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The needs of international students: Co-constructed social work knowledge through action research

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Abstract

International students coming to Canada face substantial challenges beyond the move to another country due to their student status. The challenges of migration primarily revolve around the process of adjusting and integrating into a foreign community, as well as the emotional and psychological hurdles that individuals face while adapting to a new environment, dealing with homesickness, and striving to establish a sense of belonging. This collaborative action research study used a generic qualitative inquiry methodology to explore perceptions of the needs of international students and how best to address those needs. The goal of the study was to co-create knowledge about student issues and how to best address them from a social work perspective. The study recruited 12 participants from three stakeholder groups to collaborate in the study: four social workers, four community members, and four international students. The participants completed a semi-structured interview to explain their views and knowledge related to international student needs and how to best address them from a social work perspective. The findings highlight the needs of international students before and after arriving at their post-secondary institution and the recommendations to meet their needs. The four themes identified were basic needs issues, the importance of support systems, addressing training and psychoeducation needs, and improving advocacy. The executive summary deliverable highlights suggestions for incorporating the systems theory model to meet the needs of international students studying in Canada.

Keywords: social work; international students; action research; qualitative

Introduction

There is evidence that social workers must improve service delivery to international students (Snoubar, 2021). The present study utilized action research to partner with stakeholders in developing knowledge to address a gap in social work practice and the profession regarding

how best to support international students before they attend their country of study (Bui et al., 2017). The field of social work has been increasingly influenced by globalization, migration, and other factors, necessitating that professionals possess a high level of responsiveness and expertise to address these issues effectively. As a result of expanding avenues for collaboration and knowledge exchange, social workers now have an enhanced array of opportunities to participate in international endeavors encompassing both practical engagement and scholarly inquiry (Terbish et al., 2022).

Literature Review

Historical Background and Current Trends

Over the past 20 years, the number of international students has risen by a factor of six, with a threefold increase in the last 10 years. According to Hornstein (2023), international students make up the largest temporary migrant population in Canada. Canadian policies encourage the growth of international students studying in Canada due to their education, fluency in English and French, and professional backgrounds. These policies position international students as a valuable group of highly educated individuals who may become essential contributors to the workforce and potential permanent residents (Akbar, 2022).

The demand for assistance with international students' adjustment has expanded along with the number of international students attending North American universities. A robust support network, including family support, has been repeatedly highlighted as crucial to effective student adjustment. However, there is limited research on the needs of international students, this has revealed that they may experience more adjustment difficulties as international students (Lei et al., 2015). Literature on international students shows a significant absence of information regarding their challenges and the insufficient assistance they receive during their transition as newcomers (Nutter et al., 2016).

The knowledge gap identified in the literature highlights a crucial need for social workers to understand the needs of international students to provide support and services (Bui et al., 2017). Social workers may be better prepared to assist international students in effectively integrating into a campus and community by examining the unique needs of international students. However, it is crucial that social workers collaborate with primary stakeholders to partner in creating recommendations to address identified issues.

International Student Issues

Post-secondary students are at risk for stress. These issues of stress include anxiety, mental health challenges, psychological stress, and mental illness (Linden, 2021). In addition to the stress and pressures of post-secondary education, Hanbazaza et al. (2021) discuss that international students face many other challenges, including housing, finances, and food. It is further discussed in their article that these insecurities negatively impact international student well-being, health, and academics.

According to a study involving four countries (Australia, Canada, the UK, and the USA), the students suggested they faced further challenges during the research process than those listed above. These problems included inadequate nourishment, lack of time, ignorance of university and community resources, lack of family support, and lack of access to culturally appropriate attire and food are just a few of the issues acknowledged (ICEF Monitor, 2023). Additionally, balancing work and school life is seen as a significant challenge that international students face daily to meet the necessities of life (Linden, 2021).

International students may also feel lonely and disconnected since they are distant from home and find assimilating into a new social setting challenging (Hansen et al., 2021).

