Unlocking the Narrative of Grief and Hope in International Students in the Faculty of Education, MUN, NL, Canada

by

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Abstract

Canada has become a prominent destination for international students from all over the world. This qualitative research aimed to explore the experience of grief and hope in international students in the Canadian academic context. Previous research on international students in the Canadian academic sector has addressed various challenges that international students face; however, little is known about grief and hope among international students in Canadian educational institutions. The study fills a gap in the literature on the Canadian academic context, examining how international master's students navigate grief during their study period and move toward hope by exploring relationships, listening, and the unknown aspects of their lives. This qualitative research adheres to the narrative approach as a method of inquiry and implements thematic analysis. To gain in-depth knowledge, open-ended semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentation from social media have been collected from three former international master's students of the Faculty of Education (2021-2023) at MUN, NL, Canada, who experienced grief while pursuing their degree. The results of this research discovered that grieving international students face isolation, academic discrepancy, homesickness, biases, financial problems, accommodation crises and cultural insensitivity, which impact them physically, mentally, and relationally. This research recommended that institutions and counsellors implement a more culturally sensitive approach to support grieving multicultural international students.

General Summary

This research explores the experiences of grief and hope among international students at the Faculty of Education of MUN, NL, Canada. This study employs a qualitative narrative research inquiry, incorporating semi-structured open-ended interviews, observations, audiovisual recordings of interviews, and photographs from social media, as well as collected documentation from social media posts, to examine the experiences of three former international students of the Faculty of Education. The researcher purposefully selected three international students from the Faculty of Education of the 2021-2023 session to participate, who had experienced grief during their study time. Three of the participants experienced isolation, academic discrepancy, and overwhelming situations, which impacted them physically, mentally, and relationally. In addition, relationships, listening and unknown aspects of their lives open the window of hope where they learn to embrace uncertainty. However, this research advocates for institutions and counsellors to implement a more culturally sensitive approach to support grieving multicultural international students.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

International students represent a growing and diversified population in the higher education sector. Canada has become the popular choice for international students worldwide due to its quality of education and multicultural environment. Recent statistics from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) show that the number of international students in Canada with active study permits increased to 1,040,985 in 2023, representing a 29% increase over 2022 (Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE], 2024). According to CBIE (2024), due to its rich education system, reputation as a secure and stable country, and reflection of a non-discriminatory and accepting society, the Canadian higher education sector has become one of the most popular destinations among international students. While international students represent various cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds, they often face challenges when adjusting to a new educational system. Previous research explored language, geographical distance from family, uncertainty in life events, learning methods, racism, and socioeconomic differences as challenges for international students in the Canadian higher education sector (Arumuhathas, 2023; Baruwa, 2023; Howe et al., 2023; Sohrabi, 2023). In addition, the mental well-being of international students has been discussed in various studies, which suggested that the higher education sector of Canada needs to be prepared to support multicultural international students (Au, 2017; Baghoori, 2021; Li et al., 2014). However, little is known about the grief-related challenges among international students in the Canadian educational context.

Researchers have found that grief can significantly impact the physical, mental, and academic progress of international students (Butcher, 2002; Seah, 2008). A significant amount of grief-related research on international students has been conducted in the UK, USA,

Australian and New Zealand higher education sectors. I found only one paper in the literature on the migratory loss of Asian international students in the Western academic industry, which ignored diversified international students from various countries, and the researcher did not adequately address the Canadian academic context (Ichikawa, 2021). In the context of international students, the term "migratory loss" refers to the loss of ties to their homeland, language, families, identity and social status (Nesteruk, 2018; Ichikawa, 2021). Ichikawa (2021) examined the experience of family loss and grief among Asian international students in Western campus counselling services. However, Ichikawa (2021) did not address personal experiences with faculty members and peers in the research. The grief experiences of international students from various countries within the Canadian educational sector have not been adequately addressed in the study by Ichikawa (2021). Canada has established itself as a major player in the global market over the last 20 years, particularly in the Western Hemisphere (Howe et al., 2023; Buckner et al., 2020). Not only in the Asian region, notable growth has also been observed in the higher education sector market in Canada from 2022 to 2023, as well as in the African region (CIBE, 2024). Moreover, this study did not explore the story of grieving international students from around the world in Canada.

The purpose of this research is to explore the grief-related challenges faced by international students in the Canadian higher education sector. To explore the challenges related to grief among international students, I selected international students from the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), NL, Canada. I selected the 2021-2023 session international students as data, which includes the pandemic and post-pandemic context of the Canadian academic sector. Despite examining the grief of international students through a theoretical lens, this research focused on the lived experiences

of international students' grieving journey in the Canadian higher educational sector. It is noteworthy to mention that I lost my grandmother during my study period at the Faculty of Education and faced an unexpected pregnancy, which pushed me towards isolation, depression and an unknown event in my life. I used to feel agitated and depressed, which hindered the progress of my thesis and strained my relationships with family members. My supervisor, one of the professors from my faculty, and my family members helped me during that grieving moment of my life. This study also demonstrated how, in a grieving situation, the relationship, listening, and the unknown aspects of their lives impact the relational journey of diversified international master's students. Finally, the findings of the study influenced the recommendations section for future international students experiencing grief and suggested institutional improvements to support them.

1.1 Background of the Study

Every individual is unique, and we must carefully listen to the stories of grief from marginalized populations in the Canadian higher education sector, which have not been adequately addressed in previous research. I classified international students as a marginalized population due to their diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds (Arumuhathas, 2023; Baruwa, 2023; Howe et al., 2023). International students are often considered vulnerable populations because of their limited family support and the continuous financial challenges they face during their study period. Previous research has highlighted that the marginalized population in the Canadian higher education sector face various difficulties in relation to socioeconomic and cultural differences (Arumuhathas, 2023; Baruwa, 2023; Howe et al., 2023). Researcher Ichikawa (2021) addressed personal experiences with a counsellor as an Asian international student who was suffering from migratory grief-related challenges and

used previous research as evidence. Therefore, it is noteworthy to hear the dynamic voices of international students who confronted grief in the Canadian higher education sector.

Grief is an emotional response to loss. Every individual is unique, and their reasons for grief and patterns are different as well. According to Distress Centre (2024), grief can be anticipatory, normal, complicated, disenfranchised, collective, ambiguous, absent, secondary, cumulative, and Traumatic. There are various reasons for grief, some of which are recognized as disenfranchised grief (Doka & Martin, 2002). Disenfranchised grief can occur due to distance from family members, financial crisis, educational discrepancy, racial differences, cultural shock, returning to the home country or death of close ones among international students in the higher educational sector (Bouldin, 2019; Seah, 2008). The challenges associated with disenfranchised grief are often ignored by institutions, families, and peers (Hay et al., 2024; Ichikawa, 2021; Seah, 2008). Ignorance from institutions, family or academic counterparts pushes international students towards isolation, loneliness, homesickness, depression, and a distressful emotional journey in a different educational context, which has a close association with grief (Arumuhathas, 2023; Badenhorst et al., 2024; Bouldin, 2019; Neimeyer & Thompson, 2014; Sauteraud, 2018; Seah, 2008). Therefore, this study explored how grief affects international students academically, socially, and economically and influences their relationships, listening and unknown aspects of their lives.

This qualitative research on grieving international students employed narrative as a method of inquiry. I conducted in-person and online interviews with three international students and made audiovisual recordings during the interviews for observational purposes with the participants' permission. In addition to interviews, I collected documents from their social media accounts to verify the authenticity of their journey and gather rich data for my

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research, which was approved by the ethics board. Most of the research on grief highlights the journey of general students as grievers, but marginalized international students' voices were overlooked in most of the research. Within the Canadian academic context, there is literature on the grief of faculty members and graduate students (Badenhorst et al., 2024; Shelton & Sieben, 2020); interestingly, not much is known about how international master's students process their grieving journey where interpersonal connections and active listening play a crucial role in embracing the uncertain events like grief in their life.

Previous research on the challenges faced by international students in the Canadian academic sector explored how interpersonal relationships with peers, family and institutions are crucial for international students (Arumuhathas, 2023; Baruwa, 2023; Howe et al., 2023). Any interruption in building a connection between peers, family and institutions can cause members of vulnerable populations to experience isolation, depression, and distressful emotional moments in life when they are not in an environment like domestic students (Arumuhathas, 2023; Howe et al., 2023). Barriers such as cultural differences, language, and loneliness among international students hinder building strong relationships (Howe et al., 2023). During a grieving situation, a person needs comfort from friends, family, and institutions, which can be achieved through active listening to validate the feelings of the griever. Badenhorst et al. (2024) explored how sharing grieving stories through active listening helps researchers and participants build effective relationships and bonds. Cultural values also influence the expectations of sharing and listening during grieving situations, which impacts international students' help-seeking patterns (Ichikawa, 2021; Seah, 2008). However, an empathetic response while listening and sharing the griever's stories may reduce the cultural discrepancy between the griever and the listener (Badenhorst et al., 2024). In

addition, in a new cultural milieu, grieving moments trigger the unknown aspects of life and can influence feelings of doubt and misperception. For example, unexpected news of the death of a close one in a different cultural context may create emotional imbalances in a griever, and they may react differently during that moment; the griever may struggle with their unpredictable emotion. However, researchers have indicated that the grieving moment can influence the griever to question and relearn about themselves in a new environmental context (Attig, 2001). Therefore, through this research, I explored how international students in a new environment embrace uncertainty along with grief and how listening has influenced their grieving journey and relationships.

1.2 Problem Statement

Every year, numerous international students enroll in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), Newfoundland and Labrador (NL), Canada (Gower & Harris, 2020). According to the report of the Canadian Association for Graduate Students (2015), international students comprise a larger proportion of master's students at MUN than at any other Canadian university. These students have various colourful dreams for their lives of higher studies. According to Vonderembse (2017), higher education mainly focuses on building a workforce community where students learn professionalism. However, the problem is, in our professional life, there is no place for personal grief, anxiety and any other issue which could impact our study or career pathways. Recently, many researchers found that our working lives are measured and reported extensively due to an audit culture that is becoming more demanding (Badenhorst & McLeod, 2021; Hartman & Darab, 2012; Teelken, 2012).

Badenhorst et al. (2024) emphasized that, in a neoliberal context, "the identities that are least valued—personal, imaginative, and artistic identities—are crucial for us to manage, negotiate, and oppose the current systematic conditions if we are to not only survive but also thrive" (p.1). Sometimes, it creates the illusion of a robotic society where there is no room for emotions like grief; we live to compete with each other. In addition, students from various countries enter developed and prosperous countries, such as Canada, to establish stronger academic pathways (Arumuhathas, 2023). Meanwhile, international students deal with various problems where grief exists simultaneously with their academic progress. Coming from a different cultural background, settling in a new environment, staying far away from family, financial crisis, racism, and unexpected demises of close ones often create grief in academia. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the types of grieving situations international students face and how they cope with these situations in a new academic environment.

To address the gap in the research, I focused on international students at Memorial University, NL, Canada, who enrolled in the 2021 session in the Faculty of Education and experienced various aspects of emotional states of grief during their study time. According to Owens (2016), the positive and negative consequences of narratives can help to take us toward possible interventions. Therefore, narratives of international students can provide rich data on their personal experiences of dealing with grief and how they overcome challenging situations in new environments and find hope.

1.3 Research Questions

Researchers have identified the existence of grief in neoliberal academia; they argued that it is an emergent topic in an academic context (Badenhorst et al., 2024; Fox & Wayland, 2020; Sauteraud, 2018). Badenhorst et al. (2024) argued that sharing grief can create an

environment of hope in the academic sector. So, it is crucial to understand that as human beings from different social contexts, international students have their own grief stories dealing with their academic progress. Moreover, this qualitative study aims to gather the narratives of grief experienced by international master's students (2021-2023) of the Faculty of Education at MUN and examine whether sharing grief can create a culture of hope and emotional bond among international master's students of the Faculty of Education. Therefore, this qualitative research study focused on the question: Is there any place for grief among the international master's students in the Faculty of Education at MUN? How can sharing grief create an era of hope in the academic sector for current international master's students of the Faculty of Education at MUN?

When we work to establish legitimacy and address contextual issues in academic settings, our identities are constantly negotiated (Badenhorst et al., 2024; Gannon et al., 2018; Hartman & Darab, 2012; Teelken, 2012). However, several types of research have been conducted on emerging topics, such as grief and hope, in the UK, USA, Australia, and New Zealand (Battle et al., 2013; Butcher, 2002; Bouldin, 2019; Hay et al., 2024; Seah, 2008; Tan & Andriessen, 2021). Still, it is crucial to understand the current state of emotional well-being in grief within neoliberal academic sectors, such as the Faculty of Education at MUN, where international students enroll yearly for their academic progress. Previous research in the Canadian academic context focused on the grieving situation of faculty members and how they deal with it. Therefore, this research aims to explore the experiences of international students in the MUN Faculty of Education and how they are continuously fighting with emotions such as grief in this new academic context.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

I acknowledge various *stories of self* to explore the personal journey of grief among international master's students in the Faculty of Education during their academic progression (Arnold, 2011). It is very challenging to discuss one's personal life with a stranger. This method is used because personal experiences serve as empirical evidence for understanding more significant categories of social processes (Atkinson, 2006). Therefore, the narratives of overcoming grief while pursuing an academic career in a new educational setting will encourage other international students to open up about their own struggles.

This research employs the notion of the story as 'being' proposed by Hendry, Mitchell, and Eaton (2018), which transforms the technique into an ontology, or a manner of being in the world, to understand the narrative story of grief from international students in the Faculty of Education at MUN. Additionally, I utilized the current 2021-2023 international master's students from the Faculty of Education for this qualitative study. This study also examined the Canadian academic context for international students during the pandemic and its post-pandemic period. There is a transitional period during which international students began attending in-person classes at the Faculty of Education in September 2021 (Memorial University, 2021). The conceptual framework for qualitative research is inspired by the argument of Badenhorst et al. (2024), where researchers argued that we need to acknowledge the existence of grief in a neoliberal academic context. In response to Shelton and Sieben (2020), researchers concentrate on grief, a subject that has had various impacts on each of us. Researchers have argued that grief takes various forms, and higher education does not adequately address grief (Shelton & Sieben, 2020). In addition, Shelton and Sieben (2020, p.4) emphasized that finding the path of 'hope and healing' during grief is crucial. As this

qualitative research concept aims to focus on an emergent topic, such as grief, within the

academic sector, I prefer to follow the argument presented by Badenhorst et al. (2024).

However, my project focuses on international students. In contrast, Badenhorst et al. (2024)

focused their research on the various grief experiences faced by faculty members and graduate

students (PhD and master's) within the academic sector, specifically among women, and

employed collaborative and artistic methods. Although two of the writers were international

students, the overall paper addressed a variety of grief experiences like the loss of loved ones,

personal losses, and migratory loss faced by individuals. Researchers addressed grief as an

individual and communal experience in neoliberal academic settings.

Currently, many researchers focus on emotional apprehensions, like grief, faced by

researchers in the academic sector. Most of the research was focused on faculty members and

PhD students. In addition, there is some research on how international students deal with

feedback emotionally, how they face anxiety in the academic context, how they confront

identity crises and so on (Earnest et al., 2010; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Larbi et al., 2022;

Mikkonen et al., 2016; Sohrabi, 2023). However, more inquiry is needed regarding emotional

resistance, as grief is a significant issue among international master's students in the Faculty

of Education at MUN. Moreover, most researchers have followed autoethnography as a

method of inquiry and artistic formation in their data collection procedures.

This study centred on examining the issues related to grief and hope among

individuals. I chose a qualitative narrative approach to collect the stories of the individuals.

Three international students of the Faculty of Education of 2021-2023 have been interviewed

personally to explore the stories of grief. Rather than choosing the survey method, an open-

ended interview with a narrative approach is a good fit for this study, as emotions like grief

cannot be answered by a straightforward answer like yes or no; it requires an in-depth process of sharing, which is only possible through open-ended interviews with individuals. To understand the impact of relationships, listening and unknown aspects of participants' grieving moments, I employed the conceptual framework of Hendry et al. (2018) to interpret the narratives of international students.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

Many researchers have explored grief in the higher education sector; however, several gaps remain in the rapidly expanding field of research on grieving master's international students. This study addressed the lack of research on the grieving journeys of international master's students in the Canadian academic context. In addition, there is limited research on how various reasons for grief are addressed in the Canadian institutional sector for international students, and little is known about how international students navigate grief by incorporating aspects of their relationships, listening, and aspects of their lives that are unknown to them.

My conceptual framework for grieving international students is centred on Hendry, Mitchell, and Eaton's (2018) key concept of 'being in the world,' where researchers emphasize the influence of relationships, listening, and unknown aspects of our lives. The study by Hendry et al. (2018, p. 33) focused on "the human relationship to the story," emphasizing the importance of reconceiving the story as a "spiritual act" and how power dynamics play a vital role "from both a human and institutional relational perspective." To understand a story, we need to listen to what is not said rather than focusing on specific theories or concepts. In addition, to delve into the unknown, we need to allow questions, rather than answers, to dominate our approach to inquiry (Hendry et al., 2018). I selected their

work to learn how relationships, listening and unknown aspects of life during the grieving moment influence the understanding of life among international students. In addition, it is necessary to understand how different populations, such as international students, respond to grief in the Canadian academic context. So that students from various countries can identify the appropriate cultural interventions and resources they need to apply during their grieving period. There are lots of studies focused on grief in the higher education sector, which mostly centred on faculty members, graduate students and the challenges international students face during the study period in a developed country by addressing mental health and academic pressure (Arumuhathas, 2023; Au, 2017, 2022; Badenhorst et al., 2024; Li et al., 2014; Moissac et al., 2020; Shelton et al., 2020; Sohrabi, 2023). Little is known about the Canadian academic context.

Most of the literature focuses on the grieving journey of all students in the higher education sector, and researchers have not identified the specific challenges related to grieving among international students within the Canadian academic sector. The grieving journey of domestic students and international students would not reflect the same interpersonal aspects due to their different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds (Bouldin, 2019; Seah, 2008). Furthermore, some researchers only identified grief as the bereavement of losing loved ones among students, which neglected the aspect of various sources of grief that academic sectors do not address adequately (Bouldin, 2019). Moreover, there is literature on disenfranchised grief among traditionally aged international students (18-23 years old) in the Australian academic context (Seah, 2008). According to Doka (1999), "disenfranchised grief" represents the pain and sorrow of individuals that society does not acknowledge. Society decides the standards of mourning and how an individual expresses grief (Doka & Martin, 2002). For

example, losing friends or children or divorce can make an individual suffer from emotionally and physically distressful situations, which often society does not acknowledge due to 'grieving rules' created by society. Doka (1999) identified "grieving rules" as personnel policies. Later, disenfranchised grief is used in lots of literature to address specific types of death and loss of an individual. Moreover, this study addressed grief among international students without age barriers associated with losing loved ones, along with disenfranchised grief and identified how sharing a grieving journey within the Canadian institution, family, friends, academic instructors, and professional counsellors influences fostering connection.

In my literature review, I found that most grief-centred studies focused on various theories of grief or grief-related models. Little is known about how culturally diverse international students navigate multiple challenges and embrace the uncertainty of life during their grieving moments. Therefore, rather than framing my study around the theory or model of grief, I addressed the gap in grief stories and associated challenges, which identified different patterns of handling uncertain situations related to grief among international students. The response of international students to their mental, physical, and racial challenges during grief can demonstrate positive or negative outcomes to develop future supportive networks (Seah, 2008).

Plenty of research on grief adheres to the qualitative research method, but most of it focuses on autoethnography and case studies as methods of inquiry. This qualitative research work focused on narrative investigations to gain an in-depth understanding of the grieving situation of international students. In addition, during data collection, I used multiple methods such as interviews, observations, documentation (photos and social media posts) and audiovisual recordings to represent the story of the research participants in their own words

(Creswell, 2009). Qualitative narrative inquiry enables participants to share brief insights into the grief experiences of international students, as there is a need to amplify the voices of international students for the betterment of the Canadian academic sector. Moreover, the counsellor could use this research as evidence-based knowledge. Thematic analysis in narrative studies is a popular approach (Reissman, 2008), and the similarities, variations, and connections among the participants' stories of grief helped me select the themes for my research. In addition, data collection methods, such as open-ended interviews, observation of audiovisual recordings, and analysis of social media documents, have been employed to support the evidence and illuminate key themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The participants in this research reviewed the selected individual quotes to assess how accurately I presented their experiences in my study, using member-checking procedures to enhance the trustworthiness of the research. Previous research on international students' coping mechanisms in the higher education sector has also employed the popular method of thematic analysis in narrative inquiry, which supports the reliability of my approach to this study (deBruyn, 2023; Popadiuk, 2008; Watson & Barton, 2020).

The conceptual framework of this research will explore the key concept of grieving international students as being in the world so that we can explore the contextual and relational dimensions of their grieving experiences (Hendry et al., 2018; Badenhorst et al., 2024). International students come from different cultural backgrounds and social contexts, so studying their grieving experiences in a new environment is essential. Previous researchers found that sharing grief influences identity formation during an individual's grieving process (Attig, 2001; Badenhorst et al., 2024). However, prior research has not explored the relationships, listening, and unknown aspects of grieving among international students, who

are vulnerable populations in the Canadian academic sector (Sohrabi, 2023). This study also addressed how relationships with peers, family and institutions influence their grieving journey. The concept of listening highlights the impacts of effective and ineffective listening as an empathetic engagement in various dimensional relationships. It also plays a vital role during the transition to grieving situations for international students, as identified in the findings section.

1.6 Delimitation of the Research

Delimitation of the research helps the researcher add and remove research content. The focus of the research content needs to be manageable and related to the research questions. According to Coker (2022), the delimitation of research centres on internal and external research topics, which identify the sampling process, research design and conceptual or theoretical framework. The scope of my research mainly focused on the grieving narratives of the master's-level international students of the 2021-2023 session of the Faculty of Education, MUN, NL, Canada. Domestic students' grieving journey stayed out of the focus of this research as it has been addressed in previous research (Bouldin, 2019; Hay et al., 2024; Tan & Andriessen, 2021). This research only addressed international students in specific sessions of the Faculty of Education of MUN, and it did not compare the stories of international students with those of various universities in Canada. So, it limited the perspectives of other international students all over the Canadian higher education sector. Every individual is unique, and their grief journey may vary from culture to culture. This study also excluded the grieving motives of other regional international populations in the Canadian higher education sector by addressing only specific regional international students. However, there is limited research on Asian international students' grieving journey in the

Canadian academic sector (Ichikawa, 2021), and this study expands by exploring two more regions of international students to have an in-depth and diversified knowledge of grief narratives.

This qualitative study adheres to narrative inquiry through purposeful sampling of the data, interviews, documents, and observations to gain in-depth insights into grieving marginalized populations, where the quantitative research survey method and larger data patterns are not addressed, which may impact the generalizability of the findings of this research on grieving international students. However, understanding sensitive stories centred on grief from individuals requires an in-depth procedure. So, I followed the narrative inquiry by using the qualitative research method. In addition, this research did not explore the longitudinal aspects of grief in culturally diverse populations in the higher education system. Rather, the study only identified the various reasons for grief and related challenges and how grief impacts relationships, listening and unknowing in a specific session, such as 2021-2023. There is ample research on grief, which focuses on grief models and theories. However, there is little evidence of international students' perspectives on grief impact and how it influences relationships, listening and uncertainty in life.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of the research on grieving international students is focused on enhancing the understanding of the grieving journey of diversified populations. In the research, the narrative of grievers gave insight into their being in the world, how listening impacts their relationships and embracing the uncertainty of life in a new cultural context gives them hope to thrive. In mainstream literature, there have been discussions about general students' coping strategies during grief, whereas vulnerable populations like international

students often stay out of the loop. On the other hand, this research highlighted how the relational lens worked as a valuable asset for international students from different cultural backgrounds to confront grief in a new cultural context. In the Canadian academic context, there is not much literature on grieving international students that focuses on the framework of relationships, listening, and unknowing. More specifically, in Canadian academic discourse, this research enlarges the existing literature on grief in multicultural contexts, focusing on exploring relationships, listening, and learning about unknown aspects of individuals' lives, which are the most relevant aspects of this research.

