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PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF INTERNATIONAL
STUDENT ADAPTATION UNDER CURRENT
EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS

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Summary.

Amid the global integration of higher education, international academic mobility has reached unprecedented levels. Since the 2019-2020 academic period, the dissemination of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) has necessitated fundamental systemic modifications across global pedagogical frameworks, including higher medical education. Consequently, a transition to alternative instructional modalities was implemented at most global universities, including this institution. The efficacy of such educational models remains contingent upon the cultivation of student self-discipline and the consistency of faculty feedback. Evaluation of the psychological state of students, particularly international cohorts, is essential; in addition to the acquisition of distance learning competencies necessitated by the pandemic and, since onset of war in Ukraine in 2022, they must adhere to specific regulatory frameworks within their country of residence.

The aim of the study. *Evaluation of the academic adaptation of international students to modified educational requirements within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war since 2022.*

Materials and methods. *The study population comprised 220 international students (first through third years of study) at Bukovinian State Medical University. To ensure the acquisition of objective data, a confidential, randomized survey was conducted, incorporating every third student from the respective years of study. Student adjustment was evaluated using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) developed by Baker and Siryk [1, 2], with additional items incorporated by the authors. The study adhered to the bioethical principles of the Council of Europe Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (1997), the WMA Declaration of Helsinki (1964-2013), and Order No. 690 of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine (2009). No moral or legal violations were identified by the Biomedical Ethics Committee of Bukovinian State Medical University (Protocol No. 1, September 18, 2025). This study constitutes a continuation of our prior research in this field and is integrated into the departmental projects of Bukovinian State Medical University: «The use of modern morphological and physical methods to diagnose the time and cause of death, the occurrence of bodily injuries, the development of their remote and immediate consequences in order to solve the urgent tasks of law enforcement authorities and current issues of forensic science and practice» (Department of Forensic Medicine and Medical Law; State registration No. 0123U101978, January 2023–December 2027) and «Modern aspects of the diagnosis and treatment of patients with mental and/or neurological disorders» (Department of Nervous Diseases, Psychiatry and Medical Psychology; State registration No. 0125U001434, January 2025–December 2029).*

Results: *Psychological components of academic adjustment – including motivation, diligence, application of individual abilities, performance efficiency, and adaptation to the academic environment – remain at high or very high levels among the majority of international medical students. Direct correlations are identified between motivation, diligence, efficiency, and adjustment to the academic environment, with similar associations observed between diligence and performance efficiency.*

Conclusions: *Medical education has undergone a transition toward alternative learning modalities following the pandemic and the onset of the war in Ukraine in 2022. Despite these challenges, all psychological components of academic adaptation, including motivation, diligence, the application of individual abilities, performance efficiency, and adjustment to the academic environment, remain at high or very high levels among the majority of international students.*

Keywords: *Adjustment; Academic; Students; Foreign; Learning; Alternative; COVID-19; War-time.*

Introduction.

The internationalization of higher education has resulted in an unprecedented expansion of study abroad programs. Current research emphasizes that international cultural experiences and tourism must not supersede educational objectives [1]. The International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA) facilitates over 15,000 annual international exchanges across 100 countries, where even brief pre-departure orientation sessions (2 h) are found to enhance self-esteem, psychological well-being, and the maintenance of high ethical standards during the period abroad [2].

Investigations into international medical education in the United Kingdom further identify the development of competent specialists as a primary task [3].

Bukovinian State Medical University maintains a structured system for the training of international physicians, with an enrollment exceeding 2000 students, representing 50% of the total Master of Medicine candidates. However, significant systemic changes were necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 war in Ukraine, requiring a transition to alternative instructional technologies. The efficacy of distance education is strongly correlated with high levels of student motivation and discipline, reflecting a shift in teacher-student interactions toward students' independent cognitive activity. Academic motivation is recognized as a critical determinant of educational achievement and performance enhancement [4].

These factors impact the psychological state of international students, who must adapt to distance learning

necessitated by the pandemic and the 2022 war while adhering to specific host-country regulations.

The aim of the study. Evaluation of the academic adaptation of international students to modified educational requirements within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine beginning in 2022.

Materials and methods

Study setting and participants. The study population included 220 junior international students (first through third years of study) at Bukovinian State Medical University. Objective data acquisition was ensured through a confidential, randomized survey involving every third student from the first, second, and third years of study. Indian citizens constituted the majority of respondents, representing approximately 85% of the international student body.

Study design. Academic adjustment was evaluated using the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) [5], supplemented by author-developed items. Academic adjustment was defined as the efficacy with which students manage the requirements of the professional educational curriculum approved by the University [5].

