Challenges Experienced by Kazakhstani Students during their Academic Mobility

Program Abroad

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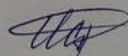
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ABSTRACT

Challenges Experienced by Kazakhstani Students during their Academic Mobility

Program Abroad

Internationalization of higher education in Kazakhstan, as a viable response to globalization, is carried out through academic mobility programs among other initiatives. However, studying abroad is not all about sweetness and light, it might also cause challenges for international students. The problem is that the majority of research conducted on student mobility is focused on the benefits of the programs lacking information about potential obstacles. Moreover, there is little research examining various strategies employed by international students during their adjustment in a new environment. Therefore, this study aimed to explore what kinds of challenges Kazakhstani students encounter during their academic mobility program abroad. Additionally, the study examined students' reactions to these challenges as well as different approaches and strategies employed by them to overcome obstacles. The qualitative research design was used to better address the research questions of this study. Ten former academic mobility students were selected and interviewed employing a purposeful sampling strategy. Overall, the results of the study demonstrate different categories of challenges that Kazakhstani students encountered in a foreign country. These challenges are related to socialization and communication in a local community, foreign language proficiency, entering a new academic environment, experiencing culture shock and daily life abroad. The most popular strategies employed by students involve seeking social support from teaching staff, close ones, and fellow students, using sign language, gestures and translators when confronting issues with understanding and speaking in a foreign language, establishing stability by setting routine and ensuring an active lifestyle abroad.

Keywords: academic mobility programs, study abroad, international students, adjustment, challenges, strategies.

Аңдатпа

Қазақстандық Студенттердің Шетелдегі Академиялық Ұтқырлық Бағдарламасы Кезіндегі Басынан Өткен Қиындықтары

Жаһандануға жауап ретінде Қазақстандағы жоғары білімді интернационалдандыру басқа бастамалардың қатарында академиялық ұтқырлық бағдарламалары арқылы жүзеге асырылады. Дегенмен, шетелде оқу позитивті тәжірибе ғана емес, сонымен қатар ол халықаралық студенттерге қиындықтар тудыруы мүмкін.Мәселе мынада: студенттер ұтқырлығы бойынша зерттеулердің көпшілігі бағдарламаның артықшылықтарына назар аударады да мүмкін проблемалар туралы ақпаратты елемейді. Сонымен қатар, халықаралық студенттер жаңа ортаға бейімделу кезінде қолданатын әртүрлі стратегияларды зерттейтін зерттеулер аз. Сондықтан бұл зерттеу қазақстандық студенттердің шетелде академиялық ұтқырлық бағдарламасы кезінде қандай қиындықтарға тап болатынын зерттеуге бағытталды. Зерттеу студенттердің осы қиындықтарға реакциясын, сондай-ақ проблемаларды жеңу үшін қолданатын әртүрлі тәсілдер мен стратегияларды зерттеді. Зерттеу сұрақтеrwapына жауап беруде сапалы зерттеу дизайны пайдаланылды. Он академиялық ұтқырлық студенттері таңдалынылып сұхбат өткізілді. Жалпы алғанда, зерттеу нәтижелері қазақстандық студенттердің шет елде кездесетін қиындықтардың әртүрлі санаттарын көрсетеді. Бұл қиындықтар жергілікті қауымдастықтағы әлеуметтену мен қарым-қатынасқа, шет тілін білуге, жаңа академиялық ортаға енуге, мәдени күйзеліс пен шетелдегі күнделікті өмірге байланысты. Студенттер қолданатын ең танымал стратегиялар оқытушылар ұжымынан, жақын адамдарынаң және курстастарынан әлеуметтік қолдау іздеуді, шет тілінде түсіну мен сөйлеуге қатысты мәселелерге тап болған кезде ымдау тілін және аударма қолданбаларды пайдалануды, күнделікті тәртіп орнату және шетелде белсенді өмір салтын қамтамасыз етуді қамтиды. .

Аннотация

Проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются Казахстанские студенты во время прохождения программы академической мобильности за рубежом

Интернационализация высшего образования в Казахстане, как действенный ответ на глобализацию, осуществляется через программы академической мобильности среди других инициатив. Однако, учеба за границей - это не только про позитивный опыт, это также может вовлекать проблемы у иностранных студентов. Проблема в том, что большинство исследований, посвященных студенческой мобильности, сосредоточены на преимуществах программы игнорируя информацию о потенциальных препятствиях. Кроме того, существует мало исследований, изучающих различные стратегии, используемые иностранными студентами во время их адаптации в новой среде. Таким образом, это исследование было направлено на изучение того, с какими проблемами сталкиваются казахстанские студенты во время программы академической мобильности за рубежом. Кроме того, в исследовании были изучены реакции учащихся на эти проблемы, а также различные подходы и стратегии, используемые ими для преодоления препятствий. Качественный метод исследования был использован для лучшего решения исследовательских вопросов этого исследования. Были выбраны 10 студентов программы академической мобильности и проведены интервью используя стратегию целенаправленной выбора. В целом, результаты исследования демонстрируют разные категории проблем, с которыми казахстанские студенты столкнулись в чужой стране. Эти проблемы связаны с социализацией и коммуникацией в местном сообществе, владением иностранным языком, адаптацией в новую академическую среду, переживанием культурного шока и повседневной жизни за границей. Наиболее популярные стратегии, используемые студентами, включают поиск социальной поддержки со стороны преподавателей, близких и однокурсников,

использование языка жестов, переводчиков при возникновении проблем с пониманием и говорением на иностранном языке, установление стабильности путем строгого режима и обеспечение активного образа жизни за границей. .

Ключевые слова: программы академической мобильности, обучение за рубежом, иностранные студенты, адаптация, проблемы, стратегии.

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1. **Introduction**

1.1. **Introduction**

This chapter introduces the research study. It starts by providing the background to the study. The problem statement and statement of purpose along with research questions are also addressed. The chapter further explains the significance of the study and provides the definitions of the main concepts. Finally, the chapter provides the outline of the whole thesis.

1.2. **Background Information**

Studying abroad is a short, temporary stay in a foreign nation during which students may immerse themselves in the host culture and practice the target language (Larrinaga & Amurrio, 2015; Moore, 2016). International student mobility is expected to exceed 8 million students per year by 2025, according to projections (Guruz, 2011, as cited in Rustemova et al., 2020). Higher education institutions are increasingly focusing their efforts on attracting overseas students, who provide both financial and cultural benefits to the institution (Milian et al., 2015). According to Green (2012) and Wildavsky (2012), high levels of student mobility are an indicator of status and excellence for higher education institutions because internationalization is becoming a significant indicator in world rankings (Hazelkorn, 2015).

Among the many existing definitions of the concept of internationalization, the most common is proposed by Knight (2004) who defines internationalization of higher education as the provision of sponsored programs that enable institutions and people to participate in international activities such as mobility, research, and linkages. Internationalization is also described as "any systematic, sustained effort aimed at making higher education (more) responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labour markets" (Van der Wende, 1997, as cited in Kreber, 2009, p. 2). Given its importance in higher education sector, "the European Commission, international organizations such as OECD, UNESCO, and the World Bank, national governments, as well

as higher education organizations such as the International Association of Universities (IAU) and the European Universities Association (EUA), gradually placed internationalization at the top of the reform agenda" (de Wit & Altbach, 2021, p. 28).

Moreover, internationalization of higher education is frequently viewed as a viable solution to globalization (Van der Wende, 2007). Universities, knowledge-producing institutions with social, cultural, ideological, political, and economic obligations, respond to globalization by adopting internationalization. If we look at definitions of terms on a broad level, while the term internationalization appears to imply cooperation and understanding between two countries and/or cultures, the term globalization frequently evokes negative connotations such as neocolonialism and cultural homogenization (McCabe, 2001). Although different in definitions, they are inextricably linked, with consequences for educational planning and practice in general, and for study abroad in particular (McCabe, 2001).

Internationalization of higher education is also developing in Kazakhstan. It is influenced by initiatives such as government-sponsored academic mobility programs, intergovernmental agreements on educational exchange, and encouragement for international accreditation of universities, the Bolashak international scholarship program, participation in the Bologna Process and the establishment of Nazarbayev University (Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016). Improving educational quality is a key objective of internationalization in Kazakhstan, with an emphasis on academic mobility (Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016). Kazakhstan's internationalization policy has a national aim of 20% student mobility by 2020, as expressed in the Strategy for Academic Mobility in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2012-2020 and supported financially by the country's Academic Mobility Scholarships (Li & Ashirbekov, 2014). To be specific, in Kazakhstan "the number of outbound internationally mobile students grew from 20,000 in 1998 to almost 100,000 in 2017" (UNESCO 2020, Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China as cited in Rustemova et al., 2020).

However, according to Savicki (2013) being an international student is not "all sweetness and light" (p. 1). Studying abroad has its advantages, but it also has its drawbacks, challenges, fears, and concerns. These are, without a doubt, an important component of the experience, without which the student's growth would be impeded (Schnickel et al., 2010). Nevertheless, concerns about living in a new area, financial restraints, familial pressures, and logistical barriers can all impact student involvement in mobility programs (OECD, 2017). Therefore, several specific obstacles confronted by international students must be handled in order to offer a meaningful international experience (Glass, 2012; Moores & Popadiuk, 2011).

1.3.   **Problem Statement**

Studying in a foreign country may be intimidating for many students especially for those who never traveled overseas and whose language of instruction is a foreign language (OECD, 2017) which is particularly the case of Kazakhstani students. The problem is that most of the existing research on student mobility programs focus on its positive sides (Lee et al., 2012; Milian et al., 2015; Waibel et al., 2018). Moreover, there is a scarcity of research on the variety of tactics used by international students to adjust to university life and culture (Gebhard, 2013). More importantly, no studies have been conducted on challenges experienced by students from Kazakhstan during their stay abroad. The lack of understanding of potential obstacles that student exchange programs possess may become a barrier for higher education institutions to provide effective international experience.

1.4.   **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

Many students experience difficulties when pursuing higher education in countries other than their own (Ozturgut, 2009). Therefore, this study aimed to examine categories of challenges Kazakhstani students encounter during their stay abroad. To achieve the purpose, the study analyzed the experiences of students during their stay in a foreign setting.

Academic adjustment and social integration into new learning contexts at an early stage are essential aspects in establishing successful adaptation (Ferencz et al., 2020). Hence, the kinds of strategies students employ while adapting to a host country were explored too.

In qualitative research, a research question is a query regarding a process, situation, or a phenomenon that has to be investigated (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). Therefore, the purpose statement was narrowed to following research questions:

1. What kinds of challenges do Kazakhstani students experience during their stay abroad?

2. What strategic responses do they employ to address these difficulties?

1.5. **Significance of the Study**

This study will contribute to existing knowledge on international students' experience in higher education by providing the missing data on Kazakhstani students' overseas adaptation experience. Moreover, it might contribute by adding to existing theories on academic mobility studies.

Furthermore, the study is significant because the findings can help a variety of stakeholders. Firstly, the results of the study can be used by the professors, institutions, and international offices of the universities to create the most favorable environment for study abroad. According to UIS (2016), 48 875 students studied abroad in 2015. Because of demographic shifts, student mobility is projected to increase. Therefore, students who are willing to participate in academic mobility programs in the future might also benefit from this study.

Parents often perceive study abroad as the way to get the greatest education possible, which would give long-term social and economic advantages (Bodycott, 2009). However, they do not consider all possible challenges such experiences might bring to their children.

Therefore, this study can be beneficial for parents and guardians of international students in obtaining a comprehensive knowledge of the procedures involved in studying abroad.

Furthermore, this research may assist to decrease societal prejudices about study abroad programs as having only advantageous consequences for their participants. Another significance of the study is that research evidence might be used by educational actors and governmental policymakers "to inform policy decision making, with the assumption that increased information will lead to more popular and more sustainable policy outcomes" (Newman et al., 2016, p. 25).

1.6.   **Definition of Main Concepts**

The root concepts of this research are internationalization and globalization. "Globalization and internationalization are seen as very different but related processes" (Knight, 2004, p. 8). According to Spring (2015), "Globalization of education refers to worldwide networks, processes, and institutions affecting local educational practices and policies (p. 1). The term internationalization "is being used in a variety of ways and for different purposes" (Knight, 2004, p. 9). In this paper, the term internationalization is used to mean "any systematic effort aimed at making higher education responsive to the requirements and challenges related to the globalization of societies, economy and labour markets" (Van der Wende, 1997, p. 18). According to Knight (2007), "one of the key elements of internationalization is academic mobility/cross-border education" (p. 134).

Academic mobility is defined as "a period of learning, teaching and/or research in a country other than the country of residence of a student or academic staff member and emphasizes that this period should have a limited duration, thus providing that a student or an employee returns to his or her home country upon completing the specified period" (Sakhieva et al., 2015, p. 336).As for the duration of the program, the term academic mobility "refers to international students who are taking a full degree abroad or students who are participating in

a short-term, semester or year-abroad program" (Knight, 2012, p. 24). Furthermore, "academic mobility is divided into external and internal (teaching students at foreign and domestic HEIs, respectively)" (Jumabayeva, 2016, p. 10). External mobility involves shifting students from one nation to another, or across parts of the world (Slipchuk et al., 2021). Hence, the scope of my research covered only short-term external academic mobility program.

1.7.   **Limitations of the Study**

"Every study, no matter how well it is conducted and constructed, has limitations" (Simon & Goes, 2013, p. 1). Since the study aimed to employ qualitative design, the fundamental limitation is that its findings cannot be generalized to wider populations with the same assurance as in quantitative method (Ochieng, 2009). This research was undertaken with ten former academic mobility program participants identified purposefully. Although this number is sufficient for qualitative research, a bigger number and a more representative sample will enable more generalizable conclusions to be drawn. Moreover, no research was conducted previously on this issue in a Kazakhstani context, which is also a limitation.

