Adjustment Experiences of Zimbabwean International Students Studying in the United States

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Abstract
Studying in a foreign country presents some unique adjustment problems for international students who tend to be more vulnerable to emotional, relational, and psychological distress in comparison to their domestic counterparts (Bista & Gaulee, 2017; HBSC, 2019; Mesidor & Sly, 2016). If not properly understood and appropriately addressed, these problems can result in declining academic performance, withdrawal from school, and physical deterioration (Alloh, Tait, & Taylor, 2018; Bista & Gaulee, 2017). Even though efforts are being made to study international students' experiences, most samples have come from Asian and Latin American international student populations and results have been overgeneralized to all international students (Bista & Gaulee, 2017; Araujo, 2011). This trend in literature tends to overlook the unique experiences of students from other nations. To avoid such overgeneralizations, this qualitative study explored adjustment experiences of Zimbabwean international students studying in the United States. Qualitative inquiry (basic interpretive approach) was selected as the research method due to the explorative nature of the research questions. Nine participants from six universities across the United States were recruited using the snowball sampling method. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data and NVivo was used to code and categorize responses. Three overarching themes emerged from the data analysis: (a) limited resources, (b) navigating the United States' academic environment, and (c) socio-cultural barriers. These findings will likely provide new insights that help educators become more culturally responsive to the needs of Zimbabwean international students and create more inclusive learning environments that facilitate better adjustment and academic success.
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Introduction
In spite of the numerous benefits of studying abroad, many of these international students have reported unique adjustment challenges such as language barriers (Kuo, 2011), limited support systems and homesickness (Mori, 2002), immigration issues and loss of social status (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006), and constant pressure to acculturate (Araujo, 2011). In addition, their unfamiliarity with foreign education systems can negatively affect their academic performance due to different educational requirements, expectations, teaching, and testing styles (Mori, 2002). The cumulative effects of such challenges can lead to declines in physical and mental health, poor academic performance, or withdrawal from school (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2012). However, many studies on adjustment experiences have been conducted using samples from Asian, European, and Latin American student populations and results have been overgeneralized to all international students.

It is very important to understand that international students comprise a heterogeneous group and discussing their adjustment experiences as a single entity tends to mask valuable and unique challenges faced by particular groups (Andrade, 2006). For example, during the 2019/2020 academic year, the United States hosted more than one million international students (1,075,496) from numerous countries and among them, **1,377 came from Zimbabwe** (Institute of International Education, 2020). In spite of their smaller numbers, in comparison to other international student groups such as 372,532 Chinese; 193,124 Indians; 13,762 Nigerians or 6,910 Malaysians (Institute of International Education, 2020), Zimbabwean international students represent a unique and resilient nation. Therefore, exploring and understanding their adjustment experiences, as they study in the United States, can provide new insights likely to help educators become more culturally responsive to these students' needs and create more inclusive learning environments that can facilitate better adjustment and academic success.

Literature Review
Literature provides evidence that most international students experience problems that can impact their academic success, psychological well-being, and overall study abroad experience (Alloh, Tait, & Taylor, 2018; Bista & Gaulee, 2017; Khanal & Gaulee, 2019; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Yassin, Razak, Qasem, & Mohammed, 2020). A wide range of attributes to these problems have been identified and the most common are: a) homesickness, b) discrimination, c) conflicting cultural values, and d) English language problems.

Homesickness

Homesickness has been defined by Thurber & Walton (2012) as the distress or impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home. Any college student who lives away from home experience some level of homesickness, but the level of homesickness experienced by many international students has been reported as traumatic due to the sudden shift inherent in the transition (Chow & Healey, 2008). Missing the familiarities of their native homes such people, places, traditions, and customs (Mori, 2002), speaking in their native language, hearing the sound of people talking in their native language, the hustle and bustle of local markets, the rumble of public transport, and the sounds of native birds, insects, or animals (HBSC, 2019) has been reported as stressful. Consequently, maladaptation to a new environment and home ruminations can feed homesickness (Willis et al., 2003). Homesickness has also been associated with health and academic issues. For example, Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) have reported a positive correlation between homesickness and higher levels of mental disturbance. Thurber and Walton (2012) have reported that homesickness can exacerbate preexisting mood and anxiety disorders and can precipitate new mental and physical health problems. Furthermore, Stroebe and his colleagues (2002) have reported a positive correlation between homesickness and depression and they have referred to homesickness as a 'mini-grief.' It appears the major challenge for international students is lack of resources to off-set the absence of familiar environments and lack of coping strategies to overcome homesickness (Araujo, 2011).

