

**Understanding Undergraduate International Students Experiences, Challenges, and
Coping Strategies at EMI Universities in Kazakhstan**

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in

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Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education

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Ethical Approval



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Date: 11th of October, 2023

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Dear Rozaoy Ismailzhanova

This letter now confirms that your research project titled

Understanding undergraduate international students' challenges and coping strategies at an EMI university in Kazakhstan

(a) has been approved by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee of Nazarbayev University.

Yours sincerely,

Sulushash Kerimkulova

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Abstract

Understanding Undergraduate International Students Experiences, Challenges, and Coping Strategies at an EMI University in Kazakhstan

The globalization of higher education (HE) has led to a rise in the number of international students globally, including in Kazakhstan. Despite their crucial role in the internationalization of HE, there is a noticeable scarcity of research on the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of international students in Kazakhstan. To close this gap, phenomenological research was carried out at two English-medium instruction (EMI) universities in Kazakhstan, which are well-known for having substantial numbers of international students. Seven participants from various countries studying in Kazakhstan participated in semi-structured interviews to discuss their experiences, difficulties, and coping mechanisms for overcoming obstacles. The results, which are presented through Lyysgard's (1955) U-Curve theory used as a conceptual framework, show that although the participants had good experiences that they attributed to the friendly atmosphere of the university and the local community, they also faced considerable challenges and employed number of coping strategies. These challenges are related to adaptation to new academic environments and curricula, linguistic challenges, and socio-cultural adjustments. Students employed several strategies to cope with these issues, including leveraging university resources, engaging in social activities, practicing the local language, and seeking personal space. The study's findings highlight the need for a comprehensive support system that integrates institutional support for international students through which they could attract many international students and enhance students' experiences at their university. This study offers valuable insight into the particular difficulties foreign students face in Kazakhstan and offers

practical solutions that stakeholders in education could consider. From this qualitative study, areas for further research are suggested.

Keywords: international students, Kazakhstan, EMI Universities, experiences, challenges, coping strategies, phenomenological study.

Аңдатпа

Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде білім беру университетіндегі шетелдік бакалавриат студенттерінің тәжірибелеріні, проблемаларын және қиындықтарды жеңу стратегияларын түсіну.

Жоғары білімнің жаһандануы бүкіл әлемде, оның ішінде Қазақстанда шетелдік студенттер санының өсуіне әкелді. Жоғары білім беруді интернационалдандырудағы шешуші рөліне қарамастан, Қазақстандағы шетелдік студенттердің тәжірибесі, қиындықтары мен күресу стратегиялары бойынша зерттеулердің айтарлықтай тапшылығы байқалады. Бұл олқылықты жою үшін феноменологиялық зерттеулер Қазақстанның екі ағылшын-орта білім беру университетінде (EMI) жүргізілді, олар шетелдік студенттердің айтарлықтай санымен танымал. Қазақстанда оқитын әр түрлі елдерден келген жеті қатысушы өз тәжірибелерін, қиындықтарын және кедергілерді жеңу тетіктерін талқылау үшін жартылай құрылымдық сұхбаттарға қатысты. Тұжырымдамалық негіз ретінде Пайдаланылған Luysgards (1955) U-Қисық теориясы арқылы ұсынылған нәтижелер қатысушылардың университет пен жергілікті қоғамдастықтың достық атмосферасына жатқызған жақсы тәжірибелері болғанымен, олар да айтарлықтай қиындықтарға тап болғанын көрсетеді. қиындықтарды жеңудің бірқатар стратегияларын қолданды. Бұл міндеттер жаңа академиялық орталар мен оқу бағдарламаларына бейімделуге, лингвистикалық мәселелерге және әлеуметтік-мәдени түзетулерге байланысты. Студенттер осы мәселелерді шешу үшін бірнеше стратегияларды қолданды, соның ішінде университет ресурстарын пайдалану, қоғамдық жұмыстармен айналысу, жергілікті тілді қолдану және жеке кеңістікті іздеу. Зерттеу нәтижелері шетелдік студенттерге институционалдық

қолдауды біріктіретін кешенді қолдау жүйесінің қажеттілігін көрсетеді, оның көмегімен олар көптеген шетелдік студенттерді тарта алады және олардың университеттегі тәжірибесін жақсарта алады. Бұл зерттеу шетелдік студенттердің Қазақстандағы ерекше қиындықтары туралы құнды түсінік береді және білім берудегі мүдделі тараптар қарастыра алатын практикалық шешімдерді ұсынады. Осы сапалы зерттеуден әрі қарай зерттеу бағыттары ұсынылады.

Түйінді сөздер: шетелдік студенттер, Қазақстан, ЕМІ Университеттері, тәжірибе, қиындықтар, қиындықтарды жеңу стратегиялары, феноменологиялық зерттеу.

Аннотация

Понимание опыта, проблемы иностранных студентов бакалавриата и стратегий преодоления трудностей в университете с английским языком обучения в Казахстане.

Глобализация высшего образования привела к росту числа иностранных студентов во всем мире, в том числе и в Казахстане. Несмотря на их важную роль в интернационализации высшего образования, существует заметная нехватка исследований, посвященных опыту, проблемам и стратегиям выживания иностранных студентов в Казахстане. Чтобы восполнить этот пробел, было проведено феноменологическое исследование в двух университетах Казахстана с преподаванием на английском языке (EMI), которые хорошо известны значительным количеством иностранных студентов. Семь участников из разных стран, обучающихся в Казахстане, приняли участие в полуструктурированных интервью, чтобы поделиться информацией о своем опыте, трудности и механизмы преодоления препятствий. Результаты, представленные на основе теории U-образной кривой Лийсгардса (1955), используемой в качестве концептуальной основы, показывают, что, хотя у участников был хороший опыт, который они объясняли дружественной атмосферой университета и местного сообщества, они также сталкивались со значительными трудностями и использовали ряд стратегий преодоления. Эти трудности связаны с адаптацией к новой академической среде и учебным планам, лингвистическими трудностями и социокультурными изменениями. Студенты использовали несколько стратегий, чтобы справиться с этими проблемами, включая использование ресурсов университета, участие в общественной деятельности, изучение

местного языка и поиск личного пространства. Результаты исследования подчеркивают необходимость создания комплексной системы поддержки, включающей институциональную поддержку иностранных студентов, с помощью которой они могли бы привлечь как можно больше иностранных студентов и расширить опыт иностранных студентов в своем университете. Это исследование дает ценную информацию о конкретных трудностях, с которыми сталкиваются иностранные студенты в Казахстане, и предлагает практические решения, которые могли бы рассмотреть заинтересованные стороны в сфере образования. На основе этого исследования предлагаются области для дальнейших исследований.

Ключевые слова: иностранные студенты, Казахстан, университеты ЕМІ, опыт, проблемы, стратегии преодоления, феноменологическое исследование.

Table of Contents

Author Agreement.....	ii
Declaration.....	iii
Ethical Approval.....	iv
CITI Training Certificate	v
Acknowledgment	vi
Abstract	vii
Аңдатпа	ix
Аннотация.....	xi
Table of Contents	xiii
List of Tables	xvi
List of Figures	xvii
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Research problem.....	3
Background information	4
Purpose of the study.....	6
Research questions:.....	6
Significance and Contribution of the Study	6
Thesis outline:.....	7
Chapter 2. Literature Review	9
Conceptualization of EMI.....	9
International students’ statistics	11
Challenges of International Students Across Different Contexts	12
Socio-cultural and cultural transitions challenges	13
Linguistic Challenges.....	15
Psychological challenges	16
Coping Strategies	17
Use of Support Systems and Social Networks.....	18
Problem-focused and Emotion-focused Mechanisms.....	18
Socialization as a Coping Strategy	20
International students in Kazakhstan: Findings from previous research	21

Conceptual Framework. U-Curve Adjustment Theory.....	23
Conclusion	24
Chapter 3. Methodology	26
Introduction.....	26
Research Approach and Design	26
Research Sample	28
Research Site.....	30
Data Collection Tools	30
Data Collection Procedures.....	31
Data Analysis	32
Ethical Considerations	33
Conclusion	35
Chapter 4. Findings.....	36
Introduction.....	36
International Students' Positive Experiences in Kazakhstan.....	36
Challenges of Undergraduate International Students at Kazakhstani EMI Universities	39
Challenges of Adaptation to New Academic Environment and Curriculum.....	39
Linguistic Challenges.....	41
Socio-Cultural Challenges and Culture-shock	43
Coping Strategies of International Students	47
Utilizing University Support and Resources.....	47
Socialization as a Coping Strategy	48
Practicing Local Languages	50
Seeking Privacy as a Coping Strategy	50
Key findings from the study	52
Positive Experiences of International students	52
Challenges of Adaptation to New Academic Environment and Curriculum.....	52
Linguistic Challenges.....	52
Socio-Cultural Challenges.	52
Coping Strategies.	53
Summary	53
Chapter 5. Discussion	55

Introduction.....	55
International Students' Positive Experiences in Kazakhstan.....	55
Challenges of Undergraduate International Students at Kazakhstani EMI Universities	57
Adaptation to New Academic Environment	58
Linguistic Challenges.....	60
Socio-cultural Challenges and Culture Shock	62
Coping Strategies International Students Used to Overcome Challenges	67
Utilizing University Support and Resources.....	67
Socialization as a Coping Strategy	68
Learning Local Languages.....	68
Seeking for Privacy as a Coping Strategy.....	69
Chapter 6. Conclusion.....	72
Main Conclusions of the Study.....	72
Limitations of the Study.....	76
Recommendations for Future Research Directions	77
Final paragraph	77
References	79
Appendix A.....	93
Appendix B	94
Appendix C	103
Appendix D.....	107

List of Tables

Table 1. The Demographic Information of Participants. 29

List of Figures

Figure 1. Lysgaard's (1955) U-Curve Theory 23

Chapter 1. Introduction

In recent years, higher education (HE) status has been circulated and globalized, and English Medium Instruction (EMI) institutions have boosted the attraction of international students across the globe, making Kazakhstan one of the emerging destinations to study. Since 1991, when Kazakhstan gained independence, internationalization has played a key role in advancing its HE system (Kuzhabekova, 2020). One of the key objectives of the State Program of Education and Science Development 2020-2025 (SPESD) (2019), is to enhance Kazakhstan's worldwide competitiveness in education and science while fostering education and training of individuals on core values. One of the approaches in internationalizing the Kazakhstani HE system has been creating EMI universities where international students can get an education in English, which has become an attractive choice for international students across the globe as well as Kazakhstan is no exception in being the notable destination for international students.

The Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Republic Kazakhstan, Sayasat Nurbek, when presenting the project of the Education Development Concept for 2022-2026 at the government meeting, spoke about the internationalization of HE (Kapital.kz 2022). Kazakhstani government plans to internationalize the HE system by extending branches of various foreign HE institutions within Kazakhstan to attract more international students to Kazakhstan. There are some specific universities from Canada, the UK, the USA, the Netherlands, Germany, and South Korea as part of a broader strategy to enhance the education sector in Kazakhstan (Sayasat Nurbek, Kapital.kz, 2022).

In addition, the Concept of the Development of Higher Education and Science for 2023 to 2029 had 13 directions of conception, of which the seventh direction related to the importance

of internationalizing the HE concepts. Its aim is linked to developing internationalization and enhancing the status of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Central Asia from 2023 to 2029.

According to Concept of the Development of Higher Education and Science for 2023 to 2029, there are three main deadlines for realizing goals in internationalizing HE, specifically, (1) establishing branches of leading foreign universities, (2) creating a unified Central Asian space, and (3) attracting international students. In establishing branches of leading foreign universities by 2023-2029, the MES RK plans to 1) open 12 branches of foreign universities, 2) develop dual diploma programs, 3) organize foreign internships for teaching staff and employees and create joint master's degrees and research projects. To create a unified Central Asian space by 2023-2025, the MES RK aims to 1) operate the Permanent Bureau of the Central Asian Higher Education Area, 2) open branches of Kazakhstani universities abroad, and 3) operate the Council of Rectors. To attract foreign students by 2023 to 2029, MES RK plans to 1) introduce an online portal based on the "Education in Kazakhstan" website, 2) implement global educational programs, and 3) bring 1400 international experts for teaching. According to MO RK (2023), three branches of foreign universities were opened in 2022 in the Western, Northern, and Southern parts of Kazakhstan. Six branches were planned to open in 2023 in Southern and Western Kazakhstan, and three more will open by 2029 in Eastern Kazakhstan. Opening international university branches attracts more international students to study in Kazakhstan. In the 2022-2023 academic year, 26,080 (4.5%) international students were studying in Kazakhstan (ENIC, 2022).

EMI universities are most likely to be the host universities in Kazakhstan. Understanding the experiences of international students at these universities is essential to increasing their attractiveness. However, there is still a gap in research, which is described below.

Research problem.

Globalization and internationalization are now central issues for HE worldwide (Wit, 2011). In the era of globalization, internationalization has emerged as a crucial element in the educational policies of countries around the globe. Knight (2013) asserts that globalization is transforming the landscape of internationalization, which, in turn, is reshaping the realm of education. Altbach (2002) provides examples of internationalization, such as policies for recruiting foreign students, partnerships with academic institutions or systems in other countries, and the establishment of branch campuses overseas.

In total there were 28,169 students studying in 113 universities in Kazakhstan, as given in the Study in Kazakhstan platform as for March 2023 (Astana Times, 2023). A relatively high number of international students compared to the 2018 statistics, which indicated approximately 21,727 international students for 2018. As mentioned above, Kazakhstani HE's priority is attracting more international students to Kazakhstan, but currently, limited studies have addressed international students' experiences and challenges in the Kazakhstani EMI context. There were few previous studies that addressed international students' motivation to study in Kazakhstan (Ospanova, 2018). Studies have also focused on general aspects of internationalization (Akkari et al., 2023; Kuzhabekova, 2020; Kuzhabekova & Lee, 2020; Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016), academic and sociocultural adjustment of international students (Kim, 2021), and psychological adaptation of international student (Ibrayeva et al., 2018). However, no research has been done among EMI university students, and previous studies have not studied international students' coping strategies in EMI universities in Kazakhstan. Studying their experiences, challenges, and coping strategies is essential so that stakeholders can

support and create a positive environment for international students. More detailed information on the significance and contribution of this study will be given below.

Background information

Internationalized HE benefits individual students, institutions and staff, economies, and societies (OECD, 2017). For example, the benefit for students is that internationalization in HE prepares graduates for a globalized world by imparting international and intercultural skills (Leask, 2016). It benefits students abroad and at home, promoting diverse learning environments and essential global competencies. In addition, internationalization provides various benefits to HE institutions, such as improving their international reputation, attracting top-tier personnel, extending academic communities, developing strategic alliances, and boosting research excellence (OECD, 2017).

It's important to note that since gaining independence in 1991, the Kazakhstani government has implemented various strategies to develop internationalization. The International Scholarship “Bolashak” was established in 1993 by a decree issued by Kazakhstan’s former president, Nursultan Nazarbayev. It has allowed talented Kazakhstani students to study and live abroad through the “Bolashak” scholarship. It can be said that the offered scholarship was one of the first steps in internationalizing Kazakhstani HE. The given program still provides Masters and PhD students the opportunity to study abroad (Bekbauova et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the Republic of Kazakhstan's 2010 admission to the Bologna Process—becoming its 47th full member—was another significant development in the internationalisation and integration of the nation's HE (Bekbauova et al., 2017). Kuzhabekova (2020) states that the Bologna process is the main driver for transforming degree structures, introducing a new credit-based academic hour accounting system, reforming quality assurance procedures, and integrating

the previously isolated HE system into the global postsecondary education and research landscape.

Moreover, the establishment of Nazarbayev University (NU) aimed to serve as a model for internationalized HE in Kazakhstan. In the foreword (2018), the founder of NU, Nursultan Nazarbayev, highlighted the significance of NU in Astana, Kazakhstan. The university represents a crucial aspect of the city's development and the nation's academic potential. It was founded as a HE flagship, aiming to compete with top global universities (Nazarbayev, 2018). The university focuses on becoming a world-class research institution with a robust research infrastructure and an innovation cluster (NU Strategy 2030). According to Nazarbayev (2018), the ambitious targets outlined in the NU Strategy 2030 will propel NU into the esteemed circle of world-leading research institutions upon achievement. Through institutional accreditation, the university will secure a spot in prominent global university rankings, thus bolstering its international reputation. Furthermore, there is a concerted effort to boost the student population to 8,000 by 2025, with 10% being international students (NU Strategy 2030). These strategic actions are poised to elevate a nation's standing in the global academic landscape and enhance its overall competitiveness on the world stage. In 2023, NU entered Times Higher Education, World University Rankings (THE WUR), and scored in the top 30% of International Research Universities (Nazarbayev University, 2023). Reaching a position within the upper third of the world's foremost research universities in a mere 14 years is a noteworthy milestone and a remarkable accomplishment, according to global benchmarks (Nazarbayev University, 2023). The next strategic ambition is to enter the top 20% of world universities in THE WUR by 2030 (Nazarbayev University, 2023). For 2024, Nazarbayev University has found to be number 1 university in Kazakhstan and NU has made it into the top 11% of Asian universities, as ranked

by the renowned Times Higher Education. The university achieved the 129th position out of 1,127 universities. Nazarbayev university is one of the EMI universities in Kazakhstan that hosts large number of international students from all over the world.

Purpose of the study

The current phenomenological study aims to investigate the positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies of undergraduate international students at EMI universities in Kazakhstan. The research purpose aligns with the research gap in understanding international students' positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies within the Kazakhstani EMI context. It contributes to the broader objective of attracting and enhancing the experiences of international students in the country's HE system.

