
THE ROLE OF ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORK SITES AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN MITIGATING HOMESICKNESS AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The rising number of international students in Indonesia brings attention to homesickness, intensified by limited physical and social support. This study explores how online social network sites (SNS) aid social integration and reduce homesickness, analyzing the support and challenges related to SNS use. Using purposive sampling, 34 international students from diverse backgrounds participated in semi-structured interviews, complemented by quantitative demographic analysis and qualitative thematic analysis. Results reveal that SNS significantly mitigates homesickness and fosters social integration by providing emotional support, distraction, information, and instant communication. Students from collectivist societies primarily seek familial and emotional connections on SNS, whereas those from individualist cultures utilize these platforms to expand social networks and engage in various interactions. However, issues like exposure to unrealistic standards, scams, fake news, privacy invasion, addiction, and negative interactions also emerged. Recommendations include counseling for social media addiction and campaigns addressing the risks of SNS use. Future studies should account for variables like stress levels and academic

pressures to better assess SNS's impact on homesickness. Adopting mixed-method and longitudinal approaches could deepen understanding and improve the study's applicability.

KEYWORDS

Homesickness, Online social networks, Social Integration, International Students.

INTRODUCTION

Social Network Sites (SNS) are virtual environments that enable people to communicate and connect with others around the world using Internet-based data. In such an interlinked domain of life today, these platforms are a boon for everyone in general, especially for the locales. There has been an increase in the number of international students who migrate to different countries for education and constantly have their adaptation strategies. One of the main challenges is homesickness which drastically affects the emotional well-being and scholastic performance globally. It has been documented in research that international students experience greater levels of homesickness as compared to their domestic counterparts (Rathakrishnan et al., 2021).

Online social network sites (SNS) provide a vital link between students' homes and host countries. Since international students have to adapt themselves to a new culture, language barriers, and being away from home at the same time (Maaike et al., 2020), social integration which means incorporating newcomers into the carried by host society is essential for them (Alba & Nee, 1997). Social media provides important means for social support, coping with stress, and creating a sense of community among international students (Sarah et al., 2020). In addition to providing opportunities for information seeking and acquiring new knowledge, SNS shape social trends and foster socio-cultural values (Junaidi & Tasir, 2021; Adikari & Adu, 2015). Friends and social media are important in adjustment for international students (Vanessa et al., 2022). Even though SNSs have the possibility of reducing homesickness by linking back to their home countries, they still do not expand social networks in the host country. These limitations may stem from the language barrier, cultural differences, and casual online interaction (Xie & Chao, 2022).

The current study examines the influence of SNS on social integration and homesickness experienced by international students. Though research in the Netherlands shows that social support and social media reduce the risks of first-year students settling in an unfamiliar environment to homesickness (Maaike et al., 2020), there is no study that specifically examined how SNS and social integration impact international students in Indonesia. Our study aims to address this gap by analyzing how SNS helps with the regulation of homesickness, what kind of support it offers for

international students, and what role it provides in social support provision. In addition, the research aims to establish students' limitations that make SNS a negative and at times offending media for international students; and gather their recommendations for enhancing the social media experience. The issue of homesickness is seriously being raised for international students in Indonesia as the number of international students is rapidly increasing. SNS and social integration seem to be a real-time solution for the thousands of students who start their academic journey each year. This study contributes to giving crucial insights to educational institutions, it will help them develop more efficient support systems for international students so that students can benefit significantly from the use of SNS which will help them in social integration and overall quality well-being.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Online Social Network Sites and Homesickness

The study emphasizes how social media can provide opportunities to engage in socializing and sharing, exchange of knowledge transfer as well as relief of acculturative stress that ultimately supports cultural adjustment (Yan et al., 2022). Moreover, it has been verified that the use of Korean SNS was for seeking emotional support and decreasing social stress due to the convenience of online communication (Shin-II et al., 2021). Also, Chinese international students in Korea are said to be able to adapt better by using local SNS (Zhong & Komaki 2017). Contrary to these, utilizing Chinese SNS as a form of recreational activity could have a bad influence (Adikari & Adu, 2015). Given the value that online social network sites bring in terms of support sought from them to adjust someone with a change (Pallotti et al. 2023; Choudhary & Baskaran, 2022; Almaatouq et al., 2020; Basim, 2018); They support the building of connections, sharing knowledge and social integration which all lead to intercultural adaptation (Mitchell 2021).