According to the modified methodology, academic adjustment was categorized into four clusters: motivation; diligence and application of individual abilities during the educational process; degree of efficiency and performance of academic tasks; and adjustment to the academic environment.

The assessment of *motivation* includes six items: awareness of the reasons for university enrollment, identification of academic tasks, perceived value of obtaining a degree, enjoyment of the learning process, the relationship between personal interests and learning, and doubts regarding the value of university education [6].

The second cluster, comprising *diligence and application of individual abilities* in the learning process, contains four items: class attendance, motivation and persistence in learning academic subjects, and timely task completion.

The third cluster, *degree of efficiency and performance of academic tasks*, consists of nine items: achievement of positive results in modular assessments, difficulties encountered in specialized subjects, perceived adequacy of mental abilities for academic writing, and general assessment of learning difficulties. Furthermore, learning satisfaction, difficulties with home assignments, and concentration issues due to reduced attention were evaluated.

The fourth cluster, *adjustment to the academic environment*, focuses on five items: successful completion of the syllabus for the respective academic year, establishment of communicative relationships with faculty and professional staff, satisfaction with academic subjects, and a positive assessment of teaching quality.

Ethical considerations. The study adhered to the bioethical principles of the Council of Europe Convention

on Human Rights and Biomedicine (1997), the WMA Declaration of Helsinki (1964-2013), and Order No. 690 of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine (2009). No moral or legal violations were identified by the Biomedical Ethics Committee of Bukovinian State Medical University (Protocol No. 1, September 18, 2025).

Scientific research. This study constitutes a continuation of our prior research in this field and is integrated into the departmental projects of Bukovinian State Medical University: «The use of modern morphological and physical methods to diagnose the time and cause of death, the occurrence of bodily injuries, the development of their remote and immediate consequences in order to solve the urgent tasks of law enforcement authorities and current issues of forensic science and practice» (Department of Forensic Medicine and Medical Law; State registration No. 0123U101978, January 2023–December 2027) and «Modern aspects of the diagnosis and treatment of patients with mental and/or neurological disorders» (Department of Nervous Diseases, Psychiatry and Medical Psychology; State registration No. 0125U001434, January 2025–December 2029).

Results and discussion

Of the total respondents, 116 (52.7%) were male and 104 (47.3%) were female, with ages ranging from 18 to 27 years; the majority of students ($n = 83$; 37.7%) were 20 years old, with age distribution varying gradually within the specified limits.

The assessment of levels of academic adjustment and adaptation to the learning environment (*Academic Adjustment*) yielded the following results.

The *motivation level* for learning among international students was found to be high, with 75 students (34.1%) demonstrating the maximum 6-point level and 82 individuals (37.3%) exhibiting a 5-point level. The distribution of students according to decreasing motivation levels is illustrated in Fig. 1.

The level of *diligence and application* of individual abilities in the educational process (Application) was highest (4 points) among the majority of international students ($n = 117$; 53.2%). The distribution of the study population according to this indicator is shown in Fig. 2.

The degree of *efficiency and performance* of educational tasks, based on individual study plans, was assessed using the Performance indicator, which was detailed on a scale from 1 to 9 points. The highest level for this indicator was observed in 68 international students (30.9%), followed by 46 students (20.9%) with 5 points and 32 students (14.5%) with 6 points. The distribution of the remaining students according to this indicator is shown in Fig. 3.

The *adjustment* of international citizens to the academic environment, evaluated according to the Environment factor, reached the maximum 5-point level in 106 respondents (48.2%), followed by 58 students (26.4%) with a 4-point adjustment level. The further distribution of students according to the Environment factor is illustrated in Fig. 4.