Mental health awareness is a crucial aspect for international students and institutions. Most Canadian institutions have wellness centres for their students to support them mentally. According to Ichikawa (2021), cultural insensitivity can delay the support-seeking attitude among international students. So, the results of this research assist in providing effective ways of reaching the existing support to mitigate grief and loss-associated challenges. In addition, this study can assist the faculty and students in better understanding the grieving journey of vulnerable individuals who come from different cultural contexts from an educational perspective. As a result, faculty can implement a more supportive academic environment for grieving international students. This research may help the instructors and staff of the faculty to prioritize cultural sensitivity for diversified populations when they hear from international students regarding grieving-related challenges.

There is ample research on grief and bereavement among undergraduate students, and less is known about the impact of master's students' grief on academic performance (Bouldin, 2019). Bouldin (2019) examined the impact of online graduate students' grief and bereavement on their academic performance within the US academic context. According to

Galbraith et al. (2012), understanding the fundamental causes of academic achievement and student performance is crucial for the university system. Conversely, my research focused on the grieving narratives of international students in the Canadian academic context and also examined the impact of academic performance on grieving international students. In addition, this study can provide a brief overview of the university system to international students, especially when they encounter the challenges associated with academic performance. University systems can use this research as evidence to develop effective listening among staff, instructors, and counsellors. This study also identified a pattern among grieving international students of building resilience to progress in the academic sector despite their grief-related challenges.

Implementing a culturally sensitive support system within the Canadian academic context is crucial (Ichikawa, 2021). The findings of my research also revealed the importance of having knowledgeable and well-equipped counsellors for international students, particularly in light of the growing needs of grieving international students. This research aimed to encourage university authorities to develop culturally sensitive counsellors who can represent the diverse backgrounds of students and provide proper care to international students when they share moments of distress. The complexity of uncertain moments faced by international students during their grieving situation can be mitigated by counsellors, staff, and instructors by facilitating proper training among them, which involves effective listening and prioritizing the building of strong relationships.

Previous researchers have shown the common phenomenon of isolation among grieving students, which is also addressed in this research. This research suggests that designing a supportive peer support system would be beneficial in overcoming isolation and

loneliness among grieving international students. As a result, grieving international graduate students will be able to foster more meaningful relationships with their peers, and isolation can be overcome through strong emotional bonding. Fostering training among non-grieving students will help to develop a peer support system in universities (Balk, 2001; Bouldin, 2019; Seah, 2008). In addition, this study also found that work engagement assists in the healing process for grieving international students (Reed, 2024). Moreover, work engagement during a grieving situation can provide a sense of mental strength, which boosts confidence and an adaptive mentality among multicultural international students. Furthermore, studies on grief have found that staying busy and focused on work provides the grieving individual with a moment of distraction from frustration, isolation, and distressful moments they experience during their isolated period (Bristowe et al., 2024; Reed, 2024). However, most of the research is not focused on international students.

Lastly, the research findings can help policymakers and the Canadian government gain a clear understanding of the difficulties international students face during their academic journey. The study highlighted the mental health issues, racial discrimination, and various crises within the grieving challenges among international students to help policymakers and government officials initiate proper crisis intervention, develop mental health resources and provide training for cultural competency in the higher education sector. In addition, this research encouraged future scholars to explore how cultural intersection influences master's-level international students during their grief to have deepened knowledge about the diverse population in the Canadian higher education sector, who are often neglected in the Canadian research sector. Moreover, this study encourages us to enhance the mental health system in academic sectors, develop effective support systems, embrace uncertainty, build community

and work engagement, facilitate successful academic progression, and expand the future research field on grief for multicultural populations.

1.8 Summary

The chapter highlights the reason for conducting grief studies on international students in the Canadian academic sector. The research aims to explore the existence of grief among marginalized populations. Moreover, this research explored the stories of grieving international master's students within the Canadian academic context. In addition, this research also examined how relationships, listening, and the unknown aspects influence international students' co-existence with grief in their daily lives. There is a lack of literature on the grieving journey of master's-level international students in Canadian academic settings, and little is known about how they navigate uncertain life events alongside grief and build hope. Grief affects an individual's mental health and academic life, and it also influences relationships with family, peers, and institutions (Tan & Andriessen, 2021).

In the next chapter, I reflect on recent literature related to emotions, silence, grief, and culture, as well as the challenges faced by international students, the experience of grief among international students, and the support networks available within an academic context. To some extent, I also discussed how these systems operate. The literature review did not only focus on addressing the gap but also tried to address what kind of challenges international students are facing in the Canadian academic context, along with grief-associated challenges and why support networks for international students need to understand the needs of the grieving international graduate students to foster inclusive resilience within the academic sector.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The concept of this qualitative study centred on grief. Grief is an unavoidable emotion that can be found in any sector of our everyday life. Additionally, there is a need for more literature on specific emotions, such as grief, among international students in the Canadian academic context. To my knowledge, there is only one contribution to the literature on grief focused on international students within the Western academic context, where the researcher talked about previous personal experience with Canadian academic counselling service and discussed East Asian international students' migratory loss and grief-associated problems by addressing previous literature on grief (Ichikawa, 2021). However, Ichikawa (2021) did not address international students who came from regions other than Asia. In comparison, identity crises in higher education, challenges, and mental health among students of colour have been discussed in many pieces of research. Moreover, most of the research regarding silence, emotional labour and grief in the academic sector centred on faculty members, graduate students, and teachers in the academic sector, how the neoliberal environment is suppressing their emotional labour, how it is only about women, how researchers and teachers are forced to separate their emotion like grief from their professional life (Badenhorst et al., 2024).

For this literature review, I searched peer-reviewed journal articles, books, book chapters, and websites from the last twenty-two years (2002-2024). For an effective literature search, I used the academic database of Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), Google Scholar, JSTOR, Research Gate, Education Database, Sage Journals, ProQuest Central, EBSCOhost Academic, Social Science Database, MUN Libraries and OneSearch. Most sources were allocated from the MUN online library database and Google Scholar. Including the current research in a literature review section is essential. I used Keywords in

the database search section such as grief, grief and international students, challenges of international students, grief among people of colour, racism and grief, grief and hope, Identity crisis in academia, emotion in academia, silence in academia, neoliberal academic context, international students' enrollment in the Canadian academic sector, grief among graduate students, the mental health of international students in Canada, grief and bereavement, grief theory and model, culture and grief, gender and grief, meaning-making during grief, coping strategies among international students, support networks in the education system.

The above-mentioned topics were reviewed to gather knowledge about the current scenario of the grieving impact on international students in the Canadian academic sector. Interestingly, little is known about international master's students' perspectives regarding grief in the Canadian academic context. Rather than focusing on identity crises, this study will examine the literature related to the presence of emotions like grief in the neoliberal academic sector. The research questions have been directed toward the practice of academic silence and concealment, emotion within academia, grief and culture, challenges faced by international students, grief among international students and support networks. After reviewing the previous literature, I selected themes discussed below that are closely related to my research.

2.1 Academic Silence and Concealment

The stressful academic environment often fosters silence and concealment, which is often overlooked because neoliberal universities require a high volume of work within a short timeframe. Many researchers found an enormous workload among the academic sector's faculty members and doctoral students, which directs toward anxiety, exhaustion, out-of-placeness, stress and frustration (Badenhorst & McLeod, 2021; Brunila & Valero, 2018; Gill, 2010; Mountz et al., 2015) whether female or male, the voice of researchers and the academic

professionals in the academic sector is suppressed by the marketization of professional success.

Like faculty members and doctoral students, the precarious workload in the academic sector faced by international students often creates vulnerability, fear, and mental distress, which keeps them silent and suppressed. Many international students confront a bundle of messages from their institution to become successful at the master's-level. Meanwhile, the experience of anxiety, nervousness and frustration became suppressed by the expectation of a neoliberal institutional context. Gill (2010, p.229) agreed that, regarding issues related to secrecy and silence, these emotionally embodied experiences or sentiments occupy a peculiar place because they are both familiar and everyday situations. Nevertheless, they mostly stay hidden and quiet in the academic communities' public areas.

Maintaining paper submission time frames, working with faculty members to gain professional experience, creating networks in job fairs, working on language barriers, adapting to new environments and communication skills, updating media profiles for future job opportunities, and so on have become a natural expectation from graduate-level international students. Numerous researchers agreed that due to issues with academic performance, English language proficiency, financial crisis and lack of support to address them (Earnest et al., 2010; Harris & Marlowe, 2011; Larbi et al., 2022; Mikkonen et al., 2016), international students might have trouble adjusting to new environments (Mikkonen et al., 2016). In addition, they become confused due to unclear expectations regarding their responsibilities as students (Rogan et al., 2006). However, little is known about the grieving situations of international students in the Canadian academic sector. Therefore, the

reconstitution of universities' organizational and temporal structures is also essential if institutions are to serve as nodes in the interconnected global economy.

According to Earnest et al. (2010), the challenges faced by international learners are made worse because most of these students are ignorant of how they could affect their academic performance. Researcher and international student Sohrabi (2023) agreed in her auto-ethnography study that while pursuing studies in another nation, international students face challenges from the environment due to their race and language barriers. In addition, different institutional academic practices in their own country and communication gaps might impact their general happiness. Therefore, these students face low self-esteem and try to hide from addressing their challenges in a new nation. However, the autoethnographic qualitative research illustrated the researcher's Canadian academic life as a PhD candidate (Sohrabi, 2023). Additionally, it did not explore emotions like grieving situations among master's-level international students in the Canadian academic context.

The findings of Menzies and Newson (2007) imply that academics are adopting strategies to resolve conflicts between competing organizational and temporal demands, strategies that harm the standard and nature of their courses of study and instruction. However, coming from a different academic, cultural, and financial background, it is crucial to address whether there is any space for the silence and concealment situation of international students in MUN at the Faculty of Education. Researchers suggested that emphasizing teamwork and the idea that influential scholarship necessitates time: time to process information, write, read, research, analyze, edit, organize, and resist the escalating administrative and professional pressures that obstruct these essential processes of intellectual development and personal freedom (Menzies & Newson, 2007; Mountz et al., 2015).

Although the neoliberal reform of higher education has been well documented, discussions of the isolating impacts and embodied working conditions caused by these elevated demands should still be more frequent.

Mountz et al. (2015) suggested the slow scholarly movement and offered a few opposition tactics that emphasize joint, group, and communal efforts to move forward. Critically, most research regarding silence and secrecy in the academic sector has focused on faculty members, women in the research sector and graduate students (Badenhorst et al., 2024). Limited research has been conducted concerning issues like silence and concealment on the institutional surface among international master's students in Canadian academic settings. Consequently, Badenhorst et al. (2024, p. 4) also agreed that 'grief is characterized by silence.' Whereas, coming from a different academic background and struggling with various emotional ups and downs simultaneously within the family, friends, and academic environment context, maternity faced by international students can lead to concealment and silence in the academic sector and break them emotionally when they confront grief in their personal life. However, the purpose of my study is focused on international master's students of the Faculty of Education at MUN, and the method of inquiry for data collection is an open-ended semi-structured interview, observation, and documentation such as social media posts, photos, and audiovisual recording.

2.2 Emotion within Academia

We know that showing emotion in academia is addressed as a weakness, and some people address it as a weapon of women to make something work, which is a preposterous mindset to suppress the voice of a human. Through doing this, neoliberal academic society wants to establish 'not only what is desirable and wanted but also what is the acceptable form

of subjectivity' (Brulnila & Valero, 2018, p. 84). For example, in an academic environment, if a student feels emotionally vulnerable and cries in front of a professor and classmates, most of the time, picturization of that event portrays the gender of the student as a girl because our social context does not allow a boy to cry in front of others. It creates disrespect for the male person, whereas any mentally distressed person can face that phrase in their life! Society creates the rules of emotion: where, when and who can show certain emotions or how they should be controlled in a particular environment. Furthermore, numerous researchers emphasized that, when it comes to caring, which is a particular emotion for the students related to supporting and advising in academic contests, it is always anticipated from a woman (Black & Dwyer, 2021; Harré et al., 2017; Thornton, 2015).

Researchers agreed that survivalism, fears, ambivalence, and complex emotional labour have all been shown to affect one's personal and professional welfare negatively (Blackmore et al., 2010; Saltmarsh & Randell-Moon, 2014; Taylor, 2013; Thornton, 2015). These effects have been linked to declining intellectual desire and enjoyment (Nash & Owens, 2016). Gill's (2010) research combined academic life, emotion, and neoliberalism and was formulated as a "demand for change" to explore neoliberal academia's hidden wounds. In our lives, we need to see our experiences of emotion, which we confront and struggle with daily. It is crucial to understand: What could we learn by deeply listening to the narrative of international students in academia? What do international students know, face, and think about expressing emotion in the neoliberal academic sector? How could this sharing change the environment of neoliberal academia by engaging with each other emotionally for international master's students?

Most universities have a union for international graduate students. However, it is important to understand that sharing and creating emotional networks in the academic sector through narrative storytelling is far different from maintaining and attending community-based programs, where tourism, organizing cultural programs, and introducing job opportunities are the main aspects. Au (2022) examines the experiences of marginalized students at a major Canadian institution. The study emphasizes the need for educational consideration and emotional support to ease conflicts between marginalized students (Au, 2022). However, the research only focused on the oppression faced by students of colour and did not talk about grief among international students. Hochschild (1979, 1983, 1997, 2003) observed rules that created certain emotional expressions and emotion control over time. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge the existence of emotions like grief and embrace them in the academic sector so that they can lead to an environment where hope prevails.

Managing emotions can be seen in every academic sector; international students often try to maintain that in their academic life because they feel that staying on track in a new academic context is impossible without managing emotions or adopting survival characteristics. Managerialism has an "informative" dimension (Connell, 2011, p.43) that intersects with neoliberalism's economic, political, ideological, and governmental dimensions, which leads to refusal (Ball, 2016; Bottrell & Manathunga, 2019; O'Sullivan, 2016). Refusal can create a barrier to expressing emotion or grief in the neoliberal academic sector, which may lead to depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. According to Hunt and Eisenberg (2010), mental health issues are becoming more severe and prevalent across North American student populations. Researchers found low rates of mental health services-seeking practices

among East Asians and other communal societies when they go through emotional

breakdowns like grief (Au, 2017; Li et al., 2014).

2.3 Grief and Culture

Grief has also become a public health issue due to its severity in human life.

According to Pomeroy and Garcia (2011), due to the significant loss of loved ones, grief has

an impact on a person's behavioural, social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual

aspects. On the other hand, grief is an experience attached to humans as a natural part of life

and deeply intersects with attachment to separation, love, and loss (Neimeyer & Thompson,

2014). Neimeyer and Thompson (2014) critiqued the traditional models of grief because grief

is a complex and non-linear phenomenon that varies among individuals' nature of

understanding; it does not follow the linear process of stages. Moreover, grief is not only

about the psychological process of individuals but is deeply rooted in collective practice and

social norms (Silverman et al., 2021).

Additionally, culture sometimes defines, shapes, limits, and influences grief

(Rosenblatt, 2008). According to Rosenblatt (2008), we need to understand the intricate

relationship between grief and support for grieving individuals from different cultural

backgrounds because the grief process varies from culture to culture. Furthermore, this kind

of distinction can help us view grief or bereavement through the lens of one's own culture,

where grief is rooted in the operational and continuous system, which makes sense in its own

way even if the process can be viewed as utterly senseless to another culture. For example, in

the Indian subcontinent, people wear white colour in bereavement rituals; on the other hand,

in Western culture, people wear black coloured dresses to express condolence to the family

who suffered from loss, whereas white is usually a colour of a new beginning of life for a

bride in the Western culture (Aslam, 2006). Therefore, researchers argued that grief needs to be handled with a deeper understanding through the lens of culture (Breen & O'Connor, 2007; Rosenblatt, 2008).

According to Neimeyer and Thompson (2014), from ancient rituals to contemporary arts, grief has become a universal and timeless phenomenon articulated in many forms throughout the history of the arts. For example, Muharram is a well-known ritual among Shi's Muslim community and is performed as a grief observation. During Muharram, grief is demonstrated publicly to achieve empathy through mourning (Jeraj, 2024, p. 81). Jeraj (2024) discovered a commonality among Persian, Arab, and north Indian Muslim communities' grieving patterns when they mourn. However, in continents like India, Iran, Lebanon, and Turkey, Muharram became a moral and political act to create a connection between constant oppression and the Battle of Karbala (Chavoshian, 2021; Deeb, 2005; Tignol, 2023). Culture to culture, religion to religion, country to country, academic to personal lives, grieving reasons, patterns and styles vary and sometimes reflect similar expressions of embracing among individual to community levels. For instance, in some cultures, maternal grief is viewed as a usual but sad incident in parents' lives (Einarsdottir, 2004). Researchers argued that in Brazil, due to local norms, parents must follow the proper ceremonial behaviour and demand silence in the face of the griever rather than loudly expressing their emotions (Nations et al., 2015; Silverman et al., 2021). Moreover, some researchers may argue that the grief experiences of an individual are exclusive, while others explore how culture influences the responses and experiences of grief. Therefore, we need to have a deeper understanding of the connections between culture and grief so that it can help individuals express their grief comfortably and foster community resilience.

2.4 Challenges Faced by International Students

International students face numerous challenges compared to domestic students in the Canadian academic sector. Most of them initially face a cultural transitional period in a different country, which impacts them emotionally, physically, academically, and financially. Numerous studies suggest that during the transitional period, international students' negative experiences have been associated with different academic backgrounds, language barriers, cultural shock, financial crises, housing crises, cultural differences, racism, discrimination, lack of support from institutions, insufficient peer support, and grief (Arumuhathas, 2023; Grayson, 2008; Guo & Guo, 2017; Howe et al., 2023; Ichikawa, 2021; Moissac et al.; 2020; Sohrabi, 2023). Negative experiences among international students can hinder their academic performance, personal growth, and mental well-being (Au, 2022; Moissac et al., 2020). Therefore, as a host country, Canadian institutions need to employ adequate resources to support marginalized populations.

In a new environment, international students often struggle to learn the social norms of the host country. Language barriers instigate the challenges to communicating with peers and participating in class discussions or group work (Moissac et al., 2020; Shadowen et al., 2019). Some students also feel disoriented and anxious during their study period, which leads to cultural shock (Guo & Chase, 2011; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004). According to Guo and Chase (2021), due to cultural shock, international students often face homesickness, isolation, depression, and frustration. Several researchers found that the academic environment relies on international students to adapt to the new environment (Arumuhathas, 2023; Guo & Guo, 2017), yet it is the core responsibility of the institutions to provide a culturally sensitive atmosphere for multicultural international students (Arumuhathas, 2023).

Every individual is unique and has challenges as well. Most of the time, marginalized students who come from different racial backgrounds face racism and discrimination in Canada. What they hear or see in global media about foreign developed countries like Canada regarding racism and discrimination is often shattered by reality. Howe et al. (2023, p. 125) explored in their research how international students face 'racism, group-ism and discrimination' on and off campus during their study period. In addition, there are testimonials in the research of international students facing housing problems, difficulties finding friends and judgmental attitudes towards certain countries and people. Furthermore, global economic changes, tuition fees, and living expenses have forced marginalized students into financial stress and job-related problems, leading to dropping out of courses and creating a suffocating environment in their lives (Howe et al., 2023; Moissac et al., 2020). Moreover, researchers agreed that tolerance capacity toward diverse people, cultures and religions could help establish a strong culturally sensitive community in the academic sector (Howe et al., 2023; Moissac et al., 2020).

Marginalized students become overwhelmed by the Canadian education system because of the dynamic environment of the classroom, different instruction patterns, assessment methods and coming from a different educational practice. For instance, in the study of Zhang and Zhou (2010, p.51-52), female Chinese students recounted differences between the Eastern/ Southern and Western/Northern educational systems. The Eastern education system mostly focuses on (but is not restricted to) conventional teaching and assessment methods that adhere to written recitation, oral tests, memorizing, and so on, which is different from Northern or Western education systems, where professors expect international students to be well equipped for APA citations or have prior knowledge about

coherent writing patterns. In addition, this female student also addressed how the TA was not mindful of the academic challenges she faced as an international student during her study time and became stressed as the Canadian writing system was unfamiliar to her (Zhang & Zhou, 2010). Some may argue that the Canadian education system is well-supported for international students. However, it is evident that Canadian institutions frequently make inaccurate assumptions about international students' readiness by failing to consider the variety of backgrounds and talents they bring (Arumuhathas, 2023). Moreover, the above-mentioned challenges also have an association with mental health issues, which may turn toward grief-related problems, which will be discussed in the next segment of this literature (Au, 2017).

2.5 Grief among International Students

The concept of grief has changed over time. Currently, grief theorists and researchers adhere to a wide range of models that better incorporate how people cope with loss— supported by findings that seriously question the cogency of the grief model as an accurate representation of the mourning trajectory (Holland & Neimeyer, 2010; Sauteraud, 2018). Most of the research on grief adheres to the coping strategy among overall grieving students (Cousins et al., 2017; Hay et al., 2024). Some losses present a more significant difficulty than others, such as when we must deal with the demise associated with kids or young people, the reality of pointless violence, the anguish of suicide, or the unexpected death of a loved one (Neimeyer & Thompson, 2014; Badenhorst et al., 2024). In these situations, meaning reconstruction can be a complicated process that forces us to "re-learn the self" (Attig, 2001, p.34) and "re-learn the world" (Attig, 2001, p.37) because both may have undergone significant changes because of the loss.

Thus, in the COVID-19 pandemic era, educators and students have seen many different forms of stress in mind, emotional complexity, and grief among people of colour (Feng et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020). Higher education settings faced a new challenge and an increasing need for pedagogical care as anxiety and mental health illnesses among people of colour are rising (Au, 2022). Furthermore, among international students, grief is often associated with the loss of close ones during their study period and the inability to reach them in time due to financial crises, academic pressure, or the various realities they face in a foreign country's educational environment (Ichikawa, 2021). In addition, grief may occur due to academic unsuccess, staying away from close ones, the uncertainty of immigration and many more reasons (Butcher, 2002; Ichikawa, 2021; Seah, 2008)

Grief in the academic sector has become an emerging topic in the Canadian context. Most grief-related studies in the academic Canadian industry are on PhD students, faculty or staff members. Interestingly, there is a dearth of literature on grief among international students in Canadian educational institutions. I have found only one piece of literature on the grief of international students, which focused on the migratory grief of Asian international students (Ichikawa, 2021). Ichikawa (2021) argued that intercultural knowledge is necessary in academic settings to establish connections with Asian international students and contextualize family bereavement. The researcher explored how loss and sorrow impact students' personal and academic lives. Concerning counselling services in the Canadian institutional sector, the researcher raised the concern of negligence in considering the diversified cultural values while counselling grieving international students (Ichikawa, 2021, p.989). However, the researcher only addressed East Asian cultural values by identifying the common phenomenon in the previous literature and the researcher's personal experiences

related to loss. Thus, it has been necessary to address how a different environment influences the relational aspects of grieving international students within the faculty, family, and work environment. Confrontation with various relationships during grieving is unique for everyone (Cousins et al., 2017; Hay et al., 2024; Pollard et al., 2017).