Social Integration and Homesickness

The negative sign of the correlation coefficient indicates that besides raising a homesickness issue, an increase in social integration also contributes to a decrease in adaptivity and support (-0.335) (Irwan, 2022). Maaïke et al. (2020) and Trinanda & Engry (2019) conducted studies in which they found that social support significantly reduces homesickness, especially among first-year students in a new environment with a gradient of -1 showing their negative correlation between social support and this phenomenon. Their social and cultural integration also influences their psychological adaptation, such as suffering from homesickness (Alaminos & Fernández, 2011). For instance, attachment to the home, displacement & nostalgia enhance the psychological well-being abroad (Papavasileiou, 2023) on the other hand, social integration and hence feeling like part of a community (Watt & Badger, 2009; Weisani et al., 2014), emotional intelligence is negatively correlated with

homesickness (e. g., Onuoha et al.). Additionally, staying in touch with family and friends can also contribute to homesickness relief (Scharp et al., 2016; Iorga et al., 2018) demonstrating the key role of good social integration in alleviating homesickness among international students.

Homesickness among international students in further education is impacted by multiple factors which include cross-cultural differences, distance and isolation from family, and social steering challenges (Maaik et al., 2020; Thomas, 2019) with implications made challenging via contact with their circles back home. Factors such as acculturation stress, perceived discrimination, and gender inequity are major contributory factors to homesickness (Mozafarinia & Tavafian 2014; Kline et al., 2011). Academic and social integration; challenges here are a cause of disconnection/homesickness (Scharp et al., 2016). Anxiety, depression, financial workloads, and other factors play an important role in the homesickness of Asian-Indian students; however academic workload does not play any part in it (Tokchov et al., 2010). In addition to that, attachment and spiritual well-being also contributed to the study of (Scharp et al., 2016; Mahmudulhassan & Abuzar, 2024) as demographic variables are age, sex gender marital status academic level nationality is one of them argued in this specific case by (Rathakrishnan et al., 2021). Moreover, empirical evidence also indicates that gender might not significantly determine homesickness as self-efficacy and esteem are strong predictors rather whereas fearful and neuroticism attachment styles predict it heavily (Weisani et al., 2014; Srikanth & Kishore, 2018).

Online Social Network Sites, A Tool for Social Support

In times of crisis, or when we need emotional support, online social network sites are important for enabling us to connect with others. These channels facilitate the rise of informational and emotional support networks, through using such mechanisms as crowdsourcing/crowdfunding these are instrumental in soliciting help/mobilizing assistance (Jin 2023). Online neighborhood networks (ONNs) foster both online and real-life community bonds, enabling local social support and illustrating the multi-dimensional roles of such platforms in providing assistance (Jonas et al., 2021). They provide a place for people (e.g., patients and caregivers) who want to engage, seek connection with others, share their experiences in specific aspects of health/wellness or illness/caregiving situations, and receive emotional support grounded on network properties such as homogeneity/heterogeneity respecting the types of social tie they have online co-presented/inhibited actual networks ranging from ideation stage informational exchanges alone). Also, member brokerage and the presence of self-focused words discussed above are the key functions crucial for the facilitation of Social support which more detail strengthens how these platforms provide support (Patrick et al., Udende et al., 2021; Srikanth &

Rajiv, 2018). This area underscores the importance of online social networks as powerful motivational devices to promote social support within different settings and amongst populations.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the role of online social network sites (SNS) in facilitating social Integration and mitigating homesickness.
2. What kind of support does SNS provide to international and how does it help students in reducing their homesickness?
3. To identify the challenges and negative experiences international students face when using SNS.
4. To gather recommendations from international students on improving the social media experience for better academic and social outcomes.
5. To provide insights for educational institutions to develop more effective systems for international students using SNS.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do online social network sites contribute to social integration and reduce homesickness among international students?
2. What types of support do social network sites offer to international students, and in what ways do they alleviate feelings of homesickness?
3. What are the challenges and negative experiences international students encounter while using social network sites?
4. What improvements do international students suggest for enhancing social media experiences to foster better academic and social outcomes?
5. How can educational institutions leverage social network sites to develop more effective support systems for international students?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research utilized qualitative design, with purposive sampling to select 34 participants from a population of international students in different universities within Indonesia. We conducted semi-structured interviews to collect detailed insights. While quantitative analysis was used for demographic data, the main focus of this study is a qualitative thematic analysis. Using statistical techniques to describe the demographic characteristics of participants and thematic analysis for a detailed qualitative examination.

