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## Motivation of Students Studying Abroad: Case of Foreign Students in European University of LEFKE (EUL)

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the factors which determine students' motivation to study abroad and effective factors in choosing country. A survey was conducted to some international students at the European university of Lefke in Northern Cyprus.

Hundred foreign students (non-Turkish students) at the European university of Lefke in Northern Cyprus were interviewed by applying convenience sampling and face to face method. The main findings of the research are as follows.

The most important factors of studying abroad are "experiencing another student life in another country", "experience another culture", "future work possibilities", and "personal experience" respectively.

The most important factors of choosing country in studying abroad are "It was important with a low crime rate in the country", "It was important with high education level in the country", and "It was important with the culture in the country" respectively.

**Keywords:** Higher Education Institutions, Motivation, Studying Abroad, Case of EUL

### Introduction

In today's intense competitive environment the success of institutions depends on their capacity and ability to meet expectations. Contemporary concept of quality is defined as the ability to meet the needs and expectations in relation to goods or services" (Kovancı, 2003; Cited by Serin and Aytekin, 2009, p. 84). According to principles of customer orientation which is an important element of quality standards, quality expectations and perceptions of university students and

their satisfactions are crucial for the competitiveness of higher education institutions ((İçli and Vural, 2010; Cited by Karahan, 2013, p. 3).

According to Karahan (2013), there are six factors affecting the quality adequacy of higher education institutions. These are Physical conditions, social areas and activities, education and training content, career support, instructor qualifications, and management and staff qualifications.

In the light of the above, main motivations of foreign students for studying abroad and choosing country are vital factors in planning marketing and educational activities especially for higher education institutions determining foreign students as target market.

“The reasons underlying behavior” are referred to as motivation (Guay et al., 2010, p. 712). Motivation can be broadly defined as “the attribute that moves us to do or not to do something” (Broussard & Garrison, 2004, p.106). The purpose of this study is to discover what criteria drives (motivates) students to study abroad, from European University of Lefke University. In addition to this, main motivations of choosing country to study are within the context of the study.

The European University of Lefke located in North Cyprus strives with great effort and commitment to see that she becomes internationally recognized among universities within the country and abroad. This process is aimed at increasing the quality and standard of the education and to also prepare students to face whatever challenge might come their way both nationally and internationally. In European university of lefke students who have come to study have many different factors and reasons that encouraged them to come over to of which these factors are of great importance to the university as it could be of great importance and also help the university properly plan their market strategies when they advertise the school

This subject is very important, because there are more and more chances for the students to study abroad who are beginning to explore the potential of the opportunities of a life time and also to help the school get international recognition and improve the standard and quality of education (Tsai, 2011).

The concept of this work can be described: is based on secondary sources. However, information from primary sources was also needed too; a research was made through the use of a questionnaire for the students of the European University of Lefke.

### **Literature Review**

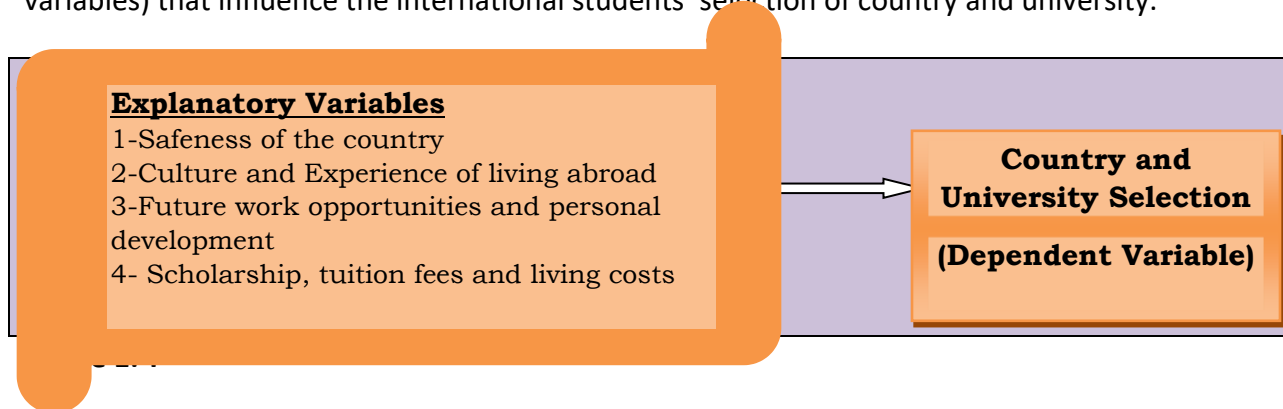
The noteworthy previous studies about motivations of studding abroad and choosing country are as follows:

- According to Bridgestock (2014), the answers to question of “Why study abroad? are 1) Study at a university with a strong international reputation, 2) Experience life in a different culture, 3) Benefit from scholarships or lower tuition fees, 4) Improve your language skills, and 5) Start building an international professional network.
- According to Zeeshan and his friends (2013), foreign students’ motivation for studying in Malaysia are 1) low tuition fee, 2) safeness of the country, and 3) culture.
- According to Meid (2003) USA students are primary motivated by three cultural reasons. These reasons are indicated: 1) to travel the world; 2) to know more about other countries; and 3) to improve language knowledge.

- According to Zweig et al (2004), students who are going to study abroad believe that it would add them a value as professionals.
- According to studies of Kelo et al (2006); Lanzendorf (2006) students expect the foreign education would open to them huge career opportunities and advantage in job search upon returning to home country.
- According to Waechter & Maiworm (2006) personal development, ideas search and lack of opportunities in particular sphere in home country are other motives to study abroad.
- According to Bokareva (2014) The most driving motives to study abroad among Russian students are: 1) to get cultural experience, 2) to emigrate or to get diploma of foreign University
- According to Macready and Tucker (2011) Motivations for studying abroad are 1) Exploring cultural heritage, 2) Experience of living abroad, 3) Willingness to travel, 4) Better academic offerings, and 5) Professional career boost.
- According to Kavakas (2013) motivations of US University students who express an interest in considering studying abroad are 1) Need recognition, 2) Search for information, 3) Sources of information, 4) Information processing, 5) Pre-purchase alternative evaluation, 6) Purchase, and 6) Post-consumption evaluation.
- According to DEİK (2013, pp. 23-25), the most important factors affecting the international students' selection of country and school are willingness of improving their life experiences; Prosperity and security level in the country; The prestige of the country; The proportion of expenditure to be made during training; Convenience in the visa process, and ease of finding a job after graduation.
- According to Polat (2012), the factor that influences students most in department and university selection is the physical conditions of the university. The city where the university is located, socio-cultural facilities and the informal information, rumors, and stories about the university are other influential factors.
- According to Ming (2010), the independent variables that have been identified to have influenced of students' college choice decision are location, academic programme, college reputation, educational facilities, cost, availability of financial aid, employment opportunities, advertising, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), representatives and campus visit.
- According to Tekelioğlu and the others (2012), the most important factors influencing foreign students in choosing Turkey and her universities are quality of education in universities, scientific success, scholarship opportunities, education and living costs, geography, religion, language and cultural similarities, promotion and the orientation additives of Turkish schools abroad.
- In addition to findings of literature above, some authors consisting of Bass (2005); Fam and Gray (2000); Hiu (2001); Hung et al (2005); MeiLi (2007); Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) reported the following factors as affecting the movement of international students: geographical proximity, Climate and environmental conditions, lifestyle, security status, racial discrimination, advices of relatives, family and the friends, ease of finding a job after graduation and possibility of immigration opportunities, scholarship opportunities, scientific qualifications of the university and its world success, University attitudes towards

international education and its quotas and Tuition fees, living expenses, travel expenses and social costs.

In the light of the main variable above the following conceptual model shown in Figure can be formulated. This model indicates the most important factors (Explanatory or independent variables) that influence the international students' selection of country and university.