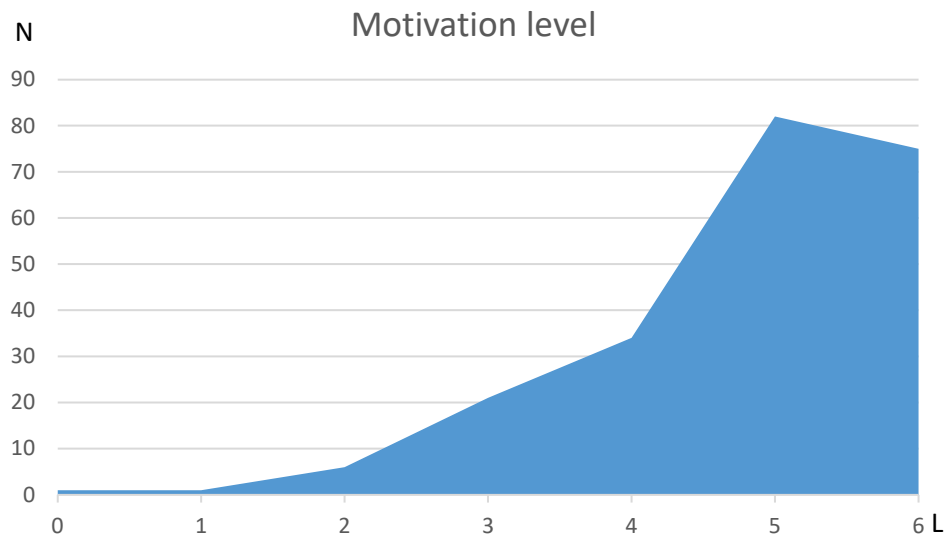


Figure 1. Motivation level of international students. Note: N – number, L – level.

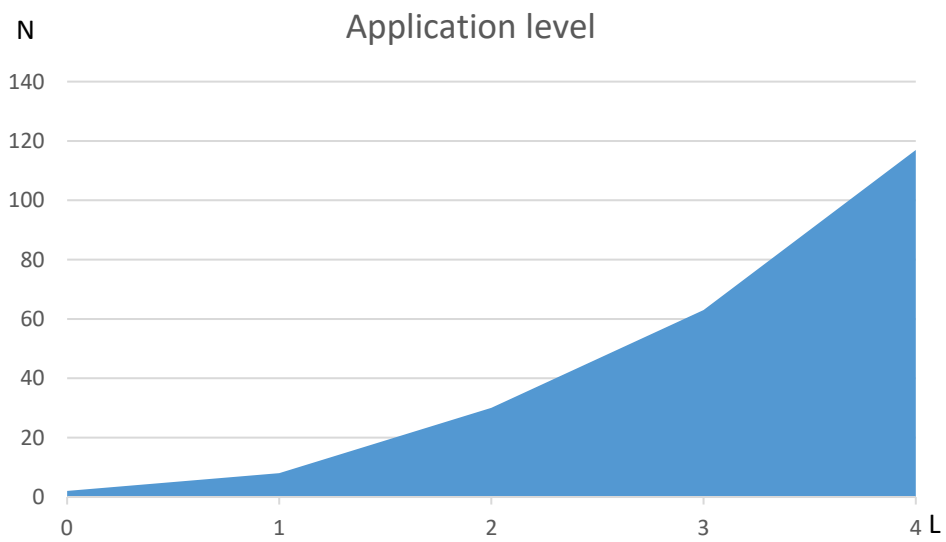


Figure 2. Application level of the international students. Note: N – number, L – level.

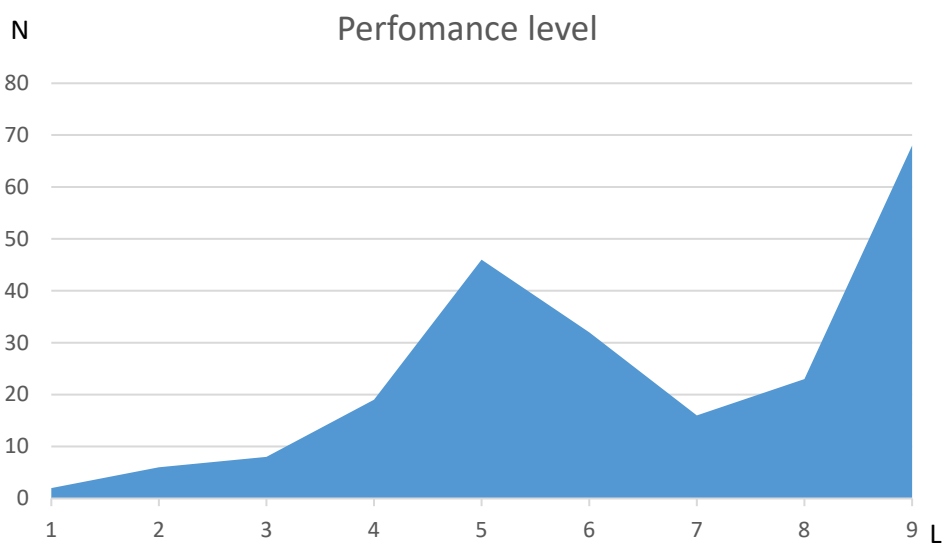


Figure 3. Performance and executive discipline level of the international students. Note: N – number, L – level.

