

**Effects of Educational Tourism on Social-Emotional
Experiences and Well-Being of International
Students of Eastern Mediterranean University in
Northern Cyprus, Famagusta.**

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the effects and influences of educational tourism on social-emotional experiences and well-being of international students of Eastern Mediterranean University in Northern Cyprus, Famagusta. This study was a qualitative study that tried to find out the impacts of educational tourism on international students' well-being. Semi-structured interviews were used with 15 foreign students between the ages of 18 and 35 who were not Turkish Cypriots to answer the questions.

The study indicates that educational tourism has impacts on international students' social emotional experience and psychological wellbeing. Their lives will change as students plan to travel and leave their country to study and live in another country. These types of changes have been found in this research such as: being independent, communication problem, adapting difficulties in a new place, unfamiliar cultural issues, facing disrespect, panic attacks, safety issues and language barriers. And all these changes happen because of many reasons such as educational issues, acculturative stress and economic issues. These changes bring other impacts in their lives such as homesickness, increasing anxiety, depression, culture chock, increasing sadness and low self-esteem.

Keywords: Educational Tourism, International Students, Social-Emotional Experience, Psychological Wellbeing, North Cyprus.

ÖZ

Bu araştırma, eğitim turizminin Kuzey Kıbrıs, Gazimağusa'daki Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi uluslararası öğrencilerinin sosyal-duygusal deneyimleri ve refahı üzerindeki etkilerini ve etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, eğitim turizminin uluslararası öğrencilerin refahı üzerindeki etkilerini ortaya çıkarmaya çalışan nitel bir çalışmadır. Soruları yanıtlamak için Kıbrıslı Türk olmayan 18-35 yaş arası 15 yabancı öğrenci ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler kullanılmıştır.

Çalışma, eğitim turizminin uluslararası öğrencilerin sosyal duygusal deneyimi ve psikolojik refahı üzerinde etkileri olduğunu gösteriyor. Öğrenciler seyahat etmeyi ve başka bir ülkede okumak ve yaşamak için ülkelerini terk etmeyi planladıkça hayatları değişecek. Bu çalışmada şu tür değişiklikler bulundu: bağımsız olma, iletişim sorunu, yeni bir yerde zorlukları uyarılma, alışılmadık kültürel sorunlar, saygısızlıkla karşılaşma, panik ataklar, güvenlik sorunları ve dil engelleri. Ve tüm bu değişiklikler, eğitim sorunları, kültürleşme stresi ve ekonomik sorunlar gibi birçok nedenden dolayı gerçekleşir. Bu değişiklikler hayatlarında vatan hasreti, artan anksiyete, depresyon, kültür tıkanıklığı, artan üzüntü ve düşük kendine güven gibi başka etkiler de getiriyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eğitim Turizmi, Uluslararası Öğrenciler, Sosyal-Duygusal Deneyim, Psikolojik Sağlık, Kuzey Kıbrıs.

DEDICATION

This study is wholeheartedly dedicated to Assist. Prof. Dr. YEŞİM BETÜL OKTAY whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ÖZ	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.1.1 Educational Tourism: A Global Analysis	1
1.1.2 Educational Tourists.....	1
1.1.3 Perceived Social Support.....	2
1.1.4 Social-Emotional Experiences and Well-Being	2
1.1.5 The Social Identity Approach	2
1.2 Aims of the Study.....	3
1.3 Main Objectives	3
1.4 Research Main Questions	3
2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
2.1 Introduction.....	4
2.2 Definition of Educational Tourism.....	5
2.2.1 International Students.....	6
2.3 Psychological Well-being	8
2.4 Social Support	9
2.4.1 Social Support and Resilience	14

2.4.2 Self-Efficacy and Resilience	14
2.4.3 Reciprocity between Perceived Social Support and Efficacy.....	15
2.5 Perceived Social Support.....	15
2.5.1 Sense of Belonging	19
2.6 Psychological Adjustment	20
2.6.1 Cultural Burden.....	20
2.6.2 Depression	21
2.6.3 Emotional Intelligence	22
2.6.4 Depression and Cultural Stress	22
2.7 Social-Emotional Experiences and Wellbeing.....	23
2.7.1 Culture and Culture Shock	23
2.7.2 The Lives of International Students	23
2.8 Social–Emotional Development.....	24
2.9 Conclusion	24
3 METHODOLOGY	26
3.1 Introduction.....	26
3.2 Research Approach	26
3.2.1 Inductive Approach.....	26
3.2.2 Why the Inductive Approach?.....	27
3.3 Methodology	28
3.3.1 Qualitative Research	28
3.4 Research Method.....	28
3.4.1 Research Instrument.....	28
3.5 Sampling	29
3.5.1 Data Collection	30

3.5.2 Sample Size	30
4 DATA ANALYSIS.....	31
4.1 Definitions	32
4.2 Coding	33
4.3 Categorization	34
4.4 Types of Changes in Psychological Well-Being of Students	35
4.5 Reasons for the Changes in Psychological Well-Being of Students	39
4.6 Impacts of the Changes on Students.....	40
4.7 Coping Strategies to Deal with these Problems	41
5 RESULTS AND CONCLUSION.....	43
5.1 Discussion.....	43
5.2 Conclusion	46
5.3 Limitation and Recommendation for Future Studies	47
REFERENCES	49

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: The Demographic Profile of the Interviewees	31
Table 4.2: Qualitative Data Analysis.....	32
Table 4.3: Coding Table.....	33
Table 4.4: Categorization Table.....	35

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Two main components of edu-tourism.....	5
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Educational Tourism: A Global Analysis

Educational tourism is today one of the world's popular types of tourism. Many countries around the world have used school tourism as one of their key sources of earnings. Education tourism can be defined as any, "application in which learners travel to a destination as a group with the primary intention of participating in a local-related learning experience" (Rodger, 1998). Tourism in general consists of many subtypes, including ecotourism, heritage tourism and rural / farm tourism (Paul and Trent).

1.1.2 Educational Tourists

From the late 1970s onwards, the growth of tourism research has developed numerous hypotheses regarding 'the visitor.' This segment analyzes the status of foreign students in view of some of the big typologies that occur and proposes that conceiving them as visitors makes sense. Foreign students are sojourners with an educational aim which, once achieved, leads to their returning to their countries of origin. However, if you look at their whole experience, rather than just their academic experience, and equate it with various visitor encounters theorized in the current literature on tourism, it is clear that foreign students should be categorized as tourists. In 1963, The World Tourism Organization (WTO) classified international students as tourists. However, it

should be noted that some definitions of tourists do not include foreign students if the students' courses last for more than one year.

1.1.3 Perceived Social Support

Perceived social support has been correlated with variety of favorable results (such as transition, inspiration and academic success) for college graduates in the U.S.A. (Reid, Holt, Bowman, Espelage, & White, 2016). It is also held that the teachers and the peers of foreign students can influence how the foreign students cope (Dennis et al., 2005). It has also been found that foreign students have difficulties with domestic students which they do not have with other foreign students, especially those from a similar background (Gebhard, 2012). It can be argued, therefore, that support from fellow students should be classified as that from domestic students and that from other foreign students. Several studies have examined the extent of the social support received by foreign students from domestic and other foreign students and have found that more assistance is received from other foreign students than from domestic students (Bhochhibhoya, Dong, & Branscum, 2017).

1.1.4 Social-Emotional Experiences and Well-Being

Social connectedness refers to the extent to which students believe that they have made connections with other people such that they are not outsiders (Strayhorn, 2018). Being an insider is linked with the level of a student's academic performance at university (Glass & Westmont, 2014; Kennedy & Tuckman, 2013), and, with psychological well-being (Atri, Sharma, & Cottrell, 2007). Extant research exemplifies the benefits derived from social support.

