Research Article

OJED
OPEN JOURNALS IN EDUCATION

© *Journal of International Students*
Volume 12, Issue 2 (2022), pp. 489-509
ISSN: 2162-3104 (Print), 2166-3750 (Online)
doi: 10.32674/jis.v12i2.3561
ojed.org/jis

The Role of Studying Abroad in Attitudes toward Immigration: A European Context

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ABSTRACT

International student mobility has been rising as a global phenomenon in the last few decades, while its impact could be various in different contexts. For the European Union (EU), studying in another EU member country could be regarded as an important factor for the solidarity and integrity of the Union. The current study elaborates on the role of studying abroad regarding the attitudes of people toward immigration in the EU. It shows that people who are studying in an EU member country, belonging to higher social classes and from EU15 countries, are more likely to have positive attitudes toward immigration. But after controlling several socio-demographic variables studying abroad still contributes positively to the attitudes of EU citizens toward immigration. Accordingly, current study provides promising pieces of evidence on the social contribution of studying abroad for both future research and policymakers.

Keywords: Eurobarometer, European Union, immigrants, migration, student mobility, study abroad

INTRODUCTION

One significant outcome of globalization is the increasing mobility of individuals across countries in recent decades. In addition to developments in technology and transportation, social, economic, cultural, and political issues, the situation has resulted in the migration of individuals from one country to another. As a result, discussions on refugees as forced migrants and the immigration issue continue to be an important topic in political agendas today.

In the case of Europe, the issue is more severe, since some developed countries in Europe become, what Triandafyllidou (2004) called, a "magnet" for people from both third world and eastern European countries. According to Eurostat (2019), there are 22.3 million non-EU citizens (5% of the EU-28) and 17.6 million other EU citizens residing in European countries as of January 2018. To this end, the number of people flowing into Europe as immigrants and refugees from unstable parts of the world has changed not only traditional national states in terms of social composition and ethnicity (Davidov & Semyonov, 2017) but also the attitudes of societies toward these newcomers. Specifically, negative attitudes toward immigrants and refugees derive mostly from problematic immigration policies, nationalism, and stereotypes toward other cultures and identities.

In addition to this severity of negative attitudes and increasing tension among cultures, as a result of the internationalization of higher education, a new type of short and medium-term immigration (student mobility/study abroad) began to emerge along with its consequences in social, political, cultural, and economic arenas. However, these migrants differ from non-student immigrants due to their desirability in the host country. In this type of experience, students are reportedly absorbing increasing cosmopolitan ideals and positive attitudes toward other cultures (Carlson & Widaman, 1988) and, as King and Raghuram (2013) put it, "students are solicited as desirable migrants because of the skills they bring and then subsequently develop in the countries into which they move" (p. 127). In short, such short-term immigration experience seems to have the potential to increase positive attitudes of both immigrants and the citizens who host them.

In terms of attitudes toward immigrants, the literature provides a rich coverage of the problem in a European context (Akrami et al., 2000; Davidov & Semyonov, 2017; Kleinschmidt, 2003; Leong & Ward, 2006; Rustenbach, 2010), global contexts (Fussell, 2014; Mayda, 2006; Ward & Masgoret, 2006). Although international students are arguably the least studied group in migration research (Bozheva, 2020; Findlay, 2011), a later study suggests that migration studies related to international student mobility and study abroad have a significant share in the literature (Gümüş et al., 2020). Considering the body of research partly addressed above, existing studies examining attitudes toward immigration lack the focus on the contribution of studying abroad to people's attitudes toward migration and immigrants, in general. However, people who have experience of immigration once in their lives might have attitudes toward immigration differing from people who have had no such experience. Therefore, this research aims to explore the role of studying abroad in people's attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. Accordingly, it attempts to answer two broad questions:

1. What is the contribution of studying abroad to individuals' attitudes toward immigration?

2. How does this contribution change over time and geography?

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Historically, immigration is not a new phenomenon in Europe, but its direction is impacted by the socio-economic and political circumstances of the time. As De la Rica et al. (2013) explained, Europe was characterized by emigration to the rest of the world before World War Two, and the second half of the 20th century witnessed a dramatic shift in direction, with European countries becoming a host region for immigrants. Today's picture is different. According to 2017 statistics, Europe and Asia in total hosted the largest immigrant population in the world, at a rate of 60%. And, from 1990 to 2017, the number of immigrants in Europe increased by 29 million; "Of the 29 million international migrants gained by Europe during this period, 46% were born in Europe, 24% in Asia, nearly 17% in Africa and 12% in Latin America and the Caribbean" (United Nations [UN], 2018).

