

**The Expectations of International Students in  
Eastern Mediterranean University: A Study of  
Higher Education Destination Choice**

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Submitted to the  
Institute of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
Marketing Management

Eastern Mediterranean University  
July 2015  
Gazimağusa, North Cyprus

Approval of the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

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## **ABSTRACT**

Quite a lot of students decide to study abroad, seeking educational opportunities in a country other than their home country. The purpose of this study is to investigate the push and pull factors that influence students' decision of studying abroad. Hence, 8 Push and 23 Pull factors have been considered as significant variables inflecting international students' decision to study abroad. These push and pull factors were analyzed using statistical procedures of analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test by comparing student's opinion who have selected Eastern Mediterranean University as their destination university. From the population of international students who were studying at EMU and through stratified sampling method, 120 international students were selected. Seven hypotheses were developed and based on the sample, the international students were divided into Turkish and Non-Turkish groups. Results show that among different push factors for Non-Turkish students studying at EMU, the perception that: "Overseas education is better than local", "understanding of another culture", and "Personal issues" (mentioned as "Other" in the questionnaire) were reported as the three most important push factors. Similarly, for Turkish students, the perception that: "Difficulty to enter home university", "limited scholarship opportunities at home universities" and "Overseas education is better than the local" were the three most important push factors. The results also indicate that the push factor: "personal issues (Others)" was considered by the participants as the most important push factor of all the push factors included in this study.

**Keywords:** Higher education, EMU, Push factors, Pull factors, Study abroad, international students, higher education destination choice, one way ANOVA, independent sample t-test.

## ÖZ

Yurtdışında eğitim öğrencilerin kendi ülkesi dışında eğitim fırsatlarını değerlendirerek farklı ülkelerde eğitimi tercih etmesi ile ilgilidir. Çeşitli Çekme ve İtme faktörleri önemli oranda yabancı öğrencinin yurtdışı eğitimi tercih etmesini sağlamıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı yurtdışında eğitim kararını etkileyen Çekme ve İtme faktörlerini incelemektir. Bu çalışmada Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesini seçmiş olan yabancı öğrencilerin beklentileri ve tercihlerini etkileyen faktörler incelenmiştir. Çalışmada farklı ülkelere gelen öğrencilerin beklenti ve tercihlerini etkileyen faktörler ANOVA ve t-test ile karşılaştırılmıştır. Türkiye ve diğer ülkelere gelen öğrencilerin de farklılaştığı ve benzer olduğu tercih faktörleri incelenmiştir. Türkiye dışından gelen öğrenciler arasında "yurtdışında alınan eğitimin yurtiçinde alınan eğitime göre daha iyi olması", "farklı bir kültürü öğrenmek", ve "kişisel sebepler" gibi konuların önemli olduğu görülmüştür. Türkiyeden gelen öğrenciler arasında ise "ülkemde üniversiteye girişin zor olması", "ülkemde burs imkanlarının kısıtlı olması", ve "yurtdışında alınan eğitimin daha iyi olması" en önemli faktörler olarak ortaya çıkmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yüksek Öğretim, DAÜ, Çekme ve İtme Faktörleri, yurtdışında eğitim, uluslararası öğrenciler, yükseköğrenim destinasyon seçimi.

*This thesis is dedicated to my husband,  
for his endless love, support and encouragement*

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout writing my thesis, especially my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Cem Tanova with his aspiring guidance and advices, my father in law, Prof. Dr. A. Mehdi Riazi with his invaluable constructive criticism and sharing his truthful and illuminating thoughts. And last but not least I express my warm thanks to my family for their supports.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
ÖZ .....	v
DEDICATION .....	vi
ACKNOWLEDGMENT .....	vii
LIST OF TABLES .....	x
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xi
1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY .....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 International Students .....	1
1.3 Aim of Study .....	3
1.4 Significance of the Study .....	3
1.5 Outline of Study .....	4
2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	5
2.1 Introduction .....	5
2.2 Higher Education .....	5
2.3 Studies of Higher Education in Other Countries .....	7
2.4 Higher Education in North Cyprus .....	13
3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY.....	15
3.1 Introduction .....	16
3.2 Population and Sample of Study.....	16
3.3 Instrument of Data collection .....	16
3.3.1 Confidentially and Ethical Issues.....	17
3.4 Data Collection and Analysis Procedure .....	17



4 HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT .....	19
4.1 Introduction .....	19
4.2 Studying Abroad Decision Process .....	19
4.3 Hypotheses .....	21
4.3.1 Hypothesis Related to Cost of Travelling as a Pull Factor.....	21
4.3.2 Hypothesis Related to Safety Issues as a Pull Factor .....	22
4.3.3 Hypothesis Related to Push Factors for Iranian Students.....	22
4.3.4 Hypothesis Related to Push Factors for Turkish Students .....	23
4.3.5 Hypothesis Related to Push Factors for Nigerian Students .....	24
4.3.6 Hypothesis Related to Pull Factors.....	25
4.3.7 Hypothesis Related to Pull Factors for Syrian Students.....	25
5 ANALYSIS AND RESULTS .....	27
5.1 Introduction .....	27
5.2 Descriptive Statistics .....	27
5.3 Hypotheses Testing .....	32
6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	52
6.1 Introduction .....	52
6.2 Summary of the Study .....	52
6.3 Conclusions .....	53
6.4 Policy Implication .....	53
6.5 Limitations of the Study .....	55
6.6 Suggestions for Future Research .....	55
REFERENCES .....	56
APPENDIX .....	62
Appendix A: Research Questionnaire.....	63

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Number and percentage of participants .....	28
Table 2: Nationality of respondents .....	28
Table 3: Gender of respondent .....	29
Table 4: Respondents' Faculty .....	30
Table 5: Participants based on their degree .....	30
Table 6: Respondents' accommodation .....	31
Table 7: Average monthly income of respondents' family .....	32
Table 8: The compression between Non-Turkish and Turkish students in terms of travel costs .....	33
Table 9: The comparison between Turkish and Non- Turkish students in terms of low crime rate .....	33
Table 10: Push factors for Turkish and Non-Turkish students .....	35
Table 11: Pull factors for Turkish and Non-Turkish students .....	36
Table 12: Difficulty to entrance to home country universities .....	39
Table 13: Experience new culture .....	39
Table 14: Quality of education .....	40
Table 15: Scholarship opportunity .....	41
Table 16: Total Average of pull factors .....	42
Table 17: Total average of push factors .....	44
Table 18: Push factors for international students .....	45
Table 19: Pull factors for international students .....	47

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: The three stages involved in the decision making process.....	20
Figure 2: Percentage of participants in terms of their nationality .....	29
Figure 3: The mean value of pull factors (part 1/2) .....	43
Figure 4: The mean value of pull factors (part 2/2) .....	43
Figure 5: The mean values of push factors .....	44

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter consists of four sections. In the first section, a definition for international students is provided. The second section describes the aim of the study. The significance of the study has been discussed in the third section, and finally, the last section presents the outline of the study.

### 1.2 International students

Quite a lot of students decide to study abroad, seeking educational opportunities in a country other than their home country. Different factors can be used to describe the discouragements of studying in home country, called push factors, and the encouragements of studying overseas, called pull factors. According to Mazzarol et al. (2002) push factors related to students' home country are the factors that forces students to decide to study overseas. Pull factors are associated with the host country where there are a variety of reasons and resources that make the country and the target higher education institute attractive for international students. Push factors have caused a significant growth in the number of students studying abroad. For instance, some students may have imperfect access to education in their home country, this limited access can be considered as a push factor. Nowadays, both private and public institutions consider higher education as an international service industry, and day by day this industry becomes more competitive. As most of international students continue their studies in private higher education institutes, this

industry can be a great contributor to the national economy of the service providers. Various motives can derive international students to study in a foreign country. Each international student holds different expectations. Therefore, by understanding the features of an admirable university and narrowing the gap between the expectations and perception of the educational services it is essential for marketers to improve and expand their service quality (Arambewela, Rodney, and Hall, 2006).

The overall number of students studying abroad grew exponentially from around 150,000 in 1955 to 2.8 million in 2007 in the second half of the twentieth century (Naidoo, 2009; UNESCO, 2009). This enormous growth in the number of international students affects the economic, political and social forces of globalization.

According to Lasanowski (2009), as nowadays, English is the common language in higher education, countries such as the U.S, Australia, and the United Kingdom which English is their first language have particularly near the half of market share (44%) of the world's international students. Although the destination of the most international students is English-speaking countries, other countries are benefiting from international students as well. Other countries where English is their second or third language, to attract more international students are offering programs in English as well (Lasanowski, 2009). For instance, France and Germany are the destination choice of 18% of international students each holding 9% market share and China is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> place by 7%.

There are different factors, such as the feedbacks provided by previously studied students in a certain university that can affect a student decision in order to select

their destination country for studying abroad. Generally, international students provide feedback to their family and friends, describing the negative and positive points of their host country in comparison with their home country. Previous studies show that students receiving recommendations from others, such as family members or friends, who have experienced higher education abroad, their decision is greatly influenced in order to select a country and a particular institution for higher education (Bodycott, 2009; Maringe and Carter, 2007; Gatfield and Chen, 2006; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). In result positive feedbacks can simply make international campuses attractive for new students.

### **1.3 Aim of Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the push and pull factors that affect students' decision to study abroad. The main focus of this study was, however, on Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) where a variety of international students can be observed on the campus. The aim was to compare different push and pull factors for different nationalities and investigate the attractive and unappealing factors for students coming to EMU from different countries.

In this study the following research questions are aimed to be answered:

- 1) What are the push factors for students of different countries studying in EMU?
- 2) What are the pull factors that attract international students to EMU?

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

International students have significant effect on the economy of a country. The results of this study will help EMU administrative to improve the pull factors in order to gain more international students. The push factors can help to develop a pattern of

the rate of the students coming to EMU from a specific country in order to manage the university's long-term business plans.

## **1.5 Outline of Study**

This thesis is organized in six chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to the study by highlighting the relevance of the chosen topic and providing information on the aims and objectives of the study. Chapter 2 provides a context for the study by reviewing and discussing previous studies that have been conducted by researchers all around the world. These studies include those that have investigated the push-pull model for international student studies abroad are included in the review so that we can understand how the relationship between different variables are studied. The third chapter consists of the methodology of the study and presents the specific methods and procedures for the sampling and data collection procedures. The theoretical model of the current survey and the hypotheses are presented in Chapter 4. Moreover, the procedures used to develop the questionnaire of the study have been described in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 presents the results of the data analysis with regard to the developed theoretical model and testing the hypotheses, including descriptive statistics and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA, t-test), which was used as the parametric test of significance to test hypotheses about the target population. Finally, in Chapter 6 the discussions about the obtained results, conclusions, and suggestions for future study have been reported.

