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# Social Alienation with International Students in New York City: A Phenomenological Research



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### Abstract

The city is a vibrant geographical area where social life is revived. Urbanization refers to the organized development of a city resulting from the interaction of various factors. This research uses a phenomenological research design to explore the experiences of students coming to the United States from abroad and sheds light on their encounters with social alienation. Through in-depth interviews with 20 students, this research investigates the meaning of social alienation from the perspective of students, as well as the challenges they face and their suggestions for addressing this critical issue. The data analysis was conducted using MAXQDA-22, a qualitative and mixed method analysis software. The findings reveal the multifaceted nature of social alienation experienced by students, which is characterized by feelings of isolation, exclusion, and detachment from their social environment. Several factors, including social dynamics, system adjustment, language barriers, and cultural differences, lead to the participants' sense of alienation. The study also highlights the coping mechanisms and strategies employed by students to navigate social alienation, such as seeking supportive friendships and engaging in extracurricular activities. The participants' suggestions emphasized the significance of fostering a more inclusive and understanding environment within educational institutions and society at large.

### Keywords

Social Alienation • International Students • Phenomenological Research • Coping Strategies

### Jel Codes

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## Social Alienation with International Students in New York City: A Phenomenological Research

Social change is a concept that describes the differentiation of each component within a society, which functions as a cohesive unit, over a specific time. It is very difficult to develop a rule that every element or institution in society will change absolutely over time. Because social change can gradually reflect its own character to society, spreading over time, or it can show itself in the form of a quick and sudden stimulus. It is undeniable that there are some effective factors in the emergence of social change (Tolan, 2005: 281). In this research, the phenomenon of social alienation is examined through the lens of migration, which is one of the relevant factors.

As a result of the dynamic movements of economic, political, and cultural factors, which are the compulsory triggers of social transformation, the migration that occurs with the movement of communities from one point to another causes changes both in the factors that trigger it and on the points of departure and destination. Continuing within this context, migration has mobilized the labor market, leading to fluctuations in the supply and demand for labor in various sectors and resulting in observable changes in social characteristics (Kaygalak, 2009: 9).

The city is a meaningful spatial meeting point where the world we live in is made sense of, walking on its pavements, communicating with the environment, realizing the day we live in, and preparing for the next day (Lefebvre, 2015: 41). At this intersection, the city expects individuals who exhibit responsible attitudes to advance to the urbanization stage, or at the very least, move closer to it. Before this stage, the most important task for the individual to do is to match the value judgments of the city with his or her own values. The individual can have the power to create change to the extent that she or he can achieve this matching (Keleş, 1998: 80).

In this research, a conceptual discussion will be held in the triangle of the global city, urbanization, and local customs, based on the foresight that the ideals of the localization of cities that try to resist globalization and their stance against social alienation require a universal perspective. For this purpose, first, a conceptual discussion will be held, and a common ground will be tried to be created by evaluating the concept of social alienation and the problem of urbanization on the same axis. Next, the stance of localization in relation to globalization will be examined, and the argument will be made that these two concepts are not opposites but rather two interconnected endpoints. The transformation of modern cities, whose importance has increased with globalization, into a global city form, will be examined using a conceptual framework. In this context, the role of local customs in global cities is evaluated. The study concludes by emphasizing the experiences of individuals who have not successfully integrated into urban life and have arrived in the cities through external flows such as migration.

This study explores the phenomenon of social alienation among international students in the United States, a complex issue that is deeply rooted in individual experiences and perceptions. Given the subjective nature of this phenomenon, a phenomenological approach is particularly suitable because it allows for a rich, detailed understanding of how social alienation manifests in this specific context. The decision to focus on a sample of 20 students was made to enable an in-depth exploration of their lived experiences. While the sample size may appear limited, it is appropriate for phenomenological research, where the goal is not to generalize findings but to capture the essence of the experience. This focused approach ensures

that the intricacies of social alienation, as experienced by these students, are thoroughly understood and articulated, providing valuable insights that may inform more generalized studies in the future.

In this context, through in-depth interviews with 20 students, this study investigates the meaning of social alienation from the perspective of students, as well as the challenges they face and their suggestions for addressing this critical issue. The data analysis was conducted using MAXQDA, a comprehensive qualitative and mixed method analysis software. The findings reveal the multifaceted nature of social alienation experienced by students, which is characterized by feelings of isolation, exclusion, and detachment from their social environment. Several factors, including social dynamics, system adjustment, language barriers, and cultural differences, lead to the participants' sense of alienation. The study also highlights the coping mechanisms and strategies employed by students to navigate social alienation, such as seeking supportive friendships and engaging in extracurricular activities. Moreover, the participants' suggestions emphasized the significance of fostering a more inclusive and understanding environment within educational institutions and society at large. In conclusion, this phenomenological study provides valuable insights into the experiences of students facing social alienation in the United States. The research highlights the need for educational institutions and policymakers to proactively address this issue and promote a more inclusive and supportive environment for students. By fostering a sense of belonging and social connection, this research aims to contribute to students' well-being and academic success, fostering a more harmonious and empathetic society.

### Urban, Urbanization, and Urban Administration in the Age of Mass Migration

In the century we live in, as a result of the dynamic movements of the communities who left their geographies for different reasons and migrated to new living spaces, multicultural and ethnic-origin social structures began to emerge. This emergence constitutes the starting point of social differentiation (Massey et al., 1993: 431).

Immigrants who attempt to integrate into different cultures and political structures by migrating have to struggle with very different oppositions in their mental and physical worlds. At the core of this struggle are the differences between the life left by immigrants in the past and the new conditions in which he/she finds himself/herself (Çelik, 2012: 298). The phenomenon of migration is not only a spatial displacement event but also a multidimensional process of social experiences that includes mental and cultural transformation (Özer, 2004: 11).