In parallel with the increasing numbers and Europe becoming a continent of migration, issues related to immigration have become a major policy issue in countries affected by the demographic changes due to the inflow of immigrants (Bade, 2004). While major political discussions focus on the social, cultural, political, and economic integration of the immigrants, one part of the issue resides in the response of society to this changing landscape. The literature provides a wide range of concepts and discussions related to public reaction to immigration and the acceptance of newcomers. In addition, one of the most striking debates in the literature is related to how citizens of a host country see immigration and what attitudes they have toward the immigrants from within and outside of Europe. Considering the theoretical explanations, studies examining factors concerning public attitudes toward immigration could be grouped into two categories; studies focusing on the impact of individual-level factors and contextual-level factors.

The individual-level factors range from socio-economic status, welfare, and income (Bridges & Mateut, 2009; Genge & Bartolucci, 2019; Hoxhaj & Zuccotti, 2019; Huber & Oberdabernig, 2016), the position of individuals in the labor market (Gang et al., 2013), social capital (Economidou et al., 2020), education (Bilodeau & Fadol, 2011; Gang et al., 2013; Hatton, 2016), age (Barber et al., 2013; Calahorrano, 2013), race (Bridges & Mateut, 2009), and a number of other demographic and individual characteristics (Gang et al., 2013; Stöhr & Wichardt, 2016). For instance, Becchetti et al. (2010) found a negative relationship between both a job loss or reduction in household income and concerns about immigrants. As Pardos-Prado (2011) summarized this by arguing that the relationship between socio-economic status of individuals and their attitudes toward immigrants were mostly analyzed within the "xenophobic attitudes" from the perspectives of ethnic competition theory. Additionally, Paas and Halapuu (2012) suggested that "ethnic minorities, urban people, people with higher education and income, as well as people who have work experience abroad are, as a rule, more tolerant toward immigrants in Europe" (p. 161). Besides the link between individuals' socio-economic status and attitudes toward immigrants, some studies investigate if the people see immigrants as a socio-economic threat (Marozzi, 2016). From this

perspective, Paas and Halapuu (2012) found that the lower the attitudes toward socio-economic risk the lower the concern toward immigrants.

The contextual factors examined vary from economic crisis (Hatton, 2016), changes over time (Hatton, 2016; Murard, 2017), skills of the immigrants (Facchini & Mayda, 2012; O'Connell, 2011), religion of the immigrants (Strabac et al., 2014), terrorism (Leclerc, 2018), and the concentration of immigrants (Hoxhaj & Zuccotti, 2019; Scipioni et al., 2019). In short, the findings suggest that the economic conditions of the country, competition for jobs, race, and the education level of the immigrants and the host country citizens are all significant determinants of attitudes toward immigration.

The above discussions in a European context allow for current research, focusing on the outcomes of student mobility from an immigration perspective. As summarized by Coleman and Chafer (2011), the impact of study abroad on individuals and the resulting learned outcomes are discussed in the following six dimensions in the literature: academic, personal, professional, linguistic, cultural, and intercultural gains. Among them, the social turn of study abroad and personality changes seem to be more related to the attitudinal changes of individuals toward immigrants. Students who have encountered different cultures and identities during their study abroad might develop a global identity, more positive attitudes toward other cultures and individuals, cosmopolitan ideals, and global citizenship (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Hendershot & Sperandio, 2009; Tarrant et al., 2014).

METHOD

Data Source and Sample

Current study uses two different data sources: the Eurobarometer 77.3 (European Commission [EC], 2015) and the Eurobarometer 89.1 (EC, 2018). Eurobarometers are specifically designed surveys to understand the political, economic, or social conditions of EU citizens and to evaluate their perceptions regarding different EU policies or reforms. Both surveys were carried out by TNS Opinion & Social on request of the European Commission, Directorate-General for Communication in 2012 and 2018. Since the surveys are conducted by TNS Opinion & Social, and the data are publicly shared by the GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, the researchers did not need IRB approval.

