

Challenges Facing Expatriate Nursing Students at Cairo University: Suggested Guidelines

Manal Mohamed Elsayy⁽¹⁾, Khadraa Mohamed Mousa⁽²⁾, Mona Abd Elkreem Hegazy⁽³⁾

(1-2) Lecturer of Community Health Nursing, Faculty of Nursing, Cairo University, Egypt

(3) Assistant Professor of Community Health Nursing, Faculty of Nursing, Cairo University, Egypt

Correspondence: Manal Mohamed Elsayy

Email: manalelsawy@cu.edu.eg

ORCID <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0649-9442>

Abstract

Background: The number of expatriate students has risen dramatically in recent years. Expatriate nursing students face unique challenges that might have a negative influence on their mental health, well-being, and academic performance. **Aim:** To assess the challenges facing expatriate nursing students at Cairo University and suggest guidelines to overcome these challenges. **Design:** A descriptive- exploratory design was utilized to fulfil the aim of this study. **Setting:** The study was conducted at the Faculty of Nursing, Cairo University. **Sample:** A convenience sample of 361 expatriate nursing students over a period of one month was included in this study. **Tool for data collection:** Challenges assessment questionnaire for expatriate nursing students, which consists of three sections: (1) Demographic characteristics of expatriate nursing students; (2) Challenges facing expatriate nursing students; and (3) Students suggested solutions for challenges. **Results:** Less than half of expatriate nursing students had moderate challenges, more than one-third had few challenges, and less than one-fifth of them had great challenges. A highly statistically significant correlation was found between all challenges' dimensions and total challenges. **Conclusion:** The most challenging aspects for expatriate nursing students were the academic challenges, followed by the clinical learning environment, and the nutritional challenges, then the sociocultural, psychological, financial, language, and communication challenges, and finally, the administrative challenges. Students suggested solutions to overcome these challenges were the presence of academic advisors for a limited number of students as well as using the English language in presenting the lectures from the faculty members. **Recommendations:** The current study recommended applying a sociocultural orientation program at the beginning of the educational program, aiming to raise students' awareness about the challenges that they may face, providing information about the available and needed resources, and lastly, providing periodic follow-up for their academic achievement by a selected group of the academic staff.

Keywords: Challenges, Expatriate Nursing Students, Suggested Guidelines.

Introduction

Internationalization is the key issue in higher education, and the international education sector had risen dramatically during the recent years. Over the last two decades, universities' foreign operations have grown in volume, scope, and complexity. Rising the number of higher educational institutions which had been internationally integrated into their institutional missions is consider a quality measure. The number of international students enrolled at the institution is one of the performance measures which frequently employed for internationalization (Kaya, 2020).

There were 47,000 expatriate students enrolled at Egypt's public universities across all degree levels, with an increase of about

2,000 students during 2010 academic year. Nowadays, Egypt is the third-most popular destination country for international degree students among the Arab worlds (Ead, 2020). In this respect, a significant rate of international student movement at Egyptian universities had occurred in the recent years, indicating a rise in the number of international student admission. Cairo University has led the way in Egypt and the Arab world in terms of attracting competent international students and strengthening the international partnerships among the fields of education and research. The Cairo University Council approved to increase the number of international students, with the decision to accept up to 30% of the maximum number of students (Abdel Nasser, 2016).

Gong et al., (2021), Poyrazli & Mitchell, (2020) and Kadariyah & Hayatistated (2019) stated that there are many great benefits to studying abroad and learning a new culture. Expatriates travel abroad for many reasons, such as learning new skills, pursuing academic goals, or meeting new people. Travelling abroad means not only being away from family and friends but also serving a great benefit. Expatriate nursing students' minds are flooded with doubtful views. The question of whether the student is willing to begin learning the new environment, language, culture, and, most importantly, academic differences cause various feelings and emotions to emerge, affecting the student's health and quality of life without knowing how to find the coping mechanisms of the new environment (Shepherd, Willis Esqueda, Newton, Sivasubramaniam & Paradies, 2019).

Financial concerns, prejudice, adjusting to a new culture and language, loss of social support, and unfamiliarity with educational, health, and other systems which all could had an impact on the educational experiences and compound with the psychological discomfort of the expatriate nursing students (Mikkonen, Kuivila, Tuomikoski & Kääriäinen, 2016; Merry et al., 2021). In addition to these issues, expatriate nursing students also struggle with the unfamiliarity of the health care system and clinical setting to provide proper health care as a basic requirement for clinical training in nursing faculties (Newton, Pront, & Giles, 2018).

Caring for expatriate nursing students and learning about their needs and challenges allows them to gain a theoretical understanding of nursing as well as other important sciences. By performing research, gathering information, and managing patients, expatriate nursing students could apply knowledge and clinical practices which they gained from faculty to their practical job. Expat nursing students must be able to grasp and implement a steady stream of new technology. Continuous further education and knowledge updated are required to maintain their professional abilities (Finnish Nurses Association, 2019).

Assessing nursing students has been a difficult issue, particularly for expatriate

nursing students. This had been significantly difficult because the clinical nursing competency assessment instruments used to assess student nurses primarily focus on the domains of professional qualities, communication nursing processes, interpersonal interactions, critical thinking, and reasoning. Communication is a big problem for expatriate nursing students, making it difficult to convey competence in nursing (Immonen, Oikarainen, Moreno, Perez Canáveras, De Raeve & Mikkonen, 2019).

Nursing is one of the numerous disciplines with an increasing number of international students. There are several advantages to globalizing nursing education, including increased healthcare workforce capacity, increased linguistic and cultural diversity of nursing professionals, and sharing of new ideas across countries to improve nursing practice (Brownie, Wahedna & Crisp, 2018). Increasing the educational level of nurses improves health outcomes, gender equality, and economic growth, particularly among low- and middle-income nations. Because a large portion of nursing education is conducted in clinical settings. Clinical education is regarded as an essential and integral component of the nursing education program. Expat students face additional challenges in clinical practice because they must communicate with patients and their relatives, staff nurses, physicians, and other social staff practitioners (Volkert, Candela, & Bernacki, 2018).

Community health nurses have a crucial role among expatriate nursing students in different educational agencies through biopsychosocial assessment to address the major problems. This role includes providing preventive and screening services, health education, and assistance with decision-making to achieve a better academic outcome. A community health nurse practice of professional nursing that advances expatriate nursing students' well-being, academic success, and lifelong achievement. To that end, community health nurses facilitate positive student responses to normal development; promote health and safety; intervene with some actual and potential problems; provide case management services, and actively collaborate with others to build student and family capacity

for adaptation, self-management, self-advocacy, and learning. In addition, community health nurses may provide interventions for acute and chronic illnesses. Community health nurses serve as a leadership role for health policies and programs; they also promote a healthy environment in educational settings (Martirosyan, Bustamante & Saxon, 2019).