Research questions:

The following questions guided my study:

1. What are the positive experiences of international students at EMI Universities in Kazakhstan?
2. What challenges do undergraduate international students face while pursuing their studies at an EMI universities in Kazakhstan?
3. What coping strategies do international students employ to effectively address and surmount the identified challenges during their educational experience in Kazakhstan?

Significance and Contribution of the Study

The study contributes to the ongoing efforts to further internationalize HE by investigating international students' positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies in the Kazakhstani context. The proposed research offers numerous potential benefits to various stakeholders, including participants, policymakers, and institutions.

First, the research seeks to enhance our understanding of undergraduate international students' experiences within Kazakhstan. These insights can inform university policies by highlighting areas where students may need additional support, such as language assistance, cultural integration programs, academic advising, and mental health services. By addressing these needs, universities can improve the overall student experience, retention rates, and academic success of international students. Furthermore, the findings can help universities develop targeted orientation programs, improve communication strategies, and foster a more inclusive campus environment. Through active engagement with participants and encouraging them to share their experiences, the study can pave the way for tangible improvements in students' lives. Furthermore, this research offers another noteworthy advantage: it has the potential to initiate the actions universities should take to accommodate international students' needs better. This advantage is closely intertwined with creating a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for these students. By doing so, it will be a step closer to bringing more international students and achieving one of the goals of MES RK – attracting more international students to study in Kazakhstan. Also, this research might contribute to the body of literature.

Thesis outline:

This thesis has six chapters and a reference list. The first chapter, introduction, has introduced the background information, a problem statement, the purpose of the study, research questions, and the significance and contributions of the study. Chapter 2 Literature review analyzes, compares, contrasts, and synthesizes the previous literature and existing research on understanding international students' challenges and coping strategies. It also includes a conceptual framework as a “working tool” for the study. Chapter 3 describes the methodology used in the study. Chapter 4 presents the research findings, and Chapter 5 is the discussion

chapter that discusses the findings that were collected for the current study. Chapter 6 summarizes the study's key findings that answer the research questions and include the study's limitations and recommendations for future study scholars.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

This study aims to investigate undergraduate international students' positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies at EMI universities in Kazakhstan. The following central questions guided the current research:

1. What are the positive experiences of international students at EMI Universities in Kazakhstan?
2. What challenges do undergraduate international students face while pursuing their studies at an EMI universities in Kazakhstan?
3. What coping strategies do international students employ to effectively address and surmount the identified challenges during their educational experience in Kazakhstan?

This chapter covers fundamental concepts in more depth and comprehensively explore existing scholarly work relevant to the research topic. It provides a solid foundation upon which the current study is built, offering valuable insights and contextual background to the research. The current chapter is structured around seven sections: conceptualization of EMI, international students statistics, challenges of international students across different contexts, and coping strategies, use of support systems and social networks, international students in Kazakhstan, and findings from previous research.

Conceptualization of EMI

Dearden (2015) notes that English is quickly shifting from being taught merely as a foreign language to becoming the medium of instruction for various academic disciplines, such as physics, mathematics, geography, and medicine, in non-Anglophone countries. In this context, she defines EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) as the use of English to teach academic courses in countries or regions where the majority of the population does not speak English as

their first language. Each nation and setting in which EMI is utilized is distinct and when we go deeper, we may find many contextual, geographical, historical, and political factors that vary the nature and extent of each country's adoption of EMI (Dearden, 2015). For instance, the expansion of EMI in Europe has been extensively chronicled, with early development attributed to European student mobility and integration programs such as the Erasmus program and the Bologna process (Curle et al., 2024). In Kazakhstan's expanding educational landscape, language instruction, particularly EMI, has played a vital role in integrating the country's educational methods with its broader developmental aims. However, reasons for introducing and using EMI may appear very similar in different contexts (Dearden, 2015). For example, in many countries, factors behind using EMI are linked with globalization and internationalization (Dearden, 2015), academic advantages (Macaro et al., 2018), and economic prospects (Dearden, 2015; Galloway & Rose, 2015; Jenkins, 2014; Maiworm & Wachter, 2014).

English is known globally as a lingua franca in commerce, science, and academia, and institutions apply EMI to provide their students with language abilities to succeed and collaborate globally (Dearden, 2015). Kazakhstan's adoption of EMI reflects a global trend in which English is fundamental to international integration and development. As Dearden (2015) points out, politicians, educational administrators, and stakeholders from numerous countries see EMI as a passport to global society associated with modernity and success.

Previous studies have shown that EMI is beneficial in academic settings as it gives students access to research materials and resources from global contexts in English, which improves their learning capabilities and outcomes (Macaro et al., 2018). Economic prospects have also been a factor in applying EMI in various contexts. It was found that EMI gives better job opportunities since many companies prefer candidates with solid English levels (Galloway

& Rose, 2015; Jenkins, 2014; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). In the Kazakhstani context, EMI is more than a pedagogical choice; it is a strategic facilitator, allowing Kazakhstan to integrate with the global economy and increase its political leverage (Karabassova, 2020).

In the Kazakhstani context, applying EMI is closely linked with the countries' long-term strategy, Kazakhstan-2050 (2012), recognizes education as one of the top goals. The country's former leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev, in his 2012 annual speech, emphasized the importance of education and the need for English language proficiency in Kazakhstan.

International students' statistics

An increasing number of students from around the world are seeking educational opportunities in different nations worldwide, resulting in substantial changes to the global student environment (UIS, 2024). According to OECD (2010), 1.6 million international students enrolled in study abroad programs worldwide in 2000. In that year, only five nations hosted 70% of those students studying abroad: the US (28%), the UK (14%), Germany (12%), France (8%), and Australia (7%) (Applyboard Statistics, 2023). Nonetheless, 6.4 million students—four times as many as in 2000—crossed the border to study in 2022 (Applyboard Statistics, 2023).

Prominent OECD 2021 destinations hosted international students: the USA 19%, the UK 14%, Australia, and Germany 9%, respectively (UIS, 2023). The top host destinations for international students can be best presented by the number of international students attending these institutions. According to Dyvik (2024), in 2022, the United States was the top host destination for international students worldwide. Approximately 950,000 students were enrolled in American HE programs in 2022 (Dyvik, 2024). Moreover, the number of international students enrolling in the UK and Canada was over 630,000 and 550,000, respectively (Dyvik, 2024).

Looking at the fastest-growing destinations in other parts of the world, Chile has emerged as the first rapidly growing destination for international students. The number of international students studying in the nation increased by 500% from slightly over 3,000 in 2018 to almost 19,000 in 2022 (Apply Board Statistics, 2023). This growth can be attributed to various scholarship programs and streamlined visa processes implemented by the Chilean government. According to the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, most of Chile's international students originate from Spanish-speaking South American countries. According to the Apply Board Statistics (2023), the second fastest-growing destination is Mexico; international students who have enrolled to study there have risen 154,2% in 2022, which indicates that the number of international students was approximately 33,501 in 2017 before the increase to 51,659 in 2022 (Apply Board Statistics, 2023).

Kazakhstan is also home to many international students from various countries and the number of international students is increasing annually. According to data released by the Kazakh Bureau of National Statistics, 64% of international students in Kazakhstan come from CIS countries, and the number of international students was 21,727 in 2018, 39,558 in 2019, and 29,069 in 2020 (Astana Times, 2021). The number decreased in 2020 compared to 2019 due to COVID-19. According to MES RK, internationalizing Kazakhstani HE is considered one of the top goals of the government, and attracting more international students is crucial.

Challenges of International Students Across Different Contexts

Studying abroad brings both advantages and challenges for international students. It is essential to understand the challenges of international students to support and create an inclusive and supportive environment to better their lives as international students.

According to Furnham and Bochner (1986), some students complete their studies with relatively few challenges; on the contrary, some students face challenges linked to a lack of language proficiency, feeling homesick, and experiencing loneliness. International students' socio-cultural, linguistic, and psychological adaptation challenges have been studied extensively (Chataway & Berry, 1989; Dao et al., 2007). More detailed analysis and synthesis of previous research on the challenges will be analyzed below.

Socio-cultural and cultural transitions challenges

Socio-cultural challenges are among the common difficulties that international students face in their host countries. Searle and Ward (1990) defined sociocultural adjustment as adapting to and navigating a new culture's social and interactive components to assimilate successfully p.450. Past studies have indicated that people with entirely different backgrounds than host countries' cultures will require more time and effort to adapt to new environments (Swami et al., 2010; Kagan & Cohen, 1990, p. 133). Individual differences exist, which may lessen the cultural challenges faced by overseas students. For instance, Zhou et al. (2008) discovered that international students who had false assumptions about the similarities between their native and host cultures faced more significant adjustment challenges.

A study conducted in the UK by Ecochard and Fotheringham (2017) found that international students faced unique challenges that include various cultural adjustments: integrating into the host nation's culture, the international student culture, and the specific academic discipline's culture. It was found that these challenges' substantial number and scale may lead to mental health issues and increased dropout rates (Ecochard &Fotheringham, 2017).

International students encounter considerable socio-cultural hurdles when adjusting to life in their host countries. These hurdles include adapting to the host country's culture, the

culture of the foreign student population, and academic disciplines (Fitzpatrick, 2017).

Misconceptions about cultural similarities might exacerbate these difficulties, resulting in feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Feelings of isolation and loneliness were socio-cultural challenges among international students in many different contexts. It was found that students feel isolated and lonely due to less interaction with locals and their peers (Hendrickson et al., 2017). Research conducted by Ma (2020) revealed the same findings, which showed that isolation was a key challenge for Chinese students studying in the US. Similarly, Gareis (2012) found that a lack of intercultural friendship and communication affected feelings of loneliness among international students studying in the US. According to Church (1982, p. 552), when international students become friends with citizens of the host nation, they tend to experience an improvement in their general life satisfaction and a decrease in emotions of homesickness and loneliness. Engaging and interacting with local populations can help international students get new perspectives and understanding of the host society's way of life, values, and customs. However, interacting and making friends is not always easy since students might have language barriers, face discrimination, or be open to making international friends (Church, 1982).

The study by Suprpto et al. (2019) aimed to explore the life adjustment of international students in Eastern Taiwan, focusing on international student life adjustment and cultural adaptation. The findings revealed that international college students have faced challenges with commitment to goals and academic adjustment. They struggled with adapting to language instruction, teaching methods, and the dynamics of student-teacher relationships. In addition, the study identified correlations among various aspects of life adjustment. Specifically, there were significant relationships between personal adjustment, academic adjustment, and lifestyle

adjustment (Suprpto et al., 2019). In addition, Heng (2017) also studied Chinese overseas students who were attending colleges in the United States. The study aimed to shed light on these students' struggles, ambitions, and aspirations. The author investigated several aspects of the student's experiences using a semi-structured interview approach and an interpretive phenomenological approach. The author discovered that Chinese overseas students face various challenges, including educational experiences, social interactions, cultural adaptation, and personal development. As found in the study, long-term aspirations, social integration, cross-cultural connections, language problems, and academic expectations are all linked variables that substantially impact the experiences of Chinese international students in the United States.

In a nutshell, the adjustment challenges are significant and can have substantial repercussions, such as mental health problems and increased dropout rates. Challenges emphasize the importance of improved support mechanisms to assist international students in successfully navigating these challenges.

Linguistic Challenges

Language proficiency is found to be a critical factor in successfully adapting to a new community for international students (Abu Rabia, 2017; Busher et al., 2016; McMahan, 2018; Tsegay et al., 2018; Wang & Hannes, 2014). The findings revealed that the English language barrier was considered one of the prominent challenges that undergraduate Arab international students faced in US universities, especially in writing and oral communication (Abu Rabia, 2017). Similar findings were found that language barriers may negatively affect the academic success of international students (Busher et al., 2016; Heng, 2017; McMahan, 2018; Wang & Hannes, 2014). The language barrier has been shown to negatively impact international students' academic performance, consistent with earlier UK research (Busher et al., 2016; McMahan,

2018). Given findings show that international students need support regarding their language proficiency which can ease their linguistic challenges. It was found that international students studying in the UK, in particular, have trouble following their instructors and grasping the course materials because of their limited English language skills (McMahon, 2018). Similarly, Burns claimed that most overseas students remain worried about English language challenges and their inability to comprehend lectures (As cited by Hu and Zhang, 2013). It was also found that Asian students' main obstacle was a lack of language ability, resulting in more difficult academic challenges (Antanaitis, 1990). In the Lin and Scherz (2014) study, five Asian international graduate students attending American universities had linguistic and cultural challenges. They discovered that language obstacles made it difficult for the students to follow lectures and participate in discussions by conducting interviews and group discussions. The lack of opportunities for interaction with local students also presented a considerable cultural obstacle. The students employed various techniques to get around these problems, including recording lectures and speaking with native speakers. They also learned about American sports from their neighborhood mates and explored new areas while attending church services. The researchers advised instructors to use more linguistically and culturally aware teaching strategies to support international students better. Last, Kim (2001) and Ecochard and Fotheringham (2017) found that international students struggle to communicate efficiently with local people due to their lack of English proficiency.

Psychological challenges

Analysis of literature revealed that another challenge that international students might face in host communities is linked with psychological challenges. Searle and Ward (1990) state that experiences contentment and happiness are connected to the psychological adaptation

process. Several studies have examined how acculturation stress and numerous other factors are related to the psychological adjustment of Asian international students. Ye (2005) discovered that Asian students used the Internet as a coping mechanism for the negative emotions associated with acculturation stress while studying the relationship between acculturation stress and Internet usage. The study also showed a substantial correlation between perceived discrimination and social utility motives. Similarly, Mori (2000) found if international students do not adjust to their new environment, they may experience psychological problems. These issues could be accompanied by feelings of inadequacy, bewilderment, homesickness, loneliness, anxiety, frustration, identity crisis, difficulty sleeping, decreased drive, inability to concentrate, and a lack of self-confidence (Mori, 2000).

There is a clear link between international students' psychological and linguistic challenges. When students have difficulties related to language, it can negatively impact their academic performance by affecting their psychological well-being since they experience boredom, dissatisfaction, or humiliation (Wang & Hannes, 2014). Language was one of the elements that influenced the participants' adaptation processes.

Coping Strategies

The literature collectively highlights that international students draw on various coping mechanisms, which may evolve and be influenced by individual characteristics and the specific challenges they encounter in their host countries (Sahu and Thakur, 2018). As analysed in the previous literature, there are number of coping strategies that are employed by international students. More specifically, use of support systems and social networks, problem-focused and emotion-focused coping mechanisms, socialization as a coping mechanism.

Use of Support Systems and Social Networks

International students' success in universities and colleges is greatly influenced by the range of resources and support services that are available to them (Akanwa, 2015). Coping strategies employed by international students in the face of the numerous challenges associated with studying abroad have been the subject of extensive research. Many studies spanning different cultural contexts and institutional settings reveal diverse coping mechanisms these students utilize. In the study by Ward and Kennedy (1996), social support was identified as a critical coping strategy. Their findings revealed that international students often turn to their peer networks, faculty, and staff for emotional and practical assistance, fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness. Likewise, Misra et al. (2003) observed that international students in the United States primarily use social support to cope with their challenges. They highlighted the crucial role of interpersonal relationships in assisting students with cultural adjustment challenges. Makhija (2013) examined coping strategies used by international students in India, showcasing the significance of cultural adaptation and support from academic institutions. Misra et al. (2003) found social support as a primary coping mechanism, whereas Makhija (2013) found that support from educational institutions played a crucial role in overcoming challenges that international students confronted in host countries.

Problem-focused and Emotion-focused Mechanisms

The role of stressors and coping mechanisms among college students was highlighted by Yusoff et al. (2010), revealing that international students use problem-focused and emotion-focused coping mechanisms to manage stress. Similar to the findings of Yusoff et al. (2010), the research by Wei et al. (2005) underscored the significance of problem-focused coping, where students actively engage in academic and intercultural activities to enhance their adaptation and

resilience. Conversely, emotion-focused strategies, such as meditation and mindfulness, have been explored by Sahu and Thakur (2018) as effective ways to manage the psychological distress that can arise during acculturation.

Research on the psychological adjustment of international students and their coping strategies highlights several key factors and approaches to support their well-being. Safdar et al. (2009) identify social support as a critical component in the stress-coping framework, emphasizing its predictive value for psychological well-being during cross-cultural adjustments. This is corroborated by Zhang and Goodson (2011), who, in a systematic review, underscore the importance of pre-departure preparation and robust social support networks for international students in the United States.

Similarly, Makhija (2013) investigates coping strategies among international students in India, highlighting the significance of cultural adaptation and academic institution support. Busher et al. (2016) expand on these findings through a qualitative study of international postgraduate students at a Midlands institution, revealing that linguistic barriers, cultural disparities, social integration, academic challenges, and financial issues significantly impact students' lives. They stress the importance of social networks and institutional support systems in facilitating successful adjustment, echoing the sentiments of Mamiseishvili (2012) and Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006). Mamiseishvili (2012) emphasizes the role of faculty and staff in addressing the language and other needs of international students, which is crucial for their academic success and persistence. Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006) similarly note that limited language competence hinders socialization with locals, underscoring the value of social support from various sources, including family, friends, co-workers, and community groups.

A strategic approach to overcoming these challenges involves learning local languages to bridge cultural gaps, aligning with Kim's (2001) assertion that language competency is vital for effective cultural adjustment. This synthesis of research underlines the necessity for institutions and support services to understand and address these factors, ensuring they provide practical assistance and foster an inclusive environment for international students.