Discrimination

In general, in the United States, international students tend to experience higher levels of discrimination than American students in campus social interactions, interactions with faculty and administration, funding, and job opportunities (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Exclusion, ridicule due to accent, religion, nationality, and being rendered invisible have been reported as some of the discrimination forms faced by many international students (Houshmand et al., 2014). Some studies have reported that some international students experience higher levels of racial discrimination than others, depending on their country or region of origin. For example, Hanassab (2006) reported that international students from the regions of the Middle East and Africa tend to experience more discrimination than students from other world regions whereas international students from Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East tend to experience than students from Europe, Canada, and New Zealand (Lee & Rice, 2007). Because most international students grew up in contexts in which their race, culture, language, or religion represents the majority, experiencing discrimination in the United States can be very inconceivable and for many of them, discrimination result in identity problems, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and feelings of loneliness and alienation (Stroebe et al., 2002).

Conflicting cultural values

When students study abroad, they take the cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors learned since childhood into their new environment and some of these cultural facets tend to conflict with those of their host country (Hofstede, 2011). As such, many international students do not have points of reference to validate aspects of the host culture and so they tend to strictly maintain their individual cultural facets and resist change (Wu et al, 2015).

It is important to note that the United States does not have a single culture as it is inherently a nation of immigrants, with innumerable lifestyle differences, ethnic customs, and regional traditions (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). However, Americans tend to value individualism in which egalitarian relationships, independence, and open/direct/low context communication styles (Hofstede, 2011). They also tend to emphasize personal control over life situations and view life problems as personal inadequacies or unwillingness to take initiative and responsibility (Hartung et al., 2010). These individualistic values tend to conflict with many international students' collectivist orientation that values hierarchical relationships, interdependence, and indirect/high context communication styles (Hofstede, 2011). Collectivist societies tend to attribute life problems to fate or external forces such as supernatural forces or other environmental factors beyond one's control (Wu et al, 2015). If these conflicting values are not understood and addressed appropriately, they can threaten the academic and interpersonal success of international students (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007).

English language problems

English language deficiency has been reported as the largest single determinant of adjustment problems experienced by international students studying abroad and most of the challenges relate to oral rather than writing proficiency (Kuo, 2011). Several studies have linked English language deficiencies to international students' psychological, emotional, and academic issues. For example, Yeh and Inose (2003) found English language fluency to be a significant predictor of acculturative stress. Dao et al. (2007) reported a negative and significant association between perceived English fluency and depression. Likewise, Sümer et al. (2008) reported negative correlations between levels of English proficiency and depression and anxiety. Furthermore,

Zhai (2004) reported anxiety about lack of understanding and misinterpreting of the English language due to differences in accent, enunciation, slang, and use of special English words. These language problems can have detrimental effects on learning sustainability and academic success of international students whose primary language is not English (Yassin, Razak, Qasem, & Mohammed, 2020).

The reviewed literature identifies homesickness, discrimination, conflicting cultural values, and English language problems as major challenges faced by international students. These challenges can contribute to students' academic and mental health problems. Because of lack of literature on African students, particularly those from Zimbabwe, it is important to explore experiences of Zimbabwean international students so that overgeneralizations are avoided and appropriate support and resources can be offered to minimize maladjustment.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Zimbabwean students studying in the United States. To ensure protection of participants, approval to conduct this study was sought from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) at a Mid-Western university in the United States. Due to the explorative nature of the research question, the basic interpretive qualitative inquiry was used to gather and analyze data (Creswell, 2013). This inquiry views reality as socially constructed, does not use predetermined theoretical frameworks to gather and interpret participants' experiences, and only aims to explore and understand experiences from participants' frames of reference (Merriam, 2009).