Significance of the Study

Egypt ranks third among Arab countries in terms of attracting Arab students, following Jordan and Morocco, and it continues to encourage more Arab and expatriate students to study in Egyptian universities (Abdel Galil, 2017). Furthermore, Egypt intends to enhance international student enrolment at its national universities, and according to the Ministry of Higher Education, (2017), Egypt's universities recruited 9,500 new international students.

Furthermore, Cairo University is ranked first in terms of attracting international students, followed by Ain-Shams and Benha Universities. The nursing faculties should play a crucial role in assessing the expatriate nursing students' needs, challenges, and cultural differences in order to be able to plan for a supportive environment to provide different means of encountering and supporting the expatriate nursing students and to include them in the social integration program through the curriculum (Narouz, 2018).

Expatriate nursing students face several challenges during their years of study, which may negatively impact their academic achievement. Nursing students' performance is critical because they must provide quality care to patients, family members, and the community (Ratanasiripong et al., 2022). Researchers observed that expatriate students in the faculty and clinical settings face many difficulties, such as language, discussion in class, adjusting to a new culture, unfair treatment, academic expectations and adaptation to each other, loss of social support, and unfamiliarity with education, health, and other systems. So the aim of the current study was to assess the challenges facing expatriate nursing students at Cairo University and suggest guidelines to overcome these challenges.

The findings of the current study will help to show the challenges faced by expatriate students at the faculty of nursing at Cairo University, such as psychological, financial, academic, administrative, nutritional, language, sociocultural, and clinical learning environment challenges. Conclusions from the research could minimize the challenges that expatriate students have faced. It will help faculty and local students be aware of the expatriate students' needs in order to better facilitate their adjustment.

So conducting the current research will add to the body of nursing knowledge regarding expatriate nursing students in the area of nursing education. Furthermore, this research will provide community health nurses with current knowledge pertaining to challenges facing expatriate nursing students. In nursing research, this study regarding challenges facing expatriate nursing students will explore new phenomena within an innovative group. Regarding nursing practice, this study will increase awareness among educational agencies regarding the challenges facing expatriate nursing students in Egypt and aim to develop strategies to overcome such challenges.

Methods

Aim of the Study

The aim of the current study was to assess the challenges facing expatriate nursing students at Cairo University and suggest guidelines to overcome these challenges.

Research questions

To fulfil the aim of the current study, the following research questions were formulated:

Q.1: What are the challenges facing expatriate nursing students at Cairo University?

Q.2: What are the suggested guidelines to overcome the challenges faced by expatriate students?

Research design

A descriptive-exploratory design was utilized to fulfil the aim of the current study. The descriptive-exploratory design seeks to find out what is happening, generate new insights, ask questions, assess phenomena in a

new light, generate ideas, and give an accurate profile of people, events, and situations (Gray, Grove, & Sutherland, 2017).

Setting

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Nursing, Cairo University. The faculty building is located on the campus of Cairo University Hospitals. Faculty of Nursing - Cairo University is an accredited educational organization and is recognized by the application of credit hours learning system with scoring students by the grade point average (GPA) and the application of student distance learning management systems. The Faculty of Nursing consists of five floors. The ground floor contains administrative offices, skills laboratories, a library, five classes, and a student capability development unit. The first floor consists of offices for the dean, the vice dean for student affairs, the vice dean for environmental affairs, the secretary, and five educational classes. The second floor contains two educational classes and academic departments, as well as informatics technology and visual-aids laboratories. The third floor includes the expatriate students' office, academic departments, and computer laboratories. The fourth floor is composed of educational classes, an education development unit, and a quality assurance unit. The fifth floor involves scientific departments and their related offices. The Faculty of Nursing includes nine academic departments.

Sample

A convenience sample of 361 expatriate nursing students was included in the current study within one month since posting of the questionnaire. The sample included all the available expatriate nursing students who are enrolled in the faculty. The researchers estimated a response ratio of about 30% (300 expatriate nursing students) of the total population (1000 expatriate nursing students) as reported from the students' affairs office during the academic year (2022-2023).

Data Collection tool

After an extensive review of the related literature, the following tool was developed by the researchers and used for data collection for the current study:

I. Challenges assessment questionnaire for expatriate nursing students: It was developed by the researchers. It consisted of three sections:

Section 1: Demographic characteristics; which included age, gender, marital status, academic level, place of residence, and living during study.

Section 2: Challenges facing expatriate nursing students: It included of eight domains with 57 questions and distributed as language and communication challenges (6 questions), sociocultural challenges (13 questions), psychological challenges (5 questions), nutritional challenges (6 questions), academic challenges (9 questions), financial challenges (5 questions), administrative challenges (4 questions), and clinical learning environment challenges (9 questions).

Section 3: Suggested solutions for challenges:

It consisted of question about suggestions of expatriate nursing students to overcome the common challenges facing them (Open ended question).

Scoring system

Answering no was scored zero, answering to some extent was scored one, and answering yes was scored two. Total questions were 57. Total scores were 114. The total score for challenges divided as a following; few challenges were <40%, when expatriate nursing students obtained < 46 scores, moderate challenges were 40%-60%, when the expatriate nursing students obtained 46-68 scores, and great challenges were > 60% with a total score of >68 points.

Validity and reliability

A team of three professors in the field of community health nursing reviewed the study tool. Each professor on the panel was requested to assess the tool for clarity, phrasing, and format, as well as an overall look, and to determine the authenticity of its material. Certain items had been added, updated, or eliminated based on their opinions and recommendations. Cronbach's alpha reliability test was used to measure the internal

consistency of the tool, and it showed a value of 0.881.

Ethical Considerations

Approval was obtained from the Research Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Nursing at Cairo University (approval number 38-2023). The researchers informed the expatriate nursing students about the purpose and nature of the study. Participation in the current study was voluntary. Confidentiality was assured through the anonymity of the data. Expatriate nursing students were assured that this data would be used only for the purpose of this research. The ethical considerations were written on the Google Form (at the first section of the electronic questionnaire). Filling out the electronic questionnaire by the expatriate nursing students was considered consent from the students to participate in the study.

Procedures

The current study was conducted in two phases:

1. **Preparation phase:** Upon receiving formal approval from the research ethical committee of the Faculty of Nursing at Cairo University to conduct the study, a formal approval was obtained from the Vice Dean of Cairo University's Faculty of Nursing to obtain approval for data collection, and the questionnaire was developed.
2. **Implementation phase:** The data were collected using an electronic questionnaire through a Google Form. The researchers sent the link of the questionnaire to the expatriate nursing students via their official page at the faculty of nursing at Cairo University and WhatsApp groups for each academic level, asking them to fill it out in their free time. At the beginning of the questionnaire, the researchers described the study's aim, benefits, research's ethical rights, as well as prior to the start of the study. All explanations were written. The questionnaire took 10-15 minutes to complete it. The questionnaire was available for one month since its posting. The data were collected from the end of April 2023 to the end of May 2023, and 361 students out of 1000 were interested in filling out the questionnaire. Both male and female students who are enrolled in the four academic years participated in the study.