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

There has been a variety of studies on higher education, international students, and different push and pull factors. In this chapter, previous studies will be reviewed and presented. The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section the general topic of higher education will be discussed. In the second part of the chapter, studies of higher education in other countries will be reviewed, and finally in the third part, higher education in North Cyprus will be reviewed.

#### **2.2 Higher Education**

Higher education is now considered as a vital global phenomenon, also referred to as a type of student tourism given the fact that each year an enormous number of students follow their higher education abroad affecting the national income, employment, and wealth of local citizens (Katircioğlu et al. 2014). The level of household income and the costs incurred by a family are among the most important factors when there is a demand for secondary or higher education (Beneito et al. 2001). Over the last decades, and especially in Europe, due to developments in education, living standards have been risen (Stevens and Weale, 2003). Generally, household demand for education is affected by the social and economic factors such as parents' education, the size and structure of the family, the geographical location of the place of domicile, the occupation of the primary earner, and the family's concern of its social status (Beneito et al. 2001). In addition to these factors,



economic and political conditions of the target country and other external factors such as geographical location of the target institution, fees, scholarship opportunities, medium of instruction and the accreditation of the degree that is awarded by the institute might affect the decision to study abroad (Katircioğlu et al. 2014).

The volume of student movement has greatly increased over the past decades. This growth has changed the roles of governments in both sending and receiving students. Instead of directly sponsoring students, governments are now assuming the roles of regulators and facilitators (Li, Bray, 2007). Market forces play an important role in matching the demand and supply in higher education. Normally, student mobility is now viewed less as an aid and more as a trade. In comparison between ones self-information and the governments or institutional advertisements, making the decision to study abroad is based on self-information. Cultural exchange has become less prominent as a motive, and economic development has become more prominent.

From an economic perspective and among the reasons for studying and pursuing higher education, the two important factors are the impact of education on the reduction of inequalities of income and the relationship between education and the labor market (Ram, 1989; Beneito et al. 2001). Hence, some studies have focused on the estimation of the rate of return of education (Psacharopoulos 1989; Al-Qudsi 1989; Psacharopoulos and Woodhall 1985).

### **2.3 Studies of Higher Education in Other Countries**

The literature review presented in this section is organized in a chronological order to show how the investigation of this topic has developed over time. This literature review covers a time period of 35 years from 1981 up to 2014.

Krampf and Heinlein (1981) undertook one of the earliest studies into the marketing of universities by interviewing prospective students of a large mid-western university in the USA. Through samples, collected from the American College Testing program, the researchers provided more than 100 pieces of information for each student, and determined the need of the prospective student market, examine the universities image and develop ways of identifying potential students who had a high probability of enrollment and were eligible for entry. By using factor analysis, they were able to show that the most influential factors for prospective students were the attractions of the campus, enlightening campus visits, approval of family, worthwhile programs in their major, useful university catalogue, closeness to home, and the sociability of the campus atmosphere.

Moreover, Hooley and Lynch (1981) examined the choice processes of prospective students of the UK universities. The attributes used in the decision process was determined by face to face data collection using stimulus cards. Consequently, the preferences for a set of experimentally chosen university profiles was obtained. These attributes were university location, course suitability, academic reputation, type of university (modern/old), distance from home, and advice from parents and teachers. Based on the results of their research, in terms of determining university choice, they suggested that course suitability was the most important attribute. Prospective students appeared to be prepared to accept almost any level of other

attributes as long they entered a course that they really wanted. As this study was based on a sample of 29 students, the generalizability of their results is limited.

A variety of factors seem to have an impact on the demand for international education. In several countries in Africa and Asia, especially over the second half of the twentieth century, the accessibility to higher education has been limited. This limitation is the main factor for many students to study abroad. The direction of the international student flow can be defined by the historical relations between the home and host countries. In addition to the perceptions of the quality of the education system; the relative wealth and the Gross National Product (GNP) growth rate in the home country, factors influencing the selection process of the destination country to continue higher education can be counted as language, the availability of science or technology-based programs, and the geographic proximity of the sender and receiver countries (Lee and Tan, 1984).

Additionally, Agarwal and Winkler (1985) studied the demand for international education in the U.S. Their study investigated students from 15 different developing countries through the post-war period. Their results showed a significant growth for international student flows in 1950s, but in later years the number of students coming to the United States to continue their higher education had declined. They were able to show a relationship between this slowdown and the cost increment of studying in the U.S. Universities. According to them another factor causing this slowdown was the enhancements in higher education chances in students' home countries. Alongside the expected benefits of studying abroad, they were able to show that the cost of education and the available education opportunities in the home country were the main causes of the flow.

Studying abroad for international students is generally conceived as an experience of both educational and personal growth. Studying abroad provides international students with a really good opportunity to learn and practice a foreign language, discover new strengths, experience a different culture, and achieve better global views. There is a plethora of research studies, which have investigated the motivating factors for international students who choose to study abroad.

As a case in point, Oosterbeek et al. (1992) examined university choice and graduates' earnings in the Netherlands. The objectives of their research were to determine if different universities were associated with different earning prospects and whether the decision to attend a particular university was influenced by these prospects. The results of their study showed that earning prospect was a significant factor though it was not a particularly important factor in the choice of a specific university.

In a different study, the flow of international students was studied by McMahon (1992) through a push and pull model. The international students were from 18 developing countries going to developed countries during the 1960s and 1970s. Base on their push model, the student flow was related to the level of contribution in the world economy and the priority placed on education by the government of the developing country, the degree of economic wealth, and the accessibility of educational opportunities in the source country. Moreover, together with the economic links between the student's home and host country, their pull model showed that the desirability of a host country for students was influenced by the comparison between the sizes of the home country economy and the economy of the host country. He mentioned that there is a negative correlation between the volume

of international student flow and the economic prosperity in host countries. This negative correlation is due to Gross Domestic Product per capita which is affected by educational opportunity counteracts. Although the pull factors differ from country to country, normally, the home government's emphasis on education and the contribution of the developing country in the international economy are the two significant factors mentioned in this research.

Furthermore, Lin (1997) by randomly distributing Self-completion questionnaires among students in seven different universities investigated the reasons for students' choice of an educational institution in the Netherlands. In his research a combination of factor and descriptive analysis was used to detect the important reasons for students' choice of institution. The most important reasons for a student's choice of institution were the quality of education offered, the school's reputation, career and traineeships opportunities, academic standards, faculty qualifications, modern facilities, student life and whether there was an international student body in the university or not.

In a more recent study, Mazzarol et al. (2002) studied the motivating factors among international students from Indonesia, Taiwan, China and India when they choose a host country to continue their education. They used the push-pull model to show the decision process of selecting the final study destination. Through a survey, they distributed and collected 879 questionnaire data from students studying at Australian colleges and universities. The mean score for the international and domestic students were compared. Their findings showed that social and economic factors in the source country serve to 'push' students abroad. Nonetheless, among the variety of host countries, pull factors affect the decision process of selecting final study destination.

The research illustrated that during the decision process and alongside the student's earlier knowledge and awareness of a host country, the recommendations made by their family and friends are very important. They mentioned that a student first selects a country then within that country an institution will be selected.

On the other hand, an empirical intercultural learning model was proposed by Yang *et al.* (2011) through survey responses from 214 undergraduates of a university in Hong Kong. The students were engaged in overseas internships/volunteer work in 20 countries. The presented model considered studying abroad as an active learning process in which study abroad goals were considered to motivate students to engage in experiences likely to enhance their intercultural, disciplinary/career, and personal competences. They applied their model on Chinese students' goals, experiences, and learning outcomes associated with their participation in study abroad. The alignment between students' learning outcomes and study abroad goals was identified through a comparison of results from content analysis of students' perception of important things learned and the descriptive statistics on students' perception of their achievement of study abroad goals. Correlation analysis identified strong relationships between students' achievement of study abroad goals and host country experiences.

Moreover, Wilkins and Huisman (2011) studied the international students' choice of the target country and institution of higher education and found that students' decision is significantly influenced by the recommendations that they receive from others who have experienced higher education in a foreign country. They investigated the causes of destination choice of international students who decided to study at a university in the UK through push and pull factors. The survey results and

the analyses suggested that overseas campuses could pose a considerable threat to home campuses in the competition for international students in the future.

Kondakci (2011) similarly identified different rationales for studying in a developing country. Among the 331 international students studying in public universities of Turkey, students from Western and economically developed countries held private rationales like experiencing a different culture, while students from economically developing countries such as Middle East and Central Asia held economic reservations such as scholarships and cost and academic reasons like academic quality. The research also notes cultural, political, and historical proximity between the home and host countries as an important determinant in explaining the size and direction of flows to the countries that are not major host destinations such as Turkey. These studies suggest that the motivations and experiences in studying in nearby developing countries are likely to be different from those in studying in traditional study destinations, such as the US and the UK.

Further, Knight and Morshidi (2011) investigated students' motivations to study in Malaysia. Their study indicated that the dramatic increase of international students' enrollment at Malaysian higher education institutions over the past few years was mainly driven by the government's deliberate strategy to recruit international students from the region and other Islamic countries, pointing to its potential to serve as a regional hub in Southeast Asia as well as among Islamic countries.

In sum, countries that are not global host destinations, such as Korea, Malaysia, Turkey, and Mexico, can serve as regional hubs seeking a niche market rather than harboring the almost impossible task of becoming a major global host like the US or

the UK. Matters of traveling convenience, lower cost, and familiar culture were some of the most frequently cited elements in past studies that could impact decisions to study nearby yet still obtain an international education.

Notwithstanding the interesting and useful findings of the studies on “push and pull” factors, there are few studies which have tried to tackle the decision-making process of the prospective international student from an integrated point of view. Bhati et al. (2012), for example, developed a theoretical model that integrates the different groups of factors, which influence the decision-making process of Indian students in Australian university in Singapore. They analyzed different dimensions of the process international students go through and investigated and explained those factors which determine students’ choice. Bhati et al. (2012) present a hypothetical model, which shows the purchase intention as an independent variable dependent on five factors: personal reasons; the effect of country image, influenced by city image; institution image; and the evaluation of the program of study. Based on this model, prospective students’ conscious or unconscious decisions of the different elements making up the factors included in this study will determine the final choice they make. As a theoretical model, it aims to integrate the factors identified in the existing literature and provide a more comprehensive and integrated view on the international students’ decision making process of selecting the target country and the target higher education institution.