Participants were recruited from six universities in the United States using the snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling is appropriate for situations in which the individuals sought do not form a naturally bound group but are scattered throughout populations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Only 9 participants were recruited due to the relatively small numbers of Zimbabwean international students studying in the United States and due to data saturation. To be eligible, participants had to be at least 18 years old and currently studying in the United States. Participants had to have been in the United States for at least one year and the United States had to be the only foreign country in which they have been a college or university student.

The following research question guided the study: What are the adjustment experiences of Zimbabwean students as they study in the United States? Two-semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant. After interviews were transcribed, NVivo, a Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) computer software, was used to code and categorize responses. Codes were developed inductively from the data and categories were derived by collapsing codes based on meaning and relevance to the research questions. Themes were then identified based on commonalities of participants' experiences as they adjusted to life in the United States.

To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were used. Participants' ages ranged from 24 years to 54 years. Three participants were females and six participants were males. Six participants indicated they were married, their partners were in the United States, and they had children who were also in the United States. Two participants indicated they were single and they had no children. One participant indicated being a divorcee. All participants indicated Shona as their primary language and Christianity as their religion. Only one participant was an undergraduate student and eight participants were graduate students. The length of stay in the United States ranged from two to nine years and so participants came to the United States between 2005 and 2014.

Results

Three overarching themes, that provided an understanding of the "big picture" (*Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 102)*, emerged from the data analysis: (a) limited resources, (b) navigating the United States' academic environment, and (c) socio-cultural barriers. These themes seemed to capture participants' adjustment experiences as they studied in the United States.

Theme 1: Limited Resources

The first theme, limited resources, represents participants' struggles with meeting basic needs. All nine participants reported one or more of the following struggles: limited finances and limited support system. These struggles were mostly experienced during the first few months upon arrival in the United States.

    Finances

All participants reported lack of finances upon arrival in the United States. For example, Elite stated that "the graduate assistantship stipend was not much … my spouse could not work because of no work permit." Stacy stated that both her husband and she were college students, had difficulty paying tuition, and were "not able to work to supplement the money we had in our savings." Dillon reported difficulty with getting his savings from Zimbabwe and getting help from his parents because "it was very expensive to send money to the United States due to hyperinflation of the Zimbabwean currency." Simba reported losing his life savings, two years after moving to the United States, due to the "Zimbabwean dollar that became worthless due to inflation." Rose reported that her sponsors "reneged on their financial promises due to inflation of the Zimbabwean dollar."

    Support System

Eight of the nine participants reported lack of support system resulting in feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Some of them reported either coming to the United States alone, having difficulty staying in touch with their families and friends in Zimbabwe due to time zone differences and high calling costs while others reported difficulty making friends with domestic students. For example, Elite reported "feeling lonely after class because I didn't bring my family. I lived alone. I still remember Thanksgiving of 2014 when campus was literally empty and I spent the holiday indoors, alone." Likewise, Rose reported "feeling abandoned when classes were not in session." Simba reported difficulties reconnecting with former Zimbabwean acquaintances who were already in the United States because "they had assimilated to the United States' culture and it's like, over night, they change. They don't want to be associated with their culture and with you." Dillon found very little camaraderie between him and his classmates whom he reported as having different hobbies and study habits. Even though Valerie had relatives and former high school classmates in the United States and Canada, she reported being isolated because "these people lived too far for me to make meaningful, emotional connections with them."

Theme 2: Navigating the United States' Academic Environment

Six participants reported difficulty and three participants reported easy transition from the Zimbabwean to the United States education system. Topics discussed were teaching approaches, academic expectations, technology, and relationship with professors.