Pilot study

A pilot study was carried out on 40 expatriate nursing students to assess the feasibility of data collection tools, their clarity, and the average time needed for data collection. The pilot results were included in the study because there was no modification to the data collection tools.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were tabulated and analyzed by a personal computer using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program version 27. Descriptive statistics were utilized, such as frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Inferential statistics including relevant statistics test of significance were also used to identify the relations among the study variables. Relations between different numerical variables were tested using Pearson correlation. Probability (P-value) less than or equal 0.05 was considered significant and P value less than or equal 0.01 was considered highly significant for person correlation and for ANOVA test, while the p value more than 0.05 indicated no significant.

Results

The study results will be presented in the following order:

Section I: Demographic characteristics: (Table 1 & Figures 1, 2).

Table (1) shows that 76.2% of expatriate nursing students aged between 20–25 years old with a mean age of 22.04 ± 1.7 years, and 61.5% of them were female. Concerning marital status, 93.7% of selected students were single, and 35.1% of them lived during their studies with their families, while 4.2% of them lived alone.

As observed in **figure (1)**, 38.8% and 27.1% of expatriate nursing students were in the fourth and first academic levels respectively.

Figure (2) reflects that 62.6% of expatriate nursing students were from Arabic countries and 36.8% of them from African countries.

Section II: Challenges facing expatriate nursing students (Tables 2-4).

Regarding language and communication challenges, **Table (2)** reveals that 64% of expatriate nursing students spoke Arabic easily. In relation to sociocultural challenges, 63.7%

of them had the ability to practice their religious activities in Egypt.

According to psychological challenges, **Table (3)** clarifies that 63.2% of expatriate nursing students felt homesick most of the time. Regarding the nutritional challenges, 52.1% of them reported that the Egyptian food was different from the food in their countries. In relation to the academic challenges, 44.9% of students to some extent found difficulties in understanding the scientific content of lectures.

In relation to the financial challenges, **Table (4)** illustrates that 65.9% of expatriate nursing students, to some extent their money was not enough to meet their daily needs.

Concerning administrative challenges, 41.8% and 41.3% of selected students told that to some extent the administrators didn't exert any efforts to help them and found difficulties in complaining to administrators in the faculty respectively. According to the clinical learning environment, 48.2% of students, to some extent, were unfamiliar with patients' diagnoses and treatments.

Section III: Level of challenges' dimensions & total challenges facing expatriate nursing students (Table 5& Figure 3).

Table (5) shows that 60.1% and 73.7% of expatriate nursing students had few language and sociocultural challenges respectively. Regarding psychological challenges, 44.6% of selected students had moderate psychological challenges, while 44.9% of them had great nutritional challenges. In addition to, 33.8%, 44.6%, 46%, and 38.2% of them had moderate academic, financial, administrative, and clinical learning environment challenges respectively. As well as, the most challenging for expatriate nursing

students were academic challenges with a mean of 8.47 ± 5.027 , followed by clinical learning environment (8.39 ± 4.959), nutritional challenges (6.70 ± 2.985), sociocultural challenges (6.63 ± 4.337), psychological challenges (5.86 ± 2.254), financial challenges (5.03 ± 2.395), language and communication challenges (4.01 ± 3.224), and finally, administrative challenges (3.96 ± 2.430) (**first research question answered**).

Figure (3) concludes that 46.8% of expatriate nursing students had moderate challenges, while 35.7% of them had few challenges, and 17.5% of them had great challenges (**first research question answered**).

Section IV: Suggestions of expatriate nursing students to overcome the challenges (Table 6).

Table (6) reports that 96.9 % out of 361 expatriate nursing students had suggestions to overcome their challenges, while 25.7% of them suggested the presence of academic advisors for a limited number of students as well as using English language in lectures from the faculty members (**second research question answered**).

Section V: Relations between the different study variables (Tables 7 & 8).

Table (7) reveals that a highly statistically significant correlation was found between expatriate nursing students' demographic characteristics, challenges' dimensions, and total challenges.

As observed in table 8, a highly statistically significant correlation was found between all challenges' dimensions and total challenges.

Table (1): Percentage distribution of expatriate nursing students regarding their demographic data (n= 361).

Demographic data	No.	%
Age (in years)		
< 20	66	18.3
20 -25	275	76.2
> 25	20	5.5
Mean ± SD	22.04 ± 1.7	
Gender		
Male	139	38.5
Female	222	61.5
Marital status		
Single	338	93.7
Married	20	5.5
Divorced	3	0.8
living during study		
Family	127	35.1
Relatives	31	8.6
Colleagues	102	28.3
Hostel	86	23.8
Alone	15	4.2

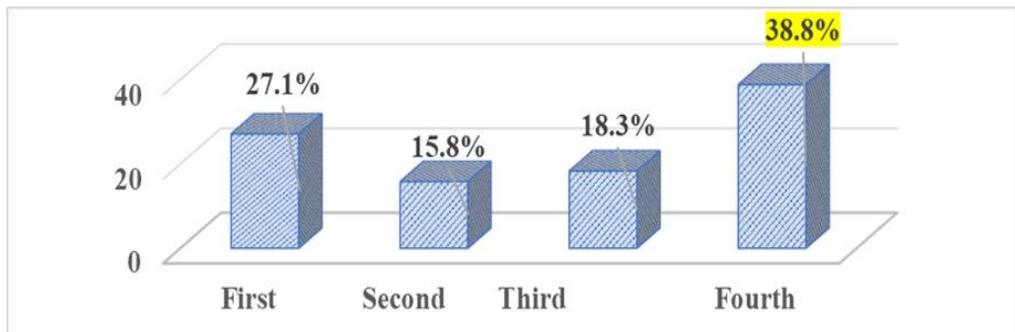
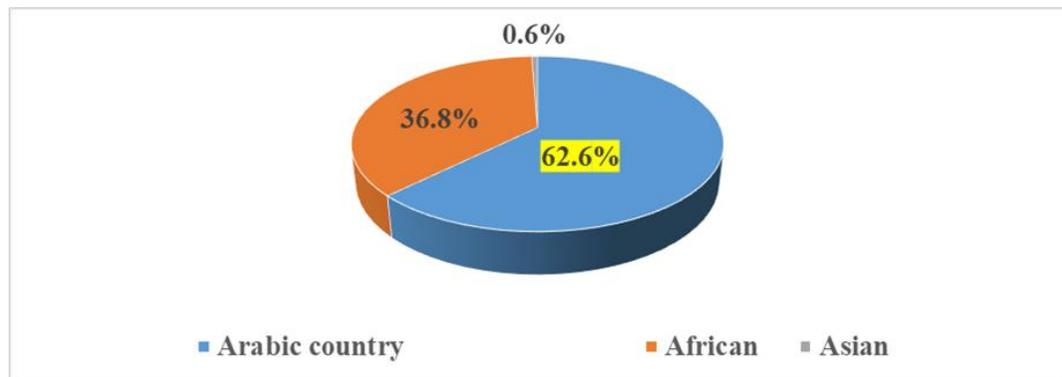
**Figure 1:** Percentage distribution of expatriate nursing students according to their academic level (n=361).**Figure 2:** Percentage distribution of expatriate nursing students according to their country of residence (n=361).