1.8.   **Outline of the Thesis**

This study includes six main chapters. The introduction section of this study starts with the background and problem statement. Following that, the purpose of the study along with research questions and the relevance of the study are provided. In addition, definitions of main concepts are included. The second chapter presents a thorough review of literature of the research topic. This chapter is structured according to key themes and theories. The third chapter includes a description of data collection and analysis. This chapter starts with the explanation of research design leading to the target population and sample size. Further, instruments used in this study are described. At the end, the plan of data analysis is provided. Chapter four provides information on findings of this study. The next chapter presents

discussion of the results. The final chapter draws conclusion of the whole study and gives recommendations for future research.

1.9. **Summary**

   To sum up, this chapter has provided the background of academic mobility programs. Then, it presented research problem and purpose. The significance of the study along with the limitations have been further discussed. The next chapter provides review of the literature summarizing key themes and theories of the study.

2. **Literature Review**

2.1.   **Introduction**

This chapter presents an overview of literature related to difficulties that Kazakhstani students go through while studying abroad for a period of time. Firstly, the general term of globalization is defined and its influence on the higher education sector is discussed. After that, the concept of internationalization as a possible solution to globalization is addressed. Moreover, along with the Kazakhstani context of internationalization of higher education the scope of academic mobility programs is examined. Finally, the chapter reviews the various ranges of difficulties encountered by students during their stay in a host country and strategies they employed to cope with these obstacles.

2.2. **Globalization and Its Influence on Education**

The world now is experiencing a globalization trend. Although there is no one agreed definition of the term globalization, it is often recognized to indicate the establishment of global interactions based on the operation of free markets (Foskett & Maringe, 2010). Globalization includes numerous aspects such as "the international flow of ideas and knowledge, the sharing of cultures, global civil society, and the global environmental movement" (Stiglitz, 2007, p. 4). According to Fox and Hundley (2011), globalization refers to "the interconnectedness of people and businesses across the world that eventually leads to global cultural, political and economic integration" (p. 3). Moreover, the creation of the airplane, the telephone, and the Internet are only three inventions which have caused the spread of globalization (Fox & Hundley, 2011).

Globalization has affected many aspects of our lives, and the education sector too. According to Spring (2015), global events have an impact on national and local school systems. "The major global institutions affecting worldwide educational policies" include the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the World Bank; the

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the World

Trade Organization (WTO) (Spring, 2015, p. 1). By acting as a "knowledge bank" for a

network of institutions, the World Bank plays a significant role in the globalization of

education (Spring, 2015). It promotes an economization of education perspective that

emphasizes the significance of education to economic growth through human capital

investment. The OECD, like the World Bank, advocates for an educational paradigm based

on economics, whereas the United Nations is interested in human rights and peace education.

While stressing different educational approaches, both organizations support a global

education culture (Spring, 2015).

Globalization is the term that has been characterized in a variety of ways throughout

the years, with some implications alluding to progress, development, and stability, as well as

integration and collaboration, while others point to regression, colonialism, and instability

(Al-Rodhan & Stoudmann, 2006). Moreover, Bakhtiari and Shajar (2006) ad that while

globalization is viewed as an unstoppable and beneficial force that will bring economic

prosperity to people all around the world, on the other hand, it is criticized for all modern

troubles. For example, in 1995, Martin Khor, the President of Malaysia's Third World

Network, referred to globalization as colonialism (Al-Rodhan & Stoudmann, 2006).

Activities that now go under the label of "education" come from colonial expansion

across the world by Europeans. From 1492 until 1945, European dominance impacted the

world (Brooks, 2017). Introducing railways, the English language, and cricket, confirms

Kipling's image of a "White Man's burden" carried by European people's intelligence,

creativity, and organization (Brooks, 2017). The colonization of the Americas by Europeans

not only changed the societies and environments of these places, but it also ushered in a new

global economy as capitalism became the dominant method of production (Brooks, 2017). In

addition, one of the features of colonialism is that it rejected variety, especially intellectual

diversity, and instead constructed inferiority (Breidlid, 2013). "This inferiorization or Othering was done in terms of race, gender, knowledge, and education systems" (Breidlid, 2013, p. 7). Moreover, hegemonic epistemology was perceived as "the only means with which to achieve progress and development" (Breidlid, 2013, p. 7). Thus, western schooling has been considered to take responsibility for introducing a human monoculture across the entire world. This was done to admit its universal applicability, and to declare western knowledge as something that is superior.

Many scholars now are concerned about universities' ability to maintain their traditions and the success of their traditional purposes in the age of globalization (Doh, 2008). This happens because of transportation, communication, and information technology advancements which accelerate global flow, and these events have an impact on national and local school systems (Spring, 2015). The education practices are now being shifted from traditional ways to modern methods to respond to the needs of the globalized world. Traditionally, education was focused on spiritual teachings, children were taught kindness and compassion. Moreover, education fostered sustainability, people knew about their own specific climate, soil, water and they did manage to survive. However, educational practices nowadays are in conflict with traditional approaches. As a result of globalization, "old-fashioned values of wisdom, trust, empathy, compassion, grace, and honesty in managing education have changed into those so-called values of contracts, markets, choice, and competition in educational administration" (Pang, 2013, p. 20). It is now experiencing corporatization of education which implies "schooling for a global labor market using human capital economic theories" (Spring, 2015, p. 2). This reform is suggested to lead to "economic growth, reduction of inequality of incomes, and increased employment" (Spring, 2015, p. 2). Globalization has also brought a knowledge economy, where the value of information technology and knowledge management has begun to overshadow the

importance of capital and labor (Pang, 2013). In addition, according to Sparke (2013), neoliberalism, a method of regulating capitalism that stresses market liberalization and market competition as the foundation for economic coordination, societal allocation, and self-success, has become "all-in-one synonym and argument" for globalization (p. 2). In other words, as people argue that because globalization is unavoidable, neoliberalization is likewise essential and natural, and is "the only way to adapt to globalization's competitive borderless economy" (Sparke, 2013, p. 2).

2.3. **Internationalization of Higher Education as a Response to Globalization**

Higher education is evolving, as is the world in which higher education plays a crucial part (Knight, 2004). According to Foskett and Maringe (2010), universities have always had an underlying worldwide goal and purpose, and are thus basically international organizations; but it is globalization that has boosted university internationalization activities. As believed by Van der Wende (2007), globalization is the main motivating force for the internationalization of higher education. "Not all universities are (particularly) international, but all are subject to the same processes of globalization—partly as objects, victims even, of these processes, but partly as subjects, or key agents, of globalization" (Scott, 1998, p. 122). Moreover, "the development of advanced communication and technological services, increased international labor mobility, more emphasis on the market economy and the trade liberalization, focus on the knowledge society, increased levels of private investment and decreased public support for education, and lifelong learning" are also seen to be the primary factors of change in higher education (Knight, 2004, p. 7).

According to Van der Wende (2007) "Internationalization of higher education is often seen as a possible response to globalization" (p. 275). Moreover, while globalization refers to "increased interdependence and, eventually, convergence of markets, cultures, and societies where individual states are seen to have little power", internationalization, on the other side,

depicts "greater mutual cooperation between states and activity across state borders" (Kreber, 2009, p. 2).

Although previously used in different spheres, the term internationalization has become widespread in education since the early 80s (Knight, 2004). This term implies different things to different individuals and is consequently employed in many different contexts. In addition, there is a lot of misunderstanding regarding what the concept of internationalization signifies (Knight, 2004). Arum and van de Water first defined internationalization as "the multiple activities, programs and services that fall within international studies, international educational exchange and technical cooperation" (Arum & van de Water, 1992, as cited in Knight, 2004, p. 9). Knight (2004) described internationalization of higher education as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (p. 11). Childress (2009) based on previous works of Knight has developed a definition of internationalization as "the process of integrating an international or intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of a higher education institution" (p. 289). Higher education leaders have advocated for internationalization of their institutions in order to better prepare students for success in the 21st century (Childress, 2009).

Internationalization in higher education is thought to involve a variety of actions and processes, including "the transnational mobility of students and staff, internationalization of curricula and quality assurance, interinstitutional cooperation in education and research, and the establishment of international university consortia" (Kreber, 2009, p. 2). In accordance with the OECD (2017), internationalization of higher education includes "inbound and outbound student mobility; inward and outward staff mobility; offshore delivery, including transnational education; and internationalization at home" (p. 151). According to Cabrera and

Renard (2015), universities are becoming increasingly international as a result of activities such as attracting and hosting international students and staff, sending domestic students on study abroad programs, and establishing branch campuses in other countries.

Furthermore, Qiang (2003) suggests four different rationales for internationalization in higher education which include the political, the academic, the cultural/social, and the economic rationales. While the political justification is primarily concerned with national security, stability, and peace, as well as ideological effects resulting from globalization attempts, the academic reasoning is mainly focused on obtaining worldwide standards in both teaching and research (Kreber, 2009). The cultural/social viewpoint emphasizes the need of studying different languages and cultures, preserving national culture, and respecting diversity, meanwhile economic rationale underpins not only attempts to develop the human resources/capital required for the nation to remain internationally competitive, but also initiatives to raise the institution's profit by offering studies abroad or trying to attract more international students (Kreber, 2009).

The roles of main international organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organization for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) and The World Bank must not be neglected when it comes to internationalization of higher education. Referring to the UNESCO, it aims "to promote the global vision of HE in which people are enabled to function in their personal, professional and community lives and are able to be perpetrators and repositories of knowledge, ideas and local and national cultural traditions" (Foskett & Maringe, 2010, p. 3). When it comes to the WTO and OECD, they share responsibility for urging nations to open up their state rules for higher education in order to foster more contact with external partners (Foskett & Maringe, 2010). Moreover, political conditions of the first half of the twentieth century emphasized the need of international collaboration and

communication in promoting peace and mutual understanding (de Wit & Altbach, 2021).

"The 1919 creation of the Institute of International Education (IIE) in the United States (US),

of the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) in Germany in 1925, and of the

British Council in the United Kingdom (UK) in 1934 are illustrations of this development"

(de Wit & Altbach, 2021, p. 30). The Fulbright Program of 1946 maintained this trend (de

Wit & Altbach, 2021). In addition, ERASMUS has had a bigger influence on higher

education reform and globalization than just exchanging students and faculty (de Wit &

Altbach, 2021). "It piloted the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and initiated access

to E.U. membership for countries in Central and Eastern Europe and other aspiring

candidates" and also "paved the way for the Bologna Process and the realization of the

European Higher Education Area (EHEA)" (de Wit & Altbach, 2021, p. 31).

Internationalization can be divided into two different streams of activities such as

internationalization at home and abroad. One stream comprises internationalization events

that take place on the home campus, while the other refers to those that take place overseas or

across borders (Knight, 2004). Internationalization at home covers activities which occur on a

home campus, including "the intercultural and international dimension in the teaching

learning process, the extracurricular activities, and the relationships with local cultural and

ethnic community groups" (Wachter, 2003, as cited in Knight, 2004, p. 17). De Wit and

Altbach (2021) identify internationalization at home as "internationalization of the

curriculum, teaching and learning, and learning outcomes, as well as global citizenship

development" (p. 42). According to them, tertiary education has to internationalize at home in

order to prepare all students for the global knowledge society we live in (de Wit & Altbach,

2021). As for internationalization abroad, in recent decade, it is being described as cross-

border or transnational education (Knight, 2004). As believed by Knight (2012), cross border

education is "the movement of people, programs, providers, policies, knowledge, ideas,

projects and services across national boundaries" (p. 23). Internationalization abroad is mainly operating as mobility programs which take many forms. The detailed information about student mobility programs as a form of internationalization abroad will be provided further in this chapter.

2.4.   **Internationalization of Higher Education in Kazakhstan**

Kazakhstan has made considerable movement toward increased internationalization since the 2007 OECD/World Bank Review of Higher Education in Kazakhstan (OECD, 2017). Country's internationalization plan revolves around outbound academic mobility (OECD, 2017). "In 2015, 48 875 students studied abroad" (OECD, 2017, p. 161) with main destinations including Russian Federation (35 106), Kyrgyzstan (4 357), the United Kingdom (1 725) and the United States (1 884).

Apart from outbound academic mobility programs, the primary aspects of Kazakhstan's internationalization strategy include the integration of the Bologna Process, the Bolashak Scholarship Program, and the establishment of Nazarbayev University (OECD, 2017). The government of Kazakhstan adopted the Bologna Declaration and joined the Bologna Process in 2010, with the purpose of aligning the country's higher education system with that of Europe (Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016). With the establishment of the Bologna Process "the three cycle-system of bachelor-master's- doctorate (PhD) was introduced in 2014" (OECD, 2017, p. 167). Moreover, within this framework Kazakhstan attempted to adopt the European Credit Transfer Scheme (ECTS) (OECD, 2017). The implementation of the Bologna process also made it possible for Kazakhstani universities "to implement joint education projects such as double diplomas, mutual recognition of academic courses and international accreditation" (OECD, 2017, p. 167). The presidential Bolashak scholarship program, which was founded in 1993, is "the most significant state policy initiative to encourage internationalization" (OECD, 2017, p. 168). The Kazakhstan government's

Bolashak Scholarship aims to invest in human capital development while ensuring that this investment has a long-term influence on the country's growth (Sagintayeva & Jumakulov, 2015). Administered by the Center for International Programs, the Bolashak scholarship pays for all study-related expenses, including "tuition fees, accommodation expenses, book allowance, medical insurance, travel expenses, entry visas and other registration costs, and application fees" (OECD, 2017, p. 168). Since its start, about 10 000 students have taken advantage of Bolashak scholarship, having studied in more than 200 universities in 23 countries (OECD, 2017). As for statistics, in 2014, overall, 1 297 people aged 18-28 were owners of Bolashak scholarship (OECD, 2017). Over the last 20 years, program managers have implemented a variety of design improvements in an effort to optimize program effectiveness (Sagintayeva & Jumakulov, 2015). Nazarbayev University, a university outside system restrictions, was created after the enactment of a unique law in 2010 (Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016). Being granted academic and administrative autonomy, as well as large financial resources, the university is suggested "to be a model for higher education reform and modern research in Kazakhstan and to contribute to the establishment of Astana as an international innovation and knowledge hub" as is stated in its mission (Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016, p. 51). According to the OECD (2017), "Nazarbayev University is clearly Kazakhstan's most internationalized higher education institution- with a high proportion of international staff and several joint and collaborative teaching programmes" (p. 170).