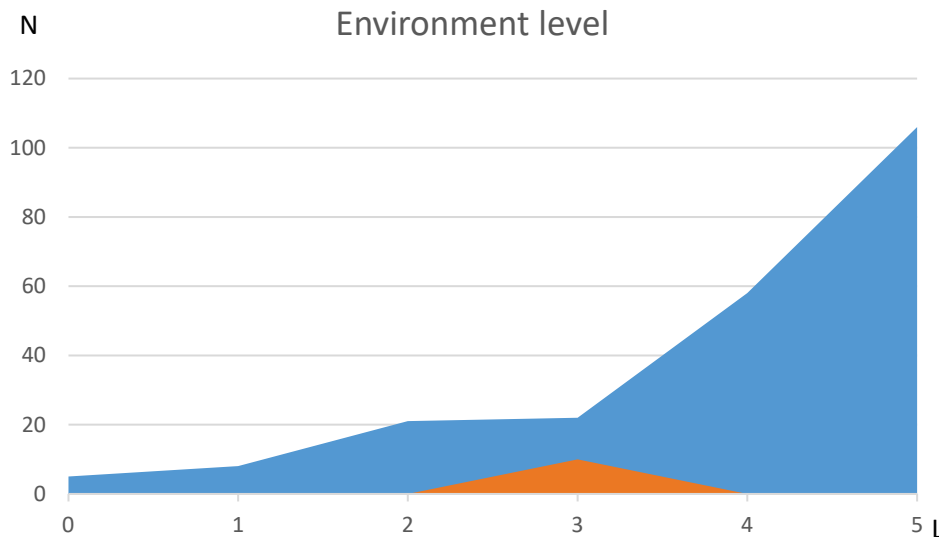


Figure 4. Adjacent level of international students to academic environment. Note: N – number, L – level.

The analysis of correlations between individual indicators of academic adaptation revealed significant associations.

A weak direct correlation was identified ($r = 0.15$, $p \leq 0.05$) between motivation and sex, indicating higher academic motivation among female students.

Moderate direct correlations were identified between motivation and diligence ($r = 0.40$, $p \leq 0.05$), motivation and efficiency ($r = 0.48$, $p \leq 0.05$), and motivation and environment adjustment ($r = 0.48$, $p \leq 0.05$).

Similar moderate direct correlations of higher intensity were observed between diligence and efficiency ($r = 0.55$, $p \leq 0.05$), diligence and adjustment to the academic environment ($r = 0.53$, $p \leq 0.05$), and efficiency and adjustment to the academic environment ($r = 0.58$, $p \leq 0.05$).

Reformation of the curriculum, pedagogical methods, and resources within medical education remains a complex undertaking even in highly developed nations [7].

The existence of a robust distance learning environment – incorporating simulation medicine tools, electronic assessment systems, and faculty proficiency in communication technologies – facilitates a comprehensive transition to alternative educational modalities within a brief temporal interval [8-10].

Data obtained from this university indicate that during the implementation of distance or blended learning, motivation, diligence, and productivity remain at high or very high levels for the majority (53.2-71.4%) of international medical students. Adjustment to the academic environment amid the COVID-19 pandemic and wartime conditions is maintained at optimal levels for approximately 75% of respondents.

Direct correlations are identified between motivation, diligence, efficiency, and adjustment to the academic environment, with similar associations observed between diligence, efficiency and performance efficiency, and between efficiency and adjustment to the academic surroundings.

The maintenance of social adaptation among international students at high levels during the pandemic period was established in previous reports [11]. While initial research focused on adaptation within the academic community, the onset of the war in 2022 introduced unprecedented challenges regarding the training of physicians. A substantial increase in scientific literature by domestic authors has been observed, specifically addressing the psychological state and the adaptation of methodological support for students under martial law in Ukraine [12-18]. Global scientific interest in the socio-psychological difficulties encountered by students during the war in Ukraine further underscores the critical relevance of this research direction [19-25].

Conclusions

Transformation toward alternative instructional technologies has occurred in the majority of medical educational institutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the onset of wartime conditions in Ukraine in 2022. Despite these stressors, psychological components of academic adaptation – including motivation, diligence, application of one's abilities in the learning process, productivity, academic task completions, and adjustment to the academic environment – remain at high or very high levels among the majority of international students.

Prospects for further research

Further investigation into the elements of social adjustment and the personal-emotional constituents of adaptation to diverse learning modalities in the host country is warranted.

Contribution of co-authors to the preparation of materials for the scientific article:

Savka I. G. – administration of the research, statistical data processing, reviewing and editing of the final text.

