most students in 1st and 2nd year find it difficult to prepare meals and hence opt for fast foods, but in comparison, those in higher levels opt for home-made food over fast foods. The data shows that 60% cook for themselves, 30% rely on fast food but occasionally cook, and the remaining 6% and 4% depend solely on fast food and snacks, respectively.

*Eating Habits and Times:* The timing and social habits around food can be different. Students may find it difficult to adjust to new mealtimes or the way food is consumed in social settings which shown by the data collected that 12% have one meal daily, 37% have two, 48% have three, and 3% have four.

*Language barriers:* When it comes to adjusting, language difficulties can pose serious problems for students studying abroad in several ways: 1. *Cultural Acclimatization:* To fully adjust to a new environment, it is essential to comprehend and engage with the host culture, which can be hampered by limited language skills. Managing everyday tasks like grocery shopping, banking, taking public transportation, and handling housing-related difficulties might become more difficult. 2. *Emergency circumstances:* When it comes to crises or health-related circumstances, it can be especially challenging to communicate demands or comprehend instructions when there is a language barrier [8].

*Cultural Adjustment:* Adapting to a new country's culture, norms, and social expectations can be challenging. For example, Indian students growing up majorly have a non-alcoholic (due to religious beliefs) and a non-smoking environment (due to social stigma), therefore when exposed to a new culture of alcohol and smoking, few students are more likely to incline towards the culture which causes major health issues due to the sudden change in the lifestyle. The survey shows that 91% of students do not smoke, while 9% do. Regarding alcohol consumption, 7% drink regularly, 12% occasionally, and 81% do not consume alcohol.

*4.1b: Socio-economic determinants: 1. Academic Pressure:* The medical curriculum is rigorous, and students must quickly adapt to different teaching styles and assessment methods.

*Legal and Administrative Hurdles:* Visa requirements, work permits, and understanding foreign legal systems can be complex.

*4.1c Psychological factors:* According to the data collected around 22.9% of students face psychological problems (refer diagram 2), Neglected psychological issues can escalate, highlighting the need to address causes like homesickness, social isolation, cultural shock, academic stress, and identity challenges. These factors can disrupt sleep patterns and mental health, necessitating proactive measures.