Socialization as a Coping Strategy

Studies have shown that international students commonly use socialization to overcome challenges. It was found that students join student clubs to socialize with peers, and it was found that engaging in extracurricular activities not only helps students forge meaningful connections but also plays a vital role in facilitating cultural exchange, adaptation, and reducing feelings of isolation (Zhou et al., 2008). Similar findings to those of Zhou et al. (2008) were found by Andrade (2006), who observed that extracurricular activities substantially impact student well-being and cultural assimilation. Furthermore, it was discovered that encouraging increased collaboration between local and international students is critical for smoothing international students' transition processes. The given finding is consistent with Jon et al.'s (2014) findings, which imply that such interactions can considerably improve all students' educational experiences by boosting cross-cultural understanding and inclusivity.

Collectively, these sources contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the coping strategies employed by international students in various settings, emphasizing the significance of social support, socialization, problem-focused coping, and emotion-focused strategies in their adaptation processes.

International students in Kazakhstan: Findings from previous research

Internationalization is one of the top priorities of the Kazakhstani education system, and having many international students will benefit the nation in many ways. Bevis (2002) and Harrison (2002) contend that foreign students are not just a financial advantage to universities in affluent countries, but also valuable contributors whose varied backgrounds and viewpoints enrich these societies. Increased cultural appreciation and awareness are the result of this. Research conducted by Kim (2021) focused on international students' academic and sociocultural adjustment in Kazakhstan. Language was a significant factor affecting adjustment, with students proficient in Russian adjusting faster. The study suggested two key conclusions: students need more support in the early stages, and language proficiency significantly impacts their adjustment. Similarly, the survey conducted by Mukhamejanova (2019) focused on understanding the experiences of international students in Kazakhstan, particularly how they exercise their agency to adapt academically and socio-culturally. The study explored factors motivating students to study in Kazakhstan, challenges they faced (academic, socio-cultural, and financial), and positive aspects of their experience, all within Albert Bandura's (1960) social cognitive theoretical framework (Mukhamejanova, 2019). The study's theoretical approach highlights the importance of allowing international students to exercise their agency to enhance their experiences in host countries.

Few studies focused on international students' motivation to study in Kazakhstan. Research by Ospanova (2018) addressed international students' motivation to study medicine. It was found that local students' academic motivation was higher than international students. According to the scholar, problems students confront abroad in their host area, such as the language barrier, weather circumstances, and lifestyle changes, may contribute to their lower

academic motivation. A similar study was conducted by Ibragimova (2019), who focused on exploring factors that influence international students' motivation to study in Kazakhstan. Push and pull factors were found to play a significant role in international students' decisions to study in Kazakhstan, with pull factors slightly more influential. Push factors such as the cost of education in their home country and limited university seats were crucial to the decision-making process. Kazakhstan's economic relationship with the students' home countries and safety factors also played a critical role in their decision-making.

Some studies focused on the general aspects of internationalization (Akkari et al., 2023; Kuzhabekova, 2020; Kuzhabekova & Lee, 20020; Jumakulov & Ashirbekov, 2016). Akkari et al. (2023) investigated the problems and options for integrating international standards into Kazakhstan's HE system after the Soviet Union. The paper describes strategies such as increasing global student enrollment, hiring international professionals, establishing foreign campuses, and using English as a language of instruction. Despite substantial government backing for internationalization, the implementation faces considerable hurdles, including effective English language use and adhering to international academic standards. The findings shed light on the difficulty of modernizing education in a transitional economy (Akkari et al, 2023). Research by Jumakulov and Ashirbekov (2016) used documentary research methods to examine the objectives, forms, procedures, and primary motives driving Kazakhstan's HE internationalization efforts. They determined that most internationalization measures were led by the Ministry of Education and Science, which conducted institutional changes, fostered academic mobility for students and staff, and negotiated international educational agreements (p.51).

Conceptual Framework. U-Curve Adjustment Theory.

As a conceptual framework to guide discussions and interpret results, the study employs Lysgaard's (1955) U-Curve adjustment theory. According to Lysgaard (1955), there are four stages of cultural adjustment that an individual goes through that are "honeymoon," "disillusionment," "adjustment," and "mastery."

Figure 1.

Lysgaard's (1955) U-Curve Theory



Note: Figure 1 provides U-Curve of Adjustment by Lysgaard (1955)

During the early stage ("honeymoon"), students are fascinated by the new culture and delighted about all the new and exciting "sights and sounds." This initial stage is then followed by a stage of disillusionment and frustration ("disillusionment" or "culture shock" stage) as the individuals must adjust to daily life in the new culture. The third stage, "adjustment," is distinguished by progressive adaptation to the new culture and learning to conduct things

responsibly according to the host country's cultural norms. The fourth "mastery" stage is characterized by minor incremental advances in the individual's ability to function effectively in the new culture (Abu Rabia, 2017; Black & Mendenhall, 1991).

As mentioned earlier, the current study aims to investigate international students' positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies at EMI University in Kazakhstan. The current study applies the U-Curve adjustment theory as it gives a structured lens to examine the adaptation process of these students.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this literature review chapter has provided an overview of key concepts related to international students and their adaptation to academic environments in host countries. The global landscape of HE has witnessed a significant increase in international students, with various countries becoming prominent hosts. The adoption of EMI in non-Anglophone nations, including Kazakhstan, has played a vital role in their socio-economic development and integration into the global community. The chapter has shed light on the multifaceted challenges international students face, encompassing linguistic, socio-cultural, and psychological aspects. These challenges might have an impact on their academic performance and well-being in general. However, the literature also emphasized the diverse coping strategies utilized by international students, ranging from seeking social support to employing problem-focused and emotion-focused approaches. University resources and support systems are instrumental in facilitating their adaptation and success. In moving forward with the study, this foundational understanding of the positive experiences and challenges faced by international students will serve as a crucial framework for examining the unique experiences of undergraduate

international students in Kazakhstan and the coping strategies they employ to navigate their educational journeys. The next chapter will cover the methodology applied in the current study.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used in the study. It begins with a detailed description of the research approach and design, research site, and sample, explaining the rationale behind choosing them. Further sections describe the data collection tools, procedures, data analysis, and ethical considerations that cover measures to avoid ethical issues. The current study applied a qualitative approach using phenomenology to answer the central research questions.

1. What are the positive experiences of international students at EMI Universities in Kazakhstan?
2. What challenges do undergraduate international students face while pursuing their studies at an EMIuniversities in Kazakhstan?
3. What coping strategies do international students employ to effectively address and surmount the identified challenges during their educational experience in Kazakhstan?

In the following sections, I will justify and describe the choices behind a qualitative research approach by applying a phenomenology design that will helped me answer the above-mentioned research questions. This chapter has eight sections: research approach and design, research sample, research site, data collection tools, data collection procedures, data analysis, ethical considerations, and conclusion.

Research Approach and Design

A qualitative approach with a phenomenological design was used to explore international students' positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies at EMI University in Kazakhstan. According to Cohen et al. (2011, p.219), by giving participants a voice, qualitative

research explores questions that go beyond the apparent behaviors and actions. In a similar vein, the qualitative method gives people the ability to express themselves and be heard (Creswell, 2013). Ritchie et al. (2014) claimed that the qualitative approach investigates participants' social environment by analyzing their experiences, narratives, and viewpoints.

The reason for selecting a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design was to facilitate an in-depth examination and comprehensive understanding of international students' positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. As the current study aims to understand the positive experiences of individuals, a phenomenological research design study was employed. A phenomenological study is a qualitative approach that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group; its goal is to describe the nature of the specific phenomenon. (Creswell, 2013). Similarly, Ritchie et al. (2014) stated that a phenomenological study examines one's issues and concerns by delving into one's experiences and narratives. The rationale for choosing phenomenology in the study is that it allows for an in-depth exploration of international students' positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. Also, it helps to understand not only the positive experiences and challenges faced by undergraduate international students but also their coping strategies at an EMI university in Kazakhstan. By focusing on the lived experiences of undergraduate international students at EMI University in Kazakhstan, I gained an understanding of their positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies. This approach was valuable as I aimed to go beyond surface-level observations and delve into participants' subjective experiences because qualitative research prioritizes the voices and perspectives of participants themselves (Creswell, 2014). By exploring participants' personal experiences, it was possible to empower participants to share their narratives, ensuring their

voices are heard and their stories are acknowledged. Also, deep exploration of subjective experiences can lead to developing or refining new theories.

Research Sample

The qualitative approach seeks to understand phenomena through participants' perspectives, and selecting a sample from whom most information for the study is obtained is crucial (Merriam, 2002). Lester (1999) supports employing the phenomenological method, which includes relatively few participants, because it enables a more profound comprehension of these people's experiences. Limiting the number of participants stimulates greater contemplation from each person, giving the researchers deeper insights. According to Creswell (2012), the appropriate number of participants for a phenomenological investigation will vary depending on the studied phenomenon. However, Polkinghorne (1989) stated that interviews are conducted with five to 25 samples. According to Hajar (2020) and Trigwell (2000), seven to 10 participants might be enough to show variety without presenting excessive data to analyze. Based on these, the number of participants for my study was chosen as seven.

The primary data source for this study were second and third-year international undergraduates, as they are currently in the midst of their studies, offering potentially richer insights compared to first-year students with limited time in Kazakhstan and fourth-year students who may have fully adapted, making it difficult to recall their initial challenges. According to Creswell (2012), criterion sampling is practical when every subject represents someone who has encountered the phenomenon. Therefore, I employed a criterion sampling strategy under the purposive sampling method. Creswell (2016) claimed that a relatively narrow range of sampling techniques is suitable for phenomenological research. One essential criterion for participant inclusion is having personal experience related to the topic under examination. Criterion

sampling proves particularly effective when all individuals in the study can be considered representatives of the study. Under the purposive sampling method, the criterion sampling procedure helps identify potential study participants (Creswell, 2013). Participant selection for the current research involved criterion sampling, with the following criteria: selecting international students in the second and third year of their undergraduate studies. This criterion was vital because it ensured that participants were familiar with the context under investigation, a crucial factor in my present research. The participants hailed from various countries, contributing to a rich and varied dataset. The geographic diversity of the participants encompasses Armenia, France, Uzbekistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia, providing a richer understanding of the international student experience.

Table 1.

The Demographic Information of Participants

Participants name (codes)	Gender	Home country	The university that they study at	Which year of studied	How long in the host community	Ethnicity
P1_UZ_XY	Male	Uzbekistan	XY	2nd year	2 years	Ethnic Kazakh
P2_FR_AA	Female	France	AA	2nd year	2 years	Algerian
P3_FR_AA	Male	France	AA	2nd year	Two year	French
P4_UZ_XY	Female	Uzbekistan	XY	3rd year	Three years	Ethnic Kazakh
P5_ID_AA	Male	Indonesia	AA	2nd year	Two years	Indonesian
P6_AM_XY	Female	Armenia	XY	3rd year	Eight years	Armenian

P7_MY_XY	Female	Malaysia	XY	2nd year	Two years	Pakistani
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Note: Table 1 provides demographic information of participants

Research Site

This research was conducted at two EMI universities in Kazakhstan. There are several compelling reasons behind selecting these particular sites, closely aligned with my research's primary focus. Firstly, the EMI universities environment was an ideal backdrop for my study. These institutions boast a substantial population of undergraduate international students representing diverse cultural backgrounds and linguistic competencies. The presence of such a diverse student body aligned perfectly with the central aim of my research, which was to gain profound insights into the positive experiences and challenges faced by international students at an EMI universities in Kazakhstan and the coping strategies they employ to surmount these challenges. For ethical reasons, the universities' names are kept confidential, and the pseudonyms for the universities were used.

Data Collection Tools

A semi-structured interview instrument was used to conduct this phenomenological research. Interviews give insight into a person's inner thoughts. (Tuckman, 1972, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011). According to Wahyuni (2012, p. 55), a semi-structured interview strategy facilitates getting responses and their justification. Semi-structured interviews have structure, consistency, and a flexible framework that helps to examine participants' experiences and viewpoints. Additionally, compared to other data collection techniques, semi-structured interviews yield higher response rates and more depth (Cohen et al., 2011); for these reasons, this interview type was used to gather the data. Interviews were conducted in English as samples for

the study were international students. The interview protocol was developed in English, Kazakh, and Russian. Interview questions covered three aspects that were expected to derive answers for three research questions that are linked with international students' positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies at an EMI university in Kazakhstan.

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process started after the Graduate School of Education Institutional Research Ethics Committee (GSE IREC) granted ethical approval for the current study. The recruitment process involved obtaining international students' contact information from the selected universities' International Student Offices. They only provided a list of international students with their corporate emails but did not have information about participants recruited for the study. Once the contact information about all internationals as potential participants was taken, I emailed a recruitment letter (Appendix C) to international students' emails. Participants interested in participating in my research replied and showed interest and consent forms were distributed to those expressing interest in the study. Once they signed the consent forms, the interview time was confirmed with each participant in advance. Given the global nature of the participants, interviews were conducted online using the Zoom platform as many students returned to their home countries during the data collection period, driving this choice. Before starting the interview, the consent form was orally introduced again to participants, and once they agreed to participate in the study, interviews began. Interviews were audio-recorded only after the participants' approval and stored on my password-secured laptop. The data collection started on the 27th of November and finished on the 15th of December 2023. All interview materials containing participants' data were stored on my password-secured laptop to which I only had access.

Data Analysis

To make sense of what has been learnt, Glesne (2006) defines data analysis as the process of arranging and evaluating what the researcher has seen, heard, and read. In research, data analysis happens after the data is gathered. According to Creswell (2007,) notable statements, sentences, or quotes should be coded, plotted, and grouped (p. 61). Then, the data is reduced into themes through coding and condensing codes before presenting the data in figures, tables, or discussions (Creswell, 2018).

After conducting semi-structured interviews, organizing the data is known as the first loop in a spiral (Creswell, 2018). As I finished conducting semi-structured interviews and collecting data, I transcribed manually the interviews that were conducted with seven participants. I transcribed manually to avoid missing crucial details collected during the data collection period. Once the interviews were transcribed, I read them thoroughly to get a general picture of the participant's responses. According to Agar's (1980) suggestion, researchers read the transcripts several times and must immerse themselves in details before breaking them into more minor themes. I followed the given suggestion by Agar (1980), and familiarized myself with interview transcripts several times and read carefully. After that, I started interpreting the interview transcripts into different themes to help categorize the data. I applied open coding (Cohen et al., 2003) by highlighting the themes in my research questions and any themes developed throughout the interviews that were not anticipated. All interviews and codes were re-read and examined to ensure nothing was missed. Initially, there were about 45-48 codes in my findings, which were then divided into eight themes. As themes are essential parts of the findings, they were again organized using inductive and deductive approaches. Seven central themes such as, 1) new academic and curriculum challenges, 2) linguistic challenges, 3) socio-

cultural challenges and culture shock were shrunk as challenges, and as coping strategies 1) utilization of university support and resources, 2) socialization, 3) practicing local languages and 4) seeking for privacy were shrunk to avoid repetition and to make categorizations of themes more clear. Pseudonyms were employed to shield participant identities for confidentiality; however, allusions to their home nations or ethnicity were used in the coding charts and written study documents. After I completed this process, more analysis was done on the final themes in order to formulate my findings statements. These themes, which were described in the findings chapter, served as the foundation for the study's conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), ethics has become a top priority for researchers. To get access to conduct interviews, first, I got CITI training after which I submitted my application to NU GSE IREC to get permission to conduct research, then successfully got my granted approval. According to Roberts and Priest (2010), researchers are responsible for upholding the privacy and security of all information received during their studies and making participants aware of the data's intended use, storage location, and accessibility (p. 116). Therefore, several measures were implemented to safeguard the anonymity and confidentiality of participants before, during, and after data collection and storage. I recognized the importance of obtaining informed consent without undue pressure or coercion. To this end, students were sent the informed consent forms before the interview when they showed interest in participating in research. Then, before the interview, students were asked to sign a consent form containing the study's description, ethical considerations, risks and benefits, participants' rights, and contact information for the survey (Appendix B). With the participants' explicit consent, I recorded audio during the interviews for subsequent data analysis and transcription. The interviews were

held online through the Zoom platform due to the global nature of participants and their absence in Kazakhstan during data collection because of the winter holidays. Participants were explicitly informed that their involvement in the semi-structured interviews was voluntary and they were not obligated to participate in the study. I encouraged participants to seek clarification and openly ask any questions they may have. Additionally, I made it clear that participants could leave the study at any moment without facing any consequences if they felt uncomfortable continuing.

The confidentiality of all participants was rigorously maintained before, during, and after the study. Information about international students is obtained through international student offices. However, these school administrators were not privy to the identities of recruited candidates for my research. I only got a list of students from them, and they did not know any information about recruited candidates. Furthermore, I kept university identity confidential, and participants were informed about that information. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of the provided information before starting the interview; the researcher used pseudonyms for the participants' names in data analysis. Creswell (2012) emphasizes the importance of describing participants' experiences and stories while maintaining strict confidentiality regarding their identities. Every effort was taken to eliminate any potential identifiers in the presentation of data throughout the project, including the thesis, to protect the participants' identities. Participants were exclusively referred to by pseudonyms at all stages of the study (before, during, and after), in all field notes, computer files, and project texts, including the final thesis. All field notes and hard copy research documents were stored in a password-protected computer, which served as a separate and safe place while not in use by researchers. As a researcher only I had access to the data during all stages of the study. The data was handled

with confidentiality by the researcher throughout the procedure, and it was never disclosed to other participants or people not involved in the study (Creswell, 2014). Participants' responses were aggregated with those of other participants and summarized or generalized in the research report. The study's results will be utilized solely for scholarly purposes. All audio recordings will be destroyed two years following successful graduation from NU GSE, MA program.

