JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE & INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION
VOLUME 14, ISSUE 4, 2022
THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE CIES HIGHER EDUCATION SIG

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Philosophy for JCIHE

This is the official journal of the Comparative and International Education Society's (CIES) Higher Education Special Interest Group (HESIG), which was created in 2008. HESIG serves as a networking hub for promoting scholarship opportunities, critical dialogue, and linking professionals and academics to the international aspects of higher education. Accordingly, HESIG will serve as a professional forum supporting development, analysis, and dissemination of theory-, policy-, and practice-related issues that influence higher education.

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Emerging Scholars Research Summaries share thesis or dissertation work-in-progress or original empirical research. The intent of this special issue is to share cutting edge research that is of broad significance to the field of comparative and international higher education. Articles must include a literature review, theory focus, and strong methods sections. Articles are 1,000 - 1,500 words excluding references and tables.

NOTE: Submissions must include a Letter of Support from the student's Supervisor/chair indicating their approval for the publication.

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Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education *Volume 14*, No. 4 (2022)

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https://www.ojed.org/index.php/jcihe/about/editorialTeam

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ISSN 2151-0393 (Print)

ISSN 2151-0407 (Online)

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 4 (2022), pp. 1-5
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
https://ojed.org/jcihe

JCIHE: Vol 14(4) 2022

Introduction

Rosalind Latiner Raby

California State University, Northridge

Editor-In-Chief

Dear Readers -

I am pleased to share the Volume 14, Issue 4, 2022 of the ***Journal of Comparative and International Higher Education*** (JCIHE). JCIHE publishes new and emerging topics in comparative and international higher educational whose themes represent scholarship from authors from around the world. In this issue 14(4), 2022, the articles explore and/or compare international higher education in the six countries: Canada, European Union, Nepal, Norway, Turkey, and the United States. Author institutional affiliation is diverse and spans six countries: Canada, Nepal, Norway, Turkey, Uganda, and United States. We conclude this issue with a Book Review by Bhavika Sicka of *Higher education in the era of migration, displacement, and internationalization* by Khalid Arar, Yasar Kondakci, Bernhard Streitwieser, & Anna Saiti. (2021).

JCIHE is an open access, independent, double-blinded peer-reviewed international journal publishing original contributions to the field of comparative and international higher education. The JCIHE is the official journal of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) Higher Education Special Interest Group (HESIG). The mission of the journal is to serve as a place to share new thinking on analysis, theory, policy, and practice, and to encourage reflective and critical thinking on issues that influence comparative and international higher education. JCIHE showcases new and diverse international research that uses rigorous methodology that focuses on theory, policy, practice, critical analysis, and development analysis of issues that are influence higher education. JCIHE has as its core principles: a) comparative research; b) engagement with theory; and c) diverse voices in terms of authorship.

In the 14(4) issue, two broad themes are represented in the articles: comparative research and student learning strategies.

Comparative Research

Gülşah Taşçı, Bernhard Streitwieser & Seyfi Kenan compare intercultural experiences from internationalization of faculty in selected universities in Turkey and in the United States. Dmitriy Fedotov compares the experiences of degree-mobile students in 32 countries in the European Union and United Kingdom. Ambika Prasad Poudel compares the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in English language teaching at two different colleges in Nepal.

Student Learning Strategies

Agnes Akoth & Elisabeth Enoksena use a process model to identify three phases that international students go through to use individual and social resources for coping with financial, social, and emotional challenges. Sara Bano, Qing Xia, and John Dirkx examine Chinese undergraduate student sensemaking of their experiences in learning about other cultures using non-western perspectives while studying in the United States. Vander Tavares examines the perspectives of local students studying in Canada and what they think about their participation in multiculturalism and multilingualism programs and their intercultural experiences with international students. Rakha Zabin, Sandra Bosacki, & John Novak use auto-ethnography to assess how international student emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills expands as they cope with everyday life. Mehmet Avci and Romulo E. Montilla explore the how self-determination supports Turkish international student well-being while they study in the United States. Nara Martirosyan, Dana Van De Walker, & D. Patrick Saxon explore the academic and non-academic challenges faced by international students during the pandemic and their use of support services to overcome challenges.

The articles in 14(4) are:

Agnes Akoth *(Eastern African Sub-Regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI), Uganda)* **and Elisabeth Enoksena** *(University of Stavanger, Norway).* **Experiences of East African students in Norway: Development of a Process Model**

This article examines the potential challenges students from underrepresented continents are likely to face in an environment with severe sociocultural differences. This study focuses on seven international students from East Africa who study in a larger city in Norway. Analyses uses a process model, illustrating the three main phases the students went through. The initial phase shows the financial, social, and emotional challenges that students faced. In the transitional phase they found social support from students in similar situations, whereas in the settling phase, they tended to mobilize individual and social resources for coping.

Sara Bano *(North Dakota State University, USA),* **Qing Xia** *(Michigan State University, USA),* **and John Dirkx** *(Michigan State University, USA).* **Developing Intercultural Competency in a Public Health Study Abroad Program: What Does Cultural Learning Mean for Undergraduate Chinese Students?**

This article explores the notions of cultural learning from non-western perspectives by focusing on the experiences of Chinese undergraduate students from the field of Public Health in the

United States of America. Weick's (1995) Sensemaking theory is used to understand how Chinese undergraduate students made sense of their experiences of learning about other cultures in both personal and professional spaces. The Chinese undergraduate students in the study used comparison as a tool to make sense of new experiences. Their sensemaking process shifted from simple to complex concepts and guided learning helped them understand complex social issues related to public health in the U.S. Interestingly, the students did not consider learning public health knowledge, English language, or life skills as cultural learning.

Gülşah Taşçı (*Mayis University, Turkey),* **Bernhard Streitwieser** *(George Washington University, US),* **and Seyfi Kenan** *(Marmara University, Turkey).* **Internationalization experiences of universities in the United States and in Turkey**

This paper offers an analysis of key stakeholders' internationalization experiences in a selection of three leading universities in the United States and three in Turkey. We used phenomenological research methodology to understand the mechanisms behind internationalization in each setting, and a research design that allowed us to engage in a detailed analysis of the decisions made by some of the key university figures in each country. The findings will be useful for higher education institutions that seek to better understand the myriad ways that internationalization goals can become operationalized, and the impact of particular goals and strategies in two contrasting settings. By illustrating one way that internationalization as a broad trend becomes implemented in local contexts and filtered down for use in six distinct institutions, this paper adds a new intercultural perspective to the existing literature.

Vander Tavares *(Faculty of Education, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, Norway)***. "Lock Us in a Room Together" - Local Students' Suggestions for Improving Socialization with International Students**

This article examines international student experiences in Ontario, Canada higher education comparing it with the perceptions of interaction with local students. The research learns from local students on how to improve socialization between the two groups and how local students conceptualize their experiences with multiculturalism and multilingualism programs at their university. The article examines the importance of diversity for the acquisition of intercultural knowledge and the development of intercultural relationships. Findings illustrate that local students considered their university to be multicultural/multilingual primarily based on the availability of cultural events and different languages spoken on campus. Additionally, local students ascribed much importance to socialization with international students, but expected the university to assume a more formal role in developing structured opportunities for the two groups to come together.

Rakha Zabin *(Brock University, Canada),* **Sandra Bosacki** *(Brock University, Canada),* **and John Novak** *(Brock University, Canada).* **The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Ontario International Graduate Students: An Auto-Ethnography.**

This article explores international student Emotional Intelligence (EQ) that includes self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skill. The article maintains that EQ allows people to work independently or collectively to cope with everyday life events. Such an emotional tool kit may help multicultural international students handle several adverse situations. This study focused on an auto-ethnographic account of the learning experience of one

international graduate student's transition to becoming a scholar within a new cultural context. Self-reflection on the hurdles and socio-emotional challenges experienced during the transition to becoming a graduate student in Ontario informs the analysis. Findings suggest the need for Canadian universities to incorporate multiple components of EQ into their international university services, including mindfulness, self-regulation, and stress management.

Mehmet Avcı *(Recep Tayyip Erdogan University, Turkey)* **and Romulo E. Montilla** *(St. Mary's University, USA).* **Total Wellness of Turkish International Students: Perceptions and Inherent Growth Tendencies.**

This article examines the basic psychological needs involved in self-determination theory to investigate the relationship between autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs, self-determined way of functioning, and wellness of Turkish international students in the U.S. The study shows that the perceived total wellness of Turkish international students, pre-pandemic, was slightly low. However, the regression analysis shows that Turkish international students have a strong self-determined way of functioning indicating higher level of wellness.

Dmitriy Fedotov (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto, Canada). **The Empirical Analysis of Degree-Mobile Students: The Hosting Country Perspective.**

This study compares degree-mobile students in 32 countries within the European Union (EU), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), and the United Kingdom. The study is based on the aggregate data from the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER): the goal is to construct indicator (benchmark) for analyzing degree mobility of students at the country level. The empirical analysis is conducted from the perspective of a receiving country. It effectively helps to establish the context and content of future discussions on how to address the practical problem of measuring and evaluating the dynamics of students flows in Europe.

Nara Martirosyan, *(Sam Houston State University, Texas, US),* **Dana Van De Walker** *(Lone Star College, Texas, US)*, **D. Patrick Saxon** *(Sam Houston State University, Texas, US)*. **The Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on International Students in a Public University in the United States: Academic and Non-academic Challenges**

This article examines the unexpected move to online learning and changing support services as a result of COVID-19. These changes have impacted international students substantially. This article unpacks the top five academic and non-academic challenges faced by international students during the pandemic, and their use of support services to overcome challenges. These results can inform college administrators, professors, and student services professionals about reviving and expanding campus academic and social support services.

Ambika Prasad Poudel *(Tribhuvan University, Dhankuta Multiple Campus, Nepal).* **Information and Communication Technology in English Language Teaching: Some Opportunities and Challenges**

This article explores how the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in English language teaching (ELT) at colleges in Nepal impacts student learning. English language teachers and the students learning English from two different colleges concluded that ICTs were useful for accessing learning resources, preparing and presenting their lessons and for conducting

collaborative learning activities. However, neither teachers nor students were satisfied with their utilization of ICTs in teaching and learning English. Access to ICT tools, and the skills needed to use ICTs were the main problems.

JCIHE Support

I want to thank several individuals who were instrumental in the publication of this issue. First, I want to thank the co-chairs of the CIES HE-SIG, Anatoly Oleksiyenko and Dante Salto for their guidance and leadership to the journal. Second, I want to thank the JCIHE Senior Associate Editor, Hayes Tang, the new JCIHE Associate Editor, Yovana S. Veerasamy, and the Managing Editor, Prashanti Chennamsetti for their support, insight, and creativity. Finally, the timely publication of the issue is dependent on the expert management of the journal by the JCIHE Production team which includes Co-Editors, Hannah Minghui Hou (lead editor), Yovana S. Veerasamy, and Marissa Lally, and Production Assistants: Kristin Labs, Kyunghee Ma, and Adeline De Angelis. It is their dedication that helps keep the standards and integrity for the journal.

I also want to thank the Copyeditors for Issue 4 for the dedication and support to JCIHE: Barry Agnes, Samantha Ambika, Nazgul Avci, Langford Bano, Ryan Fadotov, Sarah Nara, Prashanti Sicka, Yovana Tasci, Prashanti Tavares, Maylia Zabin.

Dr. Pilar Mendoza is the Past-Chair of the CIES Higher Education SIG. She moved off the rotation in June 2022. During her tenure on the journal board, she oversaw the revision of the JCIHE mission and helped to raise the standard, visibility, and profile of the journal. I want to personally thank her for her time and dedication. I am looking forward to working with her again when she and Santiago Castiello co-edit the JCIHE Summer 2023 Special Issue, *The Road Towards UNESCO's Sustainable Goals Amidst the Pandemic of Covid -19 in Latin America and the Caribbean Higher Education.*

JCIHE serves as a place to share new thinking on analysis, theory, policy, and practice, and to encourage reflective and critical thinking on issues that influence comparative and international higher education. JCIHE also aims to bring in voices from throughout the world to showcase worldwide scholarship that is not often found in other journals. The articles in this issue reflect author diversity, subject diversity, and high levels of analytic scholarship.

Editor in Chief, Rosalind Latiner Raby
September, 2022

Empirical Article

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Volume 14, Issue 4 (2022), pp. 6-21
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i4.3639 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Developing Intercultural Competency in a Public Health Study Abroad Program: What Does Cultural Learning Mean for Undergraduate Chinese Students?

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we explored the notions of cultural learning from non-western perspectives by focusing on the experiences of Chinese undergraduate students from the field of Public Health in the United States of America. We used Weick's (1995) Sensemaking theory to understand how Chinese undergraduate students made sense of their experiences of learning about other cultures in both personal and professional spaces. We applied a qualitative research design and used interviews, a focus group, and reflection papers for data collection. We found that Chinese undergraduate students focused on social behaviors and attitudes. They used comparison as a tool to make sense of new experiences. Their sensemaking process shifted from simple to complex concepts, and guided learning helped them understand complex social issues related to public health in the U.S. They did not consider learning related to public health knowledge, English language, or life skills as cultural learning.

Keywords: Chinese students, cultural learning, intercultural competencies, public health, study abroad, undergraduate students

Received March 19, 2021; revised December 1, 2021; accepted December 29, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Studying abroad has become increasingly popular in nursing and health education in the past couple decades (Kulbok et al., 2012). Many studies claim that there are several benefits to participation in study abroad programs, especially for students in healthcare. These benefits include professional and personal development, cross-cultural understanding, and increased global awareness and cultural sensitivity to diverse populations (Fenech et al., 2013; Guan & So, 2016; Kako & Klingbeil, 2019; Moorhead et al., 2014; Nguyen et al., 2018; Philips et al., 2017; Witkowsky & Mendez, 2018). Although there is widespread agreement that healthcare professionals need to be culturally competent, Hamilton (2009) argued it is less clear how to teach and measure cultural competence. There is no dearth of knowledge about cultural learning experiences of students during study abroad programs (Edmonds, 2012; Kokko, 2011; Kulbok et al., 2012). However, most of these studies about public health and nursing study abroad programs focus on Western students and studies have consistently presented Western perspectives about cultural learning and global awareness (Engle & Engle, 2004; Kokko, 2011; Paige et al., 2004). In recent years, short-term education abroad programs in the U.S. and other Western countries have become increasingly popular for Chinese students in the fields of public health, nursing, and medicine in part due to recent Chinese policies intended to strengthen their international education components (Yue & Wu, 2013; Zheng et al., 2016).

From our literature review, we learned the term cultural learning is used frequently as an outcome of study abroad programs. However, there is no clarity about what cultural learning means and how it is measured. We argue there is a need to unpack this term to better understand the impact of study abroad programs on diverse student populations. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to address this research gap and to further enhance our understanding of cross-cultural learning experiences from non-Western perspectives. We use Weick's (1995) sensemaking framework to understand how Chinese undergraduate students made sense of their learning experiences during a short-term public health study abroad program in the United States (U.S.). Our analysis focused on cross-cultural learning experiences and the notion of cultural learning. For this study, we define "cultural learning" as learning about a different culture or cultures. First, we analyze literature to understand how cultural learning is researched and presented in the study abroad context. Second, we analyze the theoretical conceptualization of the sensemaking process and cultural learning in a study abroad program. Third, we describe our study methods, findings, and limitations. Finally, we discuss implications for research and practice. We hope the findings from this study will help administrators and faculty create effective study abroad programs, especially for students from public health fields.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Study Abroad Programs in Public Health and Nursing

There are several programs where students from Western countries in nursing, public health, and other medical fields travel to different countries to gain more a holistic understanding and well-rounded knowledge about medical practices (Kulbok et al., 2012). According to Maltby et al. (2016), an abundance of research and case study literature is available on the impact of study abroad on these students' personal and professional lives. Historically, there has been focus on cultural competence as an important skill for nursing and other health professionals. Bentley and Ellison (2007), for instance, argued that culturally sensitive care is important to prepare nurses to deal with growing disparities in the medical field. Bentley and Ellison (2007) mentioned that Leininger introduced the concept of cultural competence in 1970 for nursing students. Later, from the 1980s to the 1990s, there was an extensive focus on developing culturally competent healthcare professionals, and many models and frameworks were developed. In 2000-2014, ample literature was produced about study abroad experiences of health professionals, nurses, pharmacists, and medical doctors (Edmonds, 2012; Gilboy & Bill, 2011; Kokko, 2011; Kulbok et al., 2012; Larson & Allen, 2006; Maas & Ezeobele, 2014; McComb et al., 2019; Scott et al. 2019).

In our literature review of studies from 2000-2020, we noticed the following trends were prevalent. Most studies' participants were from Global North, usually from the U.S., Australia, Canada, Europe, and Scandinavian countries. Most of the case studies mentioned one destination country; however, a few studies explored students' experiences in multiple countries (Ailinger et al., 2000; Anders, 2001; Carpenter &

Garcia, 2012; Charles et al., 2014; Foronda & Belknap, 2012; Gilboy & Bill, 2011; Hagen et al., 2009; Hu et al., 2010; Larson & Allen, 2006; Maltby & Abrams, 2009; Sandin et al., 2004). Edmonds (2012) reviewed the historical development of study abroad programs for nursing and summarized the existing literature, including anecdotal reports and research inquiries. Edmonds (2012), in their literature review, mentioned that diversity in study abroad programs is scarce. In the case of nursing programs, most existing studies are focused on a homogenous sample of single, white females, usually in the final year of their program. Also, these studies do not report an ethnic composition of their samples. Edmods (2012) argued that research should consider the demographics of the study participants to gain an accurate and representative idea of students' perceptions, insights, benefits, and impediments associated with study abroad programs.

Outcomes of Study Abroad Programs

Another important aspect of study abroad research is its focus on outcomes. Most studies focused on the positive outcomes of study abroad programs. Almost all studies reviewed for this paper mentioned cultural competence as a primary outcome of these experiences (Dixon, 2013; Koskinen & Tossavainen, 2003; McComb et al., 2019; Rew et al., 2003; Sandin et al., 2004). Cultural Competence is used both as a framework and as an outcome in many studies (Carpenter & Garcia, 2012; Gilboy & Bill, 2011; Kako et al., 2019; Ruddock & Turner, 2007). As mentioned above, cultural competence has been considered important for preparing healthcare professionals to serve diverse populations since the 1970s (Bentley & Ellison, 2007). Hamilton (2009) defined intercultural competency as "the ability to operate effectively in diverse (and sometimes unfamiliar) cultural contexts interacting appropriately, comfortably, and in ways compatible with other's expectations, values and communication styles" (p. 862). Other outcomes mentioned in these studies include self-efficiency, the development of global perspectives, and enhanced cultural sensitivity (Carpenter & Garcia, 2012; Charles et al., 2014; Kako et al., 2019). Kostovich and Bermele (2011) mentioned that study abroad is positively related to integrative learning, reflective learning, and personal-social development for nursing and public health students. We came across only one study by Foronda & Belknap (2012) which challenged the transformative nature and all positive outcomes approach in study abroad programs related to public health and nursing. In our literature review process, we could not find any study which mentioned any negative outcomes of a study abroad program.

In terms of duration, study abroad programs for healthcare professionals are often short term, ranging from one week to three weeks' time. We argue that the development of cultural understanding, awareness, and sensitivity in such a short time is probably an inflated claim which needs careful consideration and evaluation. Maltby et al. (2016) shared similar apprehensions regarding the outcomes of study abroad programs and argued that a study abroad trip does not necessarily make nursing students culturally competent but may have the potential to raise students' consciousness so that they realize that there are multiple ways to provide care and support diverse patients.

Sensemaking Process in Study Abroad Programs

Since this study is specifically focused on learning and the sensemaking process, we noticed only a few studies which explained participants' learning processes and how students were able to develop cultural awareness after participating in short term study abroad programs (Charles et al., 2014; Foronda & Belknap, 2012; Maas & Ezeobele, 2014; Ruddock & Turner, 2007). For example, Charles et al. (2014) mention that Australian students' sensemaking process was centered in their "self" since they focused their attention on their comfort and drastic changes in environment which they found frustrating. These students focused on the differences between the Indian and Australian healthcare systems. The students' comments reflect that they focused on the negative aspects of Indian healthcare system and considered Australian healthcare practices better and superior. As stated by Charles et al. (2014), "coming from the Australian perspective, students thought of their way as the 'right' way to do things" (p. 70). Foronda and Belknap (2012) also mentioned constant comparison as a part of the sensemaking process for American nursing students who participated in a study abroad program in Ecuador. Most of the comments by the participants in this study reflect participants' egocentric worldviews. Their comments and observations were about different belief systems, healthcare practices, privacy differences, resources, and living conditions in

general. Foronda and Belknap (2012) mentioned shock and surprise as dominant emotions reflected in narratives. Students expressed fear related to their safety and emphasized their fear of insects and other animals in the rain forest, as well as anxiety while touring local hospitals due to language barriers. They were also frustrated during their stay, and the reasons for their frustration included language difficulties, frustration with the inappropriate behaviors of peers, and traveling at length with peers (p. 7-8). An additional study about the experiences of Swedish students in Tanzania noted that comparison with the host culture was an important aspect of cultural learning, and students shared emotions such as anxiety, fear, stress, and feeling of being overwhelmed in the learning process (Sandin et al., 2004).

Ruddock and Turner (2007) studied the experiences of different groups of Danish undergraduate nursing students who participated in study abroad programs in Jamaica, Malta, Greenland, or Australia, finding that students experienced the transition as a bit of a shock while "adjusting to cultural differences and developing cultural sensitivity" (p. 364). These students also used comparison for making sense of their experiences. However, the students' approach to comparison was more focused on learning about their own cultural values while interacting with other cultures. Ruddock and Turner (2007) argued that "attitudes such as openness, respect and flexibility, enabled participants to appreciate and accept cultural differences" (p. 366). This attitude also helped them adapt to the new culture, develop cultural sensitivity, and experience personal growth.

Maas and Ezeobele's (2014) study observed that Dutch students compared different aspects of the U.S. medical system, as well as the behaviors and attitudes of nurses. Dutch nurses spoke highly of American peers. They mentioned that the nursing education in the U.S. is a bit better and contended that the main difference is that American nurses are more passionate and prouder of their profession, a distinction which Dutch nurses found inspiring. They also admired the diversity of the nursing roles in the U.S. healthcare system, which helped them to see their role with more creativity and possibility. They had a positive learning attitude and considered American nurses as their role models. Although they focused on positive aspects of their learning experience, they noticed issues of access related to healthcare in the U.S. They wanted to bring back their newly learned knowledge to the Netherlands.

Overall, existing literature indicates that students' sensemaking process was emotional, they used comparison as a tool, and their positive attitude towards learning about a different culture helped them develop cultural competence or cultural sensitivity, as claimed in the above-mentioned studies. However, these studies did not specifically focus on the learning process. To better understand the cultural learning process and how students develop cultural competence, we also analyzed which theoretical frameworks were used in these studies. Most of the studies did not use any theoretical framework. However, a few studies used Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory and Campinha-Bacote's (1999) cultural competence model. Foronda et al. (2016) argued that researchers should use cultural humility as a concept to develop cultural sensitivity in study abroad programs. They mentioned attributes such as openness, self-awareness, setting aside one's ego, supportive interactions, and self-reflection and critique as parts of cultural humility. With the exception of transformative learning theory, it is evident that most of these frameworks are focused on measuring outcomes, rather than in understanding the learning process.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, our focus is on the notion of "cultural learning" that is, how Chinese undergraduate students made sense of frequently used terms such as "culture" and "cultural learning" during their study abroad program in the U.S. As mentioned above, for this paper we define the term "cultural learning" as learning about a different culture or cultures. Since we are interested in understanding the process of sensemaking, the sensemaking framework, particularly Weick's (1995) idea of sensemaking, seems helpful because it provides characteristics of the sensemaking process. Weick defines sensemaking simply as "the making of sense" (Weick, 1995, p. 4). According to Weick (1995), sensemaking is a cognitive activity of framing experiences as meaningful. Sensemaking is giving meaning to actions, behaviors, and situations in a new environment through retrospective interpretations. Weick et al. (2005) argue that sensemaking is the activity that enables us to turn the ongoing complexity of the world into a "situation that is comprehended

explicitly in words and that serves as a springboard into action" (p. 409). Weick (1995) identifies the following seven properties of sensemaking:

1. identity and identification,
2. retrospection,
3. people enact environments they face in dialogues and narratives,
4. sensemaking is a social activity,
5. sensemaking is ongoing,
6. people extract cues from the context to help them decide on what information is relevant and what explanations are acceptable,
7. people favor plausibility over accuracy in accounts of events and contexts.

Sensemaking helps to control the environment and use it for one's benefit.

We used this sensemaking framework as our lens to understand the sensemaking process of our participants in a cross-cultural context.

RESEARCH METHOD

We used qualitative (Glesne, 2016) and interpretive (Creswell, 2012) research methodology because we sought to make sense of actions, narratives, and the way people interact with each other. Merriam (2009) argued that qualitative research helps researchers to understand "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their world, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 23). As stated by Merriam (2009), "the overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (p. 23).

Context

This paper explores the study abroad experiences of 15 Chinese undergraduate students from China Eastern Medical University (pseudonym) participating in an eight-week study abroad public health program in the U.S. in the summer of 2019.

Program Background and Description

In 2016, American Midwestern University (AMU) (pseudonym) reached an agreement with China Eastern Medical University (CEMU) for academic collaborations. One of the activities was that AMU would host short-term summer programs for undergraduate students in public health. In summer 2019, the second cohort of 15 CEMU students in public health arrived at AMU for an eight-week program. This study abroad program was based on the experiences of a similar program in 2018 with the first CEMU cohort. The objectives of this program were:

1. To help students improve their English language skills, especially speaking and writing.
2. To expand their knowledge in health science and healthcare through professional lectures, learning about American public health practices, exchanging ideas with public health professionals, and learning public health practices in the local community.
3. To gain professional experience in public health at the county level government.
4. To communicate and interact with American people in the local community.

The curriculum was based on the experiences in the previous year and included the following four components: (1) English and American culture, (2) health science and healthcare knowledge, (3) shadowing at the Lake County Public Health Department (pseudonym), and (4) interactive activities with the local communities. The program was divided into two halves. The first four weeks of the program consisted of classes and lectures focusing on learning English language, American culture, and the U.S. public health system. The students spent the remaining four weeks shadowing professionals in the Lake County Health Department (pseudonym) and visited various local public health and healthcare-related organizations.

Participants

For this study, we used purposeful sampling (Merriam, 2009) because we wanted to understand experiences of Chinese undergraduate students in depth. According to Patton (2002) and Creswell & Plano

Clark (2011), purposeful sampling involves the selection of individuals or groups for study who are knowledgeable or have experience with the phenomenon. Since we were interested in the study abroad experiences of public health students from non-Western perspectives, we decided to invite fifteen undergraduate Chinese students from China Eastern Medical University (CEMU) (pseudonym). These students participated in this program in the summer of 2019. The students' ages ranged between 18-22 years old. There were three students who identified as male and twelve students who identified as female. One student was in her first year of study and the rest of the students were either in their second or third years. The students came from three majors: public health administration, food hygiene and nutrition, and preventive medicine. See Table 1 for detailed information about the participants.

Table 1: Information about Participants

Name (pseudonyms)	Gender	Major	Year	Age (at the time of visit in 2019)
Yu	Female	Food Hygiene & Nutrition	3rd	21
Yilan	Female	Food Hygiene & Nutrition	3rd	21
Feiya	Female	Food Hygiene & Nutrition	3rd	20
Baisu	Male	Public Administration	3rd	21
Tingting	Female	Public Administration	3rd	21
Hong	Female	Public Administration	3rd	22
Fang	Female	Food Hygiene & Nutrition	3rd	22
Tian	Male	Public Administration	2nd	21
Sunny	Female	Public Administration	2nd	20
Bolun	Female	Public Administration	2nd	21
Zhanyue	Female	Public Administration	2nd	20
Binbin	Male	Preventive Medicine	2nd	20
Yuewei	Female	Preventive Medicine	2nd	19
Qifei	Female	Preventive Medicine	2nd	19
Fanghua	Female	Food Hygiene & Nutrition	1st	19

Data Collection

The researchers obtained IRB approval for data collection. We used several data collection methods, including surveys, reflection papers, interviews, and one focus group (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). All the data were collected in the U.S. from the start to the end of the program over the eight-week period of the program.

Survey

To learn about each student's learning experiences, we conducted two surveys, one before and one after the program. The pre-program survey asked for students' real names and the post-program survey was anonymous to encourage honest comments and criticism from the participants. Both surveys were conducted in the Chinese language and one of the researchers translated the responses into English. No monetary incentives were provided to the participants to fill out the surveys.

Focus group

One focus group was used as a method of data collection. According to Merriam (2009), the focus group is a helpful data collection technique to understand the social construction of meaning. For our study it was important to understand the group's meaning making process since students participated in this program as a cohort. The focus group was conducted at the end of the program. Six students participated in the focus group, and the meeting lasted sixty minutes. The students participated in the focus group voluntarily.

Interviews

The researchers conducted interviews with four students who did not participate in the focus group. These semi-structured, in-depth interviews lasted from 45-60 minutes. As Merriam (2009) contended, interviewing is the best data collection technique to learn what is on participants' minds. The questions were particularly focused on interactions and Chinese students' learning from healthcare professionals in the U.S., medical health practices in the U.S., and cultural differences between China and the U.S. public health practices. The students were interviewed in the Chinese language.

The interviewer and organizer of the focus group was Chinese and spoke fluent Chinese which helped eliminate linguistic barriers in communication. Also, the interviewer was the program manager and worked as a mentor for students throughout the program. The Chinese students had developed a trusting relationship with the interviewer. The interviewer also had a chance to spend long hours with these students from the start to the end of the program and to observe them firsthand and listen to their conversations, impressions, and feelings in both formal and informal situations.

Reflection papers

We used reflection papers as another strategy for data collection. Reflection is important for making meaning of new experiences (Mezirow & Marsick, 1978). These reflection papers were focused on Chinese students' experiences with the American health system. The students were asked to write a final reflection paper at the end of the program. They were encouraged to focus on their professional shadowing experiences in the Lake County Health Department in their reflection papers. The reflection papers were written in English, and the average length of the papers was five pages. Students' reflection papers were collected at the end of the program. Writing their reflection papers in English was an intentional pedagogical strategy to foster fluency in English.

The use of more than one strategy for the data collection process not only allowed us to reduce bias and misinformation, but also allowed space and opportunity for different types of participants (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). For instance, some of our participants were very articulate and enjoyed talking and sharing their thoughts verbally. However, some of our participants preferred writing as a mode of communication. We were able to focus on individual and group aspects of thinking and sensemaking processes through our diverse data collection techniques.

Data Analysis

According to Merriam (2009) and Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative data analysis is an interactive process and starts from the very first interview or observation. The data analysis process included the researchers' monthly meetings which continued over a year. In each meeting, we discussed data collected and our initial impressions to develop our interpretations. We took notes and later used our interpretations to explain emerging themes from the data. Overall, the data analysis process was reflexive and thoughtful, and it continued for over a year.

All the data were subjected to categorical content analysis, through which we identified key themes that helped illuminate the nature of the experience for the participants. We organized all the data in a systematic and organized manner in Excel sheets, as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018). We chose thematic analysis as our analysis technique because it is helpful "to identify patterns within and across data in relationship to participants' lived experiences, views and perspectives, behaviors and practices" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 297). After identifying themes, we organized data under specific themes to have a better understanding of each theme in relation to the overall phenomenon.

Merriam (2009) and Creswell and Creswell (2018) have suggested several strategies to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research, such as triangulation, members' check, researchers' position reflexivity, staying on site over a period of time, asking peers to comment on emerging findings, and thick data description. We used several of these strategies. We used researcher and data source triangulation in the data collection process by diversifying the modes of data collection through surveys, a focus group, interviews, and reflection papers and through interpretation by a diverse team of researchers.

RESULTS

Our study sought to investigate two research questions: What does cultural learning mean from Chinese undergraduate students' perspectives? And what are Chinese undergraduate students' sensemaking process of cultural learning? We used Weick (1995)'s sensemaking theory to analyze data. In this section, we will present our findings based on our research questions.

Chinese Undergraduate Students' Perceptions of Cultural Learning

Learning about a foreign culture was an important goal for most of the participants during their study abroad program. Of the participants, 10 of 15 mentioned they wanted to learn about American culture and values and "experience American culture" or "experience [a] different culture." For example, Yilan shared in her interview, "I want to understand the American culture and experience how the Americans live and… learn." Similarly, Feiya mentioned in the entry survey, "The main goal is to experience different cultures and learn local English." Tian shared during his interview, "I still want to learn about the culture of the U.S. and China. I think it is more of a different concept. I want to understand the difference in thoughts between China and the United States." Chinese undergraduate students in public health mentioned the following aspects of as part of their cultural learning.

Everyday Habits, Attitudes, and Lifestyle

When Chinese undergraduate students discussed what they learned about "American culture," they mentioned everyday habits, attitudes, and lifestyles of "American people". For example, Sunny noticed that Americans enjoy drinking iced water, while Chinese people usually drink hot water. Yilan compared lifestyles of the elder people in East Town (Pseudonym) and her community in a small city of China. She observed that Americans live a more active life and have an independent lifestyle, compared to their counterparts in her hometown. American elders participate in various classes in the community center and enjoy themselves, as compared to Chinese elders who usually center their life around their families. They also focused on American's attitudes in both social and professional contexts to make sense of the new environment. They mentioned "friendliness," "freedom and responsibility," "discipline and concept of time," and "individuality and respect for others' opinions" when they talked about what they learned about American culture.

Overall, culture was perceived as a set of habits and attitudes in social settings in day-to-day life. However, insights about the health practices, behaviors, and attitudes of health professionals were understood as part of professional development and learning about their field of study, rather than as cultural understanding. Similarly, learning the English language was perceived as a separate goal from cultural learning.

Chinese Undergraduate Students' Sensemaking Process of Cultural Learning

We used Weick (1995)'s sensemaking framework to understand Chinese undergraduate students' sensemaking process. After data analysis, the following themes emerged in terms of Chinese undergraduate students' sensemaking process.

Sensemaking as an Ongoing and Gradual Process

According to Weick (1995), sensemaking is an ongoing process. In our study, we found that the Chinese undergraduate students' sensemaking process was ongoing and gradual. Their understanding of the new culture shifted from simple everyday life behaviors to complex concepts related to social and public health issues. The Chinese students moved from a simple understanding of American people's behaviors and daily life practices to a more complex and nuanced understanding of social and cultural norms and issues. This progression is evident from their early observations of the everyday lifestyles and habits of Americans and later from their discussion of social justice issues related to public health. Freedom and the concept of responsibility were the second and third most discussed topics by the Chinese undergraduate students. They learned "freedom or independence is very important in American's hearts," but they also reflected more about what freedom really meant and how freedom and social responsibility are interconnected. Baisu

discussed, “To me, the most outstanding cultural shock is the atmosphere of freedom. Everyone can hold his own values and does not need to worry about people's judgement. So, everyone shows respect to others. However, I also realize the balance between freedom and responsibility.” This shows the increasing complexity of thinking and understanding of American cultural values among Chinese undergraduate students.

Towards the end of the program, the students started discussing issues related to social justice and equity in the field of public health. Often, they provided a robust commentary on social justice and equity issues in the U.S. In the following example from Sunny, it is evident that their understanding of public health issues had gradually increased and they were increasingly aware of social justice issues and developed a more complex understanding:

> In America, people who live in low-income communities or communities of color suffer from poor housing stock, poor nutrition, lack of access to healthcare, and lots of other hazards. The Flint water crisis is a typical example to interpret this idea. It is the government’s fault that leads to people drinking water with excessive lead undergoing damages which may last for a considerably long time, thus making people living in an environment full of instability and risks. So, for the purpose of achieving equity, the treatment for those communities where vulnerable people live, should be paid more attention and given timely aids.

Overall, Chinese undergraduate students’ sensemaking process was social and gradual. They moved from a simple to a complex understanding of social issues and cultural nuances with the aid of provided learning opportunities and support during the program.

Sensemaking as a Social and Comparative Activity

Weick (1995) mentioned that people extract cues from context to help them decide which information is relevant and which explanations are acceptable. The Chinese students derived clues from context, their decisions on which information was relevant and which explanations were acceptable were based on their past experiences in China. The participants in the study used a comparative lens to make sense and express their understanding of American culture. They noticed the friendly behavior of Americans and discussed it from a comparative perspective. For example, participants noted that “residents here are more friendly,” “people seem to be more friendly than I thought before,” “they are kinder and friendlier,” and “Americans are more polite.” Fanghua mentioned, “The difference from previous imagination, the Americans are more friendly than I thought before and they respect cultural differences very much.” It seems that Chinese undergraduate students had a certain image of Americans and American culture before coming to the U.S., and that image changed in a positive direction based on their everyday interactions and observations of Americans’ attitudes and behaviors during the program.

Although a few students admitted they did not know much about American culture at the beginning of the program, many compared American and Chinese cultures and pointed out differences in Chinese and American education, healthcare, and daily life. It is important to mention that Weick (1995)’s sensemaking theory considers the sensemaking process but does not mention comparison as a tool to make sense of social interactions. This finding extends our understanding of the sensemaking process in cross-cultural learning experiences.

Enactment of Environments in Dialogues and Narratives

According to Weick (1995) people enact environments they face in dialogues and narrative to make sense of events in their lives. We noticed that Chinese undergraduate students also used storytelling and narratives as sensemaking tools. In their interviews and reflection papers, they often shared stories to make sense of their learning experiences in the U.S. As mentioned above, Chinese undergraduate students compared the Chinese and American public health systems and often mentioned issues which needed improvement in China. They discussed American health professionals’ behaviors towards patients, attitudes towards maternity, and cooperation among doctors and nurses. While comparing the U.S. and China, they often reflected on their lives in China and used stories from their past experiences to make sense of their new experiences. Several participants used narratives, especially in reflection papers and in individual

interviews, to make sense of their learning experiences in the U.S. For example, Yilan shared a story of her personal experience in China in hospice care to make sense of the Chinese and American hospice care systems. She mentioned how American nurses treated patients in hospice care as "their family" and "even to the elderly they respect their ideas," which is different from China:

> For example, in hospice care, they (American nurses) treat dying people patiently as they treat their family members. Even to the elderly, they respect their ideas. When I was a freshman, I had an internship in Jiangsu for a month in a nursing home. I felt that for those living in nursing homes, some of them were sick and some were not sick. But the staff only follow routines every day. They took the residents in front of a TV to do some simple stretch exercise in the morning. After the morning exercise is finished, they will take them back to their room. At noon, they take them out again, just like treating a child in kindergarten. If the elder has his own ideas, such as wanting to go out, he must be accompanied. The nursing staff feels very troublesome and very impatient. The caregiver will recommend the elder not go. Yes, the caregiver will not restrict the elder very strictly, but he is very impatient. Moreover, these people who are service providers themselves feel that they have no status, their wages are low, they work hard and are tired, their families do not understand them, and the society does not understand them. So, the caregiver himself goes to work with that emotion every day, which is quite serious in China.

Plausibility over Accuracy in Accounts of Events and Contexts

According to Weick (1995), people use plausibility over accuracy in accounts of events and contexts. This was also true in the case of Chinese undergraduate students since most of them mentioned only positive behaviors of American people and society and highlighted issues which need improvement in China. For the most part, they focused on the positive aspects of American society and the health system. Chinese undergraduate students regarded Americans as "better" or "more likely" to express their opinions openly. They mentioned how much they appreciated "American people's concept of time." Tingting mentioned, "There are some real changes from my previous understanding of cultural differences between China and America. For example, Americans are more likely to make schedules for their appointments, so that it is clear to know what needs to be done next" (Tingting).

Identity and Retrospection

As noted above, Weick (1995) claimed that "identity and identification" is one of the seven characteristics of sensemaking. Identity did not appear as a strong theme in the sensemaking process for these Chinese undergraduate students. They did not directly assert their Chinese identity in their conversations, nor did they evince a strong professional identity during their study abroad experience. Time seemed to be another important factor in the process of developing a deeper understanding of a new culture. The nature of time in the sensemaking process for Chinese undergraduate students was retrospective to some extent. They were simultaneously contemplating their past experiences in China, their present lives in the U.S., and thinking about their future to make sense of their experiences. Chinese students reflected on their current experiences during the program and compared them with their past lives in China. Program activities - such as reflection papers, interviews, and focus groups - provided students with a chance to reflect and make sense of their experiences. Overall, their sensemaking process had comparative and retrospective elements, a finding which is in agreement with Weick's sensemaking theory.

Weick (1995) claimed that people use new learning from sensemaking for "their benefits," especially after returning to their home country. The students felt that they expanded their perspectives and developed a complex understanding of social and cultural concepts in different cultural contexts. Their study abroad experience helped them to reflect on their past experiences and understand their home country context from a new comparative lens. However, it is important to mention that Chinese undergraduate students' perceptions were based on limited exposure to American culture and the U.S. public health system during their short-term study abroad program.

DISCUSSION

Overall, based on our findings, we found that Weick's (1995) sensemaking framework explains some aspects of Chinese undergraduate students' sensemaking process. However, it has limitations to fully explain the sensemaking process in a cross-cultural setting. Chinese undergraduate students in public health focused on Americans' social and professional behaviors and attitudes to better understand American culture and the public health system. Although their sensemaking process was social and ongoing, as suggested by Weick (1995), they used comparison as a tool to make sense of their experiences. They used narratives to enact their environments, but these narratives were comparative. Their sensemaking process shifted from simple to complex concepts, and guided sensemaking helped them make sense of complex social and public health related issues in the U.S. and China.

Chinese undergraduate students used a comparative lens to learn and understand the culture of the host country. Their comparative approach also helped them to reflect on their past experiences and understand their home country context from a new perspective. This comparative approach is different than Weick (1995)'s suggested sensemaking framework. However, several studies of public health and nursing study abroad programs mention how participants used a comparative approach for making sense of new cultures (Anders, 2001; Charles et al., 2014; Maas & Ezeobele, 2014; Foronda & Belknap, 2012; Ruddock & Turner, 2007; Sandin et al., 2004). Participants' approaches to comparison varied across these studies. Participants from Ruddock and Turner (2007), Maas and Ezeobele (2014) and Anders (2001) approached comparison from a learning perspective with an attitude of openness towards different cultures. In these cases, students who travelled to the U.S. considered the American health system better than their systems and appreciated the positive attitude of American nurses and health professionals. However, Charles et al. (2014), Foronda and Belknap (2012), and Sandin et al. (2004) illustrated how students used an ethnocentric approach to compare their home and host countries. Participants from these studies focused on their selves and their comfort. They discussed how drastic changes in their environments were frustrating for them, and most of the comments from these studies reflected participants' egocentric worldviews.

We argue that sensemaking is a subjective and relative process, an analysis which is in agreement with many studies which show that people approach comparisons differently. We agree with Maltby et al. (2016) that merely going on a study abroad trip does not necessarily make students culturally competent, but the experience may have the potential to raise students' consciousness. Students on a public health study abroad trip may realize that there are multiple ways to approach healthcare. We argue that it is important to understand learning about different cultures as an ongoing and gradual process, rather than as a set of competencies to be acquired.