Domestic students may unintentionally add to this isolation by clique-like conduct or a lack of understanding of the difficulties experienced by their international classmates (Bender et al., 2019). Deliberate measures are needed from both parties to bridge this gap between international and domestic students, including cultural exchange programs, language support services, and campaigns to promote inclusive communities on campus (Bender et al., 2019).

Financial challenges also create issues for international students. Empirical research indicates that international students from specific regions encounter distinct and varied difficulties upon completing their studies. Approximately 50% of international students who repatriated from the United States to their native country upon completing their studies cited obtaining a visa and employment-related issues as the main factors influencing their decision to return (Khanal & Gaulee, 2019). Not gaining employment while studying has created financial distress for international post-secondary students. The financial burden has proven detrimental to students who cannot meet their basic needs (Barton & Hartwig, 2020).

Furthermore, international students frequently face housing difficulties, including a scarcity of affordable choices, exorbitant living expenses, unfamiliarity with local housing markets and cultural customs, challenges in establishing a credit history, dependence on temporary accommodations, navigating legal regulations, language barriers, and the possibility of encountering discrimination (Lee & Castiello-Gutierrez, 2019). To overcome these problems, one must engage in proactive research, conduct an early examination of housing choices, seek support from the university's foreign services, and gain a comprehensive awareness of both the legal and cultural components of the host country's housing market (Ghani et al., 2020).

Purpose of the Study: Action Research and Co-constructed Knowledge

The purpose of this study was to investigate the needs of international students and how social workers and the community could best address those needs. In this action research project, information was gathered from three different participant stakeholder groups for a participatory research approach. Potocky and Naseh (2020) stated that a holistic approach based on cultural competency is needed to for effective collaboration with international students in social work settings. For this study, the holistic approach was accomplished through action research. In an action research project, the researcher collaborates with the community, and stakeholders inform the community of this co-created knowledge. A key component of action research is the notion of stakeholders as subject matter experts (Stringer & Aragon, 2020). Engaging in collaborative endeavors with those who possess insider knowledge, such as students and social work professionals who have direct experience, is crucial to guarantee a thorough and precise portrayal of the difficulties and requirements of the international student community (Bukamal, 2022).

Project Design/Method

The research focus of this study was on identifying international students' needs and on how social workers can better address them. An action research methodology with a generic qualitative inquiry was used to research this question. Action research methodology enhances circumstances, practices, and services (Stringer & Aragon, 2020). It is used to change systems' internal workings and improve system practices. Information is gathered to help people learn how to better their lives (Stringer & Aragon, 2020).

By emphasizing the perspectives and experiences of underrepresented communities, action research can alleviate systemic injustices and disparities. Additionally, social workers can learn more about the underlying causes of social problems and collaborate on developing culturally aware, contextually appropriate remedies by actively integrating these groups into

the research process. As a result, action research is a potent instrument for effecting substantive change at the individual and systemic levels and furthering social justice (Johnson & Flynn, 2021). Furthermore, Healy (2022) suggests that access to supportive resources facilitates the cultivation of a culture that emphasizes ongoing learning and professional growth among social workers, thereby encouraging the incorporation of novel knowledge and advancements into their work. Ultimately, this collaborative approach enables social workers to make well-informed decisions, tailor interventions to the distinct needs of their clients, and contribute to the continuous improvement of the social work profession (Finn, 2020).

A generic qualitative design was used for this qualitative action research study. Instead of numbers, qualitative research focuses on narratives. According to Aspers and Corte (2019), qualitative research is more intimate because the researcher participates in the investigation. Meaning is obtained through qualitative inquiry. Instead of receiving a number or the incidence of a scenario, the researcher gains an understanding of situations or phenomena by implementing the study in a natural setting (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Qualitative research emphasizes how stakeholders construct knowledge from their experiences (Kostere & Kostere, 2021). Qualitative approaches provide insights into the human experience, and through semi-structured interviews, researchers can collect material about the research topic (Jahja et al., 2021).

