

**RESEARCH ON IDENTIFYING THE CHALLENGES FACED BY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

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**Abstract**

In Article 2, Clause 1 of the Education Law of Mongolia states, "The people are subjects of the right to education." Additionally, Clause 2 of Article 8 of the Constitution specifies, "The state shall protect the right to education of those pursuing higher education as a tradition." These principles establish universities as institutions devoted to seeking truth and pursuing knowledge, underscoring the importance of academic freedom. Universities must remain autonomous institutions where faculty and students can freely engage in academic and cultural activities. Although university students possess the same constitutional rights as ordinary citizens, their rights and responsibilities are subject to specific legal protections and limitations due to their unique status as students. This creates a need to identify and study the challenges students face and the factors influencing these issues.

**Keywords:** University, Student, Skills, Challenges

**Introduction**

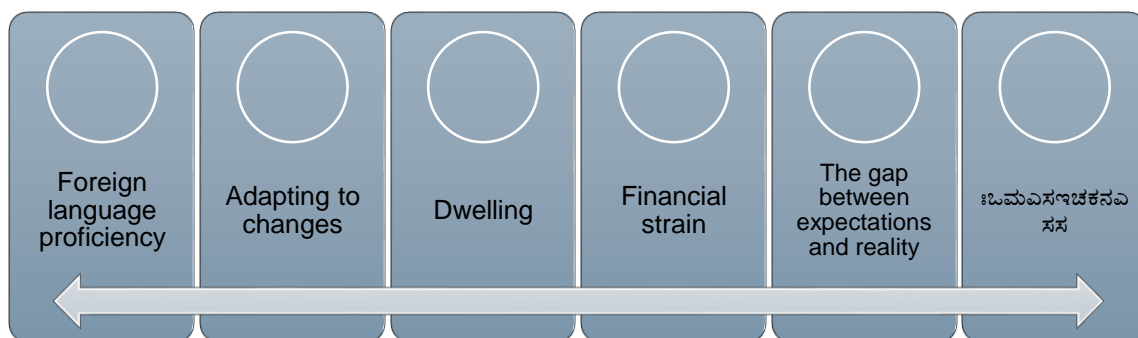
International students not only make a positive contribution to the society and economy of the host country, but they also face challenges in adapting due to factors such as language barriers, culture, academic pressures, and other social factors. The goal of this research is to identify these challenges and the factors influencing them, as well as to determine ways to overcome them. The study employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods, using surveys via Google Forms to collect data, mathematical techniques, and methods such as interviews and participant observations. There has been considerable research on the psychological development characteristics of university students. For instance, Perry, W.G. [1, pp. 46-50] used Harvard students as a long-term study subject and developed a theory of nine stages of intellectual and ethical development. Perry explained how university students' knowledge and values develop in stages, specifically how first-year students evolve from simple cognitive structures to more complex, real-world value systems. He views "the intellectual and ethical development of college students as two sides of the same coin," arguing that "intellectual development leads individuals to reassess their position and commitments in the world." Baxter Magolda, from the United States, published a work proposing four stages of cognitive development after conducting a five-year longitudinal study at Miami University [2, pp. 205-216]. Baxter Magolda highlighted that 68% of first-year students were at the absolute cognitive stage, 53% of second-year students, 83% of primary school students, and 80% of high school students were in the cognitive transition stage. He also noted that "57% of students are at the independent cognitive stage one year after graduating from college, and only a few university students reach the content cognitive stage," concluding that there are significant differences in learning comprehension between male and female students at the university level. This difference, in turn, affects their academic outcomes. Pete Hall and Kristin Van Marter Souers [3], in their book *Relationships, Responsibility, and Regulation: Developing Trauma-Informed Practices for School Settings*, wrote that, in order to create a positive learning environment, teachers must cultivate behaviors related to relationships, responsibility, and regulation. Since students learn better when interacting with others and become self-regulated, independent learners, teachers play a key role in designing instructional models and establishing an effective learning environment. In an effort to compare the impact of various factors on student success, John Hattie reviewed over 800 meta-analyses involving approximately 80 million students, concluding that teachers who establish positive relationships with students are more likely to have higher-performing students than the average teacher. Hattie also highlighted several factors that influence student performance, such as empathy, warmth, motivation, honesty, and respect for students' backgrounds. Cole, Sugioka, Yamagata-Lynch, and Kerssen-Grip observed that "the way teachers communicate affects how students perceive the learning process and impacts satisfaction and achievement in the classroom" [4]. Researcher Hativa stated that "the 'clear and understandable' nature of teacher-student relationships is one of the most important characteristics associated with effective college teaching" [5]. The aforementioned researchers agree that "students' evaluations improve, and motivation increases when teachers establish strong relationships," and studies have identified common traits of successful teachers who communicate effectively with their students in the classroom.