Foronda and Belknap (2012) mentioned barriers to learning about different cultures, such as "egocentrism, emotional disconnect, perceived powerlessness/being overwhelmed, and vacation mindset" (p. 10). However, Turner (2007) and Foronda et al. (2016) mentioned an attitude of openness, respect, flexibility, self-awareness, and egoless behavior as important in developing cultural sensitivity. Foronda et al. (2016) argued that supportive interactions, self-reflection, and self-critique are necessary for moving away from an egocentric worldview to a more inclusive approach to other cultures.

Although Weick (1995)'s theory of sensemaking does not mention the role of guided learning in the sensemaking process, our findings and synthesis of several studies indicates that guided learning is crucial to provide students support to make meaning of their experiences. We define guided learning as planned and organized learning activities which include, but are not limited to, the incorporation of language and cultural instruction, lectures and information sessions about public health, and daily debriefing sessions. Chinese undergraduate students mentioned that different learning activities - such as lectures, shadowing, English learning, reflection papers, and debriefing sessions - helped them in their sensemaking process. During the program, the Chinese undergraduate students had a chance to attend lectures and have shadowing experiences with different departments related to public health. These lectures and guided training experiences helped them to understand the American public health system. Lectures provided Chinese undergraduate students with an opportunity to learn about the American health system and expand their understanding of complex concepts, such as environmental justice and equity. Furthermore, reflection papers provided students with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and connect their new learning with their lives in China. These reflection papers are evidence of a deeper

analysis of notions of cultural learning. As mentioned above, reflection papers were specifically focused on Chinese students' experiences about the American health system.

Some studies highlight language and emotions as important aspects of the sensemaking process in cross cultural contexts (Anders, 2001; Bano, 2020; Charles et al., 2014; Foronda & Belknap, 2012; Sadin et al. 2004). However, Weick (1995) did not mention language and emotions in his sensemaking theory. In the case of Chinese undergraduate students, we noticed emotions of fear and anxiety related to language issues and their ability to communicate with their American peers and colleagues. Since the program had a structured and formal English language learning curriculum, students were encouraged to communicate with their peers and engage with the local community. The students were also provided with formal language learning opportunities through regular English language classes. The faculty from the China Eastern Medical University also held frequent debriefing sessions to help students synthesize their learning. The program organizer was a native Chinese speaker and spent a great deal of time with students answering their questions during their visits and in social time. These interactions helped students better understand some aspects of American social and professional culture and the public health system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that guided learning is crucial to the success of our short-term public health study abroad program. As mentioned above, guided learning includes, but is not limited to, the incorporation of language and cultural instruction, lectures and information sessions about public health, and daily debriefing sessions. The lectures and information sessions can provide background knowledge about the issues and problems local communities face. This knowledge can support students' learning and sensemaking processes. Where the language of two countries is different, we suggest providing linguistic and emotional support strategies. Examples of these include English language practice opportunities, group reflections, and mentoring. Daily debriefing sessions can provide students space to exchange ideas, experiences, and ask questions about the host country and local contexts. Program leaders can answer students' questions and can address students' concerns during these debriefing sessions. It is also helpful if program staff from the host and visiting countries are knowledgeable about both cultures and have previous experience in cross-cultural educational programs. For example, the leading faculty from the CEMU had been a visiting scholar at the Harvard University for one year prior to leading this program. The AMU program manager was a native Chinese person, with work experience at a college level in China, and one of the program assistants was an AMU graduate student from China. This helped students have a sense of community and a safe space to ask questions both in English or Chinese from program leaders and staff.

Overall, it is important to provide support and guidance to help students learn about different cultures through conscious program planning with community engaged activities and ample opportunities for self-reflection, and by conducting regular debriefing sessions for making sense of new cultural learning.

LIMITATIONS

We tried to address issues related to reliability and validity of the study by applying data source triangulation, researcher triangulation, and methods triangulation. However, it is important to mention that our study has some limitations. First, the study included participants from only one program from a research university so the findings may not represent a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon at different types of institutions. Second, we understand that the limited English language proficiency of most participants might have affected participants' responses, which in turn might have impacted the findings of the study. Third, the study relied on self-reported data in interviews, the focus group, surveys, and reflection paper, each of which might have issues of selective memory and exaggeration. Lastly, not all participants were interviewed due to lack of time. We believe if all participants could have been interviewed, we could have additional rich data.

CONCLUSION

Chinese undergraduate students paid great attention to cultural differences between China and the U.S. during their study abroad program and focused on social behaviors and attitudes to learn about

American culture and the public health system. They used comparison as a tool to make sense of new experiences, and guided learning helped them understand complex social issues related to public health in the U.S. We recommend that future study abroad programs for professional development should consider giving more weight to cultural components in program planning and curriculum design. Also, future research should further explore the concepts of culture, cultural learning, and professional learning, as well as how they impact students during and after their programs and in their future career development. Perhaps it would be plausible to conduct a longitudinal study and follow up to see how the program participants' cultural and professional learning impact their life within five years of their experiences and how the experiences affect their personal and professional life after they return to their home countries.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 4 (2022), pp. 22-36
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i4.4280 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

"Lock Us in a Room Together"—Local Students' Suggestions for Improving Socialization with International Students

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ABSTRACT

In Canada, research has examined international-local student interaction by focusing on international students' perceptions and experiences. As such, the perspectives of local students toward socialization with international students remain less explored. Designed as a survey-based case study with 17 local students at a university in Ontario, this study sought to understand the perspectives of local students on how to improve socialization between the two groups. Additionally, this study investigated how local students conceptualized their experiences of multiculturalism and multilingualism at their university, considering the importance of diversity for the development of intercultural knowledge and intercultural relationships. Findings suggest that local students considered their university to be multicultural/multilingual primarily based on the availability of cultural events and different languages being spoken on campus. Moreover, local students ascribed much importance to socialization with international students but expected the university to assume a more formal role in developing structured opportunities for the two groups to come together.

Keywords: Canada, higher education, international students, local students, multiculturalism, peer interaction, social interaction

Received October 13, 2021; revised December 4, 2021; accepted December 31, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Canada has emerged as a top destination for international education over the last ten years. At the postsecondary level, more than 313,300 international students were registered at Canadian colleges and universities in the academic year of 2018/19 (Statistics Canada, 2021). The significant increase in enrolment in the last decade has fueled the need for a better understanding of the lived experiences of international students, considering that the early rhetoric of internationalization focused on highlighting the financial contribution made by the students to Canadian society (Chen, 2008). Indeed, the positioning of international students traditionally as sources of revenue has been a factor in obscuring the other contributions the students make, and equally important, the role Canadian institutions of higher education have played in perpetuating some of the challenges international students encounter (Arthur, 2017; Houshmand et al., 2014; Stein & de Andreotti, 2016).

Socialization between international and Canadian students has been an ongoing topic of concern documented widely in the literature. Arthur (2017) has called on the local academic communities to reconceptualize their approaches to promoting the social inclusion of international students. This is because social interaction with local students is linked to better adjustment outcomes for international students, including overall satisfaction with the new academic experience (Rienties & Nolan, 2014). Nevertheless, international students generally report experiencing a lack of social ties with local students, despite their desire to develop such connections (Guo & Guo, 2017; Tavares, 2021a). In the Canadian context, there remains a need to further explore how *local students* perceive and experience social interaction with international students.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the perspectives of local students in relation to improving social interaction with international students. This paper is guided by two questions. First, what are the perceptions and experiences of local students in relation to multiculturalism and multilingualism in higher education? Second, what are local students' perspectives on improving social interaction with international students? This investigation is framed as a survey-based case study with 17 local students at a large university in Ontario. This paper begins with an overview of the literature concerning socialization between the two groups of students, both in general and with reference to the Canadian context. Subsequently, this paper presents the methodological design of the study. This paper adds to our knowledge of the international student experience in Canada in the domain of intergroup relations by understanding it from a local student perspective.

AN OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL STUDENT RELATIONS

Social interaction with local students plays a multifaceted role for international students. Hendrickson et al. (2011) found that international students with more friendships with local students experienced "higher levels of satisfaction, contentment, and significantly lower levels of homesickness" (p. 290) in comparison to international students with more friends from the same national background. Social interaction with English-speaking local students also affords international students who speak English as an additional language (EAL) opportunities to further develop their proficiency in English naturalistically (Tavares, 2021a). However, how such interactions are initiated is influenced by complex psychological, social, cultural, and linguistic factors. Without taking a multidimensional view of social interaction into account, the common assumption that international students simply prefer to stay within their national groups is preserved and also applied uncritically to explain intergroup relations (Rienties & Nolan, 2014).

Unsurprisingly, social interaction with international students also benefits local students in numerous ways. They afford local students the development of skills in a foreign language and of intercultural sensitivity, although this development is correlated to factors such as personal characteristics, peer interaction, and the kind of social activity in question (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013). Activities which take place especially within the classroom, including (cross-cultural) group work, and that occur in a consistent fashion "seem to have a significant and strong impact on learning and friendship relations between international and home students" (Rienties et al., 2013, p. 349). Gaulee (2018) has drawn attention to the need to build upon the motivations which local students have to interact with international students in order to improve intergroup relations and maximize gains for both groups.

Local students are known to identify language proficiency as a major barrier to successful social interaction between the two groups. Language proficiency is paramount for multilingual EAL international students' academic and social success (Sherry et al., 2010). In social interactions, language proficiency for multilingual EAL international students does not encompass simply the use of "proper grammar," but also social and cultural knowledge that can help embed international students into local students' social milieu (Arkoudis & Baik, 2014; Myles & Cheng, 2003). Yet, even when sufficient linguistic and "social" proficiency is achieved by multilingual EAL international students, issues of acceptance can persist (Guo & Chase, 2011). For instance, international students' foreignized status is often seen as an indicator of inferior cultural or academic knowledge (Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Xiao, 2021). In addition to language and nationality, discrimination rooted in other factors such as gender, race, and cultural differences interferes with how intercultural contact is facilitated and sustained (Robinson et al., 2020).

The level of participation in social activities and events in university also differs by each student group. Hartwell and Ounoughi (2019) found significant differences in their study in which local students reported frequenting libraries and orientations more than international students did. In turn, international students reported attending multi-nationality events much more frequently as well as opting for student residence more than local students did. As the authors explained, because students invest into different social experiences, they have uneven opportunities to meet students from the other group. Yet, designing opportunities in which the two groups can come together is only one part of the process. The sociocultural environment where socialization occurs impacts students' perceptions and attitudes toward multiculturalism and intercultural interaction. Monoculturalism in the academic space means that local students' ways of defining socialization remains privileged and considered the "right" one (Durkin, 2008; Fell & Lukianova, 2015).

Discrimination also subverts international student success in terms of social interaction and integration. Despite discourses of celebration of multiculturalism in the host environment, Lee and Rice (2007) have drawn attention to neo-racism to explain the kind of discrimination toward racialized international students based on the hierarchy of cultures and languages. According to Hubain et al. (2016), racialization is "a historical, political, ideological, and social process that situates race and racial categories in hierarchal manners" while prioritizing the needs and interests of White individuals (p. 947). Notions of cultural and national superiority work to perpetuate the exclusion and marginalization of international students who look, act, dress, and speak differently. Discrimination becomes therefore justified for it helps to preserve the "better" culture. Bias, prejudice, and stereotyping are some of the mechanisms that operationalize discrimination toward international students in both subtle and salient ways. It is not uncommon that racialized international students will be excluded by local students, particularly in group work, because their multilingual language proficiency and cultural behaviour are considered a hindrance to individual and collective success (Wei & Bunjun, 2021).

Research in the Canadian context has focused on how international students perceive local students' attitudes toward social interaction. Many international students report feeling intentionally ignored by local students in encounters outside the classroom, even after weeks of close contact facilitated pedagogically within the classroom (Fu, 2021). Some international students also feel openly discriminated against by local students based on their race. Houshmand et al. (2014) found that racialized international students felt as though "their domestic White peers did not care about or want their presence on campus" (p. 381). Such attitudes were related to the perceived inferiority of international students. In the same study, many of the international students turned to interaction with peers of the same or similar racial and cultural groups as a coping mechanism.

International students have also identified the kinds of socialization activities of Canadian students as a potential impediment to interaction. International students in Guo and Guo's (2017) study explained that typical social activities which their local peers engaged in, namely drinking, partying, and clubbing, were not enjoyable for them, though simultaneously such activities were key sites for social interaction. In a similar vein, although international students in a study by Robinson et al. (2020) characterized Canadian students as friendly and respectful, they explained that their social interactions with Canadian students did not lead to meaningful or long-lasting friendships. Walsworth et al. (2021) found that international students

who reported having more friendships with Canadian students, even if these friendships were superficial, experienced greater cultural and social satisfaction. While these students foreground the voices of international students, local students' perspectives remain less explored in the Canadian context (Tavares, 2020).

THIS STUDY

This study was designed through a case study approach in the context of a large and research-oriented university in Ontario. Case studies focus on understanding the situated experiences of a small number of participants (Creswell, 2013). Following an explorative orientation within qualitative research, this case study was concerned with identifying the meanings participants subjectively ascribed to experiences bound within a particular space (Leavy, 2017). Pond University, the pseudonym for the academic institution under consideration, is known locally and nationally for its racially and ethnically diverse profile. According to Pond University's website, more than 150 countries were represented on campus in the year of 2019. The number of local and international students combined in the same year surpassed 50,000. At least 10,000 of those were international students.

In addition to students, institutional diversity is also sustained by faculty and support staff. Members of both institutional groups totaled about 7,000 in the year of 2019, and according to the university's website, some of the faculty were hired from abroad, thereby contributing to internationalizing the university's status within Canada and globally. Pond University has 11 faculties and two campuses in Ontario. On the university's mission statements page, a commitment to valuing diversity and establishing global connections was presented. The university characterized itself as a multicultural institution that reflects the broader sociocultural community in which it is embedded. Equally noticeable was its statement on embracing diversity and inclusion. The statement included a commitment to valuing cross-cultural knowledge and different ways of seeing the world.

Participants

An email invitation was distributed among local students with the assistance of the college offices at Pond University. Considering its large size, Pond University is divided into smaller colleges. The colleges work to make the undergraduate student experience less intimidating, more intimate, and community-like by connecting incoming and already-enrolled students together through events organized by each college office, some of which are run by student officers. The office of each college was contacted by email with an explanation of the research project as well as a request that the invitation be circulated through the member networks. These colleges are open to undergraduate students only, which helped focus on the recruitment and the experiences of students at the undergraduate level. Approval to conduct the study was granted by the research ethics office at Pond University.

All participants consented to participating in the study prior to answering the questions on the survey. Participants were considered eligible to participate as long as they held local student status at the institution, which normally meant being a permanent resident or Canadian citizen. In total, 17 local students participated in the study. With the exception of one student, all participants reported speaking English as a first language. Participants were also asked about their multilingual repertoires. All participants reported speaking additional languages to varying degrees, which included American Sign Language (ASL), Arabic, Cantonese, French, Hebrew, Hindi, Ilocano, Italian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Marathi, Mohawk, Nepali, Polish, and Spanish. All participants have been assigned pseudonyms. While local students are referred to as a broad category of students throughout, it is important to note they do not form an ethnically, culturally, or linguistically homogenous group. The findings are discussed specifically in light of the students' *institutional status*: being local, rather than international, students.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through a survey with both closed- and open-ended questions. A survey was a suitable and convenient instrument considering the need to reach local students at different colleges across Pond University. Additional affordances of using surveys in research have been identified by Wyatt (2000),

including the potential to work with participants who are part of the context of the study, but may not be physically present. Surveys also facilitate the process of analysis since data are "captured directly in electronic format, making analysis faster and cheaper" (Wyatt, 2000, p. 427). Surveys are also interactive, and as the process of data collection unfolds, the survey can be adjusted quickly in order to address any technical issues. Data was collected for a period of one month in the fall semester of the 2019-20 academic year.

The closed-ended questions focused on capturing students' demographic and academic information. They consisted of checkbox and limited-choice items on drop-down menus to ensure first that the students met the criteria for participation—being a local and an undergraduate student—but also to record information such as program and year of study (e.g., Crisp et al., 2009). Conversely, open-ended questions were designed to investigate topics of concern in more detail. Brown (2009) explained that open-ended questions hold the potential to explore participants' experiences "by not restricting the respondents to a set of answers but asking them to express their own ideas more fully or inviting them to elaborate or explain their answers to closed-response items in their own words" (p. 202).

The development of the survey questions was informed by the themes identified in the review of the literature. The analysis followed a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The guiding questions of the study were used as pre-established categories. The content from the responses was analyzed for emergent themes and subsequently organized under one of the two main categories (i.e., in response to one of the main questions). Themes which did not correspond with any of the guiding questions were excluded. Consistent with the aims of qualitative research, the responses were sought for the purpose of understanding rather than generalization. As such, the findings cannot be generalized to represent the larger local student group at Pond University.

FINDINGS

Part I: Perceptions and Experiences with Multiculturalism and Multilingualism

Local students considered Pond University to be a multicultural and multilingual university. Multiculturalism and multilingualism were conceived of in terms of hearing or seeing *difference*. More specifically, for local students, these two institutional features were reflected in hearing languages which one did not speak or seeing someone who looked different. Local students explained that they could experience multiculturalism and multilingualism organically across the campus. However, when sharing their conceptions of multiculturalism and multilingualism, local students rarely included themselves as contributing to or reflecting the two features of the university's culture. Local students made sense of their experiences by focusing on *the other*:

> If I'm not mistaken Pond is one of the most diverse universities. Everyone stands out to me. No one looks or feels the same when I'm on campus. (Sumaya)

> I've met people from all around the world at Pond. Just walking in the halls, I hear dozens of languages being spoken. (Gabriel)

> I do consider Pond to be multilingual and multicultural because I hear people talking in other languages sometimes more than English. (Mark)

> While I'm at school I see many different cultured people walking around, and hear many different languages being spoken. (Bruno)

In this sense, there was a formulaic assessment of multiculturalism and multilingualism: *other* cultures and languages. Such an understanding suggests that foreign cultures and languages were viewed as revolving around the dominant Anglocentric culture and language of the broad community where Pond was situated, which by extension, becomes the enveloping cultural construction of Pond University as well. In their responses below, Lucas, Patricia, and Faris associated multiculturalism and multilingualism to

being primarily group-specific phenomena. The students positioned student clubs and associations as the *porte-parole* of multiculturalism and multilingualism. Experiencing cultural and linguistic diversity depended therefore on having "different" cultures and languages organized distinctively side-by-side. Moreover, food was considered a strong marker of multiculturalism in the academic space (see Block, 2006):

> I consider Pond's campus to be very multicultural and multilingual. There are many different cultures that have their clubs around campus, and also many different food places from different cultures. While walking around campus, one can hear the many different languages being spoken by different groups of people. (Lucas)
>
> I believe that Pond is multicultural and multilingual because the student body is quite diverse. Also, there are many groups and clubs that make events of other cultures outside of Canada. (Patricia)
>
> I often see posters advertising student clubs for various ethnicities, religions, etc. I also hear conversations in many different languages as I walk around campus. (Faris)

Other students considered different cultural groups to be sufficiently well represented throughout the university. Yet, the same students raised questions about how out-group members might be able to access and feel included within the different groups. In her response below, Jessica explained that the majority of multicultural and multilingual activities that she had come across had been initiated by students themselves. She argued that students invested their efforts into strengthening the visibility of their own cultural groups and focused on attracting students of the same cultural background. Jessica believed that such arrangements failed to promote intercultural opportunities for students of different cultural backgrounds to meaningfully connect with one another. She attributed group divisions to be partially the product of "human nature" and referenced the local city to exemplify another manifestation of this "natural" tendency:

> I think Pond University makes great efforts to include multicultural and multilingual activities. However, these are mostly student-driven. As such, many become exclusive to those outside of the culture being exhibited. Due to this lack of inclusion, many international students, in my opinion, fail to fully connect with others who are not of their culture. This I believe is partly due to human nature, because who likes to be out of their comfort zone continuously? This phenomenon is not new, to see this, one needs only to walk through the many "sub-villages" in [Canadian city]. (Jessica)
>
> Pond is very multicultural and multilingual since we are in [Canadian city] which is a very multicultural city on its own. (Yash)

Marie's comment below echoed the notion of "natural" group identification on the basis of a mutual language or ethnicity. For her, the fact that groups self-organized into separate groups at Pond University contributed to making it easier for her to find other French Canadians. She also believed that hearing different languages on campus was a strong marker of multiculturalism and multilingualism. Conversely, for Marcel, signalling diversity through boundaries established on the basis of cultural identity posed a certain level of conflict. He argued that diversity organized through groups helped raise awareness of the existence of other groups and consequently promote better in-group member identification. However, he questioned whether such divisions helped bring the different groups together:

> I believe the campus is very multicultural and multilingual since any room you walk into, you can hear at least 3 different languages. There [are] many events and communities of specific cultures that happen everyday. And even myself, I am a French Canadian and I easily bond with people of

> that same background and easily find them since it is such a large campus filled with so many different people of all cultures. (Marie)

> I think there are quite a few ways that people identify their diversity through student groups, fundraising and other activities. This visibility allows students to find one another and creates exposure for others. The question becomes, how much do people mix, or do we segregate according to identity? (Marcel)

For Stephanie, Pond University was not all-around multicultural. She reported seeing other cultures being represented through social events on campus. However, she explained the same experience was not available within the classroom. Finally, John and Larissa also believed that Pond was a multicultural and multilingual institution. They based their evaluation on the inward movement of students—in this case, multicultural and multilingual international students—joining Pond's community. Yet again, both students conceptualized existing student clubs and associations formed around a mutual language or ethnicity as one of the end points for incoming international students. The role played by local students in the process of integration of international students into the community was not discussed by any of the local students.

> It's multicultural *in a way*. There's a lot of events catering to the expression of multiculturalism and how people can experience different sets of cultures. In the classrooms, however, I am not sure because I have not experienced that myself. (Stephanie, emphasis in original)

> Yes, as we are a developing community and many individuals from around the world choose Pond University as their stream of education. We also have a variety of clubs that are based on ethnicity and languages of the various cultures. (John)

> Pond is multicultural and multilingual. People from nations all over the world are welcome here and can find communities and groups of their peers who speak the same language to connect with. (Larissa)

Part II: Improving Socialization with International Students

All local students reported that developing social connections with international students was a valuable experience. Yet, the students also explained that it was the responsibility of Pond University to initiate and mediate local-international student interactions. The students proposed that the university should develop events and programs that would bring the two groups together. However, a number of such available initiatives were already listed on Pond University's international office's web page. These included events in which the cultures of international students could be represented and celebrated as well as peer programs where incoming international students would be mentored by both local and senior international students. The responses suggested that the local students either were unaware of these initiatives or recommended them for others, but not themselves.

> Partner a domestic and international student together for a few weeks to learn about culture in [Canadian city] and their culture back home. (Sumaya)

> I think that Pond University could help by partnering students with multilingual international students. They could offer community involvement points to those willing to participate. This could be presented by individual departments in order to make matches. In this way, international students would not be left to their own devices and instead have a language/cultural mentor from the moment they arrive on campus. (Lucas)

> Perhaps the university could introduce a buddy system in which an international student is paired with a domestic student as a peer mentor. That way, they have a buddy who can help them navigate

> not just Pond's services, but [Canadian city] as well. I think a day or a week dedicated specifically to all the different cultures at Pond could work too. Each culture could have a booth or area dedicated to their traditions, food, music, language, etc. (Mark)

The expectation by local students that the university should develop more structured opportunities for intergroup socialization is not uncommon. Knight (2011) argued that local students "are known to resist, or at best to be neutral about undertaking joint academic projects or engaging socially with foreign students—unless specific programs are developed by the university or instructor" (p. 14). Although the local students did believe that social interaction could function as sites for the exchange of knowledge and experience, they did not envision initiating it themselves. Both Gabriel and Yash made reference to possibilities for partnership within the classroom, while Yash also proposed moving beyond the classroom to include social events unrelated to academics:

> Teachers could maybe pair international students up with domestic students to help them understand and feel more welcome. This is also a great opportunity for those people who are domestic to learn about another place and another culture. (Gabriel)

> Have more group projects in classes and have more non-school events to meet new people. (Yash)

There was also a general perception that international students were very likely to encounter adjustment issues. Hence the emergence of many recommendations for support. For example, the "buddy system" was proposed by Marie as a strategy to help remedy issues of sociocultural adjustment. While most suggestions for the improvement of socialization between the two groups were based on having options for local students to choose from, some of the local students believed that Pond University should have mandatory activities in place for local students. These would include events (Larissa) and more language programs (Taylor). Taylor proposed that if local students were required to take foreign language courses in their undergraduate program, they might be more likely to relate partially to the experience of living in another language and to better interact with international students. Taylor also believed that international students might benefit from more face-to-face assistance from certain support services at the university.

> Perhaps creating a buddy system to pair up new international students with domestic students to help them create meaningful friendships and adjust more easily to the cultural differences. (Marie)

> An event from the school that makes it mandatory for domestic and international students to attend and mingle. (Larissa)

> More language programs!! Make a "second" language mandatory in undergrad! When I studied in Europe one summer, every single person there know 3-5 languages. A better intake process at Admissions and Advising, where students should have more in person contact. (Taylor)

Another mechanism proposed to promote interaction between the two groups entailed the development of cultural events. Some of the local students proposed that cultural events could focus on selling food or artefacts characteristic of international students' cultural heritage and on creating exhibits for music and language, both of which might stimulate local students' curiosity about the other. However, food-related experiences by international students play an important role when it comes to the maintenance of their (heritage) identity (Lordly et al., 2021). The commodification of ethnic food in international events can obscure the reasons why international students resort to food-related experiences (e.g., preparing, cooking, sharing) when they encounter challenges in monocultural environments. Heller (2003) explained that "we are seeing authenticity also becoming commodified (as opposed to being used as a marker for political struggle), sometimes in the form of cultural products (music, crafts, dance, for example)" (p. 474).

> Pond could potentially arrange events, maybe even host something akin to a "culture festival" in which groups could open stands to sell foods or items from their culture or have mini shows or demonstrations for common cultural practices. (Nagi)

When reflecting on the common denominators for intergroup socialization, cultural and linguistic knowledge were identified. Patricia argued that local students had a role to play in the integration outcomes for international students. She rejected the idea that successful social interaction depended on international students having fluency in English. Jessica, on the other hand, believed that fluency was critical for both social and academic success and reported that this was an issue for many multilingual international students who spoke English as an additional language. As for Faris, he viewed the lack of social interaction between the two groups as the product of a natural predisposition among people to stay within linguistically or culturally familiar groups. Overall, there was a consensus that international students seemed to stay together as a separate group.

> I think that sometimes they just stay in their own groups of people who are familiar to them, this is understandable, but we could do a better job at inviting them to places if we see them alone or even in a group just making sure they know that you don't need to speak English to have fun. (Patricia)

> Many of them may not speak English fluently and so it may be very difficult for them to understand classes and make new friends. (Jessica)

> The potential for language barriers is always a concern, and as much as people might not like to admit it, I feel people tend to gravitate to socialising with people of their own culture and language, so there may be barriers between students socially. (Faris)

There was also a belief that experiences that did not include local peers could better benefit international students. Such experiences were conceptualized as potentially meeting some of international students' cultural and social needs primarily in relation to their affective attachment to their home countries. International students are known to develop their own support networks through which they may gain emotional and academic support from fellow international students (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009). Nevertheless, many of international students' needs cannot be seen as fundamentally different from the needs of local students. Much of the social distance that exists between local and international students is sustained by support programs and services designed on the basis of institutional status (i.e., local/foreign) and language (i.e., native/non-native) rather than a common need or challenge that university students face in general (Jones, 2017).

> I think it's important to have clubs and activities geared specifically towards multilingual international students. That way, they can meet people experiencing what they're experiencing and can build a support network. It might also be a great way to relieve some homesickness if they get to eat food or participate in an activity that reminds them of home. (Lahti)

Finally, one local student believed that the two groups of students needed nothing special to come together, except the willingness to do so. Stephanie argued that opportunities to socialize were more than sufficient at Pond University. In light of this, she explained that individual choice was really the only factor at play. Stephanie's proposition differed completely from Bruno's, who believed that the university should have a physical space designated for both groups to socialize in informally. He also proposed that student clubs should receive financial support for their social activities.

> Lock us in a room together. I don't know, I think people have plenty of opportunities to connect, they will if they want to, I'm not sure what more could be done. (Stephanie)

> Provide funding to student clubs that integrate domestic and international students and have a dedicated place on campus where domestic and international students can hang out and get to know one another. (Bruno)

DISCUSSION

The first question guiding this investigation focused on understanding local students' perceptions of and experiences with multiculturalism and multilingualism. As the responses illustrate, all students proposed that Pond University was a multicultural and multilingual university. The students' responses also give us insight into the ways by which the students conceived of these two cultural phenomena: as long as difference could be seen and heard around campus, multiculturalism and multilingualism were present. Such understanding of the ways in which multiculturalism and multilingualism are experienced reflects what Alenuma-Nimoh (2016) called "eating the other multiculturalism." This approach to multiculturalism reduces the true potential of intercultural experiences and affirms different cultural identities by simply "celebrating different festivals, eating exotic foreign foods and wearing festive traditional clothing" (p. 128) without any goals toward structural change.

Local students referenced a kind of multiculturalism by considering the differences between cultures and languages. However, recognizing difference in terms of cuisine, customs, and language does not necessarily promote opportunities to engage critically with political and social issues that culturally minoritized students face (Gosh & Abdi, 2004). Consequently, the hierarchy of cultures and languages is maintained, despite the feeling of being involved in selected multicultural experiences. In terms of the internationalization of higher education, the experiences of local students suggest that Pond University was a space where cultural and linguistic difference could be openly recognized and celebrated. However, intercultural and interlinguistic knowledge gained by means of experience still needs to be rewarded (Leask, 2012). Without rewarding it, local students will continue to have little incentive to critically engage with multiculturalism in ways that help address issues of marginalization and othering.

The need to move beyond the "pick-and-choose" or commodified kind of multiculturalism on campus remains. So long as the cultural heritage of international students is made available to be purchased, tasted, and experimented with without a commitment to transform the sociocultural fabric of Pond University, the local culture and language will continue to occupy a hierarchically privileged position. Alenuma-Nimoh (2016) has argued that this dominant/othered approach results in "the relegation of other stories to the periphery where the other's voice is often filtered through the dominant perspective" (p. 133). In the context of Pond University, this can be seen in local students' experiences with multiculturalism as something *optional*. Learning critically about the other needs to lead to the transformation of the dominant culture (Srivastava, 2007).

The same approach to multiculturalism as optional reveals an important gap in the experiences of local students. That is: whether, how, and how much local students engage with multiculturalism and multilingualism themselves. While the students were able to point to manifestations of those two phenomena on campus, particularly by referencing cultural events and student-led organizations, there was little to no indication that the local students actually participated in these events themselves. Therefore, it is more accurate to argue that there was awareness of, rather than an experiential engagement with, multiculturalism and multilingualism on the part of local students. As others have discussed, increasing the number of international students on campus does not necessarily equate to a meaningful or better development of intercultural knowledge for local students (Knight, 2011).

For one local student, multiculturalism and multilingualism were present in Pond's broader academic space, except for within the classroom. When internationalization transforms pedagogy to be (more) inclusive, local and international students encounter more opportunities to work together in interactions where multicultural perspectives and intercultural knowledge are valued (Guo & Guo, 2017; Zhang & Zhou, 2010). International students wait on their instructors to initiate multicultural learning opportunities between local and international students (Zhou et al., 2017). With this in mind, it is important for instructors to design collaborative opportunities and to group different students together in order to enhance the chances of local students gaining some form of contact with multiculturalism in teaching-

learning and of international students working with local students as well. When left to their own volition, students are not be pedagogically equipped to maximize and gain from the potential for intercultural learning in the classroom.

The second guiding question focused on understanding local students' perceptions and experiences toward improving socialization. All students viewed the university as the initiator and mediator of opportunities for intergroup interaction. Without an examination of Pond University's context, the responses would suggest that the institution needed to assume a more formal role in this regard. However, as mentioned previously, Pond University already had numerous programs in place. It remains unclear whether local students were uninterested in or unaware of such services. When it came to describing their experiences with multiculturalism and multilingualism at the university, all local students demonstrated an awareness of the existence of international student clubs and events that could potentially connect them to international students. Still, the responses suggest that the local students were less/not interested in actually taking part in these opportunities.

Some of the students expected the university to not only facilitate interaction, but also make a certain level of participation mandatory. Yet, mandating that local students attend cultural events and participate in social initiatives is unlikely to produce any meaningful outcomes if local students' dispositions to engage in intercultural interaction (and learning) are low, despite their contradictory reporting that socialization with multilingual and multicultural international students was valuable. Moreover, simply expecting that local students be present in a multicultural environment with international students does not lead local students to necessarily experience the benefits connected to intercultural interaction, such as the development of intercultural sensitivity, which is the "the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 422).

There was a general expectation that socialization may improve if opportunities unrelated to academics were made available. Ammigan (2019) has argued that opportunities facilitated by universities "must accompany both curricular and extracurricular programs and occur in social settings inside and outside of the classroom" (p. 277). This is especially important for incoming international and local students alike, for whom the academic experience is generally novel in relation to establishing new friendships and acculturating to a new environment (Jones, 2017). Extracurricular programs might help with connecting students who may not easily meet through academic opportunities due to different programs and schedules (Tavares, 2022). Students have social lives outside the university and universities can help international and local students connect on the basis of mutual interests, such as attending religious service or cultural events (Tavares, 2021d). However, the identification and implementation of such additional opportunities should not be left to international offices alone. Different academic and service units can come together to holistically improve opportunities for intergroup socialization.

Language proficiency also emerged as a potential barrier. While proficiency in the academic register of English is important for international students' academic success, multilingual international students also need to develop everyday and cultural forms of the language. However, international students tend to "feel like outsiders so they do not participate in social activities with host nationals" (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 258). At the same time, local students need to initiate informal socialization through which international students can acquire and practice the language used by locals, which includes idiomatic expressions, humor, and slang. As one student reported, local students could "do more" to help include international students beyond "buddy programs" that are typically bound to the academic context, which limits the extent to which naturalistic and unstructured opportunities for language to be acquired are available.

Finally, some local students believed that international students preferred to stay within their own groups, which undermined possibilities for the two groups to interact. This was hypothesized to be the influence of human nature in which unfamiliar groups were automatically avoided. Yet, the expectations and needs of international students reported in the literature do not align with such perceptions of local students (Guo & Guo, 2017; Heng, 2017). The local students' perceptions overlook the ways in which the configuration of the sociocultural environment, such as the structural barriers and power relations in place, interferes with international students' ability to act toward socialization. Conversations about improving

socialization should include *both* groups of students and move away from stereotyping international students, which has resulted in a neglect of how international students employ agency to meet their needs (Heng, 2018; Tavares, 2021b).

CONCLUSION

This paper adds to the literature on international-local student interaction in Canada by foregrounding the voices of local students. The findings strengthen the existing evidence that simply bringing local and international students together in a shared physical environment is unlikely to produce meaningful socialization. As the perspectives of local students demonstrated, higher education institutions need to continue to develop curricular and extra-curricular opportunities in which social interaction may be facilitated and cultivated. This paper is limited by the small sample and the lack of in-depth exploration of local students' experiences; nevertheless, it highlights some of the areas which continue to deserve scholarly attention. For example, further research can examine what approaches international offices in Canadian universities employ to design and advertise their programming to local students.

The pedagogical practices employed by faculty should also be considered further, given their potential to foster social proximity between the students. Finally, respect for and celebration of multicultural practices are essential for how international students see their place in Canadian academe. More importantly, however, is the need to reward intercultural knowledge for local students by moving away from a superficial engagement with multiculturalism and multilingualism on campuses. This becomes especially timely as Canadian institutions of higher education increasingly commit to promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion (Tavares, 2021c). As Hartwell and Ounoughi (2019) have put it, the lack of (opportunities for) social interaction produces a two-way deficit through which both local and international students miss out on the chance to grow in many intrapersonal and interpersonal areas.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 4 (2022), pp. 37-52
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i4.3425 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Ontario International Graduate Students: An Auto-Ethnography

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ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is a multifaceted ability that helps individuals to sense, understand, value, and effectively apply the power of emotions as a source of information, trust, creativity, and influence (Goleman, 2006; Mayer et al., 2011). The five components (self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skill) embedded within EQ may work solely or collectively to cope with everyday life events that international students may encounter. Such an emotional tool kit may help multicultural international students handle several adverse situations. This study focused on an auto-ethnographic account of the learning experience of one international graduate student's transition to becoming a scholar within a new cultural context. Self-reflection on the hurdles and socio-emotional challenges experienced during the transition to becoming a graduate student in Ontario informs the analysis. Findings suggest the need for Canadian universities to incorporate multiple components of EQ into their international university services, including mindfulness, self-regulation, and stress management.

Keywords: auto-ethnography, emotional intelligence, internationalization of higher education, international students, institutional recommendations

Received January 22, 2021; revised June 13, 2021; accepted January 11, 2022

INTRODUCTION

The ability to perceive and express emotions, assimilate emotions in thought, understand and reason with emotions, and regulate emotions in oneself and others is what experts define as Emotional Intelligence (EQ) (Clayton, 2012; Goleman, 2006; Mayer et al., 2000). The significance of EQ strengthens as "the subject of emotional intelligence continues to receive attention in the world even today, especially in the field of education" writes (Pool & Qualter 2018, p. xiii). One issue in studying emotional intelligence is that some theories pertain to emotions and intellect, whereas others seem broader. Therefore, it is worth examining the constituent terms, emotion, intelligence, and their combination at the outset" (Mayer et al., 2011, p. 529). EQ is seen as the stem of regulating oneself as well as others. Being aware and understanding the stream of thoughts, drives, and moods and the ability to understand others' emotional makeup based on their emotional reactions is viewed as intelligence (Brackett et al., 2011; Goleman, 2011).

The significance of EQ is that it helps international students develop an awareness of their mental and emotional lives. Emotional intelligence or competence also enables us to understand others' emotional reactions. According to González-Castro et al. (2020), such important life skills are crucial for emotional adaptation and the acculturation process. Given the multidimensional nature of the construct of EQ, Cherniss et al. (2006) questions the validity of the construct and share that the claim that EI determines real-world success has not been validated. For example, they claim that the different dimensions of EQ, such as (e.g., self-awareness and empathy) need to cohere to collectively work together to help individuals effectively interpret and manage their own and others' emotional states and regulate them contextually (Cherniss et al., 2006; Goleman et al., 2002).

Context

According to the American College Health Association ACHA (2014), 61% of graduate students report more than average or tremendous stress, higher than the average rate (55%) among all college students. Although, the problem is more dominant among international students in general as there is a vast difference in their culture, language, food, and weather from here to their countries. According to Goleman (2011), EQ is one crucial way that makes all effective leaders similar. In dealing with different leadership challenges, EQ brings in leading changes, making it an indispensable element (Tracy, 2017). EQ is vital for international students because it helps students make significant social and emotional adjustments (Qualter et al., 2018) to become future leaders.

With the growing rate of internationalization in Ontario universities (Tamtik et al., 2020), institutions are generally expected to provide international students with academic support. However, there remains a need to develop university policies that address EQ and support students' emotional and social development. These are some critical factors implanted within EQ's concept (such as motivation, self-awareness, empathy, social skill, social awareness, and management), and ignorance of these issues may lead to greater difficulties for the incoming students. These social and emotional aspects are equally important as the educational factors that should be considered, as students are often seen to get traumatized by events regarding discrimination, culture shock, and language barrier. Duggal (2017) addresses the newcomer students as refugees and claims that "refugees are individuals with palpable faces traumatized heart who are colored by real-life stressful stories, tiring experiences, complicated settlement problems" (p. 773). The newcomer international students are stressed out, with all sorts of worries regarding academics, making new friends, managing finances, draining them down.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural, Sexual, and Socio-Emotional Diversity among International Students

International students come from diverse background that reflects an array of cultural, sexual, and socioeconomic backgrounds commonly reflected in past research (Chen & Zhou, 2019; Netierman et al., 2021; Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2019) These studies, such as a study by Stavicka and Odiņa (2021), portray the variation in the psychological and social aspects that dominate the emotional domain and wellbeing of these international students arriving in Ontario with diverse upbringing and practices in different contexts.

The following sections highlight the diverse cultural, sexual, and socioeconomic dimensions of these international graduate students.

Alqudayri and Gounko (2018) portray the situation of a dominant Gulf country and state that "students from Saudi Arabia experience unique challenges as they transition from a conservative gender-segregated environment to a liberal gender-mixed environment" (p. 1736). The study results reflect that female graduate students from Saudi Arabia face unique challenges related to adaptation to a new educational environment and managing Saudi and Canadian communities' cultural expectations. The findings also show that studying and living in Canada affected these female students' values and changed how they viewed themselves, their culture, and the community.

Hsiu-Fen (2018) states that as the Canadian universities compete to attract international students, institutional academic ranking and a supportive campus become pivotal factors in international student recruitment. Coping strategies and supportive programs look towards the fact that involvement of "the women partners of international students develops various coping strategies for stress alleviation, such as personal strategies and community involvement" (Hsiu-Fen, 2018, p. 336). Hsiu-Fen (2018) also said that the partners might reshape their identity, discover their talents and interests, develop cross-culture friendships, and even help females find a job.

Lu et al.'s (2018) study results show that "academic and sociocultural challenges tended to be temporary, whereas social and employment challenges tended to be more long-standing" (Lu et al., 2018, p. 998). Emotional and psychological well-being and sociocultural difficulties are great challenges that international students must fight. Lu et al. (2018) shed further light on the issue and say that "in their narratives, they tend to attribute individual challenges to psychological (e.g., personality, motivation, effort) and cultural factors (e.g., language barriers)" (p. 998) which are challenges unique to the international students. International students come in from various cultures, races, gender, perceptions, and mindsets, leading to challenges with cultural-social assimilation and even personal growth satisfaction.

These wide ranges of cultural, sexual, social, and emotional diversity call for intercultural inclusion and assimilation in global education. Building on Success: International Education Strategy (2019-2024) (Government of Canada, 2020) explicitly states that one of the key objectives behind this plan is to encourage international students to gain new skills through academic engagement by enrolling themselves in a wide range of culturally collaborative programs and by engaging themselves to the diverse communities across Canada.

Cooper and Yarbrough (2016) carried out research using the bio-cultural model of human adaptation and photo-voice methodology to study the reflecting behavior to the surrounding circumstances of Asian-Indian female international students' physical or mental health. The photographs were used to promote connectivity and scopes for communication to facilitate psychological comfort, developing classroom strategies to foster emotional strength, resilience, and sensitivity. These are essential paradigms that educators and researchers are increasingly concerned about promoting young people's psychological and emotional health.

Looking at the cognitive domains, it can be seen that "among the psychological variables connected to well-being, relational quality, and social support have a well-established and fundamental role in healthy functioning for organizations and individuals across the life course" (Fabio & Kenny, 2019, p. 6). The institution and educators are expected to play a facilitating role to help international graduate students develop such community connections for intercultural understanding.

