

First Year International Students' Experience in Universiti Malaysia Sabah

Hasbullah Bin Awang, Irma Wani Othman and Norazah Mohd Suki

Abstract--- *Internationalization is considered as an efficient step to increase international students' enrolment in Malaysia to fulfill the national aspiration of becoming a higher learning hub of excellence worldwide. This study explores the first year experiences of international students by investigating the influencing factors on their decision to further study and their adaptation to the new environment in UMS. A qualitative research design using case study which involved 20 international students who were selected using purposive sampling was carried out. Semi-structured interview was used to gather information from these respondents. Based on the analysis of collected data, five themes were identified as the influencing factors on their decision to further study in UMS which are: academic, culture, financial, university services and social. These themes were further divided into sub-themes. Among them are the advantages and disadvantages of studying in UMS, education system differences, education program variety, educational course syllabus and mastery of English language under the academic theme. The culture theme was divided into sub-themes like new experience, UMS culture, and external world view while financial theme is divided into financial resources from family and scholarship award. University services are divided into two sub-themes of facilities and infrastructure, and international office. Further to that, the social theme is represented by three sub-themes comprising of parents and friends' recommendation, social integration development and local community and college environment. Findings also presented the respondents' view on the international students' adaptation to new environment. These were represented by eight themes, which are: mastery of English language, group assignment, and instructional quality of academicians, cultural shock, adventure and gaining new experience, food access, satisfaction on facilities and infrastructure, and international student safety. Overall, feedback from the international students implied their satisfaction and positive first year experience in UMS. Findings from this study is hoped to contribute to the Higher Education Ministry and UMS management in promoting greater enrolment and portraying UMS as the prime choice of study destination among international students.*

Keywords--- *International Students, UMS*

I. INTRODUCTION

The national education landscape has undergone numerous changes in the quest of enhancing the dignity of Malaysia as an education center of excellence specifically in the Asian region and generally, at the international level. The image and education quality are regarded as elements in the country's initiative to ensure that Malaysia is capable of developing its education sector as it navigates the educational opportunities across borders. Hence, the strategic and careful planning of the higher education institutions serves to provide direction of generating, instilling and exploiting knowledge to improve the economic development of the nation.

Hasbullah Bin Awang, Labuan Faculty of International Finance, Universiti Malaysia Sabah. E-mail: hasbullahawang87@yahoo.com
Irma Wani Othman, Centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning, Universiti Malaysia Sabah.
E-mail: iwoppib@gmail.com
Norazah Mohd Suki, Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia. E-mail: azahsuki@yahoo.com

There are various steps that need to be implemented as efforts to fulfill the aspiration and development of the country. Internationalization is perceived as a mechanism that helps in empowering and enhancing the national education system. This is gained through intensifying efforts that would increase the number of international students, extending the offer of education program to international students, and rebranding the public and private higher education institutions in the country so that Malaysia will be able to achieve the target of 200,000 international student enrolment by the year 2020 (UKM Portal, 2015).

As a developing country, Malaysia is considered as one of the destination choices for furthering education among international students. Political stability, high quality of education, reasonable educational fees, cultural varieties and a society that lives peacefully and harmoniously are the driving factors leading international students to choose Malaysia as their study destination (Suryandani, 2014). However, to ensure the sustainability of international students' enrolment in higher education institutions in Malaysia, the university management needs to take initiatives of creating a conducive environment to ensure the comfort and success of these international students.

In the context of this study, issues that need to be resolved include the determination of the extent to which, University Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is capable of creating a new environment that provides meaningful first year experience to the international students. Relevantly, this study is carried out due to the presence of many international students of different nationalities who are furthering their education in UMS. Hence, the main focus of this study is to identify the features of first year experience of international students in this university.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the study on students' satisfaction towards education services by Valka (2015), aspects like course assessment, course management, lecturer quality, learning outcomes, and learning facilities provided can affect the international students' satisfaction throughout the duration of their course. Knight (2015) further added that the variety of offered educational program portrays the flexibility of field of study to choose from and this becomes the main attracting force for international students furthering their education abroad. In addition, the international level of learning environment is considered as another important element influencing the selection of destination country to further study (Wan, 2013).

Good quality communication is also another main factor influencing the decision of international students to further their study in a foreign country (Ahmad, 2016). Additionally, the language used in the teaching and learning also influence the decision of international students in choosing the program and destination of study abroad (Lowinger, 2014). According to Liao (2014), mastery in English language has led to problems and causing stress to the international students. Findings from Lee (2014) had included cultural adaptation which relates to the accommodating behaviors to the culture of foreign countries.

According to Clavel (2015), the cost of education also influences the international students' decision on study destination. In the meantime, countries with good reputation in terms of safety and openness among the local

community to accept the presence of international students are features making the country attractive to international students (Ortiz, 2015).