1.1.5 The Social Identity Approach

This consists of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (Turner, 1982; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) and is based

on the idea that being a member of a group influences someone's self-perception, their social identity (Turner, 1982). More generally, it is claimed that being part of a coterie benefits mental health and enables people experiencing changes in their lifestyles to cope more effectively (Reicher & Haslam, 2006).

1.2 Aims of the Study

This research aims to investigate the effects and influences of educational tourism on the social-emotional experiences and well-being of international students at the Eastern Mediterranean University in Famagusta, North Cyprus.

1.3 Main Objectives

This study tries to achieve four objectives. First, to identify the types of effects that studying abroad have on the psychological wellbeing (considering the social-emotional experiences and well-being aspect) of international students. Second, to understand the reasons for these changes. Third, to find and investigate the problems that students may have due to these changes, and fourth, to find coping strategies which can be used to deal with the problems.

1.4 Research Main Questions

This study tries to answer four main questions:

- 1) What changes to the psychological wellbeing of international students are caused by studying abroad?
- 2) What are the reasons for these changes?
- 3) What are the impacts of these changes on students?
- 4) What are the coping strategies used to deal with these problems?

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

There are more than 4.6 million foreign students worldwide studying outside their homelands in colleges and universities (Project Atlas cited in Haslam, Cruwys & Ng, 2018). The number of foreign students more than doubled worldwide between 2001 and 2017. As immigrants to a host country, however, foreign students face major obstacles because of disparities in traditions, languages, food, clothes, social networks, and health including mental or psychological well-being (Mallinckrodt & Leong, 1992; Zhang & Brunton, 2007 cited in Yan & FitzPatrick, 2016).

This study considers the impact of educational tourism on the social-emotional experiences and well-being of international students who are studying at the Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus, Famagusta. In this study we focused on aspects of psychological well-being such as emotional experience, social identity and perceived social support.

Firstly, we attempted to identify how studying abroad affected the students' psychological well-being. Secondly, we endeavored to understand the reasons for these changes. Thirdly, we investigated the problems faced by the students and the impacts of these problems on the students. Fourthly, we looked at the coping strategies

used by students to deal with the problems. Fifthly, the decision was taken not to examine in detail any impacts on the physical wellbeing of the students.

2.2 Definition of Educational Tourism

Rodger (1998) defined Edu-tourism as “any type of program in which participants travel to a location either individually or in a group with the primary motive of engaging in or having a learning experience” (cited in Abubakar, Shneikat & Oday, 2014, p.58). These are individuals or groups who travel outside their environment for study, business, leisure and other activities and stay for more than 24 hours and not more than one year (World Tourism Organization, 2012 cited in Abubakar et al., 2014).

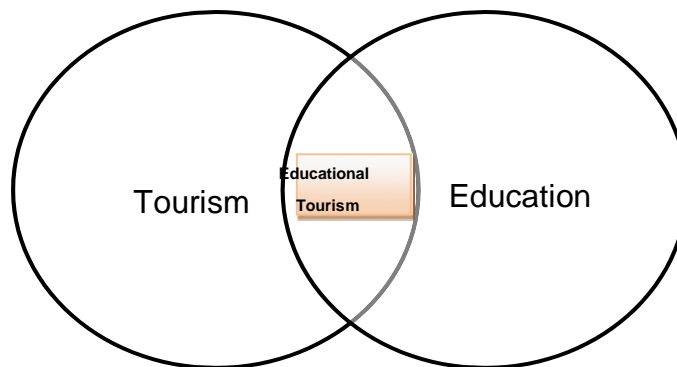


Figure 1.1: Two main component of edu-tourism. Source: Abubakar (2014)

A more detailed description of educational tourism is given by (Weary, 2008), where the term has been highlighted as tourist events carried out by those who pursue an overnight vacation and those who experience an expedition and for whom schooling and learning is a primary or secondary part of their trip. This may include general educational tourism and adolescent research trips, travel to foreign and domestic colleges and school students at language school, school excursions and exchange

programs. Further, educational tourism may be arranged separately or systematically and may be carried out in a number of natural or human-made environments.

Even though, the notion of traveling for education isn't new (Gibson, 1998; Holdnak & The Netherlands, 1996; Kalinowski & Weiler, 1992), it has become very popular and has attracted considerable interest in recent years. Now there are many international students from all over the world travelling away from home in order to acquire education.

2.2.1 International Students

As Ahmadian claimed in her research in 2013, the number of foreign students has reached over 4.5 million (cited in Chang, 2012). It has been suggested that by 2025, 7.2 million students will be able to study overseas (Chang, 2012). Universities around the world negotiate actively with one another to get more and more foreign students, so they can have tremendous cultural, educational and financial benefits. However international students face various challenges in their new countries. Such challenges include language difficulties, dealing with a different culture, coping with their studies and alien types of food. Such problems can adversely affect the physical and mental wellbeing of the foreign students.

Research has shown that the cultural and social-emotional adaptation of foreign students to U.S. universities differs greatly from that of home students (Wang, Wei, & Chen, 2015). Though 50 percent of foreign students encountered few issues during the initial period of time spent at the place of study (Wang, Wei, & Chen, 2015), other studies showed that foreign students frequently fail to get social support from students and teachers, they fail to develop connections or to contribute to the educational establishment in question and feel empty and alienated (Brunsting, Zachry, &

Takeuchi, 2018). As the social relation of international students within their university is correlated with well-being, social problems will take a psychological toll (Hirai, Frazier, & Syed, 2015); and foreign students who feel alienated are more likely to encounter depression and other mental health problems (Muyan & Chang, 2015).

Although, this is not a problem experienced only by foreign students, they usually encounter this problem more often and more intensely than local students in the United States do, partially as a result of cultural disparities in social norms (Van Horne, Lin, Anson, & Jacobson, 2018).

Authors have explored a number of possible indicators, such as social support expectations, in order to boost the adaptation of foreign students (Brunsting et al., 2018). Perceived social support is a dynamic concept which involves one's understanding of becoming the beneficiary of a number of positive activities (e.g., emotional support or listening and empathizing) as a result of the intervention of an individual or of a group of people (Malecki & Demaray, 2003).

New studies have recorded the views of foreign students about the social support which they perceive increases their well-being (Bai, 2016).

As Sharma in 2015 showed in a study, international students are sacrificing their former social network and support structure after fleeing their own country and, sadly, not all entrants have the ability to replace them in their foreign world. The great physical divide between them and their relatives and friends back home might be extremely overwhelming for foreign students and could contribute to feelings of loneliness and homesickness (Budianto, 2012; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009). This

transition can be much more difficult for foreign students who have distinct cultural traditions, vocabularies, academic readiness, and study patterns (Yan & Cardinal, 2013). All university students must adjust to a new environment. There is a huge competition nowadays for studying abroad, particularly in Middle Eastern countries. However, in their new countries, foreign students encounter varied obstacles. University students are more at risk of having mental health issues or disabilities as opposed to comparable age categories of the general population (Hamdan-Mansour et al., 2009). Foreign students, in particular, had more mental health challenges (Alavi and Mansor, 2011).

2.3 Psychological Well-being

In 2010, Bewick et al., claimed that, internal and external influences could affect students' mental health. For example, an indicator of poor mental health has been shown to be linked to financial problems and/or debt (Cooke et al., 2004). The psychological well-being of a student will change over time, and can be influenced over time by variables such as income, pressure, family income, personal ambitions and social support. Efforts to create innovative approaches that can help students navigate the transition from school to university and eventually to post-university life will also benefit from a more complete comprehension of how academic well-being evolves over time.

Vleioras and Bosma (2005) stated that “positive wellbeing is far more than the lack of illness” (Ryff & Singer, 1998, p.1). Ryff (1989) proposed that psychological well-being includes how much one wants to be mentally good (comparison of the concept of psychological well-being, which relates to feeling well). This is similar to the features of a healthy personality set out by Erikson. Trying to describe the

psychological well-being parameters, she studied Maslow's work on self-actualization; Rogers' work on the functional human; Jung's research on individualization; Allport's focus on maturity; Erikson's works on his psychosocial paradigm; Buhler's focus on fundamental life patterns; Neugarten's work on attitude improvement in adulthood, and Jahoda's optimistic psychological wellness requirements (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1996).