Surveys cover the population of the respective nationalities who are aged 15 years and over in each of the EU member countries. A multi-stage, random sample design was applied, and several sampling points were drawn with probability proportional to population size and population density in each member state. In this regard, the samples were composed of 26,637 and 27,988 respondents in 2012 and 2018, respectively.

Within this context, in 2012, of the respondents, 58.1% are from EU15 countries, 47.3% agree that immigrants contribute a lot to their country, 12.5% studied abroad, 54.0% are female, 47.9% are working, 27.5% live in large towns,

and 51.8% are composed of the middle class, and the respondents who are 55 years old and over constitute the biggest share of the sample (39.5%).

In 2018, of the respondents, 56.0% are from EU15 countries, 44.4% agree that immigrants contribute a lot to their country, 69.5% feel positive about immigration from EU member states, 38.5% feel positive about immigration from outside the EU, 20.4% studied abroad, 54.2% are female, 50.1% are working, 27.8% live in large towns, and 68.5% are composed of the middle class (lower-middle, middle, and upper-middle classes in total), and the respondents who are 55 years old and over constitute the biggest share of the sample (46.8%).

Variables

Dependent Variables

In the surveys, three items were available for the attitudes toward immigration. However, only the first one below was included in both surveys. The other two were included in the 2018 survey only.

Immigrants' Contributions

This variable was derived from a set of items related to the question, "To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?" One of the items is, "Immigrants contribute a lot to (our country)." Responses are Likert Type in four as 1: totally agree, 2: tend to agree, 3: tend to disagree, and 4: totally disagree. Accordingly, this item was transformed into a dichotomous variable representing whether participants agree (=1) or disagree (=0).

Feelings Regarding Immigration of People From EU Member States

This variable is one of the two items related to the question, "Please tell me whether each of the following statements evokes a positive or negative feeling for you?" One of the items is, "Immigration of people from EU Member States." This item is Likert Type in four as 1: very positive, 2: fairly positive, 3: fairly negative, 4: very negative. It was transformed into a dichotomous variable representing whether the participant has a positive feeling (=1) or not (=0).

Feelings Regarding Immigration of People From Outside the EU

This variable was derived from the other item, "Immigration of people outside the EU," for the same question represented in the second dependent variable. It has the same Likert Type rating, and the same transformation was applied to create a similar variable.

Independent Variables

Studying Abroad

This variable was derived from a set of items related to the question, "For each of the following achievements of the EU, could you tell me whether you have benefitted from it or not?" One of the items is, "Studying in another EU country." And answers are dichotomous: "has benefitted" (1) and "has not benefitted" (2). Has not benefited was taken as the reference category.

National Group

National group represents the two-broad groups of EU member countries, namely EU15 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) and New Member States (NMS [Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia]). EU15 countries are those members of the EU up to 1995, and the NMS became members of the EU after 2004. The United Kingdom was included in this list since it was still an official member of the EU during the administration of the surveys. NMS was taken as the reference category.

Gender

Gender is simply male and female in both surveys. Male was taken as a reference category.

Age

Age was treated as a continuous variable.

Employment

Employment is represented as to whether the participant is 1: self-employed, 2: employed, or 3: not working. Self-employed and employed answers were transformed into another category as employed (=1) and not working (=0). Not working was taken as the reference category.

Type of Community

This variable represents the residential area. It is categorized into three items in both surveys; 1: Rural Area, 2: Small/Medium Size Town, 3: Large Town. The rural area was treated as the reference category.

Social Class

This variable is derived from the question preserved in both surveys, "Do you see yourself and your household belonging to…?" The social class is categorized as 1: the working class, 2: the middle class, and 3: the upper class in the 2012 survey. However, in 2018, the middle class was enlarged as "the lower middle class," "the upper middle class," and another item "the higher class" was added. Working class was taken as the reference category.

Analysis

Considering the dichotomous dependent variables, binary logistic regression analyses were performed, and weighting was applied in all of them. For the immigrants' contributions, analyses were made for both years, but for the feelings about immigration, analyses were only made for 2018, because of the absence of the last two dependent variables in the 2012 survey.

Before passing each analysis, several assumptions were also checked. For the linearity between the Logit of the outcome and each predictor variable (the only continuous variable is age), there is a linear relationship between the age and dependent variables in all models. We checked this assumption by controlling the pair-wise scatter plot between age and Logit values in each model, and there was not any violation of the linearity assumption.