## **2.4 Higher Education in North Cyprus**

Cyprus is an island located in the eastern Mediterranean Sea surrounded by Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Greece. This island is the third largest and third most populous island in the Mediterranean region. In 2013 the population of Cyprus was



1.141 million (World Bank, 2013). Cyprus has been divided into two parts. The North part is called North Cyprus which is inhabited by Turkish Cypriots and the southern part is called South Cyprus and is inhabited by Greek Cypriots.

In North Cyprus as a result of the political isolation and embargoes faced by the country the services sector was given priority. The 1980s was a transition period from the manufacturing industry to services with a focus on tourism and higher education. The tourism sector was also under embargoes. Therefore, it could not bring about a significant growth in the economy. On the other hand, in the 1990s, due to advertising widely in other countries, the demand for higher education in North Cyprus considerably increased. Students were mostly coming to Cyprus from Turkey, Africa, and the Middle East (Katircioğlu et al. 2014).

There are six universities in North Cyprus. Girne American University (GAU), Near East University (NEU), Lefke European University (LEU), Cyprus International University (CIA), the North Cyprus campus of Middle East Technical University (METU), and the oldest and the largest one is Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU), which was established in 1979. In 2008–2009 academic year, there were 45,634 students who were studying in the six mentioned universities (SPO, 2010). These included 20.40% Turkish Cypriots, 72.95% mainland Turkey, and 6.65% students from various overseas countries. Since 1982 there has been a steady increase in the number of overseas students coming from more than 68 countries across the world to North Cyprus for higher education (Gusten, 2014).

In the international arena, due to internationally recognized and qualified universities in North Cyprus, the image of the country has been improved. The expansion of

infrastructure and facilities at the universities of North Cyprus continues at an unprecedented rate and may now be compared favorably to their international counterparts. Therefore, the higher education sector in North Cyprus is now the most important sector earning considerable foreign exchange and contributing to the growth of this small island state.

In 2014, the number of students in the six universities has been increased to 63,000 of which 20 percent of the students are Turkish Cypriots, 56 percent are from mainland Turkey, and 24 percent are international students, mainly from countries in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia. The countries from which students are coming to North Cyprus can be sorted as: Turkey, Nigeria, Iran, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan. The main language of instruction in Cyprus universities is English (Gusten, 2014).

For many students, universities of Northern Cyprus serve as a stepping stone to higher education in the western world. Among these universities EMU with 19000 registered students is one of the main and biggest universities in this region. The Institute of Higher Technology constituting the foundation of EMU was established in 1979. Back then there were only three departments: Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, and Mechanical Engineering offering 3-year programs. These three departments had only 105 students. The Government of Turkish Republic (TR) and Turkish Republic of North Cyprus agreed to transform the institute into a university in 1985. After this change, the new university was called EMU and new departments were developed while programs were also changed from 3 years to 4 years. The new departments gradually established until 2012. Now, EMU has 95 associate and undergraduates programs and 75 postgraduate programs (EMU, 2014).

Against this backdrop, the study reported in this thesis intended to investigate the push and pull factors among international students who have chosen to study at EMU. The next chapter presents the methodology of the study.

## **Chapter 3**

### **DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter includes three sections. The first section presents the population and the sample of the study. The second section presents the instrument of the data collection, and the third section describes procedures for data collection and analysis.

#### **3.2 Population and Sample of the Study**

The target population of this study is Eastern Mediterranean University located in North Cyprus. This university has more than 19000 students from 120 different nationalities. In order to test the seven research hypotheses, as presented in the previous chapter, about the population of international students at EMU, we randomly selected a sample of students to collect data. Based on the data from the sample and using inferential statistics, we can then generalize the findings of the sample to the target population of international students at EMU. The sample included 97 students who were studying at EMU in 2014. Of these 97 students, 49 (50.5%) were Turkish students and 48 (49.5%) had other nationalities.

#### **3.3 Instrument of Data Collection**

In order to collect the required data for the study, we used a questionnaire. The questionnaire used in this study was translated in two languages: English and Turkish. The questionnaire was administered to the 97 international students including both undergraduate and postgraduate students. The questionnaire had 2 main parts. The first part of the questionnaire collected demographic data from the

students. The demographic section was composed of questions about gender, age, participant's faculty, the year of education for undergraduate students, accommodation of students and the average family monthly income. The second part of the questionnaire is divided into 3 different sections. The first section includes the questions about "factors influencing students decision to study abroad", the second section consist of questions about "factors for choosing North Cyprus", and the last section has questions about "factors affecting students' higher education choice decision". In the questionnaire both closed-ended scale items and open-ended questions were used. The Likert-type scale was used and ranged from 1 (least important) to 5 (most important) (Mazzarol et. al, 2002). All the questions were modified in order to be answerable for international students studying in EMU.

### **3.3.1 Confidentiality and Ethical Issues**

As a matter of privacy and confidentiality, in the distributed questionnaire, the identity of participants such as their name, surname, and student ID number were not asked. The survey was conducted anonymously and participants of this research were volunteers who completed the questionnaires with their consent. Moreover, all the data obtained from the participants will remain confidential.

### **3.4 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

Through stratifying method, the questionnaire was distributed among 120 students in person. Because subpopulations within an overall population vary, stratified sampling method was used. The questionnaire was distributed within a week in order to have a wide range of responses. In total 97 students filled and returned the questionnaire.

Once the data were collected they were subjected to statistical analyses. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Through descriptive statistics we were able to present the characteristics of the sample in terms of their answers to the questions. We also used Analysis of Variance (ANOVA, t-test) as an inferential test of statistical significance to test the hypotheses about the target population. Results of both descriptive and inferential statistics are presented in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4**

### **HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter includes two sections. In the first section, studying abroad decision process, the base theory of the model is discussed. After that, in the second section, Hypotheses, the hypothesis used in this thesis is mentioned in details.

#### **4.2 Studying Abroad Decision Process**

The decision process for international student to select the final destination to continue their higher education can be explained in three separated stages. Stage one is when the student decides to study abroad. This stage is influenced by a sequence of push factors. These push factors are related to the students home country. After deciding to study abroad, the next stage is to select a host country. In this stage, pull factors are important. Pull factors can make a host country comparatively more attractive than another. The final stage, stage three, is where an institution is selected by the student. A range of different pull factors, such as staff expertise, use of technology, quality of institution, and the degree of novelty, makes a specific institution more eye-catching than its competitors. The three stages proposed by Mazzarol (1998) involving the decision making process is presented in Figure 1.

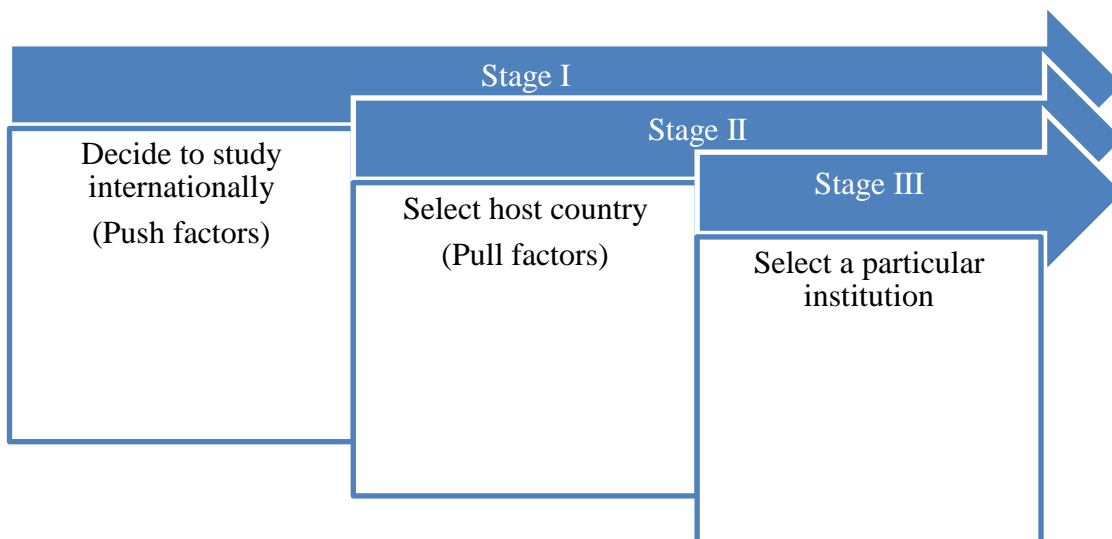


Figure 1: The three stages involved in the decision making process

There are different pull factors attracting students to study abroad. Six important pull factors that encourage a student's selection of a host country can be counted. This six pull factors provide an outline for understanding the influences. The first of the six factors is the overall level of knowledge and awareness about the host country in the students' home country. This pull factor is affected by the overall availability of information about the potential destination country and the ease with which students could obtain the information. The destination's reputation for quality and the recognition of its qualifications in the student's home country are also part of this factor. The second factor is the level of referrals or personal recommendations. These recommendations can be from parents, relatives, and friends. The third factor is related to cost issues such as living expenses and travel costs. The student's availability of part time work can be considered as part of this pull factor. The environment, a combination of lifestyle and physical climate is the fourth factor. The fifth factor is related to the geographic and time proximity of the potential destination country to the student's home country. Finally, social links is the sixth factor. Does



the student have family or friends living in the destination country? or has a family member or a friend studied there previously?

These six factors are the most important pull factors that one can use along with the mentioned push factors to formulate and test hypotheses about international students' choice of a particular university and a particular. The next section thus discusses the hypotheses related to these factors.

### **4.3 Hypotheses**

The factors influencing student decisions to study abroad can be described based on the push-pull theoretical framework. The push factors make students to leave their countries and the pull factors attract them to a certain country for higher education.

#### **4.3.1 Hypothesis Related to Cost of Travelling as a Pull Factor**

Travel cost is an important factor for international students. Travel cost is most affected by ticket price. Normally international students prefer to visit their home countries time to time. As Turkey is one of the nearest countries to North Cyprus, this factor can be considered for Turkish and Non-Turkish students.

H1: In comparison between Turkish and non-Turkish students, the travel cost is more important for Non-Turkish students.