### The Model of Main Factors Influencing the International Students' Country and University Selection

#### Methodology

As stated from the beginning of this research, the objective and purpose of this research is to find out what motivates students to study abroad, looking also at factors that influence a student's decision and also the impact it creates at the end of the study. This also has an impact on the schools, countries and economic of both nations as the students tend to acquire new knowledge, gain new experience, and learn from other culture and language that he or she can take back to his or her country to impact that into the society. On the other hand the country to which the student goes to study in also gaining economically as the students get to contribute financially via school fees, accommodation and feeding and it also creates international recognition for both the school and the country all over the world. In this research our target is to answer the question of "what motivates students to study abroad". We define what motivation is all about. A motivation is a driving force which enables an individual or groups to achieve their set aims, goals, the commitment, and passion, persistency of the people whose quality and attitudes we want to explore. Next in line is to examine some of the factors that influence student's decisions. The challenge that we encountered in planning was in coming out with the best method to carry out this experiment. The concept employed was to contact those who are presently studying abroad it is important to note this upon return, a student upon completing his/her studies abroad most have gone through and overcome some obstacles which prepares such a student to face whatever task that lines ahead, such a student is full of potential, courage, confidence, strength, skills and experience.

The method employed in this research to get information is via a questionnaire. 100 questionnaires were shared among the students, upon returns 99 questionnaires were retrieved from the students of which one was missing. The questionnaire contained two main parts which are Part 1 and part 2. In this regard, scale used in the study of Bernunger and Mattsson (2008) is adopted in this search, conducted in (EUL, 2015) via a

questionnaire which consists of two parts. Part 1 consist of a demographic structure containing information of gender either female or male, while the second part, part 2 consist of information on, A How important were the laid down statement when deciding to study, B How did one value the following statement when choosing country of study?

In the quest to find out what factors motivate students to study abroad, a research was made and conducted via the use of a questionnaire in the month of July 2015 at the European University of Lefke which happened to be a summer period.

The questions were closely structured and evaluated base on the following ratings; very important, quite important, either or, quite unimportant and finally very unimportant.

Statistical methods used to test the hypothesis above are percentage analysis, reliability test and "one sample t test".

### Findings and Discussions

The findings of research are firstly given as frequency and percentage tables. Secondly, one sample t test and reliability test of two scales used are conducted. Finally, figures for the influential factors in studying abroad and choosing country are presented.

**Table 1** explains the outcome statistics between the number of females and males that answered the questionnaire. Going by the percentage, the percentage of male that answered the questionnaire is 71%, while that of the female is 28%. A total of 99% answered the questionnaire.

**Table 1: The Question of Gender Information**

Category	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
FEMALE	28	28,3	28,3
MALE	71	71,7	100,0
Total	99	100,0	

### Reliability Test

Using the SPSS, the Cronbach's alpha value where computed in other to help check the dimensionality of the scale using factor analysis. Data set that contains about 20 test items A1-A9 and B1-B11. The alpha coefficient for the two sections of the questionnaire which the first table gave us a value of .816 out of 9 items sand the second table gave us .835 out of 11 items which suggest the second part of the questionnaire have relatively high internal consistency and reliability is also high in the second section. Note that a reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research situations (George and Mallery, 2001).