2.5.   **Academic Mobility As One of the Key Elements of the Internationalization**

As reported by the OECD (2017) "student mobility, characterized by students studying for the short or long term at a foreign university, is the most common form of internationalization" (p. 151). Moreover, de Wit and Altbach (2021) assert that "academic mobility remains the dominant component of internationalization policies worldwide" (p. 35). When it comes to its definition, academic mobility refers to "a period of study, teaching

and/or research in a country other than a student's or academic staff member's home country" (UNESCO, as cited in Jumabayeva, 2016, p. 9). It is one of the fundamental cornerstones of the Bologna process, which aims to improve student and staff mobility (Jumabayeva, 2016).

As is reported by the OECD (2012), about 4.1 million students worldwide are currently studying abroad. In 2010/2011, almost 274,000 American students studied abroad which accounts for approximately 1.4 % of the total US student population, while, about 339,700 of China's students studied abroad in the same year (Cabrera & Renard, 2015). According to statistics, the number of American students studying abroad has more than tripled in the past couple of decades, while one out of every seven students studying abroad is Chinese (Cabrera & Renard, 2015). "The US has represented the leading host country over the period 1965–2020, with 100,000 international students in 1965 and up to 1 million in 2018" (OECD, 2019, as cited in de Wit & Altbach, 2021, p. 39). France, Germany, and the United Kingdom follow in that order, with Australia coming close to the top four in 2000 (OECD, 2019, as cited in de Wit & Altbach, 2021). Top sending nations such as China, South Korea, and Malaysia are also becoming increasingly significant receiving countries, with India and Russia falling into line (de Wit & Altbach, 2021).

According to the Bologna process, academic mobility might have two different forms: vertical and horizontal mobility. While vertical mobility provides a comprehensive education pursuing an academic degree in a higher education institution, horizontal mobility offers a limited period of time studied abroad (Jumabayeva, 2016). Academic mobility can also be split into two as external and internal with the former suggesting studying at foreign higher education institution and the latter referring to local higher education institution (Jumabayeva, 2016).

As claimed by de Wit and Altbach (2021), the mobility of students might have several forms, namely degree mobility, credit mobility and certificate mobility. Degree mobility includes students obtaining a full degree or degrees (bachelor, master, PhD.) abroad, while credit mobility refers to students studying abroad for a short period- usually up to one academic year, and transferring credits back to their home degree (Wit & Altbach, 2021). Certificate mobility includes "shorter stays abroad to improve certain skills, mostly language competency without going for a degree or for credits" (Wit & Altbach, 2021, p. 38).

It is suggested that participating in higher education overseas may be especially advantageous for countries experiencing economic and political changes, such as the former Soviet Union republics (Perna et al., 2015). Along with gaining access to well-established and high-quality educational opportunities in other countries, fostering foreign education may help to broaden the population's worldwide perspectives on home countries and contribute to the formation of "global citizens" (Perna et al., 2015).

Kazakhstan is one of the 15 nations in the world with the most students studying abroad, and it is the top in the Central Asian area (Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016). According to Jumakulov and Ashirbekov (2016), outbound student mobility in Kazakhstan includes Kazakhstani government funded programs such as academic mobility program (non-degree programs) and Bolashak Program (degree programs and internships). Moreover, there are grants from other governments and international organizations such as European Union (Erasmus plus), USA (Fulbright), Germany (DAAD), India (ITEC) and Russian Federation (300 grants in 2016).

Outbound student mobility in Kazakhstan is reliant not only on foreign funding (e. g. Erasmus Mundus) and student self-financing, but also on financing by the Ministry of Education and Science. As is reported, the Ministry of Education and Science's international

mobility funding program sponsored 805 students from 52 universities to study abroad for minimum one semester in 2014 (OECD, 2017). Although the Kazakh government offers significant support for study abroad programs, it only covers roughly 10% of the cost, whereas the great majority of outbound students study at their own expense. Russia is the most popular location for self-funded students studying abroad, hosting over 35 000 students (Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016).

Short-term study abroad grants are managed at the university level, and beneficiaries may only study at host institutions with which the home university has entered into contractual arrangements (Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016). The Ministry of Education and Science of Kazakhstan sponsors the short-term mobility program and selects the amount of scholarships to be awarded to each university (Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016). Thus, between 2012 and 2015, 2.36 billion tenge was allocated by the government (Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016).

As for outbound faculty mobility, from 2011 to 2015, about 2 600 faculty went abroad for internships, study and professional development, thus constituting above 5% of the overall faculty members in Kazakhstan with 1 472 people representing Bolashak scholarship owners (OECD, 2017). However, the breadth and character of the international teacher movement is a rather unstudied issue (Wit & Altbach, 2021).

2.6. Challenges Faced by Students during their Mobility Program Abroad

"Some students strive and excel abroad, while others struggle" (Goldoni, 2015, p. 3). Even though overseas students generally express academic satisfaction, they also reveal frustration with their experiences outside the classroom (Birnbaum et al., 2012, Curtin et al., 2012, as cited in Milian et al., 2015). Students frequently struggle to fit in with the local population, to deal with cultural differences they come across when traveling, and to handle difficult circumstances that arise when two different cultures meet (Goldoni, 2015).

Difficulties adjusting to a new environment have been shown to impede with foreign students' academic progress and general well-being (Cemalcilar & Falbo, 2008).

Research on adjustment of international students abroad has a wide theoretical diversity and researchers have used a range of different terms synonymously such as adaptation, acculturation, adjustment, and accommodation to refer to the process that sojourners go through in a new culture (Henze & Zhu, 2012). Adaptation, defined as "human beings' active modification of their own behaviors, so as to adjust themselves to meet the requirements of a new environment" (Pukalos et al., 2000, as cited in Ferencz et al., 2020, p. 2), is considered to be one of the most significant behavioral traits of humans which also plays a role in human motivation and need fulfillment (Ferencz et al., 2020).

Previous study has shown that criteria such as foreign students' capacity to communicate in the host country's language, marital status, nationality, and possibilities for interpersonal connections with students from cultures other than their own influence their adaptation to a receiving country. (Galloway & Jenkins, 2015, as cited in Milian et al., 2015). Moreover, according to Goldoni (2015), students' learning experience abroad may depend on a) how they spend their time at the new place (Freed et al., 2004, as cited in Goldoni, 2015); b) how they create their own learning opportunities and form social networks; c) how the local community perceives them and how students understand the local practices and the various socio-cultural manifestations.

As explained by Henze and Zhu (2012), obstacles that international students undergo may vary according to periods of time: some are short-term and may be resolved soon after arriving (accommodation, becoming acquainted with the library, etc.), while others are long-term (language constraints, intercultural interactions with local students).

Various authors at a different timeline categorize study abroad challenges faced by international students differently based on existing literature and their own conducted studies.

Henze and Zhu (2012) identified seven key issues with international student adjustment, including "(1) academic or curriculum issues; (2) language problems; (3) economic problems; (4) housing difficulties; (5) being socially accepted; (6) difficulties in health and recreation; and (7) racial prejudice problems" (p. 96). At the same time, Church (1982, as cited in Henze & Zhu, 2012) suggested three types of problems including academic, personal and sociocultural. As expressed by Milian et al. (2015), challenges that international students commonly face include "perceived discrimination, racism, limited social support, feeling of isolation from family and friends, financial difficulties, adaptation to new cultural and social norms, potential culture shock, and challenges to adapt to new educational and learning styles" (p. 2). Additional obstacles involve surviving culture shock and adjusting to a new cultural lifestyle that includes novel drinks and meals, some of which may contravene their dietary cultural traditions and necessitate changes (Milian et al., 2015). Social and emotional constraints have also been found through research on the difficulties faced by overseas students which include: "social adaptation problems, homesickness, lack of financial resources, new educational systems, reasoning and learning styles, employment complications, time needed for language translation, gender norms and prejudices, and housing and transportation" (Crockett & Hays, 2011, Hartshorne & Baucom, 2007, Taras & Rowney, 2007, as cited in Milian et al., 2015, p. 3).

Another challenge that Gebhard (2013) points out is a lack of familiarity with host country's social norms that govern interactions. Such culturally driven norms for interaction involve "nonverbal behaviors, such as how people greet, sit, shake hands, walk through a crowd, enter a classroom late, and stand, among many other examples, and are also a culturally defined part of the intricate ways that people interact" (Gebhard, 2013, p. 3).

As for psychological challenges, international students frequently come energized or euphoric and are usually lively, inquisitive, and engaged (Gebhard, 2013). Cultural disparities

nevertheless have an effect. Because of academic, social, and occasionally financial issues, some students experience culture shock and undergo a range of symptoms such as "confusion, disorientation, isolation, frustration, anger, loneliness, inadequacy, and depression" (Gebhard, 2013, p. 3). They find that doing everyday tasks that were simple for them to complete in their home countries are now difficult (Gebhard, 2013).

In addition, international students may face challenges related to a new academic environment when the rules of studying and teaching are different from how they are used to study in their home country. Spencer (2003, as cited in Milian et al., 2015) provides an example of the US academic environment and general pedagogical approach to teaching which implies cooperative learning activities and participation requirements that may be unfamiliar teaching and learning approaches for some international students who come from educational environments where students are expected to passively receive lecture materials and produce verbatim information that they have memorized. Moreover, given the example of Asian students studying in the United States, Gebhard (2013) has concluded academic language challenges as one of the most discussed which include "difficulty comprehending the various accents of professors, test constructions, articulating their knowledge on essay exams, reading text books in a timely fashion, taking lecture notes, and giving oral presentations, asking the professor questions and interacting in seminar discussions" (p. 2).

The level of English proficiency is also considered to be an important problem as students often face with "unfamiliar language usage and slang, errors made during the translation from one language to another, and misunderstanding of idioms, similes and metaphors" (Milian et al., 2015, p. 2). Moreover, increased levels of English proficiency is suggested to reduce academic challenges, given the fact that listening to lectures is a tough academic task (Milian et al., 2015). The language issue is more than just the difficulty of learning a new language; it also prevents individuals from engaging in classroom discussions

and intercultural interactions (Henze & Zhu, 2012). According to Pan et al (2008, as cited in Henze & Zhu, 2012) "host-language proficiency not only influences the academic work of overseas students, but also affects their social lives and understanding of the host culture" (p. 97).

Adding to academic and social adjustment challenges, students highlight how emotionally difficult it may be to adapt to a new culture (Gebhard, 2013). Students reveal that "everyday things, such as paying bills, using the telephone, installing cable television, and finding a cell phone plan were no longer easy" (Gebhard, 2013, p. 10). According to Gebhard (2013), these difficulties might arise due to the use of English as a foreign language as well as the changing rules in a new country. This frequently led to "feelings of depression, homesickness, and isolation and other symptoms of culture shock" (Gebhard, 2013, p. 11). Australian study (Oei & Notowidjojo, 19990, as cited in Henze & Zhu, 2012) found that international students were substantially more likely than local students to have moderate to severe clinical depression and loneliness. Among international students, one-third expressed cultural loneliness (Sawir et al., 2008, as cited in Henze & Zhu, 2012).

Berry (2003, as cited in Cemalcilar & Falbo, 2008) based on the two-dimensional model of acculturation conclude that "people who have high levels of home and host identification (categorized as a bicultural strategy) experience the lowest acculturative stress, whereas people who have low identification with both home and host culture (categorized as a marginalized strategy) experience the highest acculturative stress" (p. 800). Acculturative stress levels were shown to be intermediate among people with mixed patterns, such as those who adopted either a separated (high home, low host identity) or an assimilated (high host, low host identity) acculturation approach (Cemalcilar & Falbo, 2008). Hence, overseas students are anticipated to exhibit comparable acculturation techniques and stress correlations (Cemalcilar & Falbo, 2008).

When it comes to strategies employed by international students while adapting to a new university life and culture, most studies are focused on coping strategies which is described as "ways of behaving to deal with stress related to the multitude of problems and interactive challenges of studying in a culturally different academic and social environment" (Gebhard, 2013, p. 4). For example, the most popular coping mechanism for Asian international students is creating a support community of people with identical cultural backgrounds (Choe, 1996, Furnham & Alibhai, 1985, Hayes & Lin, 1994, as cited in Gebhard, 2013). Students can also get help from community services which might include church, international office, trusted academic advisors, and the international students club (Gebhard, 2013). Moreover, some students cope by recalling their native culture (Weaver, 2000, as cited in Gebhard, 2013). For example, Gebhard (2013) reported in his study that "some put photos of family and friends on their wall or computer screen saver, listened to their favorite CDs in their native language, and used Facebook, Skype, email, and other technology to connect with family and friends" (p. 12).

In addition to coping strategies, Gebhard (2013) suggests doing and reflecting strategy which implies taking time to think on what happened, their feelings about the experience and other options of possible reactions in the future. Unlike previous studies, the study of Gebhard (2013) has also revealed additional adaptation strategies which suggest the use of observing and imitating behavior, for example, by monitoring how local people eat, greet, walk, take turns in a conversation, laugh and further imitating it.

Ward (2001 as cited in Savicki, 2013) suggests the ABCs of acculturation as "three general categories in which study abroad sojourners in a foreign culture may react" (p. 132), thus presenting a framework of study abroad from a psychological perspective. "The first, Affect (A), is most related to stress, coping, and psychological well-being" (Savicki, 2013, p. 132), where the key is the cognitive assessment of the stressor in the environment and the

person's coping mechanisms. According to Diener et al. (1985 as cited in Savicki, 2013), while international students may experience physical illnesses, anxiety, sadness, aggression, and other forms of psychological suffering, they may also report increased well-being and life satisfaction. The second component Behavior (B) incorporates "overt actions and skills that may indicate that a study abroad student is fitting in with the host culture" (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, as cited in Savicki, 2013). Study abroad students may be required to pick up new skills and behaviors to improve their capacity to engage, according to Ward (2001 as cited in Savicki, 2013), who hypothesizes that behavioral adaptation to a new culture follows a social learning strategy. In the final component Cognition (C) the focus is on "the mental schema the student has regarding his or her national identity, and how that identity may be compared with the assumptions and values of the host culture" (Savicki, 2013, pp. 133-134).