Further to that, family influence is also a dominant factor in determining the decision to further study in a foreign country (Lee, 2014). Meanwhile, Koe (2012) explained that political stability, absence of discrimination, low rate of unemployment, freedom of speech, absence of war was among the attracting factors for students to further their study overseas.

The conceptual framework of this study provides the direction and guides the implementation of the research. The Theory of Push and Pull Factors developed by Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) was used as the main framework of this study (see Figure 1).

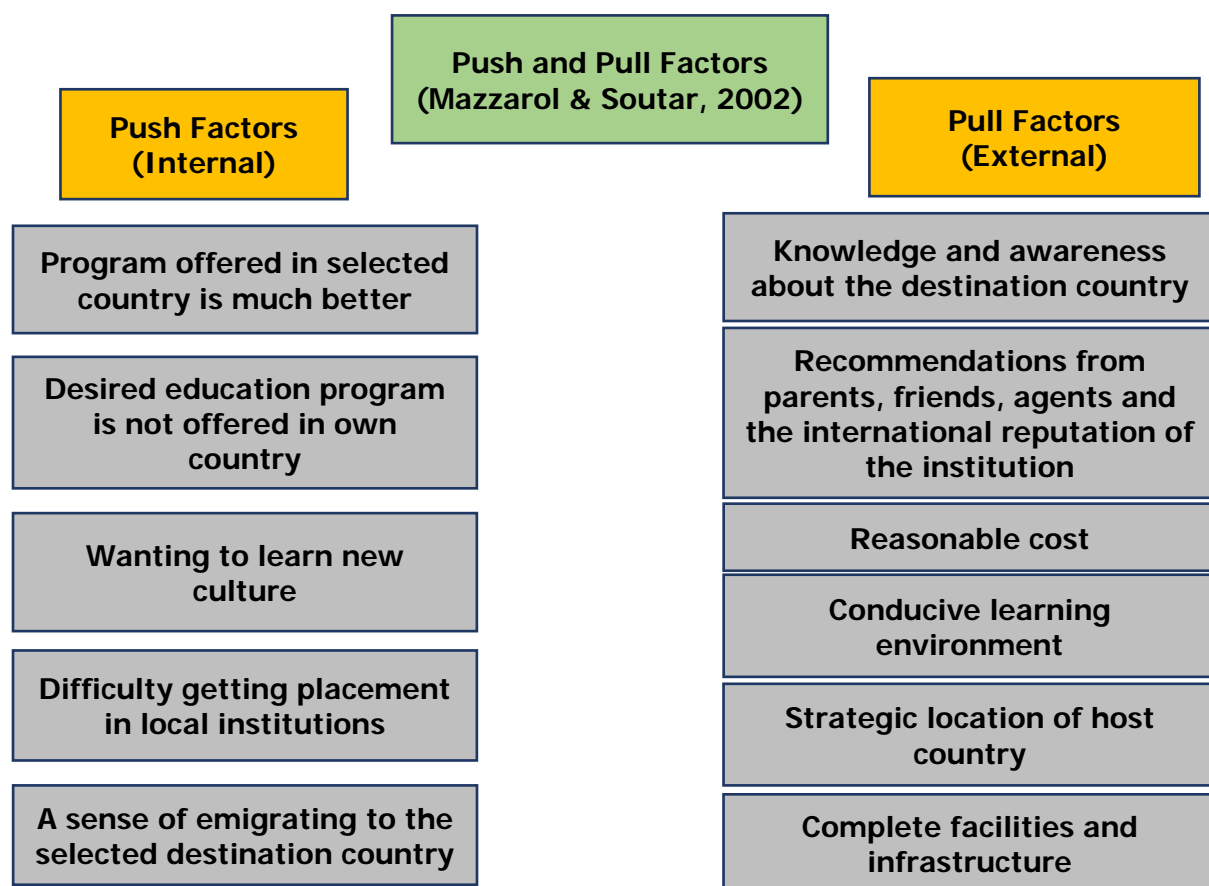


Figure 1. Mazzarol and Soutar's (2002) Push and Pull Factors

In this study, the influencing factors in deciding to further education in another country can be categorized as push (internal) and pull (external) factors. The push factors include a comparison of the program offered in the selected country and the country of origin whereby, international students are pushed towards the destination country because the program offered in the selected country is much better. Furthermore, the desired education

program may not be offered in their own country, thus exploring to other country becomes inevitable. In addition, international students opted to study abroad due to their desire to learn new culture. Difficulty in getting placement in local institution of the country of origin may also pushed the students to study abroad. Additionally, having a sense of emigrating to the selected destination country.