Covid-19 Impact on International Students

Covid-19 has drastically changed the educational landscape for millions of university students worldwide (Stavicka & Odiņa, 2021). International students have their own set of inimitable challenges with border closures and uncertainties during the pandemic (Firang & Mensah, 2021). For example, past studies show that many international students worry about visa and graduation status (Keung & Teotonio, 2020; Wong et al., 2020), optional practical training opportunities being harder to obtain or canceled (Keung & Teotonio, 2020; Wong et al., 2020); whether to go home (if that is even an option due to border closings); living far from loved ones, and not having a strong support network; having to find a place to

live if dormitories closed; and finances (Firang, 2020; Keung & Teotonio, 2020; Stavicka & Odiṇa, 2021; Wong et al., 2020).

Recent studies show that international student enrollment in Canada has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic (Keung & Teotonio, 2020; Netierman et al., 2021; Ross, 2020) as most the post-secondary education moved from mainly in-person to an online format (Ross, 2020). Wong et al. (2020) illustrate that international students reported that the academic and social-emotional challenges experienced due to Covid-19 restrictions escalated quickly. For example, Wong et al. (2020) found that some students preferred taking a flight at a higher cost and moving back to their home country because they would desire to be with family rather than remain isolated in a solitary dormitory room during this stressful time. For others, flying was not an option; with closed borders and financial stress, they had to stick around experiencing the pandemic in a much more challenging way. As the literature and past research on international students' emotional challenges and social-emotional experiences expand, this paper explores how international students need to be better supported with the components of emotional intelligence.

THEORETICAL CONSTRUCT

Emotional Intelligence deals with stress management, effective communication, empathic concern, coping strategies, and conflict resolution. These are personal and professional significant parts of a person's life. International students have such usual and unusual situations to deal with, and EQ helps these newcomer students to increase their emotional self-awareness, emotional expression, and creativity; increase tolerance, trust, and integrity; improve relations; eventually, aid them in making social and psychological adjustments in this new place. Besides the academic perspective, "the emotional dimensions like self-awareness, controlling disruptive impulses, and managing interpersonal relations are key elements in regulating oneself" (Goleman, 2011, p. 9). These are essential factors that are often ignored, which gave rise to the importance of this research. The institutions somewhat assure academic and curricular support, but the social and psychological provision is given little priority. The need for institutions to develop their mental and social policies is vital to meet the students' needs.

The AUCC's (2011) Trends in Higher Education highlights the current scenario of Canada, stating that "Canadian universities are becoming increasingly internationalized; more universities are engaging in international research collaborations; more international students are coming from a larger number of countries" (p. 15). The same report cited data for 2010 when international students represented approximately 18% of full-time master's students. The greater representation of international students is at the graduate level. For example, visa students represent about 2% of full-time undergraduate students in 4-year public universities and about 23% of full-time graduate students (AUCC, 2011). With the growing rate of the institutions' international programs and the more significant number of students traveling to Canada (Smith et al., 2013), universities need to support these international graduate students with their smooth settlement academically and psychosocial, non-academic issues. Hopefully, this study will encourage university policies to change to facilitate such students and include more emotional and social skills (significant components of EQ) into their international education policies. The study focuses on my auto-ethnographic account to examine these emotional entities through my personal experiences.

Research Question

This study focused on an auto-ethnographic account of the learning experience and transitions of myself as an international graduate student to becoming a scholar within a new social and cultural context. This is an account of self-reflection on the socio-emotional challenges experienced during the transition to becoming a graduate student in Ontario, which informs the analysis. The current research focuses on this transitional journey in reflection to the context of the internationalization of higher education in Canada and will investigate the following research questions:

- How did I cope as an international student in Ontario with the emotional and social adaptations I faced, and what supports did I get from my enrolled institution?
- What were my key challenges, and how can the institutions in Ontario better assist the international students with their emotional and mental assimilation?

After coming to Ontario as an international graduate student, these research questions reflect on my personal experiences, thoughts, and understandings. This paper also focuses on my views and opinions regarding the institutional programs that helped me with my emotional and social transition and the school's lapses for future students. This comprehensive account of my auto-ethnography is composed of my chronicles regarding my socio-psychological trials and adjustments to explore these research questions. Following my reflections, different dimensions of EQ and auto-ethnography are described and used to develop a recommendation model for the students' future benefit in making smooth adjustments regarding their emotional and social pieces.

RESEARCH METHOD

Leading for Educational Lives and the Importance of Inviting Oneself Personally

Every individual is primarily a leader of leading themselves. Only if someone is effective in leading oneself can he investigate coaching, managing, and mentoring others using the "L.I.V.E.S. model" (Novak et al., 2014, p.14). Leading oneself might seem an effortless job, but that's challenging as well. These elements promote the leaders' core authenticity in being more inviting to support the L.I.V.E.S. model and help maintain the fundamental consistency between one's values, goals, and actions. International students coming to Canada are leaders; they make decisions regarding academics, finances, and social community. They are leading themselves in understanding the new world that they are exposed to.

They are motivating themselves intrinsically and continually trying to boost their inner self. When I reflect on the beginning phase of my adjustment period, I can vividly remember how I kept motivating myself with all the challenges. I was more compassionate to myself as well as others. I was treating myself with more kindness, compassion, and care. As Neff (2020) illustrates, being kind and compassionate to oneself adds to one's resilience during challenging times and helps one understand their self-worth.

This idea of being one's leader and inviting oneself to live an educational life presented through the L.I.V.E.S. model aligning with the emotional intelligence elements can be vividly intertwined with this study. Knowing oneself better, foreseeing the possibilities ahead, and building the social connection is very helpful in the difficult phases, which are seamlessly applicable for international students. Treating oneself with kindness during a difficult time, believing for a better tomorrow, and extending empathy towards oneself and the surrounding community are helpful food for the international students in leading themselves through this challenging situation.

Neff (2020) states that treating yourself with the same kind of kindness, care, and compassion as you would treat those you care about, your good friends, your loved ones is self-compassion. They also say that self-compassion also provides a sense of self-worth. It is intertwined with mindfulness, which assists in coping and the growth of resilience. These connect clearly to my own experience because the core of my coping strategies was resilience. Neff et al. (2020) presented a series of research on developing and validating the Self-Compassion Scale—Youth version (SCS-Y). Results show significant association with mindfulness, happiness, life satisfaction, depression, resilience, and achievement goal orientation in expected directions. Overall, findings suggest that the SCS-Y is a reliable and valid measure of self-compassion for youths. Neff (2020) explores self-compassion and states that self-compassion means being kind and understanding to yourself when confronted with personal failure instead of mercilessly judging and criticizing yourself for various inadequacies or shortcomings. Giving up at the painful times of adjustment failures was something easier for me. Feeling that I was not fit for this new place was the most common thought inside my mind because I came from a completely different cultural and societal setting. I tried to treat myself with kindness, patience, and motivation, all aligned with the EQ areas to cope with my challenges.

Account of Auto-Ethnography

Autoethnography is an interpretive research method that studies social phenomena through the lens of the author/researcher's personal experience. (Wall, 2010). Autoethnography is an innovative style of qualitative inquiry that has captured the attention of an ever-increasing number of scholars from various disciplines (Ellis, 2004).

Grounded in postmodern philosophy that makes room for diverse and nontraditional ways of knowing, autoethnographic work produces "highly personalized accounts that draw upon the experience of the author/researcher for the purposes of extending sociological understanding" (Sparkes, 2000, p. 21). Personal experience methods offer a new and unique vantage point to contribute to social science and education by considering "macro and micro linkages; structure, social reproduction, and social change" (Laslett, 1999, p. 392). An autoethnography helps reconcile the best ideas and combines the power of the personal perspective with the value of analysis and theory to advance our understandings in ways it might never have otherwise been.

The following auto-ethnography account is based on my narratives regarding my experiences as an international student in Ontario. I shared instances of my challenges and the coping strategies I used to aid myself in the difficult times. I am a female international student from Bangladesh who came to Ontario to join the graduate school in an MEd program at a mid-sized Ontario University. I came to Canada in my mid-twenties, the first time away from home and family in a small country located in southeast Asia with a dominant Muslim population. In the beginning stages, my tenure in Ontario was full of emotional challenges because of severe stress and anxiety due to a situational uncertainty that I had to go through alone. It was my first experience living away from home and family, where I had to make all my decisions alone.

Even before reaching Ontario, I struggled with the decision-making of which institution to choose. Some institutions had better recognition of their degree; some were cheaper in finances. Some displayed more support services for the international students, some were situated in a region with better conditions, and some offered more scholarships. At that time, I had my parents with me back home. After many considerations, we collectively chose my current university because of its suitable location, educational research recognition, and some factors like funding and scholarship.

After the admission and the visa formalities, when I was all set for Canada, I was excited but equally drowned by the feeling of traveling alone and settling down in an unknown land. I had my family's constant support throughout; I talked to my mother over the phone for hours, sharing my anxieties. I spoke to my father and brother for advice regarding managing finances, how I adapt to this new country, and many other issues. The challenge was that they were in a different country and didn't know the actual scenario. So, the primary motivation had to come from my inner self. I had to come up with ways of coping effectively in this new environment new place, and I had to self-calm myself at those moments when I broke down completely. At that time, familial and social support was key in supporting my mental health. Research conducted with Canadian adolescent states that social knowledge and support help with emotional and spiritual understanding, strongly linked to positive school experiences (Bosacki et al., 2019a).

Drawing on research that shows links between psychological and spiritual understanding and positive school experiences (Bosacki et al., 2019a) states that social experiences and school engagement help adolescents focus on self-reflection and self-compassion self-acceptance to fight against perceptions of loneliness.

Rubin et al. (2014) state that humans tend to be deficient in applying their social skills and relationships during insecurity, anxiety, and loneliness. Anxious youths are hesitant to apply their coping skills leading to occurrences of unsociability. Research conducted by (Xiao et al., 2020) shows that this unsociability experience leads to peer rejection and subsequent loneliness. Unsociability refers to the social withdrawal associated with shyness-sensitivity, which is further connected to social, school, and psychological adjustment in adolescents (Liu et al., 2017). Shyness tends to be associated with social and psychological problems, more evidently in adolescence. In contrast, unsociability was associated with problems more evidently across domains in childhood and adolescence. Liu et al. (2017) further illustrate both shyness and unsociability lead to adjustment difficulties because adolescent unsociability contributed to increases in loneliness via a pathway through peer rejection, and loneliness directly contributed to increases in unsociability.

For me, the greatest assistance to fight my loneliness at that time was my friends. As (Bosacki et al., 2019b) stated, friendship helps buffer feelings of loneliness and strengthen the social experience of adolescents. My friends were also international students, mostly going through a similar situation. We tried

to create our community. We went to grab groceries together, we went to the bank together, and often, we just sat down together and shared our memories from home. That was so powerful. It gave me an emotional boost for which I never had to go to a professional counselor. We were counseling and compassionate to each other. At times we went to some of our faculty members and administrators to suggest our day-to-day decision-making. I was intrinsically motivated by my surrounding community, which can clearly connect to my EQ components. I would also say that elements like my self-regulation, self-awareness, social skill, and motivation, aroused me and encouraged me to overcome that fear and emotional stress.

Jones (2020) states that students face cascading uncertainties about the school, the pandemic, racial unrest, and the future. Some school districts in California have incorporated mindfulness lessons to help young people learn strategies to deal with stress. I struggled to begin a doctoral program amid the pandemic and was often broken down. The feeling of isolation and anxiety was at its peak as the program started online. Besides being conscious about collaboration, I was also worried about the technological drawbacks of an intense online doctoral course. All these concerns were nerve-racking and stressful for international students being alone in a foreign country away from home in this traumatic period of the COVID-19 pandemic when everything ahead seemed so uncertain. The exercise of quiet breathing and focusing on the present moment, mindfulness is a way to become aware of one's emotional state and usher in a calm sense (McClintock et al., 2019; Pang & Ruch, 2019). "The role of dispositional mindfulness and self-compassion is discussed as protective resources that could be utilized in times of stress" (Hwang et al., 2019, p. 1700). Dispositional mindfulness and self-compassion can assist students and educators in settling down in stressful situations within the educational surrounding. It can be incredibly helpful for young people to boost their attention skills and cope with stress through mindfulness sessions like yoga, tai chi, and other techniques to improve students' mental health.

Tatter (2019) reflects on a new study conducted at a Boston charter school to explore mindfulness in the classroom. The study results suggest that mindfulness education — can reduce the adverse effects of stress and increase students' ability to stay engaged, helping them stay on track academically and avoid behavior problems. This study connects very well to my own experience as I struggled at my beginning phases in Canada and helped myself with meditation sessions, spiritual connection, and networking.

After coming to Canada, I felt that I was drowned in the mid-ocean without even knowing the proper direction to the shore. Finding accommodation for myself, doing my daily groceries, and preparing my everyday meals were all tasks that I did for the first time as I was more of a spoon-fed child back home. These unfamiliar and novel conditions were very traumatic- it was deeply distressing and disturbing emotional experiences. Managing my finances for my living cost and my tuition fees was another massive trauma that I had to gear up with all the time within my mind. When I converted my first grocery cost into my own country's currency, I was just about to faint. Although the currency rate is a big issue, I also figured out that I went to one of Canada's most expensive groceries that I had no one to let me know about. I lived in the university residence for the first two months, but I had to leave to search for cheaper living due to higher costs. Every day after my classes, I had to walk around the whole town looking for houses, and as I mentioned before, I had no one to suggest anything. These were situations that pulled me down so often, made me cry, and lost all my hope, but then again, I tried to keep myself motivated by managing all those harmful disruptions.

The academic transition was another big step that I had to take. The teaching curriculum, methodologies, and practices followed here are different from that in my country. Although I completed my O Levels and A Levels under the London Board of Examination from a private school in Bangladesh, I still had emotional challenges when I could not keep my expectations. For example, there were times when I broke down into tears, even in the classroom, because I could not understand what my professor wanted from my writing. Components of EQ like motivation, and self-management within myself assisted me in overcoming all those emotional collapses. To balance the academic pressure, I was trying to organize my workload by maintaining work logs and calendar tasks, which helped me feel less stressed and more in control. These were ways I tried to balance the academic challenges that led to emotional disturbances and other negative thoughts. I could only accomplish this balance with emotional intelligence elements- keeping myself motivated by maintaining these scheduled work logs.

Crucial phases of my learning journey also include interrupting cultural barriers and adjustments. The lifestyle, thoughts, standards, values, and perceptions of people who live in Canada are different from my homeland. Canada being a multicultural country, has people from all over the world. These mixed thoughts and culture's culmination give this place a completely different setting from a mono-cultural place. Culture shock is a challenge that most foreigners face while adjusting to the new cultural surrounding. I would say that cultural assimilation was one of the most disconcerting and challenging experiences I had to go through.

"Why am I here?" This is the question Yi (2018) keeps on asking themselves throughout their journey in Canada. This question dragged me towards the article to relate it to my situation. They vividly illustrate the complicated interaction they had to make and the pedagogic transformation they went through during journey. Thomson and Esses's (2016) review on international student transition is another excellent secondary source that allows the reader to gain a broad perspective on the two primary acculturation domains, the sociological and the psychological (p. 874). They developed a program that paired newcomer international students with Canadian student mentors. These pairs met weekly throughout a semester, and international student participants completed measures at both the program's beginning and end. Program results showed that participants experienced positive sociocultural and psychological adaptation changes and reduced acculturative stress over time.

Although I received some aid from my professors and administrative coordinator at my institution for the academic resolutions, it was not enough. I would also say that I was lucky enough to get over those educational gaps quickly, but I can still see some of my friends struggling with those academic struggles today when we are more than halfway through our program. These struggles lead to other emotional ordeals that are somewhat not addressed well by the institution.

It would have been far better for me to manage my emotional strains and anxieties if my school had provided me with emotional support services like wellness workshops and mental health training for the primary assimilation period. The school can play a mediating role to help integrate international students in a more connected, inclusive, and unified way. The school can do much more for these international graduate students to help them cope with their emotional instabilities and breakdowns to help them transition.

Tatter (2019), in their paper, includes recommendations from educators and leaders of mindfulness-based education programs for implementing mindfulness in school and making time for staff and students to learn about mindfulness theory and science. Creating consistent space for mindfulness practice – like guided meditations — and approaches in the school day can positively affect the entire school culture, emphasizing acceptance, self-care, and empathy. To adopt mindfulness as a tool for mental health and happiness, students have to have space and time to practice it.

Lei et al. (2015) discuss how international students feel comfortable having a partner from the local country beside them during traumatic events. The new students suffer from academic mismatch due to a vital change in curriculum and teaching style, and they also worry about their residence, food, and other expenses. Lei et al. (2015) state, "international students primarily struggle with social isolation" (Conclusion, para. 1). This endorsement vividly shows that schools can help these students by taking possible measures to come out of their alienation and emotional breakdown. The introduction of peer support, talking partners, and wellness workshops can be possible measures for these institutions to assist these international graduate students.

Calder et al. (2016) highlight that the university services for international students should include pedagogical and curriculum support, designated support staff, academic advisers, and international clubs. The school should provide them with more support services with housing, finances, and other issues and make the students aware of the existing services. The policy refers to the services for some institutions, but the students are unaware of it. To aid these newcomer students, the school must provide them with a network both inside and outside the classroom to adapt to this new place by offering suggestions for these everyday problems.

Although emotional and social cognition elements are individualistic, they can be cultivated by constructing a healthy setting with the help of proper methods and practices. Schools that are increasingly

inclined towards internationalization should also provide appropriate support services to aid these international students in grooming their cognitive competencies and emotional aptitudes.

RESULTS

In their research, Feuerborn and Gueldner (2019) vividly develop the linkage between mindfulness-based practices based on the social and emotional framework and academic, social, and emotional learning competency areas. Elements like self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making play a dominant role in shaping an individual's academic, emotional, and social self. Their qualitative exploration shows the linkages between these elements and how their integration in schools might stimulate trans-disciplinary dialogues.

The auto-ethnographic analysis is based on the narrative account of my own experiences, which portrays the importance of EQ components in my life during the adjustment period. Here, I pulled instances of using self-regulation and self-awareness to overcome circumstances of emotional breakdown. These EQ components aided me in dealing with cultural obstacles, social barriers, and emotional disruptions. I feel that these aspects of EQ played a crucial role during my transition. My institution could have provided my friends and me with more services like therapy sessions, social clubs, conversation partners, and experiential educational tours to foster our emotional competencies to make our adaptation process smoother.

During my first year as an international graduate student, I had to cope with my everyday stress to balance my emotions as I was going through adjustment challenges. Every evening I went out for a walk, strengthening my heart and mind by being closer to nature. I also watched some movies, especially comedies. Yim (2016) demonstrates that laughter is a positive sensation and seems a useful and healthy way to overcome stress. Furthermore, Gelkopf et al. (2006) researched to assess humorous movies' impact on psychopathology, anxiety, depression, anger, social functioning, insight, and the therapeutic alliance in a study group. Research results showed reduced psychopathology, anger, anxiety, and depression symptoms and improved social competence.

Religion is another driving force in negative attitudes and assists in social inclusion. (Anderson & Deslandes, 2019; Cetin, 2019), I firmly believed so, and I often prayed, seeking some mental peace from God. According to Appel et al. (2019), strong spiritual connections lessons anxiety, which was true for me. Prayers strengthened my spiritual connections and helped me immensely when I felt anxious. Although I had academic pressure, I used to cook almost alternate evenings to keep myself occupied with something I love doing. Bjork (2019) suggested simple ways to relieve worry, stress, and anxiety, including yoga, aromatherapy, abdominal breathing, walking in nature, and listening to music.

Something that helped me the most was my regular swimming session and sauna bath, after which I felt relaxed and refreshed. These are the activities that I carried out regularly to strengthen my inner self to fight my depression. It would be beneficial if my institution provided some yoga sessions, cookery classes, and poetry and drama clubs to boost my emotions and all these retreats.

The connection between nature and companion animals often influences the emotional and mental world (Bosacki & Tardif-Williams, 2019). Their study explored how companion animal friendship, comfort, and bonding assists in children's mental state. Research results showed that higher levels of companion animal friendship reflected a greater level of mental stability. University programs should incorporate the use of therapy animals for a student during times of high stress in the academic year such as the use of 'Puppy Rooms' during exam time where students can visit with therapy animals and their trainers in a safe setting within the university campus.

Meditation is another way of accelerating mental performance, and navigating through innumerable possibilities (Bamber & Morpeth, 2018; Patil, 2020). Spiritual and religious construction shapes our relationships with ourselves, tradition, and relationships with the surrounding people. Adams (2019) illustrates the importance of spiritual space and experiences provoked by nature. A moderated meditation model can add to psychological well-being, personal aspiration, learning environment, and meaning in life (Kong et al., 2019; Mairean et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019). In traumatic situations, regulating one's own emotions is crucial for every individual, which can be addressed institutionally.

Fredrickson et al. (2008) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions asserts that people's daily experiences of positive emotions compound over time to build a variety of substantial personal resources (e.g., increased mindfulness, purpose in life, social support, and decreased illness symptoms). In turn, these increments in personal resources predicted increased life satisfaction and reduced depressive symptoms. Self-compassion is another resource that increases positive emotions; it promotes response to adverse life events that leave individuals feeling stressed, angry, sad, or anxious (Odou & Brinker, 2015).

Another study conducted by Lombas et al. (2019) focused on evaluating the efficacy of Happy Classroom Programs considering aspects like self-esteem, life satisfaction, relatedness, and emotional repair, in promoting psychological well-being and increasing the mindfulness level of students reducing aggression. Institutions should focus on creating conditions for the students' character building, compassion for self and other, cognitive development, life satisfaction, engagement, and actions, all of which are important in ensuring overall students' well-being (Odou & Brinker, 2015; Vracheva et al., 2019).

These research studies suggest that universities should expand mental health programs to help international graduate students of all gender orientations cope with acculturation challenges. Theories suggest mental health education programs need to broaden and build on positive emotions to teach individuals to cope with everyday life, improve positive emotions and decrease negative emotions – past studies show that compared to mere cognitive distraction, programs that promote the combination of mindful activities with self-compassion are more likely to help to boost mood and improve well-being which connects to the auto-ethnographic log.

DISCUSSION

This study described the challenges of international graduate students with academic adjustments, social and cultural assimilation, and emotional and psychological breakdowns when they pursue their higher education in Ontario. My account as an international graduate student supports past research that suggests the need for universities to help international graduate students further develop their coping skills and emotional competencies to manage their acculturation experiences (Calder et al., 2016; Jin & Acharya, 2020; Redden, 2019). For example, universities need to create support services that apply the theoretical framework of EQs to build mindfulness (Fredrickson et al., 2008; Jones, 2020; Tatter, 2019), self-awareness, and self-compassion (Feuerborn & Gueldner, 2019; Odou & Brinker, 2015), and emotional regulation (Redden, 2019; Vracheva et al., 2019). Such programs will help international students manage the psychological stress experienced during their adjustment to a new school and cultural life. Building on past studies that show engagement in compassion and mindfulness programs often lead to increased well-being and mental health (Feuerborn & Gueldner, 2019; Fredrickson et al., 2008; Lombas et al.,2019; Odou & Brinker, 2015), university services might include meditation sessions, art, and poetry clubs, culinary workshops, among others. Such programs may help international students feel less alone and gain social and emotional support.

Government and educational institutions can reshape their strategies and can also assist the international students with services regarding immigration consultancies, tax submission, and health insurance, which are key in Ontario and might not be commonly done in some other countries (El Masri et al., 2015; Trilokekar & El Masri, 2016). From my auto-ethnographic account, EQ's dimensions, such as self-awareness and self-regulation, helped me make smoother adjustments and better cope with emotional challenges while settling into graduate school life at an Ontario university.

With the strong focus on internationalization and international higher education, it is key that international students are better supported during their adjustment phases, including emotional, social, and cultural barriers. Along with all the other countries that are significantly focusing on the internationalization of higher education, Canada is also focusing significantly on internationalization strategies and goals. Canada’s International Education Strategy (2020) builds on the attributes that make Canada a powerhouse in international education: strong schools and programs of study; peaceful, welcoming, and diverse communities; an enviable quality of life; opportunities to work and start careers; and pathways to move forward and join the Canadian workforce.

As more countries recognize that international students represent an important source of revenue and human capital, and as more people worldwide study abroad, the sector has become increasingly competitive (Tight, 2021). In recent years, Canada's traditional competitors (e.g., Australia, France, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States) and emerging ones (e.g., China, Malaysia) have invested more in marketing their educational offerings by the incorporating of more appealing programs (Ge & Ho, 2014), the inclusion of scholarly research provision (Weerakkody & Jerez, 2018), and providing work opportunities in key global markets (Moore, 2018), particularly through the use of digital media. Even some of the non-traditional countries such as Iran are attracting more international students than projected (Tehran Times, 2021), taking the additional benefit of lower living costs and being geographically closer to the home countries of the international students (Collier, 2021; Kulkarni, 2021; Xu, 2021).

In addition, in many traditional source countries such as China, Singapore, and Malaysia, international students are growing the capacity and quality of their education systems. Some universities in China, Japan, Singapore, and elsewhere in Asia rank among the world's best and attract growing international students (Sidhu & Ishikawa, 2020; Yang et al., 2021; Zhang, 2021). A steady increase in the number of schools in Asia and Europe offering programs of study in English further intensifies the competition for international students. Canadian institutions and the government must address international students' emotional concerns in this competitive field of comparative and international higher education to help them better transition in this foreign country to adapt to academic and cultural changes.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study describes one example of a personal account of the learning experience of one international graduate student's transition to becoming a scholar through several emotional challenges in dealing with academic differences, culture shock, language barriers, and financial constraints. Such findings support past research that shows international students studying abroad often experience emotional and mental health challenges such as experiences of depression, anxiety, and acute stress disorder (Calder et al., 2016; Hsiu-Fen, 2018; Thomson & Esses, 2016). In sum, this study builds on and extends the research on international students' emotional and social learning experiences and positive mental health programs. This study supports the call for Canadian universities to improve their mental health support for all students and provide specific support specialized for international graduate students.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 4 (2022), pp. 53-66
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i4.4183| https://ojed.org/jcihe

Total Wellness of Turkish International Students: Perceptions and Inherent Growth Tendencies

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ABSTRACT

Research on the international students primarily focuses on adjustment and acculturation issues rather than building and maintaining the wellness of specific cultural groups of international students. This study used basic psychological needs involved in self-determination theory to investigate the relationship between autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs, self-determined way of functioning, and wellness of Turkish international students in the U.S. Data was collected before Covid-19 pandemic using a self-administered survey from 179 (71 females) Turkish international students with a mean age of 29.7 years. The results indicated that the perceived total wellness of Turkish international students was slightly low. The results of regression analyses revealed that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are positive and significant predictors of Turkish international students' wellness. Furthermore, Turkish international students with a greater self-determined way of functioning report a higher level of wellness. We recommend culture specific implications and further research to maintain international students' wellness in their sojourn.

Keywords: basic psychological needs, self-determined functioning, Turkish international students, wellness

Received September 15, 2021; revised December 1, 2021; accepted January 22, 2022
This study was conducted as a part of the first author's doctoral dissertation.

INTRODUCTION

Studying abroad has become an essential element of our society's texture owing to the countries' developing interconnection and shifts in present day's social consciousness about the importance of the higher education. Consequently, the number of international students attending U.S. universities has increased over the past decade. Institute of International Education (IIE, 2019) claimed the number of international students enrolled to U.S institutions of higher education throughout the 2018-2019 academic years as 1,095,299, making up 5.5% of the total US student body. However, the number of enrolled international students at colleges and universities decreased from 2016 to 2019 (IIE, 2019). Colleges and universities aim to improve the quality of university by increasing the number of international students. Thus, it is crucial to understand current international students' wellness in order to augment the enrollment rate.

Definition of Wellness

Wellness ranks first among human goals (WHO, 1967). There is a general agreement on the definition of wellness in the literature that it is not only the state of having no illness but also regarded as the balance of body, mind and spirit (Adams et al., 1997; Harari et al., 2005). According to The World Health Organization (WHO, 1967) the definition of wellness is an optimal state of health for each individual or a group of people. Variety of existential aspects such as physical, social, psychological, spiritual, relational, and community involvement determine the consideration of a person's wellness (Smith et al., 2006).

Dimensions of Wellness

This study uses the Perceived Wellness Model developed by Adams et al. (1997) to assess the relationship between basic psychological needs and wellness. It is efficient and useful for assessing wellness of college students that the model integrates social, emotional, physical, intellectual, spiritual, and psychological dimensions of wellness. Social wellness is vital and corresponds to the person's contentment with their social role (Hettler, 1980). Adams et al. (1997) resolved social wellness by concentrating on mutual relationships among people and their level of support. Durlak (2008) indicated certain positive outcomes of social wellness in individuals' lives such as higher senses of altruism, belongingness, and assertiveness, as well as decreases in violence, social isolation, and social anxiety. Moreover, social contact with locals had a positive impact on students' psychological wellbeing (Szabo et al., 2020). Adams et al.'s (1997) definition of emotional wellness puts self-esteem in the centre inasmuch as people who can maintain a good sense of emotional wellness are more comfortable with their identity and have a positive view of self. Those individuals who have emotional wellbeing tend to be more content and optimistic about the future, whereas others do not as much as them. Physical wellness is regarded as a person's capacity of maintaining good flexibility, strength and overall health within regular physical activity. Sustaining a healthy diet to keep body balanced and in harmony is also a part of it. According to Adams et al. (1997), physical wellbeing is a positive sense of overall physical health. Intellectual wellness is explained as the capacity of individual's engaging his/her mind in activities that provide productivity and arouse eagerness to enrich his/her intellectuality and develop abilities that he/she already has (Hettler, 1980). Parallel to Hettler's definition, Adams et al. (1997) expressed that maintaining intellectual wellness requires engaging intellectually stimulating activity at an optimum level. Hettler (1980) explained spiritual wellness as an individual's view of the world which presents him/her harmony, consciousness of one's place in society and reason to exist. Furthermore, the author highlighted that individual's inner balance and interrelation balance with others and even with the entire universe is an essential component of spiritual wellness. The Perceived Wellness model pointed out the psychological aspect as a key to wellness. Adams et al. (1997) conceptualized psychological wellness as the person's positive perception that causes him/her to have positive experience as a consequence of the incidents happen in his/her life. The scholars share the opinion that principal cause of why psychology exists is to enrich individuals' sense of psychological wellness and develop their skills to recognize it (Walsh & Shapiro, 1983).

Wellness Research on International Students

Students who go abroad for higher education face many challenges and difficulties that ultimately result in a decline of wellness level. International students mostly experienced problems

related English proficiency, financial issues, adjustment in social life, loneliness, and homesickness (Shih & Brown, 2000). The authors also pointed out that these adjustment problems influence the wellness of international students in areas such as academic performance, mental and physical health, level of life satisfaction, and attitudes toward the host culture and environment. Congruently, Banjong (2015) found that English proficiency, feeling of loneliness, and lack of social support were negatively correlated to academic success. In a comparison study, anxiety, stress due to being apart from family, school adjustment problems, and language barriers had been experienced by international students much more than domestic students in the United States. Besides all these, cultural characteristics and challenges directly affected wellness of international students that they showed physical, biological, and psychological symptoms such as fatigue, headaches, lethargy, depression, feelings of isolation compared to domestic students (Misra & Castillo 2004). Also, studying in an unfamiliar country had hazardous effects on wellbeing that international students reported risky health behaviors such as drug and alcohol use, smoking increased after they came to the host country (Rosenthal et al., 2008). In addition to psychological and physical wellbeing, studying abroad affected social wellbeing, which is a strong predictor of success in the adjustment process (Poyrazli et al., 2001; Yeh & Inose, 2003). In collectivistic cultures like Turkey, the number, quality and balance of in relationships mattered that Turkish students maintain high level of wellness through connection with the social environment (Aygun, 2004).

Some nominal research has been completed on Turkish international students in the United States. Tansel and Gungor (2003) reported that Turkish international students' described less satisfaction in the social aspects of their lives than anticipated. On the other hand, Kilinc and Granello (2003) found that life satisfaction of Turkish international students is high, while homesickness is one of the most common psychological problems among Turkish international students. In order to obtain better understanding of international students' wellness, evaluation of peers in their home country is crucial. Aygun (2004) examined Turkish students' self, identity, and emotional wellbeing at a large Turkish University. The study also investigated the importance of cultural characteristics on students' life such as independence, interdependence, relatedness, individualism, collectivism, and gender roles and stereotypes. In addition, socioeconomic status and parents' education level were included to examine students' self, identity, and wellbeing that high education level of parents was correlated with high level of wellbeing. Relational concern, inner-outer harmony, achievement, openness and creativity, social influenciability, and traditionalism were identified as descriptors of self. Results revealed that female Turkish students had higher negative emotional experiences than male students. Results also indicated a significant positive correlation between positive feelings and personal, social, and collective identity. This data indicates balance and quality in relationships mattered in a Turkish setting. Additionally, this study showed that there is a shift from collectivistic characteristics of culture to individualistic characteristics of culture among Turkish students.

Self-Determination Theory

The literature showed how remarkable is the self-determined way of functioning and behaviors on wellness. Self-determination theory emphasizes that humans' reaction to environment is not passive, in reality; they adapt themselves to the circumstances. According to SDT, competence, autonomy and relatedness are the three fundamental psychological needs that are innate and universal. Individual's development and functioning in healthy or optimal ways depend on these three needs' continuous satisfaction (Deci & Ryan 2000). SDT comprehends components that put individual's internal resources and behavioral management to the centre and inspires him/her, which are crucial for human improvement (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Since it is more based on the inclusion of principal psychological human needs, there is a distinction between SDT and other theories of motivation. SDT describes the level of individual's motivation as the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are the essential variables (Deci & Ryan, 1985). From self-determination theory perspective, motivation for studying abroad predicted lower culture shock and greater wellbeing among international students (Chirkov et al., 2007).

Research indicated that international students do not ask for help from counseling services because of unfamiliarity and negative misunderstanding of the term "counseling" in the host culture (Misra & Castillo, 2004; Olivas & Li, 2006). Correspondingly, it is expected that the social, emotional, psychological, and intellectual dimensions of wellness might be lower than domestic students. Thus, it is important to examine wellness holistically in terms of contributing factors that

basic psychological needs are one of the key variables to examine total wellness of different populations. In a cross-cultural study, Eroglu (2012) investigated the subjective wellbeing of Turkish and international students in Turkey. The main objective of the study was to compare subjective wellbeing of international and Turkish students and how subjective wellbeing differentiated in terms of gender. Result revealed that subjective wellbeing of international students was reported as being higher compared to Turkish students in Turkey. Regarding gender differences, female international students reported higher level of subjective wellbeing than male students. Eroglu (2012) discussed the results of study from the perspective of socioeconomic status of students. He argued that foreign students were mostly coming from rich countries. Also, in western cultures, males and females have equal and extensive freedom compared to males and females in eastern cultures. Therefore, their sense of comfort had an impact on international students' subjective wellbeing (Eroglu, 2012).

The need for competence was defined as the need for individuals to feel confident and productive in their activities (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This definition of competence can be interpreted for students that it is a desire to feel confident in the knowledge and skills which are required for academic achievement. Lau and Roeser (2002) reported that when students believed that they are successful, they are more likely to do better in their work compared to students who did not believe that they are unsuccessful. Research also indicated that level of competence and cognitive ability were the strongest predictors of achievement, ambition, class engagement, and test scores (Lau & Roeser, 2002).

The need for autonomy defined as that people are the authors of their own behavior, desires, and intentions (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Researchers investigated the relationship between being autonomous and its effects on people's positive functioning that more autonomous people reported high levels of functioning in areas such as engagement, learning, and performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000).The positive effects of autonomy can be seen in all areas of life, whether social, economic, psychological, or academic (Chirkov et al., 2008). Miquelon and Vallerand (2008) examined the influence of autonomous goals in academic life that when academic life became stressful, autonomous goals increased the level of happiness and self-realization of the students. Autonomous behavior is regarded differently cultures. Especially in eastern cultures, autonomy is not valued, and being autonomous has not been embraced. Vansteenkiste and colleagues (2005) examined the optimal functioning, wellbeing, and autonomy in eastern collectivistic cultures. Studies were conducted on Chinese students and found that, despite cultural pressures to the contrary, autonomy was a strong predictor of academic success, adaptive learning attitudes, and high levels wellbeing. In addition, Chinese students with greater levels of autonomy in their lives reported greater levels of vitality and psychological wellness (Vansteenkiste et al., 2005). Hence, autonomy is an essential psychological need in students' academic life both in individualistic and collectivistic cultures.

Self-determination theory described relatedness as the feeling the individual experiences when finding social connection with family members, friends, and any other people who care about that individual (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). If higher levels of functioning and connectedness were experienced, the need for relatedness was fulfilled that the quality of significant relationships in students' lives remarkably increased wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In student's life, supportive and caring relationship with the instructor predicted motivation and success in academic studies (Elmore & Huebner, 2010; Larose et al., 2005). Furthermore, the relationship between professors and students had an impact on wellness and emotional adjustment during the learning process in university years that having a good quality of relationship with professors enhanced the level of self-efficacy, motivation, and sense of social acceptance. Additionally, the peer relationship also another factor for students who reported having supportive friends and good quality of relationship with their peers had better self-regulation, higher ambition and increased perceptions of competence (Nelson & De Backer, 2008).

Current Study

Nowadays, colleges and universities desire more international students' enrollment. However, there is a growing international student population that experienced more problems than native students (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). Hence, understanding current international students' wellness in particular life areas and supporting their academic achievement and success is crucial (McCormack, 2007). Because of developmental and behavioral threats of being abroad to health, professors and

administrators of school have worries about how to reinforce their students' wellness in academic life (Adams et al., 2000).

The main focus of the research on international students mostly covers adjustment and acculturation issues instead of wellbeing of specific cultural groups of students. Furthermore, no research is conducted on perceived total wellness of international students focused on their self-determined attitudes, feelings and behaviors. It is seen that international students' stress level is higher in the United States when it is compared to time in their home countries due to number of factors like diverse teaching methods, two-way interaction with professors in the classrooms, more classroom and group activities, more assignments, more speech requirements, and more after class studying (Zhai, 2002).Students may be affected adversely by these factors. For this reason, studying international students' wellness adequately is required. Healthy society is composed by individuals with wellness. In spite of wide range of research on wellness, there is still lack of wellness-based study about culturally different international students.

The following research questions were used to shape the current study:
RQ1: What is the total perceived wellness of Turkish international students in the United States as relates to gender, age, length of stay, level of degree?
RQ2: To what extent Turkish international students' basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) related to their perceived total wellness?

METHOD

Participants

The study initially intended to include a sample of Turkish international students in the U.S. Convenience sampling method (also known as availability sampling) was used to reach international students who are eligible and suit the purpose of the study (Gall et al., 2007). Based on power analysis, Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) advised a rule to have the power in the regression analysis that one hundred and four cases plus number of predictor and criterion variables needed. A total of 325 Turkish students began the online survey but participants withdrew from the study and participants with extreme missing data were excluded before starting to analyses. The final sample (n=179) included 108 (60.3 %) males and 71 (39.7%) females. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 57 (M=29.72, SD=4.53). In terms of education level, the sample contained 86 doctoral students (48%), 79 master's level students (44.1 %), and 14 students in bachelors (7.8%). The socioeconomic statuses of participants were low (25.7%), intermediate (70.4%) and high (3.9%). Only 3.9% of the participants were engaged, 48% percent were married, 10.1 % percent were in a relationship, and 37.4% were single. The length of stay of the participants in the U.S. ranged from one year to 25 years, with an average of 5 years.

Procedure

The study used an Internet-based survey questionnaire to collect data. Approval from the St. Mary's University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained before starting the data collection procedures. Participants of the study were recruited through Turkish Students Associations of various colleges in U.S. Researcher also contacted with the Turkish Educational Attaché of Houston that the attaché was asked to announce the study to the Turkish students. Participants were informed about the study. Data collected based on the instruments, namely a demographic variable questionnaire prepared by the researcher, Perceived Wellness Scale (Adams et al., 1997), Self-Determination Scale (Sheldon & Deci, 1996), Basic Psychological Needs Survey (Deci & Ryan, 1991). Before collecting any data, the authors' permission to use each instruments were obtained.

Measures

Demographic questionnaire was created to gather participants' basic demographic characteristics of gender, age, degree, length of stay in the U.S., relationship status, spirituality and religious involvement, and socioeconomic status.

Perceived Wellness Scale

Wellness of the international students was measured with the Perceived Wellness Scale. The scale is a 36-item scale with six factors: Physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, and psychological. The rating of this scale is a 6-point range from 1 = very strongly disagree to 6 = very strongly agree.

The total score for the whole survey is 216, which represents the highest wellness score. Lower score in any of the six dimensions is generally seen as an indication of a low sense of perceived wellness in that area. In addition, sum of all the six dimensions' scores indicates the total wellness. In his study (Adams et al., 1997), the reliability score for the Perceived Wellness Survey ranged from .73 to .81 with an internal consistency reliability alpha (*r* = .91). Harari and Colleagues (2005) conducted confirmatory factor analysis to measure construct validity of the wellness scale for each of the six subscales of the wellness scale. The determinants of general sense of perceived wellness ranked psychological wellness (*r* = .70), emotional wellness (*r* = .67), spiritual wellness (*r* = .61), physical wellness (r = .61), spiritual wellness (*r* = .61), social wellness (*r* = .56), intellectual wellness (*r* = .53), respectively. The current study's reliability score for the Perceived Wellness Survey was .89.

Self-Determination Scale

The Self-Determination scale (Sheldon & Deci, 1996) measures individual differences in how people tend to function in a self-determined way. The 10-item survey was basically created to measure self-contact and perceived choice in actions. Participants indicate which of two statements feels more true for them. For example, “I feel that I am rarely myself” versus "I feel like I am always completely myself" are self-contact items and “I am free to do whatever I decide to do” versus” What I do is often not what I'd choose to do” are perceived choice in actions items. Self-Determination Scale showed good internal consistency (alphas range from .85 to .93. The reliability score for the Self-Determination scale was .80 in the current study.

Basic Psychological Needs Survey

The 21-item survey assesses the satisfaction of basic psychological needs in general. In this survey, participants indicate how true they feel each statement is of their life and respond on a scale of 1 (Not at all true) to 7 (Very true). Higher scores indicate of a higher level of satisfaction of needs. Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction Scale includes autonomy, relatedness, and competence factors. A sample autonomy item is: ‘I feel like I am free to decide for myself how to live my life’; a sample relatedness item is: ‘I get along with people I get in contact with’; and a sample competence item is: ‘In my life I do not get much of a chance to show how capable I am (reverse-scored). The dimensions have good levels of internal consistency (alpha 0.74 for relatedness, 0.75 for competence, 0.63 for autonomy), and the overall need satisfaction scale with the alpha 0.84 averaged across all 21 items. The reliability score for the Basic Psychological Needs survey was .86 in the present study.

Data Analysis

The information collected by the surveys was entered into an SPSS database. Before starting the analysis data, individual cases were evaluated based on the completion of survey, extreme missing data, and IP address. Respondents with extreme missing data were eliminated using listwise deletion method. Also, assumptions for regression analyses were met. After the evaluation of data, 146 cases were excluded. A total of 179 cases were included for final analysis. Descriptive statistics were conducted to look for themes for each variable and subscales. Inferential statistics were used in order to answer research questions.