2.7.   **Summary**

To sum up, this chapter has presented a review of literature of main aspects of the present study. At the beginning, the interconnection between globalization and internationalization of higher education is discussed. After that, the academic mobility program practices abroad and within Kazakhstan are examined. Finally, the chapter elaborates on different categories of obstacles that international students frequently face during their stay in a foreign country. Further, in the chapter that follows, the methodology of this study will be provided.

3. **Methodology**

3.1   **Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology of the current study. The chapter discusses the

research design of this qualitative research study. A description and rationale of the research

site is extensively covered. The sampling procedure is explained and the justification of the

chosen approach. Furthermore, data collection instruments and procedures are discussed. The

chapter also discusses the data analysis procedures. Finally, the ethical considerations that

guided this scientific research are considered illustrating how the whole research project

meets internationally established ethical research protocols.

3.2. **Research Design**

A research design is suggested to be a structure of a planned study. According to

Akhtar (2016), "it is the "glue" that holds all of the elements in a research project together"

(p. 68). To carry out this research and effectively address the research questions of this study,

the qualitative research design was employed since the study involved understanding

people's experiences. Thus, employing qualitative research design enabled thoroughly

examining students' experience of combating challenges during their studies in a foreign

country by using the techniques of in-depth interviews. Unlike quantitative research,

qualitative research produces non-numerical data. Therefore, the answers for the researcher

questions were provided in the form of transcribed data after conducting several interviews.

Hennink et al (2020) have identified one of the most distinguishing characteristics of

qualitative research as "the approach allows you to identify issues from the perspective of

your study participants and understand the meanings and interpretations that they give to

behavior, events or objects" (p. 10). In addition, Chesebro and Borisoff (2007) have found

five common characteristics suitable for all qualitative studies. These characteristics include

natural setting, researcher as participant, subject-based communication and subject

intentionality. Using qualitative design in this study made it possible to examine the issue of confronting challenges in a new environment from the perspectives of Kazakhstani students. Moreover, it was interesting to observe the meanings and interpretations students gave to their behaviors, feelings and emotions. Also, it was participants who determined the flow and direction of the communication during the interviews, while the information obtained caused immediate utility (Chesebro and Borisoff, 2007).

This study employed phenomenology, which is one example of a qualitative research design. According to Johnson and Christensen (2019), phenomenology is "a form of qualitative research in which the researcher attempts to understand how one or more individuals experience a particular phenomenon" (p. 182). There were a couple of reasons for using phenomenological research design for this study. Firstly, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) believe it is ideal for researching subjective, emotional, and frequently intense human experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Since the study involved examining the subjective study abroad experiences of Kazakhstani students which inevitably evokes a range of emotions in students, the first reason is justified. The second reason is owing to its characteristics- description of a phenomenon. According to Johnson and Christensen (2019), phenomenology can be employed to concentrate on the distinctive features of an individual's experience of something. Therefore, this study employed phenomenology to understand and describe how students from Kazakhstan experience a phenomenon of living and studying abroad for a short period of time. Moreover, it attempted to obtain in-depth information about each participant's personal experience of confronting obstacles and ways of overcoming them.

3.3. **Statement of the Problem and Research Questions**

In qualitative research, a research question is a query regarding a process, situation, or a phenomenon that has to be investigated (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). The core notion

being studied is included in the questions in qualitative research (Creswell, 2015). The purpose of the study, which is to explore the challenges that Kazakhstani students face while studying abroad, was narrowed to the following research questions:

1) What kinds of challenges do Kazakhstani undergraduate students experience during their stay abroad?

2) What strategic responses do Kazakhstani undergraduate students employ to address the difficulties they encounter when abroad?

3.4. **Population and Sample Selection**

The goal of qualitative research is to produce an in-depth examination of a particular phenomenon rather than to generalize to a community. Therefore, to better comprehend the phenomenon of confronting challenges while studying abroad, this qualitative researcher chose participants and sites on purpose (Creswell, 2015). Kazakhstani students who participated in short-term study abroad programs were identified as a whole population. According to Johnson and Christensen's definition (2019), a population is "the large group to which a researcher wants to generalize his or her sample results" or briefly speaking "the total group that you are interested in learning more about" (pp. 681- 682). When it comes to the population, there are more than 20 000 people from Kazakhstan studying overseas (Seidahmetov et al., 2014).

To have a better understanding of the living experience of students from Kazakhstan studying overseas for a short period of time, this study selected people and sites purposefully which is defined as purposeful sampling (sometimes called purposive sampling). According to Luborsky and Rubinstein (1995), purposive sampling is "a practice where subjects are intentionally selected to represent some explicit predefined traits or conditions" (p. 104). The predefined conditions that guided this study when selecting the participants were participating in an academic mobility program and studying in one of the universities of

Kazakhstan. Creswell (2015) adds that purposeful sampling might help to obtain a thorough knowledge that might offer valuable information and contribute to learning about the phenomenon. Thus, employing a purposive sample selection strategy helped to obtain a comprehensive knowledge of the popular phenomenon of struggling with difficulties while being in a foreign country among the target population of this study- Kazakhstani students getting education abroad.

One of the strategies of purposeful sampling is snowball sampling. This study employed snowball sampling which is described by Creswell (2015) as "a form of purposeful sampling that typically proceeds after a study begins and occurs when the researcher asks participants to recommend other individuals to be sampled" (p. 208). A few people who meet the required criteria to participate in the study were chosen in the beginning of the research. These criteria included having short-term study-abroad experience and being a student of one of the Kazakhstani universities. Further, the participants of the study were asked by the end of the interview if they could recommend someone who satisfies the requirements for participation. Thus, the number of participants naturally increased up to ten individuals.

When it comes to sample size in qualitative research, Luborsky and Rubinstein (1995) state that "there is no single formula or criterion to use" (p. 105). Moreover, the number of participants and sites sampled differ amongst qualitative studies (Creswell, 2015). According to Johnson and Christensen (2019), a small group of around 5 to 25 participants must be selected by researchers for qualitative study. Therefore, considering the given time resource and findings in literature about the optimal number of the sample, 10 former academic mobility students were recruited to achieve the purpose in this study.

3.5. **Methods of Data Collection**

For the two research questions qualitative interviews were used "to obtain in-depth information about a participant's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations, and feelings about a topic" (Johnson & Christensen, 2019, p. 552). Interviews are defined as "conversations conducted for a purpose, which frames the interaction, raises a number of issues having to do with power and control that are important to reflect upon for epistemic as well as ethical reasons" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 1003). Qualitative interviews are also widely known as depth interviews. Unlike other methods of research, in this study, in-depth interviews allowed participants to discuss personal information in detail without being constrained by answer options (Creswell, 2015). Also, in- depth interviews enabled to access participants' inner thoughts and feelings about the challenges they faced during their stay in a foreign country. Also, open-ended questions gave valuable insights into the general study abroad experience of Kazakhstani students. One of the reasons for choosing interviewing for this study is that it reveals important information when participants cannot be physically seen, and they allow participants to provide extensive private information (Creswell, 2015). Moreover, it was possible to elicit certain sorts of information in this study by asking particular questions because interviewers are believed to have more control over the information they obtain (Creswell, 2015).

Among many existing approaches to interviewing, this study employed one-on-one interviews. Every participant was interviewed at a time and the answers were recorded. This form of interviewing is believed to be great for speaking freely, asking intelligent questions, and allowing interviewees to freely express their opinions (Creswell, 2015).

As stated by Johnson and Christensen (2019), there are three types of qualitative interviews, namely the informal conversational interview, the interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. This study employed the interview guide approach in which "the interviewer enters the interview session with a plan to explore specific topics and

to ask specific open-ended questions of the interviewee" (Johnson & Christensen, 2019, p. 553). Although general topics and questions were written on an interview protocol, the interviewer did not adhere to these questions fully because it is supposed that the interview determines how questions should be phrased (Turner, 2010). Moreover, in spite of the interview protocol which implies a set of general topics and questions for all interviewees, this type of interview remained relatively unstructured (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). This study found the general interview guide approach useful because it allowed achieving a more personal approach to every participant's experience of participating in an academic mobility program by being able to ask follow-up questions to get more comprehensive information about the kinds of challenges they faced and methods employed to overcome them. Also, an informal environment that can be achieved by this type of interview guaranteed establishing friendly conversation thus obtaining in-depth information.

The interviews were conducted over the Internet. According to Johnson and Christensen (2019), the Internet is a great tool for gathering information because of many reasons, namely "(a) anyone with Internet access (anywhere in the world) can be interviewed, (b) you can see each other and develop rapport, and (c) you can record the interview sessions" (p. 547). Modern Internet software Zoom was employed to interview the participants. Zoom is helpful for interviewing because "the interviewer and interviewee can see each other and interact and develop rapport" (Johnson & Christensen, 2019, p. 547). Interviewing helped me to identify the main stages through which Kazakhstani students went through during their academic mobility programs, obstacles they had on each stage and strategies they used on their way to adapt to a new culture and environment.

3.6. **Instruments**

This study employed semi-structured interviews in which protocols served as a guide (Knox & Burkard, 2009). In terms of the semi-structured qualitative research interviews, "it

is defined as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015 as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p. 1002). Moreover, unlike unstructured interviews the interviewer has more control over how the conversation is focused on topics that are pertinent to the study objective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

A protocol in semi-structured interview is created prior to data collection to get detailed information and make comparisons between different cases. Interviewers, however, maintain their openness and flexibility to allow for further exploration of individual participants' stories (Knox & Burkard, 2009). The interview protocol of this study started with general questions about the details of the program such as continuation, country of choice, and students' majors studied abroad. Moreover, questions about student's motivation to participate in such program and general observations about a new culture were also asked. The further questions were divided into five categories: language, studies, lifestyle, socialization, psychology. Each part included follow-up questions about student's overall experience of each aspect of above-mentioned categories, challenges they faced and strategies they employed in order to overcome these difficulties.

3.7. **Data Collection Procedures**

After developing the research problem and questions, potential participants were selected to achieve the research purpose. The sample was identified from the target population employing a snowball sampling strategy. An email was sent to the Office of Global Relations at Nazarbayev University to get the former target population list. The required criterion for the population was having a short-term study abroad experience. A sample frame included former participants of an academic mobility program. The former students were sent an invitation email letter. All the necessary information about the purpose, procedures, their rights, possible risks, potential benefits, and others was attached in the

letter. Those who agreed to participate were sent another email with the informed consent form attached. As stated by Johnson and Christensen (2019), informed consent is "agreeing to participate in a study after being informed of its purpose, procedures, risks, benefits, alternative procedures, and limits of confidentiality" (p. 386). The informed consent form was signed a week before the conducting an interview and a copy was provided to the interview participant. The interview was conducted via ZOOM, an Internet software which allows recording audio materials. Further, the interview was recorded with the consent of the participant and then kept confidential using the password in a personal laptop of the researcher while conducting the study.

3.8. **Data Analysis**

After conducting the interviews the qualitative data was transformed into typed text (Johnson & Christensen, 2019). Each interview was transcribed using a voice recognition computer program. As explained by Creswell (2015), transcription is "the process of converting audiotape recordings or field notes into text data" (p. 238). Then the process of coding the document began which implies identifying text segments (Creswell, 2015). Firstly, the data derived from the interview was segmented by dividing them into meaningful units. Five main analytical units were developed according to the topical questions in the interview. These included: students' motivation, general perception, adjustment, challenges. Further, the segments were labeled with codes, e.g. "lifelong dream", "a positive experience", "adjusting quickly", "google translator", "studying differently", "loneliness."

The coded data then was turned into themes. Leavy (2017) defines themes as "an extended phrase or sentence that signals the larger meaning behind a code or group of codes" (p. 152). Themes developed within this study included "motivation to study-abroad", "communication in a host country", "a new academic experience", "daily-life of a foreigner" and "psychological well-being." In addition, memo writing was also used in the data analysis

process in order to keep track of emerging observations, thoughts, and new insights (Leavy, 2017). Finally, all analyzed information was then developed into a statement of findings.

3.9. **Ethical Considerations**

As presented by Johnson & Christensen (2019), ethics are "the principles and guidelines that help us uphold the things we value" (p. 370), while research ethics are "a guiding set of principles developed to assist researchers in conducting ethical studies" (p. 373). In Parveen and Showkat's (2017) understanding, research ethics is "doing what is morally and legally right in research" (p. 3). The importance of ethics in the research process cannot be overstated. At various stages of this process, researchers must address a variety of ethical concerns (Parveen &Showkat, 2017). The concept of ethics is becoming more prevalent, extending from a research study's inception through its conclusion and dissemination (Creswell, 2019). According to Creswell and Poth (2016), ethical difficulties in qualitative research may arise at different phases of the research process, namely prior to performing the study, during the start of the investigation, during data collection, data analysis, while reporting the data, and when publishing a study. At the initial phase, before starting the study, NUGSE Ethical Committee's approval was obtained through an application.

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and all the general information by signing an informed consent form. According to Johnson and Christensen (2019), informed consent is accepting to take part in a research after learning about its aim, methods, dangers, advantages, alternative procedures, and confidentiality restrictions. Moreover, it was clearly stated in the form that participation in the study was voluntary and did not put participants at excessive danger (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Participants were eligible to withdraw from the study at any point. In addition, they had a right not to respond to certain questions if they felt uncomfortable. Even though the interviews were recorded for further analysis, participants were entitled to refuse recording.

According to Johnson and Christensen (2019), anonymity means "keeping the identity of the participant from everyone, including the researcher" (p. 407). To achieve anonymity in this study, the real names of participants were coded by assigning nicknames. Thus, the participants were assigned informal titles such as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3 and so on without revealing their real names. Once the interviews were recorded, then the recorded information was transcribed and further analyzed. The anonymity of each respondent was guaranteed.