Ryff (1989) argued that all of them agreed on the following characteristics as part of psychological well-being: having a good view of oneself (self-acceptance), becoming able to choose or build environments suitable for one's mental condition (environmental mastery), having pleasant and strong partnerships and being free to embrace (positive relationships with others), setting goals, aspirations, and a sense of perspective (purpose in life), continuous development of one's potential (personal growth), and being self-determined and independent (autonomy). Further, good functioning (e.g., life satisfaction), and negative functioning (e.g., depression (Ryff & Singer, 1996) are positively linked to these parameters. Lastly, biological wellbeing is also tied to them (Ryff & Singer, 2002).

2.4 Social Support

Cobb (1976) described social support as "information contributing to the confidence of the subject; facts leading the subject to assume that he is regarded and valued; and data causing the person to assume that he contributes to a contact and shared responsibility network" (cited in Bai, 2016, p. 300). Extensive study has found that one's mental and physical wellbeing is affected by social support (Uchino, 2004). The social support tension buffering hypothesis posits that individuals with a higher degree of social support retain better fitness and well-being while having traumatic daily

experiences (Uchino, 2004). There is a difference between social support perceived and earned. Perceived social support relates to the understanding of the existence of and the need for supporting services in one's social community by beneficiaries, whilst social support obtained relates to the volume and nature of real support experiences earned (Eagle, Hybels, & Proeschold-Bell, 2018). Recent research has demonstrated that social support expected and earned are associated (Haber, Cohen, Lucas, & Baltes, 2007), but perceived social support has a higher and more stable association with depression and mental health effects (Eagle et al., 2018). Multiple research projects have identified important specific effects of perceived social support on the relaxation of the cultural burden of refugees or foreign students and hence the enhancement of mental wellbeing (Geeraert & Demoulin, 2013). As foreign students primarily work within their national network and their network with host nationals (Bochner, McLeod, & Lin, 1977), these two networks would also be the basis of their presumed social support. There is previous research on how social support leads to acculturation, but they have seldom assessed the perceived social support experienced independently and concurrently through the home country and the host country (Ye, 2006b), which could be too simplistic. Since social support is ultimately related to the social interaction system (Vaux, 1988), and the accessibility and roles of the home and host country social networks of international students vary, it is important to distinguish perceived social support from these various channels. Community host cultural interaction has already been known to assist foreign students to appreciate the host society's social values and attitudes, minimizing stress related to the acculturation experience, thereby promoting the acculturation phase (Searle & Ward, 1990). In the form of offering psychological comfort and protecting ethnic identity, interaction with the families and relatives of the native community could be beneficial (Park et al., 2014).

Bhochhibhoya et al., (2017) claimed in their study that social reinforcement (Dalgard, Thapa, Hauff, McCubbin, & Syed, 2006; Uchino, 2004) has long been known to protect against the detrimental effects of stress, increase well-being, decrease the incidence of disease, and increase restoration from medical conditions as they happen. Researchers recently claimed that social support between university students is a major determinant of psychological well-being and educational transition (Rodriguez, Mira, Myers, Morris, & Cardoza, 2003). The number of users in the network of the individual is an indicator of total social support fulfillment. The effects of multiple types of interpersonal care for either mental or physical wellbeing are shown by extensive proof (Rodriguez et al., 2003; Thoits, 1995). With the substantial proof of the beneficial effects of social support, the degree to which individuals view, search, and choose social support can be affected by several variables such as the sex and character of the individual. The latest studies have shed light on ethnic variations in the usage and interpretation of different kinds of social support. These studies have repeatedly shown that respondents in Asia and Asia-America receive help less frequently (Taylor, Sherman, Jarcho, Takagi, & Dunagan, 2004), find less effective support (Wang, Shih, Hu, Louie, & Lau, 2010). Such findings lead researchers to the belief that, as they try to handle stress, people from non-Western-collectivist/interdependent societies prefer to get and benefit from various styles and types of social support. According to the traditional Western concept of social support, Taylor and her peers (2007) differentiated tacit social support: one may hire from social networks as guidance, instrumental assistance, or psychological support... Implied psychological reinforcement as the personal security that can be gained through sharing or addressing somebody's issues vis a vis real negative experiences from social networks. Without addressing one's issues, tacit encouragement can assume the type of informing oneself

of near another or staying in the presence of near friends'' (Taylor et al., 2007, p. 832). A variety of research projects have shown that Asians benefit from tacit social support more than Americans, while Americans benefit through overt social support more (Yang, Leu, Simoni, Chen, Shiu, & Zhao, 2015). The person can achieve the advantages of emotional support by using this type of emotional support despite worrying about losing focus or revealing weakness. A small amount of research projects have been undertaken during the last two decades to investigate social support between Arab students in Arab countries and in Israel. There have been some important details from these projects. First, Arabs indicated that they would turn to "no one" regarding assistance considerably more frequently than Jews (Kaplan et al., 2010; Pines & Zaidman, 2003). Second, they appear to switch to community relatives (i.e., partner, mother, father, and siblings) more frequently than their peers in situations where Arab students wish to switch to outsiders for support (Pines & Zaidman, 2003). Perceived social support from one's relatives became a greater indicator of when a social occurrence (compared to perceived social support among friends) will be viewed as a traumatic condition (Khallad & Jabr, 2016).

Franco et al in 2019 have claimed in their research that the foundation of individual nature shapes interpersonal ties (Cüceloğlu, 1992). In his/her social environment, the individual's position transfers via social relationships he/she has formed towards certain humans (Kozaklı, 2006). With children, parents and peers, healthier people have a broad social bond. If the person feels valued, important and supported in these positions, he/she seems comfortable and protected. On the other hand, with the sensation of helplessness and worthlessness, if interpersonal connections are insufficient and problematic, the person would always be in danger of experiencing

psychological and physical disorder (Görgü, 2005). Social support is seen to be a vital necessity to share people's concerns among family and friends, to be in peace about the world and to preserve personal wellbeing (Özkahraman, Demir and Gökdoğan 2010). Social support consists of a large variety of factors, including receiving help from certain individuals, the level of closeness with such individuals, the value of the assistance received and the fulfillment of the requirements of the person (Yıldırım, 2004). When extant research is analyzed it is found that social reinforcement has a good influence on physical and mental wellbeing (Bayram, 1999; Ell, 1996). There is a supportive interaction among social support and self-acceptance (Başer, 2006), wellbeing (Doğan, 2004), emotional intelligence (Bayraktar, 2011), academic achievement (Yıldırım, 1998, 2006) psychological well-being (Malkoç and Yalçın, 2015) and democratic parental attitudes (Çeçen, 2008). There is, towards the opposite side, a negative connection among perceived social support and isolation (Yılmaz, Yılmaz, & Karaca, 2008), negative attitudes towards parents (Çeçen, 2008), frustration and hopelessness (Dil, & Aykanat Girgin, 2016). Psychological endurance is enhanced by social support; it is assumed that social support received within the community and beyond the community helps the person to manage the critical incident and the potential adverse effects. It can then be seen that the person's influence contributes to a sense that the person is not the only one with his issues, contributing to a much more optimistic view of the future. It may be claimed that a strong degree of psychological endurance in the person is triggered by this outcome (Terzi, 2008). When perceived social support from the parents rises, it is found that participants' optimistic consciousness often rises; consequently, the impression of high social support lowers depression. Moreover, the rise in perceived social support among foreign university students is shown to raise educational adjustment (Cura and Işık, 2016) and the rise in

perceived social support reduces hopelessness and frustration (Dil and Aykanat Girgin, 2016).