Teaching Approaches

The majority of the participants reported challenges related to the prominence of class discussions that contrasted the lecture method commonly used in Zimbabwean classrooms. For example, Tay and Dillon reported relying on their professors for all educational content, including notes (when they in Zimbabwe), but in the United States, they were expected to create their own notes from class discussions or to search for content in the library. As a result, they reported struggling with exam preparations and performing poorly on exams. "Each student had different notes, depending on what they perceived to be important. I was not even sure if I was studying the correct information," Dillon explained. He also reported that, in an effort to explain, describe, or clarify concepts, his professors used examples to which he could not relate and added, "Professors did not take time to inquire and to understand my background and my abilities."

Some participants such as Simba, Elite, and Trevor reported challenges related to the United States' fast-paced learning. For example, Simba stated that "they [American professors] give you a lot of chapters to read and a lot of written assignments and these are required within a very short time, say, within 1 week. Deadlines came quickly and sometimes I turned in incomplete work." Similarly, Elite reported that "before you master a topic, you get a quiz or you are asked to give a presentation on the topic. They move from topics too quickly and that made me anxious." Trevor reported a different kind of challenge, frustration with the use of American-specific humor by his American professors and he reported "feeling excluded or rather, alienated because I did not have the socio-cultural context to help make sense of the 'humor.'"

In contrast, Rose and Valerie did not report issues related to the different United States' teaching approaches. Rose found the American teaching methods empowering. Similarly, Valerie found the American "classroom atmosphere freer than the somewhat rigid atmosphere I was used to in Zimbabwe. Professors lectured; students only spoke when they were answering questions. Students were not expected to challenge professors' ideas."

Academic Expectations

Whereas some participants found academic expectations in the United States colleges challenging in comparison to their experience in Zimbabwean colleges, others did not. For example, Elite reported feeling pressured to ask questions during class or visit professors during office hours because "it was expected and you get points. For a while, I did not go for office hours because I felt I did not have genuine questions; I had read and understood the material on my own." He added that in Zimbabwe, "faculty use office hours to prepare for lectures and to grade assignments and not to meet with students." Similarly, Stacy discussed discomfort associated with the expectation of visiting her male professors in their offices and preferred meeting with them in public places. She stated, "As female, meeting one-on-one, in a private space, with a male who was not my relative, is considered inappropriate in my culture." The few times she utilized office hours with male professors, Stacy reported asking a classmate to accompany her.

Simba discussed "very high expectations on academic performance." His American university expected graduate students to earn As and Bs only, "otherwise you would be on academic probation and so I study every day. I have and do homework every day. I work on research projects all night, on some days. I cannot risk failing." Likewise, Tay reported stress associated with the expectation of completing "homework and projects every week but in Zimbabwe, you were required to complete three or four exams and only one term project per semester."

In contrast, Valerie, Trevor, and Rose did not experience challenges related to academic expectations and performance. Valerie discussed how attending a boarding school in Zimbabwe helped her with a relatively smooth academic transition. She reported that the "German nuns and priests who ran my boarding school were pretty strict. They set very high standards for us on behavior and grades. The structured activities and the daily

routines planted a sense of discipline that I kind of maintained when I came here." Likewise, Trevor found American education "not as rigorous as the system that I went through at the University of Zimbabwe. Lecturers expected more out of students and exams were tougher. Here, grades are based on midterm exams, homework, take home finals, and so many extra credit points. It's easy to get As here." Even though Rose reported heavy coursework, she "earned good grades and I knew how to balance work, school, and family responsibilities."

Technology

All participants reported lack of computer skills upon arrival in the United States and yet they were required to type, print, and submit assignments electronically. Stacy seemed to have the best attribution to these difficulties, "Having to learn with computers was something new for me. In Zimbabwe, most assignments were handwritten. Students submitted only one typed term project. We would pay professional typists to type our work. It's different here; people start using computers from, say, age 3 years." Trevor added, "Everything here has to be done on the computer, even discussions. As a graduate assistant, I had challenges using printers, photocopy machines, and fax machines. I had never used these machines before."

Relationship with Professors

More than half of the participants expressed discomfort regarding the expected egalitarian relationships with their professors. Tay provided the most representative discussion related to participants' experiences: "They [American professors] treat me as a colleague. They prefer to be addressed by their first names. Some of them actually invite me into their homes for social events." In addition, he reported being surprised that his professors were encouraging him to "uncover and pursue" his own interests. He reported being "confused and not knowing how to behave because I was so used to being told what to do and how to do things by my lecturers in Zimbabwe."