As students shared personal experiences, there might be a minimal risk that these discussions could evoke discomfort or distress. I aimed to build a helpful and empathic relationship with participants to reduce this risk. I ensured participants were aware of their rights, allowing them to skip any questions they felt uncomfortable answering and to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Additionally, I formulated my questions in a way that did not cause any emotional discomfort; they were formulated in a way that was easy to understand: they were on-topic, clearly worded, and did not contain specific professional terms or complex structures. The questions also did not require any personally identifiable information; therefore, it was impossible to identify the participants.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter covered the methods used in the current study. It stated the rationale behind choosing a qualitative approach with phenomenological design. Then, data collection tools, procedures, and analysis were described as best suited to answering research questions. Then, ethical considerations and measures that were taken before, during, and after the data collection process were described in detail. The following chapter introduces research findings based on collected data.

Chapter 4. Findings

Introduction

This chapter presents findings based on data collected from seven undergraduate international students who shared their positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies at two Kazakhstani EMI universities from diverse backgrounds. The following research questions guided the study: 1) What are the positive experiences of international students at EMI University in Kazakhstan? 2) What challenges do undergraduate international students face while pursuing their studies at an EMI university in Kazakhstan? 3) What coping strategies do international students employ to effectively address and surmount the identified challenges during their educational experience in Kazakhstan?

The chapter is organized into four main sections, and the first section presents international students' positive experiences, the following section demonstrates challenges, and the third section depicts findings on coping strategies that international students employ to overcome challenges. The chapter uncovers the nuances that distinguish their adjustment process, challenges, and coping strategies by analyzing their overall experiences, which enriches the understanding of the phenomenon from participants' narratives.

International Students' Positive Experiences in Kazakhstan

According to the data collected from participants, it is clear that their overall experiences as undergraduate international students are varied and sophisticated. The data analysis identified that international students who have been in Kazakhstan for a shorter time and those who have come from non-Russian speaking countries had different experiences than those who have been in Kazakhstan for a longer time and speak local languages. Both groups of students expressed

that they initially felt very excited and optimistic about studying in Kazakhstan, which correlates with “honeymoon” phase in Lysgaard’s U-Curve theory, where individuals are confident about experiences as everything is new. They are enthusiastic about their surroundings and new environments. As one of the participants from France commented: “It’s an incredible experience because I think everything here is easy for international students, especially at AA University……. When I first came, people were very welcoming and kind” (P2_FR_AA). From the beginning, she felt positive about being in Kazakhstan and was optimistic about her experience despite potential challenges that she faced and shared later. This finding was echoed by another participant who expressed feelings of a sense of belonging to the community and happiness thanks to people’s openness, support, and warm welcome. This was the way he expressed these feelings:

The university has been supportive, offering resources that aid adaptation. Despite cultural differences, the local community has been welcoming, providing a sense of belonging. People are open and ready to help in different situations, which I am grateful for and happy about. (P5_ID_AA)

In addition, it was also found that the majority of participants experienced enthusiasm about personal and academic growth through learning new cultures and perspectives that navigated their settling adjustment process into the new community. Moreover, their expectations from Kazakhstan were positive, and they were excited about the opportunity to study there. A few participants named it a “new chapter” in their lives, reflecting new beginnings. One participant, originally from Algeria and who has been living in France, stated: “Moving to Kazakhstan and studying was unexpected, and now I enjoy it. It’s fun, and I don’t face the issues I faced in France” (P2_FR_AA). This participant shared that moving to

Kazakhstan was an unexpected decision, prompted by her experiences with racism in France, which led her to drop out of university there. Consequently, she made a swift decision to pursue her studies in Kazakhstan and begin a “new chapter” in her life. She pointed out that:

I faced racism and discrimination in France. I just want to tell you that I decided to stop my studies in France because of this issue, and so after stopping my studies, I didn't know what I would do and was just thinking about restarting a new university chapter. So, my parents introduced me to Kazakhstan. I don't know how I'm here, what it was like, or how the process was as it was so fast ... I didn't face issues I had encountered in France. (P2_FR_AA)

Participants from AA University, those who were particularly in Kazakhstan for a shorter time and did not speak local languages, also stated their positive socio-cultural experiences in Kazakhstan. They indicated they did not confront any socio-cultural challenges and noted their positive experiences. They indicated that people in Kazakhstan were very welcoming and helpful, and they talked about the ease of forming new friendships. One of the participants indicated that she is from a similar background, and her country shared historical contexts with Kazakhstan. This eased her cultural adaptation, and she had positive experiences. (P6_AM_XY)

Other participants also described their student and teacher community as welcoming to international students. Some of the illustrative comments of participants are as follows:

My student community is really welcoming to international students. I enjoy this because Kazakh people are welcoming, pleasant, and friendly with strangers. (P2_FR_AA)

The school's facilities are excellent. The teachers and students are very welcoming and willing to help us integrate and make us feel as good as we need to. (P3_FR_AA)

Despite cultural differences, the local community has been welcoming, providing a sense of belonging. People are open and ready to help in different situations, which I am grateful for. (P5_ID_AA)

Overall, international students have shared their positive experiences in Kazakhstan, which is characterized by a welcoming atmosphere and community that enhances their lives.

Challenges of Undergraduate International Students at Kazakhstani EMI Universities

Along with positive experiences the data analysis revealed that students endure also negative experiences while pursuing their studies in Kazakhstan which are presented in current study through the lens of challenges. As most of the participants confronted the realities of studying in Kazakhstan, they faced some challenges, which reflects “culture shock” phase of the U-curve theory (Lysgaard, 1955). International students faced various challenges, and four themes emerged from data analysis that reflect these challenges: (1) challenges of adaptation to the new academic environment and curriculum, (2) linguistic challenges, (3) socio-cultural challenges, and (4) culture shock. According to the demonstrated findings, these challenges contributed to feelings of frustration, isolation, and stress. The sections below present a more detailed description of the participants’ challenges as international students.

Challenges of Adaptation to New Academic Environment and Curriculum

The overwhelming majority of the participants from both universities indicated that the new academic environment was challenging. The data analysis revealed that different educational backgrounds, academic study load, stress at the host university, and lack of language proficiency were found to be factors causing most of the challenges with adaptation. Participants indicated that coming from various educational backgrounds and adapting to new environments was challenging, and the education systems in the home country and host country were found to

be different. Additionally, adjusting to a new academic system required time and was not straightforward. The participant outlined.

After the education system in Uzbekistan, it was challenging for me to study at university here. There, I face a different workload. It was a massive workload for the first time in Kazakhstan, but now I know how to study and do assignments. (P4_UZ_XY)

Transitioning to the new curriculum was also challenging for international students coming from diverse backgrounds. A few participants expressed concerns regarding the university's exceptionally **high study load**. Participants stated that the quantity and intensity of academic work significantly contributed to their overall struggle, as they pointed out that they had to stay up until late at night, affecting their sleep routine and negatively impacting their emotional well-being. A few participants shared that course readings and analysis are very time-consuming, as pointed out by a participant from France, "I had many time-consuming readings and analyses that affected attending student clubs and socializing with others" (P3_FR_AA). While other participants responded that classes are very tough and stressful which were a consequence of heavy workload since they did not manage to finish their assignments. A participant from Uzbekistan remarked: "I am majoring in math, and courses are tough sometimes because I have to study many courses from my major and electives" (P1_UZ_XY).

The overwhelming majority of participants had different **initial expectations** from the university. Their expectations included that classes would be much easier as they thought that their university was not highly ranked, and they anticipated a serene and straightforward experience. The theme of adapting to the new environment represents a critical transition period in which individuals navigated variations in educational procedures and expectations, which was bewildering and challenging.

Before coming to AA University, a participant from France had expected that classes would not be challenging, as he had heard from other students who came to study. Still, he mentioned that course materials are very time-consuming and require much time to study. This caused him to dedicate more time to his studies and have less time for socialization and extracurricular activities. Similarly, a participant from Malaysia pointed out: "... University was not in ranking... I thought classes would be easy and not stressful, but it was only in my mind before coming here..." (P7_MY_XY). However, one of the participants expected that studying in Kazakhstan would be challenging, but then she shared that studying at a university in Kazakhstan is more easier than studying at a high school in her home country, and a factor behind this was taking courses only relevant to her major at her current university.

Each of the themes identified above – different educational backgrounds, the academic workload, stress at the host university, and differing expectations from the host university – stems from a low level of preparedness of students to host university. This lack of preparedness not only caused stress but also adversely affected their psychological well-being at the host community.

Linguistic Challenges

Along with adapting to the new academic environment and curriculum, the students also faced linguistic challenges connected with insufficient language abilities in both local languages and language of instruction, English. Most participants pointed out that since they do not know local languages, they felt excluded from class discussions and "left out" when their peers shifted to local Russian and Kazakh languages in group projects and discussions. This feeling was well expressed by a student from Algeria: "I was in the lab, and everyone spoke Kazakh and Russian. And I was the only one there. And I felt very left out, you know, I was like, where am I? Am I in

the right place?” (P2_FR_AA). In addition, this study’s findings disclosed significant linguistic challenges faced by participants, outside of the university campus as well. The majority of the participants who come from non-Russian-speaking (where Russian language is not spoken as a local language) countries identified language barriers as a substantial obstacle. According to presented findings, these challenges are revealed in two forms: the limited opportunities to communicate in English speakers outside the university because of the limited number of English speakers and the complexities of understanding and mastering local languages, mainly Kazakh and Russian.

A few participants expressed that studying all classes in the English language made it difficult to understand theoretical concepts given in their course readings due to their insufficient language proficiency and their first experience studying in EMI settings. Due to this difficulty, one participant from France suggested that the first semester of the university should not be graded as it is more about adjusting to new environments and finding strategies to study. She stated that having classes in the English language and not knowing the right approach to study negatively affected her emotional well-being. She commented: “Studying all classes in English affected my academics as I got low scores, and so, the first year should not be graded to give time for adaptation, and so students are not that stressed” (P7_MY_XY).

Interestingly, the findings diverge for participants of ethnic Kazakh descent from Uzbekistan and one participant from Armenia who have resided in Kazakhstan for eight years. These individuals reported that they did not face linguistic challenges, attributing this to their proficiency in the local languages, facilitating a smoother interaction with the local populace and a more integrated experience within the host community. The participant from Uzbekistan

expressed that, “I speak Russian and Kazakh languages, therefore I easily interact with local people and made friends quickly” (P1_UZ_XY).

In essence, the linguistic challenges delineated by the participants – insufficient proficiency in the language of instruction, English which impacted their studies, and not knowing local languages such as Kazakh and Russian – affected their communication both inside and outside campus. It caused the feelings of isolation and being “left out” in classes when their peers shift to local languages and feelings of isolation from the local community when being outside the campus. These challenges underscore a critical facet of the international student experience in Kazakhstan, highlighting the pivotal role of language proficiency in shaping their academic journey and social integration within the host country.

Socio-Cultural Challenges and Culture-shock

Another type of challenges that the participants faced is connected with socio-cultural challenges. The findings revealed differences in socio-cultural experiences of students among the two universities under study. While participants from AA University had positive socio-cultural experiences in their host community, that participants from XY University endured challenges of socio-cultural character in their university that were connected with feelings of isolation, loneliness, unfriendly roommates, and homesickness.

The socio-cultural challenge that participants from XY university confronted was related to the feeling of **isolation** and **loneliness**. The majority of participants expressed that they experience a lack of openness and sincerity from their peers. Two participants from Uzbekistan indicated that a lack of openness and sincerity from their peers and social disconnect impacted their living situation, where a lack of essential communication with their roommate increased their feelings of isolation and loneliness. As a participant from Uzbekistan pointed out:

Even with my roommate, we do not talk, and sometimes I feel lonely and miss my country... my parents ask me, "Who's your roommate whom you are living with?" ...

But I didn't know what to say because I didn't know with whom I lived. (P1_UZ_XY)

Furthermore, participants from XY University highlighted that seeking help from people in Kazakhstan is challenging. Participants highlighted a stark contrast between their university, where people are not very welcoming and not helpful, and their experiences in their home countries, where they find the local populace to be beneficial and readily available to assist. This is how one of the participants outlined such experience: "People here aren't very open-minded as far as I know at university... when I started living in the dormitory it seemed my peers did not want to talk to me and I felt left out." Similar feeling was echoed by another participant from Malaysia who pointed out that "... local students' connections with each other are more robust than locals to international students which gives feelings of not being welcomed" (P7_MY_XY).

The challenge of not feeling welcomed is linked with unfriendliness of roommates and people around who did not communicate with participants. The participant from Uzbekistan stated that one of the most significant challenges linked with socio-cultural adaptation was her unfriendly roommate who did not communicate with her. There was an incident when she broke her leg in which she experienced a lack of support and help from others, including her roommate and had to deal with it on her own. She mentioned that her roommate did not greet or ask how she felt. She stated it would be different in Uzbekistan, as people are helpful and caring. Despite the physical difficulties, she needed to manage academic and essential daily tasks, and she felt indifference towards her from others. She pointed out

My roommate, she was not friendly with me, did not offer any help. It's just she was on her own and did not even ask how I was doing. I tried talking to her, but she always ignored me. (P4_UZ_XY)

The similar experience was shared by another participant where he outlined: "with my roommate, we do not talk ... It was so strange initially because of my background, so I used to have a good connection with everyone." (P1_UZ_XY)

These experiences emphasize a critical aspect of cultural adjustment: the dependence on social networks for support during hard times, the individual's anticipation of empathy and aid, which was most likely influenced by their cultural background and prior experiences, contrasted with the reality of their circumstances, in which such support was conspicuously absent. This exacerbated the previously mentioned feelings of isolation and served as a clear reminder of the difficulties involved in making meaningful connections in a new cultural setting of participants.

Moreover, the research findings classify homesickness as a challenge among almost all participants except for one participant from France who did not have homesickness. Most participants encountered situations when they missed their cultural practices, identity, family connections, and food. Participants' comments included "moments of frustration and homesickness but engaging in various activities and seeking support helped maintain emotional well-being" (P5_ID_AA). Similarly, a participant from Uzbekistan echoed the same challenge that she has homesickness due to loneliness, and she shared: "I feel lonely and miss my country" (P1_UZ_XY). In a similar vein, one of the participants lives with her parents in Kazakhstan, but still misses her own culture, identity, and food, she outlined as:

I had situations when I missed things like culture, identity, and food. Even though my family is here, the identity and things you usually have done, like so many years back at home and where that feels like home, was challenging. (P6_AM_XY)

Another participant from France stated that she also felt homesick, but social media is an excellent way to cope with challenges. She commented: “I have homesickness and miss my family, ...social media ... I Facetime them when I miss them.” (P2_FR_AA)

It should be noted that only one participant did not face any homesickness, as he had already gotten used to living alone in France before coming to KZ. However, he stated that it was difficult for him to get accustomed to the new food. He pointed out: “I don’t have homesickness, as I live in a different city from my parents, even in France. However, I missed our food.” (P3_FR_AA)

Overall, the findings reveal that **isolation, loneliness, unfriendliness of roommates, and homesickness are** multifaceted experiences deeply intertwined with cultural identity and the longing for familiar experiences.

In addition, a few participants indicated that people’s mindset differs from their own nations’ mindsets, which caused some challenges that reflect *culture shock*. A participant from France noted that there is a ‘no smile’ culture in Kazakhstan, which shocked her because people in her own country are always smiling and kind. She commented: “There’s no smile culture here at all, right? So if you go to Malaysia, people are just smiling at you... people here are not that approachable, helpful, you know, hard to talk to.” (P7_MY_XY)

Similarly, another participant noted two unpleasant situations outside campus that contributed to her feeling of cultural shock. The first incident involves a frustrating encounter with a taxi driver who, despite the individual’s effort to compensate for a delay, reacted

aggressively in Russian, a language the participant did not understand. This experience highlighted a perceived lack of patience and courtesy on the side of a taxi driver, contrasting sharply with the participant's expectations based on their experiences in Malaysia, where such behavior would be considered unusual. According to the participant, the second incident involved a professor's insensitive response to a request for grade consideration. The participant asked to curve her grade (add additional points), and according to her, the professor talked harshly, which exemplified the cultural shock the participant experienced, which would be different in her own culture. It can be analyzed that this incident was considered a culture shock just because asking for additional marks in her own culture was regarded as a norm. Still, this practice can be different in Kazakhstan.

Both experiences that participants faced contributed to a broader reflection on the influence of cultural differences on personal interactions and the individual's overall adaptation to a new country.

Coping Strategies of International Students

Findings revealed that participants utilized coping mechanisms to navigate the challenges they confronted in Kazakhstan. When students used coping strategies to overcome challenges this stage can be correlated to the "recovery" phase of the U-Curve theory. According to the data collected from participants, four themes emerged reflecting coping strategies applied by participants: a) utilization of university support and resources, b) socialization, c) practicing local languages, and d) seeking privacy.

Utilizing University Support and Resources

The data analysis revealed that **utilizing university support and resources** was the most common strategy used by participants at both universities to cope with their challenges.