2.4.1 Social Support and Resilience

Shumaker and Brownell (1984) described perceived social support as the sharing of services between a minimum of two persons where no less than one person considers that the interaction increases his or her health. Perceived social support allows an individual in periods of distress to be increasingly resilient and avoids the production of psychopathology (Ozbay et al., 2007). It also provides a person with the tools required to deal with a problem (Chi et al., 2011). A person may consider obtaining support from relatives, colleagues or a substantial partner. Research investigating the various forms of social assistance have produced important findings. Mattanah et al. (2010) show that in total, perceived social support helps a person to live through difficulties and recover from stress. Zaleski, Levey-Thors and Schiaffino (1998) stated that presumed social support can simplify transition problems experienced by college students. Frey and Rothlisberger (1996), who studied teen social reinforcement, found that they often trusted peers on trivial problems but switched to relatives on problem that led them severe stress.

2.4.2 Self-Efficacy and Resilience

Glassa and Westmontb in 2013 stated that a main predictor for evaluating resistance is self-efficacy (Warner and Smith, 1982). In any human, it is an inherent trait that could be formed to serve as a buffer towards adverse conditions. Bandura (1997) described self-efficacy as the personal opinion of an entity regarding his or her ability to carry out a mission effectively. People with a higher level of self-efficacy are often more capable of managing their perceptions and persevering despite experiencing difficulties. Strong self-efficacy in a person is also considered to be a significant

indicator of finishing school successfully (Hamill, 2003). Ozer and Bandura (1990) observed that when women felt that they had influence throughout an incident, they were much more able to protect themselves against the sexual attacker. Their results highlight the importance of self-efficacy in encouraging a person to persevere when dealing with difficulty, as this factor is directly linked to it. In a different sense, Kukic (2008) noticed that an indicator of academic success and of how an individual adjusts and interacts with university living was self-efficacy. One piece of research examined self-efficacy and resistance between Malaysia's foreign students (Sabouripour and Roslan, 2015).

2.4.3 Reciprocity between Perceived Social Support and Efficacy

In 2016, Narayanan et al stated in a study that the reciprocal relationship between mastery and perceived social support between single mothers was investigated by Green and Rodgers (2002) and reported that better mastery contributed to a stronger capacity to recognize and gain support from each other when required. Further, higher amounts of perceived social support contributed to greater mastery of the tasks performed. A related research by Luszczynska, Nihal and Schwarzer (2005), which sought to establish whether self-efficacy and perceived social support were indicators of resistance to cancer, showed that there was a more positive outlook for patients who used both personal and social capital. Such results suggest that there is a connection among perceived social support and self-efficacy that can connect to forecast resilience.

2.5 Perceived Social Support

Rodríguez et al in 2017 claimed in a research that perceived Social Support affects the alienation of students from certain families and friends, the formation of different partnerships, interactions within specific social groups, and the difficulties of

achieving stronger independence (Crede & Niehorster, 2012; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). A correlation between perceived social support and transition to a new way of living is seen in large numbers of studies (Abdullah, Kong, & Talib, 2014). When the adjustment process is not destructive, effective adjustment would rely primarily on students considering that their channels of social support can be trusted and can help them (Tinto, 1993). Brock, Sarason, Sanghvi, & Gurung (1998) suggested that a feeling of approval is a core conceptual aspect of perceived social support within a functioning paradigm which is based on childhood connections which ensure care and respect for the people in question regardless of individual behaviors and perceptions. The concept of approval thus offers a healthy foundation for students to consciously investigate and adjust to a new setting. Paramo, Martinez, Tinajero, & Rodriguez, (2014) posited a feeling of belonging as a good indicator of college lifestyle change that regulates the interaction between the experience of help and adjustment. Multiple studies have found that greater degrees of social support perceived by friends and colleagues are reflective, after the first year, of improved personal transition at university (Friedlander et al., 2007). The same research finds a strong, significant association among greater degrees of perceived social family support and national, educational and personal change. Oddly, research on the topic has provided contradictory findings concerning the impacts on educational attainment of perceived social support. Crede, & Niehorster, (2012) demonstrated how potential educational success is expected by presumed family help, but not social support. Many study findings, however, show that social support will not promote educational performance (Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). The developing research indicates that, via adaptation and promotional methods, perceived social encouragement can indirectly affect educational accomplishment (e.g., MacKinnon, 2012). In order to recognize the

various correlations produced by the multiple channels of perceived social support in contributing to educational success, additional study would be needed.

Zamani et al in 2017 mentioned in their study that, the social support perceived in one's social community is among the most significant variables that could influence individual mental health and satisfaction. Social support applies to the forces that help individuals to maintain themselves. The forces or influences that make society simpler for members of the social world can be described as social support. Alternately, the perspective generated by the group, social networks, and trusting partnerships can be described as social support. In addition, the idea of social support is defined by Sarason Levine Basham and Sarason (1983) as the presence and existence of trustworthy individuals who we truly enjoy, who are concerned about us and respect us. Social support can be described as psychological support, according to Yıldırım (1997), and either actual or perceived support are essential for a person (Lin, 1986). Personal functions alleviate the impact of tension on individuals and maintain their well-being. Cultural experiences, through self-esteem, can affect well-being (Lakey & Cohen, 2000). First, socially integrated individuals establish a more complex self as family, peers, and workers, and are less impacted by anxiety. Secondly, when facing pressure, those individuals have far more options to relate to. Thirdly, either in amount or consistency, they are well off as regards social experiences, which contribute to enhanced optimistic feelings and decreased harmful attitudes (Cohen Gottlieb & Underwood, 2000). Therefore, the person perceives psychological support in his or her community. Social support awareness can act as a shield to discomfoting events in general. Knowing that there is someone who can provide support as required gives the person trust, and therefore the mental condition and feelings of the person are

significantly affected (Cohen Gottlieb & Underwood, 2000). As a consequence, the social reinforcement that people obtain may have a significant effect on life fulfillment that forms the mental portion of psychological well-being. In a variety of experiments, this is found. Good associations between life fulfillment and social support were identified by Froh Yurkewicz and Kashdan (2009). Morgan et al. (2011) found important correlations between personality and perceived family social support in another study. Social support and self-esteem were found to be correlated with psychological well-being in Türkmen's (2012) research. From another research (Çevik, 2010), the factors of self-esteem, perceived family and peer support have been shown to be indicators of the subjective well-being ratings of undergrads and 63.5% of the overall variation in subjective well-being ratings was described by such factors. It is considered essential to investigate the mediating function of perceived social support and self-esteem in the connection between isolation and life satisfaction.

Perceived social support, instrumental, educational and psychological support are vital for the well-being of all, but essential for anyone who struggles to negotiate communication and social gaps existing in a foreign and unknown community (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002). Foreign students, who have built interpersonal relations with local peers more effectively are best suited to their foreign community (Poyrazli et al., 2004). This is because domestic students could offer insightful help (e.g. where to purchase a winter coat, how to shop at the deli), instrumental support (e.g. move to the shop, take to a party) and psychological support (e.g. offer warmth and advice) if a relationship grows. While necessary for adaptation, many foreign students are not connected to domestic students, mostly because it is simpler to make friends with fellow students who talk the same language and have common social

difficulties (Gareis, 2012; Bertram et al., 2014). Domestic friends can offer valuable help for a much more fulfilling interaction in the destination country, whereas students from the same country offer linguistic and social comfort. The assistance received from students from the same country can be supplemented by that provided by domestic students to support and encourage the general transition (Bertram et al., 2014). They promote a semester-long experience - classroom based activity aimed at increasing foreign and domestic student cultural contact to provide the domestic/international student ties an opportunity to shape. This would help to promote a stronger understanding of social assistance in particular (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002).