Participants

The participants in this study were international students studying in Indonesia we selected them through purposive sampling for diverse representation. Since there is no gold standard for sample sizes in qualitative studies, we followed Lochmiller's

recommendation (Lochmiller, 2021). The final sample size was determined based on data saturation, the point at which no new themes emerged from the participants' experiences. The sample included 34 participants from various regions, genders, educational backgrounds, and ethnicities. Of the 34 participants, 18 (52.94%) were males and 16 (47.06%) were females, with an average age of 25.5 years, ranging from 21 to 30 years. The educational backgrounds of the participants varied, with 14 (41%) pursuing a Bachelor's degree, 11 (32%) a Master's degree, and 9 (26%) a PhD. The duration of stay in Indonesia among participants ranged from 6 months to 2.5 years, with an average duration of 1.5 years. While some participants had previous international experience (8, 24%), a significant portion had no prior experience abroad (26, 76%). The ethnic composition was diverse, encompassing individuals from Asian, African, Arab, Pacific Islander, Latin American, and European backgrounds. The characteristics of participants are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: *Participants Characteristics*

Demographic	Details	Participants (Percentage)
Region & Ethnicity	Asian (South, Southeast, East, Central)	12 (34%)
	African	8 (24%)
	Arab	7 (21%)
	Latin American	3 (9%)
	European	3 (9%)
	Pacific Islander	1 (3%)
Gender	Male	18 (53%)
	Female	16 (47%)
Age	21-23 years	12 (35%)
	25-27 years	12 (35%)
	28-30 years	10 (30%)
Education	PhD	9 (26%)
	Master's	11 (32%)
	Bachelor's	14 (41%)
Duration in Indonesia	6 months - 1 year	10 (34%)
	1.5 - 2 years	23 (68%)
	2.5 years	1 (3%)
Previous International Experience	Yes	8 (24%)
	No	26 (76%)

Data Collection Procedure and Instrument

Data collection was carried out through several stages. First, participant identification involved gathering information on international students currently studying in

Indonesia from various sources, including university websites, the Kemitraan Negara Berkembang website, personal connections, WhatsApp groups, and initial communications through WhatsApp. The initial contact with potential participants involved requesting their willingness to participate by first filling in the informed consent form. Second, the selection of participants was based on specific inclusion criteria: being an international student currently studying in Indonesia, having no significant health issues, being able to provide informed consent, and demonstrating a willingness to participate. Recruitment was conducted through social media and community organizations, with informed consent obtained from all participants before their inclusion in the study, ensuring confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Third, the interview process was organized with the interview times chosen by the participants and agreed upon by the researcher. Interviews were conducted through online Zoom meetings and in person, in a relaxed atmosphere at locations preferred by the participants, such as dormitories or university settings. Interviews were all conducted independently by both the primary and co-author to minimize bias. The data was collected from May to July 2024 over a three-month period, with semi-structured interviews as the main instrument of data collection. The interviews were semi-structured in nature and sought to elicit detailed answers regarding different aspects of becoming an international student in Indonesia, using open-ended type questions that touched on academic experiences, social norms, and cultural issues.

Because all international students must speak fluent English, interviews were conducted in that language to help expedite scholarly research. The interviews were semi-structured, lasted approximately 20–40 minutes, and were audio-recorded with participants' permission before being transcribed verbatim for analysis. For completeness, in addition to the interviews, a demographic questionnaire was administered that requested basic information about the characteristics of the participants (age and sex) as well as some familiarity with Indonesia before their stay (region or where they come from), duration in Indonesia and if any previous experience abroad.

Data Analysis

To analyze the qualitative data, we followed a six-phase framework for thematic analysis (Lochmiller 2021). Audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and then cleaned for any errors. The analysis consisted of familiarization with the data, coding interesting information, and then assigning codes to suitable themes. The themes were checked again for accuracy, and names were given to each theme. The analysis finished with the production of related findings to the research questions. The analysis was done by me and my coauthor to reduce bias and ensure accuracy. Statistical

analysis was carried out using SPSS for quantitative data, for participant's demographic characteristics summarization we analyzed all demographic data of the participants and used descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages mean values standard deviations).