**International Experiences that Address the Challenges Faced by University Students**

Studying abroad is an unforgettable experience for many international students. For numerous students, pursuing education in a developed country becomes a pathway to achieving their career goals. For example, according to the Institute of International Education, the number of international students studying in the United States in 2023 increased by approximately 42% compared to a decade ago. During their studies, international students face various academic and social challenges that can significantly impact their academic performance and social lives.

**Figure 1. Challenges Faced by International Students in Foreign Universities**

A common challenge faced by international students is the language barrier, which can lead to academic difficulties, feelings of invisibility on campus, and challenges in participating in club activities or other social events. For instance, learning English can be particularly difficult for many international students, as they need to grasp numerous grammar rules and specific sentence structures. If English is not the student's first language, they must not only practice their language skills but also become familiar with colloquial expressions that may not be found in textbooks. These obstacles highlight the need for targeted support



systems to help international students overcome such challenges and thrive both academically and socially.

**Another Challenge for International Students: Adapting to a New Life and Culture**

Another significant challenge faced by international students is adapting to a new lifestyle and culture, often referred to as "culture shock." For instance, Australians have unique traits, customs, and habits that may take time to adjust to. Differences in clothing, food, education, academic practices, social behavior, and communication styles can be particularly noticeable. Initially, culture shock can make it difficult to adapt to a new way of life. To overcome culture shock, students can seek support by talking to other international students, staying connected with family and friends back home, or participating in familiar activities. Adjustment takes time, and adapting to an unfamiliar environment is one of the most demanding challenges international students face while studying abroad. During this process, homesickness can trigger negative emotions as students miss their hometowns and familiar surroundings.

**Finding Employment.** For international students studying in developed countries, combining studies with part-time work is often feasible. Working while studying offers opportunities to gain professional experience, develop valuable skills, meet new people, and earn money to cover travel, meals, and daily expenses. To secure a job, it is essential to know where to look. Successful job searching in a foreign country requires proactivity and patience. Job boards, career services offered by educational institutions, and social media platforms are excellent starting points for finding employment opportunities.

**Preparing Accommodation When Studying Abroad.** When studying abroad, it is essential to arrange accommodation before arriving in the host country. Deciding where to stay can feel overwhelming, but various services and support systems are available to simplify the process. Start by evaluating your housing options. If you prefer convenience, consider student housing, which typically offers affordable and manageable options tailored to your needs. Alternatively, if you value independence, you may opt for private rentals. However, be cautious of scams and ensure the legitimacy of rental offers before making a commitment.

**Navigating a New Environment.** As an international student, it is common to feel disoriented during the first few weeks. While this can be frustrating and uncomfortable, it is a natural part of adjusting to a new environment. To avoid being late for lectures or appointments, allow yourself extra time to reach your destination and consider using tools like Google Maps. This highly functional app provides live updates on routes, including road closures, and integrates with public transportation systems in most cities. By utilizing such tools, you can plan your trips effectively. Over time, you will become more familiar with the streets and locations in your new city, overcoming these initial navigation challenges.

**Managing Your Budget While Studying Abroad.** Managing your finances is crucial when studying abroad, as you will need money not only for essential living expenses such as rent and groceries, but also for furnishing your new home, buying clothes, trying new foods, and enjoying entertainment like dining out, bars, and cinemas. Here's how to plan and manage your expenses effectively:

**Create a Budget.** Start by identifying your income and expenses. Understand where your money is going and prioritize essential costs like rent and utilities. For non-essential spending, allocate a reasonable amount and stick to it.