2.5.1 Sense of Belonging

Caligiuri et al in 2020 have mentioned that a sense of identity creates strong and healthy intimate relationships. For all humans, the "need to contribute is a strong, basic, and highly ubiquitous incentive" (Baumeister and Leary, 1995: 497). In the probably unknown host country, foreign students, who are away from their friends and families (i.e. their roots of identity), need a feeling of connection. Although inspiration is strong, due to unfamiliar cultural norms, potential communication barriers, and social gaps in how interactions are made, it can be difficult for international students to attain a feeling of connection with local students (Rivas et al., 2019). It is essential to discuss the feeling of connection of foreign students since it is connected to educational performance, personal experiences (Glass and Westmont, 2014) and pressure management capacity (Pittman and Richmond, 2008). Researchers claim that the semester-long experience - classroom based activity intended to enhance social contact between foreign and domestic students would better encourage, in part, a stronger feeling of connection to the university (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002).

2.6 Psychological Adjustment

Some students constitute a special category of individuals who, to meet their educational objectives, remain abroad. These students are referred to as 'student sojourners' and they travel to other countries to accomplish their educational objectives (Bochner, 2006). The mobility of foreign students (UNESCO, 2014) in recent decades and the number of mobile students has risen dramatically (Yu & Wright, 2016). The number of mobile students is still increasing steadily and is expected to increase to 15 million in the year 2025 (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

For both the host communities and foreign students, the higher education sector offers many mutual benefits. International students, for example, have the opportunity to join the international academic community.

These international students can develop and acquire more autonomy and extend their knowledge of other cultures (Bevis, 2002). The development of multicultural understanding and an appreciation of the host country help to enrich students (Bevis, 2002). In addition, they face a variety of cultural challenges that can have an impact on their psychological and emotional well-being (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). As a result, researchers are attempting to define psychological characteristics that are useful and protective. One of the characteristics that facilitate psychological adaptation and constructive adaptation is emotional intelligence (Vergara, Smith, & Keele, 2010).

2.6.1 Cultural Burden

Gebregergisa et al in a study in 2020 mentioned that many cross-cultural researchers now focus on acculturation. (Gui, Safdar, & Berry, 2016). Acculturation occurs when students integrate with two or more communities of different cultures and where

individuals experience cultural and psychological changes (Berry, 2005). Leaving behind one's family, friends, home, and going through the acculturation process can be frustrating and stressful for the students (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002). Acculturative stress is therefore a source of stress which sojourners encounter and which includes isolation, depression, anxiety, marginalization, increased psychosomatic symptoms and doubts about their personalities (Berry, 2005).

Acculturation has its difficulties and the results are mixed. Acculturation has been described by Berry (1997). There can be two outcomes. Firstly, individuals undergo adverse psychological and behavioral changes. These changes are made by the international students (they are the ones who are acculturating rather than members of the host community). (Ward, Bochner, & 2005 Furnham). Secondly, there can be cultural tension.

2.6.2 Depression

Depression is a psychological issue found in different demographic groups and particularly amongst university students because of educational, social and financial strains. (Shamsuddin et al., 2013).

This study indicated that the incidence of depression amongst university students is substantially higher than in college students (Ibrahim et al., 2013). Further, the incidence of depression is greater amongst foreign students than it is amongst domestic students. This can be attributed to the fact that foreign students not only leave behind their family and friends, but, are required to adapt to the host community's new social and cultural climate simultaneously. Numerous recorded studies have stated that owing to a variety of integration challenges, foreign students are vulnerable to health issues such as anxiety and depression .

2.6.3 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence was described by Salovey and Mayer (1990) as the capacity of an individual to identify and comprehend her emotions and feelings.

One of the psychological qualities assumed to promote the psychological change of students is emotional intelligence. Emotionally speaking, smart students are less likely to have major psychological issues such as depression and stress (Lin et al., 2012). Because emotional intelligence differs between cultures, (Ang & VanDyne, 2008), there is, as yet, no accurate and detailed apprehension of how important emotional intelligence is to the cross-cultural environment.

Emotional intelligence has been defined as a variety of non-cognitive skills, competencies, skills and abilities to qualify a person to deal with environmental requirements and stressors (Bar-On, 2006). The assumption is that it can facilitate and guide actions and thoughts (by signaling alterations to the milieu) (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

2.6.4 Depression and Cultural Stress

The literature on migrants in general found that depression was positively linked to cultural stress.

From the literature review, there appears to be a link between the cultural stress of students and depression. Nevertheless, because adjustment to the new environment is complex and affected by many variables, the relationship between cultural stress and depression may not always be clear and universal. In the United Kingdom, International students have been found to function successfully through the use of

successful coping strategies for making favorable decisions on problem solving, anxiety and depression treatment (Saad, 2015).

2.7 Social-Emotional Experiences and Wellbeing

Brunsting et al 2019 mentioned in their study that social-emotional experiences, or social connectedness, mirror how far students feel that they have become part of some social groups. (Strayhorn, 2018). A feeling of acceptance appears to help with academic performance (Glass & Westmont, 2014), mental health (Atri, Sharma, & Cottrell, 2007), and calm attitudes (Pittman & Richmond, 2007). Some research projects have shown a correlation between the wellbeing of foreign students and their connectedness with the domestic culture. Further, support from local students seems to help with the mental health of foreign students, whilst help from the university reduces stress (Bai, 2016; Bektas, Demir, & Bowden, 2009).

2.7.1 Culture and Culture Shock

International students often have to study in a language in which they are not fluent. Further, they can encounter ways of living which are contrary to the modus vivendi of their country of origin (including the imbibing of alcohol and attitudes to members of the opposite sex). This can result in what is known as ‘culture shock’ (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008), which can undermine the students’ attachment to their values and lead to a loss of identity and sense of wellbeing. (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008).

2.7.2 The Lives of International Students

It has been pointed out that foreign students become a minority in the host countries (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008). They also have to contend with homesickness (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007) and loneliness (Zhang & Brunton, 2007). These problems are compounded with fears concerning their physical safety (see Nyland, Forbes-

Mewett, & Marginson, 2010), which have been reported in the UK (UKCOSA, 2004). Racialism directed against foreign students can result in their congregating with similar foreign students (Schmitt, Spears, & Branscombe, 2003, p. 9).

2.8 Social–Emotional Development

Research has shown that good student/teacher relations are linked with positive outcomes for students (Cornelius-White, 2007). It has also been found that good relations with peers provide social support and practice with relationships (Carr, 2006). Negative peer relationships put students at risk of the development of academic problems and psychological difficulties (Carr, 2006; Snyder et al., 2003). Finally, high self-esteem is linked to mental stability and positive attitudes (Hosogi et al., 2012).

2.9 Conclusion

For both the host communities and foreign students, the higher education sector offers many mutual benefits. International students, for example, get the opportunity to become part of a wider international learning community, to gain more personal learning.

International students also benefit from growth and autonomy and greater cultural knowledge and skills (Bevis, 2002). The varied worldwide essence of the multicultural understanding and appreciation of the host country is also believed to enrich students (Bevis, 2002). Despite these benefits, international students also face a variety of cultural challenges that can impact their psychological and emotional well-being (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). As a result, researchers have started to seek out and define psychological characteristics that are useful and protective.

Among the mental characteristics that are thought to facilitate psychological adaptation and constructive adaptation is emotional intelligence. (Vergara, Smith, & Keele, 2010).

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this section, I shall explain in more detail the research strategy, the research method, the research methodology, the data collection methods, the sample selection, the research procedure and the form of data analysis.

3.2 Research Approach

3.2.1 Inductive Approach

The inductive method is the analysis technique which was adopted for the purposes of this report. When using this method, researchers start with basic findings that are then used to generate abstract hypotheses and results drawn from the analysis. The aim of the inductive method is to take account of the context in which the study effort is active. It is most suitable for small samples generating qualitative data. The key drawback of the inductive approach is that it creates abstract hypotheses and assumptions focused only on a limited number of results, thus impugning the reliability of study findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

With the inductive research method, a researcher starts by gathering knowledge which is important to his or her major subject. The researcher will then take a pause from data gathering after a large amount of data has been obtained, standing back to get a bird's eye view of her data. The researcher is looking for trends in the information at this point, trying to establish a model which might describe those trends. Therefore

when scientists use an inductive strategy, they begin with a collection of observations and then move from those specific experiences to a more general set of suggestions about those experiences. They switch from data to theory, in other words, from the particular to the general.