Interestingly, there is abundant evidence of grief research on international students in the UK, USA, Australian and New Zealand academic contexts. International students often suffer from a transitional period in a new academic environment. During the transitional period, they also face uncertain death or non-death-related issues like distance from family, adjustment issues, racism, and discrimination. There is evidence that non-death losses faced by international students have an association with the grieving experience, which is often ignored by the academic sector (Seah, 2008). The qualitative study of Seah (2008) on traditional-aged (18-23) international university students explored that non-death losses are identified as disenfranchised grief due to the ignorance of society and the inability to mourn publicly. This kind of ignorance pushes international students into isolation during grieving time and causes psychological and physical distress, as a result of which it affects academic progression (Seah, 2008, p.12). Canada has become one of the leading countries in terms of enrollment of international students in academic areas (Howe et al., 2023; Moissac et al., 2020). Previous research has discovered that graduate students often face enormous workloads, financial stress, employment problems, loneliness, a competitive academic life, and poor work-life balance (Bouldin, 2019; Cabrera-Caban et al., 2016; Sohrabi, 2023). According to Cabrera-Caban et al. (2016), the above-mentioned stressors harm academic performance. On the other hand, Bouldin (2019) argued that grief and bereavement served as

a further stressor for graduate students. There is less known about the grieving journey of international graduate students and associated challenges in the Canadian academic context.

According to Butcher (2002), the grief experienced by returning international students to their countries of origin has been discovered as "disenfranchised grief." If both the host country and the country of origin employ preparation programmes for returning students, it can be mitigated easily. Butcher (2002) did a study on East Asian Students who went to New Zealand and returned to their home country after completing their degree and suggested reconceptualizing grief as some grief cannot be expressed due to various cultural restrictions. On the other hand, Fox and Wayland (2020) have considered and interacted as academics and researchers with their experience who know and comprehend grief from a distance while they wrote the reflection on their study. Accordingly, researchers recommended not only observing grief within an academic context but also having an understanding of it. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the Canadian academic context of international students to know about their grieving journey.

Researchers have found a relationship between grief and academic performance, which affects students' concentration as they face distressful moments in their lives due to loss, compared to their counterparts (Battle et al., 2013; Cousins et al., 2017; Ichikawa, 2021). Students confront dilemmas between their education and family loss (Ichikawa, 2021). For example, if a student needs to attend to a critically ill family member or a funeral in their home country, they may face academic delays and experience additional education costs (Battle et al., 2013). Moreover, along with the loss, international students face a variety of challenges in relation to cost, academic expectations, time constraints, discrimination, racial problems, and homesickness (Battle et al., 2013; Cousins et al., 2017; Sohrabi, 2023).

Therefore, institutions need to be more inclusive and effectively prioritize the needs of international students, who face multifaceted challenges during their transition, as they are a marginalized population in the higher education sector (Ichikawa, 2021).

Numerous researchers agreed that the academic environment must be better designed to embrace grief (Badenhorst et al., 2024; Feng et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; Matthews, 2019; Ridgway, 2022; Shelton & Sieben, 2020). At the same time, many international students face this era during their studies. We talk about mental well-being in the academic sector, but grief needs proper nurture, which can be possible through sharing grief stories with each other. Researchers suggested that this course of writing or sharing stories entailed significant risks, weaknesses, and close interaction (Badenhorst et al., 2024; Latremouille, 2018). However, I applied an open-ended interview to explore the stories of grief and hope in the process of inquiry to understand the international master's students' opinions, feelings, behaviours and ways of dealing with these specific problems, like grief in the academic sector while pursuing their graduation from the Faculty of Education at MUN. I employed an observational method and collected documentation from social media and audiovisual recordings during the data collection process to enhance the trustworthiness of the study for the reader (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2.6 Support Networks

Researchers have identified numerous resources for university students when they encounter grief or personal loss within institutional settings (Tan & Andriessen, 2021). The support network in university settings is identified as counselling services and support from professors, peers and staff. Most Canadian institutions established international offices to help international students (Baruwa, 2023; Howe et al., 2023). However, it fails to employ

inclusion criteria for the needs of vulnerable students (Baruwa, 2023; Chukwu, 2019; Noreiga & Justin, 2020). There is a presence of counterarguments where researchers found from the lived experience of Canadian and United Kingdom international students that identified the housing problems and struggle with basic needs of international students due to unsupportive behaviour from the universities and international students' cultural stigma also creates silencing environment between institutions and international students as well (Calder et al., 2016).

Grief can be disenfranchised, which is usually ignored by society. Non-death losses often lead to isolation due to an unsupportive environment when international students go through a transitional period. Researchers found that during the transitional period in a new academic context, international students suffer due to distance from the family, unable to attend to parents who suffered from critical illness, cultural shocks, different academic environment, and discrimination, which is usually not acknowledged by society and the educational sector (Arumuhathas, 2023; Butcher, 2002; Ichikawa, 2021; Seah, 2008). According to Seah (2008), traditional-aged (18-23) students attending university stay in a developmental stage where they continuously deal with identity formation and achieving independence, which may impact the grieving process as they are also coping with adulthood challenges. In addition, the researcher also addressed that non-death loss can be as intense as death losses among international students. Conversely, the ignorant nature of institutions, family and peers for non-death losses escalates feelings of guilt, depression, and anxiety (Seah, 2008, p. 15).

Most research on grief focuses on university students. Additionally, there is a lack of research on graduate international students experiencing grief in the Canadian context.

Researchers have found that 27% of overall graduate students experience grief or bereavement during their 24-month study period (Hay et al., 2024; Pollard et al., 2017; Varga et al., 2022). Grief affects mental health, which is not adequately addressed from international students' perspectives in the higher education sector of Canada. However, mental health issues are addressed in numerous studies on international students in the Canadian academic context (Baghoori, 2021; Baruwa, 2023; Howe et al., 2023; Moissac, 2020). Counselling and therapy services have been implemented within the university system to support international students in managing anxiety, stress, and other mental health issues (Baghoori, 2021; Howe et al., 2023). Baghoori (2021) conducted a qualitative study on three hundred thirty-eight international students and found that among male and female international students, female PhD and married students face fewer mental health problems and psychological distress due to their help-seeking approach regarding their personal distress and mental well-being with family members and friends rather than their male counterparts. On the other hand, researcher Bouldin (2019) found that online graduate bereavement students in the US academic context faced difficulty focusing, felt lonely, and needed extensions from instructors while submitting their coursework. Moreover, students shared that it is essential to seek help when a grieving situation occurs.

On the other hand, grief can take students into feelings of disenfranchisement and create barriers to seeking help (Hay et al., 2024; Ichikawa, 2021; Tan & Andriessen, 2021). Researchers talked about the formal and informal support systems which act as assistants to heal grieving emotions and face challenges in the higher education sector, along with the personal lives of grievers (Battle et al., 2013; Hay et al., 2024; Ichikawa, 2021; Tan & Andriessen, 2021). However, the multidimensional impact of cultural norms and family

values has a powerful effect on support-seeking patterns among international students. For example, cultural norms and family obligations often complicate the help-seeking abilities of Asian international students who face family loss or grief in the Western education sector (Ichikawa, 2021). According to Ichikawa (2021), institutions need to develop support services that are interculturally informed and facilitate on-campus community engagement to foster resilience and open conversations among students who deal with family loss. Therefore, it is essential for formal support systems, such as universities, to have a deeper understanding and awareness of the challenges faced by marginalized populations (Tan & Andriessen, 2021). Additionally, previous research indicates that informal peer support offers a safe space for expressing emotions and enhances coping strategies (Howard-Sharp et al., 2018). On the contrary, Tan and Andriessen (2021, p. 9) argue that unempathetic responses from informal support systems, such as peers, delay the effectiveness of the support system due to a lack of knowledge among peers when discussing grief. Furthermore, Tan and Andriessen (2021, p. 7) suggested that participants purposefully withdrew from social interaction during their grieving moments and chose to "process the grief by themselves."

2.7 Summary

Researchers found that grief affects the mental, physical, academic, and relational aspects of international students (Battle et al., 2013; Hay et al., 2024; Ichikawa, 2021; Tan & Andriessen, 2021). International students often face multiple challenges during their study period due to different educational, cultural, financial, and environmental adjustments. Canadian universities could benefit from having a deeper understanding of the experiences of grief faced by international master's students. There are several studies on grief in the Canadian academic context, focusing on faculty members, staff, and PhD scholars, but less is

known about international master's students. However, there has been notable growth in the enrollment of international students in the post-secondary educational sector from 2022 to 2023 from Ghana, Nepal, Algeria, and Nigeria (CBIE, 2024). Graduate international students may face family or peer-related loss, homesickness, racism, and discrimination while pursuing their education, which can trigger anxiety, stress, depression, and suicidal tendencies. Sometimes, the families, communities, or institutions that remain silent do not recognize this loss. According to Fisher and Kirkman (2020), personal loss is often not recognized by individuals, communities or organizations and is typically unaddressed by conventional methods of grieving and loss.

This literature review examined related studies that reflect on emotional and silencing aspects in the academic sector, along with the challenges faced by international students, the impact of grief and cultural elements, the effects of grief, and the obstacles and inadequate support systems for grieving students of recent years. Most of the grief-related research focused on either coping mechanisms, grief models, or theories. There is evidence from prior studies that grief can impact international students' academic and personal journey, which may influence isolation, depression, and academic discrepancy during the transitional period of their lives (Seah, 2008). Graduate international students who suffer from grief may benefit from culturally sensitive and easily accessible mental health support systems from the Canadian educational sectors. Effective responses from Canadian universities will encourage an inclusive academic environment where the resilience and success of international students should be the highest priority. Canadian International students have a cultural stigma regarding the mental support system, and some may have a lack of awareness about the counselling process (Baghoori, 2021; Moissac et al., 2020). On the other hand, Ichikawa

(2021) found that counsellors in the Canadian academic sectors are not culturally sensitive toward grieving international students. Therefore, by developing community engagement among international students, a culturally sensitive education and counselling system can provide a safe and supportive environment for the vulnerable population in the Canadian academic sector. In the following chapter, I will discuss the method of inquiry, study population and data selection, sources of data and data collection procedure, data analysis, trustworthiness, ethical considerations, the researcher's stance, and limitations of this qualitative study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the design of this paper, which is a crucial element of a thesis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Previous researchers have helped identify anxiety, struggles, and grief within the academic sector, especially among faculty members, and there have been very few observations made about international students in Canadian academic life (Badenhorst et al., 2024; Ichikawa, 2021). Therefore, this research paper aims to unlock the experience of grief among international students of the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland, NL, Canada. This paper is the first officially analyzed study on the experience of grief among international students (2021-2023) at the Faculty of Education, MUN, Canada. As a narrative storytelling performer of ex-graduates from the Theatre Department of Dhaka University, Bangladesh, this experience influenced me as a researcher to select this specific method of inquiry. The research design was determined before the data collection started due to the researcher's keen interest in the qualitative narrative inquiry project.

3.1 Choice of Method

There are various reasons for selecting narrative as a method for this qualitative project. First, the qualitative research method is well-suited for understanding the experiences of grief among international students rather than opting for the quantitative method (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Narrative inquiry allows an in-depth exploration of an individual's personal story, allowing them to elaborate on their experiences and gain a deeper understanding of their journey (Clandinin, 2013). According to Clandinin (2013, p. 18), "narrative inquiry explores societal, cultural, familial, linguistic, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted." Several factors influenced the project, one of which is the potential for a small data size in this research, as I selected only

master's students from the 2021-2023 session in the Faculty of Education. During data collection, all of them graduated from MUN. Three people participated in this project, all of whom were enrolled as international students in the specific session when they began their studies at MUN. As it was a semi-structured, open-ended interview where participants shared their experiences as international students separately, narrative analysis has become the primary method of choice. In addition, the experience of grief should not be reduced to a simple yes or no answer, which is often the case in quantitative research survey methods, where individuals' personal experiences can be challenging to express in detail (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, this research cannot be the subject of quantitative research.

According to Creswell (2013, p. 44), the main objective of qualitative research is to portray participants' emotional insights, while providing a rich and relevant context for describing people's lives, environments, circumstances, and experiences. As this study aimed to capture the experience of grief among international students of the Faculty of Education (2021-2023) at MUN, this research adhered to the narrative tradition of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The two main research questions were: Is there any place for grief among the international master's students in the Faculty of Education at MUN? How can sharing grief create an era of hope in the academic sector for current international master's students in the Faculty of Education at MUN? The research questions mentioned above served as the foundation for organizing the twenty semi-structured interview questions for the international student participants. In addition, I employed a narrative approach by utilizing in-depth interviews, relevant documents, and observing behaviours to understand how the individual's experiences reflect the general socioeconomic and cultural influences that shaped those experiences (Clandinin, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, the narrative that

describes the data is typically presented as a narrative of the person's experiences, and gathering the data may take weeks, months, or even years. I played the role of an instrument in this research, where participants' various views and perspectives on the topic informed a qualitative research report rather than focusing on the views I gathered from other literature as a researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Among the five approaches, a qualitative research narrative has been chosen as the method of inquiry. The focus of this study was to collect participants' experiences about grief and hope, while maintaining a chronological order to gain a descriptive view from both the researcher and the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.2 Study Population

After receiving approval from the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR), I began contacting potential participants personally via email, messenger, and phone. The main objective of this research was to have insight into the grief experienced by international students. According to Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 186), narrative inquiry typically encompasses one or two participants. I decided to interview three participants to portray the experiences of individuals from different genders, countries of origin, and sociocultural backgrounds. I note, for transparency, that all three participants were international students at the beginning of the research project. If they transitioned to permanent residents during the study, this would not hinder their participation in the project.

This study examines the experience of grief among international students in the Faculty of Education, with a focus on the 2021-2023 session. I employed 'purposeful sampling' for this project because a large data group is unnecessary for this qualitative study, as the focus is on international students from a specific session (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this regard, Caulley (1992, p. 3) stated, "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in

selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study." This type of sampling is beneficial because, in a narrative inquiry, the researcher focuses more on whom to study, and every individual needs to share the experiences they have lived (Creswell & Poth, 2018). International students would be a perfect fit for this specific topic as they leave their home country, try to settle in a new environment, face a different educational structure, confront the death or illness of a close one, cope with unwanted situations, and are away from friends and family. For example, as an international student, I faced similar situations during my time in study. Losing my beloved grandmother and an unexpected pregnancy pushed me towards an uncertain and grieving situation, for which I was not prepared when I came to Canada to pursue my M.Ed from MUN. Selecting a small group of participants to collect in-depth oral stories about their grieving journeys as international students is crucial for gaining a deeper understanding of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My research questions are highly focused on phenomena such as grief and hope in international students. Initially, I communicated with three participants who were easily accessible through personal networking; however, one of them declined to participate. Then, I communicated with another international student from the 2021-2023 session from the Faculty of Education, and the last person agreed to participate in the study, which is how I selected three participants for my research. Therefore, I purposefully selected individuals who were interviewed and observed by me. In addition, during emotional distress, international students are walking towards their future success as well, which influenced this study to select specific participants who faced grief during their study period. Participants in this research were known to me, as we had attended some courses together. However, prior to the interview, I did not have adequate

knowledge about their grieving experiences. Now, I will discuss the sources and data collection procedure.

3.3 Sources of Data and Collection Procedure

I used personal networking to access the three international students (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The participants communicated through social media messages, text messages, emails, and phone calls and showed interest in giving interviews. When I communicated with the participants via messages and telephone calls, I informed them that I was working on my thesis, which focused on the grief and hope experienced by international students, and that I would like to conduct individual interviews with them to gather their stories while they pursued their degrees as international students. Luckily, three participants from the 2021-2022 session of the Faculty of Education agreed to share their experiences with me without hesitation, and I took them as participants in my research.

While staying in the same session during my study period, participants were selected purposefully through interpersonal relationships with my peers to conduct open-ended, semi-structured interviews. In addition, along with in-depth interviews, I collected audiovisual recordings of the participants, as well as documents from social media posts, and observed them to support this qualitative narrative approach, which is crucial for this type of study. Now, I will discuss various procedures followed during the data collection period.

3.3.1 Interviews (Face-to-face and online)

Nowadays, choosing interviews as a data collection method in qualitative research is prevalent because, in an interview, the researcher and participants engage in a conversation to share specific information concerning the study, which cannot be collected through

observation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Dexter (1970, p.136) explained that every conversation in an interview is a "conversation with a purpose." For example, emotions or an individual's perspective of seeing the world are impossible to describe without having a purposeful conversation. In addition, Patton (2015, p.426) claimed, "We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions…We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer…We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter other people's perspectives." This research focuses on the participants' grief experience, so it is necessary to conduct interviews to collect data and gather their feelings and thoughts about grief while pursuing their master's studies as international students.

Among the three types, semi-structured interviews were relevant for this study. Structured interviews in qualitative research often centre on an oral form of written surveys (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), in the qualitative research genre, semi-structured interviews primarily focus on exploring participants' worldviews, and inquirers seek answers to specific situations to gain a deeper understanding of the focused issue. However, this project focuses on exploring the individual's perspective on experiencing certain emotions, which is not suitable for a structured interview process (Patton, 2015). For instance, in this study, I asked each participant about their understanding of grief during their academic journey, which is challenging to express in structured or unstructured interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). On the other hand, an unstructured interview is relevant when the researcher has no prior knowledge about the subject, which is not feasible for this study (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The most significant part of the interview will focus on specific questions related to the research topic (Hendry et al., 2018). Therefore, the semi-structured,

open-ended interview is a better fit for this project, as it will allow for an in-depth exploration of the grief experience.

I wanted to keep the window open for both online and in-person interviews, as participants would appreciate having a flexible time and environment for the interview. To conduct an online interview, the researcher used computer-mediated communication tools synchronously (Salmons, 2015), such as Skype or Zoom (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 115). These types of interviews are considered verbal, face-to-face interviews that incorporate a video component, allowing for the recording of nonverbal cues and silences during conversations, which plays a vital role in narrative research inquiries (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) emphasized some problems that could occur during the use of the internet while collecting data, such as disrupted internet connection, compromised confidentiality and maintenance of ethical issues that the researcher and ethical board should observe. Furthermore, the interviews were conducted face-to-face and online in quiet locations, depending on the participants' preferences, and the researcher audiovisually recorded all interviews after obtaining consent from the participants.

Patton (2015, p. 454)) emphasized asking good questions in an interview and stated that:

Using words that make sense to the interviewee, words that reflect the respondent's world view, will improve the quality of data obtained during the interview. Without sensitivity to the impact of particular words on the person being interviewed, the answers may make no sense at all, or there may be no answer.

During the interview, it is pivotal for a researcher to ask relevant questions to help the study explore a specific topic. For example, I asked for personal experience during graduation

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to have a descriptive overview of their journey in the Faculty of Education at MUN. Follow-up questions were centred on how they felt while facing certain emotions during their study period to prompt specific adequate evidence for the study. Furthermore, Patton (2015) categorized six types of good questions, and within them, the researcher chose to follow some of them to make the interview process effective. Therefore, later, I wanted to know the participants' opinions on how much influence certain emotions have on their progress. In this process, I focused on feeling-related questions to have an adjective response like sad, anxious, happy, and so on. In addition, background and sensory-related questions have been included to provide a descriptive view and stimulate the response from interviewees (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). However, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the view of the inquirer may bias the participants during the interview.

3.3.2 Observation

Besides interviewing, observation is also an essential process for collecting data in qualitative research. I took field notes from the research site while participants answered semi-structured questions. I performed as an observer during the interview, and it was great to get direct experience where rare pieces can be observed. For example, pauses while talking about the emotional breakdown, crying, expressing frustration through body gestures, etc., could be observed through this kind of data collection procedure, which is pivotal for narrative inquiry. On the other hand, one of the problems with this activity is that the "researcher may not have good attending and observing skills" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.188). Therefore, the audiovisual recording was a crucial element for this research.

I took notes about the experiences of the international students, which were descriptive and reflective, and the date, time and place of observation were included in the notes

(Angrosino, 2007). During the observation in the sessions, I6 started with a casual conversation to make the environment more friendly and started with limited objectives to observe and take notes, and later recorded and reflected on 'personal hunches, confusions, ideas, initial interpretations, and breakthroughs' (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.168). According to Emerson et al. (2011), writing a thick description of events and people is pivotal. In addition, after completing the observation, I expressed gratitude to the participants, informed them about how the research would utilize the data, and provided them with information on how to access it. A suitable observational procedure is pivotal for this study because observation of body language, voice modulation of participants, physical gestures, pauses and silence in a specific situation continually exposes new findings during specific periods in a narrative description (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, as an ex-theatre practitioner, I had rehearsed the research questioning process before interviewing the participants, and I was familiar with observational procedures, as observation is vital to the performer and performance-related fields (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Donnell, 2011).

3.3.3 Documents

I kept a journal for authentic documentation during the data collection period (Creswell & Poth, 2018). During the interview, I asked participants to share personal documents, such as diaries, social media posts, or letters, if they wished to do so. I also inquired about specific emotions, like grief, on an individual basis. I wanted to use those documents for my interpretive purposes to explore the journey of grief and hope experienced by graduate international students at MUN.

3.3.4 Audiovisual and Digital Materials

Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested recording and examining video materials, websites, and social media posts, collecting sound, gathering phone and computer-based messages, and examining ritual objects, which are effective methods for collecting data nowadays. While conducting the interview, I kept the options for online and in-person interviews open. Before conducting the interview, I obtained permission from the participants to record the audiovisual interview. I requested that participants sign the consent form in person or via email to maintain the ethical integrity of the study. I used video recordings of the online and in-person interviews to jot down observations, maintaining a descriptive and reflexive overview of the research. Therefore, I took notes during the interviews so that I could use them during the data analysis for verification purposes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Next, I described the procedure for recording data.

3.4 Recording of Data

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), in narrative qualitative research methods, a researcher requires detailed information about a specific event to explore the situation thoroughly. I followed the steps below to employ a thorough data recording technique in narrative inquiry, which includes semi-structured, open-ended interviews, observations, documentation, and audiovisual recordings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.4.1 Formulating for Data Collection

During the data collection preparation, I obtained ethical approvals from the ICEHR committee of MUN and informed consent from research participants (see Appendix A and C). I used the research objectives and questions to guide the data collection procedure.

Additionally, I selected participants with relevant experiences and viewpoints on the topic of my project. To elicit rich narratives, I prepared interview protocols with open-ended questions. During the interview session, it was necessary to determine the scope and focus of observations and prepare a guide for observation. In addition, I reviewed the relevant documents (including journals, interview questions and forms) and sources during the study. I used appropriate audiovisual equipment during the data collection procedure, which is pivotal (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.4.2   *Preparing and Conducting Semi-Structured Open-Ended Interviews*

The most important thing for the interviewer is to listen to the interviewee actively rather than speaking frequently, which may interrupt the participants' fluency (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). So, I encouraged the participants to elaborate on their emotions, thoughts, and experiences. Moreover, I mutually schedule interviews with the participants at convenient locations and times. For the guidelines, I used the interview protocol (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). First, at the beginning of each interview session, I explained the purpose of the research to the participants by establishing rapport. Secondly, there was flexibility for the participants in the interview session while they shared their narratives. I told them they could stop the interview anytime if they felt uncomfortable. In addition, as grief is a sensitive topic, during and after the interview, participants may face challenging situations related to emotion. Therefore, I provided all of the participants with various resources they could utilize to mitigate challenges or emotional distress if they confronted this kind of situation during the interview. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), it is better to have plenty of space while writing the interviewee's comments and responses during the questioning time. I gave the participants space to talk about their experiences

during the interview. On average, each interview consisted of 50 minutes. During the interview, I encouraged them to talk about the first day of their class as an international student so that they could chronologically explore their journey. Gradually, I prompted them to talk about their feelings, challenges, strategies to overcome grief, shifts in life, growth and hope. As no new information was found, I conducted three interviews until the data was saturated. However, most of the time, I tried to listen to the participants carefully and engaged myself in effective listening so that participants could feel connected with me. At the same time, they described their journey of grief. Therefore, I took audiovisual recordings during the interview sessions to go through the interviews for detailed purposes. I explained that part in the audiovisual section of my methodology chapter. Finally, I took detailed interview notes to capture the key points and memorable quotes.