Considering the independence of errors, in our data, the observations do not come from repeated measurements or matched data, since they are gathered by different respondents each year. To check the influential values, we used Cook's distance. According to Field (2009) values for Cook's distance should be lower than 1.0. And none of the values for Cook's distance in our analyses for all models were above 1.0. To control the multicollinearity, we used VIF and tolerance values. According to Hair et al. (2013), the VIF value lies between 1.00 and 10.00 and it should be closer to 1.00, with the Tolerance value lying between 0.10 and 1.00 and it should be closer to 1.00. In the analyses, none of the VIF values were no higher than 1.208, and Tolerance values were lower than 0.828. Lastly, the sample size is quite enough. According to Hair et al. (2013), there should be at least 10 observations per number of independent variables for sufficient sample size in logistic regression analysis.

Hence, a basic binary Logit model, Logit (P_i) = Log [P_i/(1-P_i)] = p_i, was used, and a stepwise approach was followed in the analyses. Accordingly, national group is included in Model 1 only; Logit (P_i) = β_{0i} + β_{1i}EU15 + r_i. National group and studying abroad are included in Model 2; Logit (P_i) = β_{0i} + β_{1i}EU15 + β_{2i}STUDIEDABROAD + r_i. Model 3 represents the full model; Logit (P_i) = β_{0i} + β_{1i}EU15 + β_{2i}STUDIEDABROAD + β_{3i}FEMALE + β_{4i}AGE + β_{5i}WORKING + β_{6i}RURAL + β_{7i}WORKINGCLASS + r_i.

But these models are appropriate to work with the full data, including all members of the EU. Within national group analyses, there are only two models (Models 4 and 5), resulted by the exclusion of the national group. Accordingly, studying abroad is included in Model 4 only; Logit (P_i) = β_{0i} +

β_{1i}STUDIEDABROAD + r_i. Model 5 represents the whole model within EU15 and NMS; Logit (P_i) = β_{0i} + β_{1i}STUDIEDABROAD + β_{2i}FEMALE + β_{3i}AGE + β_{4i}WORKING + β_{5i}RURAL + β_{6i}WORKINGCLASS + r_i.

FINDINGS

Immigrants' Contributions

Immigrants' contributions were represented as to whether people agree or disagree that immigrants contribute a lot to their country. According to Table 1, along with being in the upper/higher class category and living in an EU15 country, studying abroad increased the odds of agreeing with immigrants' contributions in both years.

In 2012, studying abroad made a bigger contribution than living in an EU15 country when they are only two variables in the model. However, after controlling the other variables, being in the upper/higher social class makes the greatest contribution. On the other hand, the contribution of living in an EU15 country to the odds of agreeing increases in 2018. Still, studying abroad is the third biggest contributing variable in the model. Considering other variables, age doesn't make an important contribution, even if it is statistically significant, because β is equal to 1.00 in 2012 and is extremely close to 1.00 in 2018. Similarly, gender doesn't make an essential contribution for almost the same reasons. However, the contribution of being employed increases between 2012 and 2018, even if it is only small. Living in a large town always increases the odds of agreeing as opposed to living in a rural area in both years.

Apart from this, when the association of studying abroad and perceptions on immigrants' contributions are compared by national groups in different years, the role of studying abroad in an understanding of immigrants' contributions could become clearer. According to Table 2, studying abroad is an important contributor to the odds of agreeing, especially in the NMS. In 2012, studying abroad is responsible for 38.5% of the explained variance in EU15 countries, but it goes up to 59.3% in the NMS. In 2018 however, it decreases to 31.6% in EU15 countries, whereas it increases to 58.7% in the NMS. Moreover, in 2012, after controlling the other variables, studying abroad is the second biggest contributor to the odds of agreeing in EU15 countries, but in the NMS, it is first. In 2018, being in higher social classes re-establishes itself as the biggest contributor in both national groups. In the EU15, studying abroad increases the odds of agreeing 2.11 times more than not studying abroad in 2012, but it increases only 1.54 times in 2018. However, in the NMS, the contribution of studying abroad goes up between 2012 and 2018.

Age and gender do not make an important contribution. However, being employed positively contributes to the odds of agreeing in both national groups and years. In 2012 and 2018, living in large towns makes both positive and significant contribution than living in a rural area in the EU15. In the NMS,

however, the contribution of living in small/middle size and large towns becomes negative between 2012 and 2018. Apart from this, being in higher social classes makes a relatively more positive and significant contribution than being working class to the odds of agreeing, especially in the NMS.