Table 2: Percentage distribution of expatriate nursing students regarding their language and socio-cultural challenges (n= 361).

Challenges	No. (%)		
	Yes	To some extent	No
Language and communication			
Speak Arabic with difficulty.	51 (14.1)	79 (21.9)	231 (64.0)
Difficulty understanding Egyptian expressions and accents.	59 (16.3)	128 (35.5)	174 (48.2)
Difficulty in communication with Egyptian colleagues.	53 (14.7)	125 (34.6)	183 (50.7)
Difficulty in communication with faculty staff.	68 (18.9)	138 (38.2)	155 (42.9)
Difficulty to understand the daily Arabic spoken in the street.	55 (15.2)	135 (37.4)	171 (47.4)
Insufficient information about the university.	76 (21.1)	120 (33.2)	165 (45.7)
Sociocultural			
Have obstacles to expressing your own culture through behaviors.	77 (21.3)	119 (33.0)	165 (45.7)
Face discrimination in Egypt.	102 (28.3)	118 (32.7)	141 (39.0)
Have problems coping with Egyptian culture.	63 (17.5)	132 (36.6)	166 (45.9)
Have an uncomfortable feeling in your Egyptian place of residence.	64 (17.7)	140 (38.8)	157 (43.5)
Feel insecure in Egypt.	51 (14.1)	126 (34.9)	184 (51.0)
Have difficulty finding an Egyptian friend.	65 (18.0)	123 (34.1)	173 (47.9)
Have an inability to find friends from your home country.	44 (12.2)	108 (29.9)	209 (57.9)
Have isolation feeling in the campus community.	54 (14.9)	131 (36.3)	176 (48.8)
Find an imbalance between daily tasks and leisure time.	108 (29.9)	140 (38.8)	113 (31.3)
Have different ways of managing social situations.	75 (20.8)	127 (35.2)	159 (44.0)
Unable to practice religious activity in Egypt.	45 (12.5)	86 (23.8)	230 (63.7)
Unable to practice habits, customs, and lifestyle behaviors.	60 (16.7)	129 (35.7)	172 (47.6)
Cope with the Egyptian community	66 (18.3)	123 (34.1)	172 (47.6)

Table (3): Percentage distribution of expatriate nursing students regarding their psychological, nutritional, and academic challenges (n= 361).

Challenges	No. (%)		
	Yes	To some extent	No
Psychological			
Feel confused for a long time after arriving in Egypt.	100 (27.7)	154 (42.7)	107 (29.6)
Feel lonely due to the lack of a local social network.	69 (19.1)	153 (42.4)	139 (38.5)
Have social support in Egypt.	159 (44.0)	130 (36.1)	72 (19.9)
Feel homesick most of the time.	228 (63.2)	88 (24.4)	45 (12.4)
Suffer from increasing responsibilities in Egypt.	177 (49.0)	124 (34.4)	60 (16.6)
Nutritional			
Have problems with food and drinks in Egypt.	113 (31.3)	128 (35.5)	120 (33.2)
Gain weight from eating Egyptian food.	98 (27.1)	135 (37.4)	128 (35.5)
Skip meals always during the day.	131 (36.3)	139 (38.5)	91 (25.2)
Different food pattern in Egypt from the food in students' country.	188 (52.1)	127 (35.2)	46 (12.7)
Taste of Egyptian food affects your appetite.	125 (34.6)	134 (37.1)	102 (28.3)
Eat a lot of fast food.	156 (43.2)	134 (37.1)	71 (19.7)
Academic			
Find difficulties in the language of the study.	104 (28.8)	138 (38.2)	119 (33.0)
Understand the scientific content hardly	87 (24.1)	162 (44.9)	112 (31.0)
Deal with lecturers hardly.	102 (28.2)	140 (38.8)	119 (33.0)
Find academic advisor hardly	125 (34.6)	128 (35.5)	108 (29.9)
Understand the faculty's laws and rules difficulty	96 (26.6)	135 (37.4)	130 (36.0)
Find difficulty in academic achievement.	113 (31.3)	154 (42.7)	94 (26.0)
Get an incomplete scholarship.	82 (22.7)	114 (31.6)	165 (45.7)
Insufficient resources within the faculty.	114 (31.6)	152 (42.1)	95 (26.3)
Refuse to recommend faculty of nursing to other expatriate students.	87 (24.1)	115 (31.9)	159 (44.0)

Table 4: Percentage distribution of expatriate nursing students regarding their financial, administrative, and clinical learning environment challenges (n= 361).

Challenges	No. (%)		
	Yes	To some extent	No
Financial challenges			
Have problems for getting a visa.	82 (22.7)	121 (33.5)	158 (43.8)
Face problems with currency exchange.	99 (27.4)	124 (34.4)	138 (38.2)
Your money is not enough to meet your daily needs.	122 (33.8)	238 (65.9)	1 (0.3)
You don't have a job for your economic support.	141 (39.1)	94 (26.0)	126 (34.9)
Have unsuitable cost of studying in Egypt.	94 (26.0)	162 (44.9)	105 (29.1)
Administrative challenges			
The office for expatriate students is unhelpful and ineffective in solving your problems.	109 (30.2)	143 (39.6)	109 (30.2)
Find difficulties in complaining to administrators in the faculty.	98 (27.1)	149 (41.3)	114 (31.6)
The administrators didn't exert any efforts to help you.	93 (25.8)	151 (41.8)	117 (32.4)
Have difficulty extracting some documents from the educational institution.	123 (34.0)	141 (39.1)	97 (26.9)
Clinical learning environment challenges			
Find difficulties in providing patients with good nursing care.	90 (24.9)	142 (39.4)	129 (35.7)
You are unfamiliar with patients' diagnoses and treatments.	70 (19.4)	174 (48.2)	117 (32.4)
You are unfamiliar with the environment regarding clinical training.	79 (21.9)	151 (41.8)	131 (36.3)
Have unfair feeling after a clinical evaluation.	108 (29.9)	145 (40.2)	108 (29.9)
Clinical practice doesn't meet physical and emotional power or tolerance.	79 (21.9)	157 (43.5)	125 (34.6)
Have difficulties interacting within the clinical groups.	107 (29.6)	153 (42.4)	101 (28.0)
Have difficulties in communication with Egyptian patients in the clinical setting.	103 (28.6)	151 (41.8)	107 (29.6)
Have communication difficulties with clinical instructors.	83 (23.0)	156 (43.2)	122 (33.8)
Have communication difficulties with medical staff in the hospital.	99 (27.4)	164 (45.4)	98 (27.2)

Table 5: Percentage distribution of expatriate nursing students regarding their level of challenges' dimensions (n= 361).