The decision to study abroad is also due to the pull factors. These include having the knowledge and awareness about the destination country, and getting recommendations from parents, friends and agents. The reputation of the institution also serves to pull the international students towards the destination country. Apart from that, reasonable cost, conducive learning environment, strategic location of the host country and complete facilities and infrastructure are pull factors bringing international students to further their study abroad.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative approach as a means of explaining the phenomena of international students furthering their education in UMS in a more detailed manner by rationally describing the event (Levitt *et al.*, 2017). The research design is based on a case study to investigate on matters not yet known and to give explanation on the event that had happened (Creswell, 2014). Further to that, a semi-structured interview was used to obtain information from 20 international students whose involvement in the interviews were voluntary. Additionally, this study employed a purposive sampling method whereby respondents were selected based on certain predetermined characteristics. Data obtained from the interview was analyzed using verbatim transcription and coding into themes and sub-themes in a detailed and structured manner.

IV. FINDINGS

Findings of this study are presented based on the two main objectives which relate to the influencing factors determining the international students' decision to further study in UMS and their adaptation to the new environment in UMS.

4.1 Influencing Factors on International Students' Decision of Studying in UMS

Research findings based on data collected from 20 respondents interviewed regarding the influence of first year experience to shape their attitude and academic achievement among international students were based on five themes: academic, culture, financial, university services and social. These themes were further divided into sub-themes to assist in explaining the main themes clearly.

4.1.1 Academic Theme

There are five sub-themes under the academic theme: advantages and disadvantages of studying in UMS, education system differences, course study syllabus, educational program variety and mastery of English language.

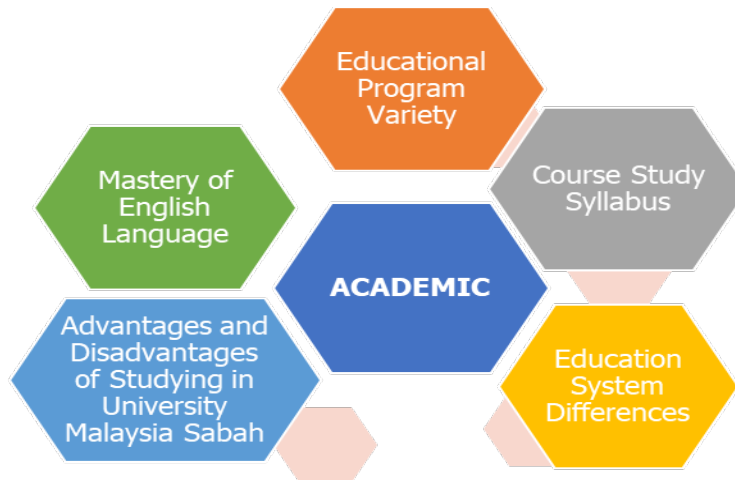


Figure 2: The Influencing of First Year International Students Experience Based on Academic Theme

(i). *Advantages and Disadvantages of Studying in University Malaysia Sabah*

One-fourth of the respondents in the interview stated that the education system offered in UMS is effective and systematic. These respondents perceived that the learning and instructional system in UMS was focused on a balance between theory and practice which is able to shape the academic development of the students especially the first year students in determining their future career. This finding reflects the finding in Li (2018) who stated that good quality teaching, appropriate curriculum design and teaching staff comprising of experienced lecturers can enhance students' satisfaction the selection of higher education institution in the host country.

Nevertheless, not all the feedback received from the respondents stated the advantages of furthering study abroad. Some disadvantages were also voiced out by the respondents during the interview. Among these issues are the use of English or Malay (which is the official language of Malaysia) as the medium of instruction which causes their difficulty in communication. This is a huge issue among the international students particularly when they need information in their learning. This implied that the use of English is important in the teaching and learning by lecturers in the higher education institution (Liew, 2012).

(ii). *Education System Differences*

The second sub-theme is on the differences in education system whereby one-fifth of the respondents agreed that there are many differences between the education system in the host country and their country of origin. A few of the respondents felt that these differences can be seen in the allocated duration of study, effective course assessment, offered educational program, assessment through examination and practical skills that were carried out. Findings of this study has similarity with findings in Valka (2015) whereby the offered educational services of a country should

include the aspect of learning and teaching that has the elements like complete and up-to-date course assessment, an examination system that has high standards and a dedicated, quality and experience workforce.

(iii). Course Study Syllabus

Some of the respondents concurred that the offered course syllabus in UMS is among the most comprehensive syllabus and at par with world-class university. The respondents gave a positive feedback to support the element of a dynamic and quality course study syllabus. Therefore, the criteria of course study syllabus is shown as having an impact on the first year experience of international students. This is aligned to the study by Knight (2015) who stated that a dynamic course study syllabus, variety in the educational program offered and program flexibility are the three main factors often used as a measurement stick by international student to make choices to further their study in the university of the host country.