The sample included stakeholder groups with knowledge of international student issues. This study had 12 participants: four social workers working with international students; four community workers working with international students; and four international students. Small sample sizes can facilitate studies of rare phenomena and diverse clients. Small studies can focus more on participants, resulting in better outcomes (Anderson & Glebova, 2022). Despite conflicting perspectives on sample size in qualitative research, Boddy (2016) argued that the sample size could be influenced by the researcher's specific context or circumstances. Each group was labeled as follows: Social Workers – SW1-4, Community Workers – CW1-4, International Students – IS1-4.

The inclusion criteria for social work participants were that they must have been registered with the College of Social Workers, Canada's social work licensing body, for at least six months and have experience working with international students for at least six months. They must also have acquired at least a two-year diploma in the human services field. The inclusion criteria for community worker participants were that they must have acquired at least a diploma in a human services field and have experience working with international students for at least six months. The inclusion criteria for international students were that they must have been enrolled in a college or university and reside in the country of study. Participants were excluded if they had a personal relationship with the researcher.

Data Collection Methods and Process

A recruitment flyer was emailed to community agencies via public email addresses through a public resource guide and posted on social media pages. The flyer directed all potential participants to email the researcher if they were interested in participating. Once participants contacted the researcher, they were screened into the study, a consent form was sent, and an interview time was arranged. Participants received a \$25 gift card for participation in the interview.

This project's data collection method involved individual Zoom interviews to uncover the knowledge and practices social workers provide to international students, the needs international students identify, and the knowledge and practices offered by community service providers. The interviews lasted up to 35 minutes and were recorded with the participant's consent. Interview questions are in the Appendix.

Data Analysis

The data acquired in this study were analyzed using a thematic analysis process. This study used an inductive thematic analysis methodology (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Using a thematic analysis entailed a series of systematic procedures. The thematic analysis examines the viewpoints of many participants while detecting the commonalities concerning the issue of interest (Nowell et al., 2017). Codes and motifs are identified to discern recurring trends. Themes facilitate comprehension of the subject matter by providing a concise summary and highlighting commonalities expressed by participants in the study (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Study participants recounted their perceptions and knowledge, providing detailed insights into their experiences working with international students and their unique experiences coming to Canada.

To maximize the study's credibility, the researchers utilized a range of procedures as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2017). These tactics involved triangulation, which is constructing a logical justification of themes based on numerous sources of evidence (Moon, 2019). Additionally, participants were allowed to examine the results to verify their accuracy, and the research findings were presented in a detailed manner using descriptive language. Descriptions of themes were provided as thematic analysis should refrain from utilizing frequency count as it can potentially distort the research findings (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Table 1 presents a concise overview of the theme summary, codes, and descriptions.

Theme 1: Basic Needs

The four codes that shaped the theme of basic needs were housing/subsidized housing, food, clothing, and access to health care, including physical and mental health. It is crucial to prioritize fulfilling the fundamental needs of international students upon their arrival in Canada. The following quotes are from social workers related to theme 1:

Housing is definitely a big one here, especially in [community deidentified]. For [region deidentified] housing, you actually need a notice of assessment to apply. So that is a major thing. So for housing, as that was a huge barrier. So it's gonna negatively impact everything like something needs to be put in place for financial stress relief and like emergency funds for food banks and stuff like that for them. (SW 1)

Definitely, every one of those needs listed. So what I saw was sort of what felt like lack of preparation. Just in all of those areas of understanding the laws, understanding the weather. Understanding what supports are available to them when they're here. It's just making sure that I that social work has been referred, and that they have a person who help them try to. Trying to connect with some of those things. But that's kind of it is just connecting to resources as best we can. (SW 2)

The following quotes are from community workers related to theme 1:

The most challenging, part that I find is with the housing part without the other to be here in [province deidentified], especially for three months. Some of them are here for education. I find that finding the right resources for them and they know the right resources. (CW 1)