RESULTS

Primary Analyses

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for total wellness and six dimensions. Regarding research question one, total wellness for the participants was calculated by dividing the individual's wellness magnitude by their wellness balance. The mean score for total wellness was 14.78 (SD=2.50). In addition to total wellness, the current study showed the highest mean scores in the dimensions of spiritual (*M* = 4.64, *SD* = .90), social (*M*=4.55, *SD* = .80), and physical wellness (*M* = 4.41, *SD* = .79). The mean scores of emotional (*M* = 4.32, *SD* = .77), intellectual (*M* = 4.21, *SD* = .70), and psychological dimensions (*M* = 4.20, *SD* = .70) were slightly lower.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Total Wellness and Six Dimensions

Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Total Wellness	14.78	2.49	8.88	23.10	14.22	.890
Psychological Wellness	4.20	.690	2.50	6.00	3.50	.514
Social Wellness	4.55	.803	2.50	6.00	3.50	.603
Physical Wellness	4.41	.787	2.00	6.00	4.00	.676
Spiritual Wellness	4.64	.904	2.00	6.00	4.00	.815
Intellectual Wellness	4.21	.699	2.67	6.00	3.33	.602
Emotional Wellness	4.32	.772	2.67	6.00	3.33	.614

Table 2: Analysis of Variance Comparing Wellness by Demographics

Demographic	Response	Sample N	Mean	SD	F (df)	p-value
Gender					1,07(1,177)	.303
	Male	108	14.62	2.23		
	Female	71	15.01	2.85		
Age					11.93(2,176)	.000
	18-24	9	14.22	2.37		
	25-34	158	14.57	2.32		
	35 and above	12	17.98	2.81		
Length of Stay					6.39(2,176)	.002
	1-5	115	14.51	2.30		
	6-10	52	14.81	2.60		
	11 and above	12	17.14	2.77		
Degree					.64(2,176)	.529
	Bachelors	14	15.34	3.44		
	Masters	79	14.88	2.30		
	Doctorate	86	14.60	2.50		
Major					9.66(2.176)	.199
	Science and Engineering	121	14.63	2.42		
	Business	21	15.14	2.57		
	Education	29	14.65	2.43		
	Arts, Humanities, and Others	8	16.48	3.27		
Relationship					.64(2,176)	.635
	Single	67	14.52	2.40		
	In a relationship	18	14.32	2.55		
	Engaged	7	14.72	2.55		
	Married/partnered	86	15.07	2.58		
	Divorced	1	15.22			
Socio-Economic Status					3.70(2,176)	.027
	Low	46	13.96	1.91		
	Intermediate	126	15.02	2.58		
	High	7	15.74	3.22		
Spirituality and Religious					.136(2,176)	.873
	Low	41	14.66	2.75		
	Intermediate	109	14.77	2.46		
	High	29	14.98	2.30		

Results regarding the relationship between wellness and demographic variables are shown in Table 2. Results indicated that there were no significant differences in the total wellness across gender F (1,177) = 1, 07, p = 0.303, relationship status F (4, 174) = .64, p = .645, and degrees F (2, 176) = .64, p =.529). However, the results revealed that there were significant differences in the perceived wellness across age groups (F = 11.938, p <.05). The Tukey, multiple comparison tests, showed age group 35+ is significantly different than age groups 25-34, and age group 18-24. The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that there were significant differences in perceived wellness across the number of years lived in the US (F (2,176) =6.388, p <.05). Post hoc tests revealed that perceived wellness was significantly different for participants who lived in the US 11+ years (M = 17.14) than those who lived in the US less than 10 (M = 14.81) years. Results indicated that there were significant differences in perceived overall wellness across socioeconomic status levels (F (2,176) = 3.70, p = .027). The following groups were found to be significantly different (p <. 05): groups 1 (low; M = 13.96, SD = 1.91), 2 (intermediate; M = 15.02, SD = 2.58), 3 (high; M = 15.74, SD = 3.22).

Multiple regression and correlation analyses were used to find out the extent to how basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) predict wellness among international students. Before analyzing the data, outliers, collinearity, independent errors, homogeneity of variance and linearity, and non-zero variances assumptions were met for regression analyses. The results indicated that there is a moderate linear relationship between perceived total wellness and autonomy ($r = .571$, $p < .001$), competence ($r = .562$, $p < .001$), and relatedness ($r = .449$, $p < .001$), respectively. The multiple regression model with all three predictors produced (F (3, 175) = 38.289, $p < .001$) with an R^2 of .396. In other words, at least one variable has explanatory power and 39.6% of the variation in total perceived wellness can be explained by autonomy, competence, and relatedness. To determine which independent variables are significantly predicting the total perceived wellness, a model was structured. For the model assumption, normal and linear assumptions met and standardized residuals were uncorrelated with each of the predictor variables. Results revealed that autonomy and competence were found significant predictors of total perceived wellness ($p < .05$) (Table 3).

Simple linear regression was calculated for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, individually that autonomy was the strongest predictor of high level of wellness (F (1, 177) = 85.834, $p < .001$) with an R^2 .327. Both competence (F (1, 177) = 81.922, $p < .001$) with an R^2 .316, and relatedness (F (1,177) = 44.817, $p < .001$) with an R^2 .202 were also found significant predictors (Table 4). All three needs were independently found significantly predicted overall wellness that Autonomy was found the strongest predictor of total wellness of Turkish international students among basic psychological needs; however, relatedness was not a significant predictor when autonomy and competence were included in the model (Table 3).

Table 3: Multiple Linear Regression Analyses of Basic Psychological Needs on Perceived Total Wellness

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*B*	*T*	*p*
Autonomy	1.018	.250	.33*	4.071	.000
Competence	.803	.215	.30*	3.730	.000
Relatedness	.233	.212	.08	1.098	.274

Note. R^2=.396 (p <.05)

Table 4: Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness Predicting Perceived Total Wellness

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*B*	R^2	F
Autonomy	1.768	.191	.571*	.327	85.834
Competence	1.490	.165	.562*	.316	81.922
Relatedness	1.248	.186	.449*	.202	44.817

Note. *$p < .05$

DISCUSSION

In this study, it is aimed to understand perception of total wellness and its relation to basic psychological needs and self-determined way of functioning which is mentioned in Deci and Ryan's Self Determination theory (1985, 1991) through a sample that consists of 179 Turkish international students studying in the United States. In the light of the recent study's findings, the role of basic psychological needs had a vital role on wellness of international students. Our first major finding was about the total wellness of Turkish international students. In the perceived wellness scale, there is no cut point to determine high or low level of wellness, specifically. Also, there was no normative population to compare wellness level. However several studies (Adams et al., 1997; Hariri et al., 2005) used same wellness measure that Turkish international students presented lower wellness, when compared to domestic students. An explanation of the results for the Turkish students' low level of wellness might be the fact that other studies included only domestic undergraduates (Adams et al., 1997). The younger undergraduate students might be more physically and socially active as well as not experiencing adjustment problems (Caspersen et al., 2000). As a result, their physical and social wellness scores augment the perceived total wellness statistics. Comparing domestic students with international students' physical-medical reactions, the international students had more symptoms due

to cultural stressors that their position in the host culture has affected international students' wellness level (Misra & Castillo, 2004; Shih & Brown, 2000).

The past adjustment, acculturation, and wellbeing studies on international students provided individual, group, and situational differences based on gender, age, relationship status, degree levels, socioeconomic status, spiritual and religious involvement, length of time in host culture (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Ballentine, 2010; Poyrazli et al., 2001; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Findings indicated that female students had been slightly higher on the wellness scores than their male counterparts but this difference was not statistically significant. It was obviously seen that there had been sharp gender distinction according to the cultural mindset; while assertiveness, toughness and focusing in material success were regarded as characteristics of men, features such as modesty, tenderness, and responsibility for quality of life were associated with women's character (Hofstede, 2011). In Turkish culture, it is not common for male individuals who are not supposed to mention their feelings. Therefore, it might be assumed that the female Turkish international students were more confident in expressing their emotions about wellness than the male Turkish international students. Social, psychological, and spiritual wellness are associated with age (Keyes, 1998; Myers & Mobley, 2004), as expected, older international students reported a higher level of wellness than younger students in the current study.

Literature suggests that personal income and wealth had an impact on wellness (Kaplan et al., 2008; Woodyard & Grable, 2014). Our findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between socioeconomic status and the perceived wellness of Turkish international students. No significant relationship was found between the perceived wellness of Turkish international students and their level of education. Perhaps Turkish international students are experiencing similar problems, stressors, or living conditions while being in the host country. It was expected that the findings of recent study could have revealed a significant wellness score among international Turkish groups within a relationship status. In the Turkish culture, feelings of belongingness and harmony are key components of a healthy living (Hofstede, 2011). Being a family is the most important part of the Turkish society and most family members are emotionally dependent and supportive of one another (Kağıtçıbaşı & Ataca, 2005). Therefore, married international students and those committed to a relationship were expected to have higher significant wellness scores when compared to single Turkish international students. The number of years lived in the U.S. was found to be a significant predictor of wellness that augmented length of the stay in the host culture increased the level of social engagement with domestic friends, professors and local community. Ingersoll (1998) emphasized that social connectedness was related to a higher level of wellness. In collectivistic Turkish culture, the patterns of relationships, belonging to a group and support from friends are vital elements (Aycan et al., 2000). When Turkish international students have adequate engagement with the host society, their overall perceived wellness has increased.

It was pointed in the results that the overall wellness of Turkish international students is immensely predicted by all three basic psychological needs, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In the literature, the significance of basic psychological needs for wellbeing, academic success, interpersonal relationships, mental and physical health has been determined broadly (Chirkov et al., 2003; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Yang et al., 2017).

Autonomy does not imply total freedom/independence, however, it refers to the internal approval of, as well as involvement with the motivated behavior of an individual (Deci & Ryan, 2000). On the contrary, the support of autonomy implies taking the perception of the Turkish international students' perspective, offering choice and useful rationale in instances where choices are not feasible (Molix & Nichols, 2013). This study indicated that, despite collectivistic cultural characteristics, Turkish international students with greater levels of autonomy reported higher perceived wellness in their lives. Consistently, a culture specific study distinguished autonomy from individualism and independence (Chirkov et al., 2003).

Competence was another strong predictor of wellness for Turkish international students in the U.S. In a study conducted by Can et al. (2015), individuals who were socially competent enjoyed studying abroad, and it was mainly the learning the language of their new country which provided them this comfort. Being capable of communicating through the language of the new place enables individual's social skills to improve in a new cultural medium and it is followed by individual's acquiring access to many other aspects of the environment.

Relatedness had been explained as a predictor variable of overall wellness for Turkish international students, however, this variable did not weigh out to be a significant predictor amidst autonomy and competence in a regression model. A possible explanation for this finding may be that balance and quality in relationships mattered in Turkish culture. However, there is a shift from collectivistic characteristics of culture to individualistic characteristics of culture among Turkish students (Aygun, 2004). On the other hand, relatedness individually predicted total wellness of international students. Accordingly, the feeling pertaining to relatedness, between the students and the advisors, were noted to have considerable degrees of positive results for the graduate level learners (Kormas et al., 2014). The results of the present study conform to the results from the investigation conducted by Demir et al. (2012) on significance of friendship between Turkish and American college students, its connection with the feelings of happiness and ultimately the wellness of the college students in international environments. In this context, their results indicated that having a perception of 'mattering to each other' mediates friendship for the American students and hence, the happiness and wellness while for the Turkish students, the quality of friendship with their American peers defined the friendship, relatedness and happiness (Demir et al., 2012).

Implications

Examining the definition, conceptualization, dimensions and effects of wellness from an integrated point of view has become inevitable to increase international students' enrollment rate. Until the year 2013, Turkey was among the top ten countries sending students to the United States, however the number of international Turkish students kept falling after 2013 (IIE, 2019). Acculturation stress and adjustment problems related to language barrier, homesickness, less satisfaction in the social aspect of their lives, financial issues, discrimination they are subjected to, and isolation from the host culture and community are the common difficulties Turkish international students face in the same way the other international students do (Poyrazli et al., 2001). Hence, besides sustained research efforts which put the precise problems of international students to the centre, understanding of Turkish international students' wellness as a whole was also required. The importance of the current study is the fact that it provides us an understanding the current international students' wellness and the connection with the basic psychological needs in certain life areas to reinforce their academic achievement and success. For example, the more senior figure is responsible for providing guidance and nurturance in collectivistic Turkish culture (Aycan et al., 2000). As a senior figure, teachers/professors would provide more guidance to increase international students' autonomous behaviors. To satisfy competence need, self-confidence and self esteem can be promoted through school and class activities. Teachers/professors would include self-enhancement assignments in the curriculum that may enhance their capacity with increasing their own ability to achieve optimal wellness. According to Hofstede (2011), collectivistic cultures' members have to maintain harmony and feelings of belongingness. As international students spend most of their time at school, this environment became an essential catalyst for creating and learning many skills related to the wellbeing (St. Leger, 2004). Current study findings call for the attention of international and administrative offices, and advisors to satisfy the relatedness needs of Turkish international students in engaging enthusiastically in educational and societal activities in their sojourn.

The findings would also help the Turkish government improve its scholarship policy to ensure that students that join U.S. universities are best prepared to take advantage of the opportunity of joining some of the best universities around the globe. For instance, the findings showed that socioeconomic status of individuals, relatedness, autonomy, and competence contribute to their wellness while in U.S. universities. This is a concept that the Turkish universities can adopt and streamline their programs so that those who are put on scholarships to the U.S. have enough funding to improve their welfare, and are fully prepared to take on an international program of study.

Limitations and Future Work

There had been considerable limitations to this research, yet utilizing online self-reporting data collection procedures was found to be by far the most apparent. In spite of the fact that operational definitions were explained and informed consent was included before starting the survey, researcher's control on the data collection process was inadequate. Hence insignificant results in several parts of the study could have been affected by incomplete responses and high missing data caused smaller

sample size. On the other hand, this situation raises the question that if participants' responses to questions asked in the questionnaire is consistent with their actual inclination or not.

In addition, even if the study used a good survey that yields reliable and validated scores, measurement errors might limit the tool's usefulness for specific populations. Though Adams et al. (1997) developed wellness scale with US college students, the instrument might show some differences for a study using international students. A mixed method should be conducted to develop a wellness scale for different cultural groups of international students.

Limited research on this subject was another limitation for this study. There is a massive amount of dataset collected from students from different backgrounds in the US; however, Turkish students in those datasets are quite rare. Therefore, the researcher compared the evidence of wellness scale with other cultural backgrounds. To discover more indicators affecting the wellness of Turkish students in colleges/universities in the U.S., there is a need for further research. In addition, future research could consider focusing on important parameters for policy-making in education and international exchange programs.

Despite the limitations, the results provided an understanding of the potential contribution of wellness to international students. Counselors, professors, advisors, and international student offices would benefit from understanding the wellness of international students while they establish pedagogical approaches and curriculum by considering both cultural and universal basic psychological needs.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 4 (2022), pp. 67-89
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i4.4070 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

The Empirical Analysis of Degree-Mobile Students: The Hosting Country Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The current study aims at providing empirical and theoretical support to the important topic of international student mobility (ISM) in Europe. Specifically, it provides empirical analysis of degree-mobile students in 32 countries: the European Union (EU), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the United Kingdom. The study is based on the aggregate data from the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER). The goal is to construct indicator (benchmark) for analyzing degree mobility of students at the country level. The empirical analysis is conducted from the perspective of a receiving country. It effectively helps to establish the context and content of future discussions on how to address the practical problem of measuring and evaluating the dynamics of students flows in Europe.

Keywords: Bologna Process, degree/long-term student mobility, European Higher Education Area, European integration, internationalization, (international) higher education policy.

Received August 7, 2021; revised October 20, 2021; accepted December 21, 2021

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, UNESCO's tertiary education participation indicators, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), reported that the share of students' enrollment in tertiary education of Europe and North America are 21 percent ISCED 5 (professional diplomas), 56 percent ISCED 6 (bachelors), 20 percent ISCED 7 (masters), and 3 percent ISCED 8 (doctorate) (UNESCO, 2020, p. 240). The current study provides empirical analysis of degree-mobile students in 32 nation-states: the European Union (EU), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the United Kingdom. The study is based on the aggregate data from the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER): the goal is to construct an indicator (benchmark) for analyzing degree mobility of students at the country level. The empirical analysis is conducted from the perspective of a receiving (host) country. Specifically, it reviews physical mobility data extracted from the ETER for the period between 2011-2012 and 2016-2017. The analysis addresses the following questions: What is the evolution of degree mobility? How consistent are the derived degree-mobility rates through time? (This means how stable or fluid these indicators are throughout the time); What are the findings from the cross-country comparisons of these mobility rates? It is expected that the answers to the above questions would provide insight into the dynamics of long-term mobility among students.

Although the efforts at providing a solid empirical foundation regarding international student mobility (ISM) have increased in recent years, the efforts to theorize about ISM are less abundant (see Riaño & Piguet, 2016). As to the rationale of this research, it can be claimed that relatively little has been written about ISM in comparison to other forms of migration (Riaño & Piguet, 2016). In this context, the proposed study strives to contribute to the existing knowledge base on ISM both empirically and theoretically. Specifically, the article addresses the practical problem of measuring and evaluating the dynamics of students flows in Europe. Thus, conceiving the idea to evaluate the directions and patterns of student flows.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Problem Statement

Many researchers (e.g., Findlay et al., 2012; Hackl, 2001; Kriesi, Grande, Dolezal, et al., 2012; Kriesi, Grande, Lachat, et al., 2006, 2008; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002; Naidoo, 2007) agree that education has become a global business which continuously shows an increasing trend in international student flows. Institutions and governments in countries with well-developed HE systems are creating initiatives to receive students from countries with less developed educational systems (Altbach, 2004; Altbach & Knight, 2007). Therefore, in the field of international diplomacy and domination, certain countries have extended their national interests through education (Peterson, 2014).

There are many factors that drive the patterns of ISM. These factors can be at the individual, institutional, national or even global levels. To name a few, one can recall personal aspirations for better employment prospects abroad, a lack of high-quality higher educational institutions at home, and government policies to encourage cross-border mobility for education (see OECD, 2021). Abbott and Silles (2016) argue, for example, that the main criteria influencing a student's decision where to study are the perceived quality of instruction abroad and the perceived value of host institutions. Students worldwide have become increasingly aware of differences in quality of higher education across regions and countries. This is attributed to a wide dissemination of international university rankings and university league tables (Abbott & Silles, 2016).

Given the complexity of the concept of internationalization in HE, it does not come as a surprise why so many scholars seek to shed light on this topic. The concept of internationalization as a strategy had been introduced in the early 1990s as a response to the increasing importance of knowledge in the global society and the programs and policies of the European Commission (de Wit & Hunter, 2020). It is important to note that one commonly accepted definition of internationalization is that "[this is] the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (Knight, 2008, p. 21). Internationalization can be framed today as "a means of

improving the quality of education and research as well as serving larger social goals" (Marinoni et al., 2019). Some authors argue that the reference to internationalization as a process is of particular relevance to researchers, especially if they intend to measure internationalization. Brandenburg (2020), for example, draws attention to the fact that a process needs entirely different indicators to measure its progress than a status. Indeed, for a process, one needs to analyze the change rate of incoming students over some period of time. For a status, on the other hand, it is sufficient to analyze only what happens in a snapshot. This means that one just needs to find the number of exchanges or the percentage of incoming students in the particular academic year. The current study takes the view of internationalization as a process. Specifically, the study aims at meeting two goals: first, it aims to explore the dynamics of student mobility (i.e., the directions and patterns of student flows) in the European region; second, it strives to measure internationalization, at least one of its important components, namely degree mobility of students.

The European Context

In Europe, the Bologna Process (BP) seems to be most influential in shaping the activities of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the field of internationalization. The ministers in charge of HE in France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom declared in Paris (France) in 1998 that they intend to establish a "harmonized" structure of study programmes and degrees. Soon thereafter, in June 1999, the ministers of 29 European countries signed the so-called "Bologna Declaration" in Bologna (Italy). This event marks the beginning of the BP and is the first attempt to formally harmonize HE on a regional scale. Harmonization in this case refers to the idea that signatories of international agreements "must eventually align their policies with those of the larger 'educational space' they have chosen to inhabit" (Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012, p. 11). Importantly, both the Sorbonne (1998) and Bologna (1999) declarations have chosen ISM as the single most important aim. The national governments, namely, the signatories of the two declarations, have been opting for structural "convergence" of study programmes as the single most important operational measure to achieve the aim of increased student mobility (Teichler, 2019, p. 432). Furthermore, the mobility of students and academic and administrative staff had been called in Berlin Communiqué (EHEA, 2003) as the main basis for establishing a European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

This study draws on Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve communiqué of 2009 - a turning point when the shift of quantitative targets towards the event of outward mobility has occurred. This policy reform had clearly aimed at stimulating and facilitating intra-European (credit) mobility. It is interesting, therefore, to examine how inbound degree mobility changed after the policy shift. However, some studies (Kelo et al., 2006; Teichler et al., 2012) have explicitly highlighted the intrinsic differences between "credit" and "degree" mobility. Specifically, the scholars contend that there are differences not only in the main drivers of the two types of mobility, but also in their main funding sources (Ferencz, 2015). In fact, governments can have more control over credit mobility flows because this type of mobility is largely funded via different mobility programmes either at the European, national or institutional level. In the case of degree mobility, however, governments do not have the power and the room to manoeuvre akin to credit mobility. This is explained by the fact that degree mobility is preponderantly self-funded.

Within the framework of BP, HE and research were pushed towards the centre of the EU agenda to construct Europe as a world leader in trade of commercial services (Melo, 2016). Specifically, a driving purpose of the BP and the EHEA is to complement the economic competitiveness generated by the common market. Many scholars (e.g., Broucker et al., 2019; Corbett, 2005; Hooghe & Marks, 2009, 2018; Robertson, 2008; Uslaner, 2004; van der Wende & Huisman, 2004) argue in this regard that the mobility of people in general, and students in particular, can affect other fundamental goals of the BP such as the creation of a cosmopolitan European citizen and consequently becoming the most competitive knowledge economy in the world. Given that education is both sociocultural and economic by its nature, these two dimensions are becoming more closely coordinated among countries in the EHEA. It is worth noting that historically these two dimensions (i.e., sociocultural values and economic strategy) are strongly tied to national policy priorities. Pertaining to the fact that both economic and sociocultural discourses overlap, researchers in their analysis of benefits of studying abroad in addition to its economic effects frequently highlight the relevance of student mobility as a prime mechanism for fostering a sense of European identity

and citizenship (Rodríguez-González et al., 2011). The latter is inextricably linked to European integration and shared European cultural values.

Importantly, some recent developments in Europe, such as the "crisis of European integration", the fear of migrants, and the rise of populist ideologies have brought new challenges that still await appropriate countervailing measures (Zgaga, 2018, p. 19). All these developments have opened a wide discourse in the EU about its key political and economic objectives. Broucker et al. (2019), for example, argue that "Bologna does not seem to have created the desired European connectedness and has not eradicated the diversity between HE systems" (p. 228). It is worth noting that the aspired ideal of co-operation within Europe still matters less than national or regional policy objective with regard to the HE system. This supports the view that system reforms are mostly conducted from an internal, national policy perspective – despite the European context wherein HE systems operate (Broucker et al., 2019). From a policy point of view, Barrioluengo and Flisi (2017) argue that "the identification of the key determinants of international student mobility is central to designing efficient policies aimed at attracting mobile students" (p. 9). For example, the goal to enhance the competitiveness of European universities in the global market is expected to positively affect a region's economy. Therefore, the ministers in charge of HE of the countries involved in the BP review the changes on a regular basis in order to assess the progress (Teichler, 2019). Although many experts have agreed that remarkable reforms have been realized, they have also accentuated that these reforms were not to the extent desired a decade ago. Specifically, expert discussions have shown signs of frustration with the failure to fulfill the plans for building EHEA by 2010. The conclusion was made about the need to continue the collaborative reform efforts, so that reform targets formulated earlier would be reached in the second decade of the BP, up to 2020. However, at the Gothenburg Social Summit (Sweden) in 2017, the target to create EHEA by 2020 has been moved again, this time to year 2025. In the Rome Communiqué (2020) the commitment is made for building an inclusive, innovative and interconnected EHEA by 2030 (EHEA, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

Data Sources and Methodology

As to the methodology used for describing the indicators of degree mobility, the main variable of interest is the number of degree mobile students as a proportion of the total student population (TSP). The empirical analysis is conducted from the receiving (host) country perspective, it reviews physical mobility data from the European Tertiary Education Register (ETER). It can be argued that ETER includes almost all HEIs from which students graduate at ISCED levels 6 (bachelor), 7 (masters) or 8 (doctorate). At the same time, HEIs delivering only professional diplomas (ISCED level 5) are mostly excluded. Importantly, ISCED is a comprehensive framework ensuring application of uniform and internationally agreed definitions that facilitate comparisons of education systems across countries. The figures required for calculating the indicator (ratio) are the number of mobile students (ISCED levels 6-8) in the numerator, and the TSP in the denominator. The denominator incorporates the TSP in the country's HEIs. This means that the TSP is the equivalent of ISCED levels 5-8. In fact, it is the sum of ISCED levels 5-7 and ISCED level 8 for both mobile (i.e., students that received their upper secondary education degree in a foreign country) and resident students (i.e., those who received their upper secondary education degree in the same country). In ETER, the unit of observation is the single HEI. For each institution ETER provides data about mobile and resident students for each respective ISCED level. For ISCED level 7, ETER makes a distinction between ISCED 7 and ISCED 7 long, however, the two categories are considered jointly, and the mobility indicators take into account the sum of these two levels. In the current study, the researcher mainly focuses on finding the share of degree mobile students at ISCED levels 6-8, except for the analysis of Erasmus mobility (not included in this study), which combines ISCED levels 5-8. These levels incorporate ISCED level 5 which is denoted as "short-cycle tertiary education" where HEIs are delivering only professional diplomas; and levels 6, 7, and 8, which correspond respectively to bachelor, master, and doctoral levels or their equivalents (OECD, 2016, p. 28). It is important to stress that information on the breakdown of students by their mobile status is not available for certain countries for some years. As a result, these countries are discarded from the analysis. Additionally, a third category is present, namely "unclassified"

students, although this category is not taken into account for computing the share of degree mobile students. In the analysis shares of mobile students can be computed for each separate ISCED 2011 level and for ISCED 6-8 altogether. Using Microsoft Excel, the researcher computed the TSP for each respective country. The denominator is equal to the TSP in every country. Specifically, it is the sum of the students enrolled at all ISCED tertiary levels. The TSP is computed as a sum of two columns: the total students enrolled ISCED 5-7 and the total students enrolled at ISCED 8. For each country, the ratio measuring the number of degree-mobile students (levels 6-8) as a proportion of the TSP (Barrioluengo & Flisi, 2017) is computed as follows:

$$(1)\ Share\ of\ degree\ mobile\ students = \frac{\text{number of mobile students}}{\text{number of mobile students + number of resident students}}$$

It is important to clarify that information about the degree mobility are collected by the ETER at the level of the receiving HEI; therefore, the available figures concern only inward mobility. It is agreed to refer to the ratio either "Share of degree mobile students" or by its alternative name -- "(inward/inbound) degree mobility rate". Pertaining to the fact that this study uses the country as the unit of analysis, the researcher is required to adjust institutional statistics (statistics at the level of HEIs) to a more general - country level statistics. To fulfill this objective, the HEIs' numbers such as incoming degree students and the TSP have been aggregated to arrive at statistics for each respective country.

By using the divisive clustering (Verma, 2013), the researcher starts with all the objects (countries) as one cluster and recursively splits the clusters. The division of countries into clusters is based on their TSP. This approach facilitates comparisons because countries from the same cluster can be directly compared to each other and no adjustment for size is required for interpreting the results. Eventually, more meaningful results are received from such analysis, pertaining to the fact that the country size and the student population size both play a role.

It is worth noting that the available data cover only a period from 2011-2012 to 2016-2017 (academic) year. Importantly, ETER adopts practice where they label an academic year at its inception. This means that the academic year 2016/2017 is labelled as 2016 in ETER, while the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), similar to Eurostat and OECD, refers to it as 2017. UIS, thus, follows a different rule for labeling an academic year – it is labelled by the year end. Therefore, according to UIS, the period of analysis in this study will be from 2012 to 2017. However, this study follows the ETER's practice by labeling all academic years at their inception. It contributes to the construction of indicators on the share of mobile students in TSP (see Table 1).

The computed degree mobility rates (*Table 1*) are then compared to UIS estimates for respective countries (*Appendix A*). It is worth noting that the UIS was established in 1999 to meet the growing needs of UNESCO member states and the international community for a wider range of reliable, policy-relevant, and timely statistics in the fields of education. The researcher uses Excel for computing the standard error (SE) of the sampling distribution (Sp) (*Formula 2*) – the case of a pooled sample proportion (P) (*Formula 3)*. Then the test statistic (the two-proportion z-test) is computed in Excel (*Formula 4*):

$$(2)\ S_p = \sqrt{[P * (1 - P) * (\frac{1}{n1} + \frac{1}{n2})]}$$

For a pooled sample proportion (P):

Table 1: Inward/Inbound Degree-Mobility Rates

Country & Country Code	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Average Change (%)
European Union (EU)	8.10599	6.93737	6.61118	6.72353	7.06125	10.56941	7.46%
Austria (AT)	13.57	15.01	15.21	15.98	16.78	17.97	5.82%
Belgium (BE)	4.94	4.43	5.82	5.35	5.87	2.28	-7.69%
Bulgaria (BG)	2.20	2.14	1.92	1.79	1.84	1.99	-1.77%
Cyprus (CY)	19.47	19.74	12.21	15.43	14.83	16.12	-1.12%
Czech Republic (CZ)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Germany (DE)	5.67	6.00	6.35	6.83	7.26	7.69	6.29%
Denmark (DK)	7.41	8.19	8.48	n/a	n/a	n/a	7.03%
Estonia (EE)	1.97	2.51	3.30	4.74	6.24	7.58	31.13%
Greece (EL)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Spain (ES)	1.74	1.27	1.43	1.54	2.43	3.19	16.47%
Finland (FI)	n/a	7.07	6.45	6.59	6.81	8.15	4.10%
France (FR)	9.97	9.66	9.46	9.12	n/a	n/a	-2.92%
Croatia (HR)	0.10	0.10	1.73	1.67	1.68	2.19	338.94%
Hungary (HU)	5.05	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	62.10	n/a
Ireland (IE)	4.70	5.90	6.61	7.48	8.06	8.32	12.34%
Italy (IT)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Lithuania (LT)	n/a	n/a	2.13	2.81	2.65	3.05	13.78%
Luxembourg (LU)	38.15	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Latvia (LV)	2.67	3.57	4.72	4.16	5.39	4.80	14.54%
Malta (MT)	2.91	n/a	n/a	2.94	4.52	5.03	32.51%
Netherlands (NL)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Poland (PL)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Portugal (PT)	3.10	3.56	3.77	4.45	5.09	5.58	12.56%
Romania (RO)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Sweden (SE)	6.51	5.27	5.47	5.75	6.06	6.24	-0.35%
Slovenia (SI)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Slovakia (SK)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
United Kingdom (UK)	15.78	16.58	17.33	17.67	17.47	17.40	2.00%
EFTA states							
Switzerland (CH)	18.45	18.83	19.21	19.26	19.37	19.50	1.12%
Iceland (IS)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Liechtenstein (LI)	80.78	82.86	85.66	87.96	89.06	88.84	1.93%
Norway (NO)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: Researcher's own elaborations on data from the ETER project. Degree-mobile students (levels 6-8) are presented as a proportion of the TSP. Data downloaded in January 2021.

(3) $P = \frac{(P1 * n1 + P2 * n2)}{n1 + n2}$

where P1 and P2 are the sample proportions (percentages) and "n" is the size of the sample. The assumption is made that n1=n2=1,000.

(4) $z = \frac{P1 - P2 - \Delta}{\sqrt{[P * (1 - P) * (\frac{1}{n1} + \frac{1}{n2})]}}$

There is a "Difference test" or "Hypothesis test Formula", where Δ is their hypothesized difference (0 if testing for equal proportions). Whenever we need to test the null hypothesis where there is no difference between the two proportions/percentages (i.e., d=P1-P2=0), the null and alternative hypotheses for a two-tailed test are often stated in the following form: Null hypothesis: H_0: P1=P2 or H_0: P1-P2=0; alternative hypothesis: Ha: P1≠P2 or Ha: P1-P2≠0. As mentioned before, the test for comparing two proportions is expected to figure out a z-score (z). While comparing the proportions (percentages) of inbound degree-mobile UIS and ETER students at the country level, the researcher uses the level of significance (p-value) to decide whether or not to reject the null hypothesis (see *Appendix B*). P-value of the difference between proportions/percentages is provided in *Appendix A*. The researcher sets the level of significance (Alpha, α). It is typically presumed that α=0.05. Hence, the confidence level is equal to (1- α). A p-value less than Alpha (typically α ≤0.05) is statistically significant. It indicates strong evidence against the null hypothesis, as there is less than 5% probability that the null is correct (and the results are random). Therefore, we should reject the null hypothesis, and say that we have evidence for the alternative hypothesis. It should be emphasized that a statistically significant result cannot prove that a research hypothesis is correct, since that would imply a 100% certainty. A p-value higher than Alpha (α > 0.05) is not statistically significant (n.s.) and indicates strong evidence for the null hypothesis. This means we should retain the null hypothesis and reject the alternative hypothesis. It is worth noting that we cannot accept the null hypothesis, we can only reject the null or fail to reject it. Equally important, in all cases we may only state that our results "provide support for" or "give evidence for" our research hypothesis. Please refer to *Appendix (A,B)* for the results on the level of significance of the difference between proportions (percentages).

RESULTS

It is worth noting that the results (see *Table A1*) are quite consistent over time. The consistency of data is evident from the stability of mobility rates over the studied period. On average, at the EU level, the number of degree mobile students (ISCED levels 6-8) as a proportion of the TSP has increased by 7.46% over the studied period between 2011 and 2016. At the country level, the share of incoming degree mobile students has increased between 2011 and 2016 by 16.47% in Spain (ES), 6.29% in Germany (DE), 2.00% in the United Kingdom (UK). Clearly, all these countries show positive dynamics by reporting the increasing share of degree mobile students in the TSP. Nevertheless, the same indicator reports in France (FR) a (-2.92%) decrement between 2011 and 2014. Importantly, degree mobility rates for years 2015, 2016 are not computed for FR due to the missing data on both the number of degree mobile students and the TSP. With regards to Italy (IT), degree mobility rates are not computed over the studied period due to the missing data on the number of degree mobile students. Interestingly, in providing the comparative analysis of before-mentioned hosting states (DE, FR, ES, UK), it can be deduced that the UK has its share of degree mobile students more than twice as large as the EU average in period between 2012 and 2015. As to the years 2011 and 2016, the shares of degree mobile students in the UK are 15.78% and 17.40%, respectively. These numbers are almost twice as large as the EU average in those respective years (e.g., 8.11% and 10.57%). Besides, the UK has 1.5 times higher degree mobility rates than FR in the period from 2011 to 2014. A comparison of degree mobility rates of the UK and DE in the period between 2011 and 2013 will show that the UK rates are more than 2.7 times higher than in DE. Despite a more than double difference in degree mobility rates in the consecutive period from 2014 to 2016, there is a trend to the reduction of that difference. For example, the UK degree mobility rate is 17.40% in 2016. This means that it is only 2.26 times higher than that of DE (7.69%). Finally, Spain (ES) has degree mobility rates that are substantially lower than the EU average. For example, in the period between 2011 and 2013 its rates are more than 4.6 times lower than the respective EU average, with the lowest in 2012 (1.27%). The degree mobility rate in 2012 is almost 5.5 times lower for ES than it is for the EU average. At the same time, ES has shown a high increase of 16.47% in its degree mobility rate over the studied period from 2011 to 2016, relative to DE, UK, and FR. As mentioned before, DE and the UK have a 6.29% and 2.00% increase over the studied period, respectively. As for FR, one can report a decrement of (-2.92%) in its degree mobility rate over time which is evident from the data available for a four-year period (from 2011 to 2014). It is important to note

that the share of degree mobile students is relatively low for ES in 2011 (1.74%), this explains higher relative growth of 16.47% when compared to UK, FR, and DE where the rates at the inception of the period were relatively high, namely 15.78%, 9.97%, and 5.67%, respectively.

Croatia (HR), Malta (MT), Estonia (EE), Spain (ES), Latvia (LV), Lithuania (LT), Portugal (PT), Ireland (IE) are the countries that report the highest growth in their share of degree mobile students between 2011 and 2016 (*Table A1*). These are (HR) 338.94%, (MT) 32.51%, (EE) 31.13%, (ES) 16.47%, (LV) 14.54%, (LT) 13.78%, (PT) 12.56%, (IE) 12.34%, respectively. High relative growth of degree mobility rates in these countries is mostly due to their much lower rates at the inception of the period. Equally important, despite the large increment to the share of their degree mobile students, the degree mobility rates in HR, MT, EE, ES, LV, LT and PT are below the EU average. Specifically, the rate in HR is less than 2.19%; in LT it is less than 3.05%; in ES it is less than 3.19%; in MT it is less than 5.03%; in LV it is less than 5.39%; in PT it is less than 5.58%; and, finally, in EE it is less than 7.58% in 2016. As to IE, it is the only country from those listed above where degree mobility rates sometimes exceed the EU average. For instance, in years 2014 and 2015 they are 7.48% and 8.06%, respectively. In fact, these rates are higher than the EU average (6.72% and 7.06%, respectively).

The growth of degree mobility rates in Switzerland (CH), Liechtenstein (LI), United Kingdom (UK), and Finland (FI) are amongst the lowest as compared to other nation-states with the growing mobility. These rates are 1.12%, 1.93%, 2.00%, and 4.10%, respectively. In fact, all above countries have shown consistency in their mobility rates over time, this is evident from slight or relatively modest fluctuations in the observed rates throughout the studied period. It can be stressed that CH, LI, and the UK have degree mobility rates that are substantially higher than the EU average throughout the whole period (from 2011 to 2016). As to FI, its share of degree mobile students is slightly below the EU average in the period from 2013 to 2016. Moreover, the data on degree mobile students are missing for FI in 2011, this explains why the mobility rate for that year was not computed. The following year (2012), however, FI reports a degree mobility rate of 7.07% which is slightly higher than the EU average of 6.94%. Overall, it can be summarized that degree mobility rates in the above countries have remained rather constant during the entire period.

There is a group of countries whose share of degree mobile students reports a negative growth over the studied period (see *Table A1*). It should be noted that degree mobility rates for countries such as Belgium (BE), France (FR), Bulgaria (BG), Cyprus (CY), Sweden (SE) show a decrement of (-7.69%), (-2.92%), (-1.77%), (-1.12%), (-0.35%), respectively. Among the above-mentioned countries only CY and FR have their degree mobility rates to be higher than the EU average. During the period from 2011 to 2015, Cyprus (CY) demonstrates rates that are more than twice as large as the EU average. In 2016, the degree mobility rate for CY is 16.12%, this is certainly less than twice of the EU average (10.57%), however, this is a very high mobility rate. With regards to FR, its portion of degree mobile students (9.97%) is more than 1.23 times higher than the EU average in 2011 (8.11%). It is worth noting that FR shows a slight trend to a decrease in its degree mobility rate. However, relative to the EU average for the period between 2012 and 2014, the portion of degree mobile students in FR has even further increased, showing a 1.39, 1.43, 1.36 times higher rates, respectively. This indicates that for the period between 2011 and 2014, the share of degree mobile students at the EU level was also declining. As to BG, its degree mobility rates are among the lowest in the EU, they are more than 3 times lower than those respective EU average rates between 2011 and 2015. In 2016, BG demonstrates the rate of 1.99% that is 5.31 times lower than the EU average of 10.57% in that year. Besides, the degree mobility rates in BG are rather stable, they are showing only slight fluctuations during the period. Similarly, the stability of rates over the entire period can be observed in SE. In fact, SE is characterized by relatively high degree mobility rates. In particular, these rates are close to the EU average in the period between 2011 and 2015. However, SE has the rate of 6.24% in 2016; this rate differs from the respective EU average of 10.57%. With regards to BE, it is sufficient to say that this country is characterized by the highest decrement (-7.69%) in the share of its degree mobile students. Nevertheless, mobility rates in BE are relatively stable between 2011 and 2015, varying in the range from 4.43% to 5.87%. Therefore, the high decrement in its degree mobility rate is mostly due to the low rate of 2.28% in 2016.

The comparative analysis of countries can be enhanced if the member-states are divided into clusters. Let us illustrate that with the example of two countries. These countries are Germany (DE) and the UK. Importantly, both nation-states have their TSP falling in the interval between 2,365K and 2,744K during the period between 2011 and 2016. Therefore, we can include them to the cluster of "Extremely large countries". The analysis reveals that during the period from 2011 to 2013 the share of degree mobile students in the UK has been at least 2.7 times higher than in DE. The fact that two countries are from the same cluster allows us to deduce that the absolute number of degree mobile students in the UK (from 2011 to 2013) will also be nearly 2.7 times higher than in DE. As mentioned before, one can notice a clear trend, showing that the difference between mobility rates of two countries has diminished in the consecutive period between 2014 and 2016. Eventually, the UK degree mobility rate has been 17.40% in 2016. This means that the UK rate is only 2.26 times higher than that of DE (7.69%). Furthermore, both countries demonstrate stability of their mobility rates. For example, the degree mobility rate in DE varies in the range from 5.67% to 7.69%, showing that it is relatively constant over the entire period. Moreover, this rate has shown a persistent growth over time. With regards to the UK, its rates are also relatively constant over time, varying in the range from 15.78% to 17.67%. As a summary, the degree-mobility rate in DE is 5.67% for 2011. It may be perceived as relatively low when compared to 15.78% rate in the UK for the same year. However, relatively modest rate at the inception of the period helps to explain why DE has a higher relative growth (6.29%) than the UK (2.00%) over the entire period of study.

The second cluster of large countries with high student population (between 1,479K and 1,835K) is referred to as "Very large countries". This cluster includes Spain (ES), France (FR), Italy (IT), and Poland (PL). The number of degree mobile students as a proportion of the TSP (i.e., average growth rate) has increased by 16.47% in ES. For FR, on the contrary, there has been a decrement of (-2.92%). As to IT and PL, information in the ETER database about the number of degree mobile students is missing for both these countries. Hence, IT and PL are excluded from the analysis. Thus, the analysis of countries in the second cluster is automatically reduced to the comparison of ES and FR. As mentioned before, ES has shown a high increase of 16.47% in its degree mobility rate. This high relative growth is mostly due to a low rate of 1.74% at the inception of the period in 2011. However, the large increment to the share of degree mobile students in ES should not distract attention from the fact that degree mobility rates in ES are substantially lower than the rates in FR and the EU average, respectively. Importantly, it has been stressed that in the period between 2011 and 2013 those ES rates were more than 4.6 times lower than the respective EU average. Moreover, the rate of 1.27% in 2012 is almost 5.5 times lower for ES than it is for the EU average. As to FR, its degree mobility rates from 2011 to 2014 are higher than the EU average. The degree mobility rates in FR are rather stable, they vary in the range from 9.12% and 9.97%. As mentioned before, the rates for 2015 and 2016 are not computed for FR since the data is missing for both the number of degree mobile students and the TSP in that period. Furthermore, the degree mobility rates in FR significantly exceed those in ES. It is noteworthy that the rates in ES are also relatively stable, they are in the range from 1.27% to 3.19%. However, it is worth stressing that FR significantly outperforms ES in terms of its degree mobile students (both in percentage and absolute terms). In fact, the number of degree mobile students in FR is about 6 times higher in the period from 2011 to 2014 than the respective number in ES.