Addressing the advisors and professors for help; using counselling services were common among international students. The overwhelming number of participants stated that their advisors and professors are always ready to help them when facing difficulties; therefore, their challenges are solved more smoothly as they can address them to their advisors or professors. Participant from France pointed out as: “whenever I have an issue concerning my studies or something, I ask my advisor, and she’s always ready to help me and has always resolved my problems” (P2_FR_AA). She as well added: “as international students, we’re treated very well... our professors are here to help us anytime and we address them immediately if we face any difficulties (P2_FR_AA). A few participants also found counseling services regarding migration and other documentation processes helpful and expressed: “Counseling services regarding my migration status, regarding my visa and for documentation are helpful” (P1_UZ_XY). The majority of participants also indicated that the international students’ office is helpful. In mitigating challenges, one of the responses of the participant from France depicted as: “At the university, we have an international office ... if we have questions or need help, they are helpful.” (P3_FR_AA)

Socialization as a Coping Strategy

Furthermore, international students **socialized** with peers and the local community as a coping mechanism. As a part of socialization, joining student clubs and attending university events helped international students to overcome challenges. They indicated that student clubs helped them make friends with whom they spent time. A participant from Indonesia outlined: “I joined international student groups and participated in cultural events, fostering a supportive network” (P5_ID_AA). Similar findings were echoed by a female participant from Uzbekistan who stated the importance of joining student clubs to form a social network. She stated: “I joined one club, and from that club, I made many acquaintances and friends with whom I took classes

and hung out” (P4_UZ_XY). In a similar vein, another participant emphasized that their involvement in a student club was instrumental in facilitating friendships. He shared: “I got into the student club Society for Industrial and Applied Math’s and made friends from there because most of them are majoring in math or taking classes with me, which is nice.” (P1_UZ_XY)

In addition, it was found that AA University provides special speaking clubs and concert tickets for international students, which helps them make friends. An expression of a participant from France is as follows:

Sometimes, the university staff organizes a speaking club for international students to improve their speaking. Also, they provide us with tickets for concerts for international students only, and so it’s helped us to create some links between us and create some friendships. (P2_FR_AA)

It is also vital to mention that having **good interaction with peers and other fellow** international students was found to be another coping mechanism among international students. Most participants noted that they can address their needs and seek help from peers. Also, some participants pointed out that good communication with other international students is essential as they convey the same experiences and can understand each other better. Below is a remark made by a student from Armenia:

Making friends is vital because, as international students, we are alone here, so it’s crucial to socialize here in Kazakhstan. Making foreign student friends is also important because sometimes we can help each other more than others. Of course, locals can assist you, but occasionally, they never face the situation we face here as foreigners. So, making foreign friends is essential because we can relate to our situations. (P6_AM_XY)

As a part of socialization, most participants indicated that dedicating time to hobbies, cooking food from their cuisine, and sharing it with friends helped maintain well-being and overcome challenges. As a participant from France outlined: “I miss our traditional meals, but sometimes I get a chance to cook with my friends” (P2_FR_AA); “sometimes, I miss my food, but I get a chance to cook and share with others” (P3_FR_AA). In addition, some participants stated that going out with friends and having fun is also helpful as a coping mechanism. The participant expressed: “...hanging out with my friends here helps me a lot” (P2_FR_AA).

Practicing Local Languages

Another coping mechanism utilized by the participants was learning local languages, and they **practiced learning them**. Participants stated that even with mistakes, they tried to practice local languages. They attend classes and practice languages there, and they use translation apps when they have difficulties explaining things to other people who do not speak English. A student from France disclosed:

My challenges were related to my poor language skills, and I did my best to try to hear what people were saying, learn it, and adapt it to myself to use it. That’s how I managed to go shopping. (P3_FR_AA)

Participants also indicated that it is vital to learn local languages to show respect to the country where they are studying and that was the reason to learn a local languages. The participant stated: “I learn the language and culture of Kazakhstan people to show my respect to them.” (P3_FR_AA)

Seeking Privacy as a Coping Strategy

One more finding reflecting a unique coping strategy employed by only a Pakistani student from Malaysia was **seeking privacy**. She said that in overcoming challenges, going out

alone to have coffee and eating junk food was a coping mechanism to deal with difficult situations. She disclosed: “whenever I’m having a bad day, I would go out and treat myself... go for junk food, have coffee when facing challenges” (P7_MY_XY). She was also the only one who stated that crying and talking to family members helped her to feel better, so she would speak to her parents and cry when she had challenges and she reflected this as: “my coping mechanism was just crying and talking to my parents, talking to friends. I’m very close to my mom, so I used to speak to my mom” (P7_MY_XY).

Overall, the vital coping mechanisms identified were utilizing university help and resources, socialization –by participating in university events and joining student clubs, dedicating time for hobbies, practicing local languages, and seeking personal privacy.

Furthermore, the findings of this study also depicted information about participants’ recommendations for upcoming international students and university staff to better the lives of international students. It is a stage when participants are fully adapted to new culture which can be correlated to a “mastering” phase of the U-Curve theory. The findings presented by current international students imply that resilience is essential for international students to help them navigate the challenges of studying abroad. As a participant from France suggested: “try to work on resilience and be open-minded to new experiences” (P3_FR_AA). Also, participants remarked on the importance of actively participating in clubs and seeking help when needed, emphasizing the significance of utilizing available resources and community support. As a participant from France pointed out: “our professors are here to help us anytime and address them immediately if you face any difficulties” (P2_FR_AA). Furthermore, participants recommended that students should take advantage of any academic or recreational possibilities

that arise. One of the participants from Malaysia stated: “It might look scary and very tough from the outside, but when you see the hidden gem, you know it’s a great place to go” (P7_MY_XY).

Key findings from the study

Positive Experiences of International students. The majority participants from AA university shared their positive socio-cultural adjustment experiences that they had as they gained great support from their university and local community.

Challenges of Adaptation to New Academic Environment and Curriculum. The majority of international students at both universities endured challenges connected with adjustment to the academic environment and curriculum, reflected mostly in a challenging study load that they found “massive” and that impacted their academic achievements psychological well-being, and caused stress. This academic adjustment is found to be rooted in participants’ diverse educational backgrounds, unfamiliar academic systems, different expectations regarding workload, and the rigors of academic assignments.

Linguistic Challenges. Students faced considerable linguistic barriers as limited opportunities to speak English outside university campus due to limited number of English speakers and insufficient proficiency in local languages, namely Kazakh and Russian, which impacted their classroom participation, understanding of course material, and social interactions. Non-Russian-speaking students felt particularly excluded when peers and instructors switched to local languages.

Socio-Cultural Challenges. The socio-cultural challenges that participants faced were related to feelings of isolation, loneliness, unfriendliness of roommates, and homesickness. They stated that people were not open and sincere, which would be different in their home countries. The study participants noted significant cultural differences that led to culture shock in

Kazakhstan. A participant from France highlighted the “no smile” culture as a stark contrast to the warm and friendly attitude she was used to in her country. Additionally, two incidents that a Malaysian student faced were: an aggressive interaction with a taxi driver and a professor’s harsh response to a grade adjustment request.

Coping Strategies. To navigate these challenges, students employed various strategies, including leveraging university resources, socialization, practicing local languages, and seeking privacy. These strategies facilitated their adjustment and integration at the university.

The students suggested that incoming international students must prepare by familiarizing themselves with the local language and culture. They also recommended that universities enhance support systems, promote engagement between local and international students, and provide additional resources to aid in the adjustment process.

Summary

The chapter presented findings collected from seven participants of this study who come from diverse backgrounds and shared their positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies at two EMI universities in Kazakhstan. The data was presented based on themes that emerged after data analysis. It presented findings starting from the positive experiences of international students. The next section outlined the challenges of undergraduate international students in pursuing their studies at an EMI university in Kazakhstan in which four themes emerged: 1) challenges of adaptation to the new academic environment and curriculum, (2) linguistic challenges, (3) socio-cultural challenges and culture shock. After the challenges presented, the coping strategies employed by international students in overcoming these challenges were outlined with four emerging themes: a) utilization of university support and resources, b) socialization, c) practicing local languages, and d) seeking privacy. This section also

gives key recommendations from current participants for upcoming international students. The following chapter (Chapter 5) will be delineated in more detail in relation to the conceptual framework, Lyysgaards' (1955) U- Curve theory, and previous research on the topic.

Chapter 5. Discussion

Introduction

The findings presented in the previous chapter were drawn from the data that was collected from seven participants from diverse backgrounds. The current studies' findings reflect international students' positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies while adjusting to a new environment, which correlate with the adjustment stages outlined in the Lyysgaard (1955) U-curve theory. To gain a more thorough picture of the participants' adjustment patterns, the findings interpreted in light of the conceptual framework that underpins this study. Lyysgaard's U-curve adjustment theory (1955) states that when adjusting to a new cultural context, an individual goes through four stages: "honeymoon," "disillusionment," "adjustment," and "mastery." Lyysgaard's U-curve adjustment hypothesis (1955) presents a framework for understanding cultural adjustment through four stages. The **honeymoon stage** features an initial fascination with the new culture, as described by Oberg (1960). This enthusiasm often gives way to the **disillusionment stage**, where challenges like language barriers lead to frustration (Furnham, 1988). As individuals adapt, they enter the **adjustment stage**, learning to navigate cultural differences effectively (Adler, 1975). Ultimately, the **mastery stage** is reached, where individuals achieve biculturalism, maintaining their cultural identity while integrating into the new culture (Berry, 1997).

International Students' Positive Experiences in Kazakhstan

The data reveals that the experiences of international students varied significantly and can be divided into two distinct categories: international students who have been in Kazakhstan for a shorter time and those who have come from non-Russian-speaking countries had varying

experiences compared to those who have been in Kazakhstan for a longer time and speak local languages, who had a smoother adaptation and transition to the new system. Findings revealed that international students who speak local languages did not encounter linguistic challenges as they were able to speak with people in local languages. Meanwhile, students who were in Kazakhstan for a shorter period of time and those who have come from non-Russian-speaking countries, specifically those who studied at AA University, had positive socio-cultural adjustment experiences. Participants from AA University shared their positive experiences about socio-cultural adjustment and stated that they did not confront any challenges. The participants of this current study shared that they felt “belonging” to their community and university by highlighting the important role of their university in their easy adaptation to new environments. Such experiences and findings from current study correlates with the findings of Smith and Zhou (2009), who emphasize the significance of a supportive academic and social environment in ameliorating the impacts of culture shock. Similarly, the current research findings suggest that the welcoming nature and supportive structures at AA University contribute to a more positive adaptation experience, echoing the assertions by Ward and Kennedy (1999) on the role of educational institutions in shaping the acculturation process of international students.

Furthermore, the current study’s findings identified that both groups of students had initial excitement about being in the host country and were optimistic about being in Kazakhstan. This finding refers to students’ positive experiences upon arriving at a new community, where they felt enthusiastic about new surroundings and were happy to be part of the community, experiencing feelings of “belonging “to the community. In this current research, finding everything “easy” seemed promising for international students and made them feel optimistic about being in a new environment. This finding correlates with the first phase of Lysgaard’s U-

Curve theory, reflecting the so-called “honeymoon” phase when individuals are enthusiastic about a new environment. Students initial excitement from this current research fully corroborates with findings from the previous studies conducted in the UK by Aisha and Mulyana (2020) who indicated that international students in the UK experienced a “honeymoon” period during which they perceived their time in the UK as a dream or a scene from a movie as they were eager to see a new country and learn more about different cultures and people’s way of living. On the other side, the findings of the present study differ from the study of Kim (2021), who conducted research on sociocultural and academic adjustment of international students in which she found that most participants in her research in Kazakhstan did not experience an initial excitement period upon arrival to Kazakhstan.

In addition, it was found that most participants from the current study shared their interest in personal and academic growth as a positive experience in Kazakhstan. Such positive experiences are considered integral to the transformative potential of studying abroad (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). For some of the participants in the current research, studying in Kazakhstan was ‘a new chapter’ of their life, the finding that aligns with findings from Wang and Hannes (2014), who highlight the role of cultural and educational immersion in fostering a sense of renewal and personal development among international students.

Challenges of Undergraduate International Students at Kazakhstani EMI Universities

The findings revealed that positive experiences of the initial stage followed the initial “excitement” period; and along with positive experiences the data analysis revealed that students endure also negative experiences while pursuing their studies in Kazakhstan where they confronted number of different challenges in their host communities and four themes emerged that reflect these challenges, (1) challenges of adaptation to the new academic environment and

curriculum, (2) linguistic challenges, (3) socio-cultural challenges, and (4) culture shock. The period when students had challenges correlates with the second phase of Lysgaard's U-Curve theory reflecting the so-called "disillusionment" or, more specifically, "culture shock" phase. Below, a more detailed analysis of each challenge that they have confronted will be discussed.

Adaptation to New Academic Environment

The majority of international students at both universities endured challenges connected with adjustment to the academic environment and curriculum, reflected mostly in a challenging study load that they found "massive" and that impacted their academic achievements, psychological well-being, and caused stress. This academic adjustment is found to be rooted in participants' diverse educational backgrounds and unfamiliar academic systems.

The analysis of this current study revealed an interesting pattern: international students struggled to adjust to a new academic system, affecting their overall adaptation to the new educational environment. As stated by participants, their differing educational backgrounds impacted their adjustment to the new academic system, as they had different expectations from the university meaning that some of the participants heard that studying in Kazakhstan is easy and others had such false assumptions due to the fact that university was not highly ranked. The current findings of the study echo the sentiments found in the previous literature that international students often face significant hurdles when transitioning between different educational systems (Busher et al., 2016). In the same way, it was found in previous literature that there can be a critical transition period that international students undergo when encountering different educational procedures and expectations (Ward and Kennedy, 1996). This period can be particularly bewildering and challenging, necessitating robust support systems within the host institutions to aid in this transition (Wei et al., 2005).

As found in the findings of the current study, academic challenges and adapting to a new curriculum were identified as factors that made adjusting to new academic environments particularly difficult. The adaptation to new academic environment challenges identified in the current study—high workload, lack of language proficiency, different expectations of curriculum and the rigors of academic assignments—resonate with global findings, such as those by Busher et al. (2016), who studied international students' experiences in the UK, and Heng (2017), who studied Chinese students' experiences in the USA. The scholars noted that academic challenges are a significant aspect of the international student experience, impacting their adaptation and success (Busher et al., 2016; Heng, 2017). According to Busher et al. (2016), international students studying in the UK had a learning process which was unfamiliar to them in which their tutors' support played an integral role in their learning progress and success. The similar findings were supported by Heng (2017) who found that international students have difficulties with varied expectations of curriculum material, pedagogy, coursework approaches, connections with faculty members, and their function as students.

International students' experiences in Kazakhstani EMI universities reveal significant academic challenges— high study load, stress at university, lack of language proficiency, rigors of academic assignments—that are pivotal in adapting to a new educational environment. These challenges, reflective of broader global findings, underscore the importance of providing comprehensive support and accurate pre-arrival information to facilitate a smoother transition for international students (Heng, 2017). Understanding and addressing these academic hurdles are crucial in enhancing their academic success and overall experience in a new educational system.

Linguistic Challenges

In addition to the previously mentioned challenges, the current study's findings shed light on the linguistic hurdles that significantly impact international students' daily lives both in and outside the university premises, highlighting a crucial aspect of their adaptation and integration process in a host environment. The linguistic challenges that participants of current research faced impacted their classroom participation, particularly their understanding of the course content and their social interactions with people outside of their campus. A more detailed discussion of the afore mentioned challenges is analyzed below.

The findings of the current study reveal that participants faced challenges at university associated with EMI, marking their first experience studying in such an environment and their insufficient level of English. Insufficient language proficiency in English caused them challenges in understanding course materials and analyzing readings. Also, it was their first experience in studying all subjects in English and this created challenges in understanding lectures, and course materials. Previous studies by Busher et al, (2017) and McMahon (2018) found that language barriers negatively affect the academic success of international students. According to Busher et al, (2016) international students studying in the UK had challenges in following their instructors during lectures and grasping course material due to their insufficient level of English. The linguistic barriers faced by students in the current study echo the findings from broader literature, where language proficiency is consistently highlighted as a critical factor in the successful adjustment of international students (Abu Rabia, 2017; Busher et al., 2016; McMahon, 2018; Tsegay et al., 2018; Wang & Hannes 2014). As found in a previous study by (McMahon, 2018) foreign students pursuing their studies in the south-west part of England reported that English proficiency as a 'gateway' to their success academically and socially (p. 39). Regarding

linguistic challenges, the findings of a previous study by Rabia (2017) revealed that the Arab undergraduate students studying in the US faced hurdles in written and oral communication in their host communities. Similar findings were revealed by Busher et al, (2016) in which they stated that language barrier negatively affected international students' academic performance in the UK at a Midlands University.

It should be noted that those students who were proficient in Russian and Kazakh did not face any linguistic hurdles. Meanwhile, participants from non-Russian-speaking countries mentioned that it was difficult for them to interact with locals, making it difficult for them to adapt to the host country. Also, non-Russian speaking participants particularly had feelings of being 'left out' when peers and instructors switched to local languages. It could be asserted that language proficiency is crucial in students' adjustment to unfamiliar settings, and familiarity with local languages can facilitate this adaptation process. Challenges due to lack of knowledge of local languages or not knowing it at all caused a number of challenges for international students of current research.

A substantial portion of the participants in the present study expressed difficulties engaging with the local populace due to the limited prevalence of English speakers, and their lack of proficiency in local languages act as a barrier to their complete immersion into their host nation's societal and cultural milieu. This scenario underscores a broader issue of language proficiency and its direct correlation with social integration and personal well-being among international students. There is a clear consensus between this study and previous literature regarding the linguistic challenges international students face; more specifically, in global contexts, it was found that not knowing local languages leads to not understanding cultural nuances, engaging in meaningful local interactions, and gaining insights into the host culture

(Poyrazli et al., (2001); Spencer-Oatey, H., & Xiong, Z. (2006)). According to Poyrazli et al, (2001), an insufficient comprehension of the host language is considered among the most stressful factors of cross-cultural adjustment. A lack of basic language abilities can have various negative implications, including disrupting social connections and causing difficulty in academic communication and performance (Poyrazli et al, 2001). Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006) found that inadequate language abilities constrain international students' ability to form host friends.