According to AERA ethical standards, "researchers are ethically required to protect the confidentiality of both the participants and the data" (Johnson & Christensen, 2019, p. 406). Johnson and Christensen (2019) explain confidentiality as "not revealing the identity of the participant to anyone other than the researcher and his or her staff" (p. 407). To ensure confidentiality, the recordings of interviews and transcribed documents were stored in the researcher's personal laptop under a security code. The data was stored until the study finished and in line with the university research ethics board regulations. Moreover, to keep data confidential, only the researcher had access to it. In addition, to ensure privacy and confidentiality as well as keeping the data anonymous, information related to student's participation, including consent forms, were deleted at the end of the study.

3.10. Summary

This chapter has described all the procedures embedded in qualitative research method. Firstly, the research design was presented and justified. Furthermore, it elaborated on the research site and sample. Next, the chapter discussed the data collection instruments as

well as the data collection and the data analysis procedures. Finally, the chapter elaborated on

ethical considerations of the study.

4. **Findings**

4.1. **Introduction**

The given study employed a qualitative approach and aimed at examining various problems that Kazakhstani students face while studying abroad. Moreover, the research aimed to explore different approaches that students employed to adjust to their new environment. The chapter presents findings obtained from semi-structured interviews with all 10 participants. Snowball sampling strategy was selected to find a required number of participants. The research was guided by two main research questions. Moreover, eight broad themes emerged from the analysis of the qualitative interviews such as: motivation to study abroad, students' general perception of study abroad experience, challenges students face while studying abroad, adjustment and socialization in the local community, communication experience in a host country, encountering a new academic environment, daily life in a foreign country, psychological well-being while being abroad.

4.2. **Background of the Participants**

Ten students participated in semi-structured online interviews using the Zoom platform. All participants took part in an academic mobility program for a period of about six months between 2019 and 2020. Students' majors studied during their academic mobility varied wildly from computer and political science, psychology to language teachers. Some students shared that the programs and disciplines they studied in their home countries did not correspond with what their host countries offered. For example, Participant 1 revealed "My major in Kazakhstan was foreign language; however, there I studied philology." Another Participant said "I am an English teacher, and there I was taught disciplines that are not related to my profession. There were no pedagogy disciplines at all. They mainly taught English, also English literature. I tried to find similar disciplines there, at least so that they are close to my major."

4.3. **Motivation to Study Abroad**

When it comes to students' motivation to study abroad, it differed from one participant to another. It is clear from the interview that students participated in an academic mobility program to travel, to try a new education system, to get experience and to learn language. Participant 1 commented:

Well, honestly, it has been my lifelong dream to study abroad, to try new things and challenge myself in a new academic environment. Unfortunately, the university where I studied couldn't provide me with such opportunities. So Poland was the only room for improvement when I got the chance to apply for China, Korea, Bulgaria and Poland.

Another Participant 2 shared views about their personal motivation to study abroad revealing:

Several factors played a role. Firstly, of course, to broaden horizons, to try the foreign education system. It seems to me that any other student must see the world outside our country, see how people live in another country, get to know their culture better, get to know people from other different countries. Learn a language and reinforce knowledge in an already acquired language.

Several other participants like Participant 2 shared having foreign education experience as the first priority to participate in an academic mobility program. "It is commonly believed that studying abroad, especially in Europe, is famous for its quality. I wanted to check this quality" said Participant 5. "I've heard a lot about foreign education as being of a high quality. So I was wondering, is it really true? If it is really so, I wanted to come there, see how it is there and see to what extent education is different there" revealed Participant 6.

As can be understood from the interviews, Kazakhstani students go abroad to study expecting that the education system there will be completely different from how they have studied in their home country. For example, Participant 4 mentioned "I always wanted to see

and understand this difference. How is the educational process going in Europe in general?"
Moreover, students share a high interest in foreign education system in general, especially in the teaching methods they employ and ways of delivering knowledge. For example, Participant 5 stated "In general, the goal was to get European learning experience. That is, to discover what kind of methods and techniques are used by professors from abroad," while Participant 6 commented "The main motivation was probably the interest of studying abroad to look at their methods and approaches to learning. I wanted to understand what the differences are or, on the contrary, what are the similarities between our domestic education and foreign education system."

Moreover, it has been revealed that some people choose to study abroad to gain experience. Learning foreign language fluently was also mentioned by Participant 3 as one of the main motives to decide on going abroad.

4.4. Students' General Perception of Study Abroad Experience

The participants shared their thoughts on their overall perception of living and studying overseas for a while. Almost all students from the interviews shared their study abroad experience as being only positive. To exemplify, participant 6 explained "I would describe my experience abroad as great, very fruitful, very well. I really liked it." Meanwhile Participant 5 described "it was a very valuable, unforgettable experience where I could test myself, test my abilities, see what I can, what I can't. In general, I got unforgettable memories and emotions. It was very unusual." Moreover, Participant 4 added "if we take as a whole, only positive impressions after the program, I generally saw something radically different from our educational program."

Even though the impressions about participating in an academic mobility program were predominantly positive, there were those who quite unexpectedly mentioned downsides as being of a minor importance. Participant 3 mentioned negative sides "there were, of

course, but they were not very global problems. Most importantly, I got a lot of experience. Yes, I learned to survive, first of all. And secondly, it was something new for me, both culture and language."

4.5. **Challenges Students Faced While Studying Abroad**

The participants shared their general experience on the main difficulties they encountered during their stay abroad. To the question, "did you face any challenges while studying abroad?" Participant 1 gave a broad response describing:

> If I had any challenge, it was my academic gap. I felt really sorry for low level in the writing classes. I was not, let's say, brilliant. And I think that's the thing that I still struggle with. So when I had my academic writing and text analysis classes, our professor said to write essays, but I was not ready to write 500 words in the first lesson. So it was a challenging thing. And then another challenge was that I couldn't attend some classes according to my program. I could have only 30 credits, but I wanted to make it more. My university staff advised me to go voluntarily, but the problem was that some of the professors were not happy to have some students without their register at least.

Adding to the academic challenges, Participant 8 mentioned "well, in terms of study, of course, it happened that I could not understand some aspects during my studies, but it was all managed by asking for clarification from my group mates and professors."
Students also emphasized having language problems. "The only thing that I can attribute to a harmful difficulty is rather a language barrier, because I went there with the thought that I knew English pretty well" stated Participant 2. Moreover, even though all students studied in the English language, the official language of their host country differed, for example, Polish in Poland and Spanish in Spain. Participant 3, who had his academic mobility program in

Poland, emphasized having language problems because locals mostly spoke Polish And I could very rarely meet people who speak good English."

Participant 6 noted facing bureaucratic issues because "…they have a different documentation system and a different grading system. And it took me some time to get used to it". Participants also mentioned that sometimes local people did not welcome foreigners. Participant 4 described:

I had a situation, for example, in a store. When I went to buy a SIM card for the phone, I asked a question in English if they had a SIM card. The seller ignored me many times and said something in Polish at the end which I did not get because of the lack of knowledge of Polish language. In the end, I could not get a SIM card. I just left the store because she totally did not want to sell and talk to me. But it was, of course, not everywhere. I can't speak for all people.

Moreover, Participant 5 noted "there were such cases that sometimes locals were not very friendly, mostly to international students. I myself have experienced it… maybe because I am Asian. Well, it seems there was a certain degree of stereotype about Asians."

On the contrary, some of the participants shared encountering absolutely no difficulties. Participant 9 commented:

There were not any challenges. I did not have any obstacles as far as we had two week orientation weeks. Also, we had local volunteer students as well as some coordinators who worked twenty four to seven. They have provided us with lots of information on what to do in case of an academic question, in case of some accommodation questions as well as entertainment. For example, volunteer students provided us instructions on how to get in and how to make purchases, you know, to buy groceries. So there were not any problems.

Adding to this, Participant 10 also emphasized that he did not encounter any difficulties. To the question of what helped him to avoid any obstacles, he replied "…because I know myself very well. I adapt very quickly to any place. I really love to communicate with new people. Well, no matter how shy and stressed I am, I am not afraid to communicate with new people, make friends. Therefore, I do not feel like a foreign stranger in a new country. So I adapted very quickly and had no problems."

4.6. **Adjustment and Socialization in the Local Community**

The interview protocol of the current study also included questions about students' adjustment and socialization in a new country. "How was your adjustment and socialization process to the local community?" the participants were asked. In general, while some students could smoothly adapt to a local community and socialize there, others experienced some difficulties. Participant 3 responded that his adjustment and socialization went very easy. He mentioned that it was their host university who facilitated adjustment and socialization processes by organizing various tours and events. "Every week we had some kind of event, for example, we visited different museums or local galleries there. On holidays foreign students visited Polish families before Christmas. Certain people were assigned to organize these activities. They helped us to quickly get acquainted with local culture and get used to it." Another participant attributed his smooth adjustment and socialization to a proficient knowledge of the English language. "If you know the language, English, then there are no particular difficulties" Participant 4 noted. Participant 6 emphasized a huge support local people as well as their professors showed to them as international students. "There was support from all sides. Locals were ready to explain if something was not clear. Professors understood that students had moved there for a particular period of time which was literally half a year. Hence, they tried to give us as much as possible in terms of knowledge and

practice. Therefore, my adaptation was also very positive, I cannot say anything bad"
commented Participant 6.

On the contrary, a number of participants stated that it was not easy to adjust in a new
community and socialize there. Participant 2 attributed adjustment and socialization issues to
a language barrier. Language issues have led the Participant 2 to avoid any communication
with locals or other international students. Instead the student kept close relationships with
those coming from her home country Kazakhstan. The Participant highlighted that it was
Kazakhstani students (who were already living there for a few years) who helped them to
adapt and socialize in a new environment. "It was they who helped us rent accommodation,
negotiate with hotels, open local credit cards and SIM cards. Since we did not know the local
language they served us as translators too" described Participant 2.

Participant 4 also revealed that it was difficult to immediately move to a new country
and adapt there. According to her response, support from her fellow friends coming there
with her helped to combat adjustment issues. "When people come to a new place together,
they somehow adapt more calmly and smoothly" noted Participant 4. Moreover, two out of
the ten participants noted that they could accept a new culture with ease and adapt there
smoothly because they knew that they would stay there for a period of time and this time
would come to an end one day. In other words, the given time limit, which constituted about
six months for the participants of the interview, helped them accept the situation and
successfully adjust as well as socialize there.

There were cases of students experiencing culture shock which resulted from big
cultural differences. Participant 1 described her case:

> I come from the southern part of Kazakhstan, where 99% of people speak Kazakh and
> have conservative traditions. In our culture the young generation should respect the
> elderly by, for example, giving them a seat in public transport. Every time I am on

public transport, I give my seat to elderly woman and they do not take it. It was so awkward, like did I do something wrong? But they felt even more awkward because it seems, according to the local culture, young people do not give a seat to elderly people as it might offend them as being too old.

This example clearly speaks up about the importance of being aware of and respecting cultural differences. A good cultural awareness about the country where people are moving is considered to facilitate adaptation and socialization there. The interviews revealed that the students had little knowledge about the culture and history of the host country before they moved there. They learned basic information about the accepting country such as the local currency, time zone, language being spoken and other popular information.

4.7. **Communication Experience in a Host Country**

Moving to another country often implies communicating in a foreign language. The main purpose of the participants of this study moving to a foreign country is to study. Even though the students studied in English, the local language might have differed. For example, students who took their academic mobility program in Poland had to acquire Polish language on top of English language to be able to socialize in their daily life. The same example is with students staying in Spain who had to learn a second foreign language- Spanish while studying there in their first foreign language- English. The participants' first priority language was English since they studied most of their time. Participant 3 noted that there were students in his group who came from Russia and Ukraine. Those, they could speak with each other in one common language- Russian. The participants also mentioned making really good friendships with those who came from post-Soviet countries such as Belarus, Russia, Ukraine which implied frequent use of Russian language.

Students actively tried to practice local language during their everyday life. According to the participants, shopping centers, grocery stores, banks and pharmacies are the most

popular places where they had to speak in the local language. "While I was doing some shopping or visiting local kids, I tried to learn the local language Polish, which was a good challenge and interesting to try myself" highlighted Participant 1. "When it came to, for example, going to a pharmacy store, a bank, or just talking with local residents on the streets that came across, you already had to somehow gently cut out those small pieces of knowledge of the Spanish language from the corners of your mind" described Participant 2. Students also regularly faced local people in their educational institutions as professors were predominantly locals delivering teaching in English language.

The interviews showed that the native languages of the participants of this study remained prevalent despite being abroad. To the question "how often did you use your native language in a foreign country?" Participant 6 replied "I used it a lot in everyday life, because there were people with whom I could communicate in my native language." Taking into consideration the case of the Participant 1, her roommate was Kazakh which inevitably led to speaking in their native language Kazakh most of their time. Participant 2 noted having every day video calls with family members which kept him practicing his mother tongue (Kazakh) regularly.

Moreover, there has been observed the trend among Kazakhstani students who go abroad that they tend to keep close relationships with their fellow countrymen. According to Participant 2, during dinner times and lunchtimes, all students in the dormitory coming from Kazakhstan regularly got together to have lunch and dinner. The findings demonstrate that the students face a variety of language based challenges during their stay in a foreign country. The major difficulties included misunderstandings concerning several words, heavy accents and the fact that some people did not speak in English at all.

The participants of the study used many methods to deal with language-related issues. The employed approaches include facial gestures, sign language, explanation method, asking

for clarification; however, the most popular remained using a translator. "We live in a world of technological advancement. Everyone has a good internet. And a Google translator is a life saver. Every time I struggled to communicate in English or Polish, I would use the translator to help me communicate with people. Students emphasized that language problems mostly arose with those who did not speak in English (local people in a host country) as they had to employ gestures, sign language and other harsh approaches.