**Use Budgeting Tools.** Download free budgeting apps or keep a physical notebook to track your spending. Regularly monitoring your expenses will help you make informed financial decisions. **Take Advantage of Student Discounts.** Many businesses offer discounts for students, including public transportation, cinemas, and restaurants. Always carry your student ID to benefit from these savings. **Work Part-Time.** Consider finding a part-time job to gain experience and supplement your income. Balancing work and study can be challenging, but it's a great way to develop skills and manage financial independence. **Plan for Short-Term and Long-Term Needs.** Ensure you have enough savings to cover emergencies or unexpected costs. Avoid overspending on non-essentials until you've established a sustainable routine for managing your finances. By creating a budget, utilizing discounts, and being mindful of your spending habits, you will gain valuable financial management experience while making the most of your time abroad.

**Educational Expectations.** The educational expectations and learning approaches in a foreign country can differ significantly from what students are accustomed to. For example, interactions with university staff and professors may be more informal than expected. In Australia, it is common to address professors by their first names. The focus of coursework may also differ, with less emphasis on exams and more on completing smaller assignments such as reports and presentations. Over time, students typically adapt to these expectations. If you encounter academic challenges, you can seek support from your university's international student office, which often provides resources such as guidance, workshops, and study seminars. If you are uncertain about anything, don't hesitate to talk to your professors or course coordinators for clarification.

**Dealing with Homesickness.** Missing home is one of the most challenging aspects of studying abroad and is a common experience for many international students. Homesickness affects everyone differently, but staying busy can help alleviate it. Engage in activities with new friends, attend classes, and establish a healthy routine in your new life. Thanks to modern technology, staying connected with loved ones has never been easier. Tools like Skype, Messenger, Viber, WhatsApp, and WeChat allow for video calls, helping you maintain close ties with family and friends. Visiting home during breaks can also be a comforting option.

**Opportunities and Overcoming Challenges.** Studying in a developed country offers immense opportunities for international students. Understanding how to overcome academic and social challenges is key to thriving in this new environment. University campuses should foster an environment that recognizes and respects human dignity and value (Feng Chaoling, 2003, p. 3). Implementing comprehensive human rights education is a crucial indicator of promoting human rights within the campus setting. By embracing these experiences, international students can grow personally, academically, and socially while making the most of their time abroad.

#### **Common Challenges Faced by University Students**

1. **Environmental Challenges.** First-year students often encounter environmental challenges as they adapt to a new place, meet people from different regions, and navigate a new social and physical environment. This period requires significant adjustment to new relationships, surroundings, and routines.
2. **Academic Issues.** Academic challenges may include struggling to meet performance expectations, adapting to course requirements, failing exams, or dealing with difficult subjects. Although university coursework may seem lighter compared to secondary school at first glance, achieving success requires substantial effort. Some students lose sight of their academic goals, particularly when their current studies seem disconnected from their future career paths, leading to a loss of motivation and academic focus.
3. **Interpersonal Relationship Challenges.** Students may face conflicts with roommates, classmates, or professors, struggle with loneliness, or fail to adapt to new social environments. Compared to senior students, first-year students often focus more on relationships than academics, which can be a major source of emotional stress.
4. **Marriage, Love, and Sexuality Issues.** Common issues include unreciprocated affection, romantic triangles, frustration in relationships, long-distance relationships, pre-marital intimacy, cohabitation, abortion, marriage, and emotional challenges such as revengeful feelings after breakups. These matters can deeply affect students' emotional well-being.
5. **Psychological Challenges.** These challenges include low self-esteem, shyness, hypersensitivity, suspicion, fear, anger, mood swings, isolation, depression, anxiety, hopelessness, and feelings of meaninglessness. Physical symptoms like insomnia, fatigue, and slow reactions may also manifest as symptoms of psychological stress.
6. **Career-Related Challenges.** Students may face uncertainties regarding internships, choosing the right major, preparing for their careers, and planning their professional paths. Other concerns include how to effectively search for jobs, identify necessary skills, and manage expectations from parents.