Theme 3: Socio-Cultural Barriers

All participants reported experiencing hardships that were associated with socio-cultural differences between United States and Zimbabwe. Most of the discussions related to the language barrier.

Language Barrier

All nine participants reported Shona, the main indigenous Zimbabwean language, as their primary language. English was reported as a second, third, or fourth language and as such, language barriers, in terms of understanding others and being understood, seemed apparent throughout participants' discussions. For example, Dillon and Nate reported difficulty understanding their professors due to their American accent and differences between American and British terminology, idioms, and slang. They also reported confusion and frustration related to differences in spelling between the familiar British English and the American English. To overcome the confusion, Nate reported relying mostly on non-verbal communication. However, Tay found gestures "very confusing because you see or engage in the same action with someone but the meaning can be different."

Stacy reported struggles associated with learning to speak with an American accent because her professors and classmates had problems understanding her Zimbabwean accent. She also reported the unfairness of being academically judged based on her different accent and stated, "My accent made my [American] professors question my educational background and academic competence as though I didn't qualify to be in college. Sometimes they would finish off my sentences when I was giving answers." Likewise, Dillon reported frustration related to the little amount of time given during class discussions to process and to respond to questions. He explained, "I form my answers in Shona and then translate them into English, in my head first, before I say out the answer. I wonder why there is always a rush for me to give answers quickly. This is not my language; it makes me nervous."

Other Cultural Practices

Besides language barriers, participants experienced challenges associated with other unfamiliar cultural practices. For example, Rose struggled with initiating and maintaining connections with Americans as she found them not as communal as Zimbabweans. Trevor had similar sentiments and expressed feelings of alienation, "Here [in the United States], people are more [im]personal. For example, people will get on a bus and sit as far away from other individuals as possible. Even in classrooms, people always look for seats that are far from other people. Sitting close to someone feels like I am invading their space."

Dillon reported difficulties adapting to the egalitarian relationships in American marriages and shifting from the traditional masculine role to helping his wife with the traditional feminine responsibilities. He reported "doing laundry, cooking, and helping children with baths. We [men] don't do this in Zimbabwe."

Simba reported being in shock hearing American children addressing adults, even church leaders, by first names and noticing college students addressing their professors in a similar manner. He indicated that such a practice was considered rude and disrespectful in Zimbabwe, "we address adults and authority figures by titles, last names, or honorifics."

Discussion

Even though some aspects of this study's results are comparable to results of previous studies, there are many

other experiences that seem unique to Zimbabwean international students. Three overarching themes emerged from the data analysis: Limited resources, navigating the United States' academic environment, and socio-cultural barriers.

Limited Resources
All nine participants reported being financially ill-prepared upon arrival in the United States. Employment restrictions by the United States government seemed to have compounded participants' financial hardships. Depending on the type of visa participants held, some were allowed to work part-time only on their campuses and others were not allowed to work at all. Moreover, they moved to the United States during the when there was an economic crisis in Zimbabwe that resulted in hyperinflation (Mazuru, 2014). Like other international students in previous studies, participants did not qualify for educational financial aid offered by the United States government or scholarships offered by American private sponsors (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007).

In addition, some participants lacked social support systems, resulting in feelings of loneliness and isolation. Other participants seemed disengaged from their families and friends and their efforts to connect with domestic students and other members of the host country seemed futile. Failure to make connections seemed to attribute to participants' poor cross-cultural adjustment.

Navigating the United States' Academic Environment
Because of their familiarity with the British education system, it appeared as though participants assumed that Western countries had similar education systems. It was clear during interviews, that participants lacked understanding of the United States' academic system. The fast-paced learning, unfamiliar teaching and assessment methods, egalitarian student-professor relationships, and lack of technology skills appeared to be challenging for participants. Overall, most participants did not appear comfortable and confident in their new learning environments because they were used to more structured environments, more formal teacher-student interactions, and different teaching and assessment approaches.