3.4.3 Implementation of Observations

The use of an observational protocol plays an inseparable part in recording information (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I kept a diary where I recorded reflective notes to document my thoughts and insights while making observations. In addition, it is also necessary to keep track of the participants' interactions, behaviours and nonverbal cues. In narrative research, the most popular forms of informal recording information include 'jottings' (Emerson et al., 2011), daily logs, and descriptive summaries (Marshall & Rossman, 2015). The researcher and participants' informal and formal activities were observed and documented during the procedure to provide a chronological view of the emotional journey of the international students in memos. However, audiovisual recordings also helped provide more detailed observations regarding any behavioural changes during the conversation while

discussing sensitive topics related to grief, emotions, challenges, relationships, support systems and effective listening.

3.4.4   Process of Document Collection and Analysis

Previously, I discussed that I would collect diaries, letters, and social media posts written by the participants to gain additional insights into their stories for the research. However, participants did not provide diaries or letters as documents. Instead, they permitted me to extract information from their social media posts. So, I extracted relevant passages from the collected documents, like social media posts and photos, to review and analyze the content (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used their posts as quotations from their timeline to illustrate how they utilized social media to share their journey of grief and hope as international students and to engage with their peers. The above-mentioned overall procedures were essential for identifying themes in the narratives and having a deeper insight into their story of grief and hope (Riessman, 2008).

3.4.5   Recording of Audiovisual

I set up the recording equipment in a non-intrusive manner. Davidson (1996) emphasized the importance of developing backup copies of computer files, including audiovisual content and various documents such as interviews and observations, to capture high-quality audiovisual recordings. So, I kept backup copies of all my documents in a secure place in case of unavoidable situations. While recording the audio, researchers must ensure that the tape size matches the transcriber's device when capturing the audio (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.175). Minimization of disruptions during the recording period is pivotal. Moreover, before processing all the procedures, I got permission from the participants to make video and

audio recordings of the interviews and observations, which helped me to transcribe the research results. In the consent form, I mentioned that if participants disagree with video recordings, their interview will be audio recorded. Luckily, three of them agreed with the audiovisual recordings, which helped me immensely during the transcription of their interviews. For example, when they described their thoughts from their memories and relived the journey during the interview, participants expressed their emotions through body and verbal language, which would have been impossible to capture if I had not gone through the recordings several times during the transcription procedures.

3.4.6 *Data Analysis and Interpretation Recording*

For data analysis purposes, I manually wrote the transcript by listening to and observing participants' audiovisual recordings multiple times. I included participants' pauses, sighs, and body language along with their narratives in the transcripts as the journey from grief to hope demonstrated variations in expressing the emotions of the participants. For example, when they talked about their grieving moments, some expressed their feelings by crying, sighs and pauses. One of the participants also showed emotions by putting one hand on the chest as if the participant was carrying a massive burden in the heart while reliving the journey of grief during the interview. I recorded the above-mentioned expressions of emotions of the participants and mentioned them in the third bracket of their quotations. For member-checking purposes, I sent the selected quotations from the interview transcripts to the participants individually. All the participants responded to the process within seven days after reviewing their selected quotations. Member-checking is important in building trust between the researcher and the participants (DeVault, 2017). In addition, I used a thematic method to interpret my data, where memos played a vital role. Research questions and objectives played

an important role in the interpretation of data as well. Emerging themes, connections, and patterns within the participants' narratives were identified during this process. I used direct narratives, quotes and examples to support the analysis. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), quotations in a manuscript should be as illustrative as possible and should be analyzed, integrated, and contextualized.

3.4.7   Data Privacy and Confidentiality Procedure

I maintained the confidentiality of the research by adhering to the rules and procedures for data protection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, I protected the gathered data by preventing access and storing it safely in my drive. I also set codes for participants to anonymize the data. The names I used in the findings chapter for the participants are not their real names to maintain the data privacy and confidentiality procedures. However, the gender of the participants was not anonymized as I also compared their experience of grief by comparing gender in the themes as well. The quotation I used of the participants from the transcription also revealed their gender as they talked about their personal experiences. I did not use any of the participants' real names in my research to maintain their anonymity and confidentiality (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.5 Data Analysis

The most popular form of data analysis in qualitative narrative inquiry is thematic analysis (Clandinin, 2013). According to Riessman (2008), thematic analysis is when the researcher examines 'what' is said or written throughout the data collection process. In this process, the researcher needs to familiarize themselves with the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I aimed to have a comprehensive

understanding of the narratives and themes emerging from the participants through this approach. Additionally, it is crucial to accurately represent the participants' remarks, including pauses, tones, and nonverbal cues from the interview recording (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To manage and organize my data, I created and organized files. I securely stored the audiovisual recordings and documents from social media on my personal device. I did not use any software. Instead, I analyzed my data manually for the coding procedure. I took notes while reading the transcripts and social media posts of the participants. The two research questions played a vital role in the written memos: Is there any place for grief among international master's students in the Faculty of Education at MUN? How can sharing grief create an era of hope in the academic sector for current international master's students of the Faculty of Education at MUN? The written memos led me to develop the codes and summaries, reflecting on my thinking by considering the research questions. As a researcher, to have a better understanding of the interviews rather than beginning to break them in order to achieve codes, it is crucial that I read the interview transcripts multiple times and immerse myself in the detailed procedure (Agar, 1980). According to Emerson et al. (2011, p.145), frequent reading helps the text generate new ideas "as if they had been written by a stranger." First, I scanned all three transcripts, audiovisual recordings and social media posts of the participants to organize the major ideas for analysis. Later, I looked into my field notes, which described my observations of the interviews, interview transcriptions, and audiovisual recordings and did not take into account the questions of the research to see what participants said during the interviews. To form initial categories, I reflected on the broader thoughts presented in the data transcriptions and documents collected from social media. In this stage, I found 12 categories, and to justify the categories, I looked for multiple pieces of evidence.

Furthermore, I used three levels: segment memos, document memos, and project memos for analysis purposes, following the procedure described by Creswell and Poth (2018, p.189). First, I segmented what was said in the transcriptions, audiovisual recordings, and social media documents to describe the journey of grief and hope of the participants in finding the initial codes. Researchers identified this procedure as a precoding memo (Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016). What I have discovered as observations is also included in segment memos to capture the insights by reading and observing audiovisual recordings and specific information provided by the data. Second, I documented growing ideas by reviewing multiple files to identify codes for the themes and compare them across the research queries. Third, the use of the project memo helped me capture the significant idea of grief and hope from the narratives and documents of the participants. Lastly, I dated and formed the above-mentioned distinguishable captions for the memos I documented to retrieve them as needed easily. In this regard, Janesick (2011, p. 148) emphasized discovering insights through 'hunch, intuition, and serendipitous occurrences,' which will assist in finding the thick and influential enlightenments of the research backgrounds, framework, and data. Moreover, I continued the memoing procedure all the way to the conclusions of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Next, I described the procedures of how I interpreted the codes into themes for my research on the grief and hope of international students. Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 189) highlighted this process as the 'heart of qualitative data analysis.' According to Creswell and Poth (2018), coding helps the researcher gain in-depth knowledge of the writings collected from interviews, documents, and observations. First, I familiarized myself with the interview transcripts of the participants' stories of grief and hope. Additionally, I visited my audiovisual

recordings multiple times as well. I used manual coding as the number of participants in the research was small. My memos helped me to find the initial coding. I chose lean coding because I did not want to be overwhelmed by the amount of code as a new researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 190), lean coding starts with a shortlist of initial codes (five or six categories with shorthand levels or codes) and then expands these initial codes as necessary rather than beginning with elaborate lists of codes during the data analysis procedure. During this process, I began with a short list of 3 codes, then expanded it to 8-9 codes and, as a reduction procedure, captured two final codes for each theme. Moreover, I choose the code or label representing the narratives' significant units. These codes represented emotions, incidents, strategies, challenges, media, experiences, relationships, or other related information about the grieving journey of the participants. The expanded codes were descriptive to reflect the content for analysis purposes. I used a diary to document the codes from the transcripts, audiovisual recordings, and social media posts by reviewing and re-reviewing frequently. Third, after multiple review processes of the codes, the final code list consisted of 12 categories of information. Examinations of each transcript piece by piece, noting and categorizing important words, phrases or sections that deal with grief, were part of this process. Furthermore, I did not use predetermined codes from previous literature to follow the traditional qualitative research process. For the audiovisual material coding process, it is pivotal to consider what kind of codes perfectly fit the topics, the development of new codes, and the themes connected to other data sources (Grbich, 2013).

Fourth, to develop the themes, I organized the codes into potential themes related to grief and hope and also looked for variations, similarities, and connections across the participants' narratives and memos (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To form the preliminary themes,

I grouped similar codes. I examined and refined the themes found in the international students' interview transcripts and identified them in the memos. In addition, I analyzed the connections among the topics and considered their consistency and applicability to the research issue. To effectively convey the main ideas in the data, I divided, combined, or renamed the themes as needed. During the process, I identified two sub-themes for each theme, which is a total of 12 sub-themes. However, I combined those sub-themes into one theme and reflected on the gathered information within six themes for the study. I did not look for how many times a code appeared from each dataset, whereas I looked at the number of passages associated with each code. Researchers argued that the counting process of frequency of the codes illustrates the quantitative systematic research procedure rather than the qualitative research approach, and this kind of count does not reflect that sometimes codes of a passage may show opposite perspectives (Bazeley, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hays & Sings, 2012). Fifth, I created a visual representation in the form of a flow chart to illustrate how I extracted the themes, which facilitated the analysis of the interconnections, variations, and contradictions between the themes and the narratives (see Appendix E). During this process, the participants' underlying meanings, narratives and experiences created a deeper interpretation of the themes. Considering the broader relational aspects of Hendry et al.'s (2018) conceptual framework, where relationships, listening, and the unknown aspects that participants reflected on during their grief experiences are reflected in my personal interpretation. A mind map has been created to illustrate the impact of relationships, listening, and previously unknown aspects of the grief and hope journey (see Appendix F), which influenced the understanding of grief among international students during their study period.

Lastly, narrative inquiry is both 'reflexive' and 'reflective,' where the analysis process involves continuous revision, reflection, and engagement with the data (Clandinin, 2013, p. 83). I visited and revisited each participant's transcripts, audiovisual recordings, and social media posts multiple times during this process so that the findings chapter reflects the authentic response of the participants and justifies the researcher's interpretation. Moreover, I clearly and compellingly present the findings in the narrative analysis report. To illustrate the themes and strengthen the interpretations, I provided pertinent quotes and passages from the participants' accounts. The overall report emphasized the unique insights that the participants' stories provide in representing the context of the body of research on grieving.

3.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

According to Hendry et al. (2018, p. 57), "these methods are designed to establish and verify truth (and, more specifically, the truth-telling of our informants)." Research is still seen as representation. We invest our trust in our methods, not in our relationship (Hendry et al., 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the trustworthiness of narrative inquiry depends on key elements like credibility, dependability, coherence, transferability, and confirmability. In addition, to strengthen the legitimacy of my qualitative research, I first confirmed the accuracy and credibility of the data content. I cross-checked the information from various perspectives (triangulation) by revisiting audiovisual recordings and transcripts of the interviews, documents of observations, and social media posts during the data collection process. I created an audit trail by documenting my memos through multiple reviews, which helped to develop the coding and thematic analysis and assist in the credibility of the research. Researchers emphasized that memos help to develop an audit trail, which can be recovered and scrutinized whenever

needed (Silver & Lewins, 2014). I explained the 'transferability' so that the findings of my research study can be transferred to another context. For other researchers to use my findings to generalize and apply them in their qualitative study, I fully described my settings for data collection, the number of participants, and the techniques by which I collected my research findings and results. To maintain the trustworthiness of the research, I shared my selected quotations from their transcripts with the project participants, and they had the option to modify any part of the quotations. The procedure of member-checking in the research increases the validity, accuracy and reliability of the information gathered during the interview (Barbour & Schostak, 2005).

Along with critically reflecting on the study methodology, I also discussed my biases in relation to sampling methodologies, demonstrating a methodical approach to data processing, interpretation, and conclusion. In addition, the study's dependability has been established by documenting any changes and unexpected events throughout the investigation. So, the integrity and transparency of researchers' approaches to the study process, data analysis, interaction with participants, and presentation equally influence the credibility of narrative research. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2004), narrative inquiry entails researchers' interpretation of participants' stories, which is inherently interpretive and subjective. It is pivotal to mention that narrative inquiry can be made credible by following accepted procedures and principles in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Next, I discuss the ethical considerations of my research.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the research, I gathered the approval of the institutional review board and got permission to select the site and the participants to conduct the study. Audiovisual recording and collection of documentation (observation, interview, and social media posts) helped me verify the data described in my research. It is crucial that my documentation accurately captures the perspectives of the participants I observed and interviewed, as well as interprets specific phrases from the transcripts accurately, along with behaviours and events. Additionally, I asked my supervisor to help me review my themes and findings to minimize my biases, which allowed me to establish a more objective perspective on the research process and data interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Each participant also signed a consent document outlining the session's voluntariness, confidentiality, anonymity, benefits of the research, purpose of the information, and study goals (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 56). After five years of research (per Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research), I will dispose of all the evidence I collected from the participants to protect their anonymity. Finally, in the final report, the names of the participants have been obscured as I addressed them anonymously to protect their identity. The study material I collected during the research was electronically encrypted and physically secured during the member-checking period. Participants could delete or add more information to their selected quotations before finalizing the research findings. Participants were informed about the sensitivity of the research, which may raise the possibility of emotional distress for them as they will reveal their grief journey during the interview, so I provided them with resources on mental health

crisis lines, MUN wellness and counselling centre numbers and general counselling, NL address of the website. I informed the participants of the research regarding the procedure I would maintain to ensure the confidentiality of the study.

3.8 Researcher Stance

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), a key component of the narrative research is the researcher's perspective, which is linked to their values, personality, approach and beliefs. Interpretation of the data and pattern of the research process depends on the researcher's attitude in every narrative research genre. For example, I started my journey in Canada at Memorial University as an international student of the Faculty of Education and my experience, personal beliefs and values influenced me to conduct this research with international students rather than with domestic students.

In this process, I actively listened to the participants' experiences and stories to establish a trustworthy environment so the storyteller feels comfortable sharing their journey. It is pivotal for the narrative inquirer to become a good listener rather than imposing or expressing their thoughts in front of the participants (Bourdieu, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Creswell & Poth, 2018). During the observation, I reflected on the participants' perceptions so that it helped the reader understand how the interpretation and presence influenced the process. However, it is difficult for the researcher to stay unbiased by their understanding and experiences (Bourdieu, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Riessman, 2008).

In addition, I carefully examined the participants' documents for my study; I respected the materials entirely because they were essential to the research. I kept in mind my presence and its impact on the study while recording the audiovisual elements. Lastly, it took at least

two months to get a thick description of every individual, as I have chosen narrative methods to conduct my qualitative analysis. Each participant participated in one interview separately, and the overall interview finished within an average of 50 minutes.

Research-related grief can deepen one's understanding of the emotional, physical and psychological complexity an individual experiences during the journey of loss and challenges in a new environment. When an individual experiences loss and distress, participating in grief-related research can give an individual a sense of empowerment and validation. Stories of grief and hope of international students will help the academic sector policymakers initiate an effective support system for prospective international graduates. Moreover, the effectiveness of various interventions varies from culture to culture and depends on the specific circumstances of an individual's experience. Lastly, this study supports the development of a healthy atmosphere, adaptability, and recovery skills that can identify the numerous protective elements for distressed and grieving international graduates.

3.9 Limitations

This qualitative research's subjective and interpretive aspects can reflect my personal preferences and ideas about the subject, which may impact how the study has been conducted. My interviewing technique has some drawbacks, including time constraints, the possibility of inaccurately interpreting participant responses, and the possibility that some individuals may feel uncomfortable participating in the interview process as they were asked to share experiences of grief or distress during their study period. Utilizing observation to get data also has certain disadvantages. For instance, participants' usual behaviour may change if they know they are being watched. Researchers frequently only observe what they want to see during their observations, so I stayed

mindful of my bias when observing my research participants. Therefore, I maintained eye contact with the participants, staying connected by listening to them actively and writing observations only when they finished answering each question.

Since I gathered the experiences of three international students at a particular session, this study did not address the larger populations and may lack generalizability. The diversity of my study's population may only partially represent the variety of the context. Consequently, purposeful data selection narrows the possibilities of including certain voices that may contribute to the research project. Current experiences may bias the participants' perspective on past experiences. In a natural setting, it is challenging for the researcher to maintain consistency across observations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The data collection, analysis and transcription of narratives can become intensive and time-consuming. However, proper implementation of extensive resources, practice, triangulation, reflexivity, and peer support can help mitigate the limitations of my research project (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Therefore, awareness of these limitations enabled me to overcome biases and have a fruitful outcome from this project.

3.10 Summary

The chapter discussed the choice of method, study population and data collection procedure. In addition, the data collection procedure explained the various patterns I used to collect the data, such as interviews, observations, and documents from social media, along with my biases. The data recording explained the interview questions, the observation of the data during the interview and from the audiovisual recordings of the participants, and the kind of documents extracted from social media. The data analysis section illustrated the uses of

memos to generate initial codes for interpreting the themes and described the process of lean

coding procedures followed by the researcher. Next, I discussed the research's trustworthiness

and ethical considerations. I explained how I maintained the credibility of the study through

an audit trail, followed member-checking procedures, anonymized the identification of data

for ethical considerations, collected signed consent forms, and informed participants

regarding proper resources, as sharing grief can create emotionally distressful situations for

the participants. Finally, I showed the limitations of the methods in my paper. In the next

chapter, I discuss the findings of my study.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Narratives of Participants

The findings from the narrative accounts of participants based on their audiovisual individual interviews, observations, and social media posts are described below- the first section centred on the summary of the narratives of the participants and the second section is focused on the themes after analyzing the data. The participants did not review the first part of the narrative accounts because it was my interpretation of their stories. I shared selected quotations from their transcripts with each participant for the accuracy of the research, also called a member-checking procedure. The second part is about the thematic analysis of the participants' narratives, where individual interviews, observations, social media posts, transcripts of the interview, and memos played crucial roles in finding the common threads among the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, the themes of the narratives are not reviewed by the participants.

4.1.1 Sandra

Sandra came to Canada as an M.Ed. student from an Asian developing country in August 2021. She started her first day at the MUN Faculty of Education in September with mixed emotions as an international student. This is the first time she has been away from her family. Initially, she felt nervous as she would study in a second language, and the academic environment differed from her home country. First, she hoped that if she returned to her country after graduation, she would get a promotion in the job she used to do. However, later, she decided to stay in Canada and bring her family here. She gradually started to miss her family members during her first year of study and felt lonely. These, apart from family

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moments during her study period and new challenges, took her into a grieving situation. She started to keep herself aloof from her community.

The journey of living far away from family, accommodation-related challenges, and academic expectations pushed her into a corner, which hampered her not only mentally but also physically and emotionally. In addition, she faced impairment in her academic progress due to her grieving journey. Furthermore, she had some physical issues, sleepless nights, and a lack of appetite, which made her weaker. Eventually, she went to see the doctor, who recommended taking enough food, sleeping more and not being stressed. In the meantime, she tried to reach out to the MUN wellness center but could not get proper help. However, in the meantime, she did not follow the recommendation of her doctor to take enough food for her own good because she felt numb most of the time.

To get rid of the journey of sadness, she decided to visit her family next year during her study time. During that time, life pushed her into a different challenging situation. As the time came near to see family members, she purchased things for her loved ones, and she started saving gift cards for her children, as in her country, they are not familiar with this kind of system, which was a surprise for her girls. During that time, most of the gift cards were stolen from her home, where she had just stayed for only two months, and she did not sign any agreement with the homeowner as she would not stay there for a long time. When she informed the homeowner about the issue she faced, instead of taking responsibility or solving the problem, they forced her to leave the room she had rented fifteen days earlier on her journey home. She cried a lot and reached out to her friends and informed them that she was homeless. Somehow, she managed to stay at a friend's house for six days as she did not have enough money to rent a hotel room or an Airbnb.

She went to her home country to get rid of the grief she was facing at that time and did not want to come back to pursue her studies further. Her husband encouraged her to return to Canada to finish her studies for her career progress. After coming to Canada, she completed two programs from two different institutions and kept herself busy with work and academic progress. She continued to talk with her family members, prayed to God and kept herself busy in the workplace, which helped build patience and hope and kept her belief alive that she could overcome any situation.

4.1.2 Ron

Ron came from an African developing country to Canada as an international student to pursue a Master's degree from the MUN Faculty of Education. He started his classes online in May 2021 and began to go to in-person classes in September 2021. On the first day of an in-person class, he was "happy" to meet new peers and felt "anxious, nervous and scared." The new country and academic environment kept him cautious because he did not know anyone in the class. Time went by, and he started to face racism during his study period with MUN outside the academic environment. In the beginning, he was unable to understand if that was racism or not. However, gradually, it became clear to him that he was facing racism, though he had prior knowledge before coming to Canada that people do not act differently with the colour of people here. These out-of-the-blue moments forced him to isolate himself from the outer world, which impacted his academic progress because he started to miss classes. He became afraid as his grades fell, and he knew that he could not fail because he had already spent lots of money to pursue a North American degree.

He tried to reach out to his family and friends to share what he was facing and feeling due to the circumstances. The suggestions he got from them were "It can happen" and "Let it

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go." However, to him, "Letting it go is not easy!" In addition, he reached out to the MUN wellness center. He booked a session for therapy, but that did not help because he felt disconnected from the therapist, as they are not people of colour, and they will not understand something with which they have no prior experience. To him, feeling a person's pain requires the opposite person to face that situation or have previous knowledge of the problem. However, he mentioned that it happened to him, but it does not mean it would happen to everyone.

To overcome grief, he began listening to music and talking with himself. He needs to understand that he cannot control other people's thoughts, but he can control his own thoughts and keep in mind that not every person will like him. So, it must be rooted in his mind that he is unique and has done nothing wrong. Listening to music and knowing himself helped him to overcome his grief, and he graduated from the Faculty of Education successfully. To him, international students need to stay connected with their community, and he created a group of MUN graduates to help international students stay connected and share their experiences.

4.1.3 Vuslat

Vuslat came to Canada from Turkey in 2021 to pursue a master's degree at the Faculty of Education of MUN, and she arrived here with her two children alone without her husband due to the aftermath of COVID-19. She wanted to do something as an educator and was initially excited about this great opportunity. Her father encouraged her immensely and felt proud of her brave step because it was a massive step for a woman in her culture to move somewhere with children when her husband could not join her simultaneously due to COVID-19. The first couple of months were hectic for her; managing studies, jobs, household chores, and children simultaneously overwhelmed her, but she used to talk with her father, who stood

beside her like an iron man. Though Canada is not the first country where she has lived apart from her parents, this is the first time she has been away from her husband. Later, her spouse joined her after a couple of months, and she gradually tried to adjust to what she was dealing with along with her family, though she had to wear many hats.

However, life had another shock for her! Five months after her spouse joined her in St. John's, NL, Canada, without showing any critical symptoms after taking the COVID-19 vaccination, her father died. She talked with her father when he was in the hospital, and he told her that he would speak to her tomorrow. He died the next day, so that tomorrow never happened. She had never imagined that this day would come. It was as if she were watching a film. She was in denial for a long time.

Primarily, with the support of her family, she handled the situation. Though she thought of taking counselling, she never did because she wanted to express her emotions in her own language, not in English. After the death of her father, her friends, colleagues, and teachers were concerned about her, and they used to call her if she needed any help. She mentioned that it was the most significant advantage. However, during that time, staying away from her home country and the busy life of Canada pulled her away from going deeper into the level of grieving. She did not like talking with anyone other than her family about her feelings, and especially shared how sad she felt with her spouse. She mentioned, "I cried, shouted, yelled, and closed myself into a room for some time, but I knew I had to be strong for my family!" The reality was that, rather than grieving, she needed to finish her degree and get a job; otherwise, all of them would be deported from Canada.