4.8. **Encountering a New Academic Environment**

All the students reported having a positive and rich academic experience. They emphasized huge differences between the education system in their home country and abroad. The students shared great satisfaction with their overseas academic achievement. According to the participants' answers, one of the noticeable features of a foreign education was the ability to really influence your study schedule. "You can choose absolutely any discipline and create for yourself an educational catalog for both engineering and information disciplines. And adding to them put something humanitarian, technological or even artificial whether it is music, dancing or something else" explained Participant 1. The students stated that managing your own study schedule is very convenient.

Adding to differences in the education system, according to Participant 4, foreign education provides more practice. "We did an experiment with children from disadvantaged areas" started her story Participant 4. "In our university (in Kazakhstan) it would be just in theory; however, here (in Poland), the professor allocated a separate time and the whole group went to that place to do an experiment. That's what really amazed me" noted Participant 4.

Another difference was the total freedom the students are given in attending and missing lectures. "You might come to the lectures if you want. If you do not attend lectures you will not be punished. Also, anyone could join the lecture at any time or left the lecture

without any warnings" remembered Participant 5. One more feature is that professors from a host university communicated a lot with their students. It was revealed that compared to Kazakhstani education system there is a low power distance between professors and students. Overseas professors might ask questions, share with their experiences, joke sometimes while this behavior might not be accepted in a Kazakhstani context.

The participants of the study were also asked if they faced any obstacles related to their studies. According to the students' reply, almost half of them stayed out of trouble. Some of them attributed it to the local education system. "I did not face any obstacles in my studies primarily thanks to their education system. There it is the students who manage the education because we ourselves chose what we wanted to be taught based on our interests. Therefore, I personally selected all the disciplines that really interested me. All I had to do is learn" explained Participant 7. Moreover, Participants 3 and 5 stated that their training went very smoothly without any difficulties.

Even though the majority of students managed to perform well during their training abroad, the remaining shared encountering study related issues. According to Participant 4, a big share of the literature and textbooks provided by the professors remained relatively unclear and difficult to understand. The participant attributed this problem to a language barrier and a shortage of vocabulary. "I had to translate a lot, first to take the essence of the word in general, and then the essence of the whole sentence or context" noted Participant 4. Moreover, the Participant 6 stated having similar issues understanding the lecture topic. However, she could manage the issue by asking for help from professors and group mates. "People there are always eager to help. Whenever I had a problem I always asked people and they explained, assisted me" emphasized Participant 6.

 4.9. **Daily Life in a Foreign Country**

Students' everyday life in a foreign country is also an important aspect to consider as problems may arise unexpectedly while just living their usual lives. In general, the participants enjoyed their daily life in a foreign country. "I did not have any problems with the public transportation system and grocery shopping as they are of a good quality there" mentioned Participant 1 about her daily life abroad. Some of the participants managed to get the best out of their trip and had an active lifestyle there. "Maybe I had a positive experience because I was able to visit lots of places in my host country," emphasized Participant 1. Also, she shared that regular visits to theaters, museums and cinemas were sponsored by their host university. Moreover, the local government supports students by providing them discounts. Thus, students had half-price tickets in the majority of recreational centers as well as for the public transport. It can be considered that the support from the government as well as the accepting university in organizing students' active lifestyle abroad might be the reason for their positive study abroad experience.

While for some stay abroad went relatively positive, others faced day-to-day problems such as a distinct difference in weather. Thus, Participant 2 studying in Spanish revealed facing an unexpectedly hot climate which took time to adapt after usual weather in Kazakhstan. In addition, it was revealed that some of the students could not find some kind of food that they are used to eating in their home country. According to Participant 4, they did not manage to find some types of cereals that they are accustomed to consuming in Kazakhstan. Students struggled to find buckwheat; however, it turned out that local people do not consume buckwheat and therefore it is not available on store shelves.

Organizing daily life in a completely new environment might be challenging. As stated by Participant 6, ensuring stability helped when staying far from homeland. "I tried to remain in my daily routine as I am used to in my home country. I did the same breakfast,

lunch and dinner that I am accustomed to eating. In general, I tried to create an environment that I was used to so that I had my own home regardless where I am" explained Participant 6.

4.10. **Psychological Well-being of Students During their Stay Abroad**

When moving to a new environment, psychological condition is believed to be hurt first. The students were asked about their mental condition during their academic mobility abroad. The interviews revealed that as soon as students arrived in a new country they felt homesickness and loneliness sometimes connected with some degree of anxiety. "I thought why did I come here? …such was my homesickness" explained the Participant 2. Hopefully, it did not last long. After a couple of weeks students started to get accustomed to a new environment.

One of the participants mentioned experiencing stress due to the dormitory conditions. The dormitory they were settled in turned out to be pretty old which did not meet their expectations. The conditions in the dormitory did not match with the conditions the Participant is used to living in which resulted in stress. However, it was paid off by a diverse and active student life there, according to Participant 4. It was discovered that homesickness, feelings of loneliness and sadness started to appear again by the end of their journey. The majority of students revealed that keeping in mind that their stay in a country is not for a long (six months on average for the participants of the study) helped to combat those destructive feelings.

As can be seen from the interviews, students from Kazakhstan tended to keep strong family ties even when they were abroad. Students regularly communicated with their families and former friends which helped to avoid any negative emotions. Some of them made friends with locals, international students and even other Kazakhstani students coming from other regions. Thus definitely led to a positive mental condition.

Also, according to the participants, they perceived a lot of support both from their trainers as well as local people and friends. "I got lots of support from all the teachers. They were ready to help me because they knew I was a tourist there as well as an international student. So, you know, if you are a tourist and your visit is temporary, people always try to do their best to make a good impression of the country by helping and supporting you" explained Participant 9.

4.11. Summary

The current chapter summarized the study's key findings and revealed six broad themes: motivation to study abroad, students' general perception of study abroad experience, challenges students face while studying abroad, adjustment and socialization in the local community, communication experience in a host country, encountering a new academic environment, daily life in a foreign country, psychological well-being while being abroad. Participants provided a detailed account of their experiences, challenges, and issues helping the researcher to investigate the kinds of issues students from Kazakhstan encounter during their academic mobility abroad. Moreover, the approaches students employ while encountering these problems were explored too. According to the findings of this study, even though students had relatively positive study abroad experience they underwent a number of obstacles. These common challenges included adaptation and socialization problems, language barrier, academic issues and feeling of homesickness and stress. In addition, participants employed a number of approaches to combat these challenges. A detailed discussion on the findings of the study will be provided in the next chapter.

5. **Discussion**

5.1. **Introduction**

The semi-structured interviews revealed several emerging themes, which were presented in the previous chapter. The aim of the current chapter is to interpret emerging themes in relation to the research questions of the study:

1. What kinds of challenges do Kazakhstani students experience during their stay abroad?

2. What strategic responses do they employ to address these difficulties?

Moreover, the current chapter includes a discussion of emerging themes in accordance with the relevant literature. Six major themes are discussed and these are; students' motivation to study abroad and overall perception, adjustment and socialization issues, communication in an accepting country, a new academic environment, symptoms of cultural shock and daily life abroad. Data gathered from interviews enabled the researcher to discover different kinds of challenges students faced while studying abroad as well as the strategies they used to deal with these issues.

5.2. **Students' Motivation to Study Abroad and Overall Perception**

Students' motivation might affect the outcomes of the study abroad participation. Therefore, the first question in this study sought to determine students' motivation to study abroad. The current study found that the main motive to participate in a mobility program among students was to travel. This emerging idea is consistent with the result of the study conducted by Anderson and Lawton (2015), which discovered that World Enlightenment is the highest rated dimension among other four dimensions that influence a student's decision to study abroad. According to Anderson and Lawton (2015), World Enlightenment includes learning about the world and communication with people from other countries. As Kazakhstan is among developing countries, it is no wonder that its students perceive mobility

programs as their main opportunity to finally get out of the country and achieve fluency in learning the English language.

Kazakhstani students also chose to go abroad for the sake of experiencing a new education system. This study found that this is the second priority reason, while Anderson and Lawton's study (2015) reported it being the third top motive after personal growth. For Kazakhstani students, obtaining foreign education is the second impulse (after seeing the world) to participate in a mobility program. The study found that the drawbacks of short-term stay in a foreign country were overshadowed by its positive sides as students reported their study abroad experience as predominantly positive. As mentioned in the literature review, even though most international students are satisfied with their academic experiences, they might be dissatisfied with their experiences outside of the classroom.

5.3. Adjustment and Socialization Issues

As mentioned in the literature review, even though some students manage to excel abroad, there might be those who struggle. Studying abroad for international students is both exciting and worrisome (Elliot et al., 2016). International students may encounter adjustment challenges in their host country due to cultural differences, linguistic limitations, and differences in social norms (de Araujo, 2011). According to Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998, as cited in de Araujo, 2011), adjustment is "a transitional process that unfolds over time as students learn to cope with the exigencies of the university environment" (p. 2). The term adjustment is used to describe the particular difficulties that international students face in their academic careers as well as the stress management techniques they employ (de Araujo, 2011).

Interestingly, a few participants of the interviews claimed undergoing a smooth adjustment in a host culture. The study found that there were a number of factors that facilitated a comfortable students' adaptation. It was revealed that English language

proficiency highly affected sojourns' adjustment. This emerging idea is in agreement with de Araujo's work (2011) who suggested that the higher the English proficiency among sojourns the less likely they are to confront adjustment difficulties in a foreign country.

The participants of the interviews also mentioned the huge support they received in a new environment which assisted easy adjustment. For example, students highlighted that accepting universities organized events and tours to expose them to the local culture. Moreover, according to participants, the readiness to help and an immense support from local people and teaching staff played a crucial role. The study discovered that social support from different sources such as faculty and surrounding people is a crucial contributor to smooth adjustment. This idea is consistent with the study of de Araujo (2011).

On the contrary, the study revealed that language barrier served as the main constraint for an effective adjustment. As the result of the interviews showed, those with a high language barrier lacked socialization with locals and other international students. As mentioned in the literature review, language issues are not only bound to cause difficulty of learning a new language, it also restrains intercultural communication, classroom discussion and accepting a host culture. In turn, students tried to keep close relationships with those coming from the same culture, from Kazakhstan. Also, they sought support and help from fellow citizens.

The study also revealed that the mobility program took an exact period of time which was about six months. Bearing in mind the period of stay and recognizing that the trip will come to an end one day helped students to easily overcome adjustment issues. Short vacations are less likely to cause culture shock than longer stays or working experiences where local culture is "fully engaged" (Furnham, 2004). Students also revealed experiencing major culture shock. There remains no clear definition of culture shock, in general it means "a serious, acute and sometimes chronic affective reaction to a new (social) environment"

(Furham, 2012, p. 14). This study suggests that the reason for culture shock might be the lack of familiarity with a host culture. As stated in the literature review, not knowing culturally driven norms of a host country might cause a challenge for international students. The study found that participants had little knowledge about their accepting culture except for basic information about differences in time zones, local currency and language. Better understanding of the local culture would enable better assimilation in a country. As mentioned in the literature review, mastering the local language would affect international students' social lives and comprehension of the host culture in addition to their academic performance (Pan et al., 2012). Moreover, Bartram (2008, as cited in Khanal & Gaulee, 2019) supposes the need to provide specific upfront information about food, culture, the academic system, finances, and housing to ease anxiety.

5.4. **Communication in an Accepting Country**

As can be seen from the study, even though the official language of students' study was English, the common language of their accepting country differed. For example, students taking their academic mobility program in Poland had to acquire Polish language, while those from Spain- Spanish language. The participants of the study are from Kazakhstan whose native language was Kazakh or Russian. Thus, learning a second foreign language adding to English to adjust in a new setting caused additional challenges.

Shopping centers, grocery stores, banks and pharmacies remained the most popular spots among students to communicate in a local language. Also, it was revealed that the teaching staff were predominantly local people teaching in the English language which was a foreign language for them.

One of the interesting findings of the interviews was that although being abroad the participants' main language remained to be their native language (Kazakh or Russian). Kazakhstani students, participating in a mobility program abroad, tended to keep close

relationships with their fellow countrymen. Students were accommodated in one room in a dormitory with their fellow citizens, had lunches and dinners as well as organized leisure together. It is suggested that international students with similar cultural backgrounds tend to get along better compared to working with students from host countries (Akanwa, 2015). Moreover, the literature review demonstrated that forming a support network of individuals from similar cultural backgrounds is the most common method of coping used by Asian international students (Choe, 1996, Furnham & Alibhai, 1985, Hayes & Lin, 1994 as cited in Gebhard, 2013). That might also be attributed to Kazakhstani people's unique feature of always keeping strong ties with close ones.

There were a variety of language- based obstacles that students confronted. One of them was a misunderstanding concerning several words. This finding supports a previous study by Milian et al (2015) who suggested misunderstanding of idioms, slang, similes and metaphors as the main problems of international students. Heavy accents among non-native speakers also created obstacles in communication.

To overcome these language based issues, students employed different approaches. For example, some of the participants reported always asking for clarification when not being able to catch the meaning because of the accent or the speed of speech. Sometimes students could show something by hands, point with fingers and imitate thus employing sign language and facial gestures. Also, when students with a relatively small vocabulary range met a problem of "finding the right word", they employed an explanation method. That is they tried to explain in many ways that missing word to finally deliver the idea. Adding to strategies used to deal with language issues, the majority of students reported using online translators. Thanks to the advancements of the internet and technologies, students could use their mobile, connect to the internet and translate in an online translator from their mother tongue to a foreign language.