There are two important problems that need to be overcome in front of the community, which migrated and created a new living space for itself. The first is "economic problems" and the second is "social problems". To the extent that the immigrant community can overcome these two problems, it can find a place for itself in the new space (Kartal, 1983: 92). However, it is important to remember that experiencing "adaptation" problems because of migration reflects a natural process (Özer, 2004: 12).

When evaluating migration within a simple conceptual framework, it is important to recognize that while migration primarily involves spatial change, it also serves as a trigger for societies' cultural transformation. Because migration is a phenomenon that constitutes the motor power of social change, its contribution to the identity problem and the emergence of identity incompatibility with other points of view are among the results that can be considered natural. As a result of migration, a social identity is constructed that is stuck between the life left in the past and the life that has just begun (Çetin, 2012: 26). The key concept underlying this identity is the city. If it is necessary to define meaning in the Middle Ages through a reference to the

past, it can be mentioned that it is possible to define the urban phenomenon as an area with economic, vital, cultural, and legal value. This area is the “gathering and meeting centers” of the community members. These centers constitute geographical areas where religious ceremonies, commercial activities, and vital needs are met (Pirenne, 2012: 47).

A city is not a geographical area compressed into certain patterns, and its starting and ending points are determined by precise rules. Therefore, it would be a misunderstanding to evaluate a city in terms of the geographical area it occupies. The city is only the geographical location of a living mechanism that gathers different elements within it. For this reason, when defining urban identity, it is necessary to consider not only permanent citizens but also temporary urbanites (Bauman, 2011: 113).

The city is directly affected by population changes as areas where the values arising from the qualitative change of a society are experienced. For example, to meet the requirements of the war economy in the harsh living conditions of the Second World War in England, an average of 6 million people left their rural lives and started to live in urban areas (Keleş, 2008: 25-35). The picture that emerges as a result of this life transformation is urbanization. Urbanization means an increase in both the number of cities and the population living in a city. Therefore, urbanization is the technical expression of a transformation experienced during the transition from rural to urban areas. As a result, there are changes in the organizational system and the internal working order. Cities are constantly moving because of internal and external migration movements. These active states of the cities reveal a social structure that has opposing views and has failed to integrate (Keleş, 2012: 309-312). The integration of this social structure is one of the responsibilities of city administrations. City administrations are not just administrative units that fulfill daily and local public needs; on the contrary, they are integrative structures that assimilate the spirit of civility (Demir & Yavaş, 2015: 132-135).

As the number of cities in a region increases, social life approaches a turning point. This orientation naturally leads to an increase in the population density in urban areas and population concentration in areas with high levels of development (Keleş, 1998: 80).

## Social Alienation

Human beings are inherently sociable creatures. In line with the purposes of creation and because of his instinctive actions, a person who cannot live alone has to continue his life by being articulated with a group or community. The great human association that arises from such a necessity is called society. In fact, society is a kind of unity formed by individuals coming together. One of the main purposes of society is to perform actions that individuals cannot perform alone, in unity, and through cooperation. For this reason, it is important for each individual in society to interact with another individual to adapt to the natural flow of life. If evaluated from this perspective, society is actually a “body of relations”. The element on the opposite side of this unity is alienation (Demir, 2018: 249).

Alienation occurs when individuals detach themselves from the advancements that originate from societal changes, the solitude that stems from being displaced, and the cultural shifts that ensue as a consequence. This outcome is indeed a manifestation of turmoil. The transformation in social interactions and the challenges faced by individuals in adjusting lead to a decline in value systems and difficulties throughout individuals’ transition to a society. At this juncture, the notion of estrangement becomes palpable. In other words, alienation refers to the temporary state of disconnection that an individual experiences while transitioning from one stage to another (Tolan, 2005: 281).

When an individual cannot discover an appropriate environment for their existence in society, they initially experience a sense of impotence. Subsequently, they focus on the lack of meaning in their surroundings and the events that occur. This level of focus leads to a disordered way of living. When a person is cut off from the outside world due to a lack of rules, they start to doubt themselves and feel disconnected from their own identity as a result of this self-reflection. Currently, the individual is struggling with their future goals and facing the lack of meaning in non-existence while also embracing the possibilities of existence. As a result, the person feels obligated to take on a different persona, distancing themselves from their own sense of self (Seeman, 1959: 786; Tolan, 2005: 302-303).

For an individual who is socially alienated, their experiences in their surroundings lose significance, and this lack of meaning in the world causes the individual to transition from tangible realities to intangible fantasies. The individual experiences a sense of existential nihilism when unable to focus on the subjects she should have faith in during the decision-making process and when uncertain about the principles she should embrace (Seeman, 1959: 786).

Alienation results in people being isolated from their environment. Therefore, the individual encounters problems in terms of being present in the social structure. In reality, people evaluate themselves in an environment separate from the society in which they live, and their communication with the social environment is cut off (Parker, 1978: 240).

### **The Problems of Urbanizing Social Foreigners**

It is not an easy task to settle for foreigners who have to continue their lives in an unknown area as a result of mass migration in the outskirts of the city, or to assign a separate function outside society. These people who are trying to become indigenous or candidates for indigenization with the characterization of foreigners display an unusual character. Expecting indigenous candidates to come out of their shells by adopting local customs means ignoring ethnic and cultural differences (Bauman, 2011: 113).

Thinking that the “disobedient” foreigners they have encountered in the cities are trying to move to the next stage with the instinct of internalizing their new lives by getting away from the life they left in the past due to the problems of “focusing” in the cities, is nothing but an imaginary projection of a reality full of illusions (Bauman, 2011: 113).