(iv). Educational Program Variety

Variety in the offer of educational program in UMS is aligned to the status of the university which is recognized as a comprehensive university. This study showed that one-fifth of the respondents agreed by stating that the proponent to their selection of University Malaysia Sabah as a study destination is due to the variety of education program being offered. The respondents conceded that most of the program offered in UMS are not available in their own country or not as competitive in terms of education program content structure. They stated that the offered program in UMS is more directed to the prospect of employability in the future after graduating. Hence, the variety of new course studies offered in the host country is among the contributing factors of the decision by the international students to further their study abroad (Zeeshan *et al.*, 2013).

(v). Mastery of English Language

It was noted by one-fourth of the respondents in the interview that their decision to further study abroad is related to the need to add value to their ability of mastering the English language as English is used as the medium of instruction and communication in at the university level. The respondents felt that this can be beneficial to their future career. Being able to communicate in English is one of the main preparations before furthering studies overseas. This was made evident by Lowinger (2014) who explained that the selection of the language used in teaching and learning is a main factor to influence the decision to further their study abroad.

4.1.2 Cultural Theme

There are three sub-themes identified in the cultural theme that influence the first year experience of international students in University Malaysia Sabah which are: gaining new experience, the culture in UMS and external world view.

| | |
|----------------|------------------------|
| CULTURE | Gaining New Experience |
| | Culture in UMS |
| | External World View |

Figure 3: The Influencing of First Year International Students Experience Based on Culture Theme

(i). ***Gaining New Experience***

There were eight among the 20 respondents being interviewed who stated that the opportunity to further their study in University Malaysia Sabah had given them the opportunity to feel new life experience in the host country. Some of the respondents felt that the virtue shown by the local community such as helping each other and being friendly to the international students had helped them to be at ease all the time in this country. Findings of this study showed that the decision to further study abroad gave them the opportunity to feel new experience. This reflects the findings of Perez (2018) which showed that the push factors of international students furthering their study abroad is due to their desire to gain new experience and to explore the culture of the host country.

(ii). ***Culture in UMS***

Findings on the culture in UMS were based on the responses by seven of the respondents in this study whereby they conceded that their first year experience as international students were influenced by exposure to the culture practiced in UMS. This includes the cultural context and language used by the local students either in or out of the campus. A few of the respondents stated that the multicultural factor and language had triggered the international students to know more about the culture and local language. This statement supported the study by Lee (2014) who found that the desire of the international students to master the local language had helped them to improve their self-confidence and gave added value to the individual while they were in the host country.

(iii). ***External World View***

In the context of this study, the desire to see the external world was stated by one-fourth of the respondents. They stated that the decision to further study abroad had opened the chances for them to visit interesting places in the host country. These findings have some similarity with Mustaffa (2013) study whereby he posited that furthering study abroad was not only seen as a decision that can be related to seeking knowledge, but it also offers other opportunities to gain exploring experience in a new place.

4.1.3 *Financial Theme*

The issues of financing are often associated by the international students as something that can give an implication to self-development throughout their study in the host country. Through this study, the financial theme

covers two sub-themes which are financial resources from family, and scholarship award for the purpose of financing the study in the host country.

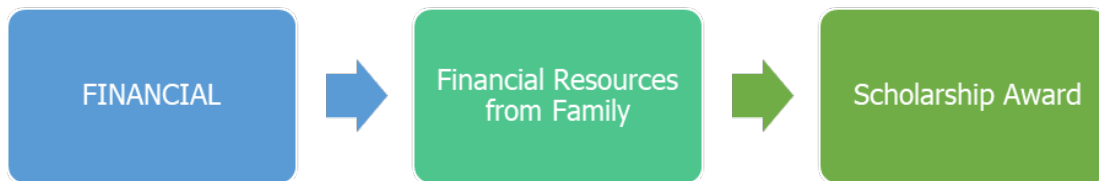


Figure 4: The Influencing of First Year International Students Experience Based on Financial Theme

(i). ***Financial Resources from Family***

A few of the respondents stated that funding to further their study in the host country comes from the financial resources channeled by members of the family. All types of expenses in terms of study cost, transportation and living cost in the host country are borne by family members of the respondents. The selection of UMS as a study destination is considered as appropriate since the study fees are reasonable, and the cost of living is low. The reasonable cost of study offered by the higher education institute in the host country is one of the main factors that influences the decision that the international students make to determine the choice of study destination. The financial theme was also proposed in Clavel (2015) study with four main driving factors of destination selection for study by the international students which are: reasonable study fees, low cost of living in a country, efficient and cheap public transportation and the opportunity to gain low financing.