5.5. **A New Academic Environment**

Entering a new academic environment might involve some challenges because of the difference in teaching and studying styles. This study found that the majority of Kazakhstani students were highly satisfied with foreign education within short-term mobility programs. The study also discovered major differences in the education system according to the reports of international students. Commenting on the differences in teaching and learning, Hofstede (1986) highlighted the main areas that problems can lie in. According to him, differences in teaching and learning style across nations may arise because of different social positions of teacher and students, difference in relevance of the curriculum, differences in profiles of cognitive abilities and differences in expected patterns between teacher and students. Ten participants commented on the differences they saw between Kazakhstani and foreign education systems. The features that differentiated overseas higher education from Kazakhstani include managing personal study schedule, practice-focus, free attendance and low power distance between professors and students. The interviews revealed that low power distance appeared in close and frequent communication between teacher and student, rare jokes and personal stories from teachers. Such behavior of teaching staff in Kazakhstan might involve misunderstanding. Hosftede (1986) defined power distance as "the extent to which the less powerful persons in a society accept inequality in power and consider it as normal" (p. 307). According to Hofstede (1986), low power distance between teacher and student might manifest in professors respecting the independence of their students, student-centered education, students speaking up in class at any time and contradicting/criticizing teachers as well as the fact that teachers are treated as equals.

It was discovered that the feature of managing one's own curriculum as well as personal schedule in a foreign education enabled to avoid educational difficulties. This is

because Kazakhstani students were able to choose subjects in line with their interests as well as the preferable lecture time.

The study found that the most popular academic difficulties that students from Kazakhstan confront when studying abroad include unclear textbooks and literature provided by professors and difficulties with understanding the lecture. It is undoubtable that these issues are attributed to students' English proficiency level. This idea is in agreement with previous study by Yeh and Inose (2003 as cited in Akanwa, 2015) who suggested that English language is the major obstacle among international students that affects their academic performance.

5.6. **Symptoms of Cultural Shock**

It is considered that cultural disparity inevitably resulting in culture shock might lead to symptoms such as cognitive, emotional, physiological, and other reactions (Furham, 2012). The most frequently confronted symptoms reported by the participants of the study included confusion, isolation, loneliness, depression and homesickness. At the beginning of their stay abroad, students revealed experiencing stress, homesickness and anxiety. This stage is identified as the crisis stage followed by the honeymoon stage when things begin to go wrong, minor problems escalate into major ones, and cultural differences grow grating (Winkelman, 1994).

The study demonstrated that stress caused by feeling of loneliness and homesickness appeared again by the end of the journey. Even though sojourns manage a new culture and adapt to a condition at this stage, problems do not end. Therefore, experiencing stress that is brought on by both physiological and psychological factors is a typical side effect of moving to and adjusting to a new culture (Winkelman,1994). In dealing with destructive emotions and feelings, students tended to turn to close ones. They had regular online calls through the Internet with parents, friends and relatives. Also, students found support in fellow citizens

residing in the same foreign country because it is perceived that students collaborate more effectively with people who share their experiences and cultures (Akanwa, 2015).

5.7. **Daily Life Abroad**

When staying in a new environment, simple tasks like finding a cell phone plan, installing cable television, and using the phone aren't easy anymore (Gebhard, 2013). One of the issues that students faced in their everyday life was adjusting to the new weather. For example, they were brought to an unexpectedly hot weather after severe cold in Kazakhstan. The literature review showed that there are other challenges such as adjusting to a new cultural lifestyle that involves unfamiliar foods and drinks, some of which may conflict with their ethnic eating customs and require modifications (Milian et al., 2015). This theory finds support in this study which found that one of the participants struggled to find cereal which they used to consume at their home.

For the remaining, lifestyle in a foreign country went positively. The participants attributed it to active leisure such as visiting theaters, museums and cinemas organized by accepting university. As can be seen, daily life aspects such as the transportation system or grocery shopping did not cause problems. The strategy that helped to overcome daily life challenges was ensuring stability by establishing routine. One of the participants tried to remain routine and create an environment that she is used to at home.

5.8. **Summary**

The present chapter has provided a discussion of emerging themes and ideas of the conducted interviews relating them to theoretical literature on the subject of different kinds of obstacles that international students overcome while being abroad. The discussion chapter aimed to describe the interview findings to provide information on the challenges that Kazakhstani undergraduate students experience during their mobility program abroad as well as different strategies they employed to combat arising issues.

6. **Conclusions**

6.1. **Introduction**

This chapter concludes the research study by providing a summary of the main findings of this study. Also, the chapter highlights significant limitations, presents the implications of the study, and suggests recommendations for further research.

6.2 **Summary of the Major Findings**

This study found that there are two main reasons why Kazakhstani students decide to participate in an academic mobility program. These factors include traveling abroad and obtaining foreign education. Moreover, the participants mentioned the opportunity to practice English in a foreign country while they are studying there. The results of the study have revealed that while some students manage to successfully adjust in a host country, the remaining might struggle. A successful adjustment in a new environment is attributed to high English language proficiency as well as social support from accepting university staff, local people and fellow students. Language barrier is found to be the main obstacle of an effective adjustment in a host country.

The academic mobility program is found to take about six months. The relatively short longevity of the vocation enabled a comparatively comfortable adjustment. As the data analysis showed, students experienced a significant culture shock which is attributed to their ignorance. Better understanding of the culture shock in accordance with mastering the local language would result in a smoother adjustment in a new environment. This study has also found that students spoke more than three languages simultaneously while being abroad. Even though the studies were conducted in English, students had to acquire one more foreign language that is commonly used in a host country. The host language differed depending on the country of the residence, for example, Polish in Poland and Spanish in Spain. Also, it was revealed that students kept speaking in their mother tongue daily when making Internet calls

to the close ones and when communicating with fellow students partaking in a mobility program too.

The study discovered several categories of challenges that were common for the majority of Kazakhstani students participating in an academic mobility program. It also examined the ways how students combat these issues. One of the most common concerns included language related issues. Students struggled understanding the meaning of several words in a foreign language which included local slangs, idioms and metaphors. Language issues also involved troubles with understanding the different kinds of accents of non-native English speakers. Students employed a number of approaches to overcome language obstacles. These approaches include facial gestures, sign language, explanation method, asking for clarification; however, the most popular remained using a translator.

The results of the interviews revealed the huge difference in teaching and learning style between Kazakhstani and foreign university education system. According to the participants' responses, what really differentiates overseas education are the opportunity to manage personal study schedule, practice-focus, free attendance and low power distance between professors and students. Despite these differences, academic mobility program participants from Kazakhstan reported a huge satisfaction with an overseas education system.

The study found that when entering a new academic environment taught in English, students from Kazakhstan face problems with understanding the lecture, textbooks and literature provided by professors. This problem is attributed to sojourns' low English proficiency level. However, students reported facing a huge support from teaching staff towards them as international students. The approach used to enhance their academic performance involved working on their English language proficiency by translating unknown words and dedicating more time to study deeply.

The study found that traveling to a new foreign setting resulted in Kazakhstani students experiencing cognitive, emotional and psychological reactions. The symptoms common for Kazakhstani students studying abroad involved confusion, isolation, loneliness, depression and homesickness.

The results of the interviews revealed stress and homesickness was prevalent among students in the beginning of their trip as well as by the end of the journey. In the beginning of their stay, stress caused by confronting unfamiliar environments ended up in anxiety. Also, feelings of loneliness were visible time after time while living and studying abroad. When dealing with emotional and psychological issues while being abroad, students found support in their closest ones, also fellow citizens who share the same experience of staying overseas for a period of time.

According to the interviews, students struggled to adjust to a new weather condition in an accepting country. Also, they faced issues confronting unfamiliar foods and drinks. Students reported cases of not being able to find their accustomed food which caused some degree of stress and homesickness. It was revealed that students who kept routine could better combat unexpected daily life challenges in a foreign country.

6.3 Limitations

One of the main limitations of this qualitative study is the relatively small number of participants consisting of 10 former academic mobility program students. A wider population would provide more generalized information as in quantitative study. However, despite the small sample size, it was made sure that the information obtained is very accurate by interviewing the representatives of different participants. Another limitation might be conducting interviews online. Even though modern technologies allow conducting video calls and see an interlocutor, important aspects such as respondents' body movements, facial expressions and real emotions might be missed which would give more information about the

different kinds of obstacles students encountered during their stay in a foreign country. Moreover, the number of host countries is limited to two which is another limitation. A larger diversity of accepting countries would provide comprehensive information about students' experience of undergoing challenges during their short-term stay abroad.

6.4   Implications

The results of the current study can benefit a variety of stakeholders. Firstly, this study might be beneficial for future academic mobility program students who are traveling abroad for a short period of time and studying there. This study might prepare them for a program by raising awareness about the possible challenges and providing real examples of students on how to deal with potential issues. University faculty and administration may also find this study useful and provide pre-departure training and ongoing support to make study abroad experience comfortable and positive. Parents might also benefit from the study by obtaining comprehensive information about possible risks for their children of participating in a short-term academic mobility program.

6.5   Recommendations

The limitations of this study can be addressed in further research. Firstly, a larger sample size would enable us to draw more generalizable conclusions. Secondly, future research might investigate deeply the influence of gender, social status, and host countries on the variety of challenges that students face during their academic mobility program. Thirdly, if possible, conducting the study involving academic mobility participants from all Kazakhstani universities would provide a comprehensive picture of the issue in a Kazakhstani context.

6.6   Personal Reflection

In general, my thesis writing process was both challenging and exciting at the same time. I have grown as a researcher applying all the knowledge I have acquired during my

two-year master's program. Moreover, I have improved my personal skills such as time-management, discipline and responsibility. Personally, I find the results of the study helpful because the number of students participating in short-term mobility programs are likely to grow in the near future as a result of globalization. I hope my thesis writing journey will help me in my career and future plans.

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Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Challenges experienced by Kazakhstani students during their academic mobility

programs abroad

Description: You are invited to participate in a research study on drawbacks of student mobility programs. The purpose of the study is to examine categories of challenges Kazakhstani students encounter during their stay abroad. Also, the kinds of strategies students employ while adapting to a host country will be explored. This study will employ semi-structured interviews which allow greater control over how the conversation will be centered on subjects that are relevant to the study's goal.

Time involvement: The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

Risks: Potential risks of participating in a research mostly relate to participants' psychological or emotional well-being. This is why emotional reactions of participants during the data collection procedure will be monitored to pause or stop the interview if needed.

Benefits: Students planning to participate in study abroad programs and their parents might benefit from this study by obtaining comprehensive information about potential downsides of studying in a foreign country. Moreover, it might not only contribute to existing literature on study abroad programs, but also lessen social stereotypes of study abroad programs as solely having positive effects on their participants.

Compensation. There will be no compensation for participating in this study. When the study is finished, a copy of the research findings will be made accessible in the Nazarbayev University library repository. The study's findings may be disclosed to the participants at their request.

Confidentiality & Anonymity. The participants' true names will be coded by giving them nicknames in order to maintain anonymity. Additionally, the transcripts of the interviews and any recordings will be saved on the researcher's personal laptop with a security code to maintain their confidentiality. Data will be erased by the end of the study.

Voluntary nature of the study. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and if agreement to participation is given, it can be withdrawn at any time without prejudice. In addition, you are free not to respond to certain questions if you wish.

Points of Contact:

It is understood that should any questions or comments arise regarding this project, or a research related injury is received, NUGSE master student, Saltanat Imanmalikova, 87058348815 and saltanat.taizhanova@nu.edu.kz should be contacted. Any other questions or concerns may be addressed to the Nazarbayev University Institutional Research Ethics Committee, resethics@nu.edu.kz.

Statement of Consent:

- I have carefully read the information provided;
- I have been given full information regarding the purpose and procedures of the study;
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else;
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason;
- With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

By clicking "I agree" below you are indicating that you are at least 18 years old, have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate in this research study.

☐ I Agree

☐ I Disagree

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.
According to the law of the Republic of Kazakhstan an individual under the age of 18 is considered a child. Any participant falling into that category should be given the Parental Consent Form and have it signed by at least one of his/her parent(s) or guardian(s). In addition, the child must give assent to participate in the research. Both parent consent and child assent scripts should be included with this application.

Appendix B

ЗЕРТТЕУ ЖҰМЫСЫ КЕЛІСІМІНІҢ АҚПАРАТТЫҚ ФОРМАСЫ

Қазақстандық студенттердің шетелде академиялық ұтқырлық бағдарламаларын өту кезіндегі кездесетін қиындықтары

Сипаттама: Сізді студенттердің ұтқырлық бағдарламаларының кемшіліктері туралы зерттеуге қатысуға шақырамыз. Зерттеудің мақсаты – қазақстандық студенттердің шетелде болған кезде кездесетін қиындықтар санаттарын зерттеу. Сонымен қатар, студенттер қабылдаушы елге бейімделу кезінде қолданатын стратегиялардың түрлері де зерттеледі. Бұл зерттеу әңгіменің зерттеу мақсатына сәйкес келетін тақырыптарға қалай шоғырланатынын бақылауға мүмкіндік беретін жартылай құрылымдық сұхбаттарды пайдаланады.

Қатысу уақыты: Сұхбат шамамен 30 минутты алады.

Қауіп-қатер. Зерттеуге қатысудың ықтимал қауіп-қатер негізінен қатысушылардың психологиялық немесе эмоционалдық әл-ауқатына байланысты. Сондықтан қажет болған жағдайда сұхбатты кідірту үшін деректерді жинау процедурасы кезінде қатысушылардың эмоционалдық реакциялары бақыланады.

Пайдасы. Шетелде оқу бағдарламаларына қатысуды жоспарлап отырған студенттер мен олардың ата-аналары шет елде оқудың ықтимал кемшіліктері туралы жан-жақты ақпарат алу арқылы осы зерттеуден пайда көре алады. Бұл зерттеу шетелде оқу бағдарламалары бойынша бар әдебиеттерге үлес қосып қана қоймай, сонымен қатар шетелде оқу бағдарламалары туралы әлеуметтік стереотиптерін азайтады.

Өтемақы. Бұл зерттеуге қатысқаны үшін өтемақы қарастырылмайды. Зерттеу аяқталғаннан кейін нәтижелер көшірмесі Назарбаев Университеті кітапханасының репозиторийінде қолжетімді болады. Зерттеу нәтижелері қатысушылардың өтініші бойынша ашылуы мүмкін.