Table 1: Association of Studying Abroad and Perceptions Related to Immigrants' Contribution in 2012 and 2018

	2012 (n = 22,396[a])						2018 (n = 24,306[a])					
	Model 1 (n = 22,087[b])		Model 2 (n = 22,086[b])		Model 3 (n = 22,087[b])		Model 1 (n = 23,892[b])		Model 2 (n = 23,892[b])		Model 3 (n = 23,892[b])	
	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β
Constant	0.031	0.75***	0.034	0.62***	0.060	0.52***	0.031	0.45***	0.034	0.37***	0.065	0.48***
National group												
EU15	0.035	1.67***	0.036	1.92***	0.037	1.91***	0.034	2.89***	0.035	3.22***	0.036	3.29***
Studied abroad												
Yes			0.046	1.99***	0.046	1.83***			0.034	1.73***	0.035	1.57***
Gender												
Female					0.028	0.98					0.027	0.95*
Age					0.001	1.00***					0.001	0.99***
Employment												
Working					0.029	1.10***					0.029	1.16***
Type of community												
Small/medium town					0.032	1.24***					0.032	0.89***
Large town					0.037	1.41***					0.036	1.05
Social class-2012												
Middle class					0.028	1.33***						
Upper class					0.088	1.99***						
Social class-2018												
Lower middle											0.042	0.91*
Middle											0.032	1.17***
Upper middle											0.057	1.77***
Higher											0.178	2.20***
Negalkarke R^2	0.013		0.027		0.047		0.056		0.070		0.092	
Model χ^2 (df)	222.239 (1)***		457.968 (2)***		793.951 (9)***		1024.196 (1)***		1281.794 (2)***		1702.097 (11)***	

*p ≤ 0.05; **p ≤ 0.01; ***p ≤ 0.001.

[a]Unweighted observations

[b]Weighted observations

Table 2: Comparison of the Association of Studying Abroad and Perceptions Related to Immigrants' Contribution by National Groups

	2012								2018							
	EU15 (n = 13,542[a])				NMS (n = 8,854[a])				EU15 (n = 13,818[a])				NMS (n = 10,488[a])			
	Model 4 (n = 13,197[b])		Model 5 (n = 13,197[b])		Model 4 (n = 8,290[b])		Model 5 (n = 8,291[b])		Model 4 (n = 13,532[b])		Model 5 (n = 13,533[b])		Model 4 (n = 10,081[b])		Model 5 (n = 10,081[b])	
	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β
Constant	0.018	1.18***	0.070	0.90***	0.026	0.66***	0.083	0.69***	0.019	1.19***	0.075	1.65***	0.028	0.36***	0.099	0.37***
Studied abroad																
Yes	0.072	2.30***	0.073	2.11***	0.050	1.64***	0.051	1.54***	0.048	1.67***	0.049	1.49***	0.045	1.87***	0.045	1.74***
Gender																
Female			0.036	0.99			0.045	0.93			0.035	0.94			0.044	1.00
Age			0.001	1.00***			0.001	1.00***			0.001	0.99***			0.001	1.00***
Occupation																
Employed			0.038	1.12***			0.047	1.04			0.037	1.16***			0.048	1.19***
Type of community																
Small/medium town			0.041	1.32***			0.054	0.97			0.041	0.89**			0.052	0.86**
Large town			0.048	1.54***			0.056	1.05			0.048	1.12*			0.057	0.81***
Social class-2012																
Middle class			0.036	1.35***			0.048	1.33***								
Upper class			0.120	2.24***			0.128	1.47***								
Social class-2018																
Lower middle											0.054	0.88**			0.073	1.07
Middle											0.042	1.14**			0.055	1.35***
Upper middle											0.075	1.80***			0.103	1.74***
Higher											0.237	1.84**			0.256	4.38***
Negalkarke R^2	0.015		0.039		0.016		0.027		0.012		0.038		0.027		0.046	
Model χ^2 (df)	146.400 (1)***		392.094 (8)***		99.219 (1)***		166.923 (8)***		177.798 (1)***		390.783 (10)***		195.173 (1)***		334.992 (10)***	

*$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$; ***$p \leq 0.001$

[a]Unweighted observations

[b]Weighted observations

Feelings About Immigration

Feelings about immigration are represented as being positive with regard to immigration from both inside and outside the EU. The first analyses were made using all the data in the 2018 survey, without comparing the national groups.

