



Indian Students in Canadian Universities: Challenges, Comforts and Success Rate in Canada

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ARTICLE INFO

Editor:

Dr. V. Jyothi

Key words:

Student visa, Canada, International,
Student, Indian.

Received : 12.04.2024

Accepted : 15.06.2024

Online published : 01.07.2024

doi:10.54986/irjee/2024/jul_sep/61-65

IRJEE METRICS

Google citations - 8695

h-index - 43

i10-index - 291

NAAS rating - 4.99

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the experiences of Indian students in Canadian Universities, focusing on the challenges they face, the comforts they find and their overall success rate. According to IRCC Indians accounted for roughly 40% of the international students in Canada in the year 2022. More and more international students are turning to social media platforms to voice their struggles in Canada, particularly highlighting the exorbitant cost of living and the shortfall of promised opportunities. Canada has long demonstrated a strong dedication to fostering ties with Indian students. In 2022, the Canadian government introduced the Student Direct Stream (SDS), a streamlined visa processing initiative benefiting students from India, China, Philippines and Vietnam. Since its inception, the SDS has proven highly successful, facilitating over 100,000 Indian students in obtaining visas. This analysis is based on a comprehensive review of recent studies, surveys and institutional reports. The study aims to inform policymakers, educational institutions and prospective students about the factors influencing the academic and social integration of Indian students in Canada.

International students has significantly shaped the landscape of higher education in Canada. Canada has emerged as a popular destination for international students, particularly from India. The increase in number of students choosing Canada for higher studies is driven by the high quality of education, better job prospects and favorable immigration policies offered by Canadian universities.

Indian students have emerged as significant contributors to the Canadian economy, leading the way with a substantial impact. In 2022 alone, their contribution amounted to approximately \$10.2 billion, illustrating their pivotal role in bolstering Canada's economic landscape. Moreover, Indian students play a crucial part in sustaining over 170,000 jobs across various sectors within the country.

The Canadian Bureau of International Education

(CBIE) reported that by the close of 2022, Canada was hosting over 800,000 international students across various educational levels. Notably, Indian students constitute the largest cohort among these, representing approximately 40% of the total international student population. This group is also witnessing rapid growth, with a notable 47% increase observed over the past five years. Though, a recent report from Better Dwelling revealed a significant decline of 41% in the volume of Indian international students applying for higher education in Canada. This drop is attributed to the combination of expensive living expenses and a sluggish job market (Singer, 2024).

Over the period, the Canadian government has been actively responding to the concerns voiced by students. While some valid criticisms have been raised, such as the adjustment to the proof of financial support

requirement, it's heartening to see the government taking steps to address these issues. This paper explores the multifaceted experiences of Indian students in Canadian universities, identifying the primary challenges they face, the comforts & support systems available and their success rate in academic and professional realms. Indian students, in particular, form one of the largest groups among these international cohorts. International students has significantly shaped the landscape of higher education in Canada. Canada has emerged as a popular destination for international students, particularly from India. The increase in number of students choosing Canada for higher studies is driven by the high quality of education, better job prospects and favorable immigration policies offered by Canadian universities.