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

How Social Network Sites Help Manage International Students' Feelings of Homesickness

Homesickness is common among international students and SNS is one of the means of managing it. Using conducting a series of interviews with diverse participants, several themes were associated with the question of how SNS alleviates homesickness.

Emotional Support and Instant Communication

SNS is viewed as a source of emotional support. SNS helps the students not to feel lonely and to feel better during lonely moments. According to one of the participants, *"Social media is like a friend. When I feel alone, I watch movies and dramas, and it helps me feel less homesick"*. Another participant highlights that they are able to communicate with family members via video calls. *"I can see my parents through video call, and I feel good when I talk with them"*. According to one of the students, *"It is vital because communication is quick, we feel we are not far away."* Previous studies also address the role of SNS in socialization and the cultural adaption process, which also helps in the alleviation of acculturative stress through SNS activities (Meng & Qin, 2023).

Distraction and Engagement

Through the SNS activity, it distracts students from feelings of homesickness. They have an opportunity to do something and they generally forget the negative feelings. As the participant stated, *"When I am using social media, it diverts my attention from homesickness"*. The previous research also highlighted the role of SNS in IS socialization in addition to cultural adaption, where both factors help in alleviating acculturative stress (Zhang et al., 2020).

Information Access and Updates

SNS is a source of information about the home country. Students read the news from it and get information about the country and the events that are occurring there. As one of the participants stated, *"You can read any news; it provides information; it is like a friend."* SNS reminds us about the home country every second, which makes students feel constantly connected to their home country's culture. It is important for their emotional health (Junaidi & Tasir, 2021).

Social Connections and Virtual Participation

SNS SNS allows international students to maintain connections and virtually participate in events, and that reduces their homesickness. A participant shared, *"I watched my cousin's marriage through social media, feeling like I was in Pakistan."* Another student highlighted the ability to see the activities of their friends and the comments on posted content, which makes them feel connected. She stated, *"Uploading pictures and receiving comments makes me feel connected."* Social networking sites offer emotional support, entertainment, quick communication, and information for international students. These platforms play a key role in aiding students in dealing with the difficulties of being away from home and adapting to a new environment.

Impact of Various Social Networking Sites on Homesickness among International Students

Foreign students in Indonesia utilize different social media platforms to stay in touch with their loved ones. These platforms serve various vital functions. Messengers and WhatsApp are mainly utilized for staying in touch, offering emotional assistance, and alleviating feelings of homesickness. In line with Jin et al. (2023), research indicates that online social networking sites help students establish informational and emotional support systems. Instagram and TikTok serve as sources of entertainment, information, and leisure, showcasing how these platforms aid in stress relief and offer a feeling of enjoyment. The examination revealed clear variations in the functions performed by each social networking site (SNS) platform. Table 2 provides an overview of these different roles.

Table 2: Various Roles of Social Media Platforms

Social Media Platform	Role
Facebook	Essential for maintaining a long-term-degree of connection and sharing life updates, reducing feelings of isolation, and achieving emotional support from family members and friends.
WhatsApp and Messenger	Included primarily for the ability to establish instant communication, thus allowing for keeping in close contact with loved ones and mitigating homesickness.
Instagram	Has more of an integrating effect, with students being able to share their experiences and getting to know their new place better.
Viber	Somewhat peculiar due to its having the most profound effect among students from Fiji, who have been using it for establishing a quick and clear line of communication with their family.
TikTok	Resources associated primarily with its entertaining and stress-

reducing functions, TikTok allows students to relax, unwind and seek comfort through enjoying the provided streaming.

Cultural Differences in Homesickness and SNS Usage

The cultural background has an impact on how students use social networking sites to alleviate feelings of homesickness. Students from collectivist cultures representing Asia, the Arab countries, and Africa highlighted the role of SNS as the means to maintain close family relationships. One of the participants claims, *"I feel less homesick if I can make a video call to my family; it helps me to feel connected with my close-knit family"*. This is in line with the principles of collectivism which imply a strong emphasis on family and social cohesion (Tochkov et al., 2010). In such cases, SNS serves as the only medium to maintain a strong emotional bond with the family providing necessary emotional support and the feeling of being included in a solid unbreakable unit.