Accordingly, Table 3 shows that studying abroad increases the odds of having positive feelings by 1.57 times after controlling the other variables for immigration from inside and outside the EU. It is the third biggest contributor to having positive feelings regarding immigration from EU member countries, after being in the upper-middle and higher social classes. It preserves its place for having positive feelings regarding immigration from outside the EU, but this time, after being in higher class and living in the EU15.

Considering gender, employment, type of community, and age, some of them make significant contributions to having positive feelings about immigration from the EU and outside of the EU. However, these are also only small contributions. But social class differs from all of them. For having positive feelings about immigration from EU member countries, social class makes more contribution than it makes in having positive feelings about immigration outside the EU, which means geographical factors related to the direction of immigration prevail against the social factors.

When the national groups are investigated separately, studying abroad has a more essential role in having positive feelings regarding immigration, whether it is from both inside and outside the EU. According to Table 4, studying abroad is the second major contributor to having positive feelings about immigration from both directions, and in both national groups, after being in the higher social classes. For having positive feelings about immigration from EU member countries, studying abroad is responsible for 27.27% of the explained variance in the EU15, whereas in NMS, it is 40.74%. However, for having positive feelings about immigration from outside the EU, studying abroad is responsible for 31.25% and 56.25% of the explained variance in EU15 and the NMS, respectively.

Moreover, age and gender make certain significant contributions, but these are often minor, since either $\beta = 1.00$ or is very close to 1.00. Being employed makes only one significant contribution and increases the odds of having positive feelings regarding immigration from EU member countries in the NMS by 1.24 times. Living in large towns significantly increases the odds of having positive feelings about immigration from EU member countries in the NMS more than living in rural areas, whereas it significantly increases the odds of having positive feelings about immigration from outside the EU in the EU15. Lastly, social class, especially being in a higher social class compared with being working class, increases the odds of having positive feelings about immigration from both directions in both national groups. However, it could be said that the contribution of social class also diminishes when it comes to immigration from outside the EU.

Table 3: Association of Studying Abroad and Feelings toward Immigration From Inside/Outside the EU-2018

	Positive feelings about immigration from EU member states (n = 24,554[a])						Positive feelings about immigration outside the EU (n = 24,347[a])					
	Model 1 (n = 24,173[b])		Model 2 (n = 24,173[b])		Model 3 (n = 24,173[b])		Model 1 (n = 23,915[b])		Model 2 (n = 23,915[b])		Model 3 (n = 23,917[b])	
	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β
Constant	0.031	2.24***	0.033	1.88***	0.069	2.88***	0.031	0.43***	0.034	0.36***	0.064	0.60***
National group												
EU15	0.035	1.03	0.035	1.13***	0.036	1.12**	0.034	2.11***	0.035	2.35***	0.036	2.40***
Studied abroad												
Yes			0.038	1.76***	0.039	1.57***			0.033	1.74***	0.034	1.57***
Gender												
Female					0.029	0.90***					0.027	0.99
Age					0.001	0.99***					0.001	0.99***
Occupation												
Employed					0.031	1.01					0.029	1.04
Type of community												
Small/medium Town					0.033	0.93*					0.032	0.90***
Large town					0.039	1.08*					0.036	1.07
Social class												
Lower middle					0.043	1.01					0.042	1.00
Middle					0.034	1.38***					0.033	1.19***
Upper middle					0.066	2.26***					0.055	1.45***
Higher					0.225	2.97***					0.167	1.69**
Negalkarke R^2	0.000		0.014		0.045		0.028		0.043		0.068	
Model χ^2 (df)	0.703 (1)		235.941 (2)***		773.335 (11)***		500.973 (1)***		778.428 (2)***		1244.786 (11)***	

*$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$; ***$p \leq 0.001$

[a]Unweighted observations
[b]Weighted observations

Table 4: Comparison of the Association of Studying Abroad and Feelings Toward Immigration From Inside/Outside the EU by National Groups-2018