Challenges	Few		Moderate		Great		Mean ± SD
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Language and communication	217	60.1	78	21.6	66	18.3	4.01±3.224
Sociocultural	266	73.7	86	23.8	9	2.5	6.63±4.337
Psychological	51	14.1	161	44.6	149	41.3	5.86±2.254
Nutritional	82	22.7	117	32.4	162	44.9	6.70±2.985
Academic	121	33.5	122	33.8	118	32.7	8.47±5.027
Financial	97	26.9	161	44.6	103	28.5	5.03±2.395
Administrative	97	26.9	166	46.0	98	27.1	3.96±2.430
Clinical learning environment	119	33.0	138	38.2	104	28.8	8.39±4.959

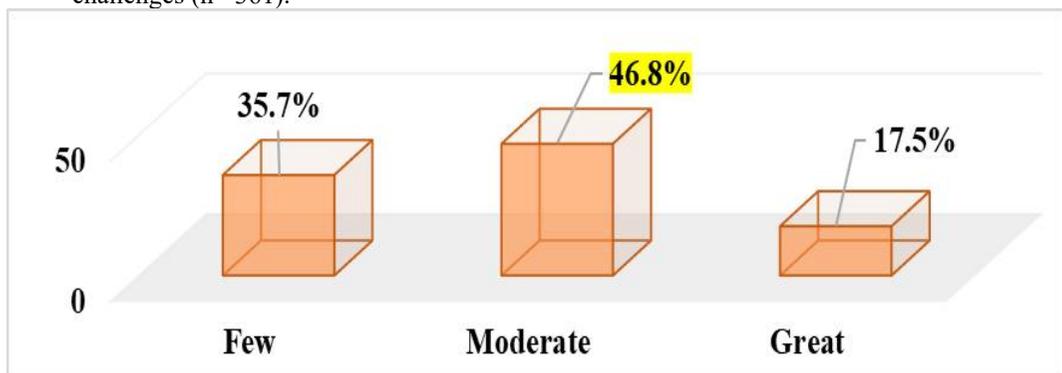
Figure 3: Percentage distribution of expatriate nursing students regarding their level of total challenges (n= 361).

Table 6: Percentage distribution of expatriate nursing students' suggestions to overcome the challenges (n=361).

Presence of Suggestions		No.	%
No		11	3.1
Yes		350	96.9
<i>* Expatriate nursing students' suggestions to overcome challenges (n=350)</i>			
Increasing awareness among Egyptian students to avoid discrimination.		50	14.3
Avoiding discrimination inside services offices in faculty.		60	17.1
Improving faculty staff dealing with expatriate nursing students.		80	22.8
Increasing activities between Egyptian students and others.		50	14.3
Using English language in lectures from the faculty members.		90	25.7
Using English language inside service office in the faculty.		30	8.6
Decreasing numbers of students in lectures.		50	14.3
Decreasing numbers of students in clinical groups.		30	8.6
Activation of expatriate nursing students' office positively.		60	17.1
Activation for the Development of Students' Abilities Office.		40	11.4
Presence of academic advisors for a limited number of students.		90	25.7
Continuous communication with expatriate nursing students.		30	8.6
Establishing special services offices for expatriate nursing students.		30	8.6
Encouragement of Arabic courses within the faculty.		70	20.0

** Responses are not mutually exclusive.*

Table 7: Correlation between the challenges' dimensions facing expatriate nursing students, and total challenges with their demographic characteristics. (A = language and communication, B = sociocultural, C = psychological, D = nutritional, E = academic, F = financial, G = administrative, H = clinical learning environment) (n=361).

Demographic characteristics	ANOVA test	Challenges' Dimensions								Total Challenges
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	
Gender	F	0.814	2.341	4.356	0.822	2.341	2.110	1.544	0.585	1.125
	P	0.444	0.098	0.014**	0.440	0.098	0.123	0.215	0.558	0.326
Academic level	F	1.007	0.131	0.847	2.232	0.852	3.710	0.463	5.843	0.124
	P	0.366	0.877	0.430	0.109	0.427	0.025*	0.630	0.003**	0.884
Country of residence	F	30.492	13.664	4.935	4.293	2.880	4.111	7.849	3.664	19.073
	P	0.000**	0.000**	0.008**	0.014**	0.057*	0.017**	0.000**	0.027*	0.000**
Living during study	F	4.799	3.272	4.329	4.746	4.575	3.040	1.214	3.864	6.611
	P	0.009**	0.039*	0.014**	0.009**	0.011**	0.049*	0.298	0.022*	0.002**

** Correlation is highly significant at the level of ≤ 0.01

* Correlation is significant at the level of ≤ 0.05

Table 8: Correlation between the total challenges facing expatriate nursing students with challenges' dimensions(n=361).

Challenges' dimensions	Total challenges	
	r	P
Language and communication	0.637	0.000**
Sociocultural	0.753	0.000**
Psychological	0.518	0.000**
Nutritional	0.692	0.000**
Academic	0.854	0.000**
Financial	0.699	0.000**
Administrative	0.736	0.000**
Clinical learning environment	0.803	0.000**

** Correlation is highly significant at the level of ≤ 0.01

Discussion

Nursing students suffer from different challenges during their years of study that affect their learning skills and their academic performance (Mthimunye & Daniels, 2020). Measures to eliminate challenges and increase academic achievement could be taken by identifying and recognizing the challenges that

students face during their years of study (Fooladi et al., 2022).

Regarding demographic characteristics of expatriate nursing students, the current study found that more than three-quarters of students aged from 20-25 years old with a mean age 22.04 ± 1.7 years, nearly two-thirds were female,

and the majority of them were single. These findings were supported by Almurideef, (2016) who investigated the challenges among 30 international students experience in their academic studies at Rowan University, New Jersey and revealed that nearly three-quarters of students aged from 18-25 years old and nearly two-thirds from them were females. At the same line, Worae & Edgerton, (2023) who assessed 712 international students' experiences at Canadian university and found that the majority of the sample was between the 17 and 29 years old, with a mean of 24 years, and the majority of students reported as being female and single. From the researcher's point of view, this congruency in the findings may be due to the same average age of students in different faculties in different countries.