She started to pray to God for her father's afterlife and to get rid of feeling suffocated at home; she used to walk a lot to stay away from grief-related emotions. The most

challenging aspect of grieving is that life taught her to wear a mask in front of people so that no one could see how sad she was internally. She still cries whenever she sees her son wearing the suits of her late father. Her son comforts her, but she is unable to make anyone understand how tough it is for her to live life without her father. In her grieving process, she realized how much she loved her father. She mentioned, "I realized how much I love them and how I did not say it many times to his face. Maybe I did not take the chance to do that, right, and I realized I was not ready for his loss like I was not expecting him to die [pause]." She thinks MUN needs to be aware of helping international students in the way they need because "you cannot give the same medicine to everyone." For international students, she suggested finding their community people, staying connected with family, and keeping themselves busy in life, which can help them overcome grief.

4.2 Emerging Themes

Based on the analysis of interviews, observation, and social media posts of the participants, emerging themes are discussed below. Variations, connections, and contradictions in participants' narratives influenced the selection of themes for this research. Themes have been selected for research manually. Reading and re-reading, multiple observations, listening and re-listening to audiovisual recordings, and documenting social media posts and pictures, transcripts and memos helped me identify segments from my data relevant to my research questions. I used memos to extract codes from the data, which assisted in selecting the broader themes for the research.

4.2.1   Reasons & Challenging Aspects of Grief

Various factors play significant roles in instigating grieving situations among international students (Seah, 2008). The participant agreed during the interview that they faced grief during their study period while they were pursuing their M.Ed. program in the Faculty of Education of MUN. Grief came into their life as a mystery they did not think of before starting their journey as international students. Different kinds of aspects created massive sadness and distress, which are the key elements of grief. Staying away from family, facing racism and losing loved ones: these three different factors initiated grieving aspects for the three participants. Sandra faced grief as she was staying away from her family for the first time in her life. For Ron, racism broke him badly, which he did not expect before coming to Canada. Vuslat never imagined that she would lose her father during her study time; that news shocked her. Sandra stated that,

> I went through a lot by that time [chuckling with frustration]! So, if I go back, like when I came here, I thought that I would be able to bring my family here soon, like if not in the first semester, maybe second or third semester, by that time I would be able to get them here, but that did not happen for some reasons which are still unknown to me like why it is taking a too long time for my family or me. However, as soon as I realized that it was getting tougher day by day, I started getting panic attacks.

Ron said, "…there is always a belief that Canada is non-racist, and you do not have any racism issues here. Then, the first time I faced racism, I did not really see that racism because, you know, like, when in my experience, you do not know what to call it right!" He gradually understood that it was racism after facing it multiple times. He learned the unknown. According to Vuslat, "My significant sadness started with the separation of the

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family. I have never been apart from my husband; it was my first time taking the kids with me here. I left him in Vietnam…" Vuslat continued,

…he came here in March, and finding a job for him was another big issue, another stress. I was the only person working as a student, doing lots of work on my own. MUN, student, and teacher, like many hats I had to wear. Moreover, I felt like I was draining my energy a lot. And then, boom, five months later, I lost my dad, and that was a sudden loss. [pause] He was not sick, but became sick after the COVID-19 vaccination, and the vaccines had a reverse effect on him.

During their grieving journey, three participants also confronted various challenging aspects of grief. Three of them made themselves isolated from the outside world and only shared their feelings with family members. Some of the challenges for the three were surrounding aspects of daily life, such as insecure accommodations, daily life expenses, and always wearing a mask in front of others so no one could know how the griever was feeling. One of the participants shared that when trying to communicate with friends during the initial stage of grief, it was challenging to manage time because of a busy life in Canada. Sandra had no interest in eating or going outside with friends, which made her weak physically and mentally as well. She mentioned that "never-ending waiting" for her family was the most challenging thing for her in a different country. Sandra stated,

So, the grief or sadness started growing; I tried my best to cope with this situation by mingling with more students or friends or by roaming around. But I found that I was not interested in doing all these things; I was not interested in roaming around the city, enjoying anything, visiting, or even going for a walk. Like every time I felt like I was all

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alone here, I was not with my family, so that thing was rooted in my mind, and eventually it grew, and the wait time was longer and longer.

Ron said, "Sometimes for me, if I am a bit sad, it makes everything slow for me, where I feel like I do not want to do that; I just want to sit somewhere or sleep for a couple of days or maybe just do nothing or more watch movies, and just sit down." In addition, his statement also disclosed that sometimes people do not know how to react or distinguish between sympathy and empathy. Ron mentioned,

I remember that I reached out to my siblings, and I said, Well, I think Canada is a bit off, there is a bit of racism in here, and they said, I should not just worry about that, but I should just let it go. However, letting it go is not easy; a simple word to say!

On the other hand, after losing her father, Vuslat stayed isolated from friends.

I did not want to be around people when they were happy, especially with their families. It was not jealousy, but it was a big thing that was missing in my life. Right! There was a big gap; it would never be filled; nobody could fill it. It was a big, hollow, grey emptiness; I did not want to go out with my friends or talk much to people because I had nothing to tell them.

During the grieving journey, Sandra even faced accommodation problems, and she was homeless due to an unavoidable situation. She mentioned:

However, I ensured my purse and bank cards were with me! So, that was a situation at that time; I was going through so many things, so many hurdles, and at the same time, this kind of incident happened to me, and when, [pause, trying to jot down the thoughts], they could, like it was time for them to comfort me in this situation, they never did that instead they asked me to leave that house. Moreover, I contacted many people; I only

know the [community name] students here. So, I reached out to so many people. I cannot blame them, because most of them lived in a shared house with a single room and bed, so they couldn't accommodate me. At that time, I was feeling hopeless about where I would live for the next 15 days until my departure. So, then that was a moment, that was a situation for me, like I was for the first time in my life, I was homeless.

4.2.2   Academic Expectations & Support

While participants were facing the grief of their lives, academic pressure created challenging aspects for each of them. Three of them struggled to reach their academic expectations. The grief influenced two of the participants' academic results, from which one of the participants was unable to recover in future courses. Ron mentioned,

It affected me, especially in terms of my academics, where I was not taking school seriously. I did not enjoy attending classes or completing my assignments, and I was falling behind. I can remember when I had some failing grades. I was saying no! It hit me that if I failed, I would have to return to my country, which is way worse. Having spent that amount of money, you are here, and then you must return to your country because you have failed. [pause]

However, he did not seek academic support. Instead, he tried to overcome the situation on his own. Sandra emphasized, "...that time I was in deep, like trauma kind of thing [chuckling with frustration], thinking that I am not able to do anything. So that also gradually impacted my results in the fourth semester. I had low grades in two courses, which I was unable to recover from later. In addition, Sandra faced biased behaviour from some of the instructors toward students, which forced the participant to drop one or two of her courses

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during the saddest moment of her life. However, she found most of the instructors mindful of the international students. She shared that the different academic environments and expectations created new challenges:

> The educational system is different in different countries; sometimes, the writing standard may not be up to the mark, so they can give some more support or another chance to write it, right? Some professors do it; it's not the case that everyone is like this. Some give you chances, just as not all professors do. I realized I do not know [sighs, due to hesitation] if it sounds rude; I found that some professors are biased toward any particular group, such as a certain color or things. So, yeah, I also experienced this situation, so I had to discontinue one or two courses…

However, among the three participants, two found all professors mindful. Furthermore, Vuslat got support from the professors during her grieving period. Vuslat emphasized that 'my professors, friends, and everyone supported me then. It was the biggest aid and advantage.'

4.2.3   Dealing with Challenges and Significant Shifts in Life

While managing the challenges of grief, participants tried to keep themselves busy with jobs and academic life. Two of them stated that it was difficult to make others understand how they felt, except to family. Therefore, Vuslat and Sandra kept themselves busy with their work and continued to share with their family what they were facing and feeling, especially their spouses. One of the participants even visited their home country to overcome grief during her study period. Sandra said,

However, after one and a half years, I could no longer hold myself back, and I visited them for one month, or five weeks. That is how I kept pushing myself; my husband drove me a lot to finish because he always reminded me that it was my dream, and I must fulfill it.

On the contrary, Vuslat believes that having been in her home country during her grief would have had a greater impact on her due to the mournful atmosphere. She said,

… if I were in my hometown with my mom, with all of those relatives, cousins and everyone, crying, shouting, mourning and grieving, I would go, I think [showing gesture through two hands to show how deeper it could be] deeper, right!

At that moment, she had lots of responsibilities on her shoulders. Furthermore, she mentioned,

I had to shake myself and say, 'Hey, life is going on. ' Moreover, I had to do something to finish my studies as soon as possible so my child could start university and high school. I have two kids about to start schooling. And [shaking two shoulders, ups and down, to express surrendering self to the situation] I think I gave up on grieving and my sadness and said, Ok, I must swallow a big thing, a big stone, put it here, [with two hands pressing the left chest, showing as if putting the burden on the heart or soul]
Interviewer: [sighs]

In addition, Sandra emphasized that working full-time during her study period helped her manage her grief, as she remained busy most of the time with her work and academic responsibilities. She said,

However, things changed when I started working full-time and realized that I perform

better when I keep myself busy. Yes, it happened in November or December 2022, when

we were working full-time. I started working full-time, and then I realized that I should

keep myself busy with something so that I do not remember that I am not with the family

or that they are not coming to me anytime soon.

Ron thought differently from Vuslat and Sandra. He talked with himself and worked

on his grieving journey. Ron stated<

So, during those times, I did not realize that I should not let all that affect me, but even if

it did, I found it hard to think about things that could make me feel better, and I said I

must fix myself with words, and that helps me find different ways.

In addition, he believes everything is in the hands of the victims because people can

control their thoughts, not others. He discovered the unknown about himself and the reality of

the world, and he could not let it go; he needed to work on it. Ron shared,

… I do not think there is a way you can manage racism. It is just like being in a country

or a place where everyone is not nice to you. Is there a way to manage that? There is no

way to manage that because you cannot want and tell them to please like me; you cannot,

as I said, you cannot control what people say, but you can control how it affects you.

Furthermore, Vuslat mentioned how she kept pushing herself during her grieving

journey. She said,

I thought it was not the time to stop and cry, drag myself from one bed to another, or

move from one sofa to another, but I needed to be productive; I needed to do something

else that could replace this huge weight with something valuable. I think my job saved me there.

All three participants worked on their grief by knowing the unknown about the reality of life. People discover themselves in various challenging situations, which also happened with three of them. Two participants felt rituals like prayers helped them during challenging situations to become connected with themselves and their loved ones. All three participants learned through sharing, two participants' relationships strengthened with family, and three o of them discovered the unknown about the world.

4.2.4   *Accessibility of Support Networks and Awareness of Professional Support*

The three international students contacted their support networks, such as friends and family. Three of them had immense trust in their family. Ron tried to reach out to his friends, but as Canada is a busy country and his friends were busy with their own lives, he found it challenging to get support (face-to-face meetings) from his friends at that moment. Ron discussed the busy life of international students and how difficult it is to find the time to meet with friends:

> …you know, I had a couple of people. I said I had friends; there were my friends then, so everyone is busy here; it is Canada, right? So even if sometimes you want to hang out with your friends because you are feeling tired or sad, you reach out to them, and they say, Oh, sorry, I am working. Moreover, you would like to say, ok, how about tomorrow? I am working, and then, next, maybe you are busy; it is like you have to book an appointment to hang out with a friend [chuckles because of humour].

Despite her busy life in Canada, Sanadra was fortunate to have friends. Whenever she was having difficulties, she sought help from her friends and colleagues, who helped her

during the misery of her life with accommodation, rides, and so on. Sandra explained how her friends and colleagues were there for her, along with her family:

I should say, my friends, I am fortunate to have some good friends here. So, I always got help from my friends whenever I needed it. So, like, [name] accommodated me for a week; if [name] hadn't done it for me, I would have had to go to a hotel, which might have cost me a lot. However, at that time, I saved this money only because of [name] help and support. So, yeah, I got help from my friends. At the same time, I also get situations like my things being stolen, which also happened at one of my classmates' houses. I got help from my workplace; some of my coworkers used to give me rides. I did not ask for that, but they always offered me a ride if I needed one. Especially when I was at MUN and rushing to catch up on the class. I got support from them. They always used to give me a ride. Moreover, I would not be able to come this far without the help and support of my family.

To overcome the sadness, Ron tried various methods and sought help from friends and family. Three of them were aware of the facilities of the MUN wellness center, but only two tried to reach out to the facilities of the MUN Wellness Centre. Between Sandra and Ron, Ron reached out to a therapist. However, he found the therapy session unfruitful as he explained how it would be great for him if he had the opportunity to share his sadness with a therapist who had the same experience or who came from people of colour:

So, just letting it go is not so easy, and then, there was a point where I had to reach out to a couple of people after my siblings, and then I was able to reach out to a therapist at MUN, and you know the therapist assigned to me at that time was a white person. So, they do not really understand my experience, so when you have a white therapist and do

not know what racism is, how do you think they would relate to what you are going through? They cannot. I am not saying that it is their fault or anything like that. You know, it is not going to be possible for him to relate because they do not know how it feels like, so they advise you on what to do, and would respond, 'yeah, yeah,' but I do not like that advice, it is not going to solve my problem. Right?

Despite the facilities of the MUN wellness centre, Sandra was unable to reach out to a therapist. She expressed her frustration due to the process of the MUN Wellness Centre reaching out to a therapist for a student:

Yeah, mentally, I was always disturbed; most of the time, I was overthinking things. Moreover, I tried to reach out to the MUN student wellness center that works for the situation, like if someone is not mentally sound! They could not do anything for me; they wanted me to go to the doctor's first and have a doctor's note. I did not feel like going to a doctor. What would I say? Like, yeah, I had to go to my eye specialist or arthritis specialist, and maybe sometimes they ask me about my personal things, but it does not mean I am a mental patient! I did not need to go to a psychiatrist or psychologist. I am not sure if this is the case, but they did not help me much. I tried to reach out to them as I was so distressed. I wanted to talk to someone, especially when I had low grades in a semester, but that did not help.

Vuslat was standing on a different path, and she only preferred to share her personal life with her family despite all the help her friends, teachers, and colleagues extended to her to ease her pain. She explained how she needed to keep the grieving journey only within her family:

[sighs] The institution, [pause] I did not make it so loud with everyone in the workplace that I was working in, but they knew that I had lost my parent. So, they checked with me, called me, and talked to me about that if you need it, but there is nothing they can do about that, right? That is only me, myself, in my world and my family. That smaller unit of lives other than the outer units. They were helpful; they did not neglect or ignore it.

However, Vuslat mentioned how she was well aware of the facilities of the MUN Wellness and Counselling Center for international students:

I have seen many call centers at MUN, and they put a lot of effort into making it out there for everyone. For example, you can see the brochures, you can see the bulletin boards, and you can see notices everywhere. Even in the MUN email center, we receive lots of emails about the student counselling sessions and how everyone can have a consultation. I have never used it, but some people must be using it, so it is there.

4.2.5   Role of Technology

All three participants used technology frequently, whether to connect with family or friends to share their grief and get assistance. Two participants shared that it was tough because they could see their family through technology, but the most challenging thing was that they could not touch them, which hampered their emotional connection. In this regard, Sandra shared,

… I only love to talk to my family. Either my husband, my daughters, or my mom, I keep calling them the whole day. I called them so many times. If I am on break, I call my daughter or my husband; if I am on the bus, I keep myself busy talking to them. I spoke to them repeatedly, which is how I managed to stay here. I felt like I was physically away from them but not mentally; mentally, I was not away from them. So that is how I

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managed myself. I needed to make my daughters realize I was always with them. Like I told you, they were never apart from me. This is the first time, right? So, if I call them, my eldest daughter is very attached to me. So, if I call her, she is happy and wants to talk to me every time. She kept texting me if I did not call her, saying, Mom, did you forget me? Did you forget that I exist in your life? So, I tried to call them as many times as possible in a day.

Moreover, family support was very effective for Sandra to continue her studies in Canada during her grieving time, and the advantage of technology helped them to reduce the distance; she detailed:

…Like he was always beside me. So, without his support, I would not have been able to come this far. I finished two programs later on; I know that I made it [joyful eyes], but it was not easy for me like my daughters [pause, suppressing the emotion of crying, tears in the eyes] initially, they were so happy that they were also going to come here, but like at a point they also realized that is not going to happen soon that they are not able to see their mom face to face, or they are not able to touch me or I am not able to touch them it is only through the media like messenger or facetime. So, yeah, gradually, we were used to that…

Ron also shared that he reached out to his family and friends through technology due to the distance and busy schedule in Canada. However, he felt emotionally disconnected from them as technology does not build the same connection that face-to-face meetings can provide. He commented,

They were there to support, but you know, people only advise you, and you know the way it hurts, like someone says, ok, I find someone and tell someone, oh, my body hurts, and someone will say, oh, I am so sorry, things like that but they do not know, they only know that you said that it hurts, but they do not know the way it hurts and how it hurts, right? Because someone does not know about your pain, you cannot measure pain, right?... so even if you hear advice and all that, you must be the one to help yourself, and some people would give you advice without knowing, and they will say, I think you should let it go, or maybe try this and try that, and but you know yourself. You know what works best for you. Just talk to yourself, and you will find the answer.

Three of them used social media to express how they were doing in their life, and two of them expressed how they were missing their families through social media posts. Two of the participants published their pictures of graduation. Before that, many photos were posted so anyone could understand them all, whether they were feeling sad, missing family, or missing a father who was no longer in this world. Ron posted on his graduation day, along with his smiley photos, and said,

I am excited to have completed my Master's in Education [name of the cohort] from Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada. Attending the convocation ceremony on the [date and month] 2023 was an immense honour, and I am proud to have been part of a long tradition of excellence that dates back over a century. I feel well-equipped to take on new challenges, adapt to changing situations and excel in my chosen field.

Sandra posted pictures of her daughter and husband to express her grief as she was far away from them. In addition, her social media posts also expressed how she stayed connected with her friends and was thankful to them for inviting her to their house, as she was far away

from her loved ones. In 2021, Sanada posted, "Thank you [name] for the invitation to your nice house, delicious food, and amazing tea...". However, Vuslat expressed her feelings through social media and talked about how much she misses talking with her late father, as technology helped them stay connected. Now, he is not there to encourage her or see how she is growing, and she misses those moments she shared with her father through the advantage of technology. During 2023, Vuslat expressed her grief with friends and family on social media, and she shared,

> I still cannot believe he is gone. Sometimes, I need to sit down for a bit, relax and get myself together. However, I want to tell you what is happening in my life. My new job, my friends, my students, their practical solutions, their minds, thoughts, and guidance in the places where I am stuck. I get lost in my father's absence. There is a huge void inside me that cannot be filled. I am enjoying the messages you leave me in my mailbox; I listen to you calling my name over and over. You said I wish I had named you [name] instead of [name]! My name feels heavy when I miss you. I taught myself how to look at life, have positive energy, and always stand tall in the face of challenges. Rest in peace, Daddy. I carry you in my heart, always.

4.2.6   *Positive Growth and Hope*

All participants agreed that positive growth occurred within them during grief. They learned they might not overcome the grief, but could learn how to stay with it. Moreover, they embodied patience and several strategies to deal with the misery of their life. Three of them agreed that they discovered themselves differently, which created a growth of hope. The positive shifts in life build confidence, patience, and philosophical changes in viewing life in a new environment. In this regard, Ron mentioned how he took control over himself, "It just

made me see that I deserve better, and I need to learn to know my worth, and I stayed constantly to the agreement that who I am, and nothing someone says is going to change that." Listening to music during the journey of grief helped him a lot, and he said, "I did try therapy, but it did not work, and then all I did was listen to music and not take my mind off all of those things." On the other hand, Sandra explained how the situation created patience within herself with the help of her family,

> …gradually, I overcame, and I developed patience. I kept pushing myself; I finished those programs, and everything started falling into place whenever I could get a job with [name]. So, things are not like whatever I am describing to you now; I would not say they are no more in my life. Still, I am alone here, but the situation improved later on as I progressed further. However, I had to work on it. I had to keep pushing myself and continuously motivate myself, and my family did it for me; my brother motivated me a lot, and my husband motivated me. They kept me pushing to finish this program, not to come, like one time, when I went home, I requested my husband not to send me back [laughing, remembering the situation]

Despite all the hurdles, Vuslat discovered about grief that, "Yeah, it did not break me, [pause] so I felt like, it did not break me, nothing would. [pause, controlling the emotion of crying] Right?" Furthermore, she mentioned that physical activities also helped her during the grieving situation:

Walking. I started walking, and whenever I felt like the house was collapsing on me, I went outside. I went outside to walk and felt much better when I came back. You know, when you do physical activity, you have more serotonin and dopamine and like your brain is shifting into another mood, you cannot be in depression all the time when you are

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moving. However, when you are in bed, nothing is happening. So, I said move, go

outside, whether it is raining or snowing, it does not matter. I went outside to take a deep

breath, and I said, yes, he is gone, but you are alive; you have to carry on. Go on,

[clapping hands to create the rhythm of moving on] go on, move, move, move. I did that,

and I think it helped a lot.

4.3 Summary

The theme of this research occurred from the individual participants' shared

experiences, where the common threads, variations, interconnections, and contradictions of

the shared stories played a vital role. Direct quotes from the participants' interviews are used

to reflect on their thoughts, emotions, challenges, methods of overcoming grief, and how

these experiences led them to discover their strengths and create hope.

Participants in this research believe that sharing feelings with close ones, motivating

self-esteem, listening to music, engaging in physical activities, praying, and receiving moral

support from support networks helped participants confront their grieving situation, which

created hope in their grieving journey. In addition, the MUN wellness center provides crucial

support for international students. However, they felt that it would be great to have people of

colour as therapists for international students. It is noteworthy to mention that participants

shared that during their grieving journey, they wanted to share their feelings with someone

with whom they would feel close and connected.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This research wanted to discover the unique experiences of international students during their study period and sought to shift the focus to their narratives of grief and hope. The qualitative method was vital in achieving in-depth knowledge about their journey (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The voices of international students became meaningful when choosing narrative as a method of inquiry. However, conducting more research to explore the narratives of grieving international students during their study period is essential. This thesis addresses the research gap, focusing on the experience of grief among international students at a Canadian university during their study period. This chapter will gradually explore the results, the trustworthiness of the study, the essence of the outcomes in relation to prior research, the interpretation of the conceptual framework in light of the research findings, research limitations, and future research prospects.

5.1 Results

To gain a deeper understanding of the narratives of international students' grieving experiences, I focused on Hendry et al. (2018) and their concept of 'narratives as being', where I sought to explore the participants' ways of being in the world as an ontology. Participants' relational intra-action during their study period played a vital role in this narrative inquiry (Hendry et al., 2018).

During the interview, three participants discussed their grieving journey during their study period and how that challenging situation opened a window of hope in their lives, allowing them to move forward. Three of the participants' grief occurred from three different aspects: distance from the family, racism, and loss of loved ones. Their grieving situations during their study period in a different country also pushed them into different challenges. The

challenges of accommodation, distance from family, maintaining academic pressure, health issues, uncertainty, facing unforeseen situations like an occurrence of theft at home, being unable to take professional help, feeling isolated and facing discrimination hinder the mental, physical and relational aspects of their lives. Moreover, during their study period, international students' grieving situations also created more challenges in their personal and academic lives.

My data collection procedure and analysis method resulted in five themes from the participants' narratives. They discussed their individual grief and challenging aspects of grief, academic expectations and support, dealing with challenges and significant shifts in life, the accessibility of support networks and awareness of professional support, and positive growth and hope.