#### **A Study to Identify Challenges Faced by University Students: A Comparison of China and Mongolia**

##### **Challenges Faced by Chinese University Students**

The first chapter discussed how challenges arising in student life can cause stress and negatively impact students' motivation to study. To identify the most significant challenges faced by university students, a survey was conducted among 150 students at Hohhot Normal University in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR).

Survey Details: Gender distribution: 47% male, 53% female Academic year distribution: 28% first-year, 24% second-year, 27% third-year, and 21% fourth-year students, the sampling was designed to ensure equitable representation of genders and academic years.

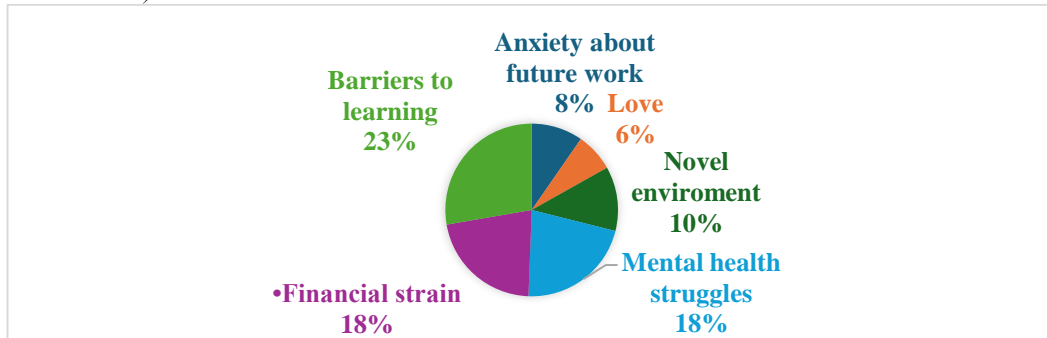
##### **Survey Results:**

1. **Prevalence of Challenges:** The majority of university students experience significant challenges in various aspects of their lives. The primary issues identified were: Financial difficulties: 17.9%, Academic challenges: 23.3%, Interpersonal relationship difficulties: 16.9%, Emotional challenges: 17.8%

Combined, these issues accounted for 75.9% of the total challenges faced. Other Challenges: A smaller portion (24.1%) of the total challenges comprised: Adjusting to a new environment: 10.3%, Issues related to romantic relationships: 6.2%, Concerns about future employment: 7.6%.

**Figure 1. Common Challenges Faced by Students**

(Source: Researcher's Calculations)

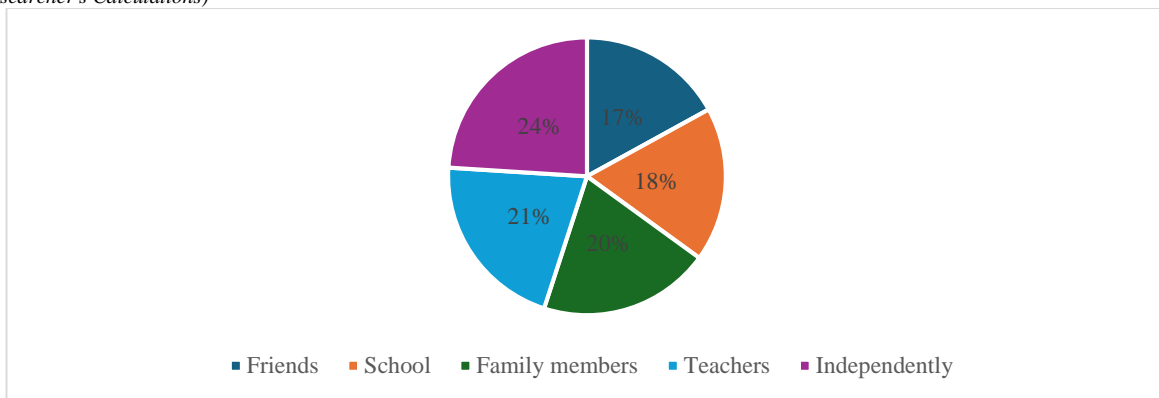


From Figure 1, it is evident that academic challenges are the most significant issue faced by students.