In the context of individualist cultures students from Latin America and Europe, people use SNS to extend their social circle and to track the activities of their friends. Thus, another student states, *"Whenever I am homesick, I use social media to keep track of my friend's updates and events, which makes me forget about homesickness"*. This type of behavior is characteristic of people with individualist mindsets which are more concentrated on their social groupings and have a variety of social interactions. This is in line with the nature of the principles of individualism which emphasize personal well-being and social success (Alaminos et al., 2011). Such a difference in the strategies for coping with homesickness through SNS usage proved the necessity of providing culturally oriented support for international students.

Ways Online Social Network Sites Contribute to the Social Integration of International Students

Social network sites help promote the social integration of international students online and provide them support to adapt to another country's life. It is also argued that social network platforms help in enhancing confidence, sharing information, and participating in social events.

Facilitating Communication and Connection

SNS platforms are essential to keep connected to other acquaintances and existing friends. SNS such as WhatsApp and Facebook help students allow their friendships to develop or continue by providing space for sharing their experiences. A participant shared: *"I made many Indonesian friends through social media because they see my content."* SNS allows quick, easy information sharing and quick interaction to connect people. The findings prove that higher social support lowers homesickness among students (Maaiké et al., 2020; Trinanda & Engry, 2019).

Enhancing Confidence and Social Skills

Online communication helps students feel confident with their social skills and interpersonal abilities. A participant stated, *"I feel more confident when I talk with local and international students using social media Because it is easier to talk to people through social"*. Other research shows that self-esteem and level of attachment significantly affect homesickness (Weisani et al., 2014; Srikanth & Kishore, 2018).

Access to Information and Support

One of the most significant uses of SNS is to find study-related support as people share information, resources, and experiences. Informants referred to social media's importance in offering information regarding local services and customs. *"If I buy something, I can contact our local Indonesian friends who have already experienced it."* SNS's provision of relevant information for daily life helps in adaptation and social integration into the community. SNS has made it relatively easy for international students to search for events, see the participants, and attend them. Additionally, for sharing support and useful information, SNS supports international students' needs to get involved and integrate into the local community (Pallotti et al., 2023; Choudhary & Baskaran, 2022; Almaatouq et al., 2020; Basim, 2018).

Comparing Online and Face-to-Face Interactions for Social Integration

Online communication plays an important role in maintaining the existing relationships, it might be relatively weak for social integration. Even if the students have contact via the Internet, most informants revealed that face-to-face relationships are more important in the integration. As face-to-face communication provides more interaction and there is an opportunity to observe people's body language, they might be more reliable in one's understanding. One participant shared, *"Face-to-face interactions help me understand people better and feel more accepted."* Research supports this showing that social integration significantly influences the level of homesickness and plays a crucial role in students' adjustment (Zhang et al., 2020). Feeling accepted in the community through face-to-face interactions has been found to reduce homesickness (Watt & Badger, 2009; Urani et al., 2003).

These findings underscore the role of SNS in facilitating communication boosting confidence providing essential information and fostering social integration, making them indispensable tools for international students. However, the importance of complementing online interactions with face-to-face connections for deeper social integration cannot be overlooked.

Negative Aspects of Social Media Use and Proposed Solutions

The following table 3 summarizes the negative aspects of social media use identified

in this study, along with proposed solutions to address these challenges. These findings highlight areas where targeted interventions can mitigate the negative impacts on international students' well-being.

Table 3: Negative Aspects of Social Media

Negative Aspects	Key Issues	Proposed Solutions
Unrealistic Standards	Idealized portrayals on social media lead to feelings of inferiority and dissatisfaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote authenticity in social media campaigns. - Provide support for affected users.
Scams and Cheating	Students fall victim to scams, leading to financial loss and trust issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement stricter verification for ads. - Encourage clear guidelines for reporting scams.
Inappropriate Content	Exposure to sexually explicit content conflicts with students' customs and values. One participant mentioned, <i>“Unexpected sexually explicit content conflicts with our customs, religion, and values, and it's troubling when it appears without our consent.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use advanced algorithms to filter content. - Advocate for stricter content regulations.
Privacy Concerns	Over-sharing and lack of privacy lead to discomfort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhance privacy settings. - Implement measures to manage offensive content.
Addiction and Dependency	Social media addiction causes restlessness and mental constraints. A participant mentioned, <i>“I feel restless and anxious if I'm not checking my social media every few minutes. It is like an addiction.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide access to counseling services.
Negative Comments	Critical comments negatively impact student’s mental health and self-esteem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide tools to filter and manage comments.