The first theme about individual grief and the challenging aspects of grief displayed feelings of frustration, anxiousness, isolation, distress, and sadness. The situations also impacted their relational interconnection with the outer world. Participants also shared how it is important to understand the differences between sympathy and empathy while listening to a grieving person. We must be more mindful when we see someone passing through the distress phase of their life. They had to wear many hats during their study time. This theme also explored that, as international students, participants were more vulnerable during their study period. A new environment also escalates the grieving aspects with different challenges. Three of them shared their feelings with their families, which helped them to relearn about themselves. Critically, all participants discovered the unknown during their grieving journey. International students from different academic backgrounds facing grief in a Canadian academic context embrace the mystery and try to find the meaning of being in this world.

The second theme demonstrates how participants dealt with academic expectations and how they were supported during their saddest moments in the neoliberal academic environment. All participants felt stressed due to the academic expectations of assignments and results. Grief impacted two of the participants' results as well. Critically, one of the participants indicated biases among some of the instructors, though the participant also said that most of the professors were mindful of the international students. Biases can damage the mental well-being of all international students. However, three of them also pointed out that they could overcome the challenges of academic life.

The third theme illustrates how participants dealt with challenges and how significant shifts occurred during their grieving journey. Their social life was immensely hampered, and they felt secure enough to stay home and work independently. All three of them shared their feelings with family members and felt secure doing that, which enhanced the relationship between the two participants. However, one of the participants felt alone because he realized that sometimes people, even those close to him, do not understand the difference between sympathy and empathy. In addition, gender also played a vital role as two of the female participants received empathetic responses from their family and social circle. However, male participants in this research did not receive supportive attitudes from family or friends because society and culture construct norms on how, when and to whom to respond empathically. Therefore, how to react to a person when they try to share their feelings of grief is crucial. Listening with empathy was a vital issue for all the participants. Three participants experienced significant shifts when they confronted the unknown in their new environment. Whatever they knew, they had to make it unknown and learn from the shifts of life. Two of the participants tried to deal with grief by praying, as they were religious. Interestingly, one of

the participants discussed how knowing about their boundaries and working on them, along with listening to music, shifted his philosophy of life.

The fourth theme portrayed how three participants took advantage of the support system. Critically, all of them somehow failed to take advantage of professional help during their grieving journey. According to researcher Rosenblatt (2017), grief is relational for many people. Therefore, focusing on individual grieving overlooks many relational dynamics that are essential to the grieving experiences of many people (Rosenblatt, 2017). The participants sought help from support networks such as family. However, one of them mentioned that it did not help him at all. Initially, he thought his family would understand the saddest moment he was facing in a new environment, but he learned a new reality about life; it solely depends on the person how they will lead their life, no one else. The participants searched for deeper emotional connections with their family or friends. However, two of them did not seek mental support from their friends because they wanted to keep their personal life personal, even though they knew sharing would help them during their grieving journey. The participants knew they could seek professional help, such as the MUN wellness and counselling centre. However, their experience with the MUN wellness and counselling centre put two international students in a different situation. One participant was unable to get help due to the lengthy process of connecting with a counsellor, and another participant discovered it would be beneficial to have people of colour as counsellors for international students, given the sensitivity of his grief and the importance of a deeper emotional connection, which is crucial for their relational intra-action. Grieving and dealing with it vary from culture to culture. For example, singing and dancing are integral to the grieving process in certain cultures. On the other hand, singing and dancing are seen as sins among the grievers in other cultures and in

some places, people hire mourners to cry at their homes so that mourners can help the griever release the burden in their soul due to grief through crying and expressing emotions which were also discussed by one of the participants (Rosenblatt, 2008). Therefore, all participants believe that institutions must be mindful of the diverse cultures of international students and how they cope with grief during their study period.

The fifth theme is about the role of technology among grieving participants. They found support through social media posts, where they expressed some of their emotional moments, whether through pictures of themselves or their family. They tried to reach out to the broader community of support to share their moment of grief and hope. Two participants attempted to mitigate the distance by sending their loved ones good wishes, posting messages while they were away, and organizing a family reunion. The final theme is related to the positive growth and hope among the participants. They thought they could overcome grief, but they learned how to stay with it and keep going on with their life. Three of the participants' social media posts illustrated their journey from 2021 to 2023; one remained self-dependent, while two were surrounded by their families and continued to work through their grief. Distance from family, racism and losing loved ones make them realize how grief was unable to break them. Instead, they learned how to cultivate patience, positivity, and confidence. They eventually learned how to control their thoughts by sharing them with families, going for walks, or listening to music.

Notably, the participants grew hope through sharing and listening to themselves and their families, which helped them learn the unknown. While participants shared their journey with the researcher, they kept saying 'you know' to the researcher as they felt the researcher would understand their feelings and the grieving journey of international students, which

established a bridge between the researcher and participants. They were comfortable sharing their stories and unfolding their feelings in front of the researcher. Listening to the stories of the participants felt like seeing my journey as an international student. Interviewers need to be cautious about the emotional connection with the participants. However, emotional connection helped the researcher of the study connect with the participants. After finishing the face-to-face interview, we hugged each other, and two of the participants shared how they felt relief and how the researcher's response during the interview was empathetic towards the story shared by the participant. I conducted one of the interviews online as requested by the participant, and it took 39 minutes to finish the interview. However, I felt the differences between online interviews and face-to-face interviews, where I felt that the researcher and participants stay more connected to each other as physical presence creates differences. The stories of each of the three participants made me realize that as an international student, I needed to be more sensitive towards my peers during my study period so they could feel free to share their loss and grief with me. Sharing impacts grievers positively as they have the moment to release their emotions, which helps them to heal even for that moment (Badenhorst et al., 2024).

5.2 Trustworthiness

I ensured the trustworthiness of the study by following Hendry et al.'s (2018) concept of narrative, which involved finding the participants' ways of being in this world. In addition, I ensured the overall quality of the research findings by attending to credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical considerations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I continued to read and reread transcripts of the participants, watch and rewatch audiovisual records, and review their social media posts to ensure that I would not become biased during the selection

of themes for this research. As an international student and researcher in this study, I have biases, such as my emotional connection with the research participants. However, I maintained the trustworthiness of this research by thoroughly reviewing the entire process, including monitoring transcripts of interviews, audiovisual recordings, and social media posts. For example, I felt biased while working on the third theme, which is dealing with challenges and significant shifts, because, as an international student, I was placing myself in that situation. I repeatedly listen to and observe their audiovisual recordings and social media posts to ensure that my biases do not influence the themes and experiences the participants share. Moreover, the audit of the collected data helped me immensely to maintain the trustworthiness of my research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

While conducting the interview, I was careful not to impose my emotions on the participants; however, we felt a connection as international students when they shared their stories. I tried to write in my journal less so that I could maintain eye contact with them, and they could feel that someone was listening to their story sincerely, which is a key element in conducting narrative research where emotion is pivotal. The connection between the interviewer and participants helped them believe in me as a researcher and express their emotions and experiences without hesitation (Hendry et al., 2018). They opened up about their relationship with their family, friends and institutions. They gave me permission to review their social media to ensure the validity and reliability of this research. They did not hesitate to talk in front of the camera because they trusted me as a researcher (Hendry et al., 2018). Overall, people tend to feel a connection to someone from similar sociocultural backgrounds, which the participants also mentioned during the interview.

I did not share the summary of the participants' individual stories, as the summary reflects my interpretation of their stories. In addition, I did not show the themes to the participants. However, I presented the quotes from their transcripts individually, allowing me to incorporate them into my paper while maintaining the authenticity and member-checking purposes of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, all participants could add, delete, or edit their quotes. Their comments helped me accurately portray their experience of grief in this research. I wanted to stay true to the stories participants narrated to me and not impose my stories on them. I tried to stay faithful to our relationship. Hendry et al. (2018, p. 58) suggested that research is not just about interpretation, but also about faith. Faith in the teller's stories enables us to build a bridge of trust, which ensures that meaning is automatically created.

I ensured that participants were aware of the research's purpose, process, and potential risks before they participated. All the names of the participants mentioned here are fictional to protect their identity. I did not protect their gender for research purposes. My consent form informed participants about MUN's support resources, as grief is a sensitive issue which can provoke a person emotionally (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Finally, this research was reviewed by my supervisor, Professor Dr. Heather McLeod, who has published grief-related studies. Her insights and guidance on the research design and findings helped me reflect on the dependability of this research. The first time I read the article "Writing through tears: Women, grief, and hope in the academy" (Badenhorst et al., 2024), I felt encouraged and wanted to write about the grief experienced by international students in my faculty. My supervisor then encouraged me to pursue this path.

5.3 Significant Findings and Prior Research

In a Canadian academic context, qualitative research on the experiences of grieving international students is limited (Ichikawa, 2021). My research does not focus on the coping mechanisms of international students. Instead, it is about the relational intra-action of international students who face grief in a new environment. Numerous studies have highlighted the challenges that international students encounter in an academic setting. In addition, some research on grief is based on the theoretical framework of grief. However, I reviewed all relevant literature on the grieving experiences of international students and the challenges they face during their study period. Next, I will focus on the literature on the grief of international students and later discuss how Hendry et al.'s (2018) narrative research served as a conceptual framework to encourage reflection in this study. Lastly, I will review each research theme and emphasize how these relate to the existing literature.

5.3.1 Grief and international students

The literature reviewed for this thesis sheds light on the various reasons for the grief experienced by the participants in this study. This study aligns with previous research, which has demonstrated that international students encounter grief-related difficulties similar to those faced by any other students in an institution (Butcher, 2002; Ichikawa, 2021; Seah, 2008). Various grieving reasons like distance from the family, financial crisis, racism, academic disruptions, losing loved ones, and dealing with new challenges have been discussed by the participants of this research, which can be found in previous grief-related research as well (Badenhorst et al., 2024; Butcher, 2002; Greene, 2020; Ichikawa, 2021; Johnson, 2022; Li et al., 2020; Neimeyer & Thompson, 2014; Matthews, 2019; Seah, 2008; Shelton et al., 2020). However, the impact of racism on international students' grieving

journey during their study period in a Canadian academic context has not been adequately researched, and this study addresses this crucial gap. Geene (2020) discussed how racism is associated with grief in the context of the USA. Similarly, the participants in this project shared in their stories that various emotions like sadness, distress, anxiety, nervousness, isolation, and depression occupied them when they faced grief during their study period, which has been discussed in previous grief-related literature (Badenhorst et al., 2024; Brunila &Valero, 2018; Butcher, 2002; Gill, 2010; Shelton. et al., 2020). Butcher (2002) argued that returning to one's home country can create feelings of sadness or distress among international students in New Zealand's academic context. Previous studies have acknowledged that international students confront various challenges during their study period like financial crises, academic disruptions, miscommunication, sociocultural differences, distance from the family, academic expectations, accommodation crises, loss of loved ones, lack of professional support and so on (Grayson, 2008; Guo & Guo, 2017; Moissac et al; 2020; Howe et al., 2023; Arumuhathas, 2023; Butcher, 2002; Seah, 2008; Sohrabi, 2023; Bista & Foster, 2016). Correspondingly, participants of this study also shared that during their grieving journey as international students how, they faced similar challenges along with grief like financial and accommodation crises, academic expectations and disruptions, lack of professional support, difficulties in seeking support from closed networks, and so on which influenced the selection of themes in this research.

5.3.2 Applications of Narratives as Being

Most of the research on international students is centred on coping strategies. How do they cope in a different environment? This research study focused on how the grieving journey of international students impacted them during their study period and how, during

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devastating situations, they walked toward hope in their lives in a new environment. This research adheres to the concept of "narrative research as being" (Hendry et al., 2018). According to Hendry et al. (2018), narratives can embrace uncertainty, precarity, vulnerability, and mystery, but often stumble in confusion instead of serving as a means of clarification or representation. The narrative stories of grieving international students are presented as living beings. All participants' relationships, listening, and unknown aspects of their lives are needed to reach the higher education sector. In addition, human experiences constantly shift a complex phenomenon like power relations. Therefore, I wanted to present the voices of marginalized people in higher education who are international students through narrative research.

Much research focused on the theoretical work of grief. In contrast, my research interpretation focused on the grieving narratives of international students, which portrayed their dynamic relationships, unawareness of being in this world and how listening has influenced their journey. Consequently, the voices of marginalized people in the higher education sector need to be heard to achieve social transformation and self-development. According to Hendry et al. (2018), whatever method we follow for our research always falls short, so it is important to challenge our conceptualization of listening. Therefore, this research focused on listening to what is not said to understand which discursive structure impacts the stories of international students' grieving journey during their academic period.

The questions of this research helped me to move into the unknown. Furthermore, I unfold the stories not only through the interview but also through visualization of the interview, which helped me capture their emotional changes and connect with the participants. Listening, relistening, observing and reobserving their audiovisual and social media posts

multiple times helped this research shift into the unknown and make a connection as an effective listener. The story of the participants' grief explored the social and cultural relational aspects in different academic contexts. In addition, unfolding their journey to present their voice for the neoliberal academic sector is crucial. The participants' dynamic relationships with themselves, family members, instructors, friends, colleagues, technology, and the professional support network during their grieving journey as international students of the Faculty of Education, MUN, helped them to thrive in the unknown phenomenon of life as a being. They learned and relearned about their challenges, and the significant shifts in their life opened the window of hope through which they learned how to co-exist with the grief. In addition, this study is inspired by the research of Badenhorst et al. (2024). They followed the creative method of being in this world by sharing their grieving stories from a feminist perspective as faculty members and graduate students (one MEd student and three PhD students). However, my research did not see the grieving stories of international students from a feminist perspective. Instead, it is centred on raising the voices of marginalized people whose grieving stories are less heard by the Canadian neoliberal academic sector. According to Hendry et al. (2018, p.58), "Faith in the story is a political act in which we acknowledge our participants, not as incomplete, but as meaning-making and central to our meaning-making." So, the participants of this study engaged in meaning-making with the researcher by telling the story of their grief journey in a foreign context. Next, I discuss how relationships, listening, and unknown phenomena influenced the participants' understanding of meaning-making in their lives.

Dynamic relationships and listening influenced the grieving journey of the participants in this research. Each of the participants of this study came from a different

cultural background, and everyone was staying away from their family, such as parents or spouses, children, or siblings, who are the backbone of their lives and roam around in their relationship network. Two of the participants had no family members with them during their study, and the distance from family created grief among one of them. The racial comments in a foreign context pushed one of the participants into a distressful moment where feelings of grief appeared. Three of the participants had a feeling of disconnectedness from their new cultural environment. The added layer of being away from home and family complicated the grieving process and enlarged the feeling of isolation. Among my participants, grief initially came from staying apart from their spouses for two of them. Later, when one of the participant's spouses arrived to stay with her, life shocked her with the demise of her father.

Cultural differences and expectations have also influenced the relationship dynamics and listening patterns between the support networks and the participants regarding gender. The male participant of this study tried to seek mental help from his family during the grieving moment. However, in many cultures, the expectations from men are different from those of women and the participant relationship network was impacted negatively due to unempathetic responses and ineffective listening. Historically, men are expected not to show their vulnerability because it is regarded as a weakness in the general behavioural norms of men. However, men are encouraged to express their vulnerabilities among their peers and family in contemporary society. On the other hand, female participants had immense positive support from spouses, children, siblings, and parents. The family relationship played a crucial role in the meaning-making process during their grief, and effective and active listening helped them connect. Sacred relationships, facilitated through the practice of rituals, also benefit the participants. Initially, it began with expressing resentment during prayers, and

gradually, prayers evolved into a form of meditation that helped individuals understand themselves and connect with deceased loved ones.

The social circles extended help to two of the participants during their grieving period. They positively influenced overcoming challenges during grieving in a new country like Canada. Participants also expressed how hesitation to seek help from social circles created barriers to sharing grief. However, one of the participants expressed frustration as the new busy life schedule impacted the participant when they tried to seek help from friends. The most prominent work in the academic sector about emotion is done by Hochschild (1983). She investigated "latent feeling rules" used in daily interactions with others as necessary for understanding one's feelings (Hochschild, 1983, p. 18). In her study, she sought to comprehend how people connect socially. Furthermore, technology-enabled effective communication to mitigate the mental distance from the family, especially when participants were dealing with intense grieving situations where video calls and messaging did not deliver the same emotional comfort as the physical presence of loved ones. However, participants also expressed that the technological help to express emotions during grief was better than nothing. The participants also used digital media to share grief, memory, connections, and success with family and peers.

Academic relationships also had an immense impact on the grieving process of international students. During grief, three of the participants had difficulties concentrating on academic work, and two of the participants experienced academic discrepancies. One of the participants shared biased behaviours from instructors toward people of colour, which impacted the participants' grieving journey and dropped courses. The participant tried to share how grief is impacting academic progress, but some of the instructor's insensitive responses

pushed the participant more toward frustration and depression. The faculty or staff do not recognize some grief, and due to not recognizing or having a deeper understanding of the reasons for grief, the participant went through difficulties and inconsistency in academic results. However, two participants did not seek help from the academic sector and worked on their academic progress through self-motivation. Moreover, one of the participants who received moral support from instructors during the grieving situation of the demise of her father did not face academic difficulty during the study period.

One of the participants did not seek professional help because the participant felt more comfortable expressing emotions in their own language, which was more meaningful than expressing them in a second language. The participant's family network worked as a main support system. However, one of the participants tried to use the professional network but could not get support due to a lengthy procedure. Among the three participants, one was successful in obtaining support from the MUN wellness centre. However, the participant discovered a lack of knowledge among the counsellors regarding grief associated with racism, which did not help the participant during his grieving journey. The participants emphasized the need for having counsellors from people of colour to assist international students, which may help facilitate effective connections between the griever and counsellors. It is pivotal to mention that strong relationship networks come from effective and active listening between the support systems and speakers. Active and effective listening helps the griever during the healing process of grief. The empathetic response towards a griever from the family, friends, academic sector, and professional support network builds effective connections. This study found that to build relationships with family, friends, the academic sector, or counsellors, participants of this research faced barriers like cultural norms, isolation, hesitations, and lack

of knowledge on cultural sensitivity, which influenced the sharing and expectations of listening during grief and severely impacted participants seeking and receiving patterns of support. Active and effective listening during the grieving process helps foster trust among international students who are confronted with isolation during grief.

Grief came as an unknown event to the research participants, though it is a natural phenomenon. The feeling of shock, denial, distress, sadness, and loneliness took the participants of this research into isolation. Along with the above-mentioned feeling associated with grief, participants of this research faced various unforeseen challenges which hinder the situations of grief, like academic difficulties, low appetite, low concentration, physical problems, concern about finance, homeless situations, theft incidents, and memories of loved ones. Before coming into a new cultural environment, they never knew that the unforeseen situations they faced during their grieving time would create confusion about life and lead to uncertainty. However, the experiences of grieving showed the participants how various relationships can impact their lives positively and negatively. Participants of this study learned that they need to keep themselves busy to keep their distance from their grieving thoughts. Gradually, through a busy life schedule at work, listening to music, prayers, sharing emotions, and physical activity, participants learned to embrace the uncertainty of their lives. The participants learned how to co-exist with grief. The moment of isolation helped them to work on their strength. Starting from questioning their capacity during the grieving time, they embodied self-confidence, patience, and different philosophies of life, where personal growth and hope occurred. Moreover, the concepts of relationship, listening, and the unknown are interconnected when participants of this research confront grief in their lives while studying in a foreign culture. Strong relationships can be built by indulging empathetic listening skills.

However, cultural sensitivity is significant for friends, academic mentors, and professional counsellors to work as an effective support system and build strong connections. A strong relationship can help the grieving individual embrace the uncertainty of their lives. Continuous confrontation with uncertainty or unknown aspects of life facilitates self-awareness, confidence, and patience to achieve growth and hope.

5.3.3 Reasons and Challenging Aspects of Grief

Previous research has explored the fact that international students experience grief during their study period (Butcher, 2002; Seah, 2008; Ichikawa, 2021). This study focused on the grieving stories of international students due to distance from the family, racism, and loss of loved ones during the study period in Canadian academic context, and such stories can also be found in previous research related to grieving stories among faculty members or people of colour (Au, 2022; Badenhorst et al., 2024; Geene, N., 2020; Johnson, 2022; Neimeyer & Thompson, 2014; Shelton. et al., 2020). Au (2022) explored in his research that during the COVID-19 era, Asian students faced racism on campus and off campus, which created grief, emotional distress, and mental stress within them. Similarly, one of the participants of this research identified off-campus racism as the reason for grief during the study period in MUN, which impacted the participant emotionally and caused academic disruption. More research found that the epidemic also impacted mental well-being, emotional complexity, and grief among both students of colour and instructors in an academic context (Feng et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020). The participants of this research also agreed about how they faced anxiety, depression, distress, sadness, loneliness, lack of appetite and panic attacks, which challenged their mental and physical well-being during their grieving period as international students.

Grief itself is a challenge, but during this challenge, participants of this research faced numerous other challenges as international students while studying in a foreign country. Much research focuses on the challenges of international students during their study period (Arumuhathas, 2023; Butcher, 2002; Grayson, 2008; Guo & Guo, 2017; Howe et al., 2023; Larbi et al., 2022; Moissac et al., 2020; Seah, 2008; Sohrabi, 2023). However, this paper focused on the challenges international students face during their grieving time. Participants talked about other challenges along with their grieving situations, including financial crises, accommodation uncertainty, inability to get help from support networks, isolation, and loneliness. The experience of Sohrabi (2023, p. 116) during her study period in the MUN Faculty of Education explains a lot in this regard; she said,

> After moving to Canada, I realized how language, accents, culture, and racism intersect in ways I had never understood before. Since 2016, I have been occupied by thoughts about identity, belonging and place issues, which had never been part of my life while living in Iran. For the first time, I understood some aspects of what many immigrants have gone through: the identity crisis, the emotional costs, the sense of loneliness, dealing with microaggressions regarding one's accent and cultural background, the ignorance and rejection of the cultural richness immigrants carry, the challenges of cultivating a sense of belonging, and the efforts required to surround oneself with a supportive community that cares for one's well-being.

In this theme, we can see that life is full of unpredictable events. One of the unpredictable events of life came as grief to the participants of this research. None thought before starting the journey as international students that life would push them into feelings of denial, shock, and distress. From there, they started to learn how important some relationships

are in their lives. The demise of a loved one or distance from the loved ones made them realize how valuable those relationships are in their life—through sharing their memories with the researcher, and participants shared how they went through the process of meaning-making—in the initial stage of grieving, participants isolated themselves and later started to share with family members.

5.3.4 Academic Expectations and Support

Previous researchers agreed that non-death loss is not well acknowledged or supported as grief in higher education, which is identified as disenfranchised grief (Balk, 2008; Seah, 2008). According to Seah (2008), grieving international students often experience decreased academic achievement when they face a lack of sufficient support networks or the ability to voice their grief-related concerns. Similarly, three of the participants of this research reported struggling with academic expectations during the grieving time. However, one of the participants claimed a biased attitude among some professors toward people of colour, which impacted the participant's grieving journey, and they dropped courses. In addition, the participant discussed that due to the different academic backgrounds, professors need to be mindful of international students. However, two of the participants expressed how grief impacted their academic journey badly as they were unable to have or seek help from the instructor. Furthermore, previous research also agreed that academic staff and faculty responses were frequently described as being aloof, insensitive, or unclear about how to react and advise grieving students on what to do next (Bouldin, 2019; Hedman, 2012). Suppose general students in the academic sector find this kind of unsupportive situation. In that case, it is more harmful to marginalized students who come from a different sociocultural background and confront grief and unsupportive attitudes from faculty members. However, in this

research, one of the participants mentioned how, during the grieving period when the participant's father died, professors and friends tried to reach out and extend mental support to her.