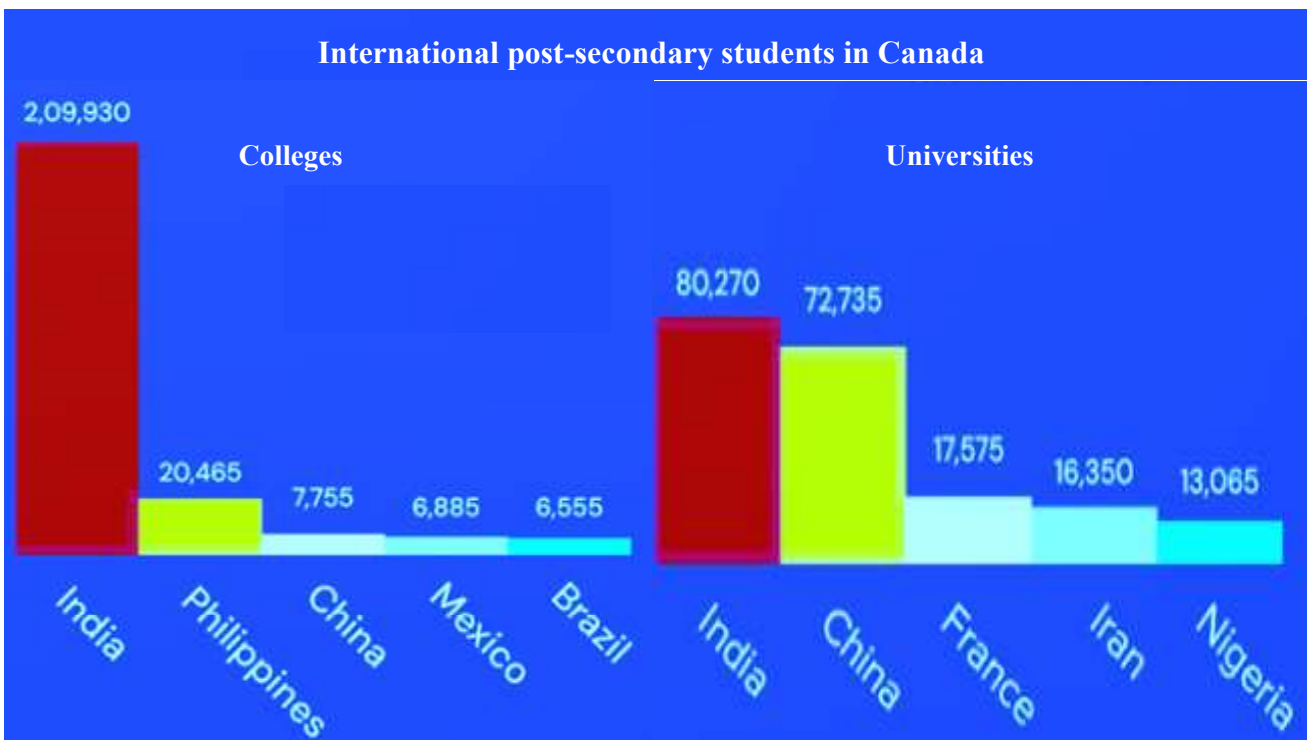
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Several studies highlight the rapid growth in the number of Indian students in Canadian universities. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), India is the second-largest source of international students in Canada. The motivations for choosing Canada include the quality of education,



Some of the preferred universities by Indian students in Canada, based on the number of Indian students enrolled in 2022

University	No. of Indian Students
Concordia University	2,758
University of Toronto	2,405
University of Waterloo	1000+
McGill University	777
York University	558

Source: University Website, 2022

post-graduate work opportunities and a multicultural environment.

However, Indian students also encounter significant challenges. These include cultural and academic adjustments, financial pressures and social integration issues. Research by Choudaha (2017) and Sawir *et al.* (2008) indicated that while Indian students are generally resilient, the support systems in place play a crucial role in their success.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from institutional reports and qualitative insights from student surveys and interviews. Data sources include CBIE reports, university statistics and primary data from a survey conducted among Indian students currently enrolled in Canadian universities.

Enrollment trends:

Increasing numbers: Over the past decade, the number of Indian students in Canada has surged. According to data from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the number of study permits issued to Indian nationals rose from 38,000 in 2015 to over 120,000 in 2023. This trend reflects Canada's growing popularity as a study destination, driven by its quality education, multicultural environment and favorable

immigration policies.

In 2022, the Canadian government approved nearly 146,000 new study permit applications for Indian nationals from July to October. However, during the same period in 2023, the number dropped significantly to less than 87,000 approvals. This marked a 41% decrease compared to the previous year. To put it differently, almost 60,000 fewer student visas were granted to Indian students from July to October 2023 compared to the corresponding period in the preceding year. (Hornstein, 2024)

Regional distribution : Indian students are spread across various provinces, with Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec hosting the majority. The concentration in these provinces can be attributed to the presence of reputed universities and metropolitan cities that offer better living conditions and job prospects post-graduation.

Fields of study : Indian students predominantly enroll in programs with strong career prospects. The most popular fields include:

Engineering and technology: Approximately 40% of Indian students opt for engineering disciplines, given their strong foundation and global demand.

Business and management: Around 25% pursue business studies, drawn by Canada's robust business environment and opportunities for entrepreneurship.