The study's insights call for a nuanced understanding of the linguistic landscape international students navigate and its implications for their academic and social experiences. There is a critical need for targeted support mechanisms within universities and the broader community to facilitate language acquisition and promote linguistic diversity. This could include language exchange programs, free local language courses, cultural assimilation workshops, and initiatives encouraging the local population to engage more openly with international students. By addressing these linguistic challenges, there is an opportunity to significantly enhance the integration and overall experience of international students, thereby enriching the cultural and social fabric of the host country.

Socio-cultural Challenges and Culture Shock

The current study's findings reveal that many international students have encountered socio-cultural challenges that have impacted their adaptation to life in Kazakhstan. These challenges varied among students from two different universities. The results of this study indicate that students from XY University had socio-cultural challenges in which they had feelings of **isolation and loneliness, homesickness and had unfriendly roommates** that caused difficulties, while students at AA University did not face socio-cultural challenges as given in the first section of the current chapter except for homesickness that they confronted.

The findings reflecting experiences of social disconnect and isolation that international students face resonate with Searle and Ward's (1990) conceptualization of sociocultural adjustment. This concept underscores the importance of adapting to the social facets of a new culture. Feelings of isolation and poor interaction with peers from the current study echo the findings of Hendrickson et al, (2011) who found that students face isolation and loneliness due to less interaction with peers and local community. The current research found that there is a gap in the interaction between international and local students, meaning that locals prefer interacting with locals over international students, which causes international students the feelings of loneliness. The current research found that participants had challenges in interacting with their roommates, since they did not talk with each other that impacted their experiences as international students. The unfriendliness of their roommates as described by participants can underscore the dissonance between the students' expectations of empathy and support, likely rooted in their cultural backgrounds and the reality of their experiences in Kazakhstan. Such finding aligns with Jones (2008) observations on the impact of cultural discrepancies on international students' adaptation processes. The experiences of participants in current study, on not receiving anticipated support, as highlighted by one of the participants who broke her leg, can be contrasted with the findings by Chataway & Berry (1989), where the support system's availability significantly impacts students' adaptation processes.

According to Montgomery and McDowell (2009) social networks play critical role in cultural adjustment and well-being in a foreign academic environment for international students. Montgomery and McDowell (2009) findings supported by the previous research that peer interaction and social support are vital components in navigating new cultural landscapes (Berry, 2005; Greenfield et al., 2003).

A notable observation from the findings is that **homesickness** and a longing for their cultural practices were also named as challenges that international students encountered. Current research findings revealed that participants missed their family, cultural practices, identity and food. According to Fisher and Hood (1988) homesickness is a complicated cognitive-motivational-emotional condition characterized by sadness, longing, and thoughts of home. Previous studies have found that “homesickness” is one of the challenges that both domestic (Thurber & Edward, 2012) and international students face at university (Rabia, 2017; Kegel, 2009). According to Rabia (2017) Arab international students studying in the US had anxiety and bewilderment that were produced by unknown cultural norms and patterns that lead to homesickness, loneliness, or depression. While Kegel (2009) found that homesickness occurred among international students due to problems linked with separation with their parents and it was difficult for them to adjust to new environments. Previous research by Thurber and Walton (2012) linked homesickness to the broader context of reentry and cultural adaptation, indicating that the student’s experiences can extend beyond initial transitions and affect overall intercultural relations and adaptation process. Both studies demonstrated the importance of addressing homesickness as a critical factor in supporting international students’ success and overall well-being in host communities.

The findings by Thurber and Walton (2012) demonstrate that homesickness extends beyond initial transitions, influencing students’ long-term cultural adaptation and intercultural relations. This underscores the need for educational institutions and policymakers to implement comprehensive support systems that address the ongoing challenges faced by international students. Effective strategies might include developing cultural orientation programs, enhancing counseling services that are culturally sensitive, and fostering initiatives that encourage

interaction between domestic and international students. By doing so, institutions can improve not only the academic success but also the overall well-being of international students, thus creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment. This holistic approach is crucial in ensuring that international students feel integrated and valued within their host communities, thereby reducing feelings of isolation and homesickness.

Analysis of the data demonstrates that international students have experienced different types of **culture shock** due to the differences in cultural norms and mindsets of people in KZ and in the countries they come from. Consistent with the research by Ward et al. (2001), who define culture shock as the disorientation experienced when someone is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, the participants in this study encountered similar disorientation. The ‘no smile’ culture described by the French participant underscores the subtle yet impactful cultural cues that can significantly affect international students’ sense of belonging and comfort. The given finding of ‘no smile’ culture from current study aligns with Furnham and Bochner’s (1986) work, that emphasizes that such non-verbal communication discrepancies can lead to feelings of alienation and misunderstanding.

Moreover, the finding from current study in which the challenge of Indonesian student in finding common language and understanding local social norms resonate with Kim’s (2001) cross-cultural adaptation theory, suggesting that communication challenges are central to the culture shock experience. This theory posits that effective communication is key to overcoming cultural barriers and adapting to new environments, a notion that is echoed in the participant’s experiences (Kim, 2001).

Furthermore, a participant of present study had unpleasant experiences outside campus with a taxi driver, and the case of grade consideration with the university professor highlights the

broader theme of expectation versus reality in cultural practices, which is a core aspect of *culture shock*. The frustration and shock expressed by the participant when faced with aggressive or harsh responses in interpersonal situations reflect the findings of Zhou et al. (2008), who note that such experiences can exacerbate the feeling of being an outsider, intensifying the culture shock.

These incidents underscore the importance of cultural sensitivity, especially in educational institutions hosting international students. The reaction to the request for grade consideration offers a poignant example of how academic and cultural norms are deeply intertwined and how divergences in these norms can lead to misunderstandings and feelings of cultural alienation, as discussed by Pedersen (1994). In his work, Pedersen (1994) found the complexities of intercultural communication within academic environments, examining how cultural differences impact interactions and perceptions in educational settings.

The experiences of international students reveal that there are notable socio-cultural hurdles in adjusting to a new community in Kazakhstan. This situation highlights an opportunity for enhancement within the Kazakhstani community, underscoring the need to cultivate more affirmative and supportive environments to facilitate a smoother integration process for international students. The findings of the current study suggest comprehensive methods that include implementing cultural orientation programs, improving culturally sensitive counseling services, and encouraging peer engagement efforts to assist international students' academic success and general well-being. This strategy is critical for international students' integration and contentment in the host communities, as it addresses concerns such as isolation, loneliness, homesickness, and culture shock while also boosting their educational experience in Kazakhstan.

Coping Strategies International Students Used to Overcome Challenges

The findings presented show that participants used various coping strategies to overcome challenges that they confronted as international students at EMI universities in Kazakhstan. The techniques that were used can be reflected in the 'recovery' stage, as outlined in the U-Curve theory of Lysgaard (1955). In this stage, individuals begin to adapt to their new surroundings through their formation of coping strategies.

The data gathered from participants revealed four distinct themes that represent the coping strategies international students employed in overcoming challenges: leveraging **university support and resources, socialization, learning the local languages and culture, and seeking privacy.**

Utilizing University Support and Resources

One of the most common coping strategies that all international students employed was utilizing university resources and support services. Addressing academic advisors, counseling services, and the international relations offices, socializing were found to be a predominant theme in the students coping strategies, which echoes previous findings (Akanwa, 2015; Misra et al., 2003; Makhija, 2013; Ward & Kennedy, 1996), who found support systems from institutions (Akanwa, 2015; Makhija, 2013) and social support (Misra et al., 2003; Ward & Kennedy, 1996) play a crucial role in overcoming difficulties. Akanwa (2015) claimed that the variety of resources and support services offered to international students has a significant impact on their achievement at universities. Similar findings by Makhija (2013) who investigated coping mechanisms employed by overseas students in India, emphasizing the importance of cultural adaptation and institutional support students get in tackling challenges. Social support is also a part of a coping strategy that was used by international students of the present study which

corroborates with the findings of Misra et al., (2003) who discovered that international students in the United States rely heavily on social support as a coping mechanism. They emphasized the significance of interpersonal ties in assisting students with cultural adjustment challenges (Misra et al., 2003).

Socialization as a Coping Strategy

In addition, the vital role of **socialization** in coping with cultural and academic difficulties is highlighted by the students of present study who actively participated in student clubs and events. Current research findings resemble those of (Ward & Kennedy, 1996; Zhou et al, 2008), who noted the significance of social networks in enhancing international students' well-being. Engaging in these communal activities not only helps students forge meaningful connections but also plays a vital role in facilitating cultural exchange and adaptation and reducing feelings of isolation (Zhou et al, 2008).

Learning Local Languages

According to the analysis of findings, one of the strategic approaches to overcoming difficulties was linked with **learning local languages** to bridge cultural gaps, echoing Kim's (2001) assertion that language competence is considered one of the important cornerstones of effective cultural adjustment. According to Kim (2001) learning the host country's language is crucial for international students, as it not only aids in everyday communication but also in understanding the new environment's cultural nuances and societal norms. This, in turn, can reduce feelings of anxiety and alienation while enhancing students' overall adaptation experience (Kim, 2001). Moreover, Schumann's (1978) acculturation model posits that language learning and cultural adaptation are interconnected processes, with language proficiency playing a vital role in the acculturation experience of learners. Schumann's (1978) paradigm emphasizes the

reciprocal connection between proficiency in a language and integrating into a culture. By improving their linguistic skills, students are more likely to interact meaningfully with the local population, accelerating their cultural acclimatization. Schumann's (1978) ideas are aligned with Kim's (2001) findings, highlighting the immense impact of language proficiency on learners' ease of cultural adaptation and overall well-being in foreign contexts (Schumann, 1978; Kim, 2001).

Seeking for Privacy as a Coping Strategy

Interestingly, the unique coping mechanism of **seeking privacy** and **emotional expression** found in one of the participants from Pakistan in the current study reflects the diverse spectrum of strategies that students employ. This approach aligns with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping theory, which recognizes the significance of individual coping strategies in managing emotional stressors. This foundational perspective is further nuanced by Furnham's (1997) exploration into the individual differences in coping mechanisms, which illuminates the diverse array of strategies that people employ, including seeking privacy and avenues for emotional expression.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that students have shared their recommendations for upcoming international students and university administration, faculty and staff. This can be known as a 'mastering' phase of U-Curve theory as students themselves were able to give recommendations based on their own experiences. The study revealed key recommendations from participants to future international students and faculty members to improve the adaptation of international students in Kazakhstan. Their advice emphasizes the importance of resilience, proactivity, engagement, and the utilization of available resources, suggesting that preparedness and active participation are key to a positive international study experience. A current finding

resembles the previous literature, Zhou et al. (2008), who assert the critical role of resilience in the successful adaptation of international students to new academic and cultural environments. The present studies' participants' emphasis on active participation in clubs and utilization of available resources is supported by Andrade (2006), who notes the significant impact of engagement in extracurricular activities on student well-being and cultural integration.

Encouraging students to immerse themselves in academic and recreational activities matches findings by Glass and Westmont (2014), who highlight the positive correlation between involvement in campus life and international students' satisfaction and adaptation. Also, it was recommended by participants of this study that fostering greater collaboration between local and international students is essential for smoothing international students' adjustment experiences. This echoes findings from Jon et al. (2014), who suggest that interactions between locals and internationals can significantly enrich the educational experiences of all students by promoting cross-cultural understanding and inclusivity.

Shortly, the 'mastering' stage where students shared their recommendations evidently is not only a testament to the students' adaptability and resilience but also a call to action for educational institutions to implement strategies that support and enrich the experiences of international students.

In conclusion, coping strategies used by international students at EMI universities in Kazakhstan reveals a multifaceted approach to overcoming challenges associated with studying abroad. Participants employed strategies such as leveraging university support, socialization, learning local languages, and seeking privacy, which effectively aided in their cultural and academic adaptation. Moreover, students have transitioned to a 'mastering' stage, offering recommendations that underscore the significance of resilience, proactive engagement, and

utilizing available resources. These insights reflect the students' adaptability and resilience and serve as a valuable guide for future international students and the administrative bodies of educational institutions, emphasizing the need for supportive structures that facilitate a smoother adjustment process. This study underscores the dynamic interplay between individual efforts and institutional support in fostering successful international study experiences.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

The previous chapter discussed the main findings of the current research, which investigated undergraduate international students' positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies at EMI universities in Kazakhstan. This chapter focuses on the main conclusions and limitations of the current study. It also suggests additional policy and practical implications and recommendations for future research.

Main Conclusions of the Study

The current study investigated undergraduate international students' positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies at Kazakhstani EMI universities. The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the positive experiences of international students at EMI University in Kazakhstan?
2. What challenges do undergraduate international students face while pursuing their studies at an EMI university in Kazakhstan?
3. What coping strategies do international students employ to effectively address and surmount the identified challenges during their educational experience in Kazakhstan?

The study first explored the international students' positive experiences, which were followed by challenges and coping strategies they employed to tackle their difficulties. The study used Lyysgaard's (1955) U-Curve theory as a conceptual framework, which allowed the researcher to discuss, analyze, and synthesize the findings through the prism of the conceptual framework.

The **first major finding** of this research regarding the **positive experiences** of international students is that their experiences are deeply influenced by the duration of their stay

and their linguistic background. Students were divided into two groups: 1) international students who have been in Kazakhstan for a short period of time and who do not speak local languages, 2) international students who have been in Kazakhstan for a longer time and speak local languages. Both groups had their initial excitement about being in Kazakhstan and were positive about their personal and academic growth in a new community. This suggests that continuous engagement and assistance can help to turn students' excitement into long-term academic and social integration.

Students from AA University, who were new to Kazakhstan and do not speak local languages shared their **positive socio-cultural adjustment** experiences by highlighting the positive and welcoming environment of their local community and university. Students expressed their strong sense of belonging and support. Students' reports of a strong sense of belonging and support underscore the importance of social integration in the success of foreign education programs. A **conclusion** can be drawn that the friendly environment provided by both the local community and the university is critical to the students' adjustment process. The support and sense of belonging that these students feel indicate that AA University has successfully developed an inclusive environment that meets the different demands of its foreign student body.

These findings imply that well-structured support networks and community engagement are crucial in improving the academic and social experiences of international students, particularly those who are new to the country and unfamiliar with the local language. This aid not only helps with their immediate adjustment but also contributes to their long-term success and enjoyment of their studies abroad.

Students who were in Kazakhstan for a longer time and who speak local languages shared that they did not have linguistic difficulties in relation with speaking local languages and communicating with the local populace which eased their experience in communicating with locals and making friends. It can be **concluded** that knowing local languages and being able to communicate can ease the process of adapting to new environments. This suggests that language training should be a key component of support services offered to international students, particularly those from non-local language speaking backgrounds. Also, it can be recommended for international students to learn the local languages before moving to host communities at least in a basic level to ease their adjustment.

The **second major finding** of this research is linked with the challenges that international students confronted in their host community – Kazakhstan, which were categorized as 1) challenges of adapting to the new academic environment and curriculum, 2) linguistic challenges, 3) socio-cultural challenges, and 4) culture shock. Each of the given challenges significantly impacted the students' integration and success in their host communities. The summary that could be drawn from these findings is that the adjustment to a new academic setting presented a number of challenges due to differences in international students' educational background and their expectations. The intense workload and unfamiliar academic systems can be especially stressful, emphasizing the importance of universities providing comprehensive orientation and continuous academic help tailored to international students' different needs.

Furthermore, linguistic challenges were critical barriers that affected international students both academically and socially. Inadequate language skills impeded students' comprehension of the curriculum and restricted their engagement with peers and local communities, exacerbating feelings of isolation. The socio-cultural challenges along with culture

shock that were faced by XY university students underscore the profound impact of cultural differences on their daily lives. Students often have feelings of isolation, loneliness, homesickness and difficulties in social integration which can emphasize the need for targeted support systems which can better facilitate cultural adjustment and inclusion.

These findings suggest that the challenges international students confront can be alleviated by comprehensive support mechanisms such as improved language training, cultural orientation programs, and stronger academic and psychological support services to enhance experiences of international students in Kazakhstan.

The **third major finding** of the study are the coping mechanisms that international students employed in overcoming challenges that they confronted. The coping strategies are categorized into four primary categories 1) using **university support and resources, socialization, learning the local languages and culture, and seeking for privacy.**

Students used academic advising, counseling services and support from international offices that provided essential guidance and support that helped them in navigating the challenges that are associated with their studies and life in a new country. In addition, students stated that they participated in social events, joined students clubs, and other campus activities that served as coping mechanisms by allowing them to build networks that offered them emotional and practical support.

Another strategy that was applied by students were learning local languages and understanding cultural norms to ease their daily communications and enhance their integration into their new environment. This not only helps with academic accomplishment but also with social connections, minimizing feelings of separation.

It was also found that some students seek privacy as a coping mechanism, allowing them to think, relax, and manage stress. This allows them to take personal time away from the academic and social obligations that are essential for mental and emotional well-being.

Collectively, it can be **concluded** that the coping strategies that international students employed helped them to overcome their challenges and adapt to their new environment successfully. The utilization of university services and resources demonstrates the significance of institutional roles in student adjustment and emphasizes the need for institutions to continue to improve these services. Social engagement demonstrates the importance of a supportive community in promoting emotional well-being and cultural assimilation. The attempt to acquire the local language and comprehend cultural nuances enriches the students' experience. It facilitates their integration, while the technique of seeking privacy recognizes the individual demands for space and personal time, both of which are necessary for psychological well-being.