### **4.3.2 Hypothesis Related to Safety Issues as a Pull Factor**

Generally, as safety is vital, students prefer to live in a country with low crime rates. For international students countries such as North Cyprus and cities such as Famagusta, the low crime rate is a salient factor that will persuade them to spend their educational life there without any worries about safety.

H2: For both Turkish and Non-Turkish students the importance of safety (low crime rate) has the same rank.

### **4.3.3 Hypothesis Related to Push Factors for Iranian Students**

The difficulty to enter into the academic program at home country can force students to leave their home country to continue their higher education abroad. This cause can be considered as a push factor. In subsequent sections, the relationship between push-pull model and studying abroad, and selecting EMU for further study will be discussed.

According to Hassanpour et al. (2014), in comparison with other countries, Iran has a large network of private and public universities offering degrees in higher education. Mirza Taghi Khan Amir Kabir founded Darolfonoon, the first systematized institute of higher education, in 1851 and it is considered by many as the beginning of western style academic universities in Iran.

Based on Mehr News Agency (2013) in 2008, Iran had over 3.5 million students enrolled in universities. This number of students is about 5 percent of Iran's whole population which is approximately 75000000. According to the same news agency, the number of university students had risen from about 2.150 million in 2005 to over 3.5 million in 2008 showing a 100 percent increase in the number of university

students doing a master's degree and PHD over the past three years. This is while according to an estimate by the Ministry of Education (2014), between 350 and 500 thousand Iranians were studying outside of the country in 2014.

Although Iran's university capacity for master's degree has reached 40 thousands in 2008 from about 20 thousands in 2005 and the universities' PHD capacity has reached to 4 thousands in 2008 from 2 thousands in 2005, student have to leave their home country because of not being accepted in the competitive entrance exam. Based on this, we can formulate the following research hypothesis:

H3: Among all possible push factors, between different nationalities, the factor of competitive entrance exam is the most important one for Iranian students.

#### **4.3.4 Hypothesis Related to Pull Factors for Turkish Students**

Understanding another culture better through first-hand experience can be a pull factor that may influence students' decision to study abroad. According to Lee (2013), although the number of international students in the Turkey has doubled in six years, Turkish students tend to study abroad.

In the past decade the demand for higher education in Turkey has increased. This growth has led to improvement in the number of universities and higher education institutions in different parts of the country. The government is also implementing initiatives to increase academic capacity and quality to enable Turkish higher education to compete with other universities in the international arena.

Over the past 10 years there has been a huge increase in the number of Turkish students studying abroad. The majority (96%) of students rated an overseas education as a good way to secure future employment, 95% said they would like to

study overseas, and 86% cited cost as the greatest barrier to overseas study (Lee, 2013)

Although the majority of Turkish students who are interested in study abroad, the culture similarity, same employment opportunities, the same life change experience might be the reason for not choosing EMU for higher education. We can therefore formulate the second research hypothesis related to Turkish students.

H4: Therefore, among the students selecting EMU as their destination university Turkish students should rate understanding new culture as least important factor in comparison to international students.

#### **4.3.5 Hypothesis Related to Pull Factors for Nigerian Students**

Li et al., (2007) mentioned that an increase in demand for higher education forced students who could not enter institutes of higher education in their home country to look for an external one. They differentiated between students who could get places at home but who preferred to go outside and those who could not get a place in the institutes of higher education in their home country. This differentiated demand partly arose from perceptions that non-local study was prestigious, and partly from awareness that external programs could offer better study conditions than were available domestically. Students also went outside to secure specialisms that were not available at home. In addition, according to Mazarol et al (2002), Taiwanese, Indian and then Indonesian students rate this factor as the most important factor to leave the country. Indonesian students, for example, preferred to study in Australia because of the better quality of Australia's education in comparison to the other developing country such as Indonesia.

According to Gusten (2014) international students interviewed at various campuses in North Cyprus, international students came to North Cyprus for the quality of the education and for the international experience. Nigerian students, for example, believed that “The system is so much better than back home” (Gusten, 2014) accordingly, we can formulate the following research hypothesis related to Nigerian students.

H5: Quality of education is an important factor for Nigerian student to push them to leave their home country and study in EMU.

#### **4.3.6 Hypothesis Related to Pull Factors for Syrian Students**

The prolonged and continuing crisis in Syria has had a disturbing effect on professors, university students, and the education sector, not only in Syria but also in the neighboring countries that are hosting so many displaced Syrians. This factor has led students to leave the country and search for suitable universities that provide opportunity to get scholarship. One Syrian student, for example, stated in interview that “We Will Stop Here and Go No Further”, 2014). Turkey provides this opportunity and attempt to attract Syrian students to continue their education in Turkey. EMU in North Cyprus provides the same chance for Syrian students to study and receive scholarship from host government or institution. Against this background, we can formulate the seventh research hypothesis.

H6: Providing scholarship for Syrian students is an important pull factor for them to study in the EMU.

#### **4.3.7 Hypothesis Related to Pull Factors**

Based on Gusten's study (2014), tuition fees at EMU started from \$6,000 to \$8,000 for a year, with scholarships of 50 percent available to around 3,000 of the 16,000 students. These rates may be low compared to international standards.

Low cost of living, low tuition fee in comparison to other international universities, low racial or ethnic discrimination and also no special visa necessary to enter country are important pull factor that can encourage international students to choose EMU especially for African students. Students can easily enter to North Cyprus and get the visa from TRNC in comparison to other countries which have difficult procedures for obtaining study visas. For instance, it takes only one month to get permission to come to Cyprus without any interview or waiting periods. This can lead us to formulate the fourth research hypothesis related to the pull factors of studying at EMU.

H7: Low cost of living and low tuition fee and also no special visa arrangements required for international students are the most important pull factors for students whom have selected EMU for further studies.

## **Chapter 5**

### **ANALYSIS AND EMPIRICAL RESULTS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter includes two sections. The first section covers the results of the descriptive statistics. These results describes the characteristics of the sample of the study. The second section reports the test results of hypotheses through comparison between the group means by using one way ANOVA and independent sample t-test.

#### **5.2 Descriptive Statistics**

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) has been used for the analysis of the data collected. Both descriptive and inferential analyses were performed. In this section the results of the descriptive statistics will be presented.

As indicated in the previous chapter, a total of 97 questionnaires were completed by a sample of EMU students. These questionnaires were distributed among Turkish and other nationality students. The frequency and the percentages of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number and percentage of participants

	Frequency	Percent %
Turkish	49	50.5
Non-Turkish	48	49.5
Total	97	100.0

More than 15 different nationalities including Nigerian, Iranian, Turkish, and Palestine were involved in this study. Majority of participants were from Turkey. Table 2 and Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondent's nationalities.

Table 2: Nationality of respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Turkey	49	50.5
Iran	10	10.3
Syria	8	8.3
Jordan	7	7.2
Nigeria	5	5.2
Palestine	5	5.2
Others	13	13.3
Total	97	100.0



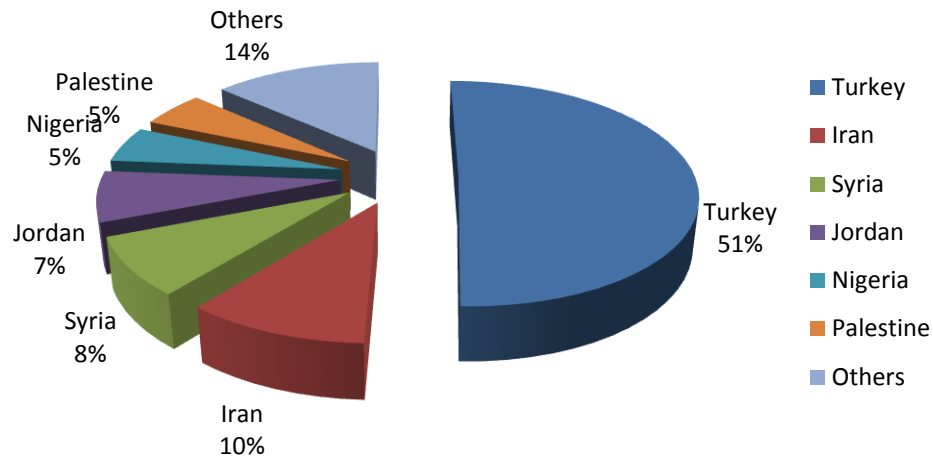


Figure 2: Percentage of participants in terms of their nationality

The male and female students in EMU does not have an equal distribution. The number of male students is higher than the number of female students. This fact, illustrated in Table 3, had affected the current research sample and the number of male participants (n= 63) is higher than the number of female participants (n= 34).

Table 3: Gender of respondent

	Frequency	Percent %
Female	34	35.1
Male	63	64.9
Total	97	100

The questionnaire was distributed among different faculties as presented in Table 4. As can be seen in Table 4, the highest number of participants is from the faculty of engineering, while the faculty of Education and Medicine had the lowest number of participants.

Table 4: Respondents' Faculty

	Frequency	Percent %
Architecture	2	2.1
Business and economics	18	18.6
Education	1	1.0
Law	12	12.4
Tourism and hospitality management	4	4.1
Medicine	1	1.0
Pharmacy	5	5.2
Communication and Media	8	8.2
Engineering	42	43.3
Other	4	4.1
Total	97	100

Participants could also be categorized based on their degree and level of education as shown in Table 5. Undergraduate students included students from all the four years of education and postgraduate students included masters and doctoral students.

Table 5: Participants based on their degree

	Frequency	Percent (%)
1st year	36	37.1
2nd year	12	12.4
3rd year	14	14.4
4th year	10	10.3
Master s	18	18.6
PHD	7	7.2
Total	97	100

As it can be observed from Table 5, most of the participants were freshman students. The results of the demographic questions indicated that a majority of participants had private houses or apartments, while only a few students were living in hotels or with their relatives. Details of the distribution of the participants in terms of their housing are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Respondents' accommodation

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Private house/apt	60	61.9
Hotel	1	1.0
Dormitory on campus	13	13.4
Dormitory off campus	16	16.5
with my relatives	1	1.0
Other	3	3.1
Total	94	96.9
Missing	3	3.1
Total	97	100

Generally, students studying abroad are financially supported by their families. The range of the average monthly income of participants' family are shown in Table 7. As it can be observed from Table 7, the majority of these participants were coming from families with an average income within the interval of \$1000-\$1499.