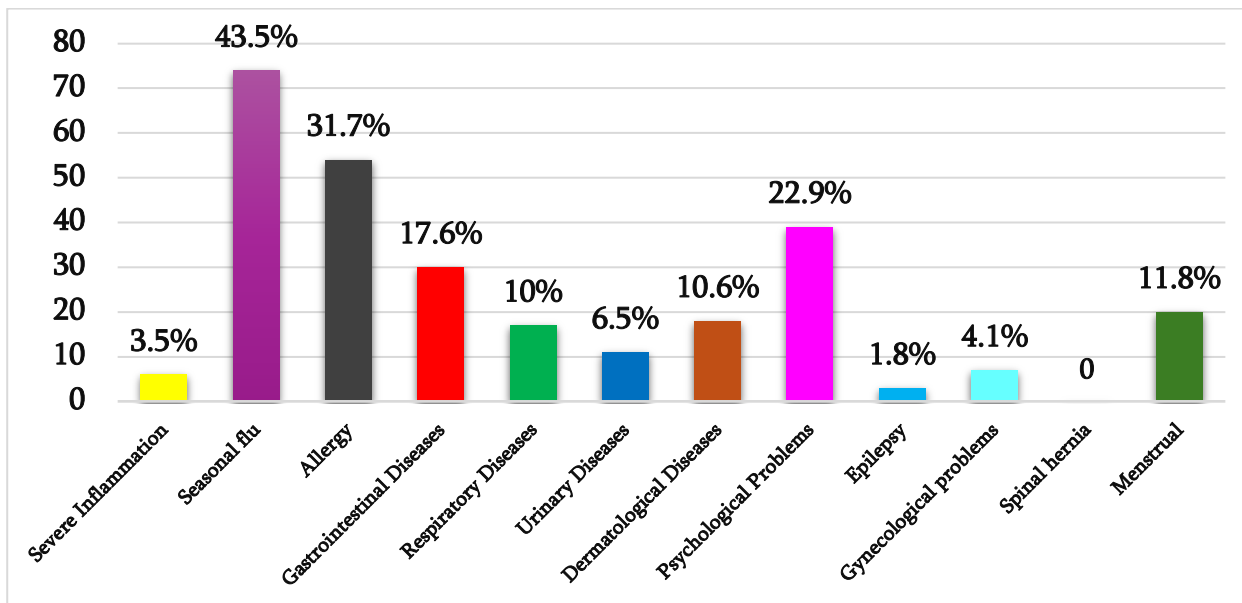


Diagram 2: Various types of diseases that Indian students suffered in Georgia.

*Homesickness:* Feeling homesick can lead to sadness and a preoccupation with thoughts of home, impacting daily functioning and focus on studies. It is usually a strong desire to go home, which is accompanied by depressive thoughts and far-reaching negative effects on the health status [11].

*Identity Challenges:* Struggles with self-identity may lead to a lack of confidence, which can hinder participation in academic discussions or group work [5].

*Mental Health Issues:* Depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues that may arise or be exacerbated by the above challenges can impair cognitive functions, energy levels, and overall well-being, directly impacting academic outcomes.

*4.1d Healthcare access:* The data reveals that most Indian students in Georgia face barriers to healthcare access, such as lack of insurance, language issues, financial constraints, and trust concerns. Diagram3 shows that Indian students in Georgia are less likely to consult a doctor, while Diagram4 indicates they are more likely to do so in India.

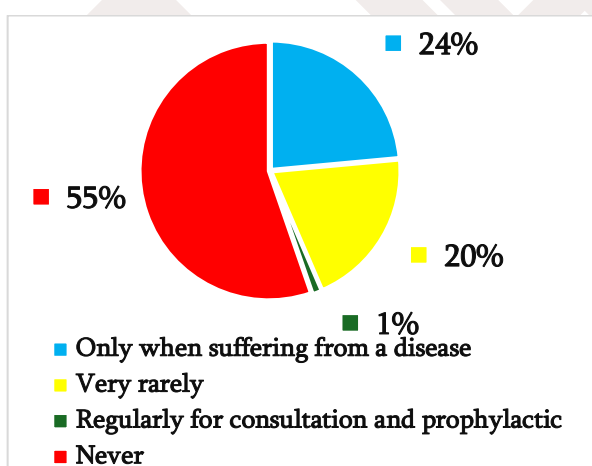


Diagram 3: Frequency of visits with a doctor in Georgia.

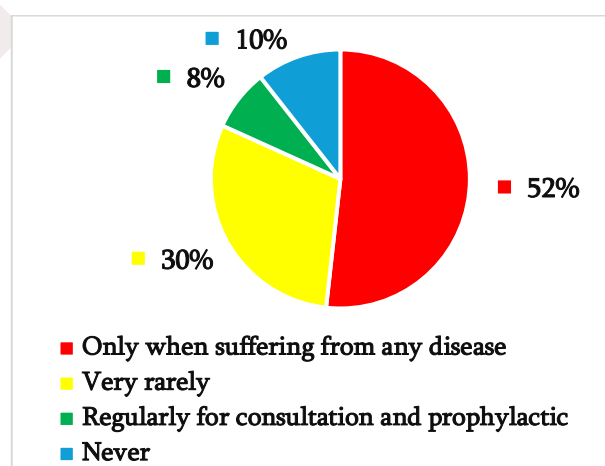


Diagram 4: Frequency of visits with a professional doctor in India.

*4.1e Other health issues include:* Gastrointestinal disease, respiratory diseases, urinary diseases, dermatological diseases, epilepsy, gynaecological problems, seasonal flu, and allergies. Seasonal flu and allergies have been noted to be quite common among first and second-year students as they tend to adapt

to the new food and climate of Georgia leading them to develop such health conditions. The data collected shows that every year 63% of students suffer from diseases, with 28% of students often suffering from diseases.