The third cluster of countries having the TSP in the interval between 431K and 733K is referred to as "Large countries". This cluster includes Netherlands (NL), Sweden (SE) and Greece (EL). The inclusion of Greece (EL) in the cluster is conditional since that country has a high variability in its TSP data. As a result, EL data can be outside of the cluster's interval. Specifically, it falls between 348K and 733K. Importantly, the data on the number of degree mobile students are missing for EL and NL in the ETER database. This explains why the mobility rates for those countries cannot be computed, thus excluding the above countries from the analysis. Eventually, the third cluster is down to the analysis of only one country (SE). SE shows rather stable degree mobility rates over time: the rate variability in SE is falling in the interval between 5.27% and 6.51%. In addition, SE demonstrates only a slight decrement of (-0.35%) in its degree mobility rate during the whole period (from 2011 to 2016). It is worth noting that the degree mobility rates in SE are about 1.2 times lower than the EU average rates in the period from 2011 to 2013. Furthermore, the degree mobility rates in years 2014 and 2015 are about 1.17 times lower than the EU

average. Finally, the data findings in 2016 (see *Table A1*) show that the rate in SE is 1.69 times lower than the respective rate for the EU average.

The fourth cluster of countries is referred to as "High medium countries". Austria (AT), Czech Republic (CZ), Finland (FI), Hungary (HU), Portugal (PT) can be grouped in this cluster because their TSP falls in the interval between 285K and 399K. The analysis of this cluster is down to AT, FI, and PT, since the computation of a share of degree mobile students in the studied period (between 2011 and 2016) is not possible for CZ due to the missing data in the ETER database about the number of degree-mobile students. The degree mobility rate computation is also problematic for HU in the period between 2012 and 2015, since the information on the number of degree-mobile students is missing in the ETER database. In addition, HU did not provide ETER with the data on its TSP in 2012. Furthermore, in the case of HU, there is a significant size gap between the rates that have been found from the available data in 2011 (5.05%) and 2016 (62.10%), respectively. The above findings raise the question about consistency of data in HU. The existing gap in data (from 2012 to 2015) as well as surprisingly high number of degree-mobile students as a proportion of the TSP in 2016 (62.10%), are the factors that have resulted in exclusion of HU from the current analysis. As to the comparison between AT, FI, and PT, the growth rate of 12.56% in PT is more than 2 times higher than the respective growth in AT (5.82%). As to FI, its growth rate of 4.10% is about 3 times lower than the rate in PT. The growth rate in FI has been computed during the period where the data on degree-mobile students are available. This implies that the growth rate computation for FI is done over the period from 2012 to 2016, pertaining to the fact that the data about degree-mobile students are missing in 2011. Overall, it can be concluded that the degree mobility rates in all three countries are stable. This is evident from the variability of these rates over the period. For example, in PT the rates vary between 3.10% and 5.58%. In AT and FI, the rates vary in the range from 13.57% to 17.97%, and from 6.45% to 8.15%, respectively. As to FI, its share of degree mobile students is slightly below the EU average in the period from 2013 to 2016. In 2012, however, FI reports a degree mobility rate of 7.07% which is slightly higher than the EU average of 6.94%. As to PT, its rates are about twice as low as the EU average in 2012 and 2016 and they are 1.75 and 1.51 times lower than the EU average in 2013 and 2014, respectively. Importantly, the difference between PT and the EU average is highest in 2011 where the rate is 2.62 times lower in PT than the respective EU average rate. In 2015, on the contrary, the difference between the computed rates is lowest, showing that the rate in PT is 1.39 times lower than the EU average. Eventually, it can be summarized that AT has significantly higher degree mobility rates than FI and PT. For instance, the rates in AT are more than twice as high as the EU average in the period between 2012 and 2015. Furthermore, the degree mobility rates for 2011 and 2016 are 1.67 and 1.7 times higher than the EU average, respectively. It can be concluded that the rates in AT are among the highest across the EU, showing, for instance, 17.97% in 2016.

Belgium (BE), Bulgaria (BG), Denmark (DK), Norway (NO), and Switzerland (CH) can be referred to as "Medium countries" because their TSP falls into interval from 213K to 279K. It is important to mention that NO is excluded from the analysis since the data on the number of degree mobile students are missing in the ETER database. In the case of DK, their shares of degree mobile students and the average growth rate can be computed only for half of the studied period, namely from 2011 to 2013. These are due to the missing data on the number of degree-mobile students in the ETER during the consecutive period (between 2014 and 2016). Furthermore, DK did not provide ETER with the data on its TSP in 2014. With respect to CH, its number of degree mobile students as a proportion of the TSP has increased by 1.12% over the period between 2011 and 2016. As mentioned earlier, the growth of degree mobility rates in CH is amongst the lowest as compared to other nation-states with the growing mobility. At the same time, CH has one of the highest degree mobility rates across both the EFTA and the EU countries, reaching to 19.5% in 2016. When compared to other states within the cluster, CH shows a positive trend in its degree mobility rates. This means that the shares of degree-mobile students in CH have been increasing over the entire period of study (from 2011 to 2016). In a similar way, DK shows a persistent growth of its degree mobility rate between 2011 and 2013. Higher relative growth of degree mobility rates in DK (7.03%) versus (1.12%) in CH can be explained by 2.49 times lower degree mobility rate at the inception of the period in 2011. In contrast to CH and DK, BE and BG have shown a negative growth of their mobility rate over time.

Specifically, BE and BG have reached growth rates of (-7.69%) and (-1.77%), respectively. With regards to BE, it is worth stressing that the country reports the highest decrement (-7.69%) in its share of degree mobile students across all the EU and EFTA states. Simultaneously, it can be emphasized that mobility rates in BE are relatively stable between 2011 and 2015, varying in the range from 4.43% to 5.87%. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, the high decrement in its degree mobility rate is mostly due to the low rate of 2.28% in 2016. As to BG, it has been mentioned earlier that its degree mobility rates are among the lowest in the EU. In fact, these rates are more than 3 times lower in the period between 2011 and 2015 than the respective EU average. In 2016, BG demonstrates the rate of 1.99% that is 5.31 times lower than the EU average of 10.57% in that year. Importantly, within the given cluster, the degree mobility rates of all countries are rather stable, they are showing only slight fluctuations throughout the period.

The next cluster is "Low medium countries", this is referred to a group of countries whose TSP falls in the interval between 116K and 212K. Croatia (HR), Ireland (IE), Lithuania (LT), and Slovakia (SK) are included in this interval. The inclusion of SK in the cluster is conditional since that country has a high variability in its TSP data. As a result, SK data can fall outside of the cluster's interval. Specifically, it falls between 116K and 217K. Equally important, the data on degree mobile students are missing for SK; therefore, it is excluded from the analysis. The number of degree mobile students as a proportion of the TSP has increased over studied period by 338.94% in HR; by 13.78% in LT; by 12.34% in IE. It is worth noting, however, that the data on degree-mobile students are missing in 2011 and 2012 for LT; therefore, its growth rate is computed for the period from 2013 to 2016. As mentioned before, high relative growth of degree mobility rates in HR can be explained by its extremely low rate (0.10%) at the inception of the period. Similarly, IE has a modest rate of 4.70% in 2011, which is below the EU average (8.11%). Nevertheless, IE shows a persistent growth of its degree mobility rate throughout the entire period. Consequently, this leads to a relatively high increase of 12.34% in its share of degree-mobile students between 2011 and 2016. Equally important, despite the large increment to the share of their degree mobile students, the rates in LT and HR are significantly below the EU average. Specifically, the rate in HR varies in the range between 0.10% and 2.19%. As to LT, its degree mobility rate varies in the range between 2.13% and 3.05%. As a summary, IE substantially outperforms LT and HR. The degree mobility rates of IE, for example, are about 3.8 times as high as the respective rates of HR or higher between 2013 and 2016. Equally important, LT shows a persistent growth in its share of degree mobile students between 2013 and 2016. Furthermore, LT outperform HR in terms of degree mobility rates. In effect, the (inward) degree mobility rates in HR are among the lowest among the EU countries, despite the fact they show an impressive 338.94% growth over the studied period.

The next cluster contains countries with the total number of students falling in the interval between 48K and 95K. These are Estonia (EE), Latvia (LV), and Slovenia (SI). The above countries are referred to in the current analysis as "Small countries". It is important to point out that the data about total number of students in SI are missing from 2011 to 2013. Moreover, SI did not provide its number of degree mobile students over the studied period (from 2011 to 2016) to the ETER database. Hence, SI is excluded from the analysis of "small countries" and the cluster analysis is down to the comparison between EE and LV. In fact, the high relative growth of degree mobility rates in EE is mostly due to the lower rate at the inception of the period. Besides, Estonia (EE) and Latvia (LV) both report a substantial growth in their share of degree mobile students between 2011 and 2016, with the results of 31.13% and 14.54%, respectively. Equally important, despite the large increment to a share of degree mobile students, the rates in EE and LV are still below the EU average. It is worth noting that EE shows a persistent increase in its degree mobility rate throughout the entire period. The variability of degree mobility rate is higher in EE, it varies in the range between 1.97% and 7.58%. As to LV, its degree mobility rate is rather stable, varying in the range between 2.67% and 5.39%. In fact, LV outperforms EE in terms of its degree mobility rates in the period from 2011 to 2013. In the consecutive period (between 2014 and 2016), the situation had reversed, exhibiting that EE has a higher degree mobility rate than LV.

Finally, the cluster of "Very small countries" includes Cyprus (CY), Iceland (IS), Luxembourg (LU), Liechtenstein (LI), and Malta (MT). The TSP in each of these countries falls in the interval between 0.5K and 44K. Liechtenstein (LI), the member-state of EFTA, stands out from the rest of the cluster in two

respects. First, across 32 countries who had participated in the analysis, LI has the smallest student population. The TSP of LI falls in the interval between 654 and 874 students. Second, LI shows the largest share of degree mobile students among all countries under review. Furthermore, LI reports a steady growth of its degree mobility rate between 2011 and 2015. Overall, the rates in LI are rather stable. In fact, the degree mobility rate in that period (from 2011 to 2015) varies in the range between 80.78% and 89.06%. Consequently, the rate in LI has dropped slightly to 88.84% in 2016. Despite its very high rates, LI has a relatively low (1.93%) growth rate over the whole period. In addition, it should be noted that LI is the smallest country in terms of its TSP; therefore, the absolute number of degree mobile students in LI is relatively low. The data about degree mobile students are missing in the ETER for LU for the period between 2012 and 2016; therefore, LU is excluded from the analysis. In a similar vein, Iceland (IS) was excluded because it did not provide ETER with information about the number of its degree mobile students in the studied period. Moreover, IS has no data about the TSP in 2015 and 2016.

Importantly, Cyprus (CY) shows rates that are more than twice as large as the EU average between 2011 and 2015. In 2016, the degree mobility rate for CY is 16.12%. This percentage number is rather high, but it is less than twice of the EU average (10.57%). Nevertheless, the rate varies in the range between 12.21% and 19.74% and it is consistent over time. CY belongs to the group of countries whose share of degree mobile students reports a negative growth over the studied period. Specifically, CY shows a decrement of -1.12%. As to MT, the data about the number of its degree mobile students are missing for 2012 and 2013 in the ETER; therefore, the growth in its share of degree mobile students is computed only for the period from 2014 to 2016. However, MT shows a substantial increment of 32.51%. The country shows a steady growth in its degree mobility rate. Moreover, MT is characterized by low variability of its rate in the given period. The rate ranges from 2.94% to 5.03%. The rates in MT are about twice as low as those respective rates of the EU average. As a summary, CY outperforms MT in terms of degree mobility rates. As to LI, it shows the largest share of degree mobile students among all countries, however, it has the smallest student population of all. Hence, the absolute number of degree mobile students in LI is not high. Finally, the stability of degree mobility rates for the studied period would signal that the data which had been extracted from the ETER and then used for computing the rates were rather consistent.

CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The results from the conducted analysis show how degree mobility rates have evolved over studied period. The analysis effectively contributes to the issue on how to collect and process a wide range of policy-relevant statistics in the fields of HE. It also helps to establish the context and content of future discussions on how to address the practical problem of measuring and evaluating the dynamics of students flows in Europe. Most recently, the Rome Communiqué (EHEA, 2020) has stressed the importance and the benefits of physical mobility for students, doctoral candidates and staff. This mobility contributes to the excellence and relevance of HE in the EHEA. Diverse cultures cooperate to “connect [different] systems and foster the development of intercultural and linguistic competences, broader knowledge and understanding of our world” (EHEA, 2020, p. 6). The Communiqué (2020) states that the mobility target - at least 20% of those graduating in the EHEA should have experienced a study or training period abroad – will be maintained. This means that the mobility experience, whether it is in physical, digitally enhanced or blended format, is considered as an essential component for HE students to acquire international and intercultural competences. This is to be achieved through internationalization of the curricula or participation in innovative international environments in their home institutions. Altogether this makes the EHEA more attractive and competitive on the global scale. Arguably, HE will be a key player in achieving the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Therefore, Ministers (EHEA, 2020) express commitment to ensure that “HEIs have appropriate funding to develop solutions for the current crisis, post crisis recovery … the transition into green, sustainable and resilient economies and societies” (p. 3).

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Appendix A. Comparison Between UIS Inbound Mobility Rates and ETER Shares of Inward Mobile Students (ISCED Levels 6-8)

Country	Country Code	UIS 2012	ETER 2011	Diff.	UIS 2013	ETER 2012	Diff.	UIS 2014	ETER 2013	Diff.
European Union	EU	7.59	8.11	n.s.	6.42	6.94	n.s.	7.20	6.61	n.s.
Austria	AT	14.04	13.57	n.s.	16.76	15.01	n.s.	15.47	15.21	n.s.
Belgium	BE	8.98	4.94	***	9.98	4.43	***	11.19	5.82	***
Bulgaria	BG	3.93	2.20	*	4.08	2.14	**	3.98	1.92	**
Cyprus	CY	23.46	19.47	*	14.88	19.74	**	14.35	12.21	n.s.
Czech Republic	CZ	8.96	-	-	9.39	-	-	9.83	-	-
Germany	DE	-	5.67	-	7.07	6.00	n.s.	7.23	6.35	n.s.
Denmark	DK	8.13	7.41	n.s.	10.13	8.19	n.s.	9.93	8.48	n.s.
Estonia	EE	2.33	1.97	n.s.	2.89	2.51	n.s.	3.72	3.30	n.s.
Greece	EL/GR	4.37	-	-	4.19	-	-	-	-	-
Spain	ES	2.84	1.74	*	2.86	1.27	**	-	1.43	-
Finland	FI	5.71	-	-	7.07	7.07	n.s.	7.43	6.45	n.s.
France	FR	11.82	9.97	n.s.	9.78	9.66	n.s.	9.84	9.46	n.s.
Croatia	HR	0.54	0.10	*	0.30	0.10	n.s.	0.38	1.73	**
Hungary	HU	4.60	5.05	n.s.	5.76	-	-	7.04	-	-
Ireland	IE	5.76	4.70	n.s.	6.45	5.90	n.s.	7.00	6.61	n.s.
Italy	IT	4.04	-	-	4.40	-	-	4.72	-	-
Lithuania	LT	1.79	-	-	2.45	-	-	-	2.13	-
Luxembourg	LU	40.56	38.15	n.s.	-	-	-	-	-	-
Latvia	LV	2.80	2.67	n.s.	3.71	3.57	n.s.	4.99	4.72	n.s.
Malta	MT	4.84	2.91	*	5.06	-	-	5.86	-	-
Netherlands	NL	7.25	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poland	PL	1.17	-	-	1.46	-	-	1.97	-	-
Portugal	PT	4.75	3.10	*	3.92	3.56	n.s.	4.11	3.77	n.s.
Romania	RO	2.44	-	-	3.49	-	-	4.07	-	-
Sweden	SE	6.32	6.51	n.s.	5.83	5.27	n.s.	5.91	5.47	n.s.
Slovenia	SI	2.27	-	-	2.62	-	-	2.75	-	-
Slovakia	SK	4.09	-	-	4.86	-	-	5.61	-	-
United Kingdom	UK	17.14	15.78	n.s.	17.46	16.58	n.s.	18.22	17.33	n.s.
Switzerland	CH	16.50	18.45	n.s.	16.85	18.83	n.s.	17.10	19.21	n.s.
Iceland	IS	6.21	-	-	6.54	-	-	7.40	-	-
Liechtenstein	LI	80.63	80.78	n.s.	-	82.86	-	85.30	85.66	n.s.
Norway	NO	7.75	-	-	3.62	-	-	3.50	-	-

Country	Country Code	UIS 2015	ETER 2014	Diff.	UIS 2016	ETER 2015	Diff.	UIS 2017	ETER 2016	Diff.
European Union	EU	9.12	6.72	*	9.47	7.06	*	9.84	10.57	n.s.
Austria	AT	15.89	15.98	n.s.	16.35	16.78	n.s.	17.19	17.97	n.s.
Belgium	BE	11.18	5.35	***	12.02	5.87	***	8.54	2.28	***
Bulgaria	BG	4.25	1.79	***	4.57	1.84	***	5.50	1.99	***
Cyprus	CY	17.53	15.43	n.s.	19.14	14.83	**	23.09	16.12	***
Czech Republic	CZ	10.55	-	-	11.51	-	-	12.54	-	-
Germany	DE	7.68	6.83	n.s.	8.04	7.26	n.s.	8.37	7.69	n.s.
Denmark	DK	10.28	-	-	10.81	-	-	10.76	-	-
Estonia	EE	5.18	4.74	n.s.	6.80	6.24	n.s.	8.20	7.58	n.s.
Greece	EL/GR	-	-	-	3.35	-	-	3.41	-	-
Spain	ES	-	1.54	-	2.53	2.43	n.s.	3.23	3.19	n.s.
Finland	FI	7.65	6.59	n.s.	7.81	6.81	n.s.	8.18	8.15	n.s.
France	FR	9.88	9.12	n.s.	9.89	-	-	10.20	-	-
Croatia	HR	0.51	1.67	**	0.43	1.68	**	2.89	2.19	n.s.
Hungary	HU	7.05	-	-	8.86	-	-	9.97	62.10	***
Ireland	IE	7.37	7.48	n.s.	8.19	8.06	n.s.	8.88	8.32	n.s.
Italy	IT	4.95	-	-	5.10	-	-	5.31	-	-
Lithuania	LT	3.54	2.81	n.s.	4.11	2.65	*	4.61	3.05	*
Luxembourg	LU	45.87	-	-	46.99	-	-	46.73	-	-
Latvia	LV	6.12	4.16	*	7.67	5.39	*	7.39	4.80	**
Malta	MT	6.21	2.94	***	8.43	4.52	***	8.28	5.03	**
Netherlands	NL	10.23	-	-	10.74	-	-	11.00	-	-
Poland	PL	2.64	-	-	3.42	-	-	4.12	-	-
Portugal	PT	5.00	4.45	n.s.	-	5.09	-	6.40	5.58	n.s.
Romania	RO	4.26	-	-	4.82	-	-	5.18	-	-
Sweden	SE	6.22	5.75	n.s.	6.58	6.06	n.s.	6.74	6.24	n.s.
Slovenia	SI	2.75	-	-	3.31	-	-	3.88	-	-
Slovakia	SK	5.90	-	-	6.02	-	-	6.90	-	-
United Kingdom	UK	18.49	17.67	n.s.	18.10	17.47	n.s.	17.92	17.40	n.s.
Switzerland	CH	17.18	19.26	n.s.	17.59	19.37	n.s.	17.75	19.50	n.s.
Iceland	IS	-	-	-	6.78	-	-	6.85	-	-
Liechtenstein	LI	87.60	87.96	n.s.	88.89	89.06	n.s.	87.98	88.84	n.s.
Norway	NO	3.63	-	-	3.92	-	-	3.15	-	-

Note: 'Diff.' reports the level of significance of the difference between ETER mobility rates (computed) and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) official inbound mobility rates. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; 'n.s.', difference is not significant. Countries for which no information is available are denoted by '–'. *Source*: Researcher's own elaborations on data from the ETER and the data extracted from UIS (all data downloaded in January 2021).

Appendix B. The Level of Significance (P-Value) of the Difference Between Proportions/Percentages (Comparison of UIS and ETER Data at the Country Level)

Country	Country Code	Academic year: 2011-2012					
		Pooled prob. (P)	Standard Error (SE)	Test stat.(Z-score)	Normsdist Function	P-Value	Diff.
European Union	EU	0.078	0.0120	0.43	0.6673	0.3327	n.s.
Austria	AT	0.138	0.0154	0.31	0.6199	0.3801	n.s.
Belgium	BE	0.070	0.0114	3.55	0.9998	0.0002	***
Bulgaria	BG	0.031	0.0077	2.25	0.9878	0.0122	*
Cyprus	CY	0.215	0.0184	2.17	0.9851	0.0149	*
Czech Republic	CZ	-	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	DE	-	-	-	-	-	-
Denmark	DK	0.078	0.0120	0.60	0.7265	0.2735	n.s.
Estonia	EE	0.021	0.0065	0.55	0.7089	0.2911	n.s.
Greece	EL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spain	ES	0.023	0.0067	1.64	0.9495	0.0505	*
Finland	FI	-	-	-	-	-	-
France	FR	0.109	0.0139	1.33	0.9077	0.0923	n.s.
Croatia	HR	0.003	0.0025	1.73	0.9582	0.0418	*
Hungary	HU	0.048	0.0096	0.47	0.6801	0.3199	n.s.
Ireland	IE	0.052	0.0100	1.07	0.8569	0.1431	n.s.
Italy	IT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lithuania	LT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Luxembourg	LU	0.394	0.0218	1.10	0.8649	0.1351	n.s.
Latvia	LV	0.027	0.0073	0.18	0.5701	0.4299	n.s.
Malta	MT	0.039	0.0086	2.24	0.9874	0.0126	*
Netherlands	NL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poland	PL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Portugal	PT	0.039	0.0087	1.90	0.9711	0.0289	*
Romania	RO	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sweden	SE	0.064	0.0110	0.18	0.5705	0.4295	n.s.
Slovenia	SI	-	-	-	-	-	-
Slovakia	SK	-	-	-	-	-	-
United Kingdom	UK	0.165	0.0166	0.82	0.7933	0.2067	n.s.

Switzerland	CH	0.175	0.0170	1.15	0.8751	0.1249	n.s.
Iceland	IS	-	-	-	-	-	-
Liechtenstein	LI	0.807	0.0176	0.09	0.5350	0.4650	n.s.
Norway	NO	-	-	-	-	-	-

Country	Country Code	Academic year: 2012-2013					
		Pooled prob. (P)	Standard Error (SE)	Test stat. (Z-score)	Normsdist Function	P-Value	Diff.
European Union	EU	0.067	0.0112	0.47	0.6800	0.3200	n.s.
Austria	AT	0.159	0.0163	1.07	0.8576	0.1424	n.s.
Belgium	BE	0.072	0.0116	4.80	1.0000	0.0000	***
Bulgaria	BG	0.031	0.0078	2.50	0.9938	0.0062	**
Cyprus	CY	0.173	0.0169	2.87	0.9980	0.0020	**
Czech Republic	CZ	-	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	DE	0.065	0.0111	0.97	0.8341	0.1659	n.s.
Denmark	DK	0.092	0.0129	1.50	0.9333	0.0667	n.s.
Estonia	EE	0.027	0.0073	0.53	0.7022	0.2978	n.s.
Greece	EL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spain	ES	0.021	0.0064	2.50	0.9938	0.0062	**
Finland	FI	0.071	0.0115	0.00	0.5014	0.4986	n.s.
France	FR	0.097	0.0132	0.09	0.5357	0.4643	n.s.
Croatia	HR	0.002	0.0020	1.01	0.8449	0.1551	n.s.
Hungary	HU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ireland	IE	0.062	0.0108	0.51	0.6950	0.3050	n.s.
Italy	IT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lithuania	LT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Luxembourg	LU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Latvia	LV	0.036	0.0084	0.17	0.5664	0.4336	n.s.
Malta	MT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	NL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poland	PL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Portugal	PT	0.037	0.0085	0.42	0.6641	0.3359	n.s.
Romania	RO	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sweden	SE	0.055	0.0102	0.54	0.7065	0.2935	n.s.
Slovenia	SI	-	-	-	-	-	-
Slovakia	SK	-	-	-	-	-	-
United Kingdom	UK	0.170	0.0168	0.53	0.7003	0.2997	n.s.

Switzerland	CH	0.178	0.0171	1.16	0.8767	0.1233	n.s.
Iceland	IS	-	-	-	-	-	-
Liechtenstein	L1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Norway	NO	-	-	-	-	-	-

Country	Country Code	Academic year: 2013-2014					
		Pooled prob. (P)	Standard Error (SE)	Test stat.(Z-score)	Normsdist Function	P-Value	Diff.
European Union	EU	0.069	0.0113	0.52	0.6988	0.3012	n.s.
Austria	AT	0.153	0.0161	0.16	0.5642	0.4358	n.s.
Belgium	BE	0.085	0.0125	4.31	1.0000	0.0000	***
Bulgaria	BG	0.030	0.0076	2.73	0.9968	0.0032	**
Cyprus	CY	0.133	0.0152	1.41	0.9207	0.0793	n.s.
Czech Republic	CZ	-	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	DE	0.068	0.0113	0.78	0.7829	0.2171	n.s.
Denmark	DK	0.092	0.0129	1.12	0.8696	0.1304	n.s.
Estonia	EE	0.035	0.0082	0.51	0.6938	0.3062	n.s.
Greece	EL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spain	ES	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finland	FI	0.069	0.0114	0.87	0.8069	0.1931	n.s.
France	FR	0.097	0.0132	0.29	0.6139	0.3861	n.s.
Croatia	HR	0.011	0.0046	2.94	0.9984	0.0016	**
Hungary	HU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ireland	IE	0.068	0.0113	0.34	0.6345	0.3655	n.s.
Italy	IT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lithuania	LT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Luxembourg	LU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Latvia	LV	0.049	0.0096	0.28	0.6117	0.3883	n.s.
Malta	MT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Netherlands	NL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poland	PL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Portugal	PT	0.039	0.0087	0.39	0.6516	0.3484	n.s.
Romania	RO	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sweden	SE	0.057	0.0104	0.42	0.6629	0.3371	n.s.
Slovenia	SI	-	-	-	-	-	-
Slovakia	SK	-	-	-	-	-	-
United Kingdom	UK	0.178	0.0171	0.52	0.6988	0.3012	n.s.

Switzerland	CH	0.182	0.0172	1.22	0.8892	0.1108	n.s.
Iceland	IS	-	-	-	-	-	-
Liechtenstein	LI	0.855	0.0158	0.23	0.5901	0.4099	n.s.
Norway	NO	-	-	-	-	-	-

Country	Country Code	Academic year: 2014-2015					
		Pooled prob. (P)	Standard Error (SE)	Test stat.(Z-score)	Normsdist Function	P-Value	Diff.
European Union	EU	0.079	0.0121	1.99	0.9766	0.0234	*
Austria	AT	0.159	0.0164	0.05	0.5217	0.4783	n.s.
Belgium	BE	0.083	0.0123	4.74	1.0000	0.0000	***
Bulgaria	BG	0.030	0.0077	3.21	0.9993	0.0007	***
Cyprus	CY	0.165	0.0166	1.27	0.8974	0.1026	n.s.
Czech Republic	CZ	-	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	DE	0.073	0.0116	0.73	0.7687	0.2313	n.s.
Denmark	DK	-	-	-	-	-	-
Estonia	EE	0.050	0.0097	0.45	0.6741	0.3259	n.s.
Greece	EL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spain	ES	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finland	FI	0.071	0.0115	0.92	0.8218	0.1782	n.s.
France	FR	0.095	0.0131	0.58	0.7179	0.2821	n.s.
Croatia	HR	0.011	0.0046	2.51	0.9939	0.0061	**
Hungary	HU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ireland	IE	0.074	0.0117	0.10	0.5379	0.4621	n.s.
Italy	IT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lithuania	LT	0.032	0.0078	0.93	0.8233	0.1767	n.s.
Luxembourg	LU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Latvia	LV	0.051	0.0099	1.98	0.9764	0.0236	*
Malta	MT	0.046	0.0093	3.50	0.9998	0.0002	***
Netherlands	NL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poland	PL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Portugal	PT	0.047	0.0095	0.58	0.7202	0.2798	n.s.
Romania	RO	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sweden	SE	0.060	0.0106	0.45	0.6724	0.3276	n.s.
Slovenia	SI	-	-	-	-	-	-
Slovakia	SK	-	-	-	-	-	-
United Kingdom	UK	0.181	0.0172	0.48	0.6827	0.3173	n.s.

Switzerland	CH	0.182	0.0173	1.20	0.8857	0.1143	n.s.
Iceland	IS	-	-	-	-	-	-
Liechtenstein	LI	0.878	0.0146	0.25	0.5971	0.4029	n.s.
Norway	NO	-	-	-	-	-	-

Country	Country Code	Academic year: 2015-2016					
		Pooled prob. (P)	Standard Error (SE)	Test stat.(Z-score)	Normsdist Function	P-Value	Diff.
European Union	EU	0.083	0.0123	1.95	0.9747	0.0253	*
Austria	AT	0.166	0.0166	0.26	0.6023	0.3977	n.s.
Belgium	BE	0.089	0.0128	4.82	1.0000	0.0000	***
Bulgaria	BG	0.032	0.0079	3.47	0.9997	0.0003	***
Cyprus	CY	0.170	0.0168	2.57	0.9949	0.0051	**
Czech Republic	CZ	-	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	DE	0.076	0.0119	0.65	0.7434	0.2566	n.s.
Denmark	DK	-	-	-	-	-	-
Estonia	EE	0.065	0.0110	0.51	0.6951	0.3049	n.s.
Greece	EL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spain	ES	0.025	0.0070	0.15	0.5580	0.4420	n.s.
Finland	FI	0.073	0.0116	0.86	0.8040	0.1960	n.s.
France	FR	-	-	-	-	-	-
Croatia	HR	0.011	0.0046	2.74	0.9969	0.0031	**
Hungary	HU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ireland	IE	0.081	0.0122	0.10	0.5416	0.4584	n.s.
Italy	IT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lithuania	LT	0.034	0.0081	1.81	0.9647	0.0353	*
Luxembourg	LU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Latvia	LV	0.065	0.0110	2.06	0.9805	0.0195	*
Malta	MT	0.065	0.0110	3.55	0.9998	0.0002	***
Netherlands	NL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poland	PL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Portugal	PT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Romania	RO	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sweden	SE	0.063	0.0109	0.47	0.6826	0.3174	n.s.
Slovenia	SI	-	-	-	-	-	-
Slovakia	SK	-	-	-	-	-	-
United Kingdom	UK	0.178	0.0171	0.37	0.6428	0.3572	n.s.

Switzerland	CH	0.185	0.0174	1.03	0.8477	0.1523	n.s.
Iceland	IS	-	-	-	-	-	-
Liechtenstein	LI	0.890	0.0140	0.12	0.5486	0.4514	n.s.
Norway	NO	-	-	-	-	-	-

Country	Country Code	Academic year: 2016-2017					
		Pooled prob. (P)	Standard Error (SE)	Test stat.(Z-score)	Normsdist Function	P-Value	Diff.
European Union	EU	0.102	0.0135	0.54	0.7061	0.2939	n.s.
Austria	AT	0.176	0.0170	0.46	0.6774	0.3226	n.s.
Belgium	BE	0.054	0.0101	6.19	1.0000	0.0000	***
Bulgaria	BG	0.037	0.0085	4.13	1.0000	0.0000	***
Cyprus	CY	0.196	0.0178	3.93	1.0000	0.0000	***
Czech Republic	CZ	-	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	DE	0.080	0.0122	0.56	0.7130	0.2870	n.s.
Denmark	DK	-	-	-	-	-	-
Estonia	EE	0.079	0.0121	0.51	0.6952	0.3048	n.s.
Greece	EL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Spain	ES	0.032	0.0079	0.05	0.5202	0.4798	n.s.
Finland	FI	0.082	0.0122	0.02	0.5091	0.4909	n.s.
France	FR	-	-	-	-	-	-
Croatia	HR	0.025	0.0070	1.00	0.8414	0.1586	n.s.
Hungary	HU	0.360	0.0215	24.28	1.0000	0.0000	***
Ireland	IE	0.086	0.0125	0.45	0.6725	0.3275	n.s.
Italy	IT	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lithuania	LT	0.038	0.0086	1.82	0.9657	0.0343	*
Luxembourg	LU	-	-	-	-	-	-
Latvia	LV	0.061	0.0107	2.42	0.9923	0.0077	**
Malta	MT	0.067	0.0111	2.92	0.9982	0.0018	**
Netherlands	NL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Poland	PL	-	-	-	-	-	-
Portugal	PT	0.060	0.0106	0.77	0.7792	0.2208	n.s.
Romania	RO	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sweden	SE	0.065	0.0110	0.46	0.6758	0.3242	n.s.
Slovenia	SI	-	-	-	-	-	-
Slovakia	SK	-	-	-	-	-	-
United Kingdom	UK	0.177	0.0171	0.30	0.6192	0.3808	n.s.

Switzerland	CH	0.186	0.0174	1.00	0.8422	0.1578	n.s.
Iceland	IS	-	-	-	-	-	-
Liechtenstein	LI	0.884	0.0143	0.60	0.7249	0.2751	n.s.
Norway	NO	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: 'Diff.' reports the level of significance of the difference between ETER mobility rates (computed) and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) official inbound mobility rates. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; 'n.s.', difference is not significant. Countries for which no information is available are denoted by '–'. *Source*: Researcher's own elaborations on data from the ETER and the data extracted from UIS (all data downloaded in January 2021)

Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 4 (2022), pp. 90-102
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i4.4429| https://ojed.org/jcihe

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on International Students in a Public University in the United States: Academic and Non-academic Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has substantially impacted higher education. The unexpected move to online learning and support services has created many challenges. International students, who often are unfamiliar with the culture and norms of American higher education, have been particularly disadvantaged. Analyzing data received through an online survey, researchers identified the top five academic and non-academic challenges faced by international students during the pandemic, and their use of support services to overcome these challenges. The results inform college administrators, professors, and student services professionals on the experiences of international students during the pandemic and offer suggestions for reviving and expanding campus academic and social support services.

Keywords: academic challenges, COVID-19, international students, non-academic challenges

Received November 24, 2021; revised January 14, 2022, accepted February 2, 2022

INTRODUCTION

According to the Institute of International Education (IIE, 2021), the 2019-2020 academic year marked the sixth consecutive year that international student enrollment at U.S. colleges and universities topped one million students. International students are defined as "students who undertake all or part of their higher education experience in a country other than their home country" (IIE, 2022, para. 1). The latest IIE enrollment figures show that there has been a decline in international student enrollment of 15% in Fall, 2020 (IIE, 2021). Although the United States remains a top host country for international students from around the world (IIE, 2021; Redden, 2020), new international student enrollment decreased by 45.6% in Fall, 2020. In the wake of a global pandemic, as some countries are still facing lockdowns and slow vaccine rollouts, higher education scholars are beginning to unveil the complex and multifaceted impact of COVID-19 on international students.

International students are uniquely positioned to be disproportionately affected by national and international crises (Bhojwani et al., 2020). Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, some Muslim international students and perhaps their non-Muslim Middle Eastern and South Asian counterparts, became targets of racism and discrimination (Lee & Rice, 2007). The 2008 recession led to less research and scholarship funding availability for international students, prompting those from lower income backgrounds to forgo study in the United States (Choudaha, 2017), while the 2017 travel ban on some countries adversely impacted participation of international students from those areas (Van De Walker & Slate, 2019).

International students at U.S. institutions have long faced both academic (Karkar-Esperat, 2018; Martirosyan et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2011) and non-academic challenges (Hegarty, 2014; Mori, 2000; Sherry et al., 2010) in the pursuit of their degrees. The ways in which COVID-19 has exacerbated these challenges is a topic of increasing importance to higher education as the United States, and the world, rebounds from the pandemic. The purpose of this study was to (a) explore academic and non-academic challenges faced by international students at one public university located in a rural community in the United States, (b) examine their use of available support services, and (c) solicit input on potential institutional support that might contribute to their success during times of crisis such as a pandemic. Data were collected through an online survey with quantitative and qualitative questions. Multiple choice and open-ended questions were used. The results of this study serve to educate university administrators, professors, and student services personnel on the experiences of international students during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ways in which academic and non-academic support services can be revived and expanded for this student group.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers and scholars tend to agree that international students bring intrinsic value to the colleges and universities they attend, promote campus diversity, offer opportunities for intercultural exchange, and present varied world viewpoints in the classroom (Hegarty, 2014; Macrander, 2017). However, these students also face a unique set of academic challenges. One primary challenge addressed in the literature is the overlap of academic achievement and English language proficiency (Andrade, 2006; Martirosyan et al., 2019). Notably, non-native English speakers can struggle when communication, particularly in the form of class participation or group work, is an integral part of the class (Lee, 2013). These students, too, can often miss or misunderstand linguistic or cultural cues that play a critical role in the classroom environment (Lee, 2013). Some particular groups, such as international graduate students, may see language proficiency as an even more significant barrier because they often have smaller, seminar-style classes, engage in research, and hold graduate assistantships (Zhou et al., 2011).

International students, including those who are native English speakers, can also struggle with other aspects of American education, such as academic conventions and standards, learning styles, and evaluation (Campbell & Li, 2007; Glass et al., 2015; Mesidor & Sly, 2016). Mesidor and Sly (2016) noted that international students from some countries may be more familiar with rote learning styles and high-pressure examinations, whereas in their U.S. classrooms, they may face long writing assignments, group presentations, or even creative or innovative projects. These differences in teaching and evaluation styles force international students to adapt within the classroom context (Mesidor & Sly, 2016). Roy (2013)

suggested, however, that professors are also responsible for helping international students in their classes adapt, and for adapting their teaching methods to those students.

In the last 20 years, one of the most notable academic challenges for international students has been the gradual shift to increased online coursework, both in regard to fully online courses and to increased online components in face-to-face courses. Karkar-Esperat (2018) asserted that online coursework, and notably asynchronous coursework, can be particularly challenging for international students due to language difficulties, feelings of isolation from their classmates, unpreparedness of the instructor, and motivation. Likewise, some international students reported that faculty interaction, both in synchronous and asynchronous online courses and in face-to-face courses, is critical to their success in the classroom (Glass et al., 2015).

Adapting to the U.S. classroom is only one part of the international student experience. Hegarty (2014) remarked, "the cultural differences of food, customs, financial constraints, homesickness, loss of social status, fear, and a sense of insignificance can all accumulate to make the international student truly feel overwhelmed in the U.S. collegiate system" (p. 228). Although Choudaha (2012) reminds us that "not all international students are the same" (p. 1), the reality is that non-academic challenges can manifest themselves in similar ways for many international students. For some, struggles with social adaptability and making new friends can lead to feelings of loneliness or isolation (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2013; Ryder et al., 2013). International students who come from cultures where mental health is seldom addressed may find difficulty in seeking out mental health resources or treatment (Forbes-Mewett & Sawyer, 2016; Mori, 2000). Untreated mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression, may further compromise international students' academic success and more importantly, their well-being (Mori, 2000).

Often intertwined with mental health are the financial challenges that international students also face. Many international students are self-supported, or have a financial or governmental sponsor, yet many others struggle to cope to financial instability, including food and housing insecurity (Choudaha et al., 2012; Sherry et al., 2010; Shi et al., 2021). Some financial issues that students may face include unexpected educational or living expenses, inability to work off-campus due to visa regulations, and fluctuating currency rates in their home country (Sherry et al., 2010). Lastly, international students can experience racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and perceived unequal treatment at U.S. universities (Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007). These non-academic challenges coexist alongside academic challenges that international students must balance and navigate over the course of their educational career in the United States.

Due to the recency of the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent global pandemic, there has been a limited amount of literature published on the effects of the pandemic on international students in the United States. Chirikov and Soria (2020) described the ways in which international students navigated the quick and unprecedented move to fully online coursework in the Spring 2020 semester, noting that while most international students managed the transition well, they faced similar struggles as their non-international peers. Principally, they discussed students' challenges with motivation, understanding course content, and the lack of opportunities to interact with their classmates (Chirikov & Soria, 2020). Less than half of the undergraduate students they surveyed, and only 60% of the graduate students, remarked that they adapted "well" or "very well" to remote instruction. Unlike their non-international peers, however, some international students faced the additional hurdle of returning to their home country and attending synchronous online classes at odd hours (Chirikov & Soria, 2020).

The non-academic challenges that international students have faced during COVID-19 have been extensive. Some students faced immediate housing insecurity when their residence halls closed in March 2020, while others faced loss of on-campus jobs, loss of financial support from their families or sponsors, and general financial disarray (Bhojwani et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2020; Chirikov & Soria, 2020). International students faced not only increased stress, but also increased barriers to receiving needed mental health treatment (Chen et al., 2020). Additionally, students reported feeling concerned about their health insurance and the possibility of COVID-19 infection, maintaining their visa status, delays in Optional Practical Training (OPT) approval, and dire prospects for future jobs in the United States upon graduation (Bhojwani et al., 2020; Chirikov & Soria, 2020).

Fischer (2020), writing in the early days of the pandemic, describes its impact as "seismic" (p. i) for the world of international education. Many have called for more research into the impact of COVID-19 on international students and this study served to help fill that void. Specifically, we focused on international students enrolled at a public university in a rural community. Although rural communities offer many advantages for international students (Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007), they also pose several challenges such as access to transportation (Lane, 2021), isolation (Olt & Tao, 2020) and limited off-campus housing opportunities (Lane, 2021). The findings of this study and practical implications offered are helpful for university administrators, faculty, and student services personnel as they direct their efforts towards providing necessary academic and non-academic support services for international students during times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research was grounded in Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation (Maslow, 1943). Maslow proposed a hierarchical progression of human needs, which can be broadly categorized (low to high) as basic needs, psychological needs, and self-fulfillment needs. As basic needs are met, motivation shifts toward meeting needs of a higher order. However, as disruption creates deficiencies in basic needs, motivation will direct back to the fulfillment of those lower order needs (McLeod, 2020). Maslow's theory applies to educational settings in the humanist sense that most individuals strive to live up to their highest potential. Maslow, in a later Hierarchy of Needs iteration, included a cognitive needs stage (McLeod, 2020). This was an acknowledgement that behaviors associated with education such as curiosity, learning, knowing, and meaning making are important to human growth and self-fulfillment.