Computer science and IT: This field attracts about 20%, reflecting the global boom in technology sectors.

Health Sciences: A smaller but significant number choose health-related programs, motivated by the high standards of healthcare education in Canada.

Academic performance : Indian students generally perform well academically, often achieving higher grades compared to their domestic counterparts. Studies attribute this to their strong educational background and high motivation levels. However, challenges such as adapting to a new educational system and cultural differences can impact performance initially.

Table 2. Key Challenges and Comforts for Indian Students in Canadian Universities

Category	Challenges	Comforts
Academic	Curriculum differences, Language proficiency, workload, and assessment styles	Tutoring and writing centers, mentorship programs
Cultural and Social	Cultural shock, social integration, discrimination, and bias	Student associations, cultural events
Financial	Tuition and living expenses, scholarship opportunities	Part-time employment, scholarships and bursaries

Challenges faced by Indian students :

Curriculum differences: Indian students often struggle with the pedagogical differences between the Indian and Canadian education systems. The emphasis on critical thinking and participatory learning in Canada can be a significant adjustment.

Language proficiency: Despite many Indian students being proficient in English, academic writing and communication in a new cultural context can pose challenges.

Workload and assessment styles: The continuous assessment and project-based learning in Canadian universities require adaptation.

Cultural and Social Challenges :

Cultural shock: Adjusting to a new cultural environment can be daunting. This includes understanding social norms, dealing with homesickness, and managing cultural expectations.

Social integration: Building a social network in a new country is challenging. Indian students often find it hard to integrate into local student communities.

Discrimination and bias: Instances of discrimination or bias, though not pervasive, can affect the mental well-being of Indian students.

Success rates : To assess the success rates of Indian students, we consider graduation rates, employment outcomes, and satisfaction levels. The data indicates a high success rate among Indian students, with many securing employment in their fields of study post-graduation.

Financial challenges :

Tuition and living expenses: The high cost of education and living in Canada is a significant burden particularly for students from middle-income families. Many students rely on part-time jobs, which can affect their academic performance. The recent increase in the proof of financial support requirement for student visa applicants by IRCC has sparked varied responses from students. While it demonstrates the government's acknowledgment of international students' challenges, it has elicited mixed reactions from them (Singer, 2024).

Scholarship opportunities: While there are scholarships available, the competition is fierce and not all students can benefit from financial aid.

Comforts and support systems :

Academic support :

Tutoring and writing centers: Many universities

offer academic support services such as tutoring and writing centers, which help students adapt to academic demands.

Mentorship programs: Peer mentorship programs provide guidance and support to new students, helping them navigate the academic environment.

Cultural and social support

Student associations: Indian student associations and multicultural clubs provide a sense of community and support.

Cultural events: Universities often organize cultural events and festivals, allowing students to celebrate their heritage and share it with others.

Financial support :

Part-time employment: The opportunity to work part-time helps students manage their finances.

Scholarships and bursaries: Various scholarships and bursaries are available to international students, easing their financial burden.

The findings highlight that while Indian students in Canada face significant challenges, the support systems in place help mitigate these issues, leading to high success rates. Academic support services, cultural integration programs, and financial aid are crucial in this regard.

Canada's commitment to Indian students: Canada aims to enhance affordability for Indian students. In 2022, the government launched the Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) Extension program, enabling international students to remain in Canada for up to three years after graduation for employment in skilled positions. This initiative has been warmly received by Indian students, affording them ample time to accumulate valuable work experience and potentially secure permanent employment opportunities.

CONCLUSION

Indian students in Canadian universities navigate a complex landscape of challenges and comforts. Their success is largely influenced by the availability and effectiveness of support systems. Enhancing these supports can further improve the experiences and outcomes for Indian students, benefiting both the students and the Canadian educational institutions.

The positive influence of international students on Canada's economy encompasses several facets. Firstly, they contribute substantially to the revenue

of Canadian universities and colleges through tuition fees. Additionally, their expenditure on essential living expenses such as housing, food, and transportation further stimulates economic activity. Furthermore, by engaging in part-time employment to sustain themselves, Indian students aid in alleviating labor shortages in key sectors, thereby fortifying the workforce. Lastly, their presence enriches the cultural fabric of Canadian communities and workplaces, fostering diversity and inclusivity.

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