Socio-Cultural Barriers
Participants reported interaction concerns, anxiety, frustration, and discomfort related to socio-cultural disparities between Zimbabwe and the United States. Their overall adjustment to life in the United States seemed to have been impeded by lack of English language skills because English was their second, third, or fourth language. Even though they were familiar with British English, participants found American English different in terms of pronunciation, meanings, and spellings of many words and idioms. Differences in accents compounded difficulties with comprehending course material, resulting in anxiety and worry about misunderstanding and misinterpretation of course content and conversations. It was not surprising that other cultural barriers, such as lack of points of reference on cultural practices and egalitarian relationships in marriages and other social settings, impeded participants' process of adjusting to life in the United States.

Participants provided unique stories about their adjustment experiences as they studied in the United States and they seemed to focus on negative experiences. However, these experiences and inherent insights have important implications for educators.

Implications for Educators
This study has provided additional knowledge to existing literature on adjustment experiences of international students studying in the United Sates. It also provided new insights that may help educators facilitate better adjustment, academic success, and retention of Zimbabwean international students. Analyses of participants' responses were used to generate the following recommendations for educators: a) develop positive relationships; b) identify student's strengths and weaknesses; c) include differentiated instruction and assessment; d) raise awareness of mental health services; e) encourage student involvement; and e) show solidarity and advocate on behalf of or alongside students.

Develop Positive Relationships
Nieto and Booth (2010) asserted that educators' awareness and interest in the culture of their international students could be helpful in understanding and helping international students academically and socially. Educators should, therefore, aim to develop positive professional relationships with their international students so that the students can open up and share their cultural background and cultural barriers that impede learning and general adjustment. In addition, these students can also share catalysts to their learning and social integration. A good starting point, for example, is for educators to make serious efforts to learn the names and proper pronunciation of their international students' foreign names. They could write down the names phonetically, practice pronouncing the names, and address these students by their actual names instead of asking students to provide alternative English names. It is important to understand that most of these students' original names carry

important cultural meanings and represent their identities, their heritage, and their culture (*Santa Clara County Office of Education, 2016)*. Being forced to drop their native names and encouraged to adopt English names may indicate that their cultures are being undervalued. In addition, when they introduce themselves, educators could also write their own names phonetically to help international students with pronunciation. They could also allow an option to being addressed by title or last name in order to reduce international students' discomfort with using first names for authority figures. Furthermore, on the first day of class, educators could provide note cards to students and ask them to write down things, about themselves and their cultures, that they think would be helpful for their professors to know, including things that might impede learning.

Identify Students' Strengths and Weaknesses
It would be helpful for educators to identify their international students' strengths and weaknesses, including English language proficiency. However, they should not assume that lack of oral English language proficiency equates to lack of understanding, lack of written English language skills, or lack of academic competence. They should not overlook the fact that conversational competence tends to lag behind written language and academic competence (Genesee et al., 2006). Therefore, they could conduct a linguistic needs assessment before any remedial or assistive programs and strategies are implemented. It is important to realize that language needs differ between one international student and another, depending on whether English is used in their home country or not. English language deficiencies could be addressed by offering discipline-specific ESL workshops that supplement ESL courses to help their international students acquire relevant academic fundamentals rarely taught in regular ESL courses. Such English immersion programs can be short-term and can occur through listening, reading, speaking, writing, and classroom discussions (Li, Steele, Slater, Bacon, & Miller, 2016). They can also incorporate discipline-specific vocabulary, assessment strategies, and expectations for satisfactory performance social topics that have been identified in literature as concerning for international students, including classroom behavior expectations, interpersonal relationship skills, United States' mores, and other cultural practices. Alternatively, informal sessions hosted and facilitated by academic honor societies of students' disciplines could be implemented. Other international students, who might be familiar with United States academic system and culture, could be invited to offer support and to share their own experiences and tips for academic and social success.