When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in early 2020, institutions of higher education (and society in general) faced a variety of unprecedented challenges. Around mid-semester in Spring 2020, many campuses were forced to shift from face-to-face to fully remote operations for instruction and support services. Operations at all levels were impacted. Social interactions were restricted and campuses had limited their recreation, learning support, and dining services. The uncertainty and fear caused by the pandemic created a crisis for many, if not all students. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs became a "reality" (e.g., Matthews et al., 2020, p. 1). Scholars and educators advocated the use of Maslow's theory as a framework to address the impact of COVID-19 on students (Banaszak, 2020; Fayazpour, 2021). Fayazpour (2021) stated that "considering Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the impact of COVID-19 on students' needs have been essential in multicultural education and innovating teaching during the pandemic" (para. 2). Matthews and colleagues (2020) described how Maslow's theory was applied in an individualized response to student needs at Notre Dame College during the pandemic. Also, when developing pandemic support resources for international students, educators at Franklin University acknowledged the impact of COVID-19 at multiple levels of Maslow's Hierarchy and developed their support priorities accordingly (Banaszak, 2020).

Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation was an appropriate framework to apply in this study because the challenges faced by international students during the crisis were academic and nonacademic. These challenges can also be characterized as fundamental to human survival, development, and motivation. For example, international students who were self-supported and lost work due to the pandemic may have struggled with food and housing insecurity, or basic physiological needs described by Maslow. Government imposed lockdowns also likely contributed to isolation, or a deficiency of what Maslow described as interpersonal, social, and belonging needs. With regard to academics, students were compelled to navigate a move to fully online coursework. This drastically changed instruction and learning, perhaps adversely for some. The online learning process dampened class group interaction and the exchange of information and ideas (Chirikov & Soria, 2020), which are fundamental to the cognitive development needs depicted in Maslow's hierarchy (McLeod, 2020). Generally, it seems likely that students and in particular, international students (who are more vulnerable to limited resources and less social interaction) were motivated to revert toward fulfilling more basic needs during the pandemic at the expense of higher needs of self-fulfillment.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Site

Participants of this study were full-time, degree-seeking international students enrolled at a university in a rural southwest Texas community in the United States. This university is a public institution that offers a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs, and currently enrolls over 20,000 students (U.S. News, 2021) of which 231 were continuing international students at the time of the study. Face-to-face, hybrid and online modalities were all part of instruction at this institution prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although a traditional university in terms of a majority of programs and courses being delivered in face-to-face settings, this institution also has fully online degree programs, and the number of online course offerings has been increasing in the past decade or so.

The university offers a number of academic and support programs for its students. It has a health clinic and a department of public safety services which offers a number of safety initiatives to students (e.g., escorting students during the evening and night hours, and awareness programs). During their orientations, international students are made aware of the available institutional support services and are encouraged to take advantage of them in order to be successful during their transition to a new environment. Being in a rural community, international students experience additional challenges compared to their domestic counterparts. For example, the lack of public transportation is an issue. Integrating into the community other than the university is challenging as well due to the lack of public events and facilities that are available. This has become an even bigger issue during the COVID-19 induced government mandated lockdowns.

Population and Sample

In Spring of 2021, an invitation to participate in the study was sent to all 231 continuing international students enrolled at the research site. Although some of them might have taken online or hybrid courses before the pandemic (no more than one course per semester according to pre-pandemic rules), the primary modality of their degree programs were face-to-face before the pandemic started. At the close of the data collection period, there were 41 responses, resulting in a 17.75% response rate. Four participants did not consent to participate and therefore, the final sample consisted of 37 participants. Even though the final sample was relatively small, quantitative and qualitative data collected from the participants offered valuable information to be considered. Also, low survey response rates have been cited as an issue during COVID-19 pandemic due to “a surge in research activity” (de Koning et al., 2021, p. 1).

Instrument and Data Collection

A survey research design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was used to conduct this study. It was descriptive and exploratory in nature, and researchers were interested in collecting timely and useful information on the impact of COVID-19 on international students. Therefore, the survey method was the best approach. “Rapid turnaround in data collection” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 211) is one of the benefits of survey research design. Surveys or questionnaires are commonly used to collect self-reported data about participants’ thoughts and perceptions (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

After reviewing surveys developed by other researchers to collect data on international students (e.g., Martirosyan et al., 2015) or on the impact of COVID-19 in higher education (Aristovnik et al., 2020), a 17-item online survey was developed. Guidelines provided by Creswell and Creswell (2018) and Johnson and Christensen (2014) were applied. The survey consisted of demographics questions and questions related to various academic and non-academic challenges that international students might have encountered due to the pandemic. There were also questions related to the use of campus support services. Participants were also asked for input on the type of institutional support that should be provided during times of crisis such as the pandemic. The survey included multiple choice and open-ended questions all of which were aligned with the purpose of the study.

Upon receiving an IRB approval from the research site, we piloted the survey among two international students. Piloting was necessary to ensure that questions were clear and understandable to research participants (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). This was quite crucial to the study because of the

participants being international students whose native language might not be English. Based on the feedback received through the pilot survey, minor revisions were made for clarity to two of the items. The survey was then e-mailed to all international students enrolled at the research site. After an initial e-mail, two reminders were sent, each a week apart. Data collection closed at the end of the third week.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were computed for demographic and multiple-choice questions. Qualitative responses received through open-ended questions were analyzed through a content analysis approach (Krippendorff, 2013). Most of the participants were very specific when sharing their opinions on the type of institutional support that would be necessary for international students during times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. They listed suggestions for various types of support that would contribute to international student academic success and success outside of the classroom. There was a total of 47 data points. Themes emerged as a result of the first coding cycle (Saldaña, 2016). Themes were then sorted out for frequency. The top four occurring themes are presented below.

RESULTS

As seen in Table 1 below, 57% of the participants were female, 39.47% were male, and 2.63% identified as non-binary/third gender. Both undergraduate (54%) and graduate students (46%) completed the survey. The majority of participants (73%) self-reported a GPA of 3.5-4.00. In addition, the participants reported their country of origin. The represented countries were Algeria, Argentina, Belize, Brazil, Canada, China, Hong Kong, Iran, Japan, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Venezuela, and Vietnam.,

Table 1: Student Sample Demographics

Demographic Variable		*n*
Gender	Male	15
	Female	21
	Non-binary/third gender	1
Classification	Freshman	2
	Sophomore	4
	Junior	5
	Senior	9
	Masters	4
	Doctoral	13
Self-reported GPA	3.50-4.00	27
	3:00-3.49	5
	2.50-2.99	5

Before responding to survey items related to academic and non-academic challenges, participants were asked to self-report on several items related to their English proficiency level. As expected, the majority of the participants (81%) were non-native English speakers. Only 19% listed English as their native language. For self-reported English proficiency, participants were given the following options: Intermediate; Advanced, Near-native, and Native. Slightly over half of the sample (57%) chose Intermediate (19%) or Advanced (38%) while the rest chose Near-native (24%) or Native (19%).

Academic and Non-academic Challenges

One of the survey items asked participants to identify some of the academic challenges they faced when taking remote/online classes, and another item focused on non-academic challenges experienced due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For both items, there were a number of challenges listed in the survey along

with an option of "other" and "none". Participants were asked to "check all that apply". Table 2 displays the top five academic and non-academic challenges faced by the participants:

Table 2: Academic and Non-Academic Challenges Experienced by Participants

	Challenges	%
Academic challenges		
	Difficulty to engage with classmates, have group discussions, or completing group work	46%
	Difficulty to reach out to instructors, ask questions, or receive clarification/guidance when needed	32%
	Difficulty to understand course expectations and complete course assignments	16%
	It was/is challenging to learn in a fully online environment due to English language barriers	16%
	It was difficult to understand hybrid/blended course schedule or requirements	16%
Non-academic challenges		
	General financial hardship	73%
	Mental health issues	59%
	Travel related issues	49%
	Difficulty paying tuition	38%
	Food insecurity	32%

It is important to note, that of the 37 participants, 15 (41%) stated that they did not experience any academic challenges while only two (5%) participants indicated that they did not face any non-academic challenges. As seen in Table 2, international students experienced more non-academic challenges than academic ones.

Participants of the study were also asked to indicate which support programs and services on campus were helpful in overcoming both academic and non-academic challenges. Table 3 displays the top five services used. Nine participants did not use any of the services listed while 10 students reported not using support services for non-academic challenges.

Table 3: Support Services Reported as Helpful

	Support Services	%
Support for Academic challenges		
	Library Services	27%
	Writing Center	14%
	The Graduate School	11%
	IT help desk	8%
	Math Center	5%
Support for Non-academic challenges		

Support Services	%
Office of International Students	14
Food Pantry	12
Emergency Student Fund	8
Financial Aid	7
Health Center	5

Finally, the participants were asked to offer feedback (through an open-ended question) on potential institutional support that might contribute to their academic success and success outside of the classroom during times of crisis such as a pandemic. Four distinct themes emerged from their responses. Financial support was the most frequent theme in the data. Participants suggested the provision of general financial aid, such as scholarships and tuition support were important during times of crisis. Academic and technical support was the second theme. Library services, writing center support, and the provision of technology equipment (e.g., headsets, microphones) for virtual classes were recommendations offered by participants to improve academic and technical support. The third theme identified for support was the provision of food pantry and dining services. A fourth theme was health support. Within the health support theme, some cited a need for mental help as well.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Academic Challenges

Interestingly, 41% of the participants in this study indicated that they did not face any academic challenges during the pandemic. One explanation behind this result could be associated with sample representation. The majority of participants (70%) were senior (24%), and graduate students (46%). It is reasonable to assume that they were established as self-directed learners, and could have been exposed to online coursework prior to the pandemic when they were allowed to take a limited number of online courses (maximum one per semester) in their face-to-face degree program. Therefore, the unexpected shift to distance learning did not cause academic challenges for them.

As seen in Table 2, the top five academic challenges reported by those international students who experienced them were (a) difficulties in engaging with classmates, having group discussions, or completing group work, (b) difficulties in reaching out to instructors, asking questions, or receiving clarification/guidance when needed, (c) difficulties understanding course expectations and completing course assignments, (d) challenges to learning in a fully online environment due to English language barriers, and (e) difficulties in understanding hybrid/blended course schedules and requirements. Perhaps some of these challenges were not new due to the differences in educational systems of their home and host countries. For example, it has been documented in the literature that international students often have difficulties in communicating and participating in group work (Lee, 2013). Generally, adapting to the American learning environment is challenging for many (c.f., Glass et al., 2015; Mesidor & Sly, 2016). However, these challenges became magnified by the characteristics of fully online coursework. As Karkar-Esperat noted (2018), online coursework can be particularly challenging for international students due to language difficulties and feelings of isolation from their classmates. Also, it is important to note that participants of the study were continuing international students enrolled in face-to-face programs, and 95% of them held a classification of sophomore or higher. This means that they had already completed at least a year of coursework and somehow adjusted to the American educational system. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that the online coursework heavily contributed to the challenges faced.

There are several practical implications to be considered by institutions when seeking to mitigate academic challenges encountered by international students during times of crisis. Offering institutional and faculty support for the virtual learning environment is crucial for student success. Faculty are encouraged to use some of the best practices of online teaching identified in the research in order to address common challenges presented in online learning environments. For example, Martirosyan et al. (2021) recommended

that online courses be structured and organized in weekly modules. Providing explicit guidelines on course and assignment requirements, communicating with students frequently, and offering synchronous and asynchronous spaces where students can ask questions are additional best practices to be considered in online instruction. In addition, making sure that international students are aware of, and encouraged to make use of virtual and in-person campus support resources is extremely important. Participants of this study utilized campus support from library services, the writing center, campus graduate school resources, the instructional technology help desk, and a math academic support center to assist in their online learning.

Finally, academic and technical support was one of the themes that emerged from participant responses regarding potential institutional support that might contribute to their success. Participants highlighted the importance of library services, writing center support, and the need for technology equipment such as headsets and microphones necessary for the delivery of online instruction. It is therefore recommended that institutions have the necessary technology equipment for online instruction available for students to borrow.

Non-academic Challenges

Participants of the study were asked to identify non-academic challenges that they faced due to COVID-19 pandemic. Results showed that the majority of them (95%) experienced non-academic challenges during the pandemic. The top five non-academic challenges reported were (a) general financial hardship, (b) mental health issues, (c) travel related issues, (d) difficulty paying tuition, and (e) food insecurity (See Table 2). Financial support, provision of food pantry and dining services, and health/mental support were three out of the four themes that emerged from qualitative data on potential institutional support that might contribute to international students' success. The magnitude and frequency of non-academic challenges were much higher compared to academic challenges. For example, 73% of participants experienced general financial hardship while more than half of the participants faced mental health issues. Slightly more than a quarter of participants had food insecurity which is consistent with the results of a current survey reporting that nearly one-third of all students had food insecurity during the pandemic (Anderson, 2020).

Not surprisingly, the findings of this study confirmed the need for considering Maslow's (1943) Theory of Human Motivation when responding to students' needs during times of crisis. Food insecurity and financial hardship fit into the "basic needs" category of Maslow's hierarchy while the rest of non-academic challenges reported are in line with the "safety" category. Both "basic needs" and "safety" are at the bottom of the hierarchy which means that they take precedence, and therefore, the importance of non-academic challenges experienced by these students cannot be underestimated.

There are a number of steps institutions can take to alleviate some of the non-academic challenges faced by international students during times of crisis. Because international students are not eligible for Federal Student Aid or other funds available to their American peers, it is recommended to allocate an emergency fund to support them during times of crisis. There are a number of institutions [e.g., The University of Texas at Dallas (n.d.), University at Buffalo (2022), The University of Oklahoma (2021)] that have already established international student emergency funds to provide financial assistance to international students during times of crisis and emergency. Supporting students with emergency funding, and therefore, retaining them is likely a better option for the institution than losing them.

Similar to a recent study among international students in Australian universities where declining mental health was one of the issues reported among students due to the pandemic (Humphrey & Forbes-Mewett, 2021), mental health was the second top non-academic challenge identified in this study. Increasing awareness about counseling and health services available through campus and community organizations is recommended. Many international students come from countries where counseling services either do not exist or are not common and are stigmatized. Moreover, lack of awareness and underutilization of services in general have long been highlighted as issues for international students (e.g., Harrybam et al., 2012; Martirosyan et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2015). Therefore, implementing awareness initiatives aimed at utilizing available support services in general, and normalizing the use of counseling services in particular, seems a necessity.

Finally, strengthening collaboration between the administrative unit responsible for international students and other entities on campus is recommended. Such collaboration would make it easier to direct international students to the appropriate support unit that meets their needs. For example, food insecurity was among the non-academic challenges reported by participants of the study. Similar to counseling services, food pantry or food bank services are not common in foreign countries. Moreover, students might not feel comfortable taking "free food". Therefore, students should be made aware of these services and encouraged to access them during times of need.

LIMITATIONS AND RECCOMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As in any given research, this study had limitations. First, it was limited to international students at one public institution located in a rural community in the United States. Although rural communities have advantages and are often ideal places for international students due to low living costs and the proximity of the campus and community, rural living also has challenges such as lower access to mass transit and government support services. These challenges are different from those of urban campuses and may be exacerbated during times of crisis. Therefore, similar but larger comparative studies are recommended. It would be helpful to identify challenges faced by international students living in urban campus communities versus those that reside in rural campus communities.

This study was conducted using a survey instrument consisting of multiple choice and open-ended questions. Although open-ended questions generated some qualitative feedback, more studies offering in-depth qualitative data are recommended. Obtaining qualitative feedback through interviews and focus groups would provide a deeper investigation into the lived experiences of international students during the pandemic.

Finally, participants of this study were both undergraduate and graduate students; almost evenly split. For future research, scholars might focus on each group separately as there are likely challenges that are unique to each group. Thorough examination of these unique challenges would allow for more targeted interventions and support service strategies for each group.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all aspects of higher education. The unexpected and abrupt shift to online learning and the need to provide support remotely has created many challenges for college students and staff. International students in this study reported experiencing a number of academic and non-academic challenges and provided information on the support services they used in attempt to overcome those challenges. Based on the findings, a number of implications for practice were offered, as well as suggestions for future research. As COVID-19 uncertainty remains an issue, administrators and educators could benefit from these findings when planning to support their international students. International students have unique resilience skills and as Siczek (2020) noted, they can "even thrive—during this global crisis because they themselves had crossed cultural, linguistic, geographical, and even epistemological boundaries to pursue higher education in the United States" (p. viii).

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 4 (2022), pp. 103-116
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i4.3874| https://ojed.org/jcihe

Information and Communication Technology in English Language Teaching: Some Opportunities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in education has brought dramatic modifications in the paradigms and methods practiced in the developed countries. In recent years, the exploitation of ICTs in teaching and learning has been expanded in developing countries too. This study has made an attempt to explore the opportunities and challenges of using ICTs in English language teaching (ELT) in higher education in Nepal, a developing country in Asia. The English language teachers and students from two different colleges were the informants in this study, and interview and focus group discussion were used as the research methods. The study concluded that ICTs were useful for the participants in their teaching and learning activities mainly for accessing learning resources, preparing and presenting their lessons, and for conducting collaborative learning activities. However, it was found that the informants were not satisfied with their utilization of ICTs in teaching and learning of English. Access to ICT tools, and the skills needed to use ICTs were the main problems for them in the integration of ICTs in ELT. Therefore, these constraints need to be minimized to improve the integration of ICTs in ELT in higher education in Nepal.

Keywords: integration, infrastructures, language skills, learner-centered approach, pedagogical skills

Received May 19, 2021; revised September 17, 2021; accepted January 15, 2022

INTRODUCTION

ICTs, the modern technologies for storage, manipulation, and dissemination of information, include both hardware tools such as laptops, smart phones, projectors, and software tools such as email, Skype, Facebook, and YouTube. These technological tools have brought a revolutionary movement in the field of education and information communication. Education, which makes wide use of information communication, has been highly influenced by the use of ICTs. In recent years, ICTs have been exploited in the teaching and learning of all subjects including Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and English.

ICTs in English Language Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning of the English language is one of the main concerns of many educational institutions because English is not only an international language and a lingua-franca of the world's citizens, but it is also the storehouse of knowledge (Bhattarai, 1995; Harmer, 2007). Therefore, attempts have been made to enhance English language teaching (ELT) and make it more advanced. Many research scholars (Acevedo, 2016; Ince 2014; Liu, 2012) in their research studies have concluded that English language teaching and learning (ELTAL) is effective and more successful with the integration of ICTs. According to Adams and Brindley (2007), "English is a subject ready to think about new ways of constructing reading and writing, and about the pedagogical value of collective work and the possibilities afforded by the renaissance of learning made possible through ICT" (p. vii). Likewise, Rank et al. (2011) discuss that the web 2.0 applications can be exploited to the advantages of the students learning English language and literature, which create several possibilities of learning opportunities such as exploring and investigating, composing and creating, reflecting and evaluating, presenting and performing; and communicating and collaborating.

ICTs, the digital technologies, are powerful educational tools; and their use has a significant role in the transfiguration of the pedagogy of teaching and learning (Ludvigsen & Morch, 2010; Sutherland et al., 2009). Angeli et al. (2015) view that a good combination of technology and pedagogy is very important to ensure that the learners are able to take advantage of technology inclusion for the opportunities of learning integrated skills of language. According to Davis (2007), the incorporation of the technologies into English classroom can help achieve: (i) cognitive gain by providing visual images, (ii) motivational gain providing fun, and (iii) interactional gain by providing convenience sharing. ICTs provide opportunities for exploring the communicative power of the English learner by engaging them in exploring literary texts and several other interactive activities in exciting ways (Richards, 2007). Likewise, computer-based activities enhance interaction and collaboration and provide unique opportunities for the development of the learners' spoken and written language capabilities (Andrew, 2007). A variety of technology-enhanced gadgets can create an interactive learning environment to develop learners' autonomy and meaningful learning, which provides a huge amount of exposure to language (Acevedo, 2016).

The spreading innovations in ICTs such as personal computers, Internet, mobile phones, and many other ICT tools, have caused a 'paradigm shift' in teaching and learning of all subjects; and the traditional model of teaching and learning has been replaced by transformed pedagogy (Juceviciene, 2008; Somekh, 2007). A paradigm shift in education is a change in the concept and procedures of teaching and learning. For example, the activity of encouraging learners for creative learning instead of rote learning is a good example of transformed pedagogy. Likewise, different types of paradigm shifts such as (i) a shift from behaviorism/habit formation-based teaching to rationalism/cognitive-based teaching, (ii) a shift from

teacher-centered approach to learner-centered approach, and (iii) a shift from psychometric-structuralist testing to psycholinguistic-sociolinguistic testing, are being practiced in the field of education. (Li et al., 2012). Consequently, various language learning online/offline software, language learning platforms; and the methodological innovations like computer-assisted language learning (CALL) have made language learning easier and more effective (Dina & Ciornai, 2013). All these advancements that improve the quality of education make wide exploitation of ICTs.

English is taught and learned as a foreign language in Nepal. It is one of the core subjects both in the college level curriculum (up to bachelor level) and school level curriculum; and as equal weightage as other compulsory subjects has been given to English (CDC, 2007). However, the analysis of the results shows that the quality of English education is relatively less satisfactory; and teaching-learning of English is one of the more difficult jobs in both secondary school education and higher education in Nepal (Bista, 2011; Budhathoki et al., 2014; Mathema &Bista, 2006). Budhathoki et al. (2014, p. 17) point out that students are very weak especially in English, Maths and Science and that the overall fail percentage in English in SLC (school leaving certificate) is increasing (it was respectively 26.28, 32.23 and 35.21 percent in the academic years 2009, 2010, and 2011).Therefore, it is essential to find out the ways to enhance the educational quality of such subjects in both school and higher education in Nepal. As several research studies (Acevedo, 2016; Davis, 2007; Dina & Ciornai, 2013; Somekh, 2007) have concluded that ICTs are useful educational tools, and they contribute a lot in ELTAL; the government of Nepal has considered the need for ICT integration for the improvement of quality of education of all subjects recently. However, the integration of ICTs in education in the developing countries is rather slow; and particularly, ICT integration in higher education in Nepal in teaching and learning of different subjects including English is at its initial stage. Therefore, it is essential to explore the opportunities and challenges in ICT integration in teaching and learning of English, based on the context of higher education in Nepal because the knowledge gained from research studies is very important for tailoring the teaching-learning activities. Moreover, though multimedia and/or ICTs have been perceived as effective tools, ICT integration has 'a long way to go and attain to maturity' (Liu, 2012, p. 2334). Therefore, research and investigation on integration and use of ICTs in education and in ELT are becoming worthwhile day-by-day in order to achieve the full advantages of such technologies.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study was guided by constructivism as the research paradigm and was based on the qualitative research design. Constructivism is a research paradigm that gives emphasis on the learners' central role in learning process for the construction of knowledge. According to Kanuka and Anderson (1999), the constructivists give priority to the methods such as problem solving, critical thinking, and collaborative learning, which can be well facilitated through the use of ICTs. Guba and Lincoln (2005) write that constructivists prefer qualitative methods because these methods can help gain a detail and in-depth understanding of the experiences of the participants. I believe, constructivism and qualitative design are appropriate and useful to explore the integration of ICTs in ELT.

For the collection of information, two ICT resourced colleges, which had adopted ICT-integration as their teaching-learning strategy, were selected purposefully. Guided by Saunders, Kitzinger, and Kitzinger, (2015), those colleges were given pseudonyms 'college A' and 'college B' for establishing research confidentiality and ethical morality. Likewise, the principals of the colleges were requested to

allow to collect data and information regarding the use of ICTs and problems of integrating ICTs in teaching and learning of English. The English language teachers and the students involved in Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.) compulsory English classes from both the colleges were the informants. As the source of information two English language teachers (one from each college) were chosen purposefully; and altogether 12 students (six from each college) were selected using random sampling methods. Permissions were received from both the teachers and students to collect information required.

As the research methods, semi-structured interviews with the teachers, and focus group discussions (FGDs) with the students were conducted. Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions are very common in qualitative research design in which the participants can share their experiences and describe details of their information (Creswell, 2012). Likewise, FGD, which is an interaction and discussion among the members of a group, allows the participants interact with each other and elicits the participants' opinions and ideas. In this study, two different questionnaires for interviews and FGDs were prepared carefully in order to obtain the information required. Attempts were made to study the usefulness of the ICT tools to the teachers and the students in teaching and learning English language skills through the questionnaire. Likewise, the problems and challenges that the teachers and students encountered while integrating the tools in their teaching and learning were also given main priority. The information collected through the interviews and FGDs were transcribed, read and re-read, segmented, categorized and themes were generated. In this way, the information, ideas, and opinions were analyzed and interpreted using thematic analysis methods following Bogdan and Biklen (1992).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the process of studying the use of ICTs in learning English language skills, and the problem and challenges of integrating ICTs in teaching and learning, I interviewed teachers and conducted FGDs with the students to learn about their experiences in this study. This section presents the findings and a discussion related to use of ICTs in English language learning.

Findings

In this study, attempts were made to develop a rapport with the teachers and students to understand their use of ICTs in ELT, and the problems and challenges they encountered in their ELTAL process. Their experiences as they shared in the interviews and FGDs have been presented in the sub-headings below.

Use of ICTs in Teaching and Learning of English

The teachers and the students in both colleges found ICTs beneficial in ELTAL. The class teacher in college A shared their experiences that ICTs have significant importance for increasing the amount of exposure to English to practice all language skills–listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar(L-S-R-W-G). They can provide the students with language skills, learning resources, and activities anywhere and anytime they liked. The teacher from college A shared their experiences:

> *English language skills learning has been anytime possible through ICTs. The students can find language learning materials such as e-books, journals, articles for enhancing their reading and writing skills; and videos, conversations, and discussions for improving listening and speaking skills. Likewise, the students can find different reference materials such as dictionaries, and grammar books; and language skills related exercises, apps, or online/offline programs to practice English language skills.*

In the discussion, the students in college A shared their experiences that ICTs have made English language learning easier and faster. They could download the English language learning materials such as videos, conversations, books, articles, and many more English language learning apps and programs. ICTs help them exchange their ideas and information; and discuss their queries with their teachers and friends anytime they like.

The class teacher in the college B agreed that ICTs could be used to facilitate the students to develop their English language skills. The advantage was that ICTs helped them to provide several types of learning materials that could increase the amount of exposure to English. Similarly, ICTs were useful to make updates of their current knowledge, information, and to understand recent pedagogical trends. The teacher from college B opined:

> *The advantages of ICTs are that they provide the students with ample exposure to the English language to promote their language skills. The students can use several browsers for searching and downloading several language skills improving exercises and programs. ICTs help me to motivate the students in the class and make their learning long-lasting as they can engage both visual and auditory sensory organs of the students through texts, images, sounds, and motions.*

Similarly, in the discussion, the students in college B expressed that ICT-based education and ICTs were quite beneficial to them in learning English language skills. The tools help them search and collect English language skills learning materials and practice all types of language skills. The learning resources such as English language dictionaries, English grammar related reference materials, language learning apps which are available through ICTs were very useful them to enhance English language skills. Moreover, the tools such as laptops, smart phones, projectors, email, Skype, Facebook groups, and discussion forums help them share their resources, ideas, and information in easier and less effortful ways.

Problems and Challenges in ICT Integration in ELT

The students in college A shared their experiences that they tackled the technological skills related problems in the beginning. They lacked many skills required to be adjusted with the ICT-based learning environment of the college. One of the informants in the FGD gave his response:

"In the beginning, I was lost. I had no idea what were computer information system (CIS), management information system (MIS), information resource center (IRC) and G-Suite. Even I had no idea about how to create email ID, how to download the resources, and how to use the projector."

Many of the students were not used to the technology-enhanced learning in their previous lower level. Knowledge of the basic technological skills was one of the problems to the students in the starting of the academic year.

The students opined that one of their main problems was poor management of ICT infrastructures. Lack of regular electric supply, and slow Internet speed were some of the main problems they encountered. One of the students expressed, *"We mostly face the technological problems like slow Internet, expensive data pack, and that we sometimes need to wait for our turn in the e-library and ICT-lab."* The students also encountered technology-inherent problems. *"There are sometimes problems in the Internet networking system. The computer says 'loading' and takes long. Sometimes the projector does not work"* opined another student.

In the interview with the teacher in college A, they shared that there were many problems for the teachers and the students. The problems were mainly technological and pedagogical skills related, and

administration related. They explained that the students generally did not have basic technological knowledge at the beginning of the session. Some of them were completely unaware of the CIS and MIS system of the college. They needed to train them for some weeks or months. He said that sometimes they needed to tackle technical problems such as laptop was not supported by the projector, laptop hanged by overuse or viruses, and large file opening time on the computer. Lack of training for the teacher was another main problem. The teacher pointed out that they had not received any formal training about the pedagogical and productive uses of the ICTs. Such training was rarely organized by the college administration. He said,

> *The college invites IT consultants and organizes the training programs occasionally. The IT department and the IT consultants train about the systems of networking, mainly the MIS. They do not train about how to integrate the ICTs in teaching-learning from pedagogical points of view.*

Lack of technological skills for using ICTs in learning English was one of the main problems for the students in college B too. While taking part in the discussion, the students shared their experiences that they had lack of required technological knowledge in the beginning of the academic year. The technology-based teaching-learning was a new experience for many of them and they had to do much labor for some weeks. One of the students said:

> *Most of us were unknown about the e-learning environment in the starting of the session. We did not have an idea about the things like Moodle, flipped classes, power points and projector. Many of us were unable even to create our email identity.*

Discussing their problems, the students shared their difficulty that some of them had problems in the availability of the Internet at home. To some of them, ICT tools were expensive to buy and that their parents were not positive towards the use of ICTs. In response to the open-ended question, the students expressed that infrastructural management was one of the main difficulties for them. They needed to tackle the problems like the interruption of power supply and slow speed Internet. One of the students expressed, *"We face the problems like lack of mentors, slow internet, difficulty to access to e-library and ICT lab"*. Another student raised the 'selection problem' or the vagueness of the resources that he finds through ICTs, *"While searching, we get many, but some are inappropriate and not to the point"*.

The class teacher gave his opinion that they needed to tackle many types of problems while integrating the ICTs in English language teaching. Among many, technology-related problem was one of them. Their computer would freeze and be unresponsive sometimes, the projector would take a long time to start, while sometimes the laptop would take long time to open the large file. Similarly, the Internet fluctuation, service failure, and power disruptions were some of the generally occurring problems. Likewise, the size of the class was not easily manageable.

The teacher said that even the newly admitted students were the problems for the teacher for some weeks. The students needed training for some weeks about the e-learning system of the college. They also experienced that plagiarism was a problem of the e-learning environment. The students would do 'copy and paste' instead of using their brain for the assignments given. The teacher also shared that all resources that were available through the ICTs might not have been authentic and accurate. It could be a problem for the students to be able to select the right ones. He also shared his experience that the textbooks and the exercises there did not encourage the students to use ICTs.

Opportunities Created by the Integration of ICTs in ELT

Many research studies have concluded that ICTs are beneficial to language teaching and learning. According to Kumar and Tammelin (2008), ICTs provide three main benefits for foreign language learning and teaching: (i) providing authentic language learning resources and contexts, (ii) creating co-operative and collaborative environment, and (iii) providing opportunities for effective teaching and learning. Likewise, Rabah (2015) finds better students' engagement and enhancement of their learning process as the benefits of ICT integration in teaching and learning. The findings in this study show that the teachers and the students took some advantages with the integration of ICTs in their ELTAL process in spite of different challenges they encountered. Based on the experiences shared, some of the important benefits of ICTs integration for the teachers have been discussed below:

(i) **Preparation:** One of the main advantages of ICTs for the teachers is that the tools can be useful for them for their preparation of the classroom presentation. They can use different web browsers for the teaching materials they need such as reference books, articles, videos, audios, conversation models, grammar references and so on. They can download those learning resources and save in their computer file for their future use. Similarly, the Internet is helpful for finding out several recent research studies on their subject matter to update themselves for current trends and methods.

(ii) **Presentation**: The teachers can exploit ICTs for their presentation of their lessons in the classroom and delivering the contents. The tools such as laptops, projectors, and several websites can be used by the teachers for making their presentation attractive and effective to facilitate students' learning.

(iii) **Motivation:** The teachers can attract the students' attention towards their presentation through the use of ICTs. The combination of sound, text, image, color, and motion through a multimedia projector can help motivate the students and to increase the students' concentration towards the lesson. Moreover, the use of technology increased the students' engaged learning involving both visual and auditory sensory organs.

(iv)**Interaction:** ICTs can help create a student-centered learning environment where lots of opportunities for both synchronous and asynchronous communication take place. The tools such as email, Facebook, Messenger, Skype, and Viber all make interaction between the teacher and students, and among the students more frequent. Sharing their ideas and information is possible whenever and wherever they stay.

(v) **Providing the students with learning resources and feedback**: With the integration of ICTs, the teachers can provide the students with lots of learning materials to increase the students' amount of exposure to the English language. Using their learning management system (LMS) or email the teachers can send the students the learning resources that are more content-specific and useful for them in the form of reading texts, videos, audios, hyperlinks, or websites. Likewise, ICTs are helpful for the teachers for providing the students with written comments and feedback to the whole class, group-wise, or individually.

Pun (2013) discusses several advantages of multimedia technology in English language teaching and learning as such that they provide opportunities for ELTAL, and they enhance interaction among the teachers and students. Likewise, they develop students' communicative competence, they motivate students to learn, and that they widen the students' knowledge about the English language. Similar to Pun (2013),

the students were found to take some advantages through the integration of ICTs in ELTAL process in this study too. Based on the FGDs conducted, some of the important benefits to the students found in this study have been discussed in the following points:

(i) **Amount of learning resources**: One of the important benefits of the integration of ICTs for the students is that they can use these tools for accessing information and learning resources. Among many others, LMS (i. e., CIS and MOODLE) is very useful with which the students can find course-specific resources. Besides, they can use web browsers and websites through which they can search and download learning materials such as e-books, e-journals, e-articles, e-newspaper, videos, audios, slides, and more for practicing their listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar-related skills. They can also use different mobile apps designed for learning the English language.

(ii) **Interaction:** ICTs can enable the students for easier and faster communication with their friends and teachers. They can easily interact about their problems or queries through the tools such as email, SMS, Skype and so on. Both synchronous and asynchronous communication through ICTs help them exchange their ideas and opinions.

(iii)**Collaboration**: Collaboration with their friends is another important benefit of integrating ICTs for the students. They can work together in peer or in groups to solve problems or given tasks. Through ICTs it is easier for the students to be involved in talking and discussing, sharing, evaluating, and constructing their knowledge. ICTs help them to create such an environment for collaborative activities. In such activities, the students can feel more relaxed and comfortable to share, discuss, and debate than in teacher dominated classroom. The tools such as email, Facebook, blogs, Skype, google docs are more useful for the students while carrying out collaborative activities.

(iv)**Exposure to English language skills**: ICTs help the students to find several English language skills specific online or offline learning resources. The students can be involved in practicing listening and speaking skills through the resources such as audios, videos, conversations songs, Skype, Viber, or online talking. Likewise, they can improve their reading and writing skills through several reading materials such as e-books, e-journals, or e-papers. They can also use several web-browsers and online or offline mobile apps for practicing the skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and grammar.

(v) **Developing learning autonomy:** Another important benefit of using ICTs is that these tools help in accessing various learning resources, which encourage reading and analyzing the contents. Likewise, ICTs help to share the information and learning materials with their friends and to give comments on them. This environment created by ICT integration is helpful for developing students' habit of independent and autonomous learning, and to develop their learning autonomy.

Difficulties in ICT Integration

The factors impeding the integration of ICTs have been categorized in various ways by different researchers. Balanskat et al. (2006) classify the barriers of ICT integration into micro-level (related to the teacher's attitudes and approaches to ICT), meso-level (related to institutional context), and macro-level (related to wider educational framework). Likewise, according to Ertmer (1999), the barriers of ICT integration can be of first-order type (external factors) and second-order type (internal factors). Based on the findings in this study, the challenges that the teachers and the students encountered in their integration

of ICTs in ELTAL have been classified into five categories as: (i) infrastructures, (ii) technological skills, (iii) pedagogical skills, (iv) textbook/curriculum, and (v) attitudes.

(i) **Infrastructures:** Infrastructure development is the basic prerequisite for ICT integrated teaching and learning. However, as Traxler and Kukulska-Hulme (2005) discuss the challenges of technology integration in the developing countries, the findings in this study too reveal that the infrastructural development and management was one of the main challenges for ICT-based teaching and learning. All the teachers and students shared their experiences that slow internet and fluctuations in the Internet speed were common problems for them. Likewise, irregular electric power supply was another impeding factor that created obstacles in their teaching and learning process. Next, most of the students reported that they were not satisfied with the size of the computer lab and the number of computers in the lab and in the e-library. They had also their complaints about the maintenance of the equipment such as the keyboard, mouse, UPS backup in the lab, and e-library.

(ii) **Technological skills:** Lack of adequate technological knowledge with the students and the teachers was another challenge in their integration of ICTs in ELTAL. Many of the students in the starting of the session did not have basic technological knowledge required for the ICT-based education system. Likewise, they did not have good ideas of English language learning specific software and websites to practice English language skills. The teachers also did not have adequate knowledge of newly developed language learning software and applications for engaging the students in collaborative activities for learning English. Some of the teachers were not so confident in using the LMS they had in the college.

(iii) **Pedagogical skills**: The teachers had not got any opportunities to take part in the training or workshops and they were less confident about using ICTs in ELTAL process. They did not have a good pedagogical skill of utilizing ICTs blending face-to-face and ICT-based teaching to engage the students both inside and outside the classroom. They did not have adequate ideas about various software and English language learning websites useful for improving the students' English language skills and knowledge construction. Many of the students were at the basic level of ICT use in English language learning. They had little idea about utilizing ICTs for collaborative activities and improving English language skills. As Van Dijk (2005), and Mishra and Koehler (2006) discussed, lack of adequate technological and pedagogical skills was one of the important factors affecting proper utilization of ICTs in ELTAL in this study as well.

(iv)**Textbook/curriculum**: The teachers shared their experiences that the textbook and curriculum had not been revised and updated to meet the need of society. Likewise, the textbook did not incorporate the contents or exercises that encouraged the students using ICTs for construction of their knowledge. This finding goes in the line with Ozdemir (2017). According to the teachers, the textbooks prescribed were unnecessarily long; and due to inadequate time to involve the students in discussion, and in interactive and collaborative activities as needed. Moreover, the evaluation system in the curriculum had given no value for the technological knowledge and skills in examinations. Using ICTs in learning English was completely an optional matter of an individual student.

(v) **Attitudes:** Attitude towards ICTs is also a challenge in integrating ICTs in ELTAL. Some of the students reported that their parents did not have a positive attitude towards using ICTs. In their opinion, ICTs were just a fashion and they taught bad things to the children. Those parents did not become ready easily to make investment on ICTs and it was not easy for the students to have ICT

tools they required. Unlike Chen (2008), the teachers in this study were motivated towards ICT integration; some parents, however, did not have positive attitudes towards ICTs.

DISCUSSION

Several key points can be learned from this research study. The discussion of the key points has been presented in the sub-headings to come.

Benefits of ICT Integration in ELT

ICTs are found to provide several opportunities and possibilities in language teaching. According to Pica (1994), ICTs offer opportunities of both intrapersonal and interpersonal communication to the language learners. The opportunities of intrapersonal interaction provide them psycholinguistic benefits by directing their attention towards language, and also help in accomplishing meaning-making through constant internal dialogues and cognitive processing (Lantolf & Appel, 1994). According to Chapelle (2003), the technology-mediated tasks are the means of benefits for the language learners for getting better input, for receiving assistance in knowledge and understanding, and for activating deep processing of input. Likewise, the synchronous and asynchronous interpersonal interaction between the teachers and the students, and between or among the students can be beneficial for negotiation of meaning and co-construction of meaning.

Similar to constructivists, as discussed in Kanuka and Anderson (1999), ICTs have been found to create many different opportunities for the teachers and the students in their English language teaching and learning in this study too. ICT tools have been found to be helpful for the teachers in the activities such as preparing and presenting their lessons, searching and collecting teaching-learning resources, motivating their students, and updating themselves. Likewise, ICTs have been useful for the students mainly for increasing their exposure to English, collecting and sharing learning resources, and making frequent interaction between or among their peers and teachers. These benefits of ICTs, however, as Van Dijk (2013) discussed, depend upon the extent of availability and appropriation of the ICTs. The teachers and the students with better access to ICTs and better ICT skills are able to take more advantages of ICT integration in ELT.

Challenges and Difficulties in ICT Integration in ELT

Research studies have found that there are several challenges in the integration of ICTs in education. Rabah (2015) highlights the challenges of integrating ICTs in English schools as: lack of supporting school leadership, inconsistent investments in ICT equipment, infrastructure and resources, inflexibility of funding, lack of professional development and support and incorporation of technology in evaluations and curricular plans. According to Alkahtani (2017), lack of training and a lack of working equipment are the main challenges in ICT integration. He further elaborates that lack of a basic understanding among both students and teachers of how the equipment functions, lack of mastery of ICT teaching techniques, and lack of mastery of electronic equipment are some of the main problems. Likewise, Laronde et al. (2017) found lack of professional development and resources, off-task behavior, and improper referencing as the main challenges in ICT integration. In the same way, Ozdemir (2017) highlights the inadequacy of technology infrastructure, ICT inadequacy of the teacher and students, inadequacy and unsuitable course materials as the challenges of ICT integration. To Chen (2008), and Christensen (2002),

teacher's belief, attitude, and motivation toward ICT and their use are some of the main factors of impeding the integration of ICTs. Most of the challenges as discussed in Rabah (2015), Alkahtani (2017), Ozdemir (2017) above were also found in this study. However, unlike Chen (2008), the attitude of the teachers, students, and administrators towards ICTs was found to be positive.

Research scholars (Traxler & Kukulska-Hulme, 2005; van Dijk, 2005) concluded that ICT integration into the teaching and learning process, particularly in a developing country is influenced by many problems and challenges. Particularly in the developing countries, the management of the infrastructures and availability of ICT-related resources are some of the main challenges (Traxler & Kukulska-Hulme, 2005; van Dijk, 2005). Besides, the effective utilization of the ICTs is also affected by the technological skills of the teacher and students, and by the pedagogical skills of the teachers (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The findings in this study too, are in the line with these scholars. For example, the teachers and the students were tackling the problems related to infrastructural management; and that they were not satisfied with their technological and pedagogical skills needed for the proper utilization of ICTs.

As it was discussed in the theory of ICT adoption and diffusion of resources and appropriation theory (van Dijk, 2005), and TPCK model (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), the effective use of ICTs is affected by two main causes: the distribution of the resources, and lack of technological pedagogical knowledge. These two were some of the main problems and challenges in integrating ICTs in ELTAL in this study too. The use of ICTs in the teaching and learning activities of the teachers and students was frequently hampered by the inefficiency of the infrastructural resources such as low Internet speed, irregular power supply, and inadequate number of computers in e-library and ICT lab. Likewise, the students did not have a good technological knowledge to handle the ICT tools to be able to use their productive benefits. More importantly, the teachers did not have adequate pedagogical skills to engage the students quite a lot in using ICTs for accessing information, collaborative learning, and English language skills learning.