It will be important to consider this information for identifying the best interventions. These interventions may contribute to lessening the negative effects of social media, which can positively influence students’ lives in a new place.

International Students' Recommendations for Enhancing Social Media Experience

Content Control and Cultural Sensitivity

International students suppose that social media should provide them with more control over the content. Most of all, it is vital for filtering sexually explicit material. For instance, one of the interviewees stresses that *"I think there should be an option on social media for international students that they do not want to see some content that is not appropriate, and there should be an option where you can just turn off that option"*. In addition, students note that it would be good to enrich content with more information about the culture and history of the host country.

Improving Connectivity and Support

In terms of enhancing their social media experience, students proposed making internet services affordable. They would appreciate the creation of a special internet package for students. A more convenient mechanism would be to get free access to social media for international students. In this way, they would communicate with their families, which would reduce homesickness. Additionally, the universities might have more contact with local companies and arrange a possibility to get SIM cards with bonuses in social media. This way, the students would not experience difficulties in settling abroad.

Enhancing Communication and Information Authenticity

To create a more effective social media experience, students emphasized that there is a necessity in translating the post. One of the students stated, *"Sometimes there is an option for translation and sometimes there would not be, so it is very difficult to understand"*. One vital aspect seems to be stricter regulations regarding content and verified information. In their opinion, it would reduce the flow of ultimate decisions and make students more aware of what is going on. As one of the respondents stated, *"There should be different sections for information to make it authentic. 80% of the information in social media is invalid."* Such mechanisms would make them feel safer and more protected.

Addressing Mental Well-being and Usage

Talking about the platforms that should be better regulated, students noted that TikTok should be banned. In their opinion, it does not support their personal development and has a negative impact on their well-being, they demand stricter regulation of TikTok. As one student suggested, *"TikTok is unproductive and should be banned for all international students as it affects our overall well-being."*

This paper is a good addition to knowledge of how online social network sites assist in managing homesickness and social integration. First of all, it provides that there

are various ways through which SNS reduces the feelings of homesickness. It may be more emotional support, distractions, or access to information and rapid communications. It is nice how international students explained the mechanism of action, as if SNS are virtual friends, and through video calls and messages, they always keep in touch with their families and friends. Besides, there are other content and activities that SNS provides, which keep students always busy and also helps to learn more about the new country.

This study found that the cultural difference in SNS usage is significant such that students from collectivist cultures use SNS to maintain the family bond and receive emotional support, while the students from individualist cultures use SNS to increase the social network and for diverse interaction. We also found that there are negative sides of SNS such as dissemination of unrealistic standards, scams, fake information, inappropriate content, privacy issues, addiction, and negative comments affecting the well-being of the students. Recommendations are verifying advertisements with strict measures, providing filters to avoid inappropriate content, privacy settings should be enhanced in SNSs, a campaign for students regarding the inauthentic representation in SNSs, and starting counseling services for social media addiction in colleges. These findings underscore the need for developing tailored support strategies for international students, considering both the benefits and potential drawbacks of SNS usage. Future research should include variables like stress levels, academic load, and personal issues to provide deeper insights and enhance the generalizability of the findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the support provided to international students, we recommend developing counseling services that aim to facilitate the issue of social media addiction. To mitigate the negative impact of SNS, it is also feasible to create workshops to inform students about the consequences that may encounter including but not limited to exposure to scams, fake news, and social standards. To protect students against inappropriate content and misinformation shared on social media, it is also relevant to encourage the promotion of new privacy settings. It is also critical to employ advanced content filtering and put more effort into verifying the legitimacy and accuracy. There is a difference between collectivist and individualist populations developing culturally sensitive support strategies is essential to address the unique needs of students from both collectivist and individualist cultures.

For future research, we recommend considering variables such as stress, academic load, and personal issues to account for their correlation with SNS usage and feelings of homesickness. It would be relevant to combine the mixed-method approach with the longitudinal one to make the findings more generalizable and directly applicable.

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