Wirth (1938: 5) defined urbanism as a “way of life.” The unique nature of communal existence becomes obvious as urban areas grow in size. Urban life assumes the responsibility of altering human existence and providing guidance at crucial junctures (Wirth, 1938: 5). To successfully accomplish this objective, individuals must adjust to their social life. An individual who desires to thrive in a densely populated culture might attain individualization by recognizing their distinctiveness to the masses. Discovering a position in many options, understanding and expressing distinctions, and accepting these distinctions are crucial for establishing one’s uniqueness. When someone fails to acknowledge their distinctiveness by conforming to societal norms, they risk becoming lost in the collective. To avoid this undesirable consequence, it is crucial to establish one’s position in society and actively oppose feelings of isolation. For individuals who are socially alienated, their experiences in their surroundings lose their significance, and this lack of meaning in the world causes them to shift from tangible realities to intangible aspirations. The individual experiences a sense of existential nihilism when unable to focus on the subjects she should have faith in during the decision-making process and when she is uncertain about the values she should believe in (Erinç, 1997: 59).

An individual striving to become an urban dweller adjusts to the new surroundings based on the specific characteristics of their environment, rather than conforming to pre-established norms (Karpat, 2003: 67). Living in an urban environment involves dealing with the challenge of social isolation. If a person who is aware of their individuality observes the modification, alteration, and difficulties faced by every object or aspect of social life that displays signs of vitality in their surroundings and comprehends this, then they have reached an advanced level of urbanity. Being an urbanite entails being cognizant of the surrounding urban environment and actively shaping one's own life based on this awareness. Therefore, urbanity can be viewed as a mode of perception. Being an urbanite means having the ability to create a unique and individualistic lifestyle and navigate life based on the principles of this lifestyle, which is open to change (Erinç, 1997: 60-62).

On the transfer of Slattery (2012: 286), according to Wirth, urban life can lead people toward a troubled spirit world by capturing them inside. At this point, the space for human beings is meaningless. The end of not being able to make sense of the place you live in is to be alone in the crowds. This loneliness causes a person to be irritable and hopeless and reduces the time to spare for another person in the name of friendship to a limited level (Slattery, 2012: 286).

When an individual experiences a feeling of detachment or estrangement toward anything, various causes, such as unjust and disrespectful treatment, involuntary displacement, and baseless delusions arising from certain experiences, might influence their emotional state. The alienated individual experiences a sense of powerlessness and isolation from the surrounding environment. At a high level of emotional intensity, individuals may reach a state where they are unable to engage in communication with their surroundings (Slattery, 2012: 129-130). To comprehend the impact of globalization on national identities in urban areas, it is necessary to introduce foreign cultures and languages into the distinct and uniform linguistic-cultural settings of cities hosting global events. Urban populations, influenced by globalization trends, are subject to further examination because of their cultural and linguistic variability (Aristova, 2016: 157).

By this way, alienation increases with the transition of individuals from a small and intimate community to an urbanized, industrialized, bureaucratized, and knitted environment with complex social relations, where official relations are intense. To be more specific, it is a natural process to expect alienation to increase while urbanizing. In another expression, it can be mentioned that there is a direct relationship between urbanization and alienation (Parker, 1978: 239).

## **The Stance of Indigenization in the Opposition to Globalization and the Administration of Global Cities**

Although it is difficult to see the essence attributed to the locality in the whole because of globalization, this essence of locality has a value that cannot be easily lost. This essence undertakes a task that directs the process of variability in spatial and social mobility. This quality is interpreted as locality. Locality or localization is a phenomenon that makes it an art to observe small but important brush strokes in a big picture. Approaching the local essence while moving away from the center constitutes the abstract conceptualization of localization. Although this conceptualization and the basic logic of globalization seem to reveal two contradictory situations, in reality, the dynamism of localization and its ability to mobilize the base feed the development process in the global sense (Özden, 2008: 153). Because localization has a quality that is fed by social, cultural, ethnic, religious, demographic, and political elements (Fosler, 1996: x).



Cities have become a geography where social movements come to life despite globalization. If evaluated in this context, the transformation of local living spaces into global cities is a foreshadowing of an expected end. Because of new transformations, the urban order has moved away from an elitist local geography ideal and has become a universal living space (Bauman, 2010: 28-29).

The understanding of global city administration can be explained by the nature of globalization, which divides among countries. The content of this statement includes "economic", "political" and "cultural" elements (Tortop et al., 2017: 384). Because, in an order where the roots of the nation-state logic have begun to be shaken or such a perception is tried to be created, the qualitative questioning of national and international relations awaiting explanation comes to the fore. The ideas that care to be represented at the local level and the values that are tried to be preserved emphasize the necessity of spreading the administration to the base (Tortop vd., 2017: 389). Therefore, the understanding of the global city, which attempts to make sense of it under this title, is built on universal values and grassroots administration.

The global city has an identity that constructs the cultural values of the people of the city to be in harmony with other cultures by universalizing them under economic globalization. The connection between this situation and economic globalization is hidden in the borderless nature of the economy (Lemanski, 2007: 448; Sassen, 2005: 28).

Since the global city kneaded in this identity is a political and economic process, it has become a conscious target for both local urban elites and public officials on a plane where local interests gain importance. If evaluated in this context, it can be stated that global cities move away from being the object of superficial scientific studies and continue their existence as a value that serves the political and economic goals of local, national and global elites in the social worlds of business world, state and civil life (Timberlake, Wei, Ma, & Hao, 2014: 164).