Include Differentiated Instruction and Assessment
It would also be helpful if educators could include differentiated instruction and differentiated assessment methods to accommodate international students' diverse educational backgrounds, learning needs, and learning styles. Educators should anticipate and respond to students' needs and learning styles by modifying the content (what is being taught), the process (how it is taught) and the product (how students demonstrate their learning), regardless of differences in ability or culture (Gregory & Chapman, 2002). In addition, reflecting on the teaching/learning process could help facilitate appropriate accommodations, resulting in more effective teaching.

Educators should consider giving more processing time to students who are linguistically different before they call upon them to give answers in class. Likewise, at the end of class, instead of asking students if they have questions on content presented, educators could ask all students to write down questions they might have and submit them electronically or on paper. At the beginning of the next class session, educators could then read the questions to the class and provide answers or allow the class to share their thoughts and ideas in answer to the questions. In addition, in place of whole class discussions, smaller group discussion can be utilized in an effort to reduce anxiety, promote talking, and sharing of ideas. Furthermore, it would be helpful for educators to use culture-free humor and culture-free examples to ensure that their international students are not alienated.

It would also be helpful if educators could take time to explain the value of utilizing office hours, including an opportunity to build rapport and to develop professional relationships. To accommodate international students who find it uncomfortable to meet in private spaces, educators could use time before and after class to meet with students in classrooms. These approaches could reduce international students' anxiety and ensure equal learning opportunities for all students.

Raise Awareness of Mental Health Services
Raising awareness of mental health services to international students is of vital importance since most of them come from cultures where professional counseling is unknown or stigmatized. Including a blurb on their syllabi, highlighting essential support services provided on campus, including location of service facilities, type of services offered, and contact persons could be helpful. These support services could include medical services because international students tend to perceive psychosomatic complaints as medical concerns (Mori, 2002) and tend to feel more comfortable seeking medical care services rather than mental health services (Onabule & Boes, 2013). Medical care referrals could enable access to mental health services without facing the stigma that is often associated with reporting emotional or psychological problems.

Encourage Student Involvement

Because they tend to spend more time studying at the cost of social life, international students should be encouraged to be involved in student organizations, extracurricular clubs, and other campus social events. Encouraging them to be involved in such settings could help them balance academics and social life, and minimize boredom, loneliness, and homesickness. Putting themselves out there could give them the opportunity to meet more people and establish friendships with domestic and other international students. Moreover, research has demonstrated a positive relationship between having more friends from the host country and satisfaction, contentment, decreased homesickness, and social connectedness (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2010). In addition, educators could also encourage international students to reach out to their new classmates and peers on social media, for example their university or program Facebook pages and Twitter accounts. Social media could be a great way for international students to find out what others are doing, what events are coming up, and hopefully, joining in!

Show Solidarity and Advocate on Behalf of or Alongside Students

Regarding limited resources (basic, financial, and emotional needs), unfortunately, educators may not be directly involved with providing resources to international students but they could offer support by referring them to resources and appropriate services. They could show their solidarity by engaging in advocacy efforts on behalf of or alongside their international students. This could be done by volunteering to serve on committees that promote the welfare of international students or by initiating dialogues involving cross-cultural awareness and adjustment experiences of international students. Educators could also advocate for fair policies regarding on-campus facilities and services.

Limitations of this Study and Directions for Future Research

This study presented with two main limitations and results should not be generalized to all Zimbabwean students studying in the United States. First, the sample was not representative of all Zimbabwean students studying in the United States with respect to ethnicity, religious affiliation, gender, and level of education. Second, even though different methods were used to ensure trustworthiness, there was possible researcher bias because the researcher is a Zimbabwean American who share similar characteristics with participants.

It is my hope that future research focuses on other Zimbabwean ethnic groups in order to corroborate results of this study. In addition, other research should compare data from males and females; undergraduate and graduate students; partnered and single students; students who grew up and went to school in rural areas and those who grew up and went to school in urban areas; and students with scholarships/assistantships and those who self-fund. It would also be interesting to compare data from students who were studying in different regions of the United States. Results of these investigations could provide more insights likely to enhance adjustment experiences and educational resources for international students from Zimbabwe.

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