Overcoming Challenges: While students often try to resolve challenges on their own, support from schools, teachers, parents, peers, and friends plays a critical role. Responses indicate the following sources of support for overcoming challenges: Friends: 17.2%, School interventions: 18.4%, Parents or family members: 20.1%, Teachers: 20.5%, Self-management: 23.8%. The data highlights that schools and teachers are major contributors to resolving students' issues.

**Figure 2. Contributors to Helping Students Overcome Challenges**

(Source: Researcher's Calculations)



**Conclusion of the Study.** Based on the results of the study, the most common challenges faced by students are related to academics, finances, interpersonal relationships, and mental health. While challenges such as adapting to a new environment, love issues, and concerns about future employment also create difficulties, the previously mentioned challenges tend to attract more attention. The study also highlights that parental support continues even after students enter university. In China, where families generally have only one child, parents often continue to care for their children as they grow older. While students attempt to solve problems independently, this is largely driven by their desire to handle their issues as adults. However, they may encounter difficulties in receiving support from their families. Additionally, students often receive support from friends. Schools and teachers play a crucial role in helping students overcome these challenges, particularly through the provision of housing, class arrangements, library services, and the presence of student advisors.

**Challenges Faced by University Students in Mongolia**

As global developments, including economic growth and the evolution of educational services, place increasing demands on Mongolia's youth, there is a growing need for students to master foreign languages, particularly English. Globalization encourages young people to acquire a wide range of knowledge and skills, but the path to becoming a successful professional is not always straightforward. Mongolian students face challenges similar to those experienced by students in other countries, and these difficulties significantly hinder their learning. To better understand these challenges, a study was conducted with 160 students from various universities, including the National University of Mongolia (NUM), the Mongolian University of Science and Technology (MUST), the Mongolian National University of Medical Sciences (MNUMS), Etugen University, and Shikhikhutag University, using a questionnaire.

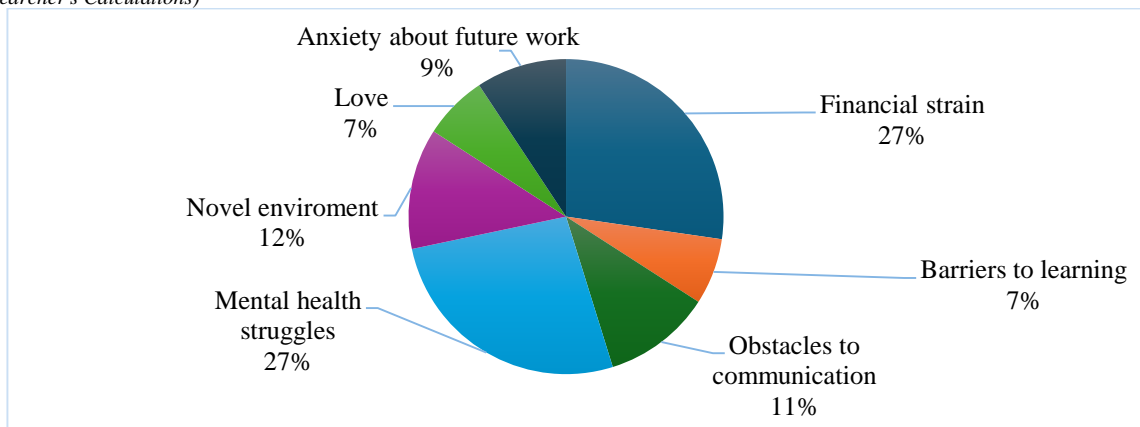
Survey Details: Participants: 41% male, 59% female, Course Levels: 32% first-year, 23% second-year, 28% third-year, 17% fourth-year students.