On the other hand, researchers who follow a deductive method take the steps mentioned sooner and reverse their order. They begin with a social theory that they find persuasive and then with knowledge they check its meaning; that is, they move from a general level to a more particular one. The method which people usually connect with empirical inquiry is the deductive approach to analysis. The researcher observes what others have done, reads current theories about whichever phenomenon he or she is researching, and then checks hypotheses arising from those theories.

3.2.2 Why the Inductive Approach?

The aims of the inductive approach are a) to compress raw textual data into a short, summary format; (b) to create explicit relations among the goals of the assessment or study and the overview results extracted from the raw data; and (c) to build a basis for the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are visible in the raw data. An easily utilized and standardized collection of procedures for evaluating qualitative data that could yield accurate and valid results is given by the general inductive method. While the general inductive approach is not as robust as some other theoretical or model creation analytical methods, in the sense of oriented assessment problems, it offers a clear, direct approach for deriving findings.

3.3 Methodology

3.3.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative analysis was used to fulfill the aims of the thesis. The key feature of qualitative research is that it is often suitable for small samples, although its findings are not observable and measurable. Its fundamental benefit, which also includes its main variation from quantitative research, is that it provides a full description and analysis of the topic of the study, without limiting the scope of the research and the nature of the responses of the participants (Collis & Hussey, 2003) (Collis & Hussey, 2003) (Collis & Hussey, 2003).

The efficacy of qualitative research, however, is strongly dependent on the expertise and powers of researchers, although the findings might not be regarded as credible since they come more from the individual opinions and explanations of the researcher. Since it is more suitable for small samples, it is also dangerous for qualitative study findings to be viewed as representing the views of a larger society (Bell, 2005).

3.4 Research Method

The goal of this research is to analyze the effect of academic tourism on international students' social-emotional experiences and well-being at the Eastern Mediterranean University in North Cyprus. Some other studies in other nations, such as the United States, Europe and Australia, have researched and reported on the social capital of foreign students or their psychological health issues. This thesis focuses on foreign students who travel to North Cyprus to study.

3.4.1 Research Instrument

Semi-structured interviews were used for the purposes of this study. I used in-depth, individual interviews which aimed to identify the emotional reactions, feelings and

opinions of participants about a specific topic. The primary benefit of individual meetings is that they involve individual and direct links between interviewers and interviewees. (Fisher, 2005, Wilson, 2003). Moreover, semi-structured interviews provide flexibility in terms of the interview flow, leaving room for the generation of conclusions that were not originally intended to be drawn about a study topic. There is, however, a threat that the interview could deviate from the research goals and targets specified (Gill & Johnson, 2002). The conduct of the study involved the use of a semi-structured interview. In order to guide the interview towards the fulfillment of study goals, certain questions were prepared, but during the meetings, additional questions were found.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is a technique which enables researchers to infer demographic details on the basis of conclusions from a subset of society without having to investigate each person. Reducing the number of people in a research project reduces the cost and the workload and could make it simpler to get information of a high quality, but this must be balanced against having a sufficiently big sample size with sufficient power to detect a real association.

In study terms, a sample is a group of individuals, objects, or items for measurement taken from a bigger population. To make sure that we can generalize the findings from the study sample to the population as a whole the sample must be representative of the demographic. The sample is a fewer set of cases selected from a bigger pool by a researcher and generalized to the demographic.

Simple random sampling lets the sampling mistake be calculated, as with all probability sampling techniques, and decreases selection bias. A particular benefit is that it is the most straightforward probability sampling method. A drawback of simple random sampling is that there might not be enough people in the sample. A full sample size can also be hard to define and difficult to obtain particularly if various forms of communication (email, phone, post) are required and your sample units are scattered over a large geographical area.

3.5.1 Data Collection

I created categories in order to make it easier to gather data to be used in the selection of the participants:

- 1) The first category includes both newly arrived students in North Cyprus and those students who have been studying in North Cyprus for a while.
- 2) The second category includes students from areas with a variety of cultures and languages, such as the United States, Southern Africa and Asia, in order to have a better estimation of the impacts on their mental wellbeing of being an international student.

As mentioned above the study sample contains students that are new and those who have lived in Cyprus for a longer period of time, and students with various cultures and lifestyles. The questionnaires are distributed between students studying at the various faculties of the Eastern Mediterranean University.

3.5.2 Sample Size

The college management and the registrar's office were contacted to procure information about the numbers of students.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS

This study tries to investigate the impacts of educational tourism on social-emotional experiences and the well-being of international students. In order to reach the objectives of the study, fifteen students have been interviewed. The results are explained in different parts as shown below. The demographic profile of the interviewees is presented in the following table 4.1.

Table 4.1: The Demographic Profile of the Interviewees

Respondent	Age	Educational degree	nationality	Gender
R1	25	Master	Nigerian	Female
R2	33	Bachelor	Lebanese	Female
R3	18	Bachelor	Nigerian	Female
R4	26	PHD	Malian	Male
R5	24	Master	Nigerian	Male
R6	20	Bachelor	Azerbaijani	Female
R7	25	Bachelor	Nigerian	Female
R8	30	Master	Irani	Male
R9	32	Master	Iranian	Male
R10	18	Bachelor	Nigerian	Female
R11	24	Master	Palestinian	Female
R12	38	Master	Nigerian	Male
R13	25	Master	Kenyan	Male
R14	28	Bachelor	Azerbaijani	Female
R15	31	Master	Nigerian	Female

4.1 Definitions

Percy, Kostere, Kostere (2015), considered four steps for analyzing data in qualitative research according to Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Qualitative Data Analysis

Step	Definition
Coding	The process of identifying and labeling recurrent words or concepts.
Categorization	In which researchers seek to group patterns that they found in data into relevant categories.
Constant Comparison	A process in which gathered and coded data will be compared with existing findings and analyzed continuously in order to develop concepts.
Thematic Analysis	Researchers examine the data carefully in order to find common themes and ideas.

For this study, in-depth interviews were performed in order to obtain accurate findings. Data was evaluated by thoroughly and correctly reading all descriptions and then highlighting the appropriate details and bolding each section of the literature review with the associated information.

4.2 Coding

Akinyode (2018), defined coding as the mechanism that helps investigators to identify and organize data extracted from documents into concrete data by attaching words to labels in order to locate similar theories and categories. The aim of this data processing method is to simplify the data into meaningful and understandable data. The interviews should be a closely reviewed section during the process of coding data to assign labels to terms and phrases and simplify information into appropriate and manageable data. The categorization stage can lead to this stage. Codes are presented in the following table.

Table 4.3: Coding Table

Item	Code
1	Being independent.
2	Communication problems.
3	Adapting to difficulties in a new place.
4	Unfamiliar cultural issues.
5	Facing disrespect.
6	Panic attacks.
7	Safety issues.
8	Language barriers.
9	Educational issues.
10	Acculturative stress.
11	Financial issues.
12	Homesickness.
13	Increasing anxiety.
14	Depression.

15	Culture shock.
16	Increasing sadness.
17	Low self-esteem.
18	Focusing on dreams.
19	Improving language skills.
20	Making international or local friends.
21	Joining public events.
22	Psychological therapy.
23	Listening to music.
24	Visiting new places.
25	Increasing social media usage.
26	Practicing favorite sports or joining a gym.

4.3 Categorization

Costantino, Raffaghelli, Alvarez, Moran (2012), described categorization as a tool that helps researchers to examine and evaluate evidence by grouping it into divisions that are important. Using this methodology, the investigator attempts to interpret what participants communicate in transcripts. In this research, four general groups are considered according to the following table on the basis of coded data and further review, including types of psychological issues, reasons for changes in psychological wellbeing, impacts of these changes on students and some solutions to solve these problems.