Table 7: Average monthly income of respondents' family

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Less than \$500	5	5.2
\$500-\$999	14	14.4
\$1000-\$1499	19	19.6
\$1500-\$1999	18	18.6
\$2000-\$2499	14	14.4
\$2500-\$2999	8	8.2
\$3000-\$4999	2	2.1
\$7000-\$8999	2	2.1
\$9000-\$10999	7	7.2
\$13000-And above	4	4.1
Total	93	95.9
Missing	4	4.1
Total	97	100.0

### 5.3 Hypotheses Testing

The hypotheses developed in this thesis were stated according to previous studies. Herein, these seven research hypotheses were tested through a comparison between the group means by using one way ANOVA and independent sample t-test. Through ANOVA and t-test the differences between group means are tested in order to see if they are statistically significant or not. For this purpose, the level of significance is set at 0.05. As such, if the P value is greater than 0.05, the differences between the groups is not significant. In this section, the data collected from international students studying at EMU is analyzed first through t-test (Tables 8, 9, 10, and 11) then

through ANOVA (Tables 12-15, 18 and 19). For t-test all international students have been divided into two groups of Turkish and Non-Turkish students. ANOVA analysis will be more detailed and the difference between different nationalities has been checked.

As it can be seen in Table 8, although the pull factor “Lower travel cost” is more important for Non-Turkish students based on the difference between the mean values, this difference between the two groups of Turkish and Non-Turkish students is not significant ( $t=1.384$ ,  $p<0.170$ ) so Lower travel cost is important for two groups.

Table 8: The comparison between Non-Turkish and Turkish students in terms of travel costs

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig.
Lower travel costs	Non-Turkish	46	3.20	1.258	1.384	.170
	Turkish	47	2.83	1.291		

Additionally, as it can be observed in Table 9, from the comparison between Turkish and Non-Turkish students through t-test in terms of low crime rate, the mean values shows that this factor is more important for Non-Turkish students however the difference between the means is not significant. ( $t=0.879$ ,  $p<0.382$ ,  $M=4$ ,  $SD=1.229$ ).

Table 9: The comparison between Turkish and Non-Turkish students in terms of low crime rate

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Sig.
Lower	Non-	46	4.00	1.229	.879	.382

crime rate	Turkish			
	Turkish	47	3.77	1.339

Table 10 shows the comparison between push factors among the two groups: Turkish and Non-Turkish students. Although, for Non-Turkish students among all push factors “overseas education better than local” has the highest mean and “low quality of life in home country” has the lowest mean, for Turkish students “Difficult to enter home university” is the most important push factors and personal issues (“other”) is the least important factor for students to leave their home country for higher education. Between the 8 push factors stated in Table 10, the results indicate that the difference of mean values are only significant for the following push factors:

- Overseas education better than local
- Understanding of another culture
- Lower status for graduates from home country

Table 10: Push factor for Turkish and Non-Turkish students

		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Overseas education better than local*</b>	Non-Turkish	49	3.22	1.263	2.933	0.004
	Turkish	47	2.45	1.332		
<b>Understanding of another culture*</b>	Non-Turkish	45	3.02	1.323	2.416	0.018
	Turkish	46	2.41	1.066		
<b>Other</b>	Non-Turkish	19	3.00	1.667	1.711	0.100
	Turkish	8	1.88	1.246		
<b>Limited scholarship at home</b>	Non-Turkish	48	2.77	1.547	0.738	0.463
	Turkish	46	2.54	1.441		
<b>High cost of program in home country</b>	Non-Turkish	48	2.75	1.480	1.088	0.280
	Turkish	46	2.43	1.328		
<b>Difficult to enter home university</b>	Non-Turkish	47	2.72	1.455	-0.123	0.902
	Turkish	46	2.76	1.479		
<b>Lower status for graduates from home country*</b>	Non-Turkish	45	2.58	1.177	2.024	0.046
	Turkish	47	2.09	1.158		
<b>Low quality of life in home country</b>	Non-Turkish	43	2.28	1.297	0.861	0.392
	Turkish	45	2.04	1.261		

\* The difference between the means is significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

Surprisingly for both Turkish and Non-Turkish students studying at EMU among all mentioned pull factors in Table 11 “Low crime rate “and “Friends/ relatives living here” have the highest and lowest mean values, respectively. The mean difference between the mentioned pull factors is not significant ( $p>0.05$ ).

Table 11: Pull factors for Turkish and Non-Turkish students

		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Lower crime rate</b>	Non-Turkish	46	4.00	1.229	0.878	0.382
	Turkish	47	3.77	1.339		
<b>International environment</b>	Non-Turkish	47	3.64	1.072	1.175	0.243
	Turkish	47	3.36	1.206		
<b>Low racial or ethnic discrimination</b>	Non-Turkish	46	3.59	1.359	-0.080	0.936
	Turkish	46	3.61	1.238		
<b>Quiet environment</b>	Non-Turkish	46	3.57	1.088	-0.227	0.821
	Turkish	47	3.62	1.114		
<b>No special visa necessary to enter country</b>	Non-Turkish	46	3.57	1.361	1.239	0.219
	Turkish	46	3.22	1.332		
<b>Lower tuition fees*</b>	Non-Turkish	48	3.56	1.457	2.875	0.005
	Turkish	47	2.74	1.310		
<b>Ability to gain full/partial scholarship from university*</b>	Non-Turkish	46	3.50	1.394	1.952	0.054
	Turkish	46	2.91	1.488		
<b>Comfortable climate</b>	Non-Turkish	47	3.45	1.039	0.190	0.850
	Turkish	47	3.40	1.136		



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<b>Scholarship opportunities*</b>	Non-Turkish	45	3.40	1.156	2.166	0.033
	Turkish	42	2.86	1.181		
<b>Status of degree from NC</b>	Non-Turkish	43	3.35	1.251	1.120	0.266
	Turkish	47	3.04	1.334		
<b>Lower cost of living*</b>	Non-Turkish	46	3.33	1.431	2.128	0.036
	Turkish	47	2.70	1.397		
<b>Ability to gain entry to the program of my choice</b>	Non-Turkish	47	3.32	1.321	0.988	0.326
	Turkish	46	3.59	1.292		
<b>Quality of life during my education here</b>	Non-Turkish	46	3.24	1.251	0.517	0.607
	Turkish	44	3.11	1.039		
<b>Education here will improve future pay</b>	Non-Turkish	47	3.21	1.334	1.606	0.112
	Turkish	46	2.78	1.246		
<b>Lower travel costs</b>	Non-Turkish	46	3.20	1.258	1.384	0.170
	Turkish	47	2.83	1.291		
<b>Job opportunities for grad from NC</b>	Non-Turkish	39	3.18	1.048	0.263	0.794
	Turkish	45	3.11	1.301		
<b>Opportunities to learn about different cultures</b>	Non-Turkish	43	3.16	1.233	0.802	0.425
	Turkish	46	2.96	1.192		
<b>Other</b>	Non-Turkish	12	3.08	1.379	0.501	0.625
	Turkish	3	2.67	.577		

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<b>Education quality in NC</b>	Non-Turkish	35	2.89	1.301	-1.355	0.183
	Turkish	8	3.63	1.768		
<b>Exciting place to live</b>	Non-Turkish	47	2.77	1.272	-1.627	0.107
	Turkish	46	3.17	1.141		
<b>Friends/relatives study here</b>	Non-Turkish	46	2.65	1.449	-0.141	0.889
	Turkish	46	2.70	1.518		
<b>Opportunities to live in other countries after grad</b>	Non-Turkish	47	2.51	1.177	0.517	0.607
	Turkish	45	2.76	1.300		
<b>Friends/relatives living here</b>	Non-Turkish	47	1.98	1.277	-1.055	0.294
	Turkish	47	2.28	1.455		

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\* The difference between the means is significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

Furthermore, ANOVA analysis was applied on the data collected from international students. Among the variety of push factors, entrance difficulty in home country can be a great push factor. This push factor is very bold in Iran; therefore, it was hypothesized that among all possible push factors, for Iranian students, the entrance difficulty is the most important one. This hypothesis was tested and the results are shown in Table 12. Among all abroad students whom have selected EMU as their destination university for further studies, this push factor was most important for Iranians and Nigerians. The results indicates that for this push factor the mean difference between the mentioned nationalities in Table 12 is not significant ( $F=0.352, p=0.907$ )

Table 12: Difficulty to entrance to home country universities

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig
Iran	10	3	1.633		
Nigeria	5	3	1.581		
Other	13	2.85	1.463		
Turkish	46	2.76	1.479		
Palestine	6	2.67	1.366		
Syria	7	2.57	1.813		
Jordan	6	2	0.894		
Total	93	2.74	1.459	0.352	0.907

As Cyprus is near Turkey and more or less they both are sharing some similar cultural activities, it was hypothesized that among all the nationalities, understanding a new culture is least important for Turkish students. Base on the results shown in Table 13, this hypothesis was true and this pull factor was least important for Turkish students, and with a small difference Nigerian students are in the second place rating this factor as least important by mean value equal to 2.60. Although for this pull factor the mean difference between mentioned nationalities in Table 13 is not significant, the results show that Jordanian students are most interested students in terms of understanding a new culture with mean value equal to 3.80 (  $F=1.699$ ,  $p=0.131$ ).

Table 13: Experience new culture

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Jordan	5	3.8	1.095		
Other	13	3.23	1.363		
Palestine	5	3.2	1.483		
Syria	7	2.71	1.496		
Iran	10	2.7	1.252		
Nigeria	5	2.6	1.342		
Turkish	46	2.41	1.066		
Total	91	2.71	1.232	1.699	0.131

Quality of education is one of the pull factors for students to continue their studies abroad. Based on the rank of universities in Nigeria, it was hypothesized that among different nationalities this pull factor is most important factor for Nigerian student. The results obtained shows that the mean difference between different nationalities mentioned in Table 14 is not significant, but among these nationalities this pull factor is most important for Jordanian students. Moreover, this pull factor with mean value equal to 2.14 is least important for Iranian students ( $F=1.787$ ,  $p=0.129$ ).

Table 14: Quality of education

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Jordan	3	4.33	1.155		
Turkish	8	3.63	1.768		
Palestine	5	3.4	0.894		
Syria	6	3.33	1.211		
Nigeria	5	3	1.225		
Other	9	2.33	1.414		
Iran	7	2.14	1.069		
Total	43	3.02	1.406	1.787	0.129

It was hypothesized that the relationship between providing scholarship and selecting EMU as destination university was a great pull factor for Syrian students. As it can be observed from Table 15, the mean difference for this pull factor is not significant. Students from Jordan and Syria have rated this pull factor as an important pull factor (Table18;  $F=0.935$ ,  $p=0.475$ ).