**Survey Results:**

1. Common Challenges Faced by Mongolian Students:

**Figure 3. Common Challenges Faced by Students**

(Source: Researcher's Calculations)

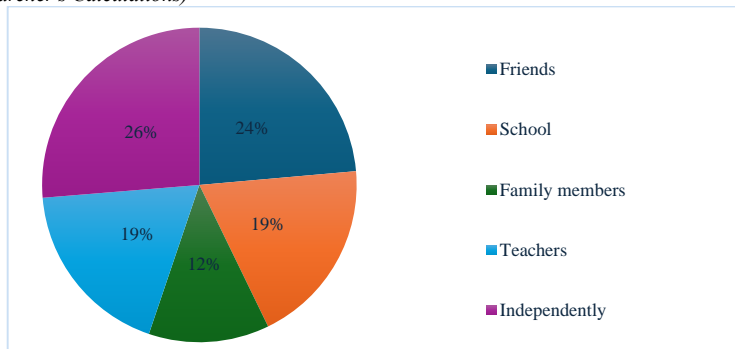


For Mongolian students, the most significant challenge is financial difficulties, followed by mental health issues. Challenges related to the academic process and love-related problems are less prominent. The survey results revealed the following challenges faced by Mongolian students: Job availability: 87%, Stress and frustration: 83%, Family planning concerns: 78%, Learning environment: 73%, Living conditions: 65%, Behavioral issues: 61%, Dislike for their chosen profession: 48%.

**2. How Students Overcome Their Challenges:**

**Figure 4. Entities that Assist Students in Overcoming Challenges**

(Source: Researcher's Calculations)



The study reveals that students primarily attempt to overcome their challenges independently or with the support of friends. This suggests that while students face significant difficulties, they rely on their own resilience and social networks to cope with the issues they encounter.

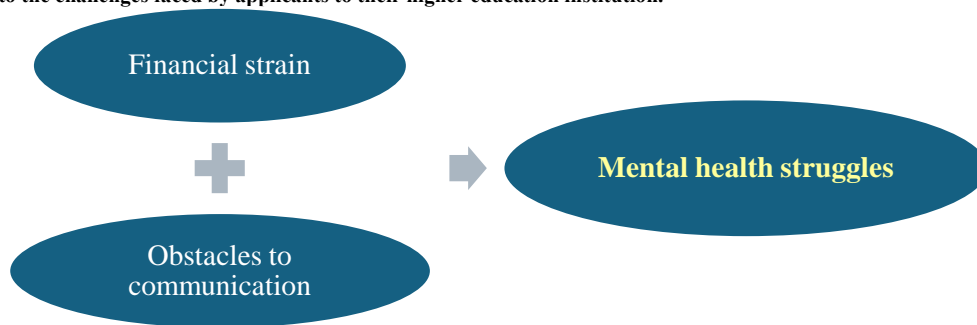
**Table 2. Ranking of Challenges Faced by University Students**

	Challenges Faced by University Entrants	China	Mongolia	Common Challenges for Students of Both Countries
1	Academic Challenges	Financial Challenges	Mental Health Challenges	Mental Health Challenges
2	Financial Challenges	Mental Health Challenges	Financial Challenges	Financial Challenges
3	Mental Health Challenges	New Environment	New Environment	Communication Issues
4	Communication Issues	Communication Issues	Communication Issues	
5	New Environment	Job-Related Anxiety	Job-Related Anxiety	
6	Job-Related Anxiety	Academic Challenges	Academic Challenges	
7	Love and Relationships	Love and Relationships	Love and Relationships	

Source: Researcher's Calculations

From the ranking of challenges faced by students in China and Mongolia, financial challenges, mental health challenges, and communication-related issues occupy the top positions in both countries.

**The solution to the challenges faced by applicants to their higher education institution.**



Financial difficulties + Communication difficulties = Emotional difficulties

**Figure 2. Correlation of the Most Pressing Issues from the Survey Results**

**Table 3. Solutions to Overcome Challenges Faced by Students**

n/a	Solutions and recommendations for addressing the issue	
	Financial strain	Obstacles to communication
<b>From the student's perspective</b>		
1.	Financial discipline	Acquiring a second language
2.	Working outside of instructional hours	Learning the art of public speaking
3.	Cultivating financial planning skills	Engaging in social activism
4.	Improving academic performance	Emotional self-regulation
<b>Family and social network perspectives</b>		
5.	Pre-planning payments	Engaging in open and free communication
6.	Educating on financial management	Reinforcing positive behaviors
7.	Influencing the avoidance of harmful habits	Establishing regular contact
<b>From the perspective of the school and teachers</b>		
8.	Avoiding activities that create additional financial pressure	Managing a club or activity group
9.	Avoiding the forced sale of books or manuals	Guaranteeing comprehensive student involvement in social work
10.	Adjusting the payment as per the established plan.	Organizing regular presentations
11.	Allowing students to manage their time effectively	Educators should support students' self-expression needs
<b>Within the scope of policy</b>		
12.	Establishing student job placements	Ensuring the legal framework provides opportunities for expressing opinions
13.	Maintaining a stable inflation rate	Providing opportunities for foreign language acquisition
14.	Financial literacy training should be introduced in primary and secondary education	Ensuring opportunities for psychological counseling
<b>As a result: Psychological stress will decrease, leading to a more effective teaching and learning process</b>		