### One Sample T Test

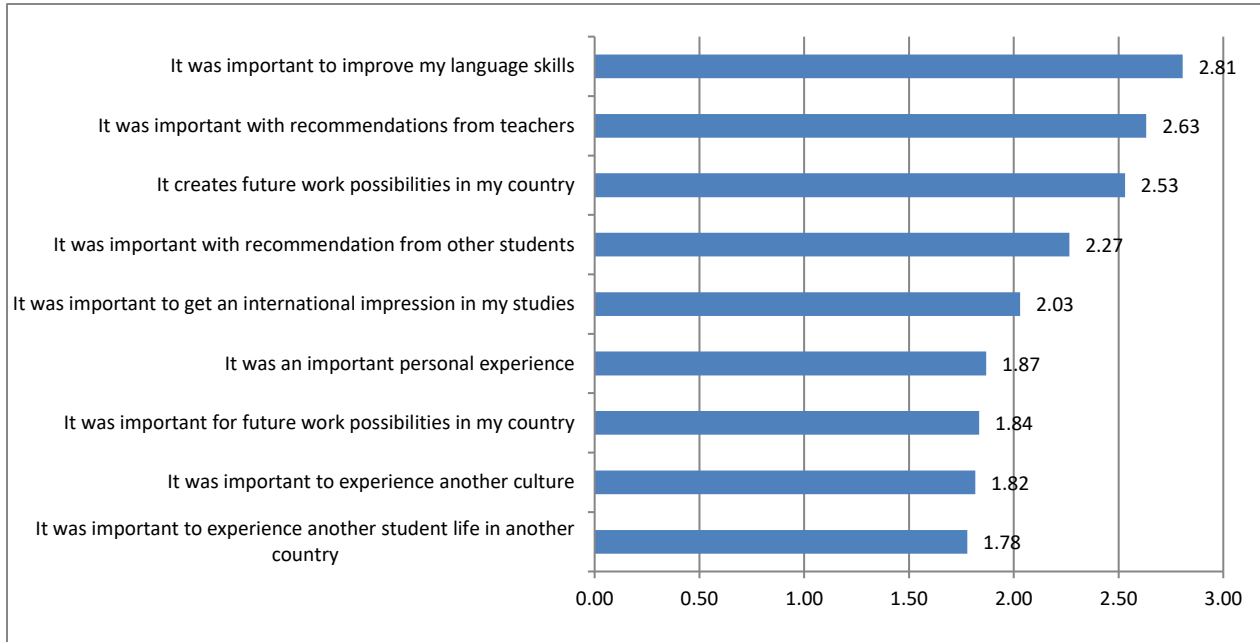
One-Sample Statistics for the Factors of Studying Abroad and the Factors of Choosing Country is given in Table 2. Figure 1 and figure 2 are derived from this table.

**Table 2: One-Sample Statistics for the Factors of Studying Abroad and the Factors of Choosing Country**

Cod e	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
A1	It was important to improve my language skills	2,8061*	1,61602	,16324
A2	It was important to experience another culture	1,8163	,94538	,09550
A3	It was important to experience another student life in another country	1,7778	1,04545	,10507
A4	It was important for future work possibilities in my country	1,8351	1,04762	,10637
A5	It was an important personal experience	1,8687	1,07520	,10806
A6	It was important to get an international impression in my studies	2,0303	1,15577	,11616
A7	It was important with recommendation from other students	2,2653	1,11735	,11287
A8	It creates future work possibilities in my country	2,5306	1,28596	,12990
A9	It was important with recommendations from teachers	2,6327	1,41704	,14314
B1	It was important with the climate as a deciding factor	2,9091	1,36345	,13703
B2	It was important with recommendations from family and relatives	2,5510	1,19382	,12059
B3	It was important with recommendations from friends	2,5253	1,11889	,11245
B4	It was important with the culture in the country	2,4388	1,32437	,13378
B5	It was an important with closeness to my country	3,0202*	1,26958	,12760
B6	It was important with prior experiences in the country	2,8283*	1,39270	,13997
B7	It was important that family/friends lived in that country	3,1939*	1,38964	,14037
B8	It was important with low transport cost to the country	2,8384*	1,36805	,13749
B9	It was important with low expenses in the country	2,6162	1,31481	,13214
B10	It was important with high education level in the country	2,2474	1,30728	,13273
B11	It was important with a low crime rate in the country	2,0303	1,24912	,12554