Table 15: Scholarship opportunity

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Jordan	5	3.6	1.673		
Syria	7	3.57	1.134		
Iran	10	3.5	0.972		
Nigeria	4	3.5	1.291		
Other	13	3.31	1.182		
Palestine	6	3	1.265		
Turkish	42	2.86	1.181		
Total	87	3.14	1.193	0.935	0.475

As it was showed in Figure 1 the Third stage for students whom decide to study abroad is to select their destination university. In the process of evaluating different universities the pull factors such as the living cost, tuition fee, and simplicity of getting visa can be very important. Herein, it was hypothesized that the mentioned pull factors are very important for the students whom have selected EMU as the abroad university for their further studies. Analyses of pull factors reported in Table 16 shows that for international students “Low crime rate” is the most important pull factor with the total average equal to 3.92. North Cyprus is a safe country with very low crime rate which has made this country an interesting place for international students. Normally, students leaving their families and living in a different country are more stressed on crimes. Interestingly, herein, this pull factor was very bold among other pull factors. On the other hand, the pull factor “Friends/relatives living here” with total average mean equal to 2.08 was the lowest important pull factor.

Table 16: Total Average of Pull Factors

	Total Average Mean
Low crime rate	3.92
No special visa necessary to enter country	3.68
International environment	3.61
Radical or ethnic discrimination	3.59
Quiet environment	3.54
Tuition fees	3.5
Ability to gain full/partial scholarship from university	3.48
Comfortable climate	3.45
Ability to gain entry to the program of my choice	3.45
Scholarship opportunities	3.33
Status of degree from NC	3.3
Quality of life during my education here	3.26
Other	3.22
Education here will improve future pay	3.21
Education quality in NC	3.17
Cost of living	3.17
Job opportunities for grad from NC	3.12
Opportunities to learn about different cultures	3.09
Travel costs	3.06
Exciting place to live	2.77
Friends/relatives study her	2.73
Opportunities to live in other countries after grad	2.56
Friends/relatives living here	2.08

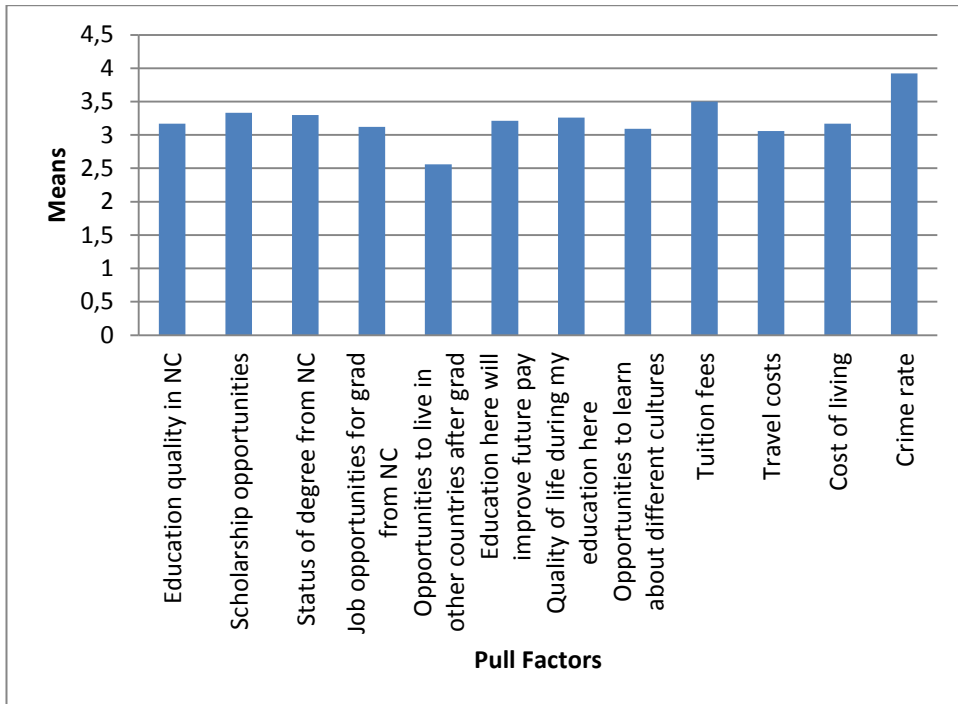


Figure 3: The mean value of pull factors (part 1/2)

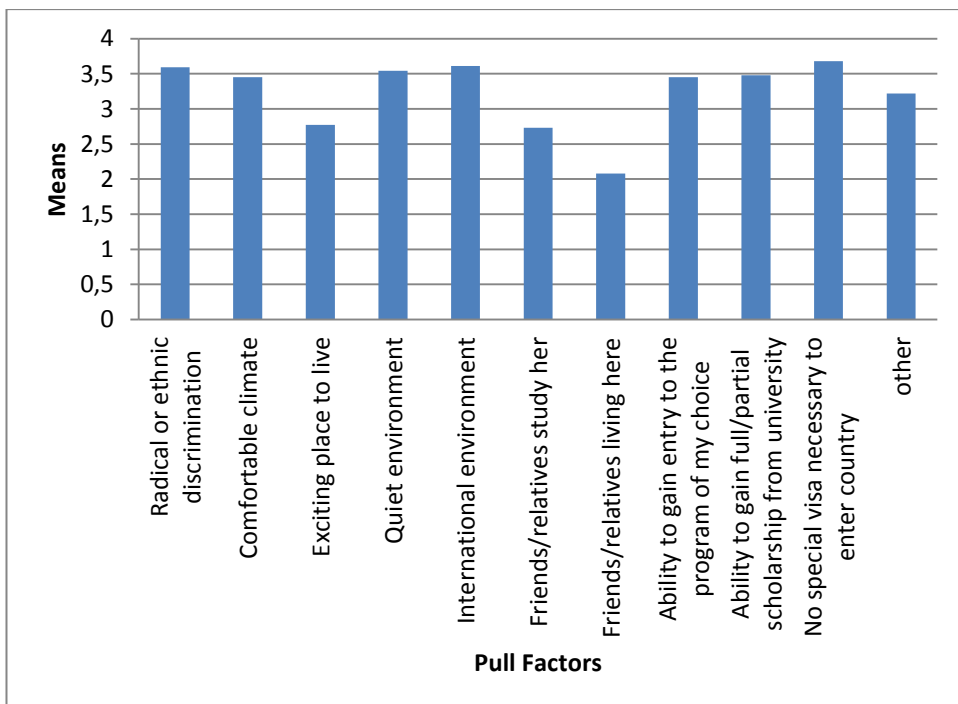


Figure 4: The mean value of pull factors (part 2/2).

Moreover, as it can be seen in Table 17, for international students in EMU most important push factor was “Overseas education is better than the local” with total

average value equal to 3.05 and the least important push factor was “Low quality of life in home country” with average mean value equal to 2.18.

Table 17: Total Average of Push Factors

	Total Average Mean
Overseas education better than local	3.05
Understanding of another culture	2.95
Limited scholarship at home	2.76
High cost of program in home country	2.75
Difficult to enter home university	2.69
Lower status for graduates from home country	2.51
Other	2.31
Low quality of life in home country	2.18

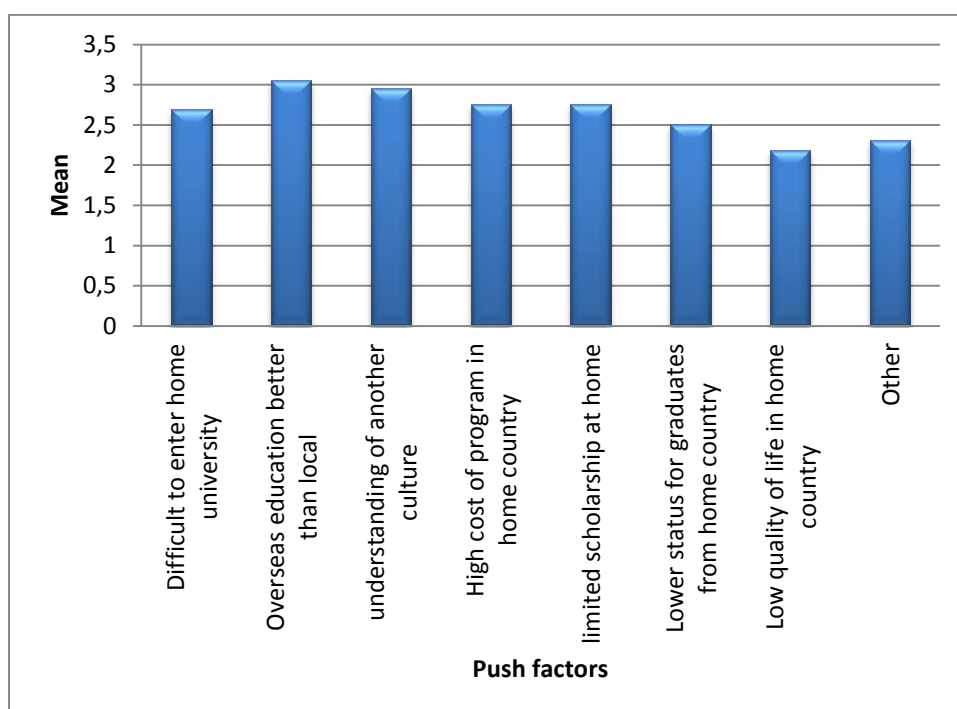


Figure 5: The mean values of push factors

Additionally, the push factors and pull factors can be discussed individually per country. Table 18 reports the result of push factors for international students per country. The results per row show the importance of each push factor for students



coming to EMU from different countries individually. For instance, the results show that for push factor “Difficulty to enter to home university” is most important for Iranians and Nigerians. On other hand, by comparing the results per column one can detect the most or less important push factor for students coming to EMU per country. For instance, for Iranians, by comparing the mean values, it can be observed that the push factors “Difficult to enter home university” and “Overseas education better than local” are most important and push factor “High cost of program in home country” with mean value equal to 1.6 is less important one. Interestingly, among all push factors mentioned in Table 18, the mean difference for push factors “Overseas education better than local” and “High cost of program in home country” is only significant.