Table 1 *Thematic summary*

Themes	Codes	Brief description
Basic Needs Issues	Housing/ subsidized	Aid in finding housing accommodations and providing housing subsidies to students
	Food	Access to culturally appropriate food Attain food support when needed
	Clothing	Understanding the appropriate clothing needed for winter months Access to appropriate winter clothing
	Access to physical/mental health care	Assist in finding available family doctors and access to physical and mental health care
Importance of Support Systems	Mentor	Developing a mentorship program with people with lived experience
	Ongoing continuity of care	Delegated workers for follow-up with students after arrival, 3mths, 6mths, 9mths
Address Training and Psychoeducation Needs	Training for social workers on policies and procedures	Social workers and community members to acquire training to understand the needs of students Students receive a resource guide with step-by-step needs procedures before coming to Canada. The resource guide includes information concerning the community they will be studying in, Canadian Laws, and culture
	Psychoeducation for students	Assigned social worker to each student to understand needs before and after arriving; to also provide case management upon arrival
	Work partnerships	Coordinate with community businesses to create work partnerships to help students find employment
Improve Advocacy	Addressing policy criteria	Advocating on the financial number that determines if a student studies in Canada
	Community networking	Facilitate and foster honest and transparent communication between institutions and service agencies regarding the needs and support available for international students

So the needs that we tend to see that we help facilitate addressing would be food needs as well as some education on sort of the new culture. The housing available in in each city is so vastly different. That you know the those numbers really need to be looked at, and I think they need to. (CW 2)

The following quotes are from international students related to theme 1:

All of the above. Housing and health, yes, for sure. Access to health care, food and clothing. So I prefer to have gotten my apartment before arriving.

I actually, when I first came, I found it because most of my cultural food, I was unable to transport it here. The challenge with clothing that I had was all the clothing I brought from my country was not able to withstand the winter weather. (IS 3)

Most important need I wanted was my housing. I had issues with jackets and everything. If there could be an agency prior to arriving that provides housing details for students. I think that's gonna help because the housing crisis is something. A lot of international students have to stay in on hotel for 2, 3 weeks, it's expensive, very expensive. (IS 4)

Theme 2: Importance of Support Systems

The two codes that created the theme of the importance of support systems were mentoring and ongoing continuity of care. Mentoring and continuity of care are essential components for the effective integration and well-being of international students in Canada. The following quotes are from social workers related to theme 2:

So maybe a mentorship for the single people and families. Like when they arrive to have some type of like mentorship for like single people and some mentorship for families like people with lived experience and a welcome package in a committee. Then also have a follow up committee that follows up and asked how they're doing, and there's anything else they need or require or navigate it through other systems. (SW 1)

I would say, maybe having an option for support. Groups of you know, both international students and potentially other community members. Maybe like connecting international students to some kind of like student buddy during the first few weeks, or maybe the first few months while they're here, and maybe even before they come. To have a buddy like matched before they even arrive in Canada, that are just going through the same isolation just to be able to build those connections. The school could have a position where somebody could have that conversation or even somebody in a government position could have that conversation. (SW 3)

The following quotes are from community workers related to theme 2:

Having a designated community support. You know, outreach worker. So like maybe we have a you know, one of our staff that would could be coordinate with the college and be like, Hey, you know the International. Just touching base with them, you know, every few weeks, just to see like, Hey, how are the students? You have any students in general that would need this this from us, or do you? Are you noticing that students need anything, you know, from community? (CM 3)

Like a welcoming committee, but there needs to be some cultural, appropriate group that is assigned to embrace these young people that are coming here and provide like a billet type of an environment for them. That there's people within the residence that these young folks can relate to, that they have to go to as their person or their mentor. (CM 4)

The following quotes are from international students related to theme 2:

I think the social aspect needs it needs to be improved. what I have analyze and notice with the college here students are like. just from class to work, to home, back to class, back to work. There is not enough social. (IS 1)

It was about adapting to the community. learning the community, learning how we relate to people. This is the department that involves about students like when you're having issues confusion. You go meet them. They make you feel comfortable. So they give you like side that could help you. (IS 4)

Theme 3: Address Training and Psychoeducation Needs

The two codes that created the theme of addressing training and psychoeducation needs were training for social workers on policies and procedures, and psychoeducation for students. Meeting the training and psychoeducation requirements is essential for social workers and international students who come to Canada, as it helps them adapt quickly and improves their overall welfare. The following quotes are from social workers related to theme 3:

So it's really important to for them to be aware their rights and their responsibilities as a tenant. It just it's about being connected to them and knowing where to look, knowing where to go. Like they have the proper permits, and they've gone through the proper procedures. They could be unaware of like the laws that we have, they could be different from. (SW 3)

Social workers having to try to figure out ourselves how to navigate system when not knowing exactly what the system is for them when they had, when they came over under visas and those pieces not understanding all that ourselves. So I just think there's a lot of ignorance. When they first come and say, this is what you have to do in April. We have to do this like by this date you have to create my CRA account. You have to make an appointment. So doing all that stuff just step by step. (SW 4)

The following quotes are from community workers related to theme 3:

I think just the key is listening and just want, you know, making sure that you know what are their needs, and asking and listening, and just, you know, if policies needs to be changed or language needs to be changed. Maybe having a checklist of like what some of the struggles might be. Know what resources that we think that would be beneficial to them, laid out. To be prepared and have answers for them, because when they're coming they're probably gonna be overwhelmed and stressed. (CM 3)

I think they really need to be boots to the ground and see what their the impact on these individuals truly are. It's one thing to hear it on the news or read it in a document, but let them be faced with the hardships that these young individuals are coming through your doors with. They need to be prepared for we

have in the winter primarily darkness and minus 50 winters. They need to be prepared for the cost of living here is extremely expensive. The cost of food here is extremely expensive. (CM 4)

The following quotes are from international students related to theme 3:

There was a specific check list that that I had to have all the check marks for. some posed a challenge, big challenge. I would recommend that students try their best to know the country that we are coming to. So when you come here you don't be caught. You won't be caught off guard trying to catch up. My part of this the tuition, because it wasn't a full scholarship. So there is a percentage that I had to find and the not having the job to cover all that was really stressful. (IS 1)

It could really help international students from every part of the globe to settle down easily, because international students goes through a lot for arriving and knowing that this is a new community and trying to understand how the community works. We, understanding how the community works, also looking for housing. It's not gonna be an easy, easy thing. It is we an organization that's gonna like, provide not provide housing. Probably give information on housing, or pretty much a website that you could easily access to look for housing around. (IS 4)

Theme 4: Improve Advocacy

The two codes that created the theme of improving advocacy were addressing policy criteria and community networking. It is crucial to consider policy factors while dealing with international students coming to Canada to establish an inclusive, hospitable, and efficient educational setting. The following quotes are from social workers related to theme 4:

I find, is very important just being able to navigate different programs and different services. Things like being able to work and make an income. They could be very limited in that depending on you know where they are, they might only be able to make a certain amount of money, and that could put a strain on housing on, you know, food on essentially every aspect of their lives. (SW 3)

I'm all about information sharing. Just navigating or collaborating with other systems can be very difficult. Just you know, we have to do referrals, and then we we're have to have all the confidentiality pieces all, everything has to be flowing. I might have my confidentiality agreement. They might have their confidentiality, agreement, and all those kinds of things. So it's like, it's very difficult to collaborate sometimes and have an open, honest conversation about what is needed for particular people. Social workers having to try to figure out ourselves how to navigate system when not knowing exactly (SW 4)

The following quotes are from community workers related to theme 4:

I think the biggest challenge, just making sure everyone's on the same page. We don't want to duplicate services, and we just wanna make sure we know what the other is doing and how they're supporting. Just make sure they're very

clear expectations of what each group is going to provide or do, just so that we don't you know, overlook the needs of the students. Every student, from wherever they're traveling from needs to be supported, and that if policies need to be changed, you know, on a weekly monthly basis. (CM 3)

They're an international student. So they don't have the like appropriate paperwork to say that they're an [province deidentified] Canadian citizen to be able to get through the service program and get into things like [province deidentified] works, or get into even our program for housing. (CM 4)

The following quotes are from international students related to theme 4:

That impacted me greatly even financially. There was one point in time where I had some bills to pay. I didn't have the funds upfront. If you're not prepared, you can be like a fish out in sea it would be lost. You will be lost because I've experienced it, and I have seen a lot of my colleagues. They are here. and they have been here for, like thus their second semester and their still like struggling with the same thing because they failed to prepare before coming. (IS 1)

In terms of tuition international students. We pay almost like 3 times what domestics pay and each some every year my tuition increased.) I think they need to be honest of all the reality of the situation, I mean. Yes, you want to attract students to the institution, but at the same time don't sell it as a bed of roses. (IS 2)

Discussion

Four themes emerged from the data analysis: basic needs issues, the importance of support systems, addressing training and psychoeducation needs, and improving advocacy. The information gathered from social and community workers and international students offered a distinct viewpoint. The viewpoints shed light on the necessity of a collaborative partnership with organizations that provide programs and services to international students partnered with post-secondary institutions.

The first theme, basic needs, aligns with the literature, indicating that students who experience food insecurity experience adverse mental, physical, and academic effects (Yan, 2020). Furthermore, it has been suggested that housing shortages and the cost of living also negatively impact international students (Lee & Castiello-Gutierrez, 2019). It is crucial to prioritize identifying and resolving fundamental requirements for international students, including accommodations, food stability, personal safety, healthcare availability, and cultural adaptation, as this significantly contributes to their overall welfare and academic achievements (Ghani et al., 2020).

The second theme, the importance of support systems, centers on the requirements of international students at Canadian post-secondary institutions. Social workers have a crucial role in identifying the diverse needs of international students, which can include academic difficulties and obstacles related to adjusting to a new culture. Page and Chahboun (2019) highlight the need for solid support systems and provide insights into areas that might be improved. Providing and maintaining reliable support systems entails evaluating the efficacy of current support programs and suggesting focused approaches to improve support systems,

which comprise academic aid, mental health provisions, cultural integration initiatives, and engagement with community resources (Li & Peng, 2019).

The third theme emphasizes the literature that acknowledges that specialized training provides social workers with the requisite expertise and understanding to tackle various intricate social problems within certain groups or circumstances (Healy & Thomas, 2020). Training and psychoeducation improve social workers' capacity to deliver customized solutions, comprehend distinct obstacles, and foster favorable results for the persons, families, and communities they cater to (Healy & Thomas, 2020). Goldberg and Warburton (2021) highlight that social professionals may acknowledge the imperative requirement for targeted education to adequately assist international students, including proficiency in cultural sensitivity, overcoming language obstacles, and understanding mental health issues.

Concerning the fourth theme, enhancing advocacy, the findings of this study support that advocacy plays a vital role in the work of social workers as it empowers them to amplify the voices of marginalized persons and groups, arguing for their rights and equitable access to resources. Furthermore, advocacy by social workers enables them to exert influence over policies, processes, and institutions, fostering positive social transformation and addressing structural inequalities (Hoefler, 2019). By emphasizing international students' experiences, this research can actively contribute to advocacy endeavors that seek to solve systemic problems such as xenophobia, discrimination, or visa requirements that may hinder their ability to access education and opportunities (Tanhan & Strack, 2020).

Recommendations

The research findings illustrated the needs of international students before and after arriving at their post-secondary institution and the recommendations to meet their needs. The researchers created a draft of an executive summary containing recommendations and resources for social and community workers, government agencies, and post-secondary institutions. This draft was shared with participants for feedback before it was finalized. Agency leaders and social workers can utilize this information to facilitate the improvement of social workers' comprehension and awareness regarding the requirements of international students, as well as strategies to meet them effectively.

The first recommendation is to create an interdisciplinary task force within the community. Task forces are crucial in social work since they assemble interdisciplinary teams to tackle intricate social problems and execute efficient resolutions. These task groups promote cooperation among experts, community members, and stakeholders, encouraging joint efforts and the mobilization of resources (Parker, 2020). These platforms identify needs, formulate plans, advocate for legislative changes, and implement interventions across different social system levels (Parker, 2020). This can include how to better address and network on the basic needs for international students. Task forces can promptly address emergent difficulties, foster creativity, and guarantee that initiatives are culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate. In general, they actively contribute to the progress of social justice, the promotion of well-being, and the establishment of good transformations within communities (Cruz-Correa et al., 2020). Task force work can also include advocacy and representing a voice for the international student community.