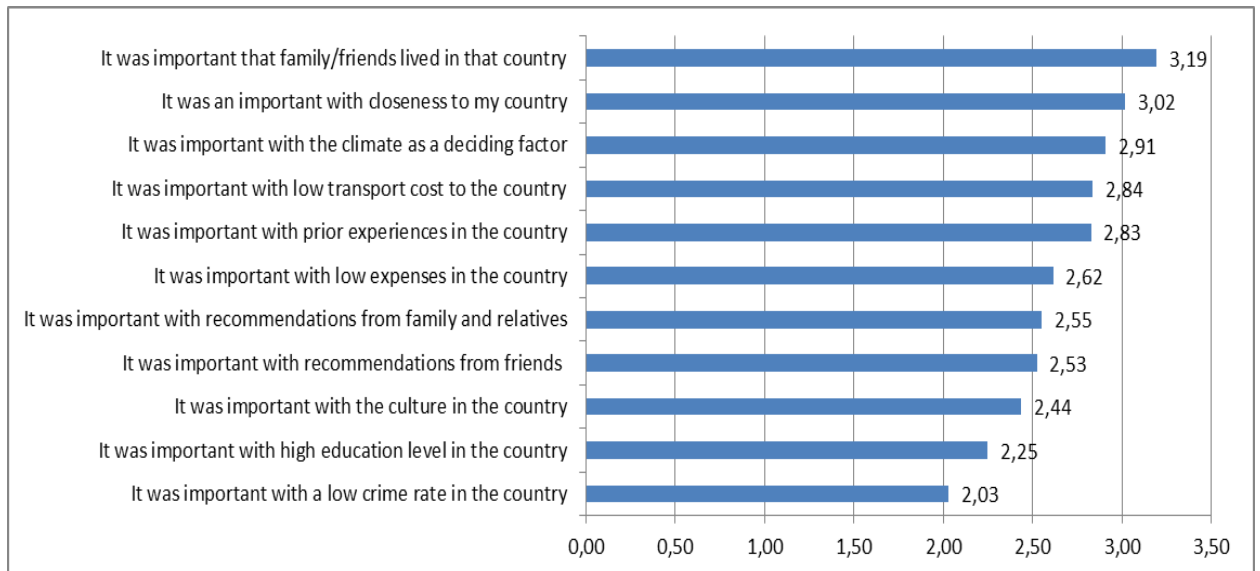
\*Mean is statistically not different from test value of 3 (Either or).

Figure1 shows the plot of the factors that influences one's decision to study abroad of which from the plot the most influential factor is "it was important to experience another student life in another country" having a 1.78 value and the least important value is "it was important to improve my language skills" having 2.81.



**Figure 1: Importance of factors to study abroad**

From the Figure 2 below looking at the plotted bar chart, the important factor in choosing country is indicated by the first plot having the 2.03 “it was important with a low crime rate in country” happens to be the most important motivating factor of studying abroad based on our research and the least important motivation is that “It was important that family/friends lived in the country”



**Figure 2: Importance of factors in Choosing Country**



## Conclusion

From the research embarked on, it was found that there were many factors that motivate the international students at European University of Lefke to pursue higher education abroad. These factors are as follows; languages, culture, climate, personal experiences amongst others. Studying abroad, gives one the opportunity to be exposed to countless different experiences that may influence the rest of a student's life. Some students are motivated to the extent that they end up changing their major or career path as a result of the new things they learn from being abroad. Several factors serves as an influencer and we could draw similarities among our students and some factors were more important than others.

The most influential factor of section A in relation to "effective factors of studying abroad" of the research indicates that "it was important to experience another student live in another country" happens to be the most influential factor among others that were considered in the research. On the other hand in the second section of the questionnaire, section B; the most important factor that influenced the students when they decided in what country to study was that "it was important with low crime rate in country", the 95 percent responders' answers is enough to get a wide picture about the motivations of the students.

In general, research reports that the most important factors in selecting country and university are "experiencing another student life in another country", "experiencing another culture", "future work possibilities in home country", and "low crime rate in the host country". These findings highly overlap with the first three explanatory (independent) variables of conceptual model depicted in Figure 1.

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