Table 4.4: Categorization Table

Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
Type of changes in psychological wellbeing	Reasons for changes in psychological wellbeing	Impacts of changes on students	Coping strategies
Being independent	Educational issues	Homesickness	Focusing on dreams
Communication problem	Acculturative stress	Increasing anxiety	Improving language skills
Adapting difficulties in a new place	Financial issues	Depression	Making international or local friends
Unfamiliar cultural issues		Culture chock	Joining public events
Facing disrespect		Increasing sadness	Psychological therapy
Panic attacks		Low self-esteem	Listening to music
Safety issues			Visiting new places
Language barriers			Increasing social media usage
			Practicing favourite sport or joining a gym

4.4 Types of Changes in Psychological Well-being of Students

First of all, almost 90 percent of respondents claimed that they had communication problems after they arrived in North Cyprus, especially in the first year of their education. We found that 14 interviewees had difficulties with communicating and having contact with others for a variety of reasons. As one of the respondents claimed:

"I did not have such social communication like before and after some months I have faced with homesickness, I felt somehow depressed" (R3)

Another student said:

"I had huge problem with communicating with different people, because of my weak language skills, my self-confidence decreased and I felt lonely a lot." **(R4)**

A bachelor student from Nigeria declared that:

"Lack of social abilities to communicate with other people, they did not understand me well so even for a simple shopping I had many difficulties." **(R5)**

One bachelor student from Lebanon explained that:

"Lack of abilities to communicate with others and did not have any experience before, so when I came here and I was alone with these changes, because I didn't have any friends at first and I did not know anyone here, though it effected my psychological wellbeing in a negative way." **(R8)**

One student from Nigeria said:

"Yes, I felt lonely, in fact, I still do, I feel depressed also because being here, I don't know how to communicate specially with others who are from different countries with different cultures and languages. I don't have friends and also my family members are back home, so I feel lonely, depressed and even have suicide thoughts many times." **(R10)**

There are other two main problems that students have faced during their sojourn in Cyprus. One of these was making connections and communicating with other people, local or international, because of the language barrier. This happens because not all students speak English well and also not all of them know Turkish, which is the national language in north Cyprus. The other main problem involved difficulties adapting to a new place. Thirteen interviewees discussed these issues. For example:

"Mostly the environment was different and the new unfamiliar place with a new language which I did not learn before and a new currency different from my home country and also a new culture." **(R11)**

“Language barrier is the huge problem I had in order to interact with others or wanna join a social group.” **(R12)**

"When I came here first I felt alone and I was asking myself why I am here and I couldn't study because I didn't know English well and I couldn't make friends ... but after I year, I found these problems not that serious for me." **(R13)**

"Lack of interactions, lack of friends, I was new in a place and I had no Turkish skills, low self-confidence, and staying at home because of lockdown and feel isolated. And I did not have any experience from before, because I have never lived alone before I come to Cyprus. It was difficult for me to improve my language skills and find more friends." **(R14)**

"Lack of language skills specially local language here is different from my language so it was so hard for me to do my daily life such as talking to local people or to find a job or to go shopping." **(R15)**

"I had huge problem with communicating with different people, because of my weak language skills, my self-confidence decreased and I felt lonely a lot." **(R4)**

"I had language based problems, sometimes in the class and also outside, it was hard for other people to understand me well." **(R5)**

"Language barrier was the most important and biggest problem I have faced in this multicultural environment." **(R8)**

"Meeting new friends, being in a new place, new culture and different languages are sort of problems I had faced after I came here." **(R9)**

Another important factor that has been found in this study concerned cultural issues. Ten students stated that they had faced many problems due to cultural differences, and as a result, they have experienced culture shock since coming to North Cyprus. Here are some of the respondents' answers:

"Being alone and not having people who are familiar with the culture to help to adapt to the place made it quite hard first and also being new to the whole university education." **(R10)**

Another respondent said:

"Just the difference I have experienced was the culture here and I faced a little culture chock but after some time I could adapt myself to the new environment." **(R13)**

One student claimed that:

"Just the difference I have experienced was the culture here and I faced a little culture chock and also the language misunderstandings made it hard to communicate and join a team or social groups." **(R14)**

Another interviewee said:

"Yes, I have experienced culture shock specially the first weeks I arrived here, I didn't feel safe and I was worry about the thieves or the dogs at night." **(R4)**

Another respondent said:

"At first to adapt in a new place was hard, it was an unfamiliar culture and not very close to what my culture is in my home country." **(R5)**

One student claimed:

"Yes, I have experienced culture shock. Not feeling so safe during night because of dogs, not having so many friends, staying alone and missing home." **(R6)**

Another interviewee stated:

"Yes but not too much because my culture is close to culture here, both countries are Muslim countries but though I had experienced some culture shock due to a very multicultural place that I arrived." **(R7)**

4.5 Reasons for the Changes in Psychological Well-being of Students

The findings revealed that most of the respondents (9 respondents) had educational issues during their stay in North Cyprus. Some of them claimed that the educational system is different in their country and that, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, all classes were online, so most students were under the pressure of using new platforms and ways of communicating in the class.

One student from Lebanon claimed that:

"Yes, sure I felt a lot specially last year because of Covid 19, I had to stay in my room alone and it was a bad experience and I was under pressure and felt depression. I had internet problems that increased my pressure about studying online." **(R8)**

One interviewer answered like this:

"Sometimes I do feel depression at study online, scaring to make mistakes and receive bad marks but I felt lonely because I had few friends in dorms and during lock down I had problems to contact my friends or it was hard to study together during exam periods." **(R11)**

Another student claimed:

"I didn't have too much problem about this issue just I had lack of skills and abilities to cope with new problems and situations that might happen. When our classes became online, not all of us were able to use the micro soft teams very well, and especially when we had online quiz or test, there were such big pressure on us to deal with." **(R12)**

Another interviewer answered like this:

"Studying in Cyprus is just a class room experience without industrial experience so it destroys the hope of many studies leaving their own country and traveled alone to Cyprus to study, I felt upset and disappointed and nervous about my future." **(R14)**

Another issue that some of the respondents experienced related to their finances; especially big changes in currency rates and increasing prices in many different countries. Consequently, many students faced financial problems concerning both their living and university expenses. Here are some of the answers that they have provided about their pecuniary problems:

"I thought I might be able to find at least a part time job to manage some of my expenses and costs but unfortunately there is lack of job opportunity here in Cyprus and this issue had push me under pressure." (R1)

Another student claimed:

"It was not easy to adapt immediately but gradually I did. When I came here, my family has sent me some amount of money and they were expected that amount to be enough but because of currency rate issues, that amount was not actually enough for me and I ran out of money most of the times, but I have never discussed this issue with my family cause I didn't want them to be worried, but at the same time I had experiencing very stressful situation and I was under too much pressure." (R3)

One interviewer answered like this:

"Being familiar and adapting all cultures around me. I was working before lock down happened, so after that I lost my job and I became jobless, losing my salary, so it was a big problem for me because I was not able to handle my expenses and those time I faced many financial problems, my house rent, my daily expenses, food..., that situation was really hard and increased my anxiety." (R4)

4.6 Impacts of the Changes on Students

Most of the participants answered that they have faced homesickness and that they missed their home country, whilst others claimed that studying abroad has increased their levels of depression and that they felt sad most of the time. Some also explained that their confidence decreased and that they had low self-esteem. The following are some of their answers:

One student explained:

"I felt lonely first when I arrived and also it increased my anxiety especially during exam periods. Sometimes I really miss my home back in my country. I want to have my parents beside me and their support." **(R2)**

Another respondent said:

"Increased anxiety and I felt somehow depressed, I did not have such social communication like before and after some months I have faced with homesickness." **(R3)**

Other student has explained like this:

"Because I couldn't make so many friends I felt a little depressed and I missed my home, I was staying in the house most of the times because of no friendships or relationships with others." **(R4)**

And one more interviewee has explained:

"I had low self-esteem because I couldn't make friends or communicate well, I was staying home most of the times and it increased my anxiety." **(R5)**

One student stated:

"My anxiety increased and I was stressed too much for not being accepted by other people and not be able to make any friends." **(R6)**

4.7 Coping Strategies to Deal with these Problems

In order to deal with these problems, some of the respondents devised strategies such as focusing on their dreams or improving their language skills. One of them recommended psychological therapy and some of them suggested visiting new places and getting out more. However, most of the respondents have mentioned practicing a sport or joining a gym. Here are some of their solutions below:

" Dreaming, talking more with my family, use more social media and spend more time on watching my favorite movies and songs." **(R7)**

"Being part of a group, finding close friends, improve skills and try to learn other languages." **(R8)**

"Trying to be a source of happiness to myself no matter I have friends or not. Trying to do the things I like most to make myself happy, watching movies, listening to music, cooking and so on..." **(R10)**

"Chat with friends and play table tennis or hang around with them at the city." **(R11)**

" I tried to go out more and to find more friends specially who are from my home country so I could communicate and understand them better and I tried to find a part time job." **(R13)**

Chapter 5

RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Discussion

This research aims to investigate the effects and influences of educational tourism on social-emotional experiences and the well-being of international students at the Eastern Mediterranean University in Famagusta, Northern Cyprus. In this chapter we provide a summary of the study.

This study was a qualitative study that tried to find out the impacts of educational tourism on international students' well-being. Semi-structured interviews were used with 15 foreign students between the ages of 18 and 35. They graduated with various degrees of education such as undergraduate, master, and Phd. Each interview was transcribed and then coded to analyze it.

There are two main reasons for changes in psychological wellbeing which students have faced during their stay in Cyprus. One of these was the difficulty which they had in making connections and communications with other people, local or international, as the result of a language barrier. This happens because not all students speak English well and also not all of them know Turkish, which is the national language in north Cyprus. The other one was adapting to difficulties in a new place. A total of 13 students discussed these issues in the interviews.

Perceived social support, educational support and psychological support are vital for the well-being of all, but essential for anyone who is struggling to communicate in a foreign and unknown community (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002). Those international students who have built interpersonal relations with their local peers are more likely to be able to cope with any problems which they might encounter. (Poyrazli et al., 2004). This is because domestic students can offer insightful help (e.g. provide advice on where to purchase a winter coat, and on how to shop at the deli), instrumental support (e.g. help with shopping and provide invitations to parties where more contacts can be made) and psychological support (e.g. offer warmth and advice) if a relationship grows.

Another important factor that has been found in this study was having to deal with an unfamiliar culture. A total of ten students mentioned that they had faced many problems due to cultural differences and as a result they experienced culture shock when they came to Cyprus. Newsome in 2016 mentioned in a study that it has been argued (Tarry, 2011) that the practice of travelling overseas for higher education could have the effect of transforming cultures. There are various views on what international students gain by studying abroad. Some scholars argue that the purpose of studying abroad is to gain experience in the host country rather than to abandon cultural heritage and adopt the culture in which international students live for a relatively short period (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008; Kingston & Forland, 2008). Language is an important part of this process. However, in addition to being required to learn in the medium of a foreign language, these students are sometimes challenged at the level of deeply ingrained cultural and religious taboos, such as in relation to lifestyles, social rules, social behaviours (e.g., the consumption of alcohol), gender relations and sexual

mores. Clearly there is potential for disruption and conflict in this situation. International students face a variety of cultural challenges that can have an impact on their psychological and emotional well-being (Smith & 2011 Khawaja). As a result, researchers have started to seek out and define psychological characteristics that are useful and protective. Among the mental characteristics that are thought to facilitate psychological adaptation and constructive adaptation is emotional intelligence, the students' mental health in a new setting (Vergara, Smith, & Keele, 2010).

The findings revealed that most of the respondents had (9 respondents) educational issues during their study in Cyprus. Some of them claimed that the educational system in their country is different to the one which exists in Cyprus. They also stated that due to the Covid 19 pandemic all classes were online, so most students experienced stress as a result of having use new platforms and ways of communication during lessons.

Depression is one of the most severe mental health issues and it is found in all demographic groups. University students are among the most prone classes of the population because of educational, social and financial strain. Depression Afflicted; (Shamsuddin et al., 2013). Most of the participants answered that they have faced homesickness and that they missed their home countries, but others also claimed that studying abroad has increased their level of depression and that they felt sad most of the time, and, some also explained that their confidence decreased and that they had low self-esteem. The number of students studying abroad is more likely to grow compared with the domestic student population with the consequence that there is likely to be a plethora of cultural problems such as cultural shock, mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, homesickness, perceived racism, and bias (Mori, 2000; Rosenthal, Russell, & Thomson, 2006; Sandhu, 1994) .From the review of literature,

there appears to be a link between the cultural stress of students and their depression. Nevertheless, since an adjustment to the new environment is complex and affected by many variables, the aforementioned positive relationship may not always be clear and universal.

5.2 Conclusion

This study considers the impact of educational tourism on social-emotional experience and the well-being of international students who are studying at the Eastern Mediterranean University in Famagusta, North Cyprus. Firstly, this research tries to first identify how studying abroad has affected the psychological well-being of students. Secondly, it tries to understand the reasons for these changes. Thirdly, it endeavors to identify and investigate the problems (and the impacts of these problems) that students may have due to these changes, and, fourthly, to find coping strategies to deal with the problems. There are large numbers of studies looking at the impacts of tourism on the psychological well-being of international students. However, since the focus of this research is on the impacts of tourism on the psychological well-being and mental health of students, areas such as physical health will not be reviewed in detail. The study indicates that educational tourism has impacts on international students' social emotional experiences and on their psychological wellbeing. Their lives will change as students travel and leave their country to study and live in another country. The types of changes which they experience include being independent, having communication problems, difficulties in adapting to a new place, unfamiliar cultural issues, facing disrespect, panic attacks, safety issues and language barriers. Further, these changes can lead to educational issues, acculturative stress and financial issues. These changes bring other impacts in their lives such as homesickness, increasing anxiety, depression, culture chock, increasing sadness and low self-esteem.

This research has suggested some solutions to solve these issues or problems that international students can have after moving to another country. These strategies are: focusing on dreams, improving language skills, making international or local friends, joining public events, psychological therapy, listening to music, visiting new places, increasing social media usage and practicing a favorite sport or joining a gym.

5.3 Limitation and Recommendation for Future Studies

During the collection of data, the first challenge this study encountered was that it was carried out at the time of the Covid 19 pandemic. Most of the students have left the island. The Eastern Mediterranean University, on the other hand, has been teaching online since last February 2020; so it was difficult to locate students.

The second issue was interacting with some students from Iran or some Arab countries. Some of these students are unable to speak English very well, and it was difficult for them to understand questions about the interview or to respond in depth to what the study was looking for.

A third challenge was that the exodus of students as a result of Covid 19 meant that the majority of respondents were from only two countries, Nigeria and Iran.

A suggestion for future research is that questions be asked in not only English but in other languages as well. Another suggestion is that future research may take into account other dimensions of psychological disorders or any other psychological problems that foreign students may experience and concentrate on them.

In Smith and Khawaja's(2011) overview (e.g., language), researchers should propose expanding conceptual constructs to incorporate non-social variables to increase

comprehension of the causes and interrelationships of factors that affect the social-emotional and well-being outcomes of foreign students. This information can help highlight important elements where students require assistance in the undergraduate or graduate student period. At the beginning and end of their university courses, students requiring more assistance will comply with the concept of adjustments of the life course theory, which are periods of increased social and emotional uncertainty. Intervention studies should also be influenced by the findings of the present study as it illustrates the possible significance of such experiences and help.

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