The current study reflected that nearly two-thirds of expatriate nursing students were from Arabic countries and more than one-third of them were from African countries. This finding is in line with the findings of Ead, (2020) who investigated the importance of Egyptian higher education as a mechanism for monitoring soft power within the context of globalization and revealed that, Egypt's universities are suited to attracting Arab students, particularly from the Gulf region (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates), as well as students from East Asian countries such as Malaysia and some African countries (Nigeria, Somali, Liberia, Chad, Eretria and Malawi) because the Egyptian government provides scholarships to support cultural exchanges with the neighboring countries.

The present study revealed that more than one-third of students were in the fourth level, while a minority of them were in the second level. This finding contradicted with the finding of a study done by Alasmari, (2023) about the challenges and social adjustment of twenty expatriate students in Saudi Arabia and reported that nearly two-thirds of students were in their first and second years. From the researchers' point of view, the differences between two studies may be due to sample size.

Concerning the levels of challenges that expatriate nursing students faced during their study, the current study found that more than two-fifth of the expatriate nursing students had great

nutritional challenges. This finding stands in line with the finding of a study conducted by Gebru & Yuksel-Kaptanoglu, (2020) who assessed the adaptation of the challenges among 31 expatriate students in Turkey and discovered that food differences and cuisine were a challenge for expatriate students. Many expatriate students had difficulty in adjusting to the new foods, had become dependent on fast food, and possessed varying food consumption habits. From the researcher's point of view, this agreement may be because expatriate nursing students did not have enough time to prepare their diet as usual in their countries, or this congruency may be due to financial problems.

Also, in a study done by Jin et al., (2023) who expressed that food stress acculturation and its implications among international students', they, highlighted that unfamiliar cuisine is a particular challenge that international students frequently face. A similar result is presented by Olaoye, (2020). From the researchers' point of view, this could be because the diet was considered a crucial obstacle among expatriate nursing students. Added to that, this finding is in harmony with the findings of a study performed by Pilli & Slater, (2021) who investigated the eating behaviors and dietary patterns of 30 foreign students attending a Canadian institution and discovered that while many students sought to maintain home country food traditions, their new independent living conditions and new food led to shifts in their eating habits. Limited cooking skills, busy lives, limited access to familiar meals, and fast-food surroundings all led to unhealthy eating habits. From the researchers' point of view, this may affect students' nutritional status which affect their physical health and may negatively affect their level of academic achievement.

The study results found that less than one-third of expatriate nursing students had moderate academic challenges. This result is consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Aung, (2019) who investigated challenges among 74 international students in the United States and revealed that the students were mostly concerned with the challenges of academic success, they have indicated their difficulties in approaching academic faculty members, working with groups and the transition of the university curriculum in their studies. From the researcher's point of view, this agreement may be because expatriate nursing

students suffered from academic challenges at a different level because of the nature of nursing study.

Conversely, Worae & Edgerton, (2023) at a Canadian university found that three-quarters of students indicated no problems with how their lecturers responded to their academic concerns, while just over two-thirds indicated no problems actively engaging in class presentations and discussions. From the researchers' point of view, the possible explanation for this disagreement might be due to differences in languages and countries among students.

The current findings revealed that more than one-third of expatriate nursing students had moderate clinical learning environment challenges. This finding parallels those of Kol et al., (2021) who carried out a qualitative phenomenology study on ten international students to investigate the learning experiences of the international nursing students in Turkey and found that students reported that the most common challenges in the clinical area were the difficulty in understanding the patient because of the language and culture differences. Teachers had in different behaviors toward the students or they cared for the students, but a high student-teacher ratio exerted negative consequences for the students. In addition, the students reported worrying about being rejected by the patients in the clinical setting. They feel foreign and face prejudice because of their skin colour and language. From researchers' point of view, this congruency may be due to the same nature of study in the faculty of nursing, which depends on clinical training and dealing with a great variety of cultures among patients.

Moreover, the current results are supported by a study done by Korhonen et al., (2019), who carried out a study on 133 culturally and linguistically diverse healthcare students' experiences of the clinical learning environment in Finland and reported that students agreed that clinical personnel treated both native and ethnically and linguistically different students equitably. However, numerous students stated that clinical staff mistreated them because of their cultural background. Mistreatment presented itself as a mentor's lack of concentration, a negative attitude, and arrogance towards the students' foreign background. Similarly, the

current finding agreed with the aforementioned study done by Genotiva, (2022) who conducted a qualitative study to obtain the students' opinion or thoughts and experiences among five nursing students during their first clinical practice at Novia University in Finland, they were reported that the students encountered problems throughout their practice, including the challenge of language and interaction, as well as hostile and agitated patients. From the researchers' opinions, this agreement may be due to difficulty of nursing education is by nature.

The current study found that more than two-fifth of expatriate nursing students had moderate psychological challenges. This finding stands in line with the study conducted by Wolf, (2019) who explored the experiences of eight bachelor's Chinese nurses' in the United States and discovered that loneliness, isolation from society, prejudice, and maintaining a work-life balance were among the difficulties that faced the foreign-born students. Furthermore, James, (2018) corroborated the current finding who explored the lived experiences of Indian nursing students and revealed that nursing students were more likely to face family separation and felt more pressure to succeed. From researchers' opinion, this may be due to the separation of expatriate nursing students from their families and friends.

The current study indicated that less than half of expatriate nursing students had moderate financial challenges. This finding agreed with the aforementioned study of Lee, (2017) to explore challenges of international students in Tokyo and discovered that, students have difficulties due to financial hardship and one of his most difficult challenges was financial strain as a result of uncertain financial assistance and students extremely concerned about the university tuition.

The current study finding also supported by the finding of a study done by Mehra, (2017) who conducted a review article in America and indicated that expatriate students did not receive sufficient financial support from the state or university as compared to domestic students, and this included inadequate job opportunities, a high cost of health insurance, and textbooks. At the same line with a qualitative study done by Martelli, (2020) who examined seven international students' perceptions of challenges at American University, indicated that most

international students spend twice as much as the national students and receive the same education. From the researchers' point of view, this may lead the student to struggle between studying and earning to ensure his financial stability. As a result, the student would not have sufficient time to study on the days they worked since they were exhausted at the end of each work day, which may have a negative impact on their academic performance.

The current study revealed that less than half of expatriate nursing students had moderate administrative challenges. This finding corroborates with a study performed by Mbous, Mohamed & Rudisill, (2022) who determined the challenges among thirteen international students' in the United States and concluded that international students were dissatisfied with the International Students' office performance and, emphasized that they perceived lack of support and guidance from it. This finding supported a study done by Martelli (2020) who indicated that many foreign students reported that university support is lacking.