The second recommendation is to develop training for social and community workers. Training is essential for social workers since it provides them with the necessary information, skills, and competencies to effectively meet the numerous and intricate needs of the international individuals, families, and communities they assist. Training provides social workers with theoretical frameworks, evidence-based practices, and practical techniques to evaluate, intervene, and advocate in different situations (Goldberg & Warburton, 2021). In addition,

continuous training allows social workers to remain informed about developing trends, optimal methods, and ethical issues in their profession, enabling them to deliver services of superior quality that are culturally sensitive (Potocky & Naseh, 2020). Training in continuous professional development strengthens social workers' ability to adapt effectively to dynamic circumstances, policy initiatives, engage with a wide range of stakeholders, and sustain ethical standards. Training eventually leads to positive outcomes for their clients and society (Goldberg & Warburton, 2021).

The third recommendation is to create programs to support international students within higher education institutions. There are many avenues for supporting international student welfare within the post-secondary institution and community settings. Initiatives such as mentoring programs, international wellbeing, and support programs can be developed. Mentorship programs generally entail structured procedures for pairing mentors and mentees according to their interests, aspirations, and competence areas. These programs also establish explicit expectations and goals for the mentorship relationship. These programs may consist of frequent gatherings, sessions for setting objectives, exercises for enhancing skills, and sessions for providing feedback to facilitate the mentee's progress and advancement (Ibrahim et al., 2020). An international student well-being initiative that engages social workers in assisting international students could use a comprehensive approach to addressing the psychological, emotional, and social requirements of students pursuing education overseas. The information would include guidance on visa applications and immigration procedures, cultural adjustment, and accessing support services (Brunsting et al., 2021).

The fourth recommendation is to create an international student guide. An international student guide is crucial in social work, as it effectively addresses the distinctive obstacles and requirements these students may encounter while pursuing their education in a foreign country. As discussed in the literature, social workers are crucial in assisting individuals during various life transitions and difficulties, such as adapting to a different culture, understanding unfamiliar systems, maintaining mental health and wellness, and accessing resources and support services (Potocky & Naseh, 2020). Social workers may empower international students by offering a detailed and customized guide that helps them overcome problems and make well-informed choices regarding their academic, social, and personal lives. Moreover, providing a guide specifically designed for international students can assist social workers in recognizing possible obstacles to adaptation and entry, enabling them to offer more focused and culturally attuned assistance to this demographic (Brunner, 2023). In general, a manual for international students in social work may function as a significant instrument for enhancing the welfare and achievement of these students while they are pursuing their education overseas.

Conclusion

It is crucial to recognize the constraints of this study, including the small sample size. However, a small sample size can still result in saturation and can focus more on the participant, resulting in more prosperous outcomes (Anderson & Glebova, 2022). This study highlighted how partnerships in research can create co-constructed recommendations to address the needs of international students. This type of research fosters an atmosphere where international students can flourish, and social and community workers, in collaboration with stakeholders, should provide utmost importance to fundamental needs such as housing, healthcare, and financial stability.

Furthermore, it highlighted the importance of acknowledging the significance of support structures such as peer networks, mentorship programs, and university resources. Investing resources in training and psychoeducation programs designed for the unique experiences and

difficulties international students face can improve their capacity to adjust and succeed in academic and personal pursuits. In addition, bolstering advocacy initiatives at institutional, community, and policy levels can effectively tackle systemic obstacles and cultivate a more inclusive environment for international students in Canada. Engaging in collaborative endeavors with those who possess insider knowledge, such as students or professionals who have direct experience, is crucial to guarantee a thorough and precise portrayal of the difficulties and requirements of the international student community (Bukamal, 2022). This action research study illustrated how partnerships in research can create co-constructed knowledge and recommendations for practice with international students.

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