Taken together, these findings indicate that overcoming the problems faced by international students requires a well-rounded approach that includes both institutional support and personal strategies. To better meet international students' different need – educational institutions can use these insights to enhance international students' academic achievements and overall well-being. This comprehensive support system may considerably improve the experience and outcomes for international students, making their study abroad trip both manageable and gratifying.

Limitations of the Study

The study is subject to several limitations that affect its scope and the generalizability of its conclusions. With only seven participants, the small sample size may not fully represent the broader population of international students at EMI universities in Kazakhstan, limiting the

ability to apply findings universally. Moreover, by using a mixed-methods research approach, further research could generate large numerical data, contributing to the comparative analysis of undergraduate international students across different cities in Kazakhstan.

Recommendations for Future Research Directions

Future research on international students' experiences at EMI universities in Kazakhstan could benefit from several enhancements. Expanding the geographic scope to include a variety of universities and regions would help compare experiences across different educational and cultural settings. Increasing the sample size and participant diversity would enhance the findings' generalizability. Longitudinal studies could offer insights into how students' challenges and coping strategies evolve over time, providing a deeper understanding of the adaptation process. Integrating quantitative methods alongside qualitative interviews could offer a more comprehensive analysis of influencing factors. Additionally, research could focus on developing and testing interventions aimed at helping international students manage the challenges of studying abroad. Studies on the impact of language proficiency and cross-cultural communication could explore how these factors affect academic performance and social interactions. Finally, exploring the role of digital technologies in shaping the experiences of international students could provide relevant insights, particularly considering the recent shifts towards online education. These research directions could significantly enrich our understanding of the factors that influence the success and well-being of international students.

Final paragraph

Writing this thesis has been a challenging yet rewarding journey for me to improve my research skills as a scholar along which I have also developed some of my soft skills. I gained valuable knowledge on qualitative research methods and how to conduct research by following

ethical considerations, conducting interviews and analyzing data. Aso, I have improved my critical thinking skills by analyzing, reading and synthesizing large number of literature by thoroughly planning and organizing. Overcoming procrastination was a significant milestone for me, and I credit much of this progress to the guidance of my supervisor. My supervisor introduced me to effective time management techniques and tools, which helped me break down tasks into manageable parts and set realistic deadlines. By implementing these strategies, I developed a structured approach to my work, which reduced my tendency to procrastinate. Last but not least, I have developed perseverance and resilience by working through setbacks and challenges throughout the research and writing process.

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Appendix A

Declaration of the Use of Generative AI



Understanding Undergraduate International Students Experiences, Challenges, and Coping Strategies at EMI Universities in Kazakhstan

Appendix A – Declaration of the Use of Generative AI

I hereby declare that I have read and understood NUGSE's policy concerning appropriate use of AI and composed this work independently (please check one):

- with the use of artificial intelligence tools, or
 without the use of artificial intelligence tools.
-

(If you have used AI tools as defined in the GSE policy document, please complete the rest of this form.)

During the preparation of this thesis/examination, I used quillbot, ChatGPT [NAME of TOOL] to brainstorm ideas, paraphrase my own idea, edit the text for clarity and grammar, cite and reference sources [REASON]¹.

I also declare that I

- am aware of the capabilities and limitations of AI tool(s),
 have verified that the content generated by AI systems and adopted by me is factually correct,
 am aware that as the author of this thesis I bear full responsibility for the statements and assertions made in it,
 have submitted complete and accurate information about my use of AI tools in this work, and
 acknowledge that there may be disciplinary consequences if I have not followed NUGSE's guidelines regarding AI appropriate use.

Name: *Rozaoy Ismailzhanova*

Signature: *Rozay*

Date: *29.05.2024*

¹ Examples of REASON: brainstorm ideas / find or select sources on a topic / paraphrase / structure and organize the written text / edit the text for clarity and grammar / ask for tips to improve coherence / cite and reference sources

Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Understanding undergraduate international students' positive experiences, challenges, and coping strategies at an EMI University in Kazakhstan

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a research study on undergraduate international students at an EMI University in Kazakhstan. The main purpose of this phenomenological study is to investigate the positive experiences, challenges that undergraduate international students at EMI University in Kazakhstan face and the coping strategies they use to overcome these challenges. As a part of the study, you have been invited to participate in the interview. I believe your input will be valuable to this research and through active engagement with participants, and encouraging them to share their own experiences, the study can pave the way for tangible improvements in international students' lives. You will be asked open-ended questions related to your experience during your stay in Kazakhstan and studying at an EMI university. Our conversation will be audio-recorded only with your permission. The collected information will be used only for data analysis purposes. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym at all stages of the study to ensure complete anonymity and to prevent anyone from knowing your participation and the answers you provided. Your answers will be coded so confidentiality is guaranteed. Data that you will provide will be stored on my personal computer and protected by a password which only I know. The results of the study will be used only for scholarly purposes.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Interviews will take approximately 30 - 45 minutes

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There is a minimal risk to you from your participation in this study. Since you will be sharing personal experience, discussions could evoke feelings of discomfort or distress. To reduce this risk, I will aim to build a helpful and empathic relationship with you, and also ensure you understand your rights that you can skip any questions that you feel

uncomfortable answering and withdraw from study at any moment. The benefits, which may reasonably be expected to result from this study, are indirect: giving a 'voice' to you to tell your positive experiences, perhaps your challenges and difficulties during your academic studies. In addition, your 'voice' can help in making changes and informing a number of stakeholders about your difficulties in order to create a better environment for international students. Information on your participation will be accessible neither to your teachers nor university administration. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your studies and grades at universities.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand that your participation is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your academic standing. You also have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals but reiterate that no personally identifiable information will be shared in any publication.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Master's Thesis Supervisor for this student work, associate professor, Sulushash Kerimkulova, skerimkulova@nu.edu.kz. If you are not satisfied with how this study is being conducted, or if you have any concerns, complaints, or general questions about the research or your rights as a participant, please contact NUGSE Research Committee to

at gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz . Please sign this consent form if you agree to participate in this study.

- 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

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

АҚПАРАТТАНДЫРЫЛҒАН КЕЛІСІМ НЫСАНЫ

Шетелдік бакалавриат студенттерінің оң тәжірибелеріні,

проблемаларын және Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде білім беру университетіндегі қиындықтарды жеңу стратегияларын түсіну.

СИПАТТАМА: Сізді Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде білім беру университетіндегі шетелдік бакалавриат студенттеріне арналған зерттеуіне қатысуға шақырамын. Бұл феноменологиялық зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде білім беру университетінде шетелдік бакалавриат студенттерінің оң тәжірибелеріні, кездестірген проблемаларды және осы проблемаларды жеңу үшін қолданатын күресу стратегияларын зерттеу болып табылады. Оқыту аясында сіз сұхбатқа қатысуға шақырылдыңыз. Сіздің үлесіңіз осы зерттеу үшін құнды болады деп сенемін және қатысушылармен белсенді қарым-қатынас жасау арқылы оларды өз тәжірибелерімен бөлісуге шақыру арқылы зерттеу шетелдік студенттердің өмірінде айтарлықтай жақсартуға жол ашуы мүмкін. Сізге Қазақстанда тұру және ағылшын тілінде білім беру университеттегі оқу кезіндегі тәжірибеңізге байланысты ашық сұрақтар қойылады. Біздің әңгімеміз тек сіздің рұқсатыңызбен аудиожазбаға жазылады. Жиналған ақпарат тек деректерді талдау мақсатында пайдаланылады. Толық анонимдікті қамтамасыз ету және сіздің қатысуыңыз және сіз берген жауаптар туралы ешкімнің білуіне жол бермеу үшін сіздің атыңыз зерттеудің барлық кезеңдерінде бүркеншік атпен ауыстырылады. Сіздің жауаптарыңыз шифрланады, сондықтан құпиялылыққа кепілдік беріледі. Сіз берген деректер менің жеке компьютерімде сақталады және мен ғана білетін құпия сөзбен қорғалады. Зерттеу нәтижелері тек ғылыми мақсаттарда қолданылады.

ҚАТЫСУ УАҚЫТЫ: Сұхбат шамамен 30-45 минут алады.

ТӘУЕКЕЛДЕР МЕН АРТЫҚШЫЛЫҚТАР: Бұл зерттеуге қатысуыңыз сіз үшін ең аз тәуекелді қамтиды. Сіз жеке тәжірибеңізбен бөлісетіндіктен, талқылау ыңғайсыздық немесе қайғы сезімін тудыруы мүмкін. Бұл тәуекелді азайту үшін мен сізбен пайдалы және эмпатикалық қарым-қатынас орнатуға тырысамын, сонымен қатар сіздің құқықтарыңызды түсінетіндігіңізге көз жеткіземін: сіз өзіңізге ыңғайсыз жауап беретін кез келген сұрақтарды өткізіп жіберіп, кез келген уақытта оқудан бас тарта аласыз. Осы зерттеудің нәтижесінде ақылға қонымды түрде күтуге болатын артықшылықтар жанама болып табылады: олар сізге “сөйлеуге”, өз тәжірибеңіз туралы, мүмкін академиялық оқу кезіндегі қиындықтарыңыз бен қиындықтарыңыз туралы айтуға мүмкіндік береді. Сонымен қатар, Сіздің” дауысыңыз “ шетелдік студенттер үшін жақсы жағдай жасау үшін бірқатар мүдделі тараптарға сіздің қиындықтарыңыз туралы хабарлауға көмектеседі. Сіздің қатысуыңыз туралы ақпарат сіздің оқытушыларыңызға да, университет әкімшілігіне де қол жетімді болмайды. Бұл зерттеуге қатысу немесе қатыспау туралы шешіміңіз сіздің оқуыңыз бен бағаларыңызға әсер етпейді.

ҚАТЫСУШЫНЫҢ ҚҰҚЫҚТАРЫ: Егер сіз осы форманы оқып, осы жобаға қатысуды шешсеңіз, сіздің қатысуыңыз толығымен ерікті екенін түсініңіз. Сіз өз келісіміңізді қайтарып алуға немесе кез келген уақытта айыппұл санкцияларынсыз немесе басқа құқығыңыз бар жеңілдіктерді жоғалтпай қатысуды тоқтатуға құқығыңыз бар. Сіздің қатысу немесе қатыспау туралы шешіміңіз сіздің оқу үлгеріміңізге әсер етпейді. Сіз сондай-ақ белгілі бір сұрақтарға жауап беруден бас тартуға құқығыңыз бар. Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері ғылыми немесе кәсіби кездесулерде ұсынылуы немесе ғылыми журналдарда

жариялануы мүмкін, бірақ жеке тұлғаны анықтауға мүмкіндік беретін ешқандай ақпарат ешбір басылымда жарияланбайтынын тағы бір рет атап өтеміз.

БАЙЛАНЫС АҚПАРАТЫ:

Сұрақтар: Егер сізде осы зерттеуге, оның рәсімдеріне, тәуекелдері мен артықшылықтарына қатысты сұрақтарыңыз, алаңдаушылықтарыңыз немесе шағымдарыңыз болса, осы студенттік жұмыс бойынша магистрлік диссертацияның ғылыми жетекшісі, қауымдастырылған профессор Сулушаш Керимкуловаға хабарласыңыз, skerimkulova@nu.edu.kz. Егер сіз бұл зерттеудің қалай жүргізілетініне қанағаттанбасаңыз немесе зерттеу немесе қатысушы ретіндегі құқықтарыңыз туралы алаңдаушылық, шағымдар немесе жалпы сұрақтарыңыз болса, NUGSE зерттеу комитетіне хабарласыңыз gse_researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz .

Егер сіз осы зерттеуге қатысуға келіссеңіз, осы келісім формасына қол қойыңыз.

- Мен берілген ақпаратпен мұқият таныстым;
- Маған Зерттеудің мақсаты мен процедуралары туралы толық ақпарат берілді;
- Мен жиналған деректердің қалай пайдаланылатынын және кез келген құпия ақпараттың не екенін түсінемін

ақпарат тек зерттеушілерге қол жетімді болады және басқа ешкімге жария етілмейді;

- Мен кез-келген уақытта зерттеуге қатысудан бас тартуға ерікті екенімді түсінемін
- Жоғарыда айтылғандардың бәрін толық біле отырып, мен өз еркіммен қатысуға келісемін бұл зерттеу

Қолы: _____ Күні: _____

Appendix B

ФОРМА ИНФОРМИРОВАННОГО СОГЛАСИЯ

Понимание позитивных опытов, проблемы иностранных студентов бакалавриата и стратегий преодоления трудностей в университете с английским языком обучения в Казахстане.

ОПИСАНИЕ: Приглашаю вас принять участие в исследовании, посвященном иностранным студентам бакалавриата в университете, где обучение проводится на английском языке, в Казахстане. Основная цель этого феноменологического исследования - понимание позитивных опытов, проблем с которыми сталкиваются иностранные студенты, а также стратегий, которые я использую для их преодоления. В рамках исследования я приглашаю вас принять участие в интервью. Ваш опыт и точка зрения являются важными элементами этого исследования, и ваше активное участие может способствовать улучшению жизни иностранных студентов. Я верю, что ваше участие будет ценным и поможет нам лучше понять, как поддержать иностранных студентов в их учебном пути. Вам будут заданы открытые вопросы, связанные с вашим опытом во время пребывания в Казахстане и учебы. Наш разговор будет записан на аудиозапись только с вашего разрешения. Собранная информация будет использоваться только в целях анализа данных. Ваше имя будет заменено псевдонимом на всех этапах исследования, чтобы обеспечить полную анонимность и не допустить, чтобы кто-либо узнал о вашем участии и предоставленных вами ответах. Ваши ответы будут зашифрованы, поэтому конфиденциальность гарантирована. Данные, которые вы предоставите, будут храниться

на моем персональном компьютере и защищены паролем, который знаю только я.

Результаты исследования будут использованы только в научных целях.

ВРЕМЯ УЧАСТИЯ: Интервью займёт примерно 30-45 минут.

РИСКИ И ВЫГОДЫ: Ваше участие в этом исследовании сопряжено с минимальным риском для вас. Поскольку вы будете делиться личным опытом, обсуждения могут вызвать чувство дискомфорта или огорчения. Чтобы снизить этот риск, я постараюсь выстроить с вами полезные и сопереживающие отношения, а также убедиться, что вы понимаете свои права: вы можете пропустить любые вопросы, отвечать на которые вам неудобно, и отказаться от учебы в любой момент. Преимущества, которые можно обоснованно ожидать в результате этого исследования, являются косвенными: они дают вам возможность “высказаться”, рассказать о своем опыте, возможно, о ваших проблемах и трудностях во время академической учебы. Кроме того, ваш “голос” может помочь во внесении изменений и информировании ряда заинтересованных сторон о ваших трудностях, чтобы создать лучшую среду для иностранных студентов. Информация о вашем участии не будет доступна ни вашим преподавателям, ни администрации университета. Ваше решение участвовать или не участвовать в этом исследовании не повлияет на вашу учебу и оценки в университетах.

ПРАВА УЧАСТНИКА: если вы прочитали эту форму и решили принять участие в этом проекте, пожалуйста, поймите, что ваше участие является полностью добровольным. Вы имеете право отозвать свое согласие или прекратить участие в любое время без каких-либо штрафных санкций или потери льгот, на которые вы имеете иное право. Ваше решение участвовать или нет не повлияет на вашу академическую успеваемость. Вы также имеете право отказаться отвечать на определенные вопросы. Результаты этого

исследования могут быть представлены на научных или профессиональных встречах или опубликованы в научных журналах, но еще раз подчеркиваем, что никакая информация, позволяющая установить личность, не будет опубликована ни в одной публикации.

КОНТАКТНАЯ ИНФОРМАЦИЯ:

Вопросы: Если у вас есть какие-либо вопросы, опасения или жалобы по поводу данного исследования, его процедур, рисков и преимуществ, свяжитесь с научным руководителем магистерской диссертации по данной студенческой работе, ассоциированным профессором Сулушаш Керимкуловой, skerimkulova@nu.edu.kz . Если вы не удовлетворены тем, как проводится это исследование, или если у вас есть какие-либо опасения, жалобы или общие вопросы об исследовании или ваших правах как участника, пожалуйста, свяжитесь исследовательским комитетом NUGSE по адресу gse.researchcommittee@nu.edu.kz

Пожалуйста, подпишите эту форму согласия, если вы согласны участвовать в этом исследовании.

- Я внимательно ознакомился с предоставленной информацией;
- Мне была предоставлена полная информация относительно цели и процедур 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 я волен отказаться от участия в исследовании в любое время без объяснения причин;

- Полностью осознавая все вышеизложенное, я соглашаюсь по собственной воле принять участие в этом исследовании.

Подпись: _____ Дата: _____

Appendix C

Recruitment Letter

Participate in an Exciting Research Opportunity!



Are you a **second** or **third-year undergraduate international student** at EMI University in Kazakhstan? Are you willing to share your **unique experiences** and **insights** that help in shaping the **future of education**?

THEN WE ARE LOOKING FOR YOU!

I, Rozaoy Ismailzhanova, a second-year master's student at the Graduate School of Education at Nazarbayev University (NU), invite you to take part in my research project, which aims to investigate the **positive experiences**, the **challenges** that undergraduate international students face at an EMI University in Kazakhstan and the **coping strategies** they use to overcome these **challenges**.

Your Participation Matters!

By sharing your **experiences**, you're contributing to a better understanding of the **international student experience**. Your insights can help shape **policies, support services**, and initiatives to enhance academic studies for **future students** like you.

Why Participate?

Make a Difference: Your voice can positively impact the lives of **international students**.

Contribute to Research: Your experiences can shape the **future of education**.

Confidentiality: Your **identity** and **personal information** will be kept strictly **confidential**.

How to Get Involved?