The global city creates a suiChart basis for formulating a new human geography. To achieve this, the unity of global politics and the economy must interact with cultural elements (Acuto, 2013: 5).

### **The Stance of Local Customs in Global Cities**

Social strangers can enter social intimacy to the extent that they can internalize the values that belong to someone else or another group by universalizing their differences and local cultural values of their own during the social integration stage (Günay, 2008: 343). In a world where important steps have been taken toward globalization as a result of people's inability to act within this scope, staying at a fixed point on the limited plane of local customs constitutes one of the biggest obstacles to social progress. Local units, which started to lose their meaning despite globalization, left their own fields of existence and started to become more dependent on the global one. This dependency is a guiding meaning-making situation that emerges on the axis of the interpretation of the transformation of social relations. At this point, the locals have become a prisoner of the world beyond their control. Thus, each element that attempts to localize or makes progress at this stage is faced with another globalized element. At this stage, the local has to choose between declaring its dependence on the global and living with its identity within its own borders (Bauman, 2010: 9).

The point that should be emphasized within the framework of this interpretation is that three different sociological perspectives exist regarding the consequences of globalization from a cultural perspective. If these perspectives are interpreted in the context of the global city, the cultural differences of societies,

convergence, or the convergence of societies and the creation of a hybrid society are emphasized (Lane, 2019: 1).

The cultural values of cities have become unable to maintain their stagnant structure because of global transformations. The dynamic and transformative nature of globalization forces local cultures to evolve. This evolution finds an area of movement in a wide framework, from lifestyle to eating habits, to social values to mentality. The most obscure actor in this field of action is the “local habits” that face the danger of disappearing. The city is in a crisis of identity with its globalization. The social and cultural fabric of the city is attempting to identify with another identity thousands of kilometers away in a universal void, going beyond its local character. This phenomenon causes the fabric of local cultures, habits, and values to deteriorate (Yayinoğlu & Susar, 2008: 20-22).

After providing fundamental and conceptual information about the subject under consideration and explaining the nature of the topic, transitioning to the explanation of the research methodology is important to convey the foundations on which the structure of this field research is built.

### Methodology of the Research

Social alienation is a profound and pervasive phenomenon that can significantly impact individuals' well-being and sense of belonging within society. This research uses a phenomenological research design to explore the experiences of students coming to the United States from abroad and sheds light on their encounters with social alienation. Through in-depth interviews with 20 students, this research investigates the meaning of social alienation from the perspective of students, as well as the challenges they face and their suggestions for addressing this critical issue.

Participants	Nationality	Occupation	Institution	Gender	Age Range
P1	Turkish	Student	The New School	Female	22-24
P2	Turkish	Student	Fordham University	Female	25-27
P3	Mexican	Student	Columbia University	Female	28-30
P4	Indian	Student	Columbia University	Male	30+
P5	Indian	Student	Columbia University	Female	25-27
P6	Indian	Student	City University of New York	Male	25-27
P7	Taiwanese	Software Engineer	New York University	Male	25-27
P8	Tibetan	Student	Columbia University	Female	30+
P9	Turkish	Student	The New School	Male	28-30
P10	Japan	Student	Columbia University	Female	22-24
P11	Bosnian	Student	The New School	Female	30+
P12	Turkish	Student	City University of New York	Male	28-30
P13	Turkish	Bakery	City University of New York	Female	30+
P14	Canadian	Student	New York Film Academy	Female	30+
P15	Hong Konger	Student	Columbia University	Female	22-24
P16	Turkish	Student	Monroe College	Female	25-27
P17	Turkish	Student	Columbia University	Male	28-30
P18	Turkish	Student	Columbia University	Male	25-27
P19	Indian	Student	City University of New York	Female	22-24



Participants	Nationality	Occupation	Institution	Gender	Age Range
P20	Turkish	Student	Columbia University	Male	22-24

The table above presents the demographic information of the participants. The interviews were conducted face-to-face between February and April 2023. Participants were selected using maximum variation sampling, a purposeful sampling strategy in qualitative research. This approach ensured the inclusion of participants from various nationalities, thereby creating a diverse study group. As a result, the study explored a broad spectrum of experiences related to social alienation.

The data analysis was conducted using MAXQDA-22, a qualitative and mixed method analysis software. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data analysis, this study utilized MAXQDA's comprehensive features for the systematic coding and categorization of data, which help maintain objectivity and consistency throughout the analysis process. By employing this software, the research minimizes the risk of subjective bias when interpreting qualitative data because it allows for clear tracking of coding decisions and themes. Furthermore, the software's robust tools for data visualization and cross-referencing enhance the validity of the findings by enabling thorough and transparent analysis. This methodological rigor ensures that the conclusions drawn are both credible and reliable, reflecting the true nature of the participants' experiences with social alienation.

While the phenomenological research design focuses on the subjective and contextualized experiences of a specific group of international students, it is acknowledged that this approach has inherent limitations in terms of generalizability. However, the depth of understanding gained from this method is crucial for exploring the complex phenomenon of social alienation. The study's reliance on in-depth interviews with a relatively small study group size (20 participants) means that the findings are context-specific and reflect the experiences and perceptions of these individuals. The qualitative study aims to provide a rich, detailed understanding rather than generalizable results. However, the focus on a specific group of students at a particular time and location may limit the applicability of the findings to other contexts or populations. Future research could build on these findings by incorporating complementary quantitative methods or expanding the participant pool to include a broader range of contexts and experiences, thereby enhancing the generalizability and robustness of the conclusions.