(ii). ***Scholarship Award***

The next sub-theme is scholarship award. Eight of the respondents agreed that the opportunity to further their study in the host country is funded fully by the government scholarship scheme in their own country. The respondents stated that acquiring a scholarship award from the government in their own country to further their education in UMS is considered a golden opportunity for them to expand their knowledge and develop themselves. The scholarship given to them ensures that they have an adequate fund and plays a specific role to influence the international students to choose UMS as the main destination of furthering their study. Thus, financial factor is an important consideration before any decision is taken. According to the Institute of International Education (2016), the international students' stable financial position is an important factor that influence the selection of host country destination regarding the purpose of furthering study.

4.1.4 University Services Theme

Most universities in the world compete by offering various promotions to attract the arrival of international students into their country. The university takes the initiative to provide services and complete facilities to ensure a comfortable life to the campus students. From the findings obtained through the theme of university services, two sub-themes had emerged which are: facilities and infrastructure, and international office.

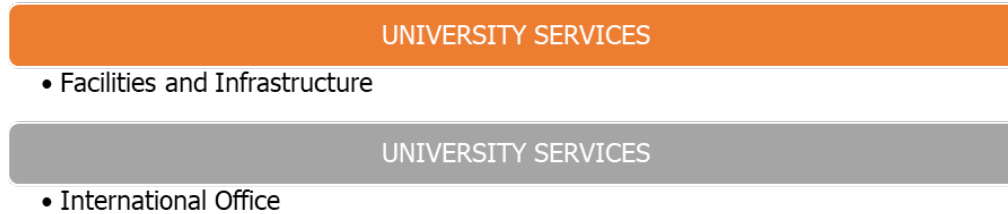


Figure 5: The Influencing of First Year International Students Experience Based on University Services Theme

(i). ***Facilities and Infrastructure***

Most of the respondents who participated in this study informed that the facilities and infrastructure provided by UMS are classified as good and succeeded in attracting the arrival of international students. The facilities and infrastructure refer to lecture hall, tutorial room, library and leisure area. A few of the respondents voiced out their opinion that the facilities and infrastructure provided by the university is complete and able to support the usage by all the university students. These include an ambient and pleasing environment like lecture room with suitable size that are equipped with teaching aids and tools which are important element to fulfill the needs of a conducive learning. Findings of this study agreed with the study by Wan (2013) who showed that a conducive learning environment that is at an international standard is an important feature influencing international students in making decision on destination country before they further their study.

(ii). ***International Office***

The setting up of an international office in each university functions as an intermediary medium between the international students and the university administration in the host country. Some of the respondents had given a positive feedback on the services by international office in UMS. This had incorporated the aspect of treatment by the international office staff when dealing with issues regarding their visa or study fees. These findings provided an overall picture on the importance of setting up an international office in a university, especially in facilitating the transaction between international students and the administration of the university. According to Academic Cooperation Association (2015) the service quality provided by the administrative staff is also a determiner of the students' satisfaction towards the education institution in the country and this has been proven to be attuned to the findings of this study.

4.1.5 Social Theme

The decision to further study abroad in a foreign country involved the social life context of the international students whereby they need to assimilate themselves with the new environment that may be quite different from their own country. This social theme includes three sub-themes: recommendation of parents and friends in making decision about studying further abroad, development of social integrity and the relationship of the local community and college environment.



Figure 6: The Influencing of First Year International Students Experience Based on Social Theme

(i). Recommendation of Parents and Friends

It was found that eight of the 20 respondents had stated that their decision to further study abroad was due to recommendations given by their parents and friends who had previously furthered their study in Malaysia higher education institutions. Some of the respondents showed positive reaction from their family members when they furthered their study abroad. The recommendation from the family and friends is a determining factor of international students' decision in furthering studies abroad (Lee, 2014).

(ii). Development of Social Integrity

The relationship of the international students with the local students, lecturers and the local community is seen as a positive step in forging the relationships among them. From 20 respondents who were interviewed, seven of the respondents stated that the development of social integration in their relationship with classmates and the lecturers was firstly nurtured through friendship. The view of one respondent in this study had implied that the relationship formed with the lecturers or the local students had been able to strengthen the friendship to facilitate the interaction among them. These findings were closely related to Yusliza (2012) study whereby it was stated that the close relationship was able to facilitate the international students in the process of adapting themselves with the new environment and eventually to understand cultural differences.

(iii). Relationship with the Local Community and College Surrounding Environment

From findings in Jobbins (2015) study, it was shown that the advantages of furthering study abroad are related to the chance of expanding the social network and meet with new people from the local community. One-fourth of the respondents gave their opinion regarding their life with the local community and the surrounding environment in UMS. Some of the respondents praised the surrounding environment in the college as being better than in their own country. The conduciveness of the accommodation area, leisure area and the cafeteria in UMS fulfilled the criteria and desires of the international students. A study by Maringe (2007) concluded that a conducive college surrounding environment in a university is among the factors that attract the interest of the international students to further their study abroad.