On the other hand, the current study disagreed with Alasmari, (2023) in Saudi Arabia and found that the programs and assistance offered by the deanship of student affairs assisted them in adjusting during their study in Saudi Arabia. From the researchers' point of view, the differences between the two studies may be due to the differences in students' nationality and languages as well as the different numbers of students' enrolled at the faculty.

The present study indicated that more than two-thirds of expatriate nursing students had few sociocultural challenges. In this respect the qualitative study done by Newton, Pront & Giles, (2018) who examined the experiences of six registered nurses who supervised expatriate nursing students in the clinical area at Australia and revealed that expatriate nursing students reported cultural barriers such as differing opinions regarding the role of nurses in patient care and varying social styles, whether with friends or in care-provider-patient interactions, as well as a lack of familiarity with a host country's systems and difficulty in accessing services. As a result, expatriate students were unfamiliar with social and cultural norms, which could have a negative impact on their social interaction. From

the researchers' point of view, the Arabic cultures are intimate with each other's while Australia allows immigration, so there was a great cultural variation among students.

Also, lee, (2021) reported that cultural misconceptions, such as varying approaches to eye contact, physical touch, recognizing time, gender roles, and addressing faculty by first names, may not be made explicit at the start, resulting in significant confusion and stress if the students are not appropriately oriented. Additionally, Koon and Mehdi, (2019) reported that there was a cultural shift in food, greetings, holidays, practices and some religious activities. Also, Maleku et al., (2022) studied the discrimination and mental health among 103 international students in the United States and showed that many foreign students continue to face some degree of discrimination and stereotyping due to their place of birth and ethnicity from domestic students. From the researchers' point of view, the shift from one culture to another, as well as the conflicts between different institutions and beliefs, make the new foreign students feel confused and uncomfortable.

The present study revealed that more than half of students had few languages and communication challenges. In this respect, a study done by Worae & Edgerton (2023) at a Canadian university indicated that the majority of the participants did not experience language challenges. Also, a study done by Elahi, Bhatti, and Nauman (2018) concerning the challenges encountered by 26 expatriates' students in Pakistan, they said that communication was recognized as a vital tool, yet they did not meet problems on the job because they could not or found it difficult to explain how to accomplish things to their host country colleagues. This is due to the fact that English is the medium of instruction in the majority of Pakistani institutions, as well as the official language of organizations and the government. From the researchers' opinions, the agreement between the findings may be due to faculties of nursing examine the students' abilities regarding communication and language so these capabilities were considered less challenges that facing expatriate nursing students.

Conversely, in a qualitative study carried out by Palmer, (2019) who investigated the lived experiences of foreign nursing students in the United States and discovered that communication and language difficulties, especially oral and written expression, were the most frequently mentioned challenges in the literature. Communication as well as language difficulties arise in academic, clinical, and social environments. Learning nursing and medical terms, as well as colloquial language had been identified as especially challenging. This finding also conflicted with a study done by Schneider et al., (2020) who determined that professors' teaching styles and language use were challenges identified among the foreign students and searched five electronic databases using international student and doctoral. Also, the current study disagreed with Alsahafi & Shin, (2019) who investigated factors affecting 100 Saudi students in Australia and their adjustment and mentioned that language presented a significant challenge. From the researchers' point of view, this disparity between the two studies could be explained because two-thirds of expatriate nursing students in our study were from Arabic countries, which had the same language and communications.

The current study concluded that the most challenging for expatriate nursing students were academic challenges, followed by clinical learning environment, nutritional challenges, sociocultural, psychological, financial, language and communication challenges, and finally, administrative challenges. In regard to the level of total challenges the result concludes that less than half of students had moderate challenges, more than one-third had few challenges, and less than one-fifth of them had great challenges.

These findings agreed with the findings of a comprehensive literature review by Ma, (2022) who reviewed 21 studies and found that both international students and faculty faced obstacles in terms of language, culture, discussion in class, academic expectations, and adaptation to each other. The previous educational, cultural, and language backgrounds of the international students were both sources of knowledge and barriers to adaptation in a new learning environment. The current finding stands in line with the findings of a qualitative study conducted by Zakaria & Yusuf, (2022) who assessed

challenges experienced by twenty-two expatriate female nurses at Saudi Arabia and reported that, nurses faced several challenges included homesickness, differences in operating procedures, lack of fluency in Arabic, inability to interact comfortably with non-Malaysian expatriate nurses whose languages and cultures were also different from their own, difference in communication styles between Malaysians and Saudis. From the researchers' opinions, this congruency may be normal with any expatriate nursing students who may suffer from different obstacles that vary from country to other.

In this respect, Merry, Vissandjée, & Verville-Provencher, (2021) who conducted a review on 114 participants related the challenges, adaptation and supportive interventions for foreign students in academic nursing programs among the host countries and discovered that the challenges that students may face during their study were linked to the living in a foreign nation, such as financial issues, unfair treatment, adjusting to a new culture and language, loss of social support, and unfamiliarity with education, health, and other systems. Furthermore, the current finding is consistent with the current study done by Olaoye, (2020) illustrated that challenges expressed by respondents at the United States were included financial constraints, limited scholarships or grants, housing and accommodation issues, language barrier or accented English, academic difficulties, environment anxieties and sense of belonging.

Moreover, these findings parallel a study done by Koon and Mehdi, (2019) on 50 foreign students from ten universities with various nationalities to identify the challenges encountered by foreign students and their life satisfaction in Azerbaijan and determined that the challenges faced by students primarily center on culture, interaction with others, separating from families and friends, and the academic system. The current finding is also in harmony with a study done by Baklashova & Kazakov, (2016), who reported that home country culture of the expatriate nursing students was significantly opposite to the host country culture.

The current study indicated a highly statistically significant correlation between language, sociocultural, psychological, nutritional, financial, administrative, and total

challenges with their country of residence, as well as a statistically significant correlation was found also between the academic and clinical learning environments with their place of residence. This finding supported finding of a study done by Gebru & Yuksel - Kaptanoglu, (2020) in Turkey and reported that some African female and male students reported incidences of sexual harassment, including verbal assault, sexual insults, being stalked in the streets, with a physical contact. Furthermore, they face challenges as black international students due to their race.

A highly statistically significant correlation also was found between language, psychological, nutritional, academic, and total challenges with their living during studies, as well as a statistically significant correlation was found between sociocultural, financial, and clinical learning environment challenges with their living during studies. These findings supported the finding of a study carried out by Van der Knaap, (2017) about the experiences of expats living in the Netherlands and noted that other expats provided sincere support to him and his family when circumstances were difficult; they had a community of expat friends. These expat communities offer a great deal of assistance to their members. They all agree that their families are quite supportive. From the researchers' opinions, this agreement in the findings may be due to language, psychological, nutritional, academic were the main challenges that face expatriate nursing students.