On the other hand, the empirical findings of this study are based on self-reported interviews data, which may be influenced by participants' recall biases or social desirability effects. The diversity of participants' backgrounds in terms of nationality, socioeconomic status, and academic discipline may affect the consistency of their experiences and perceptions of social alienation. Additionally, the subjective nature of phenomenological analysis may lead to interpretative variations. Future studies should consider incorporating quantitative measures or triangulating with other data sources to validate and expand upon these findings.

Ethical considerations were given significant importance in this study. Participants were informed about the study objectives, and their informed consent was obtained before the interviews. Confidentiality was ensured, and personal identifiers were removed from the data to protect participants' privacy. Additionally, participants were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

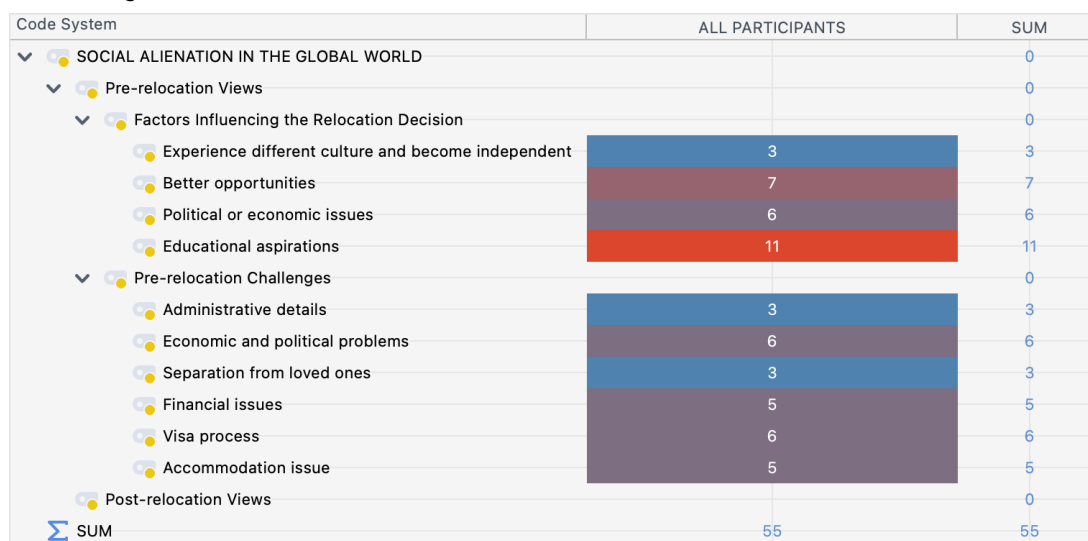
## Findings of the Research

This section presents the analysis of the interview data. Based on the arguments of the participants, three themes emerged: pre-relocation views, post-relocation views, and the phenomenon of social alienation. Pre-relocation views are discussed in two categories: factors influencing the relocation decision and pre-relocation challenges. Post-relocation views are addressed in three categories: post-relocation challenges, post-relocation support and assistance, and coping strategies for culture shock. Views on social alienation are categorized into four categories: defining social alienation, the impact of social alienation, strategies to overcome social alienation, and recommendations regarding social alienation.

Chart 1. below presents the categories of ‘factors influencing the relocation decision’ and ‘pre-relocation challenges’ under the theme of pre-relocation views. The views of the factors influencing relocation decisions are grouped under four headings. Accordingly, *educational aspirations* (11) are the most frequently mentioned arguments. It is followed by *better opportunities* (7), *political or economic issues* (6), and *the experience of different cultures and independence* (3). In contrast, the views in the pre-relocation challenges category are grouped under six headings. Accordingly, *economic and political problems* (6) and *the visa process* (6) are the most frequently mentioned arguments. They are followed by *financial issues* (5), *accommodation issues* (5), *administrative details* (3), and *separated from loved ones* (3) arguments.

**Chart 1**

*Intensity Distribution Chart Showing Participants’ Opinions on ‘Factors Influencing the Relocation Decision’ and ‘Pre-relocation Challenges’*



Some of the views of the participants who put forward the “educational aspirations” argument, which is most frequently mentioned in the category of *factors influencing relocation decisions*, are as follows:

“I always dreamed to have an education in NY.” (Participant 2).

“I left my country to pursue my undergraduate studies. I was excited by the possibility of living and studying in the United States and was able to do so because my family’s financial situation took a very fortunate turn the year before I came to college.” (Participant 6).

“Studying abroad has always been my dream and when I got the chance to come to USA to study, I was happy to seize the opportunity.” (Participant 8)

Some of the views of the participants who put forward the “economic and political problems” and “visa process” arguments, which are most frequently mentioned in the category of *pre-relocation challenges*, are as follows:

*“There are economic problems in that country and this is tiring.”* (Participant 13)