CONCLUSION

ICTs are found to contribute several benefits to ELTAL in higher education in Nepal. The technologies are useful for the teachers for collecting teaching-learning resources, preparing and presenting the lessons, motivating the students, making more frequent interactions, and providing the students with feedback. Likewise, ICTs are helpful for the students for collecting learning resources, making interactions and collaborations, increasing exposure to English, and developing their learning autonomy. However, there are many problems and challenges in the integration of ICTs in ELT in higher education institutions in Nepal. The teachers and students encounter problems related to infrastructure management, technological skills, pedagogical skills, curriculum and textbooks, and attitudes of the parents. For effective integration of ICTs in ELT, more attention is needed to minimize such challenges.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 4 (2022), pp. 117-131
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
Online: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i4.3424 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Experiences of East African Students in Norway: Development of a Process Model

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ABSTRACT

Norway has large unrealized potential for recruiting students from Africa. In order to increase student mobilisation and integration, it is important to know the potential challenges students from underrepresented continents are likely to face in an environment with severe sociocultural differences. This study examined experiences of 7 international students from East Africa studying in a larger city in Norway. Data was collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, and grounded theory was applied. Analyses of the data resulted in the development of a process model, illustrating three main phases international students went through. The initial phase shows the financial, social, and emotional challenges that students faced. In the transitional phase, they found social support from students in similar situations, whereas in the settling phase they tended to mobilize individual and social resources for coping. The results are discussed in light of previous research and concluded with recommendations for higher education institutions.

Keywords: challenges, coping, East Africa, international students, Norway, process model

Received January 21, 2021; revised April 3, 2021; accepted January 10, 2022

INTRODUCTION

Migration and education are interrelated as many people move abroad for study purposes. Therefore, education is a contributory factor to the increase in the number of people moving across national borders globally (Tani, 2017). As of 2017, international students were estimated to amount to around 5,000,000 worldwide compared to 2,000,000 in 2000. More than half of these international students were from Nigeria, China, India, South Korea, and Saudi Arabia, enrolled in institutions in the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States of America, France, Germany, and the Russian Federation (UNESCO, 2019). Factors in the increase of global international student migration include technological advancements that have eased access to information on study opportunities, increase in the population undertaking higher education, and general increase in cross-border mobility (Wiers-Jenssen, 2019). Even though international students account for only 21% of the total global migration of 272,000,000 as of 2019 (International Organisation for Migration, 2019), they contribute to economic growth, scientific research, cultural diversity, and building international relationships in the host countries (Institute of International Education, 2020).

The Norwegian Government perceives internationalisation to be an important initiative to enhance the quality and relevance of higher education (Holme et al., 2019; Ministry of Education, 2020). It has been an important government expectation for decades, that higher education institutions increase their focus on internationalisation (Ministry of Education, 2020). In Spring 2018, the total number of international students in Norway was estimated to be 13,773, which can be attributed to the Norwegian deliberate policy of internationalisation of higher education, including public funding for both Norwegian and international students to attain higher education, tuition-free public higher education institutions, equal treatment for both international and Norwegian students, student loans, and scholarships (Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, 2020d). There is, however, a vast potential to increase further the number of international students in the country. Most of the international students in Norway come from Europe and Asia, including Sweden, Germany, China, and Nepal (Holme et al., 2019; Wiers-Jenssen, 2003), with fewer students from the African continent. Reported numbers from year 2000 until 2018 show that students from Europe studying in Norway has increased dramatically during that period of time, whereas the number of students from Africa have been consistently low (Wiers-Jenssen, 2019). The number of East African students in Norway is especially low. In 2017 for example, only 188 students from Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania studied in Norway (UNESCO, 2020). In order to make Norway a more attractive study destination for students from other continents besides Europe, it is important to explore the subjective experiences of current international students from such areas.

Despite positive educational, social, and economic contributions in the host countries, we know from international research that students abroad face challenges in their new environments (Murphy-Lejeune, 2003; Ruddock & Turner, 2007). Such challenges include language barriers, racial discrimination, psychological frustrations, and academic problems (Banjong, 2015; Iwara et al., 2017; Kaya, 2020; Lee, 2017). They also experience financial frustrations, which become worse when they live in an expensive country like Norway (NUMBEO, 2020). International students have to adapt and adjust to maximize life opportunities in the new host communities (Chen & Chen, 2009), and the more different the new context is, the more likely the students are to encounter difficulties during the adaptation process.

Most studies on international students have been carried out in the United States of America, the United Kingdom (UK), Japan, and South Africa with Chinese, Korean, and Filipino student populations (Almurideef, 2016; Iwara et al., 2017; Kaya, 2020; Lee, 2017). Additionally, studies carried out on African international students abroad have to a small degree targeted East Africa students (Holme et al., 2019; Lee & Opio, 2011). East African countries are more communally oriented, interdependent, and highly populated compared to an individualistic, independent, and less populated country like Norway (Hofstede Insights, 2020b). These cultural and contextual differences are likely to expose students to cultural shock and social challenges that can pose difficulties during their intergration process within the host countries.

Therefore, this study examined the experiences of East African international students studying in Norway and propose a process model for integration. The study aims at providing information that can contribute to improving the wellbeing and integration of international students (particularly ones

from East Africa) in Norway, and enhance the likelihood of attracting more international students in the future.

Research question: What are the experiences of East African international students in Norway?

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Holme et al. (2019), Norwegian higher education institutions (HEIs) define international students as all "foreign students, which includes all students of non-Norwegian citizenship" (p. 14). Additionally, Statistics Norway (2020) provides statistics of foreign degree-seeking students that have enrolled in Norwegian higher education. These students must have moved to Norway within the last five years and completed their secondary training elsewhere (Holme et al., 2019). Therefore, in Norway, international students are persons that moved to Norway for study purposes, who are not Norwegian citizens, have completed their secondary education elsewhere, and must have moved to Norway within the last five years.

Generally, with the increase of international students' global mobility, several studies have documented challenges that these students encounter in host countries (Gichura, 2010; Lee, 2017). Some studies rank language barriers highest among challenges that international students face in the host countries (Domville-Roach, 2007; Iwara et al., 2017). Language barriers can contribute to further academic and social challenges (Banjong, 2015; Kaya, 2020). Sherry et al., (2010) specifically emphasized that international students are more challenged with the spoken language than the written ones in their host communities because language speech requires more than language classes. Consequently, the language difficulties contributes to limited socialization among international students (Gichura, 2010; Kaya, 2020).

Researchers have emphasised that international students are faced with limited financial resources while in host countries (Holme et al., 2019; Gichura, 2010). Lee (2017) reported that self-funding international students are prone to face more financial difficulties due to unstable financial support, forcing them to search for part-time jobs. As a result, the time for immersion into the host community culture and interaction with friends is reduced, making some students lonely. Gao (2008) elaborated that these financial difficulties occur because international students are expected to pay higher tuition fees than domestic students within the United States, and additionally, exchange rates affect the amount of school fees that international students have to pay, making the fees high. For instance, about 58% of the international students at the University of Toledo in the United States reported facing financial challenges and unaffordable health insurance (Sherry et al., 2010). Norwegian public higher education institutions do not require school fees, but since Norway is a country with a high cost of living, it is likely that international students still face financial challenges.

Several studies have reported feelings of isolation, loneliness (Sawir et al., 2008), and homesickness at a personal level among international students (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002; Sümer et al., 2008), which are more significant among first-time international students (Lee, 2017). A combination of lack of familiar friends, the disconnect from families in their home countries, and lack of familiar language for social interaction account for the loneliness among international students in the host community (Sherry et al., 2010).

An Australian study on international students emphasizes the importance of choice of methods for data collection in order to gain the genuine experiences of the respondents (Arkoudis et al., 2019). Their findings indicated that international students tended to rate their overall satisfaction as high on questionnaires, whereas deeper analyses based on focus groups revealed experiences of lack of social integration and belongingness. Another study on international students conducted in Australia (Sawir et al., 2008) identified cultural loneliness as a third kind of loneliness in addition to personal and social loneliness. International students experienced cultural loneliness due to the absence of preferred cultural and linguistic environment and affected students despite adequate personal-and social support.

Similarly, Kenyan and Tanzanian students in United Kingdom (UK) and Sweden respectively reported sociocultural adaptation and practical challenges upon arrival in their respective host countries. The Kenyan students were concerned about integrating into the UK culture and felt lonely, isolated, and homesick, while Tanzanian students faced additional racial discrimination and transnational difficulties (Gichura, 2010; Mählck, 2018).

Differences in sociocultural context are thus likely to affect the experience and coping of international students. Below, we elaborate on some of the main differences between Norway and the

three East African countries from which our respondents originate. Cultural orientation being subjective and part of a person's life can either facilitate or frustrate international student's efforts to cope with and integrate into their host countries (Kolstad & Horpestad, 2009).

Contextual Socio-Cultural Differences: Norway Versus East African Countries

Norway is located in Northern Europe, with a total population of 5,000,000 people. Bokmal and Nynorsk Norwegian are the official languages in Norway, although Sami, Finnish, and English are spoken as well (Christensen et al., 2020; Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, 2020a; NUMBEO, 2020; Statistics Norway, 2020). Norwegian weather consists of both winter and summer ranking from an average of -7 to 25º Celsius, respectively (Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, 2020b). Norway is a developed egalitarian welfare state with values of equal rights and trust in government (Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, 2020c), making it more attractive for international students. Norway is classified as having an individualistic culture with high level of independence among persons, in which people tend to respect each other's personal spaces and views (Hofstede Insights, 2020b; Kolstad & Horpestad, 2009; Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, 2020b;).

In comparison, countries like Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania in East Africa are considered developing countries (United Nations, 2019). These countries are collectivist in nature, meaning that they tend to reinforce citizens' interdependence, common loyalty, morality, group approval of actions, and selflessness among people (Hofstede Insights, 2020a; Rarick et al., 2013). This can be evidenced by the high value these countries attach to kinship care and extended families, among other aspects (Kabatanya & Vagli, 2021). All three countries have large populations ranging from 45 million people (Uganda), 54 million (Kenya), to 60 million (Tanzania) (World Population Review, 2020b; World Population Review, 2020a). English is the official language of Uganda, and is also widely used in Kenya and Tanzania, although each of these countries also have other languages such as Kiswahili, which is the official language of Kenya and Tanzania (Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The weather consists of rainy and sunny seasons, with temperatures ranging from approximately 16–30º Celsius on average (Uganda Tourism Board, 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

Grounded theory is a systematic methodology for discovering theory from data (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Whereas traditional scientific research models tend to start with the development of hypotheses deriving from an existing theoretical framework, a study based on grounded theory is likely to start with a question (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). As mentioned above, there is limited research on East African students in Norway, and there are few students from this region in Norway and in Scandinavia as a whole. Consequentially, there is lack of knowledge on the impact of the large social cultural differences and potential cultural loneliness. Bearing this in mind and adding findings from previous research on international students where different choice of methods yielded largely diverging results (Arkoudis et al., 2019), grounded theory was considered most appropriate for this study.

In this study, the process included the following: 1) open coding, where collected data was carefully reviewed, and concepts and categories developed. Relationships among categories were then established (Kim & Okazaki, 2014); 2) axial coding involving assembling the categories formed from the open coding into a diagram. The researcher identified the central themes in the data, examining conditions that influenced the situation, the resulting actions and their consequences (Creswell & Poth, 2018); and 3) selective coding involving theoretical integration where all the concepts and categories were revised, comparisons drawn, and finally, a model developed for understanding the data collected (Kim & Okazaki, 2014). The reflexivity aspect of constructivist grounded theory was used because of its acknowledgement of the researcher's contribution and position within the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This design allowed participants' viewpoints to be represented and interpreted through development of a process model for sociocultural and emotional adjustment.

The roles of an insider as an international student and outsider as a researcher were used professionally (Kanuha, 2000). Author 1 positioned herself more as a researcher to get insightful and objective information from participants. However, her insider role provided familiarity with the participants, thereby facilitating connection with them. Author 1 was determined to listen carefully,

respect participants' views, and allow interviewees enough time to express their opinions. She asked follow-up questions for any unclear information and refrained from interfering with participants' interpretations of their experiences.

Participants Selection

Seven participants (3 Ugandans, 2 Kenyans, and 2 Tanzanians) studying at a university in one of the larger cities in Norway were selected purposively through snowball sampling. East African students in Norway are few and therefore hard to locate (Neuman, 2006). Participants were purposively selected because of their knowledge about studying and living abroad, plus their availability and willingness to engage in the research (Bryman, 2012; Etikan et al., 2016; Suen et al., 2014). Three criteria were used to select participants: 1) participants had to be Ugandan, Kenyan, or Tanzanian international students currently studying and living in Norway; 2) they had to have lived in Norway for more than four months; and 3) they had to be between 25 and 45 years of age. We made the age criterion wide to increase the likelihood of getting more respondents. None of the respondents, nevertheless, exceeded the age of 31 years.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Participants	Age	Gender	Level of education	Country of origin	Period of stay in Norway
Participant 1	26	Male	Masters	Uganda	7 months
Participant 2	31	Female	Masters	Kenya	7 months
Participant 3	26	Male	Masters	Tanzania	1 year & 7 months
Participant 4	25	Female	Masters	Uganda	5 months
Participant 5	31	Male	Masters	Tanzania	8 months
Participant 6	26	Male	Masters	Uganda	5 months
Participant 7	25	Female	Masters	Kenya	1 year

Data Collection

After approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), Author 1 contacted various participants both physically before the outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), and through phone calls and email during lockdown. Written informed consent was given by all participants.

Individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to gather information from participants. The interviews were supported by an interview guide with open-ended questions (Bryman, 2012; Coughlan et al., 2016) related to feelings associated with living in Norway, challenges encountered, and coping mechanisms. Twenty interviews were conducted with participants: seven primary face-to-face interviews, seven follow-up interviews for clarity of participants' views, and six final follow-up interviews for consistency were done through WhatsApp video calls because of COVID-19. The interviews took place in English within a period of one month. The primary interviews lasted around one hour per participant. Later follow-up interviews were conducted after transcription and realisation that there was missing information, and these follow-up interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes per participant.

Author 1 recorded and took notes during the interview sessions with consent from the participants to ensure that no information was missed during the interviews and transcriptions. The four interview probes, including elaboration and continuation, attention, clarification, and evidence (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) were used to encourage participants to stay meaningfully engaged during the interviews. The transcriptions of the primary interviews were done immediately after the interview session to allow for prompt follow-up.

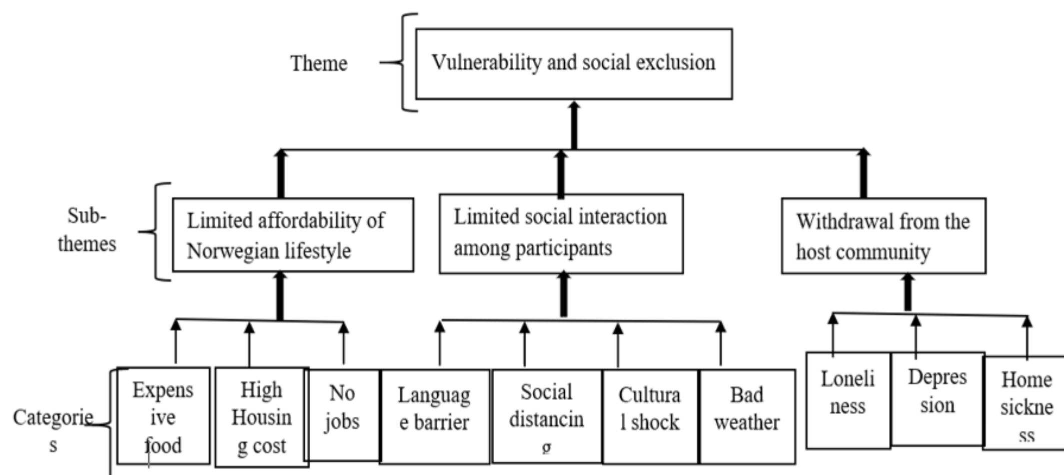
Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic data analysis method and the steps of grounded theory were used for data analysis. Thematic data analysis involved the identification, examination, and presentation of themes from participants' collected perspectives. This method was selected for its flexibility and ease in identifying patterns within the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). While identifying themes, Ryan and Bernard (2003) recommended looking for repetitions, indigenous expressions, metaphors and analogies, transitions, similarities and differences, and linguistic connectors in the data (Bryman, 2012).

Initially, collected participants' data was reviewed and coded first manually and later transferred to Nvivo for organisation. Codes are here referred to as the most basic element of the raw data that was assessed in a meaningful way in relation to the topic of study (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). Sub-categories were developed as well. At this stage, similarities and differences in participants' views were also established to create meaningful analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This stage corresponded to open coding under grounded theory.

Secondly, various categories emerged and formed subthemes and central themes. This corresponds to axial coding under grounded theory. Diagrams were used to assist in understanding different themes, and coded extracts were reviewed as well in relation to the themes to determine the validity of the themes in relation to the data. A storyline beneath the themes was established for analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). See Figure 1 below illustrating how the theme vulnerabilities and social exclusion were developed.

Figure 1: Example of How Themes and Sub-Themes Were Developed from Initial Categories



Finally, a process model was developed by compiling all the developed themes to provide meaning to the experiences of the participants while they lived in Norway. This corresponds to selective coding where data is theoretically presented (Creswell & Poth, 2018). At this stage, a process model for sociocultural and emotional adjustments among participants was created.

Limitations of the Study

The small number of participants limits the generalisation of the model to other international students. The researchers utilised detailed results with participants' stories and trustworthiness criteria (Bryman, 2012; Morrow, 2005) to strengthen the validity of the study.

The insider role of Author 1 as an international student created a challenge for participants assuming that the researcher knew and understood their experiences. Most of them used phrases like "You have experienced this, so you understand." Author 1 was careful about not validating her own experiences as an international student in the current study, but to respect the views of the participant and to seek clarity on ambiguous issues. It is also important to note that the study was conducted partially during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, and that this is likely to have influenced the

respondents' answers to some extent. Reported feelings of loneliness and isolation in particular are likely to be enhanced due to the circumstances under which some of the interviews were conducted.

RESULTS

Vulnerability and Social Exclusion

The first theme that emerged during the data analysis related to the challenges the participants experienced while living in Norway. Participants were challenged socially, financially, emotionally, and culturally. Financially, participants were challenged by limited financial resources, expensive goods and services like food and housing, and failure to get part-time jobs, which limited the affordability of what they referred to as the "Norwegian lifestyle." Self-funding participants faced more financial difficulties compared to scholarship students due to lack of part-time jobs, which is attributed to language barriers and lack of networks for references.

> Norway being a very expensive country and I'm not on scholarship, things are really costly. The food buying has been completely limited because of the high prices. So, I just thought that I would get a job and then make through tough financial times, but I have not been able to get a part-time job. This is because I lack the networks, language, and also there is a very low trust for strangers. So, coming out with friends, going out for a meal is impossible unless you really have a lot of money, so the society is limiting things to do because of prices. (Participant 2)

Participants faced social and cultural difficulties that resulted in limited social interaction. One of the issues raised was the language barrier, which posed critical integration challenges to participants in addition to those related to accessibility of services and jobs as narrated by these two participants; "I think it would have been easier to get a job if I spoke Norwegian. We have been looking a lot into service jobs and the first thing is, do you speak Norwegian?" (Participant 7), and "I haven't got a hospital that I can go to because I had to first call and make an appointment. I would call the landline and it was speaking Norwegian, which I was not understanding" (Participant 4).

Participants also experienced social distancing due to preference for personal space among people in Norway. They experienced what they called cultural shock because native Norwegians did not greet or speak to them but rather distanced themselves both in public and indoors as expressed by one of the participants, "People here don't talk too much honestly, they are trying to maintain their personal space, they don't want you to reach out and create a conversation" (Participant 4). Participants had limited social interactions both with fellow students and the broader Norwegian community. They reported that cultural shock was unavoidable due to the cultural differences between Norway and their home countries. Many participants reflected on the communal culture in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania; "I'm used to our communal way of doing things compared to individuality here" (Participant 1).

> I am socially excluded in the things I like to do because of language. Because if you cannot speak the language, then you cannot understand the culture. If you cannot understand the culture, then you are not invited. There is a lot of exclusion, physical exclusion, and emotional exclusion. It was more of like people kept their distance a lot, so it was difficult to integrate with them because they were keeping distance. (Participant 2)

Emotionally, participants reported withdrawal from the Norwegian community because of loneliness, depression, and homesickness. These were explained by the lack of familiar activities, failure to make friends for interaction, and physical distance from home countries. One of the students described how the coronavirus situation has facilitated further loneliness since schools, churches, and other social spaces are locked down; "Because of COVID-19, now we don't have classes and church services so, you have a lot of time alone, and when you are alone there are a lot of negative feelings around you" (Participant 5).

> Yes, I get depressed. There are low moments when you feel down. The depression comes because of a couple of situations; one is being overwhelmed by work at school, and secondly, you come home and realize you are alone, and you do not have people to talk to. (Participant 1)

The experiences shared above show participants' vulnerability to social exclusion from the different activities that would normally facilitate their social integration within Norway. The forces for social exclusion are both personal and communal, implying that participants need to adjust both at the individual and community levels to enhance their wellbeing and integration within the Norwegian community.

Coping with Challenges

At community level, international networks like students' associations, church groups, other international students, and host families were supportive in overcoming loneliness, depression, and limited social interaction, offering a sense of belonging, and practical support to participants.

> The Pan-African Student Association is an African community; we come together to talk about different things, discuss and play games. This community really understand, and experience similar challenges like me. The gatherings of the church give you a different vibe that by the time you begin the new week, you're really energized. On Fridays, we have had football matches with some church members, which helped me deal with fears and depression. (Participant 1)

> I have lived with a host family that has given me a home setting. It has been supportive; they gave me a cheaper rent. The house has two cats which I play with. I do normal things we do at home like taking out garbage, and it has helped me get out of depression. (Participant 2)

Supportive friends were a source of emotional, financial, social, and practical support among participants. These friends engaged in different activities like rotational weekend programs and shared activities like hiking, cooking, dancing, and playing games, which kept participants engaged, motivated, and provided them a sense of belonging. Participant 1 narrates, "And with my friends, sometimes we go dancing, which helps with emotional stress. We play FIFA and watch matches together. The weekend program with friends helps us to have a very busy schedule to avoid being lonely".

Host study institutions were supportive through institutional programs and services in terms of information, library resources, and other practical support like holding language classes at a subsidised price to facilitate the students' integration. This helped participants to cope with the language barrier and academic difficulties through the utilization of institutional resources. Participant 4 narrates, "Our university coordinators held mandatory counselling meetings with us on an individual basis to share with them what was bothering us, and they helped".

> The language classes have been helpful. I know you can't master the language in two months. Though, with learning the language, at least when you go to the supermarkets, you can read things and understand what you're going to buy without having to consult people. (Participant 1)

Individually, participants reported using their personal resources to facilitate their coping processes through engaging in sports and gym sessions, being open-minded, avoiding overspending, cooking their own food, enjoying music and dancing, and engaging in hobby activities like face painting and teaching themselves basic Norwegian. These activities supported their coping with emotional, financial, and social challenges while in Norway. Participant 4 narrates, "I love singing, I love sports; I play football, volleyball and I love going to the gym. So, these activities have helped me to do away with the negative feelings that would trigger stress and depression."

> I really adjusted to only basics, I eat very basic food, I don't travel, I do not buy clothes. I actually have done so well that I have lived on a smaller budget. I cook all my meals at home. (Participant 2)

> If you're open-minded, then it is easy to cope. I tried to teach myself just a few things in Norwegian just to invite a Norwegian to have a short conversation with me. Maybe I want to ask the person their name, then I can ask in Norwegian like 'Hva heter du?' and from that point I could manage to have a longer conversation. (Participant 3)

Individual Transformation

This theme relates to what participants transformed into after living in Norway for a period of time. On a positive note, participants became independent and better able to exercise self-control, which supported their coping process, "You have to try your level best to be independent in practice. So, I control myself instead of asking for everything, I try to do things by myself." (Participant 3) On the negative side, some participants reported becoming less social and less confident while in Norway, "I used to be a very bold girl and confident but when I came here and it was evident that no one really wants to talk, it really messed with my confidence." (Participant 7)

> I have changed from how I used to do things at home to how things are done here. I also find that when I enter the bus, I just sit alone because that is how it is done here. I stopped being social because it is what is done here. I am transforming to society here. (Participant 2)

Presentation of a Process Model for the Sociocultural and Emotional Adjustment of International Students

While analysing the data, it became apparent that our respondents went through different chronological phases when adjusting to the new situation as international students in Norway. The timing for entering, or gradually shifting to phase two and three naturally varied between the different individuals, and the phases overlapped somewhat. Based on the findings from this study, we propose a process model for sociocultural and emotional adjustment.

Initial Phase: Encountering Difficulties

This started from the time participants landed in Norway. The international students in our study encountered several difficulties, however; significant negative emotional effects were felt within one to two months after moving to Norway, with mild effects from six months and beyond. Participants encountered financial, emotional, cultural, and social challenges that limited their social integration into the Norwegian community. As a result, there was risk of social isolation.

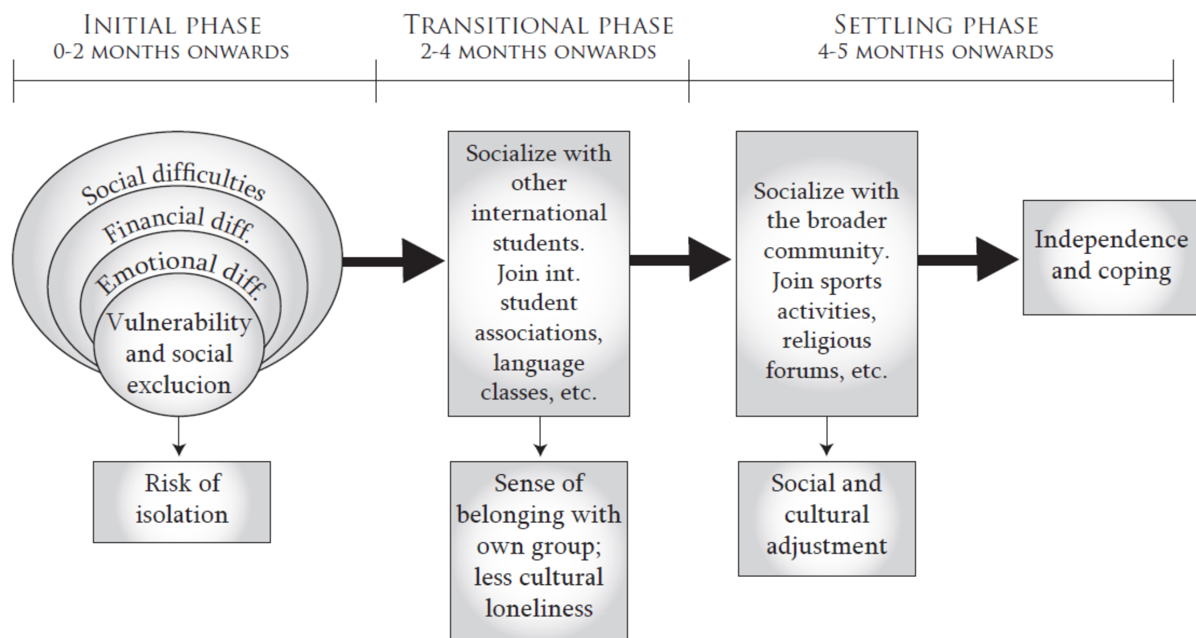
Transitional Phase: Seeking Support from Similar Others

During this phase, participants socialized with their groups of international classmates and other international students who spoke English. They joined international students' associations and enrolled in Norwegian language classes. This helped them find a sense of social belonging among familiar others that shared similar challenges, culture, and language, and as a consequence they experience less cultural loneliness.

Settling Phase: Coping and Independence

The coping process was subjective and realized at different times. Participants reported the start of their coping process between four and five months after arrival in Norway. In the settling phase, our respondents seemed to be less dependent on their limited group of international students, engaging more in sports, religious forums, and other activities in the host community. They had learned a little Norwegian which served as an icebreaker for interaction with natives. In addition, they had adjusted more to the Norwegian way of living; cooking their own food instead of eating out and socializing in their own homes to avoid spending too much money, as well as not expecting to hold small-talks or interactions with strangers.

Figure 2: Process Model for Integration of International Students



DISCUSSION

Financial difficulties limited participants' ability to afford what they called a "Norwegian lifestyle," and this became worse for self-funding participants who didn't get part-time jobs to supplement their income. Participants related the failure to get a part-time job to the lack of Norwegian language skills and small networks of their nationals in Norway. However, according to studies conducted in English-speaking countries such as the United States, international students struggled to find part-time jobs there as well (Sherry et al., 2010) due to lack of references, low confidence, and limited experience (Gautam et al., 2016). Financial difficulties led participants in our study to mostly keep within the networks of international students to avoid overspending. This helped them cope with limited financial resources, but it also prevented them from expanding their networks within Norway, especially in the initial phase of living in Norway.

Our respondents reported several aspects that challenged them socially. They experienced limited social interaction with fellow students and the broader Norwegian community due to cultural shock and social distancing that was worsened by the pandemic. The cultural shock was related to what they perceived as an individualistic and independent living style in Norway that differed greatly from the communal culture to which they were accustomed. They also found language barriers to be prominent, but only when outside of their study institution. This is because English was the teaching language at the host institution and international students spent time at campus with other English-speaking students. Several other studies have found language to be one of the greatest challenges faced by international students (Domville-Roach, 2007; Iwara et al., 2017). Language barriers minimize

integration in host countries and escalate academic problems for international students (Banjong, 2015; Kaya, 2020; Lee, 2017; Sherry et al., 2010).

It is noteworthy and worrying that some respondents in the current study said that they became less social to better adapt to Norwegian culture. Some reported that experiencing feelings such as loneliness, depression, and homesickness made them withdraw further from the Norwegian community, creating a negative spiral. Loneliness and depressive thoughts mainly occurred due to lack of familiar activities, language problems, failure to make friends, COVID-19 lockdowns, and physical distance from families at home. It is not uncommon that international students suffer from such challenges, even when there is no global pandemic. Several studies have found that international students felt lonely, isolated, depressed, and homesick while living in host countries (Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002; Sümer et al., 2008), resulting in their withdrawal from the host community (Holme et al., 2019; Gu, 2015; Kim & Okazaki, 2014). This may have severe individual and academic consequences for international students, and it is a risk that educational institutions need to tackle in order to achieve better internationalisation.

It is important to acknowledge that students have resources at the individual level to manage the problems they may face (Lee, 2017). International students' agency and initiative is critical to overcoming difficulties in the host countries (Gu, 2015). Our study revealed that participants mobilized their personal resources to cope with their new living situations. However, according to them, this was more evident when they had been in Norway for a while. In the process of transition from the old to new host environment, international students are likely to get attached to others that experience the same situation as them for social support (Chavajay, 2013; Gu, 2015). Our findings emphasize the risk of cultural loneliness, and how important it is for international students to be able to socialise with peers from similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds. It is likely to assume that this need is more prominent with large socio-cultural differences between home and host countries.

International students utilize social networks to maximise coping strategies (Baba & Hosoda, 2014; Chavajay, 2013; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Straiton et al., 2017) and share their difficulties with peers in order to remain optimistic (Ellwood, 2011; Lee, 2017). The participants in our study reported receiving support from friends, study institutions, home and host families, and the international communities in Norway. Participants shared how their friends, both in Norway and overseas, played an important role emotionally and practically. It is nevertheless essential that international students have access to institutional resources and services such as student associations, recreational centres, libraries, and cultural and language classes to help minimize academic stress and socialization challenges (Wu et al., 2015).

Although most participants reported positive transformation into independent persons after the initial phase of cultural shock, cultural loneliness and other challenges, it is worth noting that a few of them expressed how they continued feeling less confident and less social all the while studying in Norway.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explored the experiences of East African international students in Norway. In spite of efforts on the part of the host institution to support international students, participants faced financial, emotional, social, and cultural challenges that had implications for their integration within the broader Norwegian community and their general wellbeing. The most crucial period was one to two months into their stay in Norway. After the initial challenges and cultural shock had subsided, our respondents mobilized individual coping mechanisms and social networks to manage their new lives in a different country. Some participants adapted to what they perceived to be the essence of Norwegian culture by becoming more independent. While this may be positive and beneficial for some, the implied risk is that they become less social, more isolated, and lonely. Host institutions have the important job of ensuring better social integration of international students. We propose the following recommendations.

Although support to facilitate the wellbeing and integration of international students is continuous, according to our study, there is need for extra attention before the students enter the host country and during the initial phase when they encounter the most difficulties. This can be done through 1) pre-arrival preparations and support, like providing more information about the host country and the sociocultural study environment to international students before arrival. This should include information about the common challenges faced by international students and potential coping

mechanisms, as well as available services such as physical and mental health care; 2) matching a native student with international students as soon as they arrive; and 3) initiating more cultural mixing activities to avoid social isolation or segregation of certain international student groups. Such activities could be institutional orientation programs, social gatherings, language practice forums, and culture sharing initiated by the host institution, student associations, and study program coordinators.. Increased use of host families as living arrangements for international students could also facilitate social inclusion and improved language skills.

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Empirical Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

Volume 14, Issue 4 (2022), pp. 132-150
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i4.3699 | https://ojed.org/jcihe

Internationalization Experiences of Universities in the United States and in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers an analysis of key stakeholders' internationalization experiences in a selection of three leading universities in the United States and three in Turkey. We used phenomenological research methodology to understand the mechanisms behind internationalization in each setting, and a research design that allowed us to engage in a detailed analysis of the decisions made by some of the key university figures in each country. The findings will be useful for higher education institutions that seek to better understand the myriad ways that internationalization goals can become operationalized, and the impact of particular goals and strategies in two contrasting settings. By illustrating one way that internationalization as a broad trend becomes implemented in local contexts and filtered down for use in six distinct institutions, this paper adds a new intercultural perspective to the existing literature.

Keywords: higher education, internationalization, phenomenological research design, Turkey, U.S.

Received April 4, 2021; revised August 1, 2021; accepted December 29, 2021

INTRODUCTION

The concept of internationalization has become a common theme in higher education (HE) discourse in recent years. Some universities view internationalization simply as a strategic goal to pursue, but this understanding can lead to misguided efforts considering that the very notion of internationalization and what it entails in practice continue to be misunderstood and/or contested.

Internationalization remains an ill-defined goal that is alternately lauded and questioned. As such, studying the manifestations of internationalization in different geographic contexts and at various types of institutions is critically important in international HE research.

With the number of international students in HE institutions steadily rising (Shields, 2013), the number of students is expected to reach more than 590 million by 2040 (Calderon, 2018). Governments and education administrators are struggling to creatively develop, remodel, and reform HE (Chapman & Austin, 2002) in line with these increasing numbers. While organizations like Eurydice, with their "Thematic Reports", are trying to produce comparable international data on HE, the internationalization of HE is regarded as one of the most important means of economic development and social and cultural integration. In response to these changes, broad discussion has emerged in many countries regarding reforms and development of new internationalization strategies for the internationalization of HE.

Today, internationalization in HE is based on a neoliberal perspective (Wadhwa & Jha, 2014) that emphasizes globalization and the role of technological innovation (Heywood, 2013, p. 132). However, critiques of neoliberal tendencies are commonly found within the broader discourse in the literature, where the emphasis has especially been on studies of North-South inequalities (Pineda et al., 2020), the predominance of the English language (Wihlborg, 2019), and certain unethical practices (Denisova-Schmidt, 2018).

This myopic focus is often based on cultural biases and may neglect the "local factors" inherent in internationalization. Several studies have focused significantly on the benefits of internationalization in HE. Although HE is considered to be a human right in most contexts, certain meritocratic views have argued that inert hierarchies, where international students from certain nations are categorized as being more successful than those from other nations, exist in universities (Tannock, 2018). On the other hand, the emphasis on "knowledge colony" (Quijano, 2000) and on the relationship between postcolonialism, knowledge, and power has become more prominent in recent years (Rizvi et al., 2006).

Recent research on internationalization in HE has tended to focus on various components of internationalization, such as meaning, reasons/motivations, strategies, and international mobility (Iosava & Roxå, 2019). In addition, since universities are stakeholders in internationalization (Stohl, 2007), understanding the perspectives of faculties towards internationalization is an important part of internationalization policy. Some of the current research that has framed our understanding of the internationalization of HE and its related issues has focused on different institutions within the U.S. context particularly (see Buckner, 2019, de Wit, 2019), while other research has focused on the inequalities of opportunity (Glass et al., 2021).

Hence, there is a need for more research investigating the internationalization of various systems through the agency of those who play a key role in the internationalization of HE. A literature search on the internationalization of HE showed that the majority of studies has been conducted on developed countries, and that only a small number of comparative studies involving developed and developing countries have been conducted, as seen in the low number of internationalization studies in Turkey. These few studies that have been performed examined Turkey within its own context or in comparison to the European context alone (Fındık, 2016; Göktürk, 2018; Kondakçı et. al., 2016).

The present study, therefore, is the first to provide a comparison of HE internationalization between the U.S. and Turkey. Our choice of Turkey and the U.S., as examples of developing and developed/internationalized countries respectively, in our discussion of internationalization efforts in HE provides a unique opportunity to compare various intercultural perspectives on two distinct experiences of internationalization. Moreover, the present study provides an analysis of the internationalization experiences of Turkish HE by examining the practice of theories from

a local perspective. This study is important because it looks at a developing country, Turkey, and a developed country, the U.S., and analyzes their different approaches to and progress with the internationalization of their HE sectors, using a small sample of their respective universities.

In this study, the first and foremost task was to focus on the big picture in the comparison of internationalization experiences in the two countries with different systems and cultures while maintaining a local angle to examine the theory and practice. Establishing a wider focus to be able to analyze the whole picture was key to understanding the internationalization policies in the U.S. and Turkey and their consequences, as the respective policies are based on different social, economic, and cultural dynamics and traditions within their unique approaches and systems. Bearing that in mind, we investigated their local impact as well for the purpose of shedding light upon the workings of these forces at the basic local.

The second goal of the present study was to understand both countries' internationalization efforts through an intercultural lens. Previous studies on the impact of cultural factors on the internationalization of HE have attempted to understand the nature of culture by examining the differences in habits, traditions, languages, and ways of thinking (Cavusgil et al., 2010). Hence, the present comparative study preferred focusing on the “cultural area” of internationalization in HE while investigating the internationalization of HE institutions. It is important that international literature includes studies on the internationalization of HE from the perspectives of developing countries, such as Turkey, as these points of view involve ethical concerns and concepts such as unequal opportunities, issues that must be addressed in future research.

Finally, we argue that the international literature on internationalization in HE should also include internationalization perspectives of developing countries, such as Turkey, in order to investigate the impact of existing internationalization policy measures. Considering the importance of contextual factors, such as internationalization processes, procedures, and decision-making, this analysis significantly contributes to our understanding of internationalization. Therefore, we suggest that future studies address such perspectives. This study argues the need to show how two distinct and different systems have developed internationalization and by showing how the differences exist, it allows understanding of how the national culture and context (environment) influence internationalization efforts.

To this end, the present study aims to provide an in-depth examination of key stakeholders’ internationalization experiences in the university context. The following five research questions were developed to guide the study:

1) What does internationalization mean to the key stakeholders in U.S. and Turkish universities?
2) Why do they feel internationalization is necessary?
3) How are they being supported to internationalize?
4) What challenges do they face?
5) What are the strategies they adopt?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

As the internationalization of HE has rapidly become a global phenomenon, the term ‘internationalization’ has often been employed in an ad hoc, inconsistent, and idiosyncratic manner (de Wit, 2002). However, the definition and scope of internationalization continues to evolve. How universities perceive and define internationalization is important for understanding how they operationalize it (Hudzik, 2015). Furthermore, misconceptions about the real meaning of internationalization (de Wit, 2011) have also led to incorrect implementations. Thus, it is important to investigate not only how university stakeholders understand internationalization but also how they engage in the process of implementing it. Numerous definitions of internationalization currently exist. For example, in seeking to define internationalization, Knight offers the following:

> Internationalization at the national/sector/institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of post-secondary education (Knight, 2004, p. 11).

For several researchers, internationalization implies the necessity of cultural and intercultural transformation. For example, Jiang (2008, p. 348) defines internationalization as "the exchange of national cultures," while Hudzik views comprehensive internationalization as follows:

> Commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise… It is essential that it be embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility (Hudzik, 2015, p. 6).

Why has internationalization suddenly become such an important topic in HE research if it already existed for as long as there have been universities? As Taylor (2004) pointed out, internationalization represents one of the most important drivers of change in modern universities. Thus, the development of effective strategies for internationalization is an important element of university administration. The reasons behind the favor shown to internationalization in institutional trends rest on the institutional background, resources, and stakeholders involved (Knight, 1994), and Knight (2004) identified the causes and consequences of internationalization as social, cultural, political, academic, and economic and distinguished between the national and institutional dimensions of these elements. Here, internationalization could be considered as a reflection of a university's desire to maintain its intercultural context (Lumby & Foskett, 2014). Several researchers have argued that there is a correlation between internationalization and intercultural transformation (Bartell, 2003; Leask, 2008; Schein, 2010; Sporn, 1996).

Today, internationalization is generally considered to be one of the top strategies of HE institutions. With internationalization being a leading theme in current HE strategy, it is imperative for us to understand how developing countries and universities respond to this development. How institutions respond to internationalization in HE presents a varied and uneven picture, as contextual realities understandably dictate policy making on the ground in diverse settings.

A Bird's Eye View on Internationalization in U.S. Universities and Turkish Universities

The education system in the United States is largely a decentralized education system. The HE model in the U.S. has historically been based on European influences and continues to be so to this day. Oxford and Cambridge, for instance, were the models for the first colleges established in the colonies (de Wit, 2001). The modern U.S. university took shape in the second half of the 19th century (Lagemann & Lewis, 2012) and was inspired by the Humboldtian model imported from Germany, which advocated a joint emphasis on teaching and research. The Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 and the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 helped U.S. universities open their doors to students from every segment of society, including those engaged in agriculture and ranching and those with a military service background. With this shift, HE institutions became more diversified in terms of the curricula they offered, the student population, and notions of service, and due to the success of this shift, the U.S. model of the research university quickly spread globally (Altbach et al.,1999; Kerr, 1994).

Comprehensive internationalization attempts were limited to U.S. universities until the 1990s. The first wave of HE internationalization in the U.S. took place from the 1940s to the 1960s (Goodwin & Nacht, 1991). The second wave, which took place in the 1970s and 1980s, was driven by the rise in the number of international students attending U.S. universities (Goodwin & Nacht, 1991, p. 111). More recently, the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the financial crisis of 2008 (Choudaha & de Wit, 2014), the U.K. Brexit referendum of 2016, and the actions of the current U.S. administration have further affected the direction of internationalization of U.S. universities, including the flow and placement of international students (Choudaha, 2017).

On the other hand, the Turkish higher education system has a centralized structure and is administered by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), which was established in 1981. Higher education entered the process of restructuring academically, institutionally, and administratively with the Higher Education Law enacted in 1981. With this law, all the higher education institutions in Turkey were gathered

under the roof of the CoHE, academies were transformed into universities, educational institutes were transformed into education faculties, and conservatories were connected to universities. Thus, the CoHE has become the only institution responsible for all higher education (CoHE, 2022).

The internationalization of Turkish universities structurally began after the 1980s and according to Taşçı and Kenan (2019), three key studies have governed this internationalization process. The first is the Turkish HE strategy developed in a seminal study on internationalization strategies conducted by a group under the direction of Teziç (YÖK, 2007). The second is the pioneering study titled, "Growth, Quality, Internationalization: A Roadmap in Turkish HE", by Çetinsaya (2014), and the third is the study titled, "The New Council of HE Policy in HE", conducted by the President of the HE board, Saraç, who demonstrated that HE studies in Turkey were more systematic and action oriented (YÖK, 2018).