	Positive feelings toward immigration from the EU member states								Positive feelings toward immigration outside the EU							
	EU15 (n = 13,959[a])				NMS (n = 10,595[a])				EU15 (n = 13,790[a])				NMS (n = 10,557[a])			
	Model 4 (n = 13,693[b])		Model 5 (n = 13,693[b])		Model 4 (n = 10,194[b])		Model 5 (n = 10,194[b])		Model 4 (n = 13,518[b])		Model 5 (n = 13,519[b])		Model 4 (n = 10,173[b])		Model 5 (n = 10,173[b])	
	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE	β
Constant	0.020	2.10***	0.083	3.65***	0.026	1.96***	0.096	1.91***	0.019	0.83***	0.075	1.63***	0.028	0.36***	0.099	0.33***
Studied abroad																
Yes	0.055	1.89***	0.057	1.65***	0.047	1.52***	0.048	1.46***	0.046	1.77***	0.048	1.57***	0.045	1.66***	0.046	1.56***
Gender																
Female			0.038	0.89***			0.044	0.96			0.035	1.00			0.044	0.95
Age			0.001	0.99***			0.001	1.00**			0.001	0.99***			0.001	1.00**
Occupation																
Employed			0.041	0.96			0.048	1.24***			0.037	1.03			0.048	1.09
Type of community																
Small/medium town			0.044	0.90*			0.051	0.99			0.041	0.87***			0.052	1.03
Large town			0.052	1.03			0.057	1.26***			0.048	1.11*			0.057	0.88*
Social class																
Lower middle			0.056	0.97			0.069	1.22**			0.055	0.93			0.071	1.39***
Middle			0.045	1.51***			0.052	1.03			0.043	1.15***			0.056	1.50***
Upper middle			0.086	2.48***			0.113	1.46***			0.071	1.44***			0.104	1.61***
Higher			0.296	3.06***			0.364	2.81**			0.221	1.59*			0.256	2.75***
Negalkarke R^2	0.015		0.055		0.11		0.027		0.015		0.048		0.018		0.32	
Model χ^2 (df)	144.551 (1)***		542.116 (10)***		81.020 (1)*		194.091 (10)***		154.381 (1)***		497.553 (10)***		126.710 (1)***		230.932 (10)***	

*$p \leq 0.05$; **$p \leq 0.01$; ***$p \leq 0.001$

[a]Unweighted observations

[b]Weighted observations

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In examining the contribution of the study abroad experience on people's attitudes toward immigrants and immigration, one major finding is that contribution of studying abroad is significant for having positive attitudes toward immigrants and immigration, regardless of time or geography. Earlier research that focuses on the learning outcomes of students' educational experience outside of their country links the study abroad experience with personal gains, such as language acquisition (Coleman & Chafer, 2011; Kinginger, 2009), cultural competence (Perez-Encinas & Rodriguez-Pomeda, 2019; Watson et al., 2013), identity creation (King & Ruiz-Gelices, 2003), and intercultural competence (Alred & Byram 2002; Avcılar & Gök, 2021). The findings of such research contribute to the literature on social gains of studying abroad by linking it with personal attitudes toward others, namely immigrants. And our findings also partly explain attitudes toward immigrants by arguing that an educational immigration experience influences people's perception of immigrants.

Moreover, people from EU15 countries are more likely to have positive attitudes toward immigrants and immigration. Similarly, findings emerge from a study by Meuleman et al. (2009) that there is a regional difference among European countries toward immigration. They found that, "populations of Northern European countries, especially Scandinavian countries, tend to hold more open attitudes toward immigration, while Southern and Eastern European countries, those that started to experience sizeable immigration only recently, are among the least immigrant friendly" (p. 359). Furthermore, national group differences also affect the contribution of studying abroad. In the NMS, studying abroad explains more variance in the odds of having positive attitudes toward immigrants and immigration than in the EU15.

Another implication of this research is that there is a close relationship between peoples' socio-economic status and their attitudes toward immigrants. In other words, being in higher social classes and employment (having a job) have a positive contribution on having positive attitudes toward immigrants and immigration regardless of national group. Theoretical explanations of people's attitudes toward immigrants argue from economic perspectives that people might have negative attitudes toward immigrants when they see the immigrants as threats to their jobs and wages (O'Rourke & Sinnott, 2006; Wilkes et al., 2008). These findings can partly be explained by the findings of earlier research that job insecurity is greater in lower classes. Näswall and De Witte (2003) suggested that "employees in jobs characterized by manual labor, contingent workers, and to some extent older workers, and those with lower levels of education, experience higher levels of job insecurity" (p. 189). The findings of this research are consistent with the individual level socio-economic factors (household income, job loss) impacting on people's attitudes toward immigrants as found by Becchetti et al. (2010). However, there is need for a more detailed up-to-date examination is needed in explaining the association between socio-economic status and attitudes toward immigrants by future research for a better policy recommendation. Because there is a contradiction between the findings in the