4.2. International Students' Adaptation to New Environment in University Malaysia Sabah

Based on the interviews with 20 respondents who were involved willingly in this study, eight perspectives of adaptation to a new environment were ascertained. These cover the elements of: capability to master the English language, group assignment, instructional quality of the academicians, cultural shock, adventure to acquire new knowledge, food access, quality of the facilities and satisfactory infrastructure support, and safety of international students.

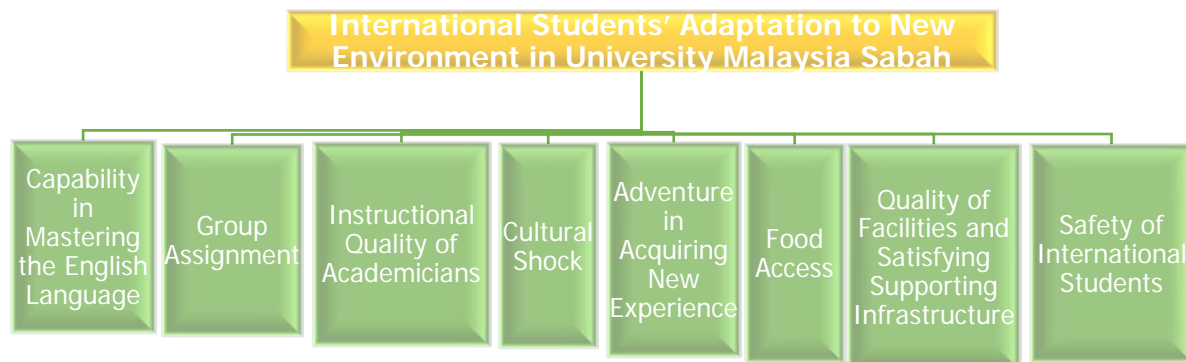


Figure 7: International Students' Adaptation to New Environment in Universiti Malaysia Sabah

(a) Capability in Mastering the English Language

The main language for communication in UMS is English which is also an international language often spoken in many countries in the world. Seven of the 20 respondents stated that they faced difficulty when communicating in English in the host country. These respondents faced the problem to communicate in English because the language they used to speak at home is their mother tongue. According to Liao (2014), the problem of mastery in English has given much pressure to the international students while they were still in the host country and this issue rampantly happened. Therefore, before deciding to further their study, the international students need to take their own initiatives to enhance and improve their communication skills with English.

(b) Group Assignment

The diverse background of everyone in the group assignment provides the space for the international student to participate and give their ideas and opinions. Findings of this study showed that 12 out of the 20 respondents had difficulty in doing the group assignment. Some of the respondents stated that doing a group assignment is a difficult process and they often had to go through uncomfortable experience compared as other members of the group were fluent in English during the assignment. This was proven in Huang (2012) study who found that the international students were not keen on group assignment because of the obvious communication gap between the international students and local students.

(c) *Instructional Quality of Academicians*

The quality of education can be investigated from several aspects including the instructional quality of the lecturers in the higher education institution. Through the interview, 14 of the respondents agreed that the quality of instruction among the lecturers in University Malaysia Sabah is good. Some of the respondents explained that the lecturers in UMS are committed to deliver knowledge and skills in disseminating information to the students.

(d) *Cultural Shock*

Among the main challenges faced by the international student is the issue of cultural shock. Finding obtained from this study showed that six of the respondents presented their discomfort due to cultural clash upon arrival in the host country. A few of the respondents voiced out their opinion that there are lecture mates who communicated roughly with other friends and made them feel uncomfortable and regarded as being rude. Thus, this shows that the cultural difference that exists between the two countries has indirectly left a negative stigma among the international students. This scenario has similarity with Yale's (2017) study which stated that cultural shock is caused by the individual's confusion when facing with new culture.

(e) *Adventure in Acquiring New Experience*

The value added of learning new culture gives a meaningful experience to the international students as they know more about the culture of the local community. A total of 15 of the respondents stated that the decision to further study in University Malaysia Sabah is aimed to explore and gain experience in a new environment. Most of the respondents who exhibited their excitement to further their study in UMS is closely related to their desire to learn the uniqueness of the local culture in Borneo Island.

(f) *Food Access*

Another challenge faced by international students is the access to food. Based on the interviews, majority of the respondents did not have any issues regarding food. They felt that the food in this country has similarities with food in their own country. All respondents stated that ever since they were in UMS, there had no problem at all to obtain halal food. This is because most of the students or vendors near the campus are Muslim and thus, there is no barrier for them to access halal food. This is aligned to Mustaffa's (2016) study which explained that the cultural adjustment especially food is also considered by international students before making decision to further study abroad.