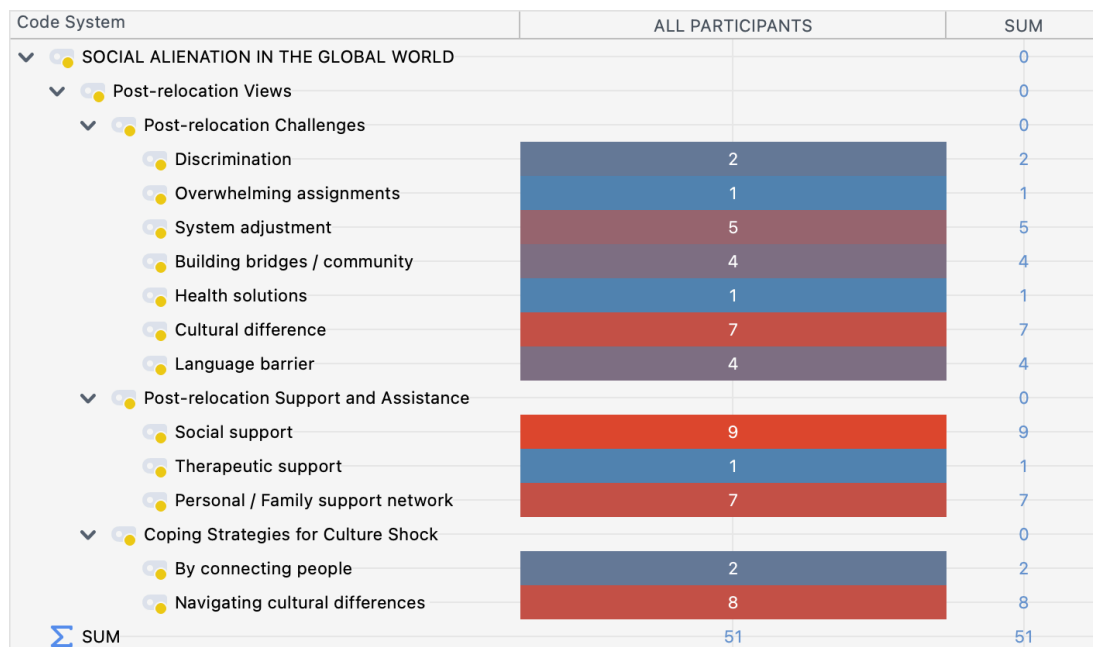
*“I think my country’s economy was not going well that moment. Furthermore, this situation affected my life and my decisions.”* (Participant 16)

*“Application process and visa issues are, to a large extent, exhausting.”* (Participant 9)

Chart 2. below presents the categories of ‘post-relocation challenges’, post-relocation support and assistance’, and ‘coping strategies for culture shock’ under the theme of post-relocation views. The respective views in the post-relocation challenges category are grouped under seven headings. Accordingly, *cultural difference* (7) is the most frequently mentioned argument. It is followed by *system adjustment* (5), *building bridges/communities* (4), *language barrier* (4), *discrimination* (2), *overwhelming assignments* (1) and *health solutions* (1) arguments. On the other hand, the views in the post-relocation support and assistance category are grouped under three headings. Accordingly, *social support* (9) is the most frequently mentioned argument. This was followed by *personal/family support network* (7) and *therapeutic support* (1) arguments. Lastly, the views in the coping strategies for the category of cultural shock are grouped under two headings. Accordingly, *navigating cultural differences* (8) is the most frequently mentioned argument. It is followed by *connecting people* (2) argument.

#### Chart 2

*Intensity Distribution Chart Showing Participants’ Opinions on ‘Post-relocation Challenges’, Post-relocation Support and Assistance’, and ‘Coping Strategies for Culture Shock’*



Some of the views of the participants who put forward the “cultural difference” argument, which is most frequently mentioned in the category of *post-relocation challenges*, are as follows:

*“One challenge I had was adapting to the US attitudes of individualism and small talk.”* Participant (7)

*“Definitely cultural differences.” For example, in my country welcoming is pretty common.”* (Participant 16)

Some of the views of the participants who put forward the “social support” argument, which is most frequently mentioned in the category of *pre-relocation support and assistance*, are as follows:

*“I was part of a scholarship body (Rhodes) that was entirely built up of international students, and there were plenty of social events that Rhodes would invite us to. There were also workshops and discussions on mental health. They also generally support students who need or want mental health care.”* (Participant 5)

*“I have a very good friend living here who has helped me a lot, like showing me around and helping me get along with my new life and so on. I think that was one big reason why I was quite ready to embrace my new life so much.”* (Participant 8)

*“I was extremely fortunate and blessed to be surrounded by some of the nicest people I have ever met in my life. We all found ourselves in the same space, mentally and emotionally. We were all away from home, overwhelmed, and alone. We became a family for each other.”* (Participant 14)

Some of the views of the participants who put forward the “navigating cultural differences” argument, which is most frequently mentioned in the category of *coping strategies for culture shock*, are as follows:

*“New York is a huge city. With a lot of movement, life happens too fast and in different languages. Getting used to moving on the subway, knowing directions, how to prepare for winter, the way people communicate (rude but helpful, it feels like they are scolding you but actually they want the best for you), everything was new.”* (Participant 3)

*“I did experience a lot of culture shocks. I never truly overcame them all, but as the years went by, I did adapt to my surroundings quite a bit.”* (Participant 6)

Chart 3. below presents the category of ‘defining social alienation’ under the theme of the phenomenon of social alienation. The views in this category are grouped under three headings. Accordingly, *cultural exclusion and otherness* (8) is the most frequently mentioned argument. It is followed *disconnectedness from the social environment* (7) and isolation (6).

**Chart 3**

*Intensity Distribution Chart of Participants’ Opinions on ‘Defining Social Alienation’*

Code System	ALL PARTICIPANTS	SUM
▼ SOCIAL ALIENATION IN THE GLOBAL WORLD		0
▼ The Phenomenon of Social Alienation		0
▼ Defining Social Alienation		0
As being alone and isolated	6	6
As disconnectedness from social environment	7	7
As cultural exclusion and otherness	8	8
Σ SUM	21	21

Some of the views of the participants who put forward the “as cultural exclusion and otherness” argument, which is most frequently mentioned in the category of *defining social alienation*, are as follows:

*“Although I like to be attracted to me because I am a foreigner, sometimes questions about my country and culture make me feel culturally alienated. I think such questions and statements can exclude people from a culture.” (Participant 1)*

*“I believe is when you feel your identity does not match with the ones surrounding you, there is no sense of belonging or of community, so you feel isolated.” (Participant 3)*

*“The feeling of being left out, on my own or even worse feeling alone in the public/with people around because there is a lack of connect intentionally or otherwise.” (Participant 4)*

Chart 4. below presents the category of ‘the impact of social alienation’ under the theme of social alienation. The views in this category are grouped under three headings. Accordingly, *personal isolation* (6) is the most common argument. It is followed by *silent disconnection and depression* (4) and *identity crisis and perceived differences* (2) arguments.