Table 18: Push factors for international students

	Nationality	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig
Difficult to enter home university	Iran	10	3	1.633	.352	.907
	Nigeria	5	3	1.581		
	Other	13	2.85	1.463		
	Turkey	46	2.76	1.479		
	Palestine	6	2.67	1.366		
	Syria	7	2.57	1.813		
	Jordan	6	2	0.894		
	Total	93	2.74	1.459		
Overseas education better than local*	Palestine	6	3.83	1.169	2.420	.033
	Other	14	3.71	1.139		
	Iran	10	3	1.333		
	Jordan	6	2.83	1.602		
	Nigeria	5	2.8	0.837		
	Syria	8	2.75	1.282		
	Turkish	47	2.45	1.332		
	Total	96	2.84	1.348		
understanding of another culture	Jordan	5	3.8	1.095		
	Other	13	3.23	1.363		
	Palestine	5	3.2	1.483		
	Syria	7	2.71	1.496		
	Iran	10	2.7	1.252		
	Nigeria	5	2.6	1.342		
	Turkish	46	2.41	1.066		

	Total	91	2.71	1.232	1.699	.131
High cost of program in home country*	Palestine	6	3.67	0.816		
	Syria	8	3	1.69		
	Jordan	5	3	1.871		
	Other	14	2.79	1.762		
	Turkish	46	2.54	1.441		
	Iran	10	2.3	1.567		
	Nigeria	5	2	0.707		
	Total	94	2.66	1.492	3.460	.004
limited scholarship at home	Palestine	6	3.67	0.816		
	Syria	8	3	1.69		
	Jordan	5	3	1.871		
	Other	14	2.79	1.762		
	Turkish	46	2.54	1.441		
	Iran	10	2.3	1.567		
	Nigeria	5	2	0.707		
	Total	94	2.66	1.492	.884	.510
Lower status for graduates from home country	Nigeria	5	3	1.581		
	Other	14	2.93	1.207		
	Jordan	5	2.6	1.673		
	Palestine	5	2.6	0.894		
	Syria	6	2.33	0.516		
	Turkish	47	2.09	1.158		
	Iran	10	2	1.054		
	Total	92	2.33	1.187	1.449	.206
Low quality of life in home country	Other	13	2.85	1.463		
	Nigeria	5	2.8	1.095		
	Palestine	5	2.6	0.548		
	Turkish	45	2.04	1.261		
	Iran	8	2	1.414		
	Syria	7	1.57	1.134		
	Jordan	5	1.4	0.894		
	Total	88	2.16	1.277	1.628	.150
Other	Other	8	3.88	0.991		
	Syria	5	2.6	2.191		
	Iran	4	2.5	1.915		
	Nigeria	1	2			
	Turkish	8	1.88	1.246		
	Palestine	1	1			
	Jordan	0				
Total	27	2.67	1.617	1.756	.166	

\* The difference between the means is significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

Similarly, the pull factors can be analyzed and compared with each other per country which students decide to leave and continue their studies abroad. In Table 19 the mean and standard deviation of pull factors based on the questionnaire distributed in

this thesis is stated. For instance as it can be observed, for Iranian the pull factor “No special visa necessary to enter the country” has highest mean value equal to 4.10 . Each row of the table 19 shows the value of importance of each pull factor per country. Therefore, the pull factor “Education quality in North Cyprus” is the most important pull factor for students coming to Cyprus from Jordan with mean value equal to 4.33. Surprisingly, among all pull factors mentioned in Table 19, the mean difference for pull factors “Tuition Fees” and “Exciting place to live” is only significant.

Table 19: Pull factors for international students

	Nationality	N	Mean	SD	F	Sig.
Education quality in North Cyprus	Jordan	3	4.33	1.155		
	Turkish	8	3.63	1.768		
	Palestine	5	3.4	0.894		
	Syria	6	3.33	1.211		
	Nigeria	5	3	1.225		
	Other	9	2.33	1.414		
	Iran	7	2.14	1.069		
	Total	43	3.02	1.406	1.787	.129
Scholarship opportunities	Jordan	5	3.6	1.673		
	Syria	7	3.57	1.134		
	Iran	10	3.5	0.972		
	Nigeria	4	3.5	1.291		
	Other	13	3.31	1.182		
	Palestine	6	3	1.265		
	Turkish	42	2.86	1.181		
	Total	87	3.14	1.193	.935	.475
Status of a degree from NC	Syria	7	3.71	1.496		
	Other	11	3.64	1.12		
	Jordan	5	3.6	1.673		
	Palestine	6	3.33	1.211		
	Turkish	47	3.04	1.334		
	Nigeria	5	3	0.707		
	Iran	9	2.78	1.302		
	Total	90	3.19	1.297	.761	.603
Job opportunities for graduates from NC	Syria	7	3.57	1.397		
	Jordan	4	3.5	0.577		
	Iran	10	3.2	1.033		
	Other	10	3.2	1.229		
	Turkish	45	3.11	1.301		
	Palestine	4	2.75	0.5		

	Nigeria	4	2.5	0.577		
	Total	84	3.14	1.184	.478	.823
Opportunities to live in other countries after getting educated here	Turkish	45	2.76	1.3		
	Iran	10	1.8	0.632		
	Syria	8	2.5	1.309		
	Jordan	5	3	1.225		
	Nigeria	5	2.4	0.894		
	Palestine	5	2.6	0.548		
	Other	14	2.86	1.512		
	Total	92	2.63	1.238	1.025	.415
Education here will improve future pay	Nigeria	5	3.6	0.894		
	Jordan	4	3.5	0.577		
	Palestine	6	3.5	1.643		
	Iran	10	3.4	1.35		
	Other	14	3.07	1.385		
	Turkish	46	2.78	1.246		
	Syria	8	2.63	1.598		
	Total	93	3.00	1.302	.906	.495
Quality of life during my education here	Palestine	5	3.8	0.837		
	Other	12	3.42	1.24		
	Nigeria	5	3.4	0.548		
	Syria	8	3.25	1.581		
	Jordan	6	3.17	1.329		
	Turkish	44	3.11	1.039		
	Iran	10	2.7	1.418		
	Total	90	3.18	1.147	.665	.678
Opportunities to learn about different cultures	Palestine	5	4	0		
	Other	12	3.67	1.155		
	Iran	9	3	1.225		
	Jordan	5	3	1.414		
	Turkish	46	2.96	1.192		
	Syria	8	2.5	1.414		
	Nigeria	4	2.5	1		
	Total	89	3.06	1.209	1.554	.171
Lower tuition Fees*	Nigeria	5	4.4	1.342		
	Syria	8	4	1.512		
	Palestine	6	3.67	1.506		
	Other	14	3.36	1.393		
	Iran	10	3.3	1.567		
	Jordan	5	3	1.581		
	Turkish	47	2.74	1.31		
	Total	95	3.16	1.439	2.048	.068
Lower travel costs	Iran	10	3.6	1.075		
	Palestine	5	3.4	1.14		
	Other	14	3.21	1.122		
	Syria	8	3.13	1.885		
	Nigeria	5	3	1.225		
	Turkish	47	2.83	1.291		
	Jordan	4	2.25	0.957		
	Total	93	3.01	1.281	.884	.510

Lower cost of living	Palestine	5	3.8	1.643		
	Other	14	3.5	1.16		
	Iran	10	3.4	1.35		
	Syria	8	3.25	1.753		
	Nigeria	5	2.8	2.049		
	Jordan	4	2.75	1.258		
	Turkish	47	2.7	1.397		
	Total	93	3.01	1.441	1.082	.379
Lower crime rate (safe environment)	Syria	8	4.38	1.408		
	Other	12	4.17	0.937		
	Jordan	5	4	1.732		
	Iran	10	3.9	1.449		
	Palestine	6	3.83	0.983		
	Turkish	47	3.77	1.339		
	Nigeria	5	3.4	1.14		
	Total	93	3.88	1.284	.468	.830
Lower racial or ethnic discrimination	Syria	8	4.38	1.408		
	Nigeria	5	3.8	1.643		
	Jordan	4	3.75	1.893		
	Turkish	46	3.61	1.238		
	Other	14	3.57	1.158		
	Iran	10	3.2	1.476		
	Palestine	5	2.8	0.447		
	Total	92	3.60	1.293	.987	.439
Comfortable climate	Palestine	6	3.83	1.329		
	Jordan	4	3.75	1.5		
	Iran	10	3.6	0.699		
	Syria	8	3.5	1.309		
	Turkish	47	3.4	1.136		
	Other	14	3.29	0.994		
	Nigeria	5	2.8	0.447		
	Total	94	3.43	1.083	.555	.765
Exciting place to live*	Palestine	6	4	1.265		
	Turkish	46	3.17	1.141		
	Other	13	3.15	1.281		
	Syria	8	2.88	1.458		
	Iran	10	2.2	0.632		
	Jordan	5	2	1		
	Nigeria	5	2	1		
	Total	93	2.97	1.220	3.066	.009
Quiet environment	Iran	10	4	1.054		
	Syria	8	3.88	0.835		
	Turkish	47	3.62	1.114		
	Jordan	4	3.5	1.291		
	Palestine	6	3.5	1.378		
	Other	13	3.31	1.182		
	Nigeria	5	3	0.707		
	Total	93	3.59	1.096	.711	.641
International environment	Jordan	4	4.25	0.957		
	Palestine	6	3.83	1.169		

	Iran	10	3.8	0.919		
	Other	14	3.64	1.008		
	Syria	8	3.38	1.188		
	Turkish	47	3.36	1.206		
	Nigeria	5	3	1.414		
	Total	94	3.50	1.143	.803	.570
Friends/relatives study there	Palestine	5	3.6	1.517		
	Syria	8	3	1.512		
	Jordan	4	2.75	2.062		
	Turkish	46	2.7	1.518		
	Other	14	2.64	1.336		
	Nigeria	5	2.4	1.673		
	Iran	10	2	1.155		
	Total	92	2.67	1.476	.762	.602
Friends/relatives living there	Jordan	4	2.75	2.062		
	Palestine	6	2.33	0.816		
	Turkish	47	2.28	1.455		
	Other	14	2.21	1.477		
	Nigeria	5	2	1.732		
	Iran	10	1.6	0.843		
	Syria	8	1.38	0.744		
	Total	94	2.13	1.370	.914	.489
Ability to gain entry to the program of my choice	Nigeria	5	3.8	1.643		
	Jordan	4	3.75	0.957		
	Turkish	46	3.59	1.292		
	Syria	8	3.38	1.188		
	Palestine	6	3.33	1.506		
	Iran	10	3.3	1.337		
	Other	14	3	1.414		
	Total	93	3.45	1.306	.474	.826
Ability to gain full/partial scholarship from university	Syria	7	3.86	1.464		
	Jordan	4	3.75	0.957		
	Palestine	6	3.67	1.751		
	Nigeria	5	3.6	1.673		
	Iran	10	3.3	1.494		
	Other	14	3.29	1.326		
	Turkish	46	2.91	1.488		
	Total	92	3.21	1.464	.792	.579
No special visa necessary to enter country	Jordan	3	5	0		
	Iran	10	4.1	1.287		
	Syria	8	3.88	1.553		
	Palestine	6	3.5	1.049		
	Turkish	46	3.22	1.332		
	Nigeria	5	3.2	1.483		
	Other	14	2.86	1.231		
	Total	92	3.39	1.350	1.975	.078
Other	Iran	1	5			
	Syria	3	3.33	2.082		
	Jordan	1	3			
	Other	5	2.8	1.304		

Turkish	3	2.67	0.577		
Palestine	2	2.5	0.707		
Nigeria	0				
Total	15	3.00	1.254	.581	.715

\* The difference between the means is significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

## **Chapter 6**

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the results are discussed and the conclusions are presented in five brief sections. The first section provides a synopsis of the study, while the second section provides the conclusions of the study. In the third part of the chapter, implications for policy makers are presented, while the fourth section presents the limitations of the study. Finally, some suggestions for further studies are presented in the last part of the thesis.