(g) *Quality of Facilities and Satisfying Supporting Infrastructure*

Most international students made decision to choose furthering their study overseas after considering the facilities and infrastructure prepared by the university. In the context of this study, there were 13 respondents who stressed that new environment adaptation has a direct relationship with the university services. Most of the

respondents felt that the facilities and infrastructure provided by the university were most helpful to provide them with a comfort zone throughout their study in this country. The facilities provided include a complete library with recent reference sources, clean cafeteria that offered numerous appetizing dishes with reasonable price and laboratory equipped with the latest equipment. These facilities have helped them a lot while they were in UMS.

(h) Safety of International Students

The safety factor refers to the situation in the destination country which is peaceful and free from all kinds of turbulence or political instability. Seven respondents stated that the safety factor is a priority that is given consideration before making decision to choose their study destination. Some of the respondents stated that the safety factor in the host country is given much emphasis before the final decision is made. The decision made to choose Malaysia and especially University Malaysia Sabah which is perceived as the right choice was based on the political stability and harmony of the local community.

V. DISCUSSION

Overall, this study has contributed empirical data that relates to the first year experience of international students in UMS. The research findings have unearthed interesting information that are insightful and can be used in the strategic management of international students in UMS as well as in other higher education institutions in Malaysia. One of the most striking information presented in this study is on the role of English which is a dominant factor that can influence the first year experience of the international students particularly in the effort of achieving academic excellence. This agreed with findings in Lowinger (2014) who stated that the language used in the teaching and learning in the university is a main influencing factor on the international students' decision to choose the program and destination of their study.

Additionally, this study had also shown that in general, the international students who participated in this study perceived the education system offered at UMS as being effective and systematic. Wan(2013) stated that the position, accreditation and reputation of a university are among the main criteria considered before making decision to further study abroad. The respondents had acknowledged that the education system in Malaysia and their country of origin are significantly different in terms of academic system and the instructional language used. Thus, this affirms past findings from Knight (2015), Valka (2015) and Li (2018) that study destination attraction for the international students consists of the type of courses offered, the use of intermediary language, and the image of the higher education institution. The variety of educational program offered by the university in this country provided more choices to the international students compared to what are offered at the university in the country of origin. Therefore, it becomes the main point in decision-making of the international student to further their study abroad. The difficulty of getting the desired education program in their own country and its availability in UMS had also contributed to their decision to choose the destination of their study (Zeeshan, 2013).

This study has also indicated the advantages gained by the international students who furthered their study in UMS. This includes the expansion of their social network and the opportunity to meet various new friends from a

diverse background. The international students explored their new experience when they entered in a cultural setting that has differences from their own culture, and therefore, this new experience was able to provide positive values in themselves. At the same time however, the international students did imply some negative aspects of their first year experience in UMS. This pertains to the use of Malay as a medium of instruction as the local students were also not proficient in English.

Apart from that, this study has also shown that financing is not an issue among international students as they gained financial resources from their family or scholarship. Institute of International Education (2016) explained that excellent students have the chance to get a scholarship or financial assistance to finance their study abroad. The reasonable cost of studying in Malaysia has contributed to the selection of UMS as a study destination. According to Clavel (2015), adequate financial source to cover the study expenses abroad is a main factor that needs to be considered before making a selection of the study location.

Findings of this study also confirmed that the facilities and infrastructure offered by the university is an important cause to ensure the comfort of the international students during their study duration. The efficient services provided by the international office also played a role in creating meaningful experience to the international students. According to Academic Cooperation Association (2015), efficient and friendly service quality given by the staff of the institution was a determiner to the satisfaction towards the services provided.

This study also confirms findings from Lee (2014) that family and friends' recommendations are a dominant factor to determine the decision to further study abroad. This study also highlighted the element of cultural shock experienced by some of the international students in UMS. This finding is considered as a new discovery and considered as a theoretical contribution to the research framework explaining the factors influencing decision to further study abroad. Additionally, the theme on food access is also a new discovery that enriched the research framework. Findings in this study showed that food access is not a problem to Muslim and non-Muslim international students as there are varieties of food provided with high similarities with what they have in their country of origin.

Lastly, the stable political environment, national security that is characterized by being free from turbulence and war, and the practice of freedom of speech had made Malaysia as having the favored selected characteristics among international students intending to further their study abroad. International student safety is an important consideration before the final decision is made to continue study abroad.

VI. CONCLUSION

The higher education in Malaysia has undergone numerous changes in the effort to support the aspiration of the country development so that the nation can become more competitive and at par with developed countries. Therefore, the presence of international students furthering their study in Malaysia is an evidence of the excellence of the national education system. Findings of this study are hoped to help in streamlining the guideline for international students to get themselves prepared physically and mentally to carry on with life in a new environment in the host country destination. Based on the findings of this study, it was ascertained that UMS image and

reputation can be upheld as one of the universities selected by international students desiring to further their study and subsequently, promote Malaysia as an academic center of excellence at the global level.