RESEARCH METHOD

The method for this study is phenomenological which is type of qualitative research and is an approach focusing on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The choice of the phenomenological research design was set by our desire to gain a detailed understanding of the internationalization experiences of key stakeholders (Groenwald, 2004; Moustakas, 1994).

The phenomenological study design was determined to be best suited for examining in detail the perspectives of stakeholders engaged in internationalization (Creswell, 2013). In-depth qualitative interviews have been shown in previous studies to be efficient tools for identifying the similarities and differences of internationalization experiences, cultural views, and practices of the faculties between two countries (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Moreover, it has been stated that it is important to have a comparative perspective when examining internationalization in order to improve intercultural understanding, diversity of views, and mutual understanding (Hudzik, 2015). The interviews conducted as part of the present study provided a rich set of data on the said aspects.

We used the conceptual framework of internationalization developed by Knight (1994), Dijk and Meijer (1999), and Hudzik (2015) to analyze key stakeholders' internationalization experiences within the context of the university. Our analysis also used Hudzik's (2015) model of comprehensive internationalization by examining institutional case stories. He argues that it is important to focus on the fundamental strategies, tactics, and structures needed to transfer the idea of comprehensive international engagement into action. For data analysis, we also used Dijk and Meijer's (1999) "Internationalization Cube", which includes the three-dimensions of "Policy", "Support", and "Implementation". The institutions in Cell 1 are characterized by limited internationalization activity, indicating a low level of internationalization, while those in Cell 8 have robust activity, indicative of high internationalization.

Participants

The purposeful sampling methods, criterion sampling, and maximum variation sampling, were used to create the study group (Creswell, 2013). Maximum variation sampling aims to reveal similarities and differences between situations that vary by nature (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

The world university ranking scores of the universities and the internationalization activity levels constituted the criteria for selection of the universities to be included into the study. In terms of creating the sample by selecting participants from the predetermined universities, we selected participants holding positions related to internationalization.

The study included a total of 30 participants selected from 6 institutions, 3 for each system. In selecting institutions from both systems, special attention was given to their parallel features, meaning that the institutions in one of these systems were roughly equivalent to the institutions in the other system. A total of 30 key representatives in internationalization management and decision-making positions (such as senior officers, international officers etc.) from the universities in the U.S. (15 participants) and in Turkey (15 participants) participated in the study (see Table 1).

Table 1: Key participants

Countries/Universities	Key Participants
Turkey A (private) B (public) C (public)	• Vice-rector for internationalization • Vice-rector for academic affairs • Head of International office • High-level and mid-level staff members • Senior officer
U.S. X (private) Y (public) Z (public)	• Vice-rector for internationalization • Vice-rector for academic affairs • Head of international office • High-level and mid-level staff members • Senior officer
Total	30

In order to ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were used for all participants, and the participating institutions were referred to by alphabetical letters. The universities in the U.S. were coded as institutions X, Y, and Z, while the universities in Turkey were coded as institutions A, B, and C. For example, university X, one of the selected universities from the U.S., is a top ten research university, while university Y is a polytechnic university, and university Z is a public university. Similarly, among the universities selected from Turkey, university A is a top ten university in the rankings in Turkey, university B is a technical university, and university C is a public university.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study was conducted through semi-structured interviews with key representatives in internationalization management and decision-making positions at universities in Turkey and the U.S. An open-ended interview protocol was used in the data collection process, which was performed through face-to-face and online interviews between 2017 and 2018. The interviews lasted between 15 and 90 minutes. Each interview was audiotaped and independently transcribed.

The phenomenological approach basically requires the researcher to enter the data in the analysis of the collected data. In this context, in the current study, in order to provide a deep understanding of the participants' experiences of internationalization in higher education, the important explanations made by the participants were emphasized, divided into themes and clusters of shared meaning were created (Moustakas, 1994). Then the findings were compared through categorization. In this way, similarities and differences in themes were elicited. The continuous comparison method was used to explored the emerging themes (Merriam, 1998). The transcripts were reviewed, thematically categorized, and supported with citations to capture the central idea within each area of inquiry. This conceptual framework contributed to our goal of clarifying why it is important for HE institutions to determine their rationale for internationalization before initiating the process, as well as to accurately understand and assess the phenomenon of internationalization.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The strongest aspect of this study is that it reveals the experiences of internationalization in two different countries. The HE internationalization experiences of Turkey and the U.S. are valuable because they help to provide an understanding of the big picture. From a methodological point of view, conducting interviews with key internationalization figures increased both the reliability and validity of the research. Furthermore, we have using a western model and we have describing Turkey within this western lens. This was strengthen our work and show that we have sought to understand the complexities involved in cross-cultural policy analysis.

As with any research, the present study also has its limitations, the primary one being that the research involved countries with two different systems. While the U.S. has a decentralized higher education structure, Turkey has a central higher education system. Secondly, the study was only able to interview a limited number of participants. Finally, since this study was designed in a qualitative design, it was not aimed to reach generalization (Patton, 2015). It was tried to understand the internationalization processes in depth with the people in the universities selected from the two countries. In the light of this study, it is possible to suggest that a transferable result can be reached as a result of the examination of the processes related to the internationalization experiences of different higher education institutions through studies to be designed in qualitative design.

FINDINGS

The present study provides an in-depth examination of key stakeholders' internationalization experiences in the university context. The data analysis conducted on internationalization activities in the selected Turkish and U.S. participants revealed significant similarities and differences, which are discussed in the following section. Overall, five key results emerged from the study.

Finding 1: Understanding Internationalization

The first priority of the present study was to explore how the stakeholders at each of the participating universities understood the definitions and key concepts of internationalization their university was using. The following sub-themes emerged from the interviews conducted with the respective stakeholders: Key stakeholders at Turkish universities emphasized in their interview the academic aspect of internationalization and focused on the following themes (A, B, C) (see Figure 1).

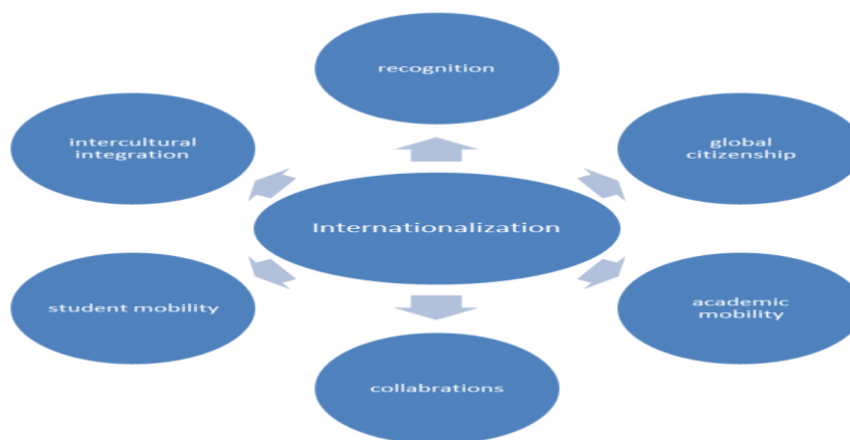

Figure 1: A, B, and C universities' understanding of internationalization

One of the participants included many components of internationalization in the definition of internationalization:

Internationalization can be achieved through recognition. New studies and development, the publications of faculty members and doctoral students, research partnerships, joint doctoral programs, foreign students, and incoming-outgoing students and faculty members are key elements of the process (A3).

Another participant highlighted the three missions of HE and expressed their difficulties with and misunderstanding of the definition of internationalization as follows:

> The classical definition is the internationalization of the three missions of higher education, which are teaching, research, and community service…But lately, we have focused a lot on student mobility. We have neglected the internationalization of the curriculum a little. It seems that there is something missing in various aspects of the definition (B2).

In defining internationalization, the participants underlined the academic dimension of internationalization and the aspect of intercultural awareness:

> Internationalization is an important part of acquiring knowledge and fostering cultural interaction. I can say that the internationalization of students is the defining feature of intercultural communication (C1).

Key stakeholders at a U.S. institution emphasized the academic aspect of internationalization and focused on the following themes in the interviews (X, Y, and Z) (see Figure 2).

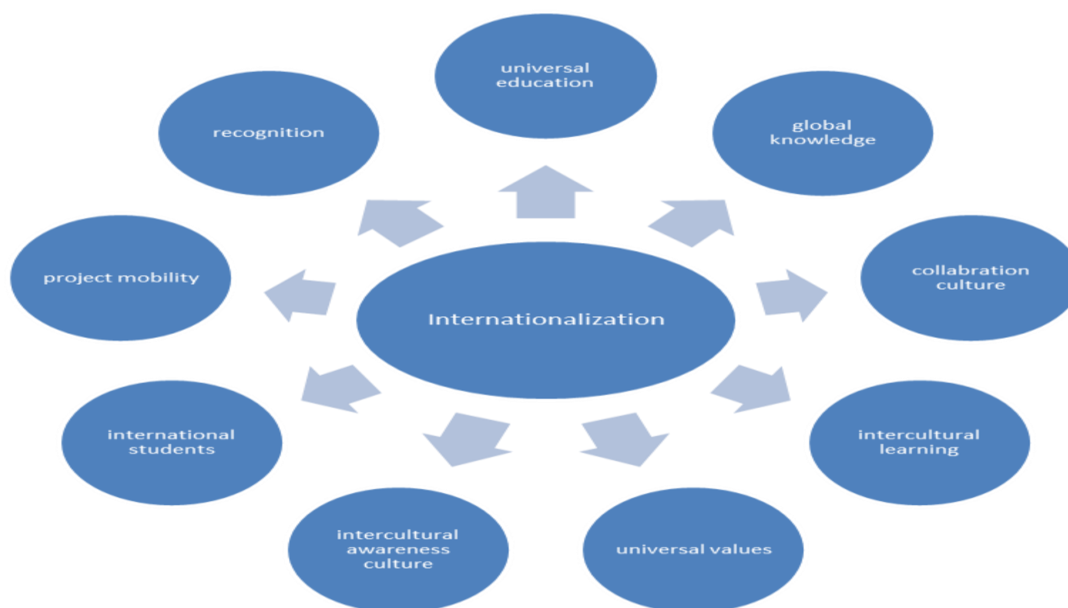

Figure 2: X, Y, and Z universities' understanding of internationalization.

One of the participants defined internationalization by making connections with cooperation culture and corporate identity, as well as with culture, within the framework of world-wide knowledge production, discovery, and quality understanding:

> Internationalization involves the global production and discovery of information. It means to make knowledge universal. Within the framework of quality understanding, it is to share this knowledge and information through cooperation culture, corporate identity, and culture. Our university is a research university in the U.S. (X3).

Another of the participants identified internationalization with a comprehensive perspective focusing on three criteria, namely, the internationalization of student unity, curriculum, and experiences (raising intercultural awareness):

> The internationalization of universities can be described in multiple ways. One way is to internationalize the student body; we have students from all around the world joining the student body and student life of the university. A second way is to internationalize the curricula by bringing in global perspectives to the curricula of the university to broaden them and allow more comparative examples and comparative experiences. A third way is to provide U.S. students, or any students from different parts of the world, the opportunity to travel and study abroad to give them practical leadership experiences through which they can grow as professional young people (Y2).

Another participant emphasized the many components of internationalization in the definition of internationalization:

> Perhaps by offering more study abroad opportunities and more faculty exchange programs, or by attracting more international students to your campus, more research opportunities can be provided for communication and collaboration (Z1).

Finding 2: Rationales Behind Internationalization

It is important that HE institutions determine their reasons for internationalization in a rational way to be able to understand and evaluate the phenomenon of internationalization accurately. Regarding the benefits of internationalization, the key stakeholders interviewed from Turkish universities emphasized the academic rationale of internationalization but disagreed about the socio-economic reasons for it. For example, key stakeholders at university A referred to notions such as academic quality, international scientific production, understanding intercultural research, research policies, developments in technology and science, and international science production, while those in B addressed the economic rationale behind internationalization, which was not mentioned by universities A and C.

Reasons that are clearly, comprehensively, and factually constructed could guide the process of internationalization for universities. The participants tended to rely on academic reasons, such as academic quality, resources, mission-vision, community benefit, international science production, and international students, to support their views about internationalization, as shown in the following statement:

> Our founding mission and vision are global education and science production. We need to expose our students to the whole world to achieve science production around the world. The best way to do this is to become international (A1).

Again, focusing on the academic dimension, one of the participants explained the reasons for internationalization as follows:

> Therefore, internationalization in higher education is inevitable for mobility programs as well as for joint studies with other academics and for the university to gain a global character in its effort to attain universal knowledge (C2).

The key stakeholders in the U.S., on the other hand, expressed their reasons for internationalization based on institutional missions, actions, and evidence of internationalization. For example, stakeholders in university X cited their university mission and identity, mentioning ideas such as the 'desire to interact with the world, the desire to encourage students to learn about the world, intercultural awareness and learning, the desire to acquire a different perspective, and emphasis on diversity.' However, the stakeholders in university Z focused more on the academic rationale, referring to goals like 'the desire to develop academics, to gain recognition, to establish a network and share knowledge in the international arena, to attain a better ranking, to gain global awareness, and to create common consciousness in the global arena.'

In this context, some of the participants shared their ideas on the reasons of internationalization from a multi-dimensional academic, socio-cultural, geopolitical, and economic perspective:

> We have to understand multiple perspectives of certain disciplines, such as the geopolitical perspective and the sociocultural perspective; we have to understand different societies, different nations, different people, and very different issues. Cultural development varies from society to society; universities need to gather students from all backgrounds and with different perspectives, including economic perspectives, considering how inter-connected financial markets (Y2).

Finding 3: Support for Internationalization

The key stakeholders in the U.S. pointed out that cultural support was interactive and multidimensional. The support, assistance, and management practices provided for international activities in university X, Y, and Z are conducted interactively, as the respective participants made clear in interviews by referring to the ongoing flow of information and interaction between the faculty and departments. The interviews further revealed that academic, economic, socio-cultural, and technical support comes from the university.

For example, one participant highlighted the importance of internal motivation when explaining the culture of cooperation in the development of internationalization support culture:

> Our university has developed a strong support and motivation culture, characterized by external supports, funds, incentives, and awards. Yet, with that said, academicians are already so desperate to access information that they do not need special external motivation or support. Achieving quality results through cooperation is the product of the internal motivation of the academician (X2).

One participant first emphasized the importance of economic support before turning their attention to the academic support provided at university Y:

> We provide faculties the opportunity to participate in workshops and support their research and travel. To expand scholarship, we provide various teaching tools to faculty to support their teaching experiences all over the world. We adopt many different approaches, such as providing incentives to faculty and to colleagues from other universities studying the same topic (Y3).

The key stakeholders in the Turkish universities stated that a support culture was provided at different levels and by different players at each university. The key stakeholders in university A underlined that the support culture was interactive and multidimensional, whereas those in universities B and C stated that it was unilateral. For example, one participant discussed internationalization in connection with a lack of economic support:

> In the process of internationalization, especially in the Erasmus exchange process, my university has provided academic support. Particularly, the International Office provided support. But I do not think the economic support is sufficient. Also, more detailed information should be given during the course selection stage (B1).

Finding 4: Internationalization Strategy

Turkish participants emphasized that internationalization is a major priority and highlighted the two-faceted strategy of global exchange and Erasmus. Participant A1 reported the following strategy of internationalization for Asia:

> We should be aware of what's happening in China and in India. Asia, in this sense, is like a tsunami of information and knowledge. And we are the first university to establish relations with China. I sent a calendar to my friends, with the message, ‘Think China’… It's so important to learn Chinese. Also, India is in a completely different place. We have been searching those geographies. For us, internationalization does not only mean the United States and Europe. Asia is very important, and so is Russia (A1).

One participant implemented internationalization strategies in university B from a multidimensional point of view and found their respective university to be sufficient in this respect:

> Our university follows various policies and strategies towards internationalization, and I think it seems sufficient…For example, SUNY cooperation is an important step in this regard, as well as in language politics. There is a significant demand for our university from international academics and students. Our academics are very well equipped…the internationalization of the student body, the internationalization of faculty, the internationalization of research, the internationalization of educational programs, the internationalization of support services, and the internationalization of physical resources and stakeholders (B1).

University C was among the Turkish universities with a large number of international students, and it pursued a more regional policy that focused on European and Muslim countries:

> Agreements were made mainly between Arab and Asian countries. These agreements were very useful for those working in those areas at our university and also for those working in Islamic Sciences, such as theology. Our university also has a well-established Faculty of Theology. We can send a large number of students to countries like Qatar, Jordan, Bahrain, and Malaysia (C1).

In our study, the key stakeholders in the U.S. universities all conducted rigorous international research activities, pursued distinct strategies to facilitate international education for domestic and international students and aimed to strengthen student retention and faculty exchange. While participants X, Y and Z demonstrated different levels of integration, all three were committed to internationalization and considered internationalization policies to be among their top priorities. For example, the priority of

university X was to be seen as a leading global bio-medical pioneer. A participant from university X reported that they have followed a worldwide expansionist strategy in internationalization, and that they are working towards developing partnerships and cooperation.

> We have operated in over 100 countries all around the world, and 20% of our student body is from different countries. This number of students constituting our international body is huge. As part of the strategy implemented at our university, most of our collaborations on different subjects are carried out by individual researchers, professors, doctors, and academicians. They develop partnerships and enter into cooperation. The faculty have academic and health care interests and conduct research. I can't tell you the exact number, but it's something like 20% of the student body (X1).

One of the participants from university Y also discussed the organizational strategies and program strategies they used for internationalization. These include adequate funding, adequate financial support, research, cooperation, and implementation.

> We contribute to global development in many fields, including agriculture, as well as higher education capacity development. We have a research faculty for doing that. We developed a lot of study programs and learning programs. We have centers in different parts of the world; for example, we have large centers in Senegal, in India, and in Africa. We engage in a lot of activities, both on the research side and the teaching side (Y1).

One of the participants in university Z emphasized the importance of implementing an effective strategy to gain internationalization awareness and create a cooperation culture.

> I think the most effective strategy for increasing the efforts or achieving the goal of internationalization is to have awareness, to prepare your campus and institution by providing information, and to incorporate all your faculties, your academicians, your senior leaders, and all other stakeholders in international activities. The most effective way to develop an internationalization strategy and to achieve internationalization is to ensure the entire campus is working in cooperation towards these efforts (Z1).

Finding 5: Challenges in Internationalization

The key stakeholders in the U.S. institutions in our study all conducted rigorous international research activities, pursued distinct strategies to facilitate international education for domestic and international students, and aimed to strengthen student retention and faculty exchange. While universities X, Y, and Z demonstrated different levels of integration, all three were committed to internationalization and considered internationalization policies to be among their top priorities. For example, the priority of university X was to be seen as a leading global bio-medical pioneer.

Through our analysis of the key stakeholders in the U.S. based on academic and cultural perspectives, we noticed that the participants were aware of the challenges presented by internationalization. One of the participants stated that there are difficulties due to differences in procedures between countries:

> They experience difficulties working in different countries under different rules and difficulties dealing with different kinds of funding, immigration, tax and hiring issues. Under these constraints, the distance from people's mother countries feels more acute when they come here. So that's a challenge, and then of course the search for funding is always a challenge (X1).

University Y participants discussed the economic, academic, socio-cultural, and political challenges, while university Z participants largely focused on the difficulties experienced in the process of implementing common internationalization goals, cultural and linguistic differences, and economic support.

Among the difficulties encountered in the internationalization process, the most striking was economic difficulties:

> That is the major difficulty; working without resources is very hard. It is very difficult to work with resources outside of the university…On the student side, there are the issues of family perspectives and the funds required to study abroad (Y1).

Another participant explained the difficulties students face in internationalization in terms of academic, economic, and socio-cultural factors.

> So, some of the challenges involve money, as students feel they don't have the money to study abroad…In addition, there can be barriers with the curriculum... That is one of the consequences of faculty not being internationalized…That is an example of how the challenge could be partly cultural, or partly financial; I think they vary (Z1).

The same participant expressed the concern that students have about whether they will receive the same quality of education abroad:

> If you are a student studying sociology, your faculty will probably be very happy if you want to go abroad. So, the only problem may be financial. But if you are a student of engineering, your faculty members may be worried that you will not get the same quality of training. So, it differs depending on the field of study…But sometimes the faculty discourages students when the study abroad program involves educating the faculty (Z3).

When discussing the disadvantages of internationalization, Turkish universities A, B, and C tended to focus on economic problems, language problems, cultural problems, lack of time, and red tape. The most frequently mentioned themes were difficulties in implementing common internationalization goals, cultural differences, language problems, and economic support. For example, one participant explained the difficulties encountered in the process of internationalization in connection with the academic mentality:

> The issue is the mental problem at the top rather than the bureaucracy. We could not raise the academic mentality despite all our efforts. During the process of institutionalization, establishing the institution, establishing the university, hiring the staff, establishing the system, and setting up the lessons, we have to act with an academic mentality in all those processes. But I am afraid everyone knows what mentality we act on (C1).

One participant criticized the insufficiency of funds:

> I feel that there is merit to opportunities like congresses, seminars, and academic mobility in understanding the values of different cultures and developing myself in the academic field. Of course, these are limited by the funds available (B2).

The issue of "brain drain and quality" was emphasized in the reported difficulties encountered in the process of internationalization:

> At present, we have exchange programs with some universities, but we are not satisfied with some of the incoming students from these programs. We should be a little more selective about them…What we want is to improve the quality…But when it comes to attracting doctoral students, we have a few problems. Turkey's top graduates want to go to world universities for their doctoral studies. I have to compete with Stanford, Yale, and Princeton (A1).

One participant highlighted language problems, lack of institutional support, physical deficiencies, lack of social facilities, and management and coordination problems stemming from the fact that the university has very large campus as the main difficulties encountered in the internationalization process:

> Language is the first obstacle for the university. Among the problems we face as an institution, the lack of support from the university for the activities that we are conducting ranks among the top. We're just doing research with the budget the National Agency gives to us. Unfortunately, the physical conditions are not very good here (C2).

DISCUSSION

The present study provides an analysis of internationalization by examining a selection of universities in the U.S. and in Turkey. We demonstrate the importance of using an intercultural approach to internationalization in the following seven subsections. Our main argument is that it is of critical importance to focus on contextual factors to explain internationalization processes, procedures, and decision-making.

1) Understanding the concept of internationalization.

Understanding the concept internationalization was the first point addressed in the present study. Full comprehension of this concept is an important first step, insofar as it establishes a clear and resolute

path toward internationalization (Simon, 2013, p. 50 as cited in Hudzik, 2015, p. 59). The findings showed that the participants made an effort to develop and integrate international elements into the student experiences at their respective institutions, which suggests that the concept of internationalization in HE is of utmost importance for universities. In this process, comprehending and interpreting internationalization in a correct manner accelerates the transition from theory to practice. From the analysis of the participating universities, we determined that they all shared an awareness of the importance of internationalization. Our study's findings were clearly consistent with Knight's (2004) defined "as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, dimension into the purpose, functions, or delivery of post-secondary education" (p. 11).

2) Why internationalization is necessary.

The second issue addressed in the study was the reasons behind the necessity of internationalization. The data collected from the key stakeholders we interviewed at three universities in Turkey revealed congruence in the academic rationales of internationalization, particularly in terms of the benefits that the participants receive from the internationalization, whereas some divergence was observed for the socio-economic rationales. The institutional internationalization trends are governed by the institutional background, resources, and the impact of institutional stakeholders (Knight, 2004). For example, while the key stakeholders at the A, B, and C universities in Turkey referred to ideas such as "academic quality, international science production, understanding of intercultural research, research policies, developments in technology and science, and international science production", the key stakeholders at the three universities in the U.S. referred more to institutional missions, actions, and evidence of internationalization when expressing their reasons for internationalization. Moreover, the stakeholders at university X emphasized their university mission and identity to explain internationalization, and in a similar manner, the stakeholders at university Y spoke of "the mission of the research university being the production and sharing of universal information, the interaction of countries, the recognition of different cultures, and the production of new knowledge". In both countries, the reasons provided by the university representatives included academic, political, socio-cultural, and economic factors.

3) Internationalization requires support from the highest levels**.**

The third point addressed in the study was the effect of the support provided by the university administration or its board of directors for internationalization. McMurray and Scott (2013) reported that various factors determine the organizational climate of a university, such as support, justice, trust, innovation, and recognition. The magnitude of the support is determined by the type of support, assistance, or resources provided to encourage international activities at the university (Dijk & Meijer, 1999), while the image of the institution, which is built on its achievements, serves as a source of pride for the employees and students and contributes to defining their objectives (Bess & Dee, 2007). The most prominent feature of the universities selected from the U.S. in the present study is that they have a well-developed and broad framework of competition and cooperation culture. We observed that the support culture was interactive and multidimensional in the institutions in the U.S. Also, university donor policies are also important pillars of internationalization. As seen in institution X, major donations could boost the international profile of an university and provide support for high-achievement students.

On the other hand, an analysis of the views of the participants at the institutions in Turkey revealed that while the support culture was interactive and multidimensional at university A, it was unilateral in universities B and C. For example, at university A, the interviewees indicated that negotiations around the implementation of a variety of internationalization activities had been inadequate and unilateral in terms of the level of economic support for such initiatives, which resulted in a perception of being unproductive. Similarly, the interviewees at university C also reported that there was an inadequate culture of support for the implementation of internationalization activities, and that they held the university's strategies in economic, bureaucratic, and academic matters responsible for such a negative outcome.

4) Organizational culture is a determining factor for internationalization.

Bartell (2003) suggests that the promotion or prevention of successful internationalization depends on the organizational culture, and that the culture of the university stakeholders determines the dominant

culture. These values and beliefs are conveyed verbally and through symbols (Bartell, 2003; Schein, 2010). In our study, the key stakeholders from the U.S. pointed out that universities adopted a facilitating, outward-looking, and multiple-support culture, while two universities in Turkey adopted weaker and inward-focused support cultures. Furthermore, the key stakeholders in Turkey reported that lack of financial support, inadequate institutional strategies, and lack of multiple-support systems limited the availability of the international learning experiences for students. Thus, it can be suggested that a strong culture is an important factor in the internationalization success of institutions (Sporn, 1996). Based on these findings, it can be argued that it is necessary to provide academic, economic, and bureaucratic support to increase the participation of students and professors in overseas education.

5) Besides the challenges, internationalization also offers many opportunities.

The fifth issue addressed in this study was the challenges encountered during internationalization. Our study identified several problems in Turkish universities, such as the lack of infrastructure, the inadequacy and dysfunction of libraries, and the lack of cultural and sports facilities, while the most common challenges faced by the U.S. universities were related to procedural differences between countries, culture shock, difficulties experienced in scholarships, economic-related and cultural-related student problems, and time constraints.

In Turkey, the issue of lack of adequate support for research could be attributed to insufficient economic resources of the university and the inadequacy of reward and incentive mechanisms. For internationalization, rewards and encouragement are important for motivating the academic staff and for achieving successful internationalization (Hudzik, 2015; Ratliff, 2013). Furthermore, it has been argued that financial problems are the main reason for the slowdown of internationalization progress (Green, 2002). In the U.S., social activities and social and cultural events hosted by the university that include the participation of students, administration, and staff in a variety of settings are considered particularly important aspects of internationalization. Universities in Turkey experience problems in providing work environments, resources, and infrastructure that are because financial resources are more limited in Turkey.

This study further found that a couple of the universities from the Turkish sample experienced language problems in pursuing their internationalization goals. These universities emphasized the importance of English as a way to further develop themselves internationally. A related challenge was the integration of international students into the campus community. According to Leask (2008), international perspectives help students to understand and work with diverse cultures in both domestic and international contexts. The literature on this subject has shown that it is common for international students to connect with other international students since they share a similar sense of isolation and identity struggle (Garrord & Davis, 1999).

6) Internationalization must also address intercultural learning.

This study was also focused on intercultural learning, which was often found to be inadequate. Internationalization provides individuals the opportunity to learn about other cultures and individuals in foreign countries. Despite monolingualism being declared the "illiteracy of the twenty-first century" (Roberts et al., 2018, p. 116), the importance of the English language is nonetheless clear; however, this leads to unequal opportunities that benefit the students of Turkish universities where courses are taught only in English.

Another key point to mention is that internationalization in HE has been shown to contribute to the development of international understanding and of intercultural skills and competencies in students (Beelen & Leask, 2011). Ironically, however, socio-cultural and social justice dimensions, economic differences, and access problems are still neglected in the literature on the internationalization of HE. In Turkey, universities A and B were especially aware of the importance of focusing on quality rather than on quantity. The issue of quality was also associated with the issue of brain-drain (Wahlers, 2018). Stakeholders in the Turkish universities expressed their concerns about brain-drain.

Furthermore, internationalization is an individualistic phenomenon, one that usually entails tension as a result of political, institutional, and cultural resistance. It is important to create a mindset of common responsibility and cooperation in internationalization among individual members of the university community (Hudzik, 2015). It is difficult to think of a successful strategic and comprehensive approach to

internationalization that does not involve experienced, active academic staff. We noticed in our research that the staff at university C did not have an international vision, and that this led to mental barriers to internationalization.

7) Internationalization policies and strategies need careful consideration.

It is important to focus on the fundamental strategies, tactics, and structures needed to transform the idea of comprehensive international engagement into action. Internationalization in HE has been applied differently by different institutions (Buckner, 2019; Seeber et al., 2016).

Knight and de Wit (1995), who considered university programs to be strategic components of internationalization, argued that every institution had its own set of internationalization strategies. U.S. institutions conducted international research activities and adopted corporate strategies, such as the development of programs to facilitate foreign education, international student registration, and other services. Thus, while the policy of attracting foreign students to the campus is given the priority in U.S. universities, the strategic priority in Turkey is to send students abroad, especially through the Erasmus program. Furthermore, while the U.S. strategy primarily aimed to attract students from Asian countries, Turkey focused primarily on Europe and the Turkic Republics. This trend in student mobility at the institutional level reflected the current priorities of the CoHE and Turkish universities, where traditionally local students in Turkey are now encouraged to participate in international exchange programs.

Moreover, it is known that the universities are often influenced by international trends, which in turn affect academics and researchers (Altbach et al., 2009). Additionally, national educational policies and policies adopted by the government or civil society organizations also influence and shape this process. U.S. higher education has been shaped by the free-market system for several years and has been a pioneer in competition and internationalization. In the U.S., systematic administrative regulations are based on a common belief that corporate autonomy should be maintained (Amaral et al., 2013). In Turkey, by contrast, university administration and senior higher education administration should cope with a high-level centralization and low institutional autonomy. The centralized structure in Turkey, which is reflected in the universities, the CoHE, and the government, all work in tandem in carrying out the internationalization process. In Turkey, the university administration, and the senior HE administration are faced with a high-level of centralization and low institutional autonomy. As a result, HE internationalization is now seen as a new process with multiple approaches, which include the policies of HE massification and a variety of strategies that seek to attract more foreign students to study in Turkey (Taşçı & Kenan, 2019).

Organizations in the U.S. influence the direction of internationalization in a similar manner. In addition, the study by Shchepetylnykova and Alvis (2020) showed that the participation of the faculty in internationalization is considered to be very important for public universities in the U.S.

CONCLUSION

This paper provided analysis of key stakeholders' internationalization experiences in selected universities in the U.S. and in Turkey. From our analysis on internationalization in the US and Turkey we argue that it is critically important to not only take the national culture and context into account when examining internationalization but also to consider the factors that are managed by committed individual decision makers in specific institutions and that subsequently play out on a local level.

We have further shown how broad analyses of internationalization can be filtered down into localized contexts and specific institutional settings to illuminate the true mechanisms behind the curtain. We recommend that Turkey needs to develop new strategies by playing to its strengths, especially its geopolitical position, strong historical ties, and its advantages as a multicultural society. Its best approach would be to respond to current needs and establish the conditions required for future change. On the other hand, the U.S. universities have a lot to learn from universities in other countries. In particular, we argue that the U.S. universities should develop more local strategies to improve the socio-cultural aspects of internationalization. Another remarkable point is that the primary strategy in the U.S. universities is to attract students to campus. In addition to this strategy, their expanding the student sending strategy can contribute to the process of learning and experiencing intercultural skills from universities in other countries.

One of the significant findings of the present study is that the categorization based on the unequal relations between developed and developing nations, HE institutions (public and private), faculty members (qualified and less qualified), and students (English speaking and non-English speaking) overshadowed the ultimate goal of internationalization. The intercultural learning dimension and especially the inequality of opportunity dimension are neglected in the literature. Thus, the present study, although based on only two countries, demonstrates the importance of improving the socio-cultural aspects of internationalization.

In this context, it is seen that many factors, including geographical location (for countries in the Middle East, Africa etc.), individual student qualifications, and especially the mindset of personnel, institutional factors (funding shortages, donation systems, teaching-research focus), and systemic factors (central-local systems, amount of resources, differentiation of cultural priorities) affect the level and direction of internationalization in HE. Therefore, we suggest that future studies investigate these factors with an analysis that includes more countries.

Finally, we believe that the most important contribution of this study is that it presents an in-depth analysis of the internationalization efforts in two quite distinct countries and contexts based on an intercultural perspective. The perspectives of the university stakeholders in the two cultures and systems that were profiled in the present study provided an understanding of how cultural differences can alter practical approaches. For example, the meanings attributed to "internationalization" differed based on the culture and applications and served to determine the developmental direction. Due to the inequalities of opportunity and the ethical concerns expressed in the global literature, future studies should include more internationalization perspectives, especially those from emerging economies.

Our study of the U.S. and Turkey has demonstrated the value of analyzing internationalization based on the culture and context of each nation. As such, we hope we have been able to make a worthwhile contribution to further developing an understanding of the intercultural dimension of internationalization in HE.

Funding

This work was supported by George Washington University and TUBITAK/2214A (Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey: Grant number 1059B141600495)

Acknowledgments and Contributors

This paper is produced from the first author's doctoral dissertation. We thank George Washington University and TUBITAK/2214A for generously funding and supporting this research. In addition, we would like to thank Nancy Kober for her diligent proofreading of the manuscript.

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OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION
Volume 14, Issue 4 (2022), pp. 151-155
Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education
DOI: 10.32674/jcihe.v14i4.4858| https://ojed.org/jcihe

Book Review

Khalid Arar, Yasar Kondakci, Bernhard Streitwieser, and Anna Saiti. *Higher education in the era of migration, displacement, and internationalization*. New York: Routledge, 2021. 172 pp. $44.95 (paperback). ISBN 9780367363024.

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ABSTRACT

Higher Education in the Era of Migration, Displacement and Internationalization by Khalid Arar, Yasar Kondakci, Bernhard Streitwieser, and Anna Saiti provides a multifaceted exploration of the dilemmas involved in higher education policymaking and administration in keeping with the accelerated pace, scale, and diversity of transnational migration. Assuming that higher education empowers displaced persons to better themselves and their host communities, Arar et al. consider specific dynamics that shape the educational trajectories and choices available to these populations. The co-authors list activities and initiatives employed in various world states to create higher education pathways for displaced persons, highlighting different variables that affect policies and indicating the hurdles faced by the populations being served and the institutions supporting them. These country-specific examinations of approaches facilitating access are the richest contributions of the book. The discussion of the gendered dimensions of migration is less rewarding. Ultimately, this book is a timely investigation and can inform and improve higher education policies, practices, and narratives concerning displaced and refugee students.

In *Higher Education in the Era of Migration, Displacement and Internationalization*, co-authors Khalid Arar, Yasar Kondakci, Bernhard Streitwieser, and Anna Saiti explore the issues and dilemmas involved in higher education policymaking and administration in the face of accelerated globalization and large-scale transnational migration. Having either experienced statelessness themselves, observed it intimately, or studied it at length, the four authors bring diverse perspectives to book, approaching the topic through multiple lenses. Assuming that higher education (HE) empowers displaced persons to better themselves and their host communities, Arar et al. go over the specific dynamics that shape the educational trajectories and choices available to these populations. The co-authors list activities and initiatives employed in various world states to create HE pathways for displaced persons, highlighting different variables that affect policies and indicating the hurdles faced by the populations being served and the institutions supporting them. Arar et al. suggest that much work needs to be done to make HE spaces more inclusive and responsive for these vulnerable populations, utilizing data by UNESCO and third-sector organizations to substantiate their claims.

In the first chapter, Arar et al. force us to rethink our oversimplified definitions of migrants, reminding us that migrant students are a variegated and stratified group, with many having access to more financial, sociocultural, and educational capital than others. The authors establish differences between forcibly displaced and voluntarily mobile students, pointing out that student mobility should not be conflated with voluntary migration. While many migrants, entitled and well-resourced, migrate by choice, others are forced to flee their homelands by circumstances of war, conflict, political upheaval, economic hardship, and/or environmental catastrophe. Displaced migrants may lose their legal documents and credentials, sometimes their very homes and belongings, in search of safer havens. Their displacements lead to deprivations from social and economic statuses and lost educational opportunities.

Arar et al. lament that despite these realities, colleges and universities view and treat diversified international students as a monolithic group, failing to create and implement suitable admissions processes and procedures for their enrollment and success. Despite their disadvantaged backgrounds, refugees and asylum seekers get lumped together with regular international students who have the upper hand. Even their credentials are not fairly evaluated and recognized. The authors suggest that forcibly displaced students should be reclassified as a distinct category of student type alongside the existing categories of international students, foreign students, and credit-mobile students. Policymakers and practitioners are urged to discern differences in mobilities and build appropriate structures to accommodate forcibly displaced persons into HE. These alternative programs and procedures should take into consideration the unique needs and dispositions of refugee students and at-risk migrants, help mitigate the impacts of their displacements, and empower them to integrate harmoniously.

In the second chapter, Arar et al. contextualize global mobility flows, framing the global dimensions of mobility. International migration tends to flow from low- to high-income countries, and the authors expand upon the multifarious reasons why migrants move and relocate across borders, as well as the differing reactions of nation states to newcomers — receptions

ranging from welcoming to lukewarm to outright alienating. The authors distinguish between migrants, forced migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, displaced persons, and stateless persons, and trace the perilous journeys that involuntary migrants make, shedding light on policing, xenophobia, marginalization, and racism that migrants often endure along the way. In the following chapter, Arar et al. discuss how five countries — Morocco, Jordan, Mexico, Germany, and Bangladesh — on five different continents each deal with involuntary migrants, going over different public and political approaches and policies towards these mass influxes, the moral and ethical issues involved, and the newcomers' feelings of in/exclusion and un/belonging.

In the fourth chapter, Arar et al. share lessons gleaned from empirical scholarship on the subject of access to HE for asylum seekers and refugees. In particular, the authors assess varied governmental and institutional responses to newcomers' needs. They also address major personal and systemic challenges faced by displaced students when they seek to access pathways into HE, including eligibility, discrimination, transcript recognition, barriers to admission (such as high school accreditation, entrance exams, language literacy), as well as sociocultural, academic, and economical unpreparedness for HE. Arar et al. note that insufficient data exists on the numbers of displaced persons enrolled in HE institutions and suggest the need for more granular data. They also observe the need for more intersectional research. Overall, the literature reviewed has shown that integrating in and attaining HE helps displaced persons build confidence, feel secure, cope with trauma and abandonment, and assimilate into the local social fabric.

Arar et al., in the fifth chapter, go on to report on the experiences of Syrian refugees accessing and studying in Turkish HE, citing critical factors in the refugees' adaptation process and revealing that past policies have not been properly aligned to serve refugees' needs. This chapter also reiterates the rehabilitative, uplifting, and restorative role that HE has on the economic, social, and psychological conditions of forced migrants. The sixth chapter covers refugee support actions and programs, including those initiated by governmental actors, universities, community-based nonprofits, and tertiary sector agents. Arar et al. urge for support actions to be evolutionary and adaptable to actual needs, adequately funded, free from political influence, and humanitarian in intent. Arar et al. wrap up their book by dedicating the final chapter to the discussion of global discourses, future research, and recommendations (such as a shift away from a 'box ticking' approach to a more holistic approach to refugee resettlement).

This book draws on Edward Said's critical and scholarly musings on deracination and adds to a growing body of scholarship on refugee-background learners. Birtwell et al. (2020), for instance, have established that HE is fundamental in restoring dignity, security, and hope for refugee students. HE opportunities likely cushion refugee students from the negative aspects of forced migration and ease their transition into communities (Peralta, 2020). Refugee students display an unwavering commitment to the value of HE and to their future selves, even in the face of barriers such as bullying, lack of language fluency, and identity dissonance (Luu, 2020). Therefore, HE educators must reflect on their inclusion practices and address deficit thinking towards refugee students (MacIsaac et al., 2019).

Said has referred to our contemporary era as “the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration” (p. 174), and as Arar et al. themselves note, international migration will probably increase during the coming decades. Migration drivers such as economic pressures, environmental stress, and geopolitical transformations are likely to not merely persist but intensify, as exemplified by the crisis in Ukraine. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused social, economic, and political disruptions, influencing migration flows. This book serves as an important guide and resource for policymakers in countries faced with unexpected mass inflows, who must be prepared to meet these uncertainties and meaningfully absorb newcomers, tend to their needs, and foster their development.

This book also supplies the educational leadership and research community with tools and strategies to unfold the full potential of inclusion programs, especially those HE leaders and staff working to further the mission of accommodating displaced, disenfranchised, and destitute people within the fold of HE. Scholars and practitioners alike are offered a nuanced and fleshed-out understanding of the complex intersection of immigration policies with HE. Additionally, this book is valuable to students both at the undergraduate and graduate levels pursuing Higher Education, International and Comparative Education, Human Rights and Humanitarian Policy, Global Inclusion and Social Development, Migration Studies, and related fields.

While this book has many strengths, one of its significant limitations is that it fails to sufficiently include within its scope of discussion the plight of returnees and how HE systems in returnees’ home countries might support successful or sustainable repatriation. Similarly, while internally displaced persons (IDPs) are mentioned sporadically throughout the book (for instance, a mention of 11,000 IDPs hosted by Mexico), the unique needs of IDPs and how these might best be served by HE are not identified. Furthermore, the gendered nature of migration is not adequately delved into, leaving me wondering: How might we envision gender-sensitive refugee HE and resettlement policies? Svinjar (2020) has found that the likelihood that a woman refugee obtains a college degree is less than her male refugee peer. Displaced girls and women who are unaccompanied, pregnant, or disabled are especially vulnerable in the process of HE (Obradović-Ratković et al., 2020). While Arar et al. note that cultural taboos vigorously oppose education for girls and young women in refugee camps, they do not address how HE leaders might overcome gender-specific obstacles.

Overall, however, this book fills an important lacuna in the literature, since the subject of access to tertiary education for refugees and migrants remains a relatively understudied trend. By suggesting ways that HE systems worldwide can create policies and structures that respond fairly and adequately to the distinctive and respective demands of displaced people, refugees, and international students, this book also successfully bridges theory and practice. In order to make HE just and equitable, it is crucial that we generate spaces for reimagining citizenship, identity, and human rights. It is imperative to undo systemic barriers that prevent the entry or threaten the success of outsiders; after reading this book, it seems the very notion of the outsider and the “Other” must be questioned, revised, and perhaps done away with altogether.

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