**Chart 4**

*Intensity Distribution Chart of Participants’ Opinions on ‘the Impact of Social Alienation’*

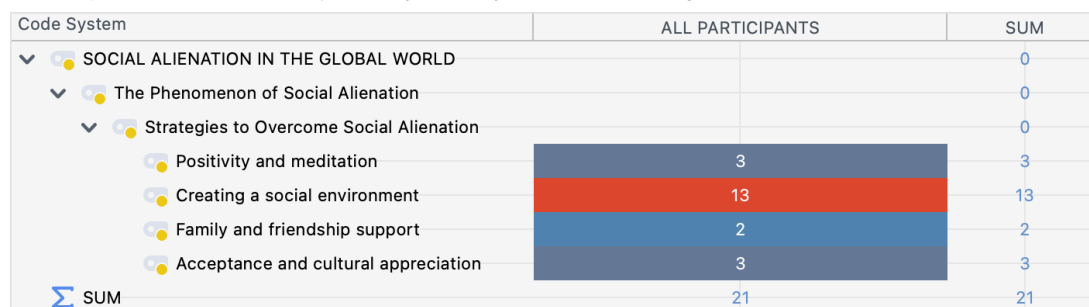
Code System	ALL PARTICIPANTS	SUM
▼ SOCIAL ALIENATION IN THE GLOBAL WORLD		0
▼ The Phenomenon of Social Alienation		0
▼ The Impact of Social Alienation		0
Personal isolation	6	6
Silent disconnection and depression	4	4
Identity crisis and perceived differences	2	2
Σ SUM	12	12

Some of the views of the participants who put forward the “personal isolation” argument, which is most frequently mentioned in the category of *the impact of social alienation*, are as follows:

*“I experienced it because I was one of the few non-natives in my surrounds. I was also one of the only people of color. I found it difficult to combat, but I made good friends to try. It never truly ended until I moved to New York City, a place that is more populated and less diverse than the previous places I lived in.” (Participant 6)*

*“I felt lonely because I did not belong to the groups that people in my neighborhood had formed. I wish I could become one of them sooner and feel more at home.” (Participant 8)*

Chart 5. below presents the category of ‘strategies to overcome social alienation’ under the theme of social alienation. The views in this category are grouped under four headings. Accordingly, *creating a social environment* (13) is the most common argument. It is followed by *positivity and mediation* (3), *acceptance and cultural appreciation* (3), and *family and friendship support* (2).

**Chart 5***Intensity Distribution Chart of Participants' Opinions on 'Strategies to Overcome Social Alienation'*

Some of the views of the participants who put forward the “creating a social environment” argument, which is most frequently mentioned in the category of *strategies to overcome social alienation*, are as follows:

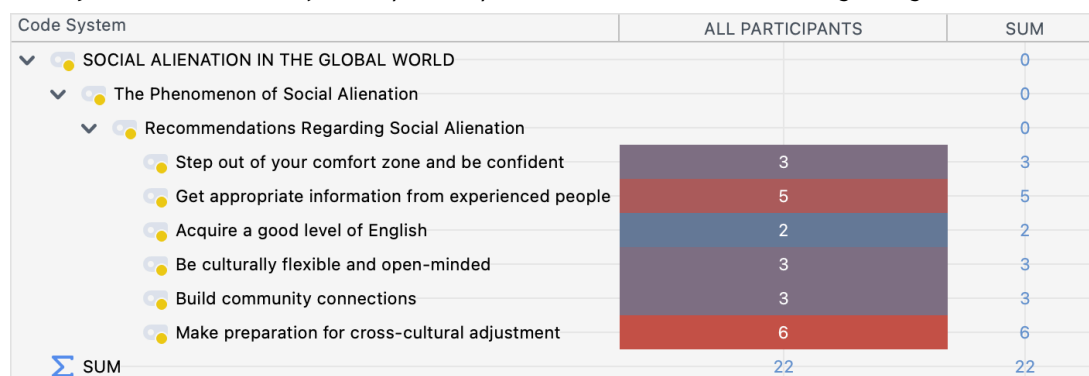
*“I’m going to social events and frequenting bars, cafes, parks; I call my family more often; I’m a writer and reader and have found people through book talks and literary events too.” (Participant 5)*

*Participating in sports clubs and other activities that share common interests. (Participant 7)*

*“I love being around people, and I love socializing. If there’s ever a time, I would hypothetically feel socially alienated, I would go out and sign up for events etc.. to get to know new people.” (Participant 14)*

*“I ensure I connect with people and try my best to learn about different cultures as much as possible. I ask questions to learn, but I never judge.” (Participant 18)*

Chart 6. below presents the category of ‘recommendations regarding social alienation’ under the theme of social alienation. The views in this category are grouped under six headings. Accordingly, *preparing for cross-cultural adjustment* (6) is the most common argument. It is followed by *getting appropriate information from experienced people* (5), *step out of your comfort zone and be confident* (3), *be culturally flexible and open-minded* (3), *build community connections* (3) and *acquire a good level of English* (2) arguments.