**5. Recommendations for improving international student adaptation:** Universities can help address these challenges by offering support services, including health counselling, academic advising, language assistance, and the appropriate social programs designed to foster community among international and local students. Encouraging a campus culture of inclusion and awareness can also contribute to better outcomes for international students. Collaborating with healthcare providers to offer affordable and accessible healthcare options for international students. This may involve setting up on-campus health clinics or negotiating discounted rates with local medical facilities. By prioritizing the healthcare needs of international students, universities can ensure that these students receive the medical attention and support they require to thrive in their academic pursuits.

**Conclusion:** In summary, Indian students in Georgia face numerous challenges including dietary adjustments, language barriers, cultural adaptation, academic pressure, career uncertainties, and administrative hurdles. Psychological factors like homesickness and mental health issues compound these challenges, exacerbated for first and second-year students who also struggle with dietary changes and health issues due to climate adaptation. To support their success, universities should offer mental health counselling, language assistance, social programs, and collaborate with healthcare providers to meet their needs.

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**SOME ASPECTS OF ADAPTATION PROCESS OF INDIAN STUDENTS  
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**SUMMARY**

**Background:** International students comprise a rising population of higher education students globally. However, the empirical evidence about their physical, social and psychological health, associated with changes in their usual style of life and well-being are very limited. This research assesses the aspects of Indian students' adaptation in Georgia. The two-years study acknowledging the urgent importance of the issues raised, has continued and expanded the range of observations to enhance the data, gain clearer understanding, develop proposals and actions to improve the situation with international students' adaptation process.

**Method:** A survey was conducted to analyse the health status of Indian students in Georgia (n=300), exploring physical and social well-being, available health care level, and other adapting difficulties, specific to international as a whole and particularly the Indian students in Georgia.

**Objective:** This cross-sectional study focuses on different aspects of the prevalence of physical, social, psychological problems, acculturation stress, access to Health Care services, and socioeconomic determinants.

**Main Findings:** The research mainly revealed not only health conditions caused due to adaptations but also a lot of other aspects of adaptation issues, highlighting the strong need for the development of an integrated system to support international students in new living conditions.

**Keywords:** Indian Students, Survey, Adaptation, Health Status

*РУСУДАН ВАДАЧКОРИЯ, АХИШТАН ФЕБРИАН НИШАНТАН*  
**НЕКОТОРЫЕ АСПЕКТЫ ПРОЦЕССА АДАПТАЦИИ ИНДИЙСКИХ СТУДЕНТОВ,  
 ОБУЧАЮЩИХСЯ В ГРУЗИИ**

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**РЕЗЮМЕ**

**Актуальность:** иностранные студенты, получающие высшее образование в разных странах мира, включая Грузию, в настоящее время представляют собой глобально растущую популяцию. Однако литературные и эмпирические данные об изменениях их физического и социально-психологического здоровья, связанных со сменой привычного уклада жизни, очень ограничены. Представленное исследование направлено на оценку процесса адаптации индийских студентов, проживающих в Грузии, а также изучение и анализ изменений в состоянии их физического здоровья, в ходе процесса адаптации. Двухлетние наблюдения, выявили острую актуальность и важность затронутых вопросов, что предусматривает углубление и расширение рамок исследования, чтобы в конечном итоге собрать и проанализировать достаточно данных,

подтверждающих остроту проблемы, необходимость её глубокого понимания, разработать комплекс предложений и рекомендаций по облегчению процесса адаптации иностранных студентов.

**Метод:** Онлайн-опрос обучающихся в Грузии индийских студентов (n=300) на основе разработанного опросника, получение и статистическая обработка полученных данных, о состоянии физического здоровья и социального благополучия, доступный уровень медицинского обслуживания и другие трудности адаптации, характерные для интернациональных студентов в целом и для индийских студентов в Грузии, в частности.

Кроме того, особое **внимание** в данном опросе уделяется различным аспектам наиболее распространенных физических, социальных, психологических проблем, стресса аккультурации, доступа к услугам здравоохранения и социально-экономическим детерминантам.

В ходе исследования **выявлены** случаи осложнения со здоровьем, вызванные сложностью адаптации, а также многие другие аспекты адаптации, что подтверждает острую необходимость разработки комплексной системы поддержки иностранных студентов в новых условиях жизни.