If you're interested in participating or have questions, please contact me through email

rozaoy.ismailzhanova@nu.edu.kz or call/whatsapp on

+77782824149 Rozaoy Ismailzhanova, MA student at GSE

Join me in this exciting research adventure and help make differences!

Shaping the Future of International Education

Appendix C Зерттеуге қатысуға шақыру

Қызықты зерттеуге қатысыңыз!



Сіз Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде білім беру университетінде бакалавриаттың **екінші** немесе **үшінші** курсындағы **шет елдікі студенті** болып табыласыз ба? **Болашақ білім** беруді қалыптастыруға көмектесетін бірегей **тәжірибеңіз** бен **идеяларыңызбен** бөлісуге дайынсыз ба?

ОНДА БІЗ СІЗДІ ІЗДЕЙМІЗ!

Мен, Назарбаев Университетінің Жоғары білім беру мектебінің магистратурасының екінші курс студенті Розаой Исмаилжанова, сіздерді Қазақстандағы **ағылшын тілінде білім беру** университетіндегі шет ел студенттерінің **тәжірибелерін**, кездесетін **проблемаларды** және осы проблемаларды еңсеру үшін пайдаланатын күресу **стратегияларын** зерделеуге бағытталған зерттеу жобама қатысуға шақырамын.

Сіздің қатысуыңыз маңызды!

Өз **тәжірибеңізбен** бөлісу арқылы сіз **халықаралық студенттердің тәжірибесін** жақсы түсінуге ықпал етесіз. Сіздің идеяларыңыз сіз сияқты болашақ студенттерге академиялық білім беруді жақсартуға бағытталған **саясатты, қолдау қызметтерін** және **бастамаларды** қалыптастыруға көмектеседі.

Неге қатысу керек?

Өзгеріс: Сіздің дауысыңыз **шетелдік студенттердің** өміріне оң әсер етуі мүмкін.

Зерттеуге үлес: Сіздің тәжірибеңіз білім берудің **болашағына** әсер етуі мүмкін.

Құпиялылық: Сіздің жеке ақпаратыңыз қатаң құпияда сақталады.

Қалай қатысуға болады?

Егер сіз қатысуға қызығушылық танытсаңыз немесе сұрақтарыңыз болса, маған электрондық пошта арқылы хабарласыңыз rozaoy.ismailzhanova@nu.edu.kz немесе қоңырау шалыңыз/ WhatsApp қосулы +77782824149

Розаой Исмаилжанова, Назарбаев Университетінің Жоғары білім беру мектебінің магистратурасының студенті.

Маған осы қызықты зерттеу жобасына қосылыңыз және өзгерістерге көмектесіңіз.

Халықаралық білім берудің болашағын қалыптастыру

Appendix C

Приглашение на участие в исследовании Примите участие в захватывающем исследовании!



Являетесь ли вы **иностранным** студентом **второго** или **третьего** курса бакалавриата в университете где обучение на **английском** в Казахстане? Готовы ли вы поделиться своим уникальным **опытом и идеями**, которые помогут в формировании будущего образования **иностраннных студентов**?

ТОГДА МЫ ИЩЕМ ИМЕННО ВАС!

Я, Розаой Исмаилжанова, студентка второго курса магистратуры Высшей школы образования Назарбаев университета (NU), приглашаю вас принять участие в моем исследовательском проекте, целью которого является изучение **опыта, проблем**, с которыми сталкиваются иностранные студенты в университете в Казахстане, и **стратегий** преодоления, которые **иностраннные студенты** используют для преодоления этих проблем.

Ваше участие имеет значение!

Делясь своим **опытом**, вы способствуете лучшему пониманию **опыта иностранных студентов**. Ваши идеи могут помочь в формировании **политики, служб поддержки** и инициатив, направленных на улучшение академического образования **для будущих студентов**, подобных вам.

Зачем участвовать?

Измените ситуацию: Ваш голос может положительно повлиять на жизнь иностранных студентов.

Внесите свой вклад в исследования: ваш опыт может повлиять на будущее образования.

Конфиденциальность: Ваша личность и личная информация будут храниться в строгой тайне.

Как принять участие?

Если вы заинтересованы в участии или у вас есть вопросы, пожалуйста, свяжитесь со мной по электронной почте rozaoy.ismailzhanova@nu.edu.kz или позвоните / whatsapp по номеру +77782824149 Розаой Исмаилжановой, студентке магистратуры Высшей школы образования.

Присоединяйтесь ко мне в этом захватывающем исследовательском приключении и помогите добиться перемен!

Формирование будущего международного образования

Appendix D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Understanding undergraduate international students' positive experiences, challenges and coping strategies at an EMI University in Kazakhstan

Good day! My name is Rozaoy Ismailzhanova. I am a second-year master's student at Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education. Thank you very much for your participation in the study. You are invited to participate in a research study on undergraduate international students at an EMI University in Kazakhstan. The main purpose of this phenomenological study is to investigate the positive experiences and challenges that undergraduate international students at EMI University in Kazakhstan face and the coping strategies they use to overcome these challenges. As a part of the study, you have been invited to participate in the interview. I believe your input will be valuable to this research. Through active engagement with participants and encouraging them to share their experiences, the study can pave the way for tangible improvements in international students' lives. You will be asked open-ended questions related to your experience during your stay in Kazakhstan and studying at an EMI university. Our conversation will be audio-recorded only with your permission. The collected information will be used only for data analysis purposes. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym at all stages of the study to ensure complete anonymity and to prevent anyone from knowing your participation and the answers you provided. Your answers will be coded, so confidentiality is guaranteed. The data you will provide will be stored on my personal computer and protected by a password only I know. The results of the study will be used only for scholarly purposes. Before starting the interview, could you please sign the consent form?

Date:

Time:

Place:

Interviewee:

Gender:

Age:

Year of study:

Major:

Questions:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you please briefly introduce yourself by giving some background information about your home country, major, and how long you have stayed in Kazakhstan? 	<p>Background data</p>
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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Could you please describe your overall experience as an international undergraduate student? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were your initial expectations, and how have they evolved over time? 2. How do you perceive the overall experiences the university and the local community provide for international students? 3. What are your positive experiences while studying at EMI university in Kazakhstan? 	Experiences
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have you encountered any challenges during your study at EMI University in Kazakhstan? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you please share any academic challenges that you have faced? • Have you faced any cultural challenges? • What about language-related or social-interact challenges? 2. Have these challenges affected your overall adaptation to life in Kazakhstan? If yes, how? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has it affected your emotional well-being? If yes, could you please explain broadly? 4. Could you provide examples of situations or incidents that particularly stand out as challenging during your time as an international student? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	Challenges

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To address the challenges you mentioned earlier, please speak about coping strategies or mechanisms you use to overcome these challenges. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you develop these strategies, and how effective have they been? 2. Have you been provided help from the university's resources, such as academic advisors, language support services, or counseling services? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you share your experiences with using these resources? 3. How important is social support from peers and fellow international students in coping with challenges? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you been part of any support networks or groups? 4. Have you engaged in any extracurricular activities or cultural experiences that have helped you adapt and overcome challenges? If so, please describe them. 5. Reflecting on your study as an international student, what advice or recommendations would you give to international students? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What about faculty members or school administration? 	Coping strategies
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Would you recommend studying at Kazakhstani EMI University to other international students? If yes, what would it be? Why? 2. Are there any additional insights or experiences you would like to share? 3. Do you have any more comments before we wrap up the interview? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - Thank you very much for participating in this study; your assistance is greatly appreciated! After I finish the transcription, I would like to send it to you, and if you want to make changes, you are welcome! If you have other questions or concerns related to my study or interview, you can email me • My email address is rozaoy.ismailzhanova@nu.edu.kz • 	Final observations

Appendix D

Интервью протокол

Шетелдік бакалавриат студенттерінің тәжірибелерін, проблемаларын және Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде білім беру университетіндегі қиындықтарды жеңу стратегияларын түсіну.

Қайырлы күн! Мен Розаой Исмаилжанова. Мен Назарбаев Университетінің жоғары білім беру мектебінің магистратурасының екінші курсына оқимын. Бұл феноменологиялық зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде білім беру университетінде шетелдік бакалавриат студенттерінің тәжірибелерін, алдында тұрған проблемаларды және осы проблемаларды жеңу үшін қолданатын күресу стратегияларын зерттеу болып табылады. Оқыту аясында сіз сұхбатқа қатысуға шақырылдыңыз. Сіздің үлесіңіз осы зерттеу үшін құнды болады деп сенемін және қатысушылармен белсенді қарым-қатынас жасау арқылы оларды өз тәжірибелерімен бөлісуге шақыру арқылы зерттеу шетелдік студенттердің өмірінде айтарлықтай жақсартуға жол ашуы мүмкін. Сізге Қазақстанда тұру және ағылшын тілінде білім беру университеттегі оқу кезіндегі тәжірибеңізге байланысты ашық сұрақтар қойылады. Біздің әңгімеміз тек сіздің рұқсатыңызбен аудиожазбаға жазылады. Жиналған ақпарат тек деректерді талдау мақсатында пайдаланылады. Толық анонимдікті қамтамасыз ету және сіздің қатысуыңыз және сіз берген жауаптар туралы ешкімнің білуіне жол бермеу үшін сіздің атыңыз зерттеудің барлық кезеңдерінде бүркеншік атпен ауыстырылады. Сіздің жауаптарыңыз шифрланады, сондықтан құпиялылыққа кепілдік беріледі. Сіз берген деректер менің жеке компьютерімде сақталады және мен ғана білетін құпия сөзбен қорғалады. Зерттеу нәтижелері тек ғылыми мақсаттарда қолданылады. Сұхбатты бастамас бұрын, ақпараттандырылған келісім формасына қол қоя аласыз ба? Рахмет!

Күні:

Уақыт:

Орын:

Сұхбат беруші:

Жасы:

Оқу жылы:

Мамандығы:

Сұрақтар:

<p>1. Қазақстандағы шетелдік студенті ретіндегі ортақ тәжірибеңізді сипаттай аласыз ба? - Сіздің алғашқы үміттеріңіз қандай болды және олар уақыт өте келе қалай өзгерді?</p> <p>2. Университет пен жергілікті қоғамдастық ұсынатын шетелдік студенттерге арналған жалпы тәжірибеңізді қалай сипаттайсыз?</p>	Тәжірибелер
<p>1. Сіз Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілінде білім беру университетінде оқып жүріп қандай да бір қиындықтарға тап болдыңыз ба? - Сіз кез-келген академиялық мәселелермен бөлісе аласыз ба? Тілдік немесе әлеуметтік мәселелерші?</p> <p>2. Бұл проблемалар сіздің үлгеріміңізге, эмоционалдық әл-ауқатыңызға және Қазақстандағы өмірге жалпы бейімделуіңізге әсер етті ме? Олай болса, қалай?</p> <p>3. Шетелдік студент ретінде оқу кезінде әсіресе қиын болып көрінетін жағдайлар мен оқиғалардың мысалдарын келтіре аласыз ба?</p>	Мәселелер/ Қиындықтар

<p>1. Бұрын айтқан қиындықтармен күресу үшін сіз жеңу стратегиялары немесе жеңу үшін қолданатын механизмдер туралы айта аласыз ба? - Сіз бұл стратегияларға қалай келдіңіз және олар қаншалықты тиімді болды?</p> <p>2. Сіз академиялық кеңесшілер, тілдерді қолдау қызметтері немесе кеңес беру қызметтері сияқты университет ресурстарынан көмек алдыңыз ба? - Осы ресурстарды пайдалану тәжірибесімен бөлісе аласыз ба?</p> <p>3. Қиындықтарды жеңуде құрдастар мен басқа да шетелдік студенттердің әлеуметтік қолдауы қаншалықты маңызды? - Сіз кез келген қолдау желілерінің немесе топтарының бір бөлігі болдыңыз ба?</p> <p>4. Сіз Қазақстандағы өмірге бейімделуге және қиындықтарды жеңуге көмектескен кез келген сыныптан тыс іс-шараларға немесе мәдени тәжірибеге қатыстыңыз ба? Олай болса, оларды сипаттаңыз.</p> <p>5. Шетелдік студент ретінде оқуыңыз туралы ойлана отырып, сіз халықаралық студенттерге қандай кеңестер немесе ұсыныстар берер едіңіз? - Ал мұғалімдер немесе мектеп әкімшілігі туралы не деуге болады?</p>	<p>Қолданатын күресу стратегиялары</p>
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<p>1. Сіз Қазақстан университетінде оқуды ұсынар ма едіңіз? - Сіз бөліскіңіз келетін қосымша идеялар немесе тәжірибелер бар ма? - Осы зерттеуге қатысқаныңыз үшін көп рахмет, Мен сіздің көмегіңізді өте бағалаймын! Транскрипцияны аяқтағаннан кейін мен оны сізге жібергім келеді, егер сіз өзгертулер енгізгіңіз келсе, өтінемін! Егер менің оқуыма немесе сұхбатыма қатысты басқа сұрақтарыңыз немесе алаңдаушылықтарыңыз болса, маған электрондық пошта арқылы жібере аласыз Менің электрондық поштам: rozaoy.ismailzhanova@nu.edu.kz</p>	<p>Қорытынды сұрақтар</p>
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Appendix D

Интервью протокол

Понимание опыта, проблемы иностранных студентов бакалавриата и стратегий преодоления трудностей в университете с английским языком обучения в Казахстане.

Добрый день! Меня зовут Розаой Исмаилжанова. Я студентка второго курса магистратуры Высшей школы образования Назарбаев университета. Большое вам спасибо за согласие принять участие в исследовании. Основная цель этого феноменологического исследования - изучение позитивных опытов, проблемы с которыми сталкиваются иностранные студенты, а также стратегий, которые я использую для их преодоления. В рамках исследования я приглашаю вас принять участие в интервью. Ваш опыт и точка зрения являются важными элементами этого исследования, и ваше активное участие может способствовать улучшению жизни иностранных студентов. Я верю, что ваше участие будет ценным и поможет нам лучше понять, как поддержать иностранных студентов в их учебном пути. Вам будут заданы открытые вопросы, связанные с вашим опытом во время пребывания в Казахстане и учебы. Наш разговор будет записан на аудиозапись только с вашего разрешения. Собранная информация будет использоваться только в целях анализа данных. Ваше имя будет заменено псевдонимом на всех этапах исследования, чтобы обеспечить полную анонимность и не допустить, чтобы кто-либо узнал о вашем участии и предоставленных вами ответах. Ваши ответы будут зашифрованы, поэтому конфиденциальность гарантирована. Данные, которые вы предоставите, будут храниться на моем персональном компьютере и защищены паролем, который знаю только я. Результаты исследования будут использованы только в научных целях. Прежде чем начать собеседование, не могли бы вы, пожалуйста, подписать форму согласия? Спасибо!

Дата:

Время:

Место:

Интервьюируемый:

Пол:

Возраст:

Год обучения:

Специальность:

Вопросы

<p>1. Могли бы вы, пожалуйста, описать ваш опыт как иностранный студент, учащийся в Казахстанском университете? - Были ли у вас какие-то ожидания, и как они развивались со временем?</p> <p>2. Как вы воспринимаете общий опыт, предоставляемый университетом и местным</p>	<p>Опыты студентов</p>
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сообществом для международных студентов?	
<p>1. Сталкивались ли вы с какими-либо трудностями во время обучения в Университете?</p> <p>- можете ли вы, пожалуйста, поделиться любыми академическими трудностями с которыми вы столкнулись?</p> <p>- А как насчет культурные трудности?</p> <p>- А вы столкнулись с какими то трудностями связано с языком?</p> <p>2. И повлияли ли эти трудности на вашу академическую успеваемость? Если да, то каким образом?</p> <p>- А как насчет эмоциональное благополучие и общая адаптация к жизни в Казахстане? Повлияли ли на них?</p> <p>3. Могли бы вы предоставить примеры ситуаций или инцидентов, которые особенно выделяются как вызывающие трудности во время вашего обучения в качестве иностранного студента?</p>	Проблемы/ Сложности
<p>1. Для преодоления упомянутых ранее проблем, могли бы вы, пожалуйста, поделиться стратегиями и механизмами, которые вы используете? Как вы разработали эти стратегии, и насколько они оказались эффективными?</p> <p>2. Воспользовались ли вы помощью ресурсов университета, таких как академические консультанты, службы языковой поддержки или консультационные услуги? Если да, можете ли вы поделиться своим опытом использования этих ресурсов?</p> <p>3. Как важна социальная поддержка со стороны сверстников и других иностранных студентов в преодолении трудностей? Были ли вы частью каких-либо клубов или групп поддержки?</p> <p>4. Участвовали ли вы во внеклассных мероприятиях или культурных опытах, которые помогли вам адаптироваться к жизни в Казахстане и преодолеть трудности? Если да, пожалуйста, опишите их.</p> <p>5. Размышляя о своей учебе в качестве иностранного студента, какие советы или рекомендации вы бы дали иностранным студентам?</p> <p>- А как насчет преподавателей или администрации школы?</p>	Стратегии преодоления

<p>1. Посоветовали бы вы обучение в Казахском университете?</p> <p>- Есть ли какие-либо дополнительные идеи или опыт, которыми вы хотели бы поделиться?</p> <p>- Большое вам спасибо за участие в этом исследовании, я очень ценю вашу помощь! После того, как я закончу транскрипцию, я хотела бы отправить ее вам, и если вы хотите внести изменения, пожалуйста!</p> <p>Если у вас есть другие вопросы или опасения, связанные с моим обучением или собеседованием, вы можете написать мне по электронной почте</p> <p>Мой адрес электронной почты: gozaoy.ismailzhanova@nu.edu.kz</p>	<p>Заключительные вопросы</p>