On the other hand, one of the participants received support from instructors during her grieving journey and expressed her gratitude to the professors. However, she did not seek their help and achieved excellent results. In addition, Hedman (2012) explored that if a student's loss of loved ones is recent, the faculty should provide accommodation for the grieving student. It is pivotal to mention that two of the participants who were unable to get or seek help from instructors during their grieving time were confronting disenfranchised grief, as one of them stayed away from family and the other faced racism. The participant who faced grief due to losing her father during the study period received support from the instructors. Sohrabi (2023) expressed in her autoethnography that international students are less happy with their educational experience in a foreign country than domestic students. According to Salamonson et al. (2015), this might be because facilitators are less adept at addressing international students' situated learning practice demands, which was also expressed by one of the participants of this research.

5.3.5 Dealing with Challenges and Significant Shifts in Life

While dealing with grief, participants realized that keeping themselves busy created significant shifts in their lives. They continuously relearned about the complexity of the world they are living in. Grieving participants engaged with different dimensional mysteries as human beings. The transitional period of seeking help to keep oneself isolated for some time made them realize the world's reality. According to Attig (2001, p. 34), this is called 'meaning making and meaning finding in grieving.' When participants were grieving, they isolated

themselves and tried to give meaning to their suffering or grieving experiences. Based on their experiences during their grieving journey, they reinterpreted and rebuilt the narratives of their lives and came to a self-understanding. Participants came to terms with meanings that appeared to emerge from their pain. They came to trust the aspects of their daily life schedules that continued to work. Therefore, from the isolating moment, two participants discovered that the working environment was a shift in their lives. Bouldin (2019) explored that some grieving students found that focusing on academic work created significant shifts in their lives as it helped them divert their thoughts, to which all three participants agreed.

Two participants discussed how prayers helped them deal with grief and gave them a sense of life. Their stories shaped their identities in the context of loss by reflecting cultural grieving rituals, beliefs, and behaviours, which can be found in previous research related to grief (Tan & Andriessen, 2021). It is noteworthy to mention that Tan and Andriessen (2021) found that people who were not religious also expressed experiencing philosophical shifts, indicating that a person's traits and preconceived ideas about life before loss play a vital role in dealing with grief. Familiarly, one of the participants found music and self-awareness to be a meaning-making and finding process to shift life away from grieving. However, unlike Tan and Andriessen's (2021, p. 3) study, my study did not follow the Meaning of Reconstruction and Loss Framework (MRL) developed by Gillies and Neimeyer (2006). Instead, as a sacred act, I tried to deeply understand that my humanity is linked with the participants' stories. We came from the same background because we are international students, which connected us to openly discuss what participants discovered during their grieving journey. According to Rosenblatt (2008), cultural differences can reveal much about human flexibility, significant differences in human relationships, and the meaning surrounding grieving. There are amazing

ways that grieving is ingrained in continuous systems that make sense in their own way, even if they are utterly nonsensical when viewed through the lens of one's own culture. Moreover, the cultural dynamic relationships of participants of this research revealed their dynamic patterns of dealing and shifts in their lives of grieving in their stories. To the participants of this research, grief made them relearn that it was not only about emotional response; instead, they made sense of being in this world through the constant challenges they faced along with grief as international students. They constructed their identity and realities through their story of grief. All three of the participants were isolated for a time to relearn about themselves, to understand the mystery, and to temper the pain of their sufferings emotionally. According to Attig (2001, p. 41), this state of mind helps the griever psychologically build 'self-esteem, self-confidence and self-identity.'

5.3.6 Accessibility of Support Network and Awareness of Professional Support

Au (2022) suggested that there is a growing need for pedagogical care (reflexivity, empathy, and a dedication to social justice to build a welcoming and encouraging learning environment) in higher education settings due to the rise in stress and mental health illness among people of colour, which is also discussed by three of the participants. Three of the participants sought support from their families during their grieving journey. Interestingly, only two of them succeed in achieving mental support from the family; this could be because of gender and reasons of grief. Previous research on grieving also suggests that gender plays a pivotal role in the culture of the griever. Newman et al. (2008) found that during the grieving time, women use social networks and support more often than males do; this is because men may be less expressive about their emotional experiences and, as a result, make fewer allusions to emotions and social process in their grief, which may be linked to their reduced

options for social support. However, the male participant in this research asked for help from family members, but the advice he received from them did not help him as he was facing disenfranchised grief. The listener of the griever needs to be empathetic rather than sympathetic, which was the key finding of this research.

Previous research suggests that participants sought professional help when they felt informal assistance was insufficient (Tan & Andriessen, 2021), which was discussed by one of the research participants as well. However, when the male research participant used professional help services, he felt disconnected from the professional counsellor. The feeling of connection is a crucial element for a griever, which the male participant of this research did not find from family, friends or professional counsellors. He expressed his dissatisfaction with professional counsellors because he felt there is a need for people of colour as counsellors for international students, as the experience of racism can only be understood by a person who has faced similar consequences in their life. As a result, he preferred to process grief by himself and withdraw from any social interaction. Therefore, the role of culturally sensitive listening practice among professional counsellors in validating diverse expressions of grief is necessary.

On the other hand, among the two female participants, one faced difficulty in accessing professional assistance from the institution due to the lengthy process pattern, and the other participant stated cultural differences in not taking professional help during the grieving journey as an international student. Moreover, the three participants knew about their professional networks through university advertisements and informal support networks. However, unlike the research findings of Newman et al. (2008), a pattern of not seeking mental support from friends other than family members has been noticed in this research

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among female participants. The primary reason they mentioned for not seeking help from friends was uneasiness and not wanting to drag others into their sorrow, as their friends were also confronting their battles as international students.

5.3.7 Role of Technology

Technology plays a crucial role in sharing narratives and fostering connections among international students. Numerous studies explored the uses of social media among grievers to reflect on the relationship with the deceased person they had and to cherish the memories (Tan & Andriessen, 2021; Bouldin, 2019; Hay et al., 2024), which has been seen by two of the participants of this research. Three of them shared their thoughts on social media, such as the battle of loneliness, which was expressed through lonely pictures by one of the participants, and another participant shared a memory of family pictures, as staying away from family created feelings of grief within that person. In addition, the participant who lost her father shared the picture and emotional thoughts about her father on social media. As seen in previous research, social media was used as a form of community engagement for the participants (Bouldin, 2019). However, it also has adverse effects when others do not know how to support the griever properly.

Among the research participants, smartphones have been seen in dealing with grief as a means of communication with family and professionals to share narratives. However, previous research discussed the possible advantages of online support for students who are mourning loss, which only focused on online professional assistance and social media uses (Bouldin, 2019; Eisma et al., 2015) but did not identify how smartphones also have a significant influence on grieving international students which this research addressed. The participants initially thought sharing narratives with families who stay away from them using

their smartphone's various apps was a healing method for grief. Interestingly, one of the participants stated that the support he received from family, friends and professionals made him realize that effective listening is crucial in this regard. Because of that, he worked on himself to get rid of grief-related challenges, which has been found in the research conducted by Tan and Andriessen (2021) as well. On the other hand, two research participants stated that they got help from their families by talking with them on smartphones and using various apps like Messenger. They have the privilege of seeing them. However, one of them stated that it is not the same because, during the grieving time, one of the participants wanted to touch her family and hug them to feel them, which was impossible because of the distance. Previous research discussed how distance from the family during grieving puts grievers in an emotional dilemma (Ichikawa, 2021). For example, one of the participants shared that due to time constraints and financial issues during the study period, the participant was unable to attend her father's funeral; similar incidents were discovered in previous research (Battle et al., 2013). Moreover, two participants stated that the technological advantage was better than nothing during their grieving time as international students to strengthen their bond with family and friends. Through active listening by the family members, two participants struggled with the unknown, the constant battle of their lives as being in this world. It is important to note that two of them are female and married. Previous research centred on mental health issues among international students discovered that married female PhD students get proper support during their distressful journey due to their help-seeking patterns (Baghoori, 2021). However, my study found the same tendency in international master's students who suffered from grief during their study period in Canadian institutions. On the other hand, my study found that one male participant also tried to seek help from family,

friends, and professional counsellors. However, all of the support networks failed to support him due to a lack of awareness about the griever and lesser in-depth knowledge of cultural values, ethnicity and racial discrimination in a White cultural society. In addition, my study also revealed that family members may tend to expect male participants to solve their grieving challenges by themselves, and families have a lack of awareness about mental issues like grieving.

5.3.8 Positive Growth and Hope

Previous research identified that in higher education, grieving students develop positive growth during their grieving moment, which creates hope in their lives (Seah, 2008; Tan & Andriessen, 2021; Bouldin, 2019; Hay et al., 2024). Tan and Andriessen (2021) emphasized that grieving students develop their philosophical views and self-perception by using social support networks, which is also stated by two of the participants of this research. However, the themes of positive growth and hope of this research explored the process of the participants' grief as being in this world, effective listening of the support networks or themselves, and constant understanding of the unknown as being in this world. Two of the participants of this research identified that effective listening by the family members helped them change their perspective on their lives during their grieving journey. Participants mentioned that this process strengthened their relationships with their family members. On the other hand, one participant found that when a social network system does not work, a person can work on their own perspective of seeing the world, which can help them create positive growth and hope.

Staying away from family, racism and losing loved ones during the study period of higher education creates distress, loneliness, and anxiety, where grief arises and which can

affect international students academically, mentally and physically (Seah, 2008; Au, 2022).

Two participants mentioned that praying during their grieving journey also helped them

connect with their beliefs and develop personal growth, as found in previous research (Tan &

Andriessen, 2021; Hay et al., 2024). On the other hand, a nonreligious person can find

personal growth by changing their perspective on life and knowing about their barriers, as

stated by one of the participants. Participants mentioned rituals, technology, and physical

activities like walking and listening to music as a way of knowing about themselves and

building growth in their lives. Interestingly, for the three of them, the professional support

system from the institution did not contribute to their personal growth and hope.

Earlier researchers adhere to the coping mechanism, grief model or grief theory for

their study of grief among students (Au, 2022; Hay et al., 2024; Seah, 2008; Tan &

Andriessen, 2021), but I chose Hendry et al. (2018) key concept of relationships, listening and

unknown aspects to analyze the narratives of grieving international students which is inspired

by Badenhorst et al. (2024). In my study, participants indicated that sharing grief narratives

with family influenced their grieving experience, created personal growth and strengthened

the relationship. By losing loved ones, one of the participants learned the meaning of a

relationship with loved ones, which created a deeper relational engagement with living loved

ones through active listening. The personal growth came with sharing narratives, effective

listening to support networks, and understanding the continuous mystery of the world, which

helped two of the participants co-exist with grief. Critically, the narrative of one of the

participants portrayed that a griever may not receive social assistance; however, a griever can

also embrace the uncertainty of a grieving situation and facilitate personal growth through

exploring new paths and adaptation (Shelton & Sieben, 2020). According to Shelton and

Sieben (2020), finding the healing process during grief can help an individual in the meaning-making process, which helps a griever both mentally and physically overcome the distressful situation.

5.4 Expectations and Recommendations

Participants of this research were asked about their expectations of assisting grieving international students in a neoliberal academic sector. All three suggested that the MUN Wellness Center must be well-equipped for grieving international students. Two participants indicated that cultural diversity in the counselling sector for grieving international students is crucial for an institution. For example, to establish an effective connection with the grieving international student, professional counsellors at an institution need to be aware of the individual's cultural background, which can help them provide more effective assistance to the griever (Ichikawa, 2021). One of the participants also suggested mitigating the lengthy procedure of the MUN Wellness Center to reach a counsellor for grieving international students, as they may face more difficulties than domestic students due to cultural differences and physical distance from their families.

International master's-level students also need academic assistance when they face a grieving situation during their study period, like other graduate students (Au, 2022; Hay et al., 2024; Seah, 2008; Tan & Andriessen, 2021). One of the participants suggested that instructors also need to be mindful of grieving international students when they seek time to submit assignments during their grieving time. Biased behaviour among some professors towards people of colour was also identified, which forced the participants to drop courses. However, institutions often fail to understand disenfranchised grief, as explored in previous research (Au, 2022; Hay et al., 2024; Seah, 2008).

Among three of the participants, two of them received mental support from their families; however, one of them suggested unsupportive behaviour from the family during the grieving time, which has been explored in previous research (Bouldin, 2019; Tan & Andriessen, 2021). In addition, for family support, the gender of the griever has played a significant role, as society often views males as successful and independent figures who are discouraged from sharing their narratives as grievers (Versalle & McDowell, 2005). Effective or ineffective listening from family members can also influence the journey of grieving international students, as discussed by participants in this research. An empathetic response can strengthen the bond between the listener and the griever, as identified by the participants (Tan & Andriessen, 2021). Previous research has shown that women tend to be more expressive about their grieving situations than men (Newman et al., 2008). On the contrary, this research found that female participants hesitated to share grieving stories with friends, and male participants tried to reach out to friends to overcome grief. However, all participants suggested that sharing grieving stories with friends and family enhances listening effectiveness and improves emotional healing. Participants also suggested building a community network among international students so that it can serve as an aid to grieving international students.

5.5 Research Limitations

This research provides valuable insights into the journey of grieving international students in the MUN Faculty of Education within the Canadian higher education context. However, the small data size reflects the limitation of this research. Rather than choosing qualitative semi-structured interviews, this study could have chosen quantitative research as a method of inquiry to establish the generalizability of the research within a broader population

(Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, the generalizability of this research is followed by doing a proper audit, various methods of data collection (audiovisual recordings, observations, and digital documents from social media), constant comparison, triangulation, and a detailed presentation of three international master's students (Chenail et al., 2010).

International students came from diverse cultural backgrounds, and given the small data size, my research findings may not be applicable to all culturally diverse communities. Researcher biases in selecting participants may also contribute to study limitations, as the participants who were not selected for the research may have had different experiences compared to the research participants (Patton, 2015). However, when selecting participants, I aimed to capture the various reasons for grieving that the participants addressed as international students. The institutional support system may vary from country to country, so the research findings may not accurately reflect the experiences of all international students from diverse environmental settings who are grieving (Ichikawa, 2021).

According to Hendry et al. (2018), to move into the space of unknowing, we need to allow questions to dominate the inquiry approach despite the answers. Therefore, the questions in this research influenced the entire process to shift toward understanding the mystery of grieving international students, rather than what we had always expected to hear from a griever. By acknowledging the above-mentioned limitations of my study, I will now reflect on future research prospects on grieving international students.

5.6 Future Research Prospect

This study focused on the stories of grieving international students from the MUN Faculty of Education (2021-2023) through qualitative research, employing narrative as a

method of inquiry. There are several international master's students from various faculties with diversified cultural backgrounds whose grieving stories also need to be addressed (Seah, 2008). Furthermore, a cultural comparison among international students grieving in a Canadian academic context may inform cross-cultural analysis for future research (Rosenblatt, 2008). A cross-cultural analysis of grief research reveals variations in grieving practices among the larger group of international students, which can aid in understanding the complex cultural framework.

Previous researchers also addressed the phenomenon among higher education students of using technology during their grieving time (Bouldin, 2019; Tan & Andriessen, 2021; Hay et al., 2024). However, there is limited information about international students' use of technology patterns in adapting to grief during their study period in a different environment. Tan and Andriessen (2021) explored in their research how students in the higher education sector use social media to support their personal growth, which is often centred on death-related grief. Therefore, future researchers could focus on international students' uses of digital media in a Canadian academic environment while processing various grief patterns. These could provide insights into various reasons for grieving and the influence of online forums on adapting to grief for international students (Bouldin, 2019). However, this research addressed how international students utilized technology to connect with their families and friends during their grieving journey.

There is also a prospect of mixed-method research analysis, which may explore both statistical trends and in-depth knowledge about the grieving experiences of international students in the Canadian academic sector (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, there has been lots of research centred on grief, but in the USA, Australia and New Zealand higher

education context (Tan & Andriessen, 2021; Au, 2022; Hay et al., 2024; Bouldin, 2019), little has been known about the Canadian academic context on international students' ratio of grieving challenges. There has been research on the grieving journey of online students in the higher education sector, but it has primarily focused on qualitative research methods within the American academic context, as conducted by Bouldin (2019). Moreover, every country and academic environment is unique for diverse international students, so it is crucial to understand the story of international students' grieving journey and personal growth, enabling the Canadian academic sector to better assist with grief for international students. However, Badenhorst et al. (2024) explored grief in the Canadian academic context, where researchers acknowledged various types of grief associated with the loss of loved ones, as well as the consequences of immigration and personal loss faced by individuals. The authors did not specifically focus on the grief experienced by international students. Instead, they emphasized a more general exploration of grief in a neoliberal academic context, highlighting how grief often remains unacknowledged in these sectors.

Finally, this research explored the experiences of grief and hope among international students at the Faculty of Education of MUN. However, future researchers can use MUN wellness counsellors as data, along with international students, to verify both sides' experiences (Bouldin, 2019). They would assist MUN in developing proper interventions for grieving international students. In addition, one of the participants in this study identified biased behaviours among some professors of the Faculty of Education, which impacted the participant's grieving journey. Therefore, future research can explore faculty members' experiences with grieving international students, which would provide a deeper insight into grief-related future interventions. Furthermore, when participants in this research were asked

for their recommendations on supporting grieving international students, they suggested that building community engagement can help international students face the challenges related to grief (Bouldin, 2019; Hay et al., 2024). This research agrees with the prospects of community engagement for those who suffer the same issues as grief and have an understanding of it. After all, we are human beings who constantly engage in dynamic relationships as we navigate this world, seeking to understand the mystery of life, where uncertainty empowers us to recognize our abilities and learn how to co-exist with grief (Hendry et al., 2018). If we cannot manage our grief, we can learn how to co-exist with it. Active listening can be a crucial element because it creates effective connections, and connections can influence our hope (Badenhorst et al., 2024).

5.7 Conclusion

The research focuses on grief and hope experiences in international students (2021-2023) in the Faculty of Education at MUN, NL, Canada. This project developed themes that connect different phases of the grief experiences of international students. The collection of stories helped to develop themes, such as how participants tell the stories and interact (Hendry et al., 2018). During this process, the researcher employed reflexive writing and thinking, which are pivotal for narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013).

This qualitative narrative inquiry provides insights into the grieving experiences of international students and how they navigate these situations during their study period in the Canadian neoliberal academic context. Implementing semi-structured, open-ended interviews, observations, documentation, and audiovisual recordings helped to illustrate the individuals' narratives, and thick descriptions opened the window for making a deeper understanding of the grief of complex and resilient groups, such as international students (Creswell & Poth,

2018). However, limitations such as biases, partial generalizability, subjectivity, and the ethical considerations of narrative inquiry play a vital role in the process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Despite the above-mentioned drawbacks, narrative inquiry offers a deep and nuanced insight into people's experiences negotiating the challenging field of grief (Clandinin, 2013). The reliability and validity of the researcher's findings can be improved by adopting a reflective and empathetic research position (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The diverse experiences of grief among international students in the Canadian academic context can be explored and understood by carefully considering the project's limitations (Patton, 2015). The voices of international students of the MUN Faculty of Education needed to be heard. Therefore, this narrative inquiry aims to foster a broader understanding and knowledge of grief, which will help the neoliberal academic environment develop support systems, interventions, and policies to better serve international students.

The challenges of grief among international students faced in a foreign milieu have a significant influence on their relationships with various support systems from the personal to professional sectors; the quality of listening they receive during their grieving period plays a crucial impact, and the uncertainty of life helped them to relearn about seeing life from a different point of view (Hendry et al., 2018). According to Hendry et al. (2018), life is full of uncertainty and mystery, which unfolds many layers in various ways. This researcher agrees that the neoliberal academic sector must provide emotional support to grieving international students to foster an inclusive education system. The challenges faced by the participants of this research regarding building effective relationships with instructors and counsellors could be mitigated by fostering cultural sensitivity (Ichikawa, 2021). To have an inclusive

environment, universities must facilitate cultural sensitivity and empathetic communication by providing appropriate training to the instructors, staff, and counsellors. Many studies have found that international students face various challenges in Canada, and grief is not addressed adequately (Ichikawa, 2021; Badenhorst et al., 2024). My study provided evidence of this by presenting the narratives of grieving international students, which addressed COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 circumstances of international students in Canadian institutions, stating that universities needed to be better equipped to assist grieving international students who come from different cultural backgrounds.

Future researchers can delve deeper into understanding what kind of interventions would be effective for policymakers in providing an inclusive education system by acknowledging grief among international students. Grief is a natural phenomenon, but grief always comes as a shock in human life, as if no one can prepare themselves to deal with it before facing it. In this study, I explored how international students navigate grief during their study period and move towards growth and hope by utilizing effective relationships, empathic listening, and embracing uncertainty in their lives within a Canadian academic context. Therefore, Canadian universities need to understand how effective relationships and empathetic listening can help international students deal with uncertainty during their academic life and support this vulnerable population emotionally, mentally, and relationally.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Approval

ICEHR Number:	20250372-ED
Approval Period:	July 17, 2024 – July 31, 2025
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Heather McLeod Faculty of Education
Title of Project:	Unlocking the Narratives of Grief and Hope of International Students in the Faculty of Education, MUN, NL, Canada

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 icehr@mun.ca
www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

July 17, 2024

Mrs. Nila Saha
Faculty of Education
Memorial University

Dear Mrs. Saha:

Thank you for your correspondence addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) for the above-named research project. ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarifications and revisions submitted, and is satisfied that the concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* for **one year**. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the *TCPS2*. Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project. If funding is obtained subsequent to ethics approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR so that this ethics clearance can be linked to your award.

The *TCPS2* requires that you **strictly adhere to the protocol and documents** as last reviewed by ICEHR. If you need to make additions and/or modifications, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes, for the Committee's review of potential ethical concerns, before they may be implemented. Submit a Personnel Change Form to add or remove project team members and/or research staff. Also, to inform ICEHR of any unanticipated occurrences, an Adverse Event Report must be submitted with an indication of how the unexpected event may affect the continuation of the project.

The *TCPS2* **requires** that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before **July 31, 2025**. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. All post-approval ICEHR event forms noted above must be submitted by selecting the *Applications: Post-Review* link on your Researcher Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Alyson Byrne

Alyson Byrne, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

AB/bc

cc: Supervisor – Dr. Heather McLeod, Faculty of Education

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

The Interview will be conducted through Zoom/ Skype or in person, depending on the participant's choice. You can skip any questions which you do not want to answer. Questions for the interview are discussed below:

1. Tell me about your first day as a master's student at the Faculty of Education, MUN.

2. What were your feelings during the study period?

3. Can you tell me about your expectations from your faculty as an international student?

4. Can you tell me about a moment when you first experienced significant sadness during your graduation period?

5. How did you primarily handle the situation?

6. Can you describe how the experience of sadness or grief has affected you mentally, emotionally, and physically in a completely new environment?

7. What are the most challenging aspects of grieving for you?

8. How did you continuously manage these challenges?

9. How did you express your emotions during your grieving journey?

10. Can you describe any significant shifts in your daily life, social interaction, and relationships resulting from your grieving situations?

11. How did these changes impact your grieving journey?

12. In your grieving process, is there anything specifically surprised you (it could be positive or negative)?

13. Have you noticed any positive growth developed from your understanding of grief?

14. Have you gone through any process or ritual to honour the memory of the person you lost or overcome the situation you faced?

15. What kind of changes do you think this grieving situation created within you to see the relationships, personal values and perspective of life?

16. How did your support networks, such as family, friends, teachers, and institutions, help you during this journey of grief?

17. What kind of initiative have you noticed during your study period taken by your faculty to inspire international students mentally and emotionally?

18. As an international student, what programs or support systems do you believe your faculty needs to employ to help international students overcome their grieving situations?

19. Did you find inspiring outlets, such as the arts or physical activities, to overcome or process grief in your life?

20. Based on your experiences, what advice or inspiration do you want to give international students to deal with their grieving journey during their study period?