## Solution and Recommendations

### Financial Challenges | Communication Challenges

#### From the student's perspective

1. Maintain financial discipline | Learn a foreign language
2. Work during non-class hours | Learn public speaking skills
3. Develop and stick to a financial budget plan | Be socially active
4. Avoid receiving inadequate academic assessments | Manage personal mental health

#### From the family and friends' perspective

5. Plan payments in advance | Engage in open, free communication
6. Educate on financial literacy | Encourage the right actions
7. Influence to avoid harmful habits | Maintain constant communication

#### From the school and teachers' perspective

9. Avoid organizing activities that create additional financial pressure | Run clubs and extracurricular groups
10. Do not force the sale of books or study materials | Ensure every student's participation in social work
11. Increase fees according to the planned schedule | Regularly organize presentations and research conferences
12. Allow students to plan their own work schedule | Meet students' needs for self-expression

#### From the policy level

13. Create job opportunities for students | Ensure the legal environment provides opportunities for expressing opinions
14. Keep inflation levels stable (control fee increases at appropriate levels) | Provide conditions for learning foreign languages
15. Start financial literacy training in general education schools | Provide opportunities for psychological counseling

### Outcome: Psychological Pressure Decreases, and the Process of Teaching and Learning Becomes More Effective.

University is a place for learning, personal development, and joy. However, for some students, it becomes a source of immense stress and anxiety, casting a dark shadow over their mental health. Constantly worrying about grades and exams leads to feelings of inadequacy and failure. The pressure of studying can overshadow the joy of learning, turning it into a negative experience. This, in turn, triggers anxiety and depression, making it difficult to focus, sleep, or even engage in hobbies. In some cases, issues like bullying, loneliness, or social mismatches exacerbate the problem, causing students to feel isolated and alienated. It is essential for universities to anticipate the challenges faced by new students and involve teachers in finding solutions. Addressing these challenges should be part of the teachers' responsibilities. While social disconnection may sometimes bring mental relief, social interaction is critical; its absence can lead to feelings of loneliness, worthlessness, and even despair. Students must actively engage with their academic responsibilities, resist procrastination, and stay mindful of both their social and academic duties. It's important to remember that a student's journey is far from smooth. Challenges are inherent to the experience. Reflecting on the problems students face reveals that these issues are not abstract concepts, but real-life barriers.

### Conclusion

University life presents a variety of challenges, but with a positive attitude and proactive strategies, these challenges can be overcome. Maintaining personal organization, fostering communication with classmates, prioritizing both physical and mental health, and actively pursuing career development opportunities are essential ways to navigate the obstacles encountered during university life.

The research highlights that for Chinese students, the main challenges include financial crises (91%), payment amounts (90%), teachers' attitudes (86%), family atmosphere (71%), living conditions (68%), behavioral issues (59%), and job availability (43%). From these findings, it is clear that financial issues are the most significant contributing factor to these challenges. However, focusing solely on financial problems is too narrow; a comprehensive approach that addresses all influencing factors is necessary to understand and tackle these issues effectively.

For Mongolian students, the primary challenges are job availability (87%), stress and frustration (83%), family planning (78%), learning environment (73%), living conditions (65%), behavioral issues (61%), and dissatisfaction with their chosen profession (48%).

In the 21st century, characterized by a knowledge-based economy, university students face unprecedented challenges that require more than just specialized knowledge. These challenges demand that students develop into well-rounded professionals, equipped with a wide range of skills. Overcoming the difficulties encountered during student life will help cultivate these skills, and the courage and patience developed in the process will serve students throughout their careers.

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