The current study found a highly statistically significant correlation between all challenges' dimensions and total challenges. This finding was consistent with Lee, (2021) who reported that language constraints could create extra challenges associated with forming friendships with locals. Loneliness is another major issue for international students, which stems from a loss of contacts back home, a loss of relationships in the host country. Also, a study done by Alsuhaibani, (2022) who investigate the international Saudi students' transition and usage of social media highlighted that they who had adequate understanding of language was an important aspect of talking with people from different countries or cultures. Due to the very deep relationship between language and culture, a language barrier does more than hinder students'

understanding of course texts and lectures. From the researchers' point of view, the same findings may be related to dimensions of challenges had crucial for all expatriate nursing students.

For many international students, learning a foreign language is one of the most difficult aspects of adjusting to their host country, limiting their academic achievement. Added to that, Wajid, (2017) in a study, reported that the challenges could had an impact effect on students' physical and psychological well-being as well as their academic achievement. From the researchers' opinions, the foreign language may be a crucial challenge among the expatriate nursing students in most of countries.

Regarding expatriate student's suggestions to overcome their challenges, the current study indicated that one-quarter of them suggested the presence of academic advisors for a limited number of students as well as using English language in lectures from the faculty members. At this respect, a qualitative study carried out by Deng, (2017) on five expatriate students' opinions of attendance and perseverance at Malaysian institution reported that the part-time expatriate participants recommended that the university hold monthly workshops and seminars to help them develop their soft skills and time management. In order to help them balance their job schedules, the expatriate student advised the university to offer them a more flexible schedule for attending lecture classes or promote the option of online learning offering club resources and extracurricular activities without charging extra. From the researchers' point of view, the agreement of the findings may be due to the same challenges among the expatriate nursing students in any country so suggestions to face these challenges will be congruent.

At the same line, Alasmari, (2023) in Saudi Arabia offered that student affairs officers, academic experts, and social workers should make an effort to assist them in overcoming potential language, communication, lifestyle, and institutional challenges. Additionally, a study done by Martelli, (2020) at Morehead State University revealed that foreign students relied on their teachers for support as they struggled with language problems and adjusting to American measures. As a result, university-level programs involving international students, local students,

academic and administrative personnel, and other stakeholders should be organized in order to improve academic achievement and intercultural communication. International students should have access to counselling and guidance services at their universities. A useful guideline with specific information that could help during their study (Kol et al., 2021; GulRaihan & Sandaran, 2017).

Implications for Practice

The current study's findings have implications for practice. It highlights the challenges that are faced by expatriate nursing students and suggests guidelines for overcoming these challenges. It sheds light on the main challenges that expatriates face. There are also practical implications of this research for students' affairs and academic staff. They have the opportunity to decrease the tensions that occur as a result of the challenges that these expatriates confront. They can also organize awareness sessions for these expatriates to improve their communication and training could also be organized to address these difficulties.

Conclusion

The most challenges for expatriate nursing students were academic challenges, followed by clinical learning environment, nutritional, sociocultural, psychological, financial, language and communication challenges, and finally, administrative challenges. Students' suggestions to overcome the challenges included presence of academic advisory staff allocated for a limited number of students as well as using English language by the faculty members in lectures presentation.

Recommendations

In light of the current study findings, the following recommendations were suggested:

1. Applying program for social and cultural orientation at the beginning of the educational program.
2. Raising students' awareness of possible challenges that they may face, providing information about available and needed resources, and performing frequent follow-up on students' academic success.
3. Provide educational sessions for the university staff about the students' needs and their

situations to ensure their inclusion within the university learning environment.

4. Further researchers should be done on a larger scale and in different faculties for generalization of the result.

Suggested guidelines to overcome challenges faced by expatriate nursing students.

The findings from this study clarifies that expatriate students face several challenges. It was suggested to provide a number of services and resources across the academic trajectory to assist students in overcoming such a wide range of challenges. Based on the study findings and a comprehensive review of previous and current regional and global related books, articles, and journals, researchers suggested guidelines. (Merry, Vissandjée, & Verville-Provencher, 2021; Oikarainen, 2018; Sailsman, Rutherford, Tovin, 2018; Valen-Sendstad et al., 2018).

- **Academic achievement:** Provide a flexible course schedule and modify courses to allow students to maintain a work-life balance. Speak more slowly while conducting lectures; organize the topic; minimize abbreviations or explain them; avoid idioms; offer handouts; give written information; and employ audio and visual assistance when presenting material. Use a range of teaching methods and adjust content to make it more culturally relevant. Use teamwork to promote peer learning. Assignments and exams should be included in evaluations, and they ought to be modified in order to accommodate students.
- **Clinical learning environment co-operation:** Provide information sessions on social and cultural elements prior to clinical placements. Practice clinical skills, provide more verbal reports, offer an additional course to supplement clinical learning, and provide additional hands-on training. Create smaller clinical groups and mix groups to encourage peer learning. Clinical mentoring. Standardized patient simulation allows for a supportive and contextually rich setting in which nursing students can practice language and skills and debrief in a safe atmosphere.

- **Nutritional adaptation:** Nutrition education approach should be implemented for students focused on behavior change, to strengthen cultural adaptation approaches. Food awareness, food skills, and healthy eating habits should be given for expatriate nursing students.
- **Psychological support:** Provide psychological support to enhance self-efficacy and empowerment. Provide social events as well as cultural diversity celebrations. Enhance self-esteem. Make students feel appreciated. Assist and refer to services, show interest and make them feel valued, and interact with a personal and friendly attitude.
- **Financial assistance:** Provide financial assistance or scholarships/ inform and support students' applications for scholarships and studentships. Create and encourage work or volunteering opportunities.
- **Administrative support:** Ensure that educators have access to institutional support. Provide training to academic and clinical instructors to enhance their understanding of the problems facing students and how to meet their needs. Establish a handbook or brochure containing program information. Have student advisers that meet with students one-on-one on a regular basis.
- **Language and communication competence:** Provide language training classes and services. Pair foreign-born students with students from host countries to practice language and provide assistance. Create and support student study groups. Language learning and support through mobile application.
- **Sociocultural adjustment:** Provide training and talk with educators about cross-cultural communication. Encourage students to share their cultural perspectives in conversations and promote peer interactions and learning. Course for students to improve boldness, communication, and information collection during clinical contacts, as well as to assist

students in recognizing and handling cultural differences.

Availability of data and materials

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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Conflict of interest

The authors confirm that there are no conflicts of interest in the content of this article.

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