Savka S. D. – choice of the research methodology, data selection, realization of diagnostic tests, preparing the draft of article.

Karvatska N. S. – conducting psychometric analysis, comparing the results obtained, preparing accompanying documentation.

Savka V. G. – conceptualization of the research, searching for literary sources, translating texts into English.

Conflict of interest. The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding this article. The authors declare that all the procedures and experiments of this study adhere to

the ethical standards of the Declaration of Helsinki (1975, revised 2008) and national legislation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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ПСИХОЛОГІЧНІ АСПЕКТИ АКАДЕМІЧНОЇ АДАПТАЦІЇ ІНОЗЕМНИХ СТУДЕНТІВ В СУЧАСНИХ УМОВАХ НАВЧАННЯ

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Резюме.

У наш час, в умовах інтернаціоналізації вищої освіти, навчання за кордоном досягло рекордного рівня. Проте, починаючи з 2019-2020 навчального року, у зв'язку з поширенням коронавірусної інфекції, спричиненої Covid 19, вся система освіти, у тому числі й вищої медичної, зазнала суттєвих змін. Так, більшість університетів світу, як і наш заклад, перейшли на альтернативні форми навчання. Їх продуктивність тісно пов'язана з формуванням у студентів високого рівня дисципліни та зворотнього зв'язку з викладачем. І тут важливо враховувати і психологічний стан студентів, особливо іноземців у тому чи іншому навчальному закладі, в яких окрім опанування особливостей дистанційного навчання через пандемію COVID –19 та воєнний стан в нашій країні з 2022 року добавилися ще певні спеціальні обмеження в країні перебування.

Мета роботи. Дослідити академічну адаптацію студентів-іноземців до умов навчання після карантину, спричиненого COVID –19 та в умовах воєнного стану після 2022 року.

Матеріали та методи. Вся вибірка респондентів включала 220 студентів-іноземців, які навчалися на молодших 1-3 курсах навчання. Для отримання об'єктивних та достовірних результатів опитування проводили анонімно в рандомізованому порядку, що включало кожного третього студента зі свого курсу навчання. За країною походження у переважній більшості це були вихідці з Індії, яких біля 85% навчається в нашому університеті з-поміж представників інших країн. У дослідженні ми обстежували студентів з використанням опитувальника адаптації студентів до коледжу (SACQ) розробленого Baker and Siryk (1989,1994) з авторськими доповненнями. Дослідження схвалено комісією з питань біоетики Буковинського державного медичного університету (протокол № 1 від 18.09.2025 р.). Дане дослідження є продовженням попередніх пошуків у цьому напрямку і частиною комплексної науково-дослідної роботи кафедри судової медицини та медичного правознавства Буковинського державного медичного університету на тему: «Використання сучасних морфологічних та фізичних методів для діагностики часу та причини настання смерті, виникнення тілесних ушкоджень, розвитку віддалених та ближених їх наслідків з метою вирішення нагальних завдань правоохоронних органів та актуальних питань судово-медичної науки та практики» (номер державної реєстрації 0123U101978, терміни виконання 01.01.2023-31.12.2027 рр.) та кафедри нервових хвороб, психіатрії та медичної психології ім. С. М. Савенка «Сучасні аспекти діагностики та лікування пацієнтів з психічними та/або неврологічними розладами» (номер державної реєстрації 0125U001434, терміни виконання 01.01.2025-31.12.2029 р.).

Результати. При застосуванні альтернативних форм навчання рівень мотивації, старанності та застосування власних здібностей в освітньому процесі, ступінь продуктивності та виконання навчальних завдань відповідно до індивідуальних навчальних планів і затверджених освітньо-професійних програм залишаються на найвищому або досить високому рівнях у переважній кількості (53,2-71,4%) студентів-іноземців. Виявлено пряму кореляційну залежність між мотивацією, старанністю, продуктивністю та адаптацією до академічного середовища, а також продуктивністю та адаптацією до академічного оточення.

Висновки. Підготовка лікарів зазнала трансформації в напрямку переходу на альтернативні (дистанційні, змішані) технології навчання у більшості закладів вищої освіти після пандемії, спричиненої COVID –19 і в нашій країні через воєнний стан після 2022 року. Незважаючи на ці виклики, всі психологічні компоненти академічної адаптації, включаючи мотивацію, старанність, застосування індивідуальних здібностей, ефективність роботи та пристосування до академічного середовища, залишаються на високому або дуже високому рівні серед більшості іноземних студентів.

Ключові слова: академічна адаптація; студенти-іноземці; альтернативне навчання; Covid 19; воєнний стан.

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