literature. Gang et al. (2002) using the Eurobarometer survey of 1988–1997 found that Europeans, who are in economic competition with foreigners have a negative view of immigrants. In their later study (Gang et al., 2013), using 1988, 2003, and 2008 Eurobarometer surveys, they argue that during economic strains, negative attitudes toward immigrants increase. By contrast, Valentino et al. (2019), whose study sample from four continents, argued that "there is little support for the Labor Market Competition hypothesis, since respondents are not more opposed to immigrants in their own SES stratum" (p. 1201) leaving a space for future research. Besides the individual level socio-economic factors, state level (welfare distribution among the residents) concerns that impact individuals' attitudes toward immigrants are also noteworthy to consider in future research from the perspective of what is called "welfare chauvinism."

Additional findings from the research suggest that people living in larger towns in the EU15 are more likely to have/develop positive attitudes toward immigrants and immigration than people living in rural areas, confirming the findings of Garcia and Davidson (2013) that people in rural areas have negative attitudes toward immigrants in the United States. However, in the NMS, people living in large towns are less likely to feel positive about immigration from outside EU member countries than people living in a rural area, which requires further investigation as to whether this difference is related to people's cultural and economic differences or is related to continuing adaptation of NMS to the European Union.

Gender and age do not make an essential contribution to the development of positive attitudes toward immigrants and immigration regardless of year and national group. Calahorrano (2013) found a hump-shaped association between population age, peaking at around the 70s, and people's concerns toward immigration. However, the data of this research do not confirm this association; one possible reason is due to the cross-sectional secondary data use in the current research. According to one perspective, women are more "others-oriented" than men, who tend to be self-oriented, and women have a more favorable outlook toward other racial groups than men (Hughes & Tuch, 2003). But the findings of this research do not find supportive evidence for such a school of thought.

Overall, this study shows that studying abroad may play an important role in having positive attitudes toward immigrants and immigration, even after controlling certain socio-demographic factors. National group characteristics and time factors may lessen or strengthen the contribution of studying abroad, but its positive and significant contribution remains salient. A possible explanation for this could be the relatively similar experience that students studying abroad and people migrating have, because of the similar motives they may share. So, increasing the opportunities to study abroad among EU member countries could be an essential solution, especially for people living in the NMS, and from working or lower-middle-class sections of society in both national groups. Therefore, the findings of this research seem to provide promising pieces of evidence for those researchers who investigate the social outcomes of study abroad, and for those policymakers of EU countries struggling with an increasing number of immigrants and, as a result, an increase in the number of citizens who

oppose them. As this study is limited to the European citizens' study abroad experience in other European countries, it leaves space for future research on the role of the European citizens' study abroad experience outside the EU, and the role of non-European citizens' study abroad experience in their attitudes toward immigration.

Limitations

There are several limitations of the study. First, the exact meaning of the term "studying abroad" is not clearly articulated in the surveys so it may include different types of degree and credit mobility or abroad voluntary activities covering short- or long-term study abroad periods. Second, unlike the experimental design surveys, the cross-sectional data utilized in this study hinder to make sharp decisions on the effect of studying abroad on the attitudes toward immigration and immigrants. Accordingly, we suggest further investigation to confirm whether this positive role of studying abroad in the attitudes toward immigrants and immigration is a result of the abroad study experience or just an overrepresentation of respondents who already have positive attitudes, considering the possible selection effects originating from the absence of pre-measure of those attitudes.

A similar limitation is related to the role of socio-economic status in both studying abroad and attitudes toward immigration. The current study shows that people from higher social classes have positive attitudes toward immigration. Besides, mobile students are often from the higher strata (Van Mol & Timmerman, 2014), and lack of financial means and study costs could be a hindering factor the mobility (Dabasi-Halász et al., 2019; Souto-Otero et al., 2013). So, socio-economic status might also be a preexisting factor for the mobility of the people, and the actual contribution of studying abroad could be limited because of such interaction effect.

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