Құпиялылық. Қатысушылардың аты-жөндері жасырын болу үшін бұл зерттеу бүркеншік аттар беру арқылы кодталады. Сонымен қатар, құпиялылықты сақтау үшін сұхбаттардың транскрипттері және кез келген жазбалар зерттеушінің қауіпсіздік коды бар жеке ноутбугында сақталады. Жиналған деректер зерттеу соңында жойылады.

Зерттеудің ерікті сипаты. Бұл зерттеуге қатысу қатаң түрде ерікті болып табылады және егер қатысуға келісім берілсе, оны кез келген уақытта зиянсыз кері қайтарып алуға болады. Сонымен қатар, қатысушылар кез келген сұраққа жауап бермеуге құқылы.

Байланыс пункттері. Осы жобаға қатысты қандай да бір сұрақтар немесе ескертулер туындаған жағдайда, Салтанат Иманмаликовамен байланысуға болады, 87058348815, saltanat.taizhanova@nu.edu.kz. Кез келген басқа мәселелер Назарбаев Университетінің Институционалдық зерттеулер этикасы комитетіне жіберіліне алынады, resethics@nu.edu.kz .

Келісім туралы мәлімдеме:.

- Берілген ақпаратты мұқият оқып шықтым;
- Маған зерттеудің мақсаты мен тәртібі туралы толық ақпарат берілді;
- Жиналған деректер қалай пайдаланылатынын және кез келген құпия ақпарат тек зерттеушілерге көрінетінін және ешкімге айтылмайтынын түсінемін;
- Мен кез келген уақытта зерттеуден себепсіз бас тарта алатынымды түсінемін;
- Жоғарыда айтылғандардың барлығын толық біле отырып, мен өз еркіммен осы зерттеуге қатысуға келісемін.

Төмендегі "Мен келісемін" түймесін басу арқылы сіз кем дегенде 18 жаста екеніңізді көрсетесіз, осы келісім үлгісін оқып, түсіндіңіз және осы зерттеуге қатысуға келісім бересіз.

☐ Мен келісемін

☐ Мен келіспеймін

Бұл қол қойылған және күні қойылған келісім пішімінің қосымша көшірмесі сізде сақталады.

Қазақстан Республикасының заңы бойынша 18 жасқа толмаған жеке тұлға бала болып саналады. Осы санатқа жататын кез келген қатысушыға ата-ананың келісімі парағы берілуі және оған кем дегенде бір ата-анасының немесе қамқоршысының қол қоюы қажет. Сонымен қатар, бала зерттеуге қатысуға рұқсат беруі керек. Бұл қолданбаға ата-ана келісімі де, баланың келісімі сценарийлері де қосылуы керек.

Appendix C

ФОРМА ИНФОРМАЦИОННОГО СОГЛАСИЯ

Проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются казахстанские студенты во время программ академической мобильности за рубежом

Описание: Вам предлагается принять участие в исследовании недостатков программ студенческой мобильности. Цель исследования - изучить категории проблем, с которыми сталкиваются казахстанские студенты во время пребывания за границей. Кроме того, будут изучены виды стратегий, которые студенты используют при адаптации в принимающей стране. В этом исследовании будут использоваться полу структурированные интервью, которые позволят лучше контролировать то, как разговор будет сосредоточен на темах, имеющих отношение к цели исследования.

Время участия: Интервью займет около 30 минут.

Риски: Потенциальные риски участия в исследовании в основном связаны с психологическим или эмоциональным благополучием участников. Вот почему эмоциональные реакции участников во время процедуры сбора данных будут отслеживаться, чтобы при необходимости приостановить интервью.

Преимущества: Студенты, планирующие участвовать в программах обучения за границей, и их родители могут извлечь выгоду из этого исследования, получив исчерпывающую информацию о потенциальных недостатках обучения в другой стране. Более того, это могло бы не только внести вклад в существующую литературу по программам обучения за границей, но и уменьшить социальные стереотипы о программах обучения за границей, поскольку они оказывают исключительно положительное влияние на их участников.

Компенсация. Компенсация за участие в этом исследовании не выплачивается**.** Копия результатов исследования будет доступна в репозитории библиотеки Назарбаев Университета при окончании исследования. Результаты исследования могут быть раскрыты участникам по их запросу.

Конфиденциальность и анонимность. Истинные имена участников будут закодированы путем предоставления им псевдонимов для сохранения анонимности. Кроме того, стенограммы интервью и любые записи будут сохранены на личном ноутбуке исследователя с защитным кодом для сохранения их конфиденциальности. Данные будут удалены к концу исследования.

Добровольный характер исследования. Участие в этом исследовании является строго добровольным, и если дано согласие на участие, оно может быть отозвано в любое время без ущерба. Кроме того, вы можете не отвечать на некоторые вопросы, если хотите.

Контактные пункты. В случае возникновения каких-либо вопросов или замечаний относительно этого проекта, можно будет связаться с Салтанат Иманмаликовой, 87058348815, saltanat.taizhanova@nu.edu.kz. Любые другие вопросы или проблемы

могут быть адресованы в Комитет по этике институциональных исследований Назарбаев Университета, resethics@nu.edu.kz.

Заявление о согласии.

- Я внимательно прочитал(а) предоставленную информацию;
- Мне была предоставлена полная информация о целях и процедурах исследования;
- Я понимаю, как будут использоваться собранные данные, и что любая конфиденциальная информация будет видна только исследователям и не будет раскрыта никому другому;
- Я понимаю, что могу отказаться от участия в исследовании в любое время без объяснения причин;
- Зная все вышеизложенное, я добровольно соглашаюсь участвовать в этом исследовании.

Нажав кнопку "Я согласен(а)" ниже, вы указываете, что вам исполнилось не менее 18 лет, вы прочитали и поняли настоящую форму согласия и согласны принять участие в данном исследовании.

☐ Я Согласен(а)

☐ Я Не Согласен(а)

Дополнительный экземпляр этой подписанной и датированной формы согласия остается у вас.

Согласно законодательству Республики Казахстан ребенком считается физическое лицо в возрасте до 18 лет. Любому участнику, подпадающему под эту категорию, должна быть выдана Форма родительского согласия, подписанная как минимум одним из его/ее родителей или опекунов. Кроме того, ребенок должен дать согласие на участие в исследовании. В это приложение должны быть включены сценарии согласия родителей и детей.

Appendix D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Challenges experienced by Kazakhstani students during their academic mobility

programs abroad

Time of Interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer: Saltanat Imanmalikova

You are invited to participate in a research study on drawbacks of student mobility programs. The purpose of the study is to examine categories of challenges Kazakhstani students encounter during their stay abroad. Moreover, kinds of strategies students employ while adapting to a host country will be explored too.

Your participation in the study is on a voluntary basis, and you can withdraw from the study at any point. You may choose not to respond to a question if you are hesitant to answer it. Using a voice recorder, the interviews will be captured for subsequent transcription. The researcher's own laptop will be the only place where the files are kept. The data will only be accessible to the researcher. The interviews will be deleted after they have been written down. The details of the interview will remain private. The actual names of participants won't appear in the research report. Instead, to safeguard participants' anonymity, a code system, such as Student 1, Student 2, etc., will be used to replace each participant's name in the study report.

The interview will take approximately 30 minutes.

The consent form to participate in this study has already been signed by you.

Introductory questions:
1. When did you participate in academic mobility program? How long did it take?
2. In which country did your academic mobility program experience take place?
3. What was your major that you studied during your mobility program?
4. What was your motivation to participate in academic mobility program?
5. How would you in general describe your study-abroad experience?
6. What kinds of challenges did you face when studying abroad?

Topical questions:
1. What was your communication experience in a host country? Did you face any language based challenges? What languages did you speak?
2. What was your academic experience in a host country? Did you see any differences in educational system? How was your academic achievement?
3. How would you describe your lifestyle abroad? Was your experience relatively positive or negative in terms of daily life aspects such as food, drink, accommodation, public space and weather?

4. How was your adjustment and socialization process to the local community?
5. How was your psychological well-being while being abroad?
6. What strategies or approaches did you employ to cope with emerging difficulties while studying abroad?

Thank you for the cooperation and participation in this interview.

Appendix E

СҰХБАТ ХАТТАМАСЫ

Қазақстандық студенттердің шетелде академиялық ұтқырлық бағдарламаларын

өту кезіндегі кездесетін қиындықтары

Сұхбат уақыты:
Күні:
Орны:
Сұхбатшы: Салтанат Иманмаликова

Сізді студенттердің ұтқырлық бағдарламаларының кемшіліктері туралы зерттеуге қатысуға шақырамыз. Зерттеудің мақсаты – қазақстандық студенттердің шетелде болған кезде кездесетін қиындықтар санаттарын зерттеу. Сонымен қатар, студенттер қабылдаушы елге бейімделу кезінде қолданатын стратегиялардың түрлері де зерттеледі.

Сіздің зерттеуге қатысуыңыз ерікті негізде және сіз кез келген уақытта зерттеуден бас тарта аласыз. Сұраққа жауап беруге тартынсаңыз, оған жауап бермеуді таңдауыңыз мүмкін. Дауыс жазу құрылғысының көмегімен сұхбаттар кейінгі транскрипция үшін түсіріледі. Зерттеушінің жеке ноутбукі файлдар сақталатын жалғыз орын болады. Деректер тек зерттеушіге қолжетімді болады. Сұхбаттар жазылғаннан кейін жойылады. Сұхбаттың егжей-тегжейлері құпия болып қалады. Қатысушылардың нақты есімдері зерттеу есебінде көрсетілмейді. Оның орнына, қатысушылардың анонимділігін сақтау үшін зерттеу есебінде әрбір қатысушының атын ауыстыру үшін 1-студент, 2-студент, т.б. сияқты код жүйесі пайдаланылады.

Сұхбат шамамен 30 минутты алады.
Осы зерттеуге қатысуға келісім формасына сіз әлдеқашан қол қойғансыз.

 Кіріспе сұрақтар:
1. Сіз академиялық ұтқырлық бағдарламасына қашан қатыстыңыз? Қанша уақыт өтті?
2. Академиялық ұтқырлық бағдарламасы бойынша тәжірибеңіз қай елде өтті?
3. Ұтқырлық бағдарламасы кезінде қандай мамандықты оқыдыңыз?
4. Академиялық ұтқырлық бағдарламасына қатысуға не түрткі болдыңыз?
5. Жалпы шетелде оқу тәжірибеңізді қалай сипаттар едіңіз?
6. Шетелде оқу кезінде қандай қиындықтарға тап болдыңыз?

Өзекті сұрақтар:
1. Қабылдаушы елде сіздің қарым-қатынас тәжірибеңіз қандай болды? Сіз тілдік қиындықтарға тап болдыңыз ба? Сіз қандай тілдерде сөйледіңіз?
2. Қабылдаушы елде сіздің академиялық тәжірибеңіз қандай болды? Сіз білім беру жүйесінде қандай да бір айырмашылықты байқадыңыз ба? Оқу жетістіктеріңіз қалай болды?
3. Шетелдегі өмір салтыңызды қалай сипаттар едіңіз? Тамақ, сусын, тұрғын-үй, қоғам және ауа райы сияқты күнделікті өмір аспектілері бойынша тәжірибеңіз салыстырмалы түрде позитивті немесе нешативті болды ма?

4. Сіздің жергілікті қоғамдастыққа бейімделу және әлеуметтену үдерісіңіз қалай өтті?

5. Шетелде болған кездегі психологиялық жағдайыңыз қалай болды?

6. Шетелде оқу кезінде туындаған қиындықтарды жеңу үшін қандай стратегиялар мен тәсілдерді қолдандыңыз?

Сұхбатқа қатысқаныңыз үшін рахмет.

Appendix F

ПРОТОКОЛ ИНТЕРВЬЮ

Проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются казахстанские студенты во время программ академической мобильности за рубежом

Время интервью:
День:
Место:
Интервьюер: Салтанат Иманмаликова

Вам предлагается принять участие в исследовании недостатков программ студенческой мобильности. Цель исследования - изучить категории проблем, с которыми сталкиваются казахстанские студенты во время пребывания за границей. Кроме того, будут изучены виды стратегий, которые студенты используют при адаптации в принимающей стране.

Ваше участие в исследовании осуществляется на добровольной основе, и вы можете выйти из исследования в любой момент. Вы можете не отвечать на вопрос, если не решаетесь ответить на него. Интервью будут записываться на диктофон для последующей расшифровки. Собственный ноутбук исследователя будет единственным местом, где будут храниться файлы. Данные будут доступны только исследователю. Интервью будут удалены после того, как они будут записаны. Детали интервью останутся в тайне. Настоящие имена участников не будут указаны в отчете об исследовании. Вместо этого для защиты анонимности участников будет использоваться система кодов, например, «Студент 1», «Студент 2» и т. д., для замены имени каждого участника в отчете об исследовании.

Интервью займет около 30 минут.

Форма согласия на участие в этом исследовании уже подписана вами.

Вводные вопросы:
1. Когда вы участвовали в программе академической мобильности? Как долго это заняло?
2. В какой стране проходила ваша программа академической мобильности?
3. Какую специальность вы изучали во время программы мобильности?
4. Какова была ваша мотивация для участия в программе академической мобильности?
5. Как бы вы в целом описали свой опыт обучения за границей?
6. С какими трудностями вы сталкивались во время учебы за границей?

Актуальные вопросы:
1. Какой у вас был опыт общения в принимающей стране? Сталкивались ли вы с какими-либо языковыми проблемами? На каких языках вы говорили?
2. Каков был ваш академический опыт в принимающей стране? Вы заметили какие-то отличия в системе образования? Каковы были ваши успехи в учебе?
3. Как бы вы описали свой образ жизни за границей? Был ли ваш опыт относительно положительным или отрицательным с точки зрения аспектов повседневной жизни, таких как еда, напитки, жилье, общественное пространство и погода?

4. Как проходил ваш процесс адаптации и социализации в местном сообществе?

5. Каково было ваше психологическое самочувствие во время пребывания за границей?

6. Какие стратегии или подходы вы использовали, чтобы справиться с возникающими трудностями во время учебы за границей?

Спасибо за сотрудничество и участие в этом интервью.