Appendix C: Informed Consent Document

Consent form

Title:	Unlocking the Narratives of Grief and Hope in International Students in the Faculty of Education, MUN, NL, Canada.
Researcher(s):	Nila Saha, M.Ed, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland. nsaha@mun.ca, 7092191078.
Supervisor(s):	Dr. Heather McLeod, Professor, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, hmcleod@mun.ca.

You are invited to take part in a research project. This document explains what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this research. Please contact the researcher if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

Purpose of Study:

An investigator from the Memorial University of Newfoundland Faculty of Education has decided to explore the experiences related to grief and hope in the international students of the Faculty of Education (2021-2023), MUN, NL, Canada. The researcher chose a qualitative research approach to collect the narrative stories of individuals. The findings from the study may help the students mentally by sharing their griefs and policymakers of the neoliberal universities to think about effective interventions for international students.

What You are being invited to do in this Study:

The researcher will conduct interviews with you either online or in person, depending on your preference. Data collected from you as part of your participation in this project will be hosted and /or stored electronically by the platform used for the interview. The choice of the platform, either Zoom or Skype, will depend on your preference for online participation.

If you choose to participate online, the interview will be conducted via Zoom or Skype, and the data will be stored securely on these platforms and the personal devices of the researcher.

If you choose to participate in person, the interview will be conducted at a location of your choice, such as your home or in a private room booked at the MUN library. In this case, any of the data collected will be stored securely by the researcher.

In addition, during the interview, the researcher will collect written materials from you, such as diaries, letters, and/ or social media posts, to better understand your experiences. Important parts of these documents will be analyzed to identify common themes. The researcher will also take notes during the interview.

Please note that regardless of the method of participation, all data will be handled with utmost care to ensure your privacy and confidentiality.

Your participation in this study will involve one interview session. The session will consist of 25 interview questions and is expected to last approximately 3 hours. Please note that duration is an estimate, and the actual length of the interview may vary depending on the depth of your responses.

The researcher aims to ensure that the interview is as convenient as possible for you. If needed, the interview can be paused and resumed at a later time.

Please remember that your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

Anonymity and Confidentiality:

Interviews will be conducted either online or in person, so participation in this research is not anonymous, but the data will be reported without identifiers, ensuring confidentiality.

Each participant will sign a consent document that outlines the voluntary nature of the session. I will preserve the confidentiality of the research by observing the rules and procedures for data protection. During the analysis process, personal details in your narratives may increase the possibility of confidentiality disclosure. Therefore, I will remove specific information that may lead to identifying the participants to protect their confidentiality.

In addition, all data will be securely stored and accessed only by the researcher, supervisor, and ethics board committee to ensure the authenticity of the research. Any reports or publications based on this research will use anonymized data and will not include any information that could identify individual participants. Your privacy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance to us.

Audio/video recording:

Your participation in the research study involves an interview, which I would like to audio/video record. The purpose of the recording is to accurately document the information you provide and to allow for later analysis of the data. The recording will be used for research purposes only and will be accessed by the research team, such as the researcher, supervisor and ethics board.

Please note that you have the right to request that the recording be stopped at any time during the interview and to request, during the interview or afterwards, that all or any portion of the recording be erased or destroyed.

Your signature below on the last page of the form indicates that you consent to have this interview recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, you may still participate in the research study via an audio platform or in-person interview only.

Some participants may prefer to be identified in the publication/ dissemination of the study findings, and this option may be given as long as it does not negatively affect and /or identify other participants who do not wish to have their participation known and/ or their data attributed to them in the study findings. Direct quotations from your interview will be included in the research findings, but any specific identifiers will be carefully removed during the analysis procedure as the researcher will use code for the participants to maintain your confidentiality.

Withdrawal from the Study:

Participants have the right to stop and /or end their participation at any point during the data collection process. If a participant chooses to withdraw from an interview partway through, any data collected up to that point will be securely stored and used for research purposes, unless the participant requests otherwise.

Following the conclusion of data collection, participants can request the removal of their data. As per Article 3.1 © of the TCPS2, if a participant withdraws consent, they can also request the removal of their data unless or until it is impossible or impractical to do so.

Data can be removed from the study before September 15th, 2024, only, prior to anonymization.

Participants will be given the option to review /verify their data (transcribed for their interview) and to add, change, or delete information. The timeline for the process will be within the month of October 31st, 2024.

Use, Access, Ownership, and Storage of Data:

All data collected in this study will be securely stored. Electronic data files will be password-protected and stored on password-protected and/ or encrypted devices, and any hard copy of the data will be stored in a secure location.

Access to the data will be limited to the research team, which includes the researcher, supervisor and ethics committee only. As per Memorial University's (MUN) policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research, the supervisor and the researcher will store the data for 5 years, and after 5 years, all collected data will be destroyed by the researcher and supervisor.

*Note that the MUN policy does not require data destruction following the minimum retention period. It is the researcher's decision to continue to retain the data or to securely dispose of it after the mandatory retention period.

Possible Risks:

Participation in this study may involve some potential risks. While we anticipate these risks to be minimal, they could include emotional discomfort when sharing personal experiences during the interview.

If a participant becomes upset or uncomfortable during the interview, they have the right to pause or stop the interview at any time. You may also choose not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable.

We understand that discussing personal experiences can sometimes bring up unexpected emotions. If you feel the need to talk to someone about your feelings after the interview, we recommend the following resources:

<u>If participants are Memorial students</u>: Memorial University's Student Wellness and Counselling Centre (UC5000)- (709) 864-8500

<u>General Counselling (NL)</u>: Bridge the Gapp- https://bridgethegapp.ca/

<u>Urgent Need</u>: Mental Health Crisis Line, 24-hour Toll Free- 1-888-737-4668.

Possible Benefits:

When an individual experiences loss and distress, participating in grief-related research can give an individual a sense of empowerment and validation.

Reporting and Sharing Results:

- This research will be published as a thesis and as a journal article.
- Upon completion, my thesis/dissertation will be available at Memorial University's Queen Elizabeth II Library and can be accessed online at https://research.library.mun.ca/.

Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact:

 Researcher- Nila Saha, nsaha@mun.ca, 7092191078.

Supervisor: Dr. Heather McLeod, Professor, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, hmcleod@mun.ca.

*This research has been approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR). If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

The hardcopy or emailed consent document:

Consent:

Your signature on this document means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation in the study without having to give a reason and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.

Regarding withdrawal during data collection:

- You understand that if you choose to end participation **during** data collection, any data collected from you up to that **point will be destroyed**.

Regarding withdrawal after data collection:

- You understand that if you choose to withdraw **after** data collection has ended, your data will be removed from the study by October 31, 2024.

Please indicate whether or not you agree.

I agree to be video-recorded	☐ Yes	☐ No
I agree to the anonymous use of my social media status, letters and diaries regarding my experience of grieving, distress and hope in this study	☐ Yes	☐ No
I allow my name to be identified in any publications resulting from this study	☐ Yes	☐ No

By signing this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

A copy of this Informed Consent Document will be given to you for your records.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

Researcher's Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study, and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

_____   _____

Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

Appendix D: Recruitment Document

Email

My name is Nila Saha, and I am a student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am conducting a research project called Unlocking the Narratives of Grief and Hope of International Students in the Faculty of Education, MUN, NL, Canada, for my master's degree under the supervision of Dr. Heather McLeod, Professor, Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland. The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences related to grief and hope of the international students of the Faculty of Education 2021-2023 in MUN, NL, Canada.

I am contacting you to invite you to participate in an online/ in-person interview in which you will be asked to answer semi-structured questions and share your personal documents like diaries/letters/social media posts (optional) related to experiences of grieving and hope during your study time at MUN. Participation will require 3 hours and one interview session for 25 semi-structured questions. The interview can be conducted at your preferred location, such as home or the MUN Queen Elizabeth II Library room booked by the researcher.

When you have started your program of study, you must enroll in the Faculty of Education as an international student of session 2021-2023. However, if you become a permanent resident of Canada within your study time, that will not conflict with the criteria for participating in this research.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me to arrange a meeting time in person or online (via Zoom or Skype).

If you have any questions about me or my project, please contact me by email at nsaha@mun.ca or by phone at 7092191078.
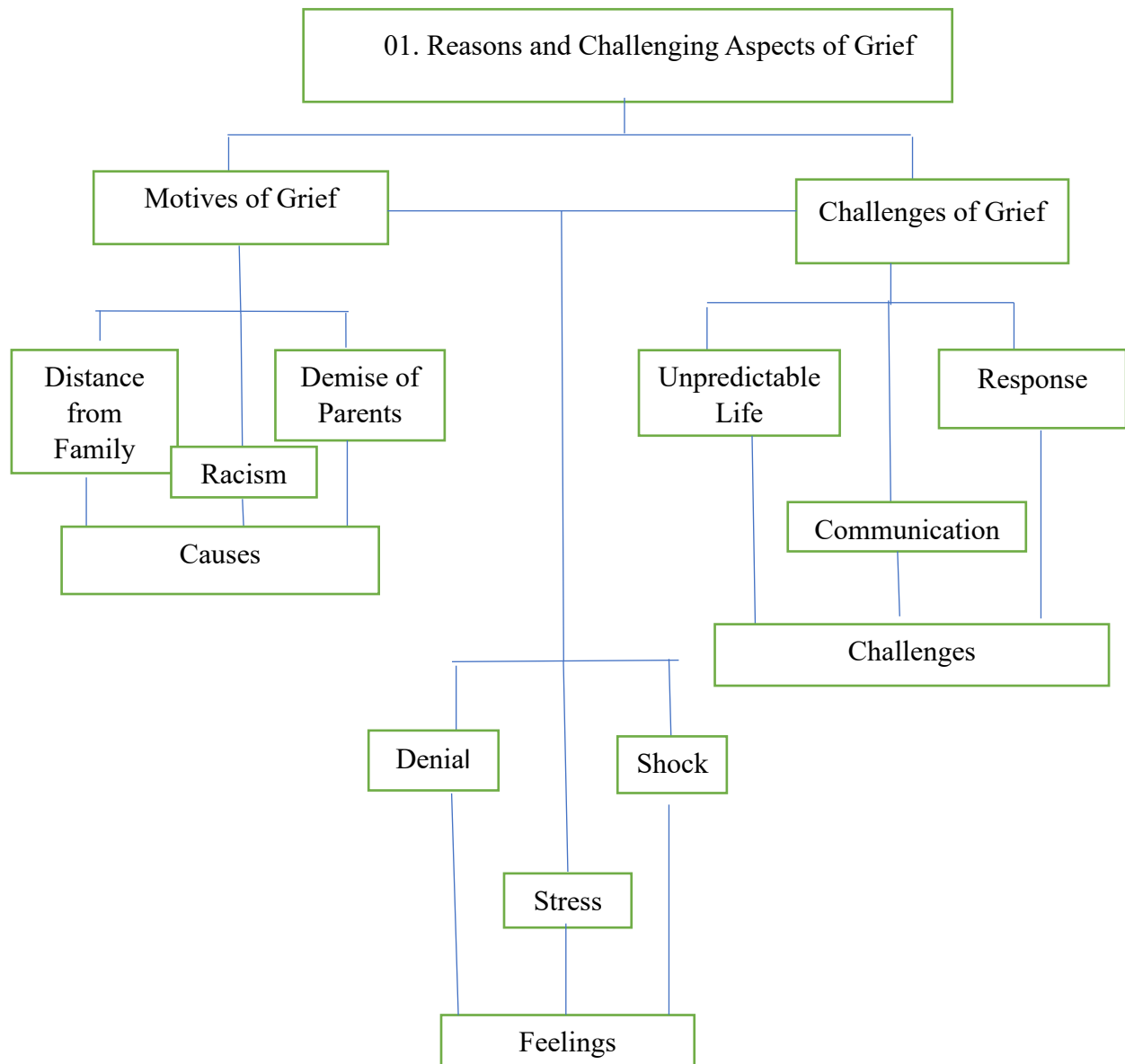
 Participation in this study is not a requirement of your program of study.
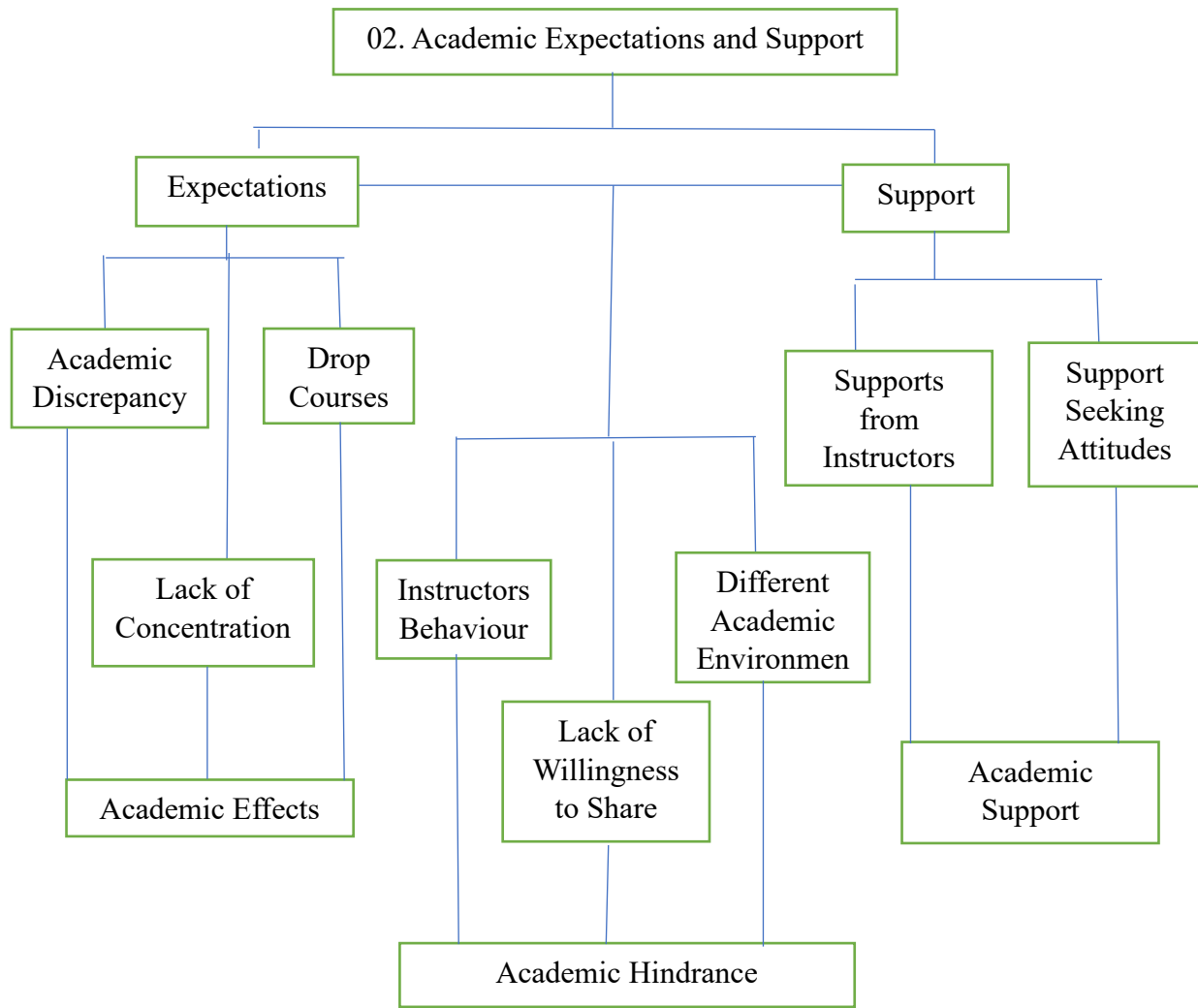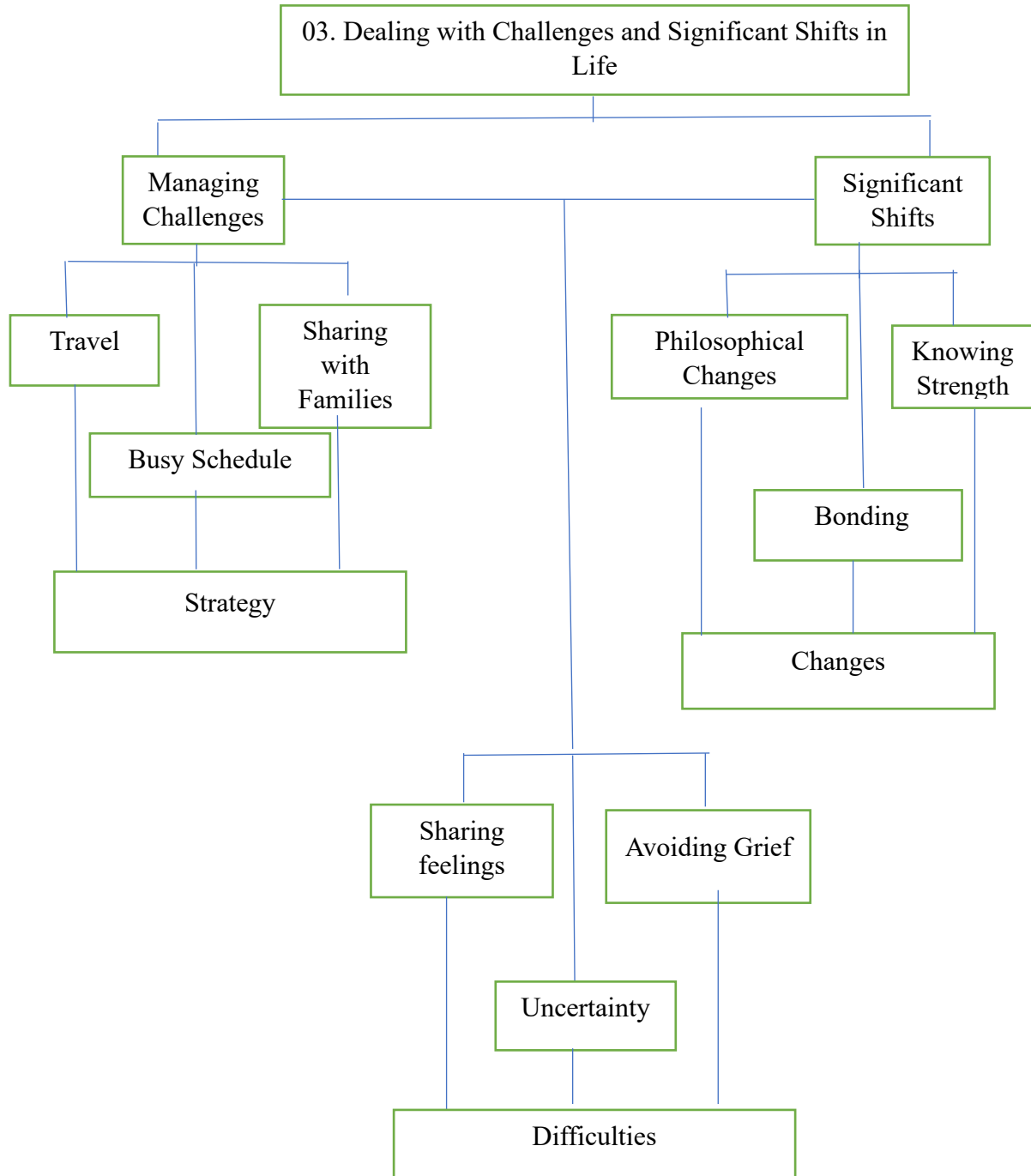
Thank you in advance for considering my request,
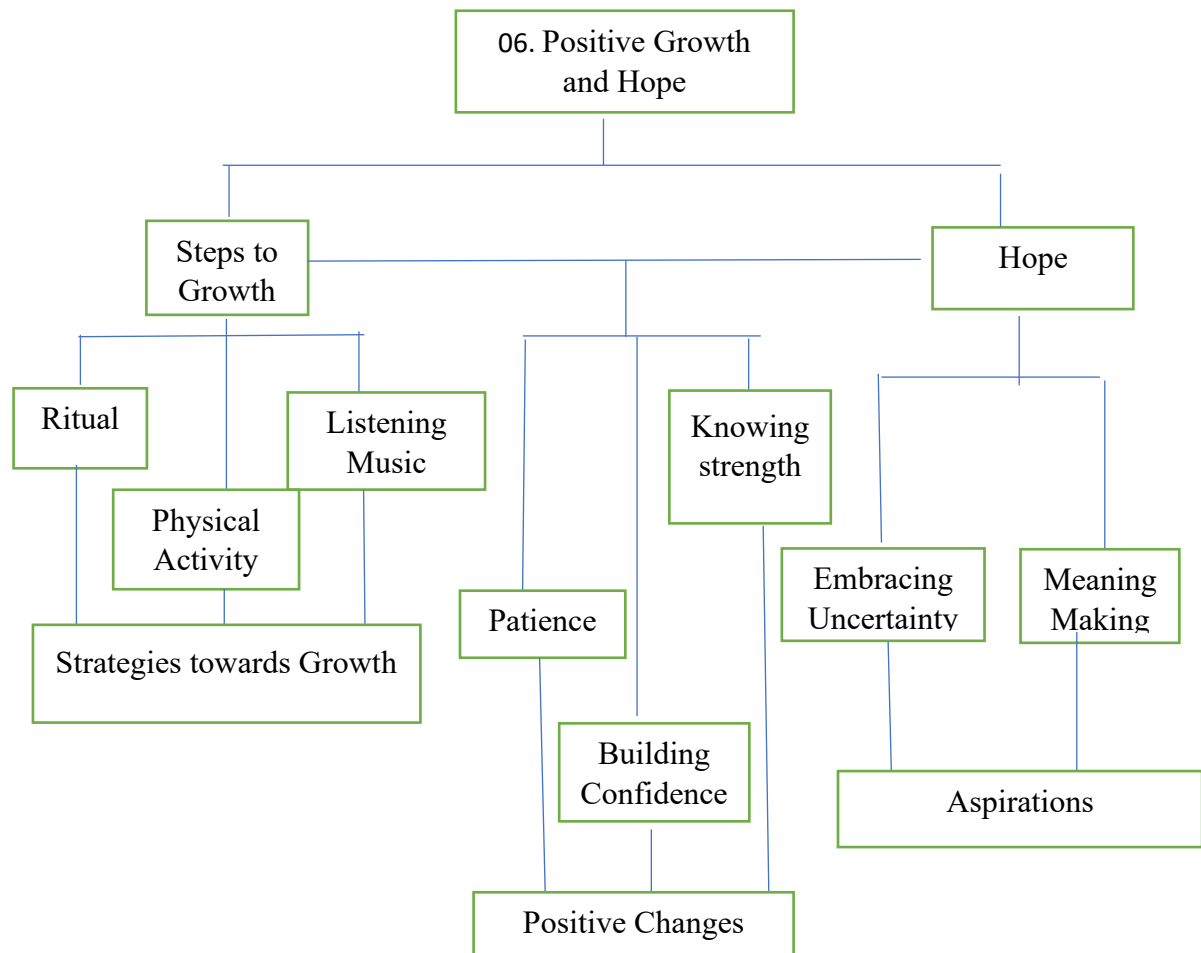
Nila Saha

This research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR). If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

Appendix E: Flow Chart of Themes

02. Academic Expectations and Support

Expectations

Support

Academic Discrepancy

Drop Courses

Lack of Concentration

Instructors Behaviour

Different Academic Environmen

Supports from Instructors

Support Seeking Attitudes

Academic Effects

Lack of Willingness to Share

Academic Support

Academic Hindrance

06. Positive Growth and Hope

Steps to Growth
- Ritual
- Physical Activity
- Listening Music
- Strategies towards Growth
- Patience
- Building Confidence
- Knowing strength
- Positive Changes

Hope
- Embracing Uncertainty
- Meaning Making
- Aspirations

`Appendix F: Mind Map on Relationships, Listening and Unknown in the Narratives of Grief and Hope in International Students**