#### **6.2 Summary of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the push and pull factors that influence international students' decision of studying abroad, and particularly choosing EMU as their destination. The study followed a survey design, and through stratified sampling method, 120 questionnaires were distributed among international students studying at EMU. The questionnaire was constructed on the main concept of the push and pull factors and included 8 Push and 23 Pull factors that might have affected international students' decision to study abroad. Based on the previous studies which had investigated the push and pull factors, seven hypotheses were developed to be tested with the data of the current study. The responses were analyzed using statistical procedures of analysis of variance (ANOVA) and t-test. The conclusions of the study are presented in the next section.



### **6.3 Conclusions**

Based on the responses to the distributed questionnaires, the developed hypotheses were tested through t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The significance level for testing the hypotheses was set at 0.05. Interestingly, it was observed that the opinion of students from different nationalities were not statistically significant for the developed hypotheses. In other words, the rate of importance of the push and pull factors were more or less the same for students coming to EMU from different countries. The results (Tables 16 and 17) indicated that among all the hypotheses, “Overseas education is better than the local” with the total mean value equal to 3.05 out of 5 and “Lower crime rates” with the total mean of 3.92 out of 5 were the most important push and pull factors, respectively. In a similar study done by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), it was shown that exactly the same push factor was the most important push factor for Taiwanese, Chinese, and Indonesians students. Normally, as the main aim of international students is to improve their education level, it seems logical to see the same pattern of results among different international students in different studies.

### **6.4 Policy Implications**

The implication of the push factor mentioned above is that international students are not searching for a luxury home or town; rather they are seeking quality education. In other words, the education level of the target university and a hope for quality education is their first priority. Therefore, the finding from this study suggests that the host governments and their educational institutions should consider the importance of the mentioned push factor that influence students' study destination choice and give due attention to their education quality.

Equally important, it was found that students leaving their family and home country and living in a different country are more stressed on the crime rates. Among all the pull factors, this factor (Low crime rates) was very bold. North Cyprus is a safe country with very low crime rates, which has made this country an attractive place for international students. Therefore, it can be suggested to other host governments that in order to attract more international students, the first step is to have a safe country with low crime rates.

Furthermore, among the pull factors the results significantly indicated that “Lower tuition fees”, “Ability to gain full/partial scholarship from university “, “Scholarship opportunity”, and “Lower cost of living” with an average value equal or greater than 3.33 are the important factors for Non-Turkish students. Hence, it seems logical that in order to increase the potential of EMU to attract more Non-Turkish students these pull factors should be improved. Among the push factors, the mean values between the two Turkish and Non-Turkish groups for “Understanding another culture” and “Lower status for graduates from home country” were found to be statically significant. These two push factors were more important for Non-Turkish students. Thus, one may suggest that a better presentation of North Cyprus culture and a guarantee for career opportunities may attract more Non-Turkish students.

## **6.5 Limitations of the Study**

One of the main limitations of this study was that among all the questionnaires that were collected, the number of participants from different nationalities were not equal to each other. In addition to this limitation, for some nationalities, the number of participants was very low such as Nigeria that had only 5 participants. This

limitation, low number of participants for some nationalities, can cause lower statistical power of the analysis.

## **6.6 Suggestions for Future Research**

This study was based on the international students who have selected EMU for their further study. It would be interesting to collect data from the students that are studying abroad, but did not choose North Cyprus. To investigate why some, for example, Iranian, Nigerian, and Turkish students did not choose EMU or North Cyprus as their higher education destination. The findings of such studies will contribute to the findings of this study. Moreover, the effect of living in North Cyprus as a host country on international students' expectations can be studied as well.

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## **APPENDIX**

## Appendix A: Research Questionnaire

### QUESTIONNAIRE OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITIES OF NORTH CYPRUS

The questionnaire is composed of mainly two parts. One part is dedicated to examine the factors influencing higher education choice decisions of international students studying in North Cyprus Universities and second part questions the expenditures of international students studying in North Cyprus Universities.

#### **A. PERSONAL INFORMATION**

1. University: .....

2. Nationality:      a. Turkish      b. Other (Please write): .....

3. Age: .....

4. Gender: .....

5. Faculty:

- |                                       |                                    |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a. Architecture                       | h. Art and Science                 |
| b. Business and Economics             | i. Communication and Media Studies |
| c. Education                          | j. Engineering                     |
| d. Law                                | k. Foreign Languages               |
| e. Tourism and Hospitality Management | l. Computer and Technology         |
| f. Medicine                           | m. Other .....                     |
| g. Pharmacy                           |                                    |

6. I am an undergraduate student in ....

- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| a. 1 <sup>st</sup> Year | c. 3 <sup>rd</sup> Year |
| b. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Year | d. 4 <sup>th</sup> Year |

I am a graduate student doing my

- ...  
e. Masters  
f. Ph.D.

7. How many years have you resided in North Cyprus? : .....

8. Where do you stay?

- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| a. Private house/apt   | b. Hotel                |
| c. Dormitory on campus | d. Dormitory off campus |
| d. With my relatives   |                         |
| e. Other:.....         |                         |

9. What is your average monthly income?
- a. less than \$500
  - b. \$500-999
  - c. \$1000-1499
  - d. \$1500-1999
  - e. \$2000-2499
  - f. \$2500-2999
  - g. \$3000 and above

**B. Factors Influencing Higher Education Decision Choice**

1. Some of the reasons for studying abroad are given below. Please indicate the most important (5) and least important (1) reason in influencing your decision to study abroad.

Factors influencing my decision to study abroad	LEAST IMPORTANT			MOST IMPORTAT		
1. Difficulty to gain entry into my chosen academic program at home	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Overseas education better than local	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Better understanding of another culture	1	2	3	4	5	
4. High cost for the programs that wish to study in home country	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Limited scholarship opportunities to study at home country	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Lower status for graduates of universities from my home country	1	2	3	4	5	
7. Low quality of life in home country	1	2	3	4	5	
Other: .....	1	2	3	4	5	

2. If North Cyprus was not your first choice to study abroad, what was your other choices  
 1)\_\_\_\_\_ 2)\_\_\_\_\_ 3)\_\_\_\_\_
3. Some of the factors influencing your decision to select North Cyprus for studying abroad are given below. Please indicate the most important (5) and least important (1) factors influencing **YOUR** decision.

Factors for choosing North Cyprus	LEAST IMPORTANT			MOST IMPORTANT		
1. Education quality in North Cyprus	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Scholarship opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Status of a degree from North Cyprus	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Job opportunities for graduates from North Cyprus	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Opportunities to live in other countries after getting educated here	1	2	3	4	5	
6. Education here will improve future pay	1	2	3	4	5	

7. Quality of life during my education here	1	2	3	4	5
8. Opportunities to learn about different cultures					
<b>Low Cost</b>					
9. Tuition Fees	1	2	3	4	5
10. Travel costs	1	2	3	4	5
11. Cost of living	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Safety Issues</b>					
12. Crime rate (safe environment)	1	2	3	4	5
13. Racial or ethnic discrimination	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Environment</b>					
14. Comfortable climate	1	2	3	4	5
15. Exciting place to live	1	2	3	4	5
16. Quiet environment	1	2	3	4	5
17. International environment	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Social links</b>					
18. Friends/relatives study here	1	2	3	4	5
19. Friends/relatives live here	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Admittance/Acceptance</b>					
20. Ability to gain entry of to the program of my choice	1	2	3	4	5
21. Ability to gain full/partial scholarship from the university	1	2	3	4	5
22. No special visa necessary to enter country	1	2	3	4	5
Other:.....	1	2	3	4	5

4. Below are some characteristics that are important in making higher education choice decisions. Please indicate the most important (5) and the least important (1) factors in your institution (university) choice.

Factors affecting my higher education choice decision	LEAST IMPORTANT		MOST IMPORTANT		
<b>The institution ...</b>					
1.... Provides the specific degree program that I am looking for	1	2	3	4	5
2... has a reputation for expertise of teaching staff	1	2	3	4	5
3... has a reputation for research	1	2	3	4	5
4... has a an academic reputation	1	2	3	4	5
5... has prestige	1	2	3	4	5
6... has an international recognition	1	2	3	4	5
7. is selective in admitting students	1	2	3	4	5
8... has flexible programs	1	2	3	4	5
9... offers packages for costs	1	2	3	4	5
10... offers academic support facilities	1	2	3	4	5

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11... has advanced information technology infrastructure	1	2	3	4	5
12...is innovative	1	2	3	4	5
13... is the first university to offer place	1	2	3	4	5
14... was guided by my parents	1	2	3	4	5
15... was recommended by my family/friends	1	2	3	4	5
16... offers accommodation for first year	1	2	3	4	5
17... provides information during the application to university	1	2	3	4	5
18... applies lower entry requirements	1	2	3	4	5
19... has a large campus and facilities	1	2	3	4	5
20... is closely located from home	1	2	3	4	5
21... offers a social life nearby	1	2	3	4	5
22... is well known to me	1	2	3	4	5
23... provides job opportunities on graduation	1	2	3	4	5
24. Other influences.....	1	2	3	4	5

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*THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND COMPLETING THE SURVEY.*