**Chart 6***Intensity Distribution Chart of Participants' Opinions on 'Recommendations Regarding Social Alienation'*

Some of the views of the participants who put forward the “make preparation for cross-cultural adjustment” argument, which is most frequently mentioned in the category of *recommendations regarding social alienation*, are as follows:



*“Every person is different, despite coming from the same country. I would advise them to research the city and surroundings where they will move to ensure it will suit their personality and meet their social needs.” (Participant 6)*

*“Acquire a good level of English, develop personal interests and learn about the local culture.” (Participant 7)*

*“They should start learning about the dynamics of that country. There are vlogs, TV series, and podcasts, so they can take a look to determine what it is like to live in that particular country.” (Participant 18)*

## The Result

Cities are not merely geographical areas; they are living environments where the culture of life is shaped. The communities within these environments strive to exist across a variety of spectrums, from the local to the global level. In this context, a city has the power to influence the overall character of its residents, impacting everything from daily life to broader cultural aspects.

The multicultural nature of a city, shaped by immigration, is a natural process that elevates the city to the status of a global city. This global dimension can be assessed from two perspectives. First, a global city enhances its social structure by bringing together people from diverse cultures, facilitating the establishment of an intercultural communication network. Additionally, a global city becomes a focal point for capital accumulation factors, such as trade, which is a positive aspect. Conversely, local customs in a global city may lose value or be forgotten despite globalization. Maintaining these customs within a diverse community is challenging because local traditions must co-exist with new cultural influences. This dynamic can lead to issues related to urbanization and highlight the negative aspects of a global city.

It is accurate to say that one of the basic principles of urbanization is the capacity to adjust to the overall dynamics of the metropolis. By blending local practices with universal principles, an individual can transition from being a social outsider to being an urban citizen. Nevertheless, we should not perceive this circumstance as the individual completely forsaking his local traditions, but rather as him adapting to a new environment while still maintaining a connection to his past. The capacity to simultaneously employ both local and universal criteria significantly impact an individual's endeavor to coexist within groups. It is crucial to acknowledge that individuals who identify as urbanites may eventually assimilate into the city by adopting stereotypical ideals. The term "city guest" might be used to describe the antithesis of this scenario. If an individual is unable to reconcile and incorporate both local and universal ideals, he or she can only exist as a visitor to the city. When someone rejects the values of the city and fails to connect with its residents, they are isolated in a remote part of the city, waiting for their departure to the next place. The subsequent task, as a test of one's abilities, should involve acquainting the visitor with the customs of the locality and promoting their assimilation into both the urban area and its inhabitants. Through this process, individuals may shift from social isolation to being a member of the urban community, adopt local traditions, and acquire the capacity to apply universally accepted principles for personal development.

When placed in an unfamiliar setting, each individual is inherently a social outsider. The urban environment influences the personality of these socially marginalized individuals, creating a distinct atmosphere in which they can act according to their own principles within a broader framework. At this stage, the individual will either integrate with the city's population or undergo a unique form of urbanization.

Cultural conflicts, language barriers, and the fear of exclusion also impact people from their countries of origin. These individuals often stress the importance of social support and having friends who can offer such support. Those who have left their native country seek to connect with others facing similar challenges, believing that shared problems can foster mutual support. For many, the primary concern is social exclusion and marginalization, which can heighten feelings of loneliness and depression and trigger identity crises.

The feeling of not belonging to a new environment often intensifies the desire to return home, as individuals fear social alienation and isolation. In such cases, the intensity of social alienation and sense of disconnection frequently make individuals more willing to return to their home countries.

To address these issues, various precautions and efforts can be taken. For example, individuals who build a positive social network in their new host country are generally happier and more resilient despite challenges. Those who remain motivated and seek support from their surroundings can navigate this transition with less difficulty. Support from friends and family is crucial in this regard. Engaging in activities such as exploring public spaces, joining a gym, keeping a diary, maintaining regular contact with family, and embracing new cultures can significantly mitigate the effects of social alienation. By stepping out of their comfort zones, engaging with their new environment, and connecting with new people, individuals can better manage and reduce the negative impacts of social alienation.

Field research on social alienation has revealed that the desire for education and better living conditions can lead to indecision about addressing political and cultural challenges. However, the results also show that economic concerns become more pronounced upon entering a new social environment. These concerns form the basis of an individual's anxiety when considering moving to a new social setting or living outside his/her home country.

In addition to these concerns, many people worry about difficulties in obtaining entry permits for their desired destinations. Similarly, questions about where to live, securing financial support, navigating administrative issues, and coping with the emotional strain of being separated from family and loved ones are also crucial. However, the primary motivation for individuals seeking to relocate abroad is the pursuit of higher education. It is observed that a family's financial situation can further intensify the desire to study abroad.

Despite the strong desire to live and work abroad, concerns about political, economic, and social acceptance in the host country often lead to apprehension. Individuals who wish to leave their home country due to economic and political issues fear encountering similar problems in their new country. As a result, those who cannot find political, economic, or social satisfaction in their homeland are increasingly motivated to emigrate.

This study explores the relationship between literature and research through the lens of social alienation due to spatial changes, highlighting the challenges in maintaining cultural continuity during transitions to new locations. An examination of the issues of disappearance and discord within the multicultural framework of metropolitan regions reveals that the social estrangement experienced by individuals trying to assimilate is fundamentally a clash of cultural values.

Based on this context, we conclude that the evolving dynamics of cities can lead individuals to feel disconnected from the stable nature of rural areas. To address this issue, we propose that cities should effectively integrate both old and new elements to prevent the loss of cultural identity, mitigate detachment from new cultures, and avoid the adoption of exclusive behavioral norms. This approach requires the implementation of action plans to ensure that intercultural dialog meetings—recommended for city governments

—are held regularly to address segregation and foster the development of personal identity within the urban crowd.



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