REFERENCES

- [1] American Council on Education, ACE. (2015). Internationalization in Action. Retrieved from <https://www.acenet.edu/newsroom/Pages/Internationalization-in-Action.aspx>
- [2] Ahmad, S. Z., & Buchanan, F. R. (2016). Choices of destination for transnational higher education: “Pull” factors in an Asia Pacific market. *Educational Studies*, *42*(2), 163–180.
- [3] Clavel, T (2015). 'Culture, cost and proximity draw Chinese students to Japan', *The Japan Times*, 22 April, viewed 1 July 2015, <<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2015/04/22/issues/culture-cost-proximity-draw-chinese-students-japan/#.VZPZsUYnIXx>>.
- [4] Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage, Oaks.
- [5] Huang, Y. 2012. “Transitioning Challenges Faced by Chinese Graduate Students.” *Adult Learning* 23: 138–147.
- [6] Institute of International Education (IIE). (2016). International students by primary source of funding, 2015/16 [data set]. Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange.
- [7] Jobbins, D 2015, 'Foreign students add to campus attraction', *University World News*, no. 360, viewed 28 March 2015
- [8] Knight, J. (2015). International universities: Misunderstandings and emerging models. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *19*, 107–121.
- [9] Koe, W.L. & Siti Noraisah Saring. 2012. Factors Influencing the Foreign Undergraduates' Intention to Study at Graduate School of a Public University. *Universiti Teknologi Malaysia: Jurnal Kemanusiaan* 19: 57-68
- [10] Lee, C-F (2014). 'An Investigation of Factors Determining the Study Abroad Destination Choice: A Case Study of Taiwan', *Journal of Studies in International Education*, vol. *18*, no. 4, pp. 362-81.
- [11] Lee, J., & Ciftci, A. (2014). Asian international students' sociocultural adaptation: Influence of multicultural personality, assertiveness, academic self-efficacy, and social support. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *38*, 97–105.
- [12] Levitt, H. M., Motulsky, S. L., Wertz, F. J., Morrow, S. L., & Ponterotto, J. G. (2017). Recommendations for Designing and Reviewing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Promoting Methodological Integrity. *Qualitative Psychology*, *4*(1), 2–22.
- [13] Liao, K. Y.-H., & Wei, M. (2014). Academic stress and positive affect: Asian value and self-worth contingency as moderators among Chinese international students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *20*(1), 107-115.
- [14] Li, J., Wang, Y., Liu, X., Xu, Y., & Cui, T. (2018). Academic adaptation among international students from East Asian Countries: A consensual qualitative research. *Journal of International Students*, *8*(1), 194–214.
- [15] Liew Chei Siang. 2012. Analisis Kepuasan Terhadap Program Pengajian Dalam Kalangan Pelajar Antarabangsa Di Malaysia. *Prosiding PERKEM VII*, 2, 1019–1031.
- [16] Lowinger, R., He, Z., Lin, M., & Chang, M. (2014). The impact of academic self-efficacy, acculturation difficulties, and language abilities on procrastination behavior in Chinese international students. *College Student Journal*, *48*(1), 141–152.
- [17] Mustaffa, C.S., & Illias, M. (2013). Relationship between student's adjustment factor and cross-cultural adjustment: A survey at the Northern University of Malaysia. *Intercultural Communication Studies* *22*(1): 279-300
- [18] Mustaffa, E. (2016). Food acculturation of new international student in the UK (Doctoral dissertation, University of Surrey).
- [19] Ortiz, A. (2015). New study: How international bachelor's students choose institutions. *WorldEducationServices*.
- [20] Perez-Encinas, A., & Rodriguez-Pomeda, J. (2018). International students' perceptions of their needs when going abroad: Services on demand. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, *22*(1), 20–36
- [21] Suryandari, R., Jaafar, M., & Hamzah, N. (2014). Mengantarabangsakan Ruang Pendidikan Tinggi Malaysia: Pengalaman. *Malaysian Journal of Society and Space*, *10*(3), 60-72.

- [22] Valka, S. (2015). Management of International Students' Academic Adjustment: Challenges and Solutions. *European Scientific Journal*.
- [23] Wan, R., Nordin, S. M., & Razali, R. (2013). International students' cultural experiences: Exploring socio-cultural and academic adjustment in Malaysian Universities. *Recent Advances in Modern Educational Technologies*, 31–37.
- [24] www.ukm.my(2015)Available from: http://www.ukm.my/news/Latest_News/bilangan-pelajar-antarabangsa-di-malaysia-naik-100-menjelang-2020-pm/
- [25] Yale, B. (2017). Understanding Culture Shock in International Students. Available @. <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/ViewArticles/Understanding-Culture-Shock-in-InternationalStudents.aspx>
- [26] Yusliza M. Y (2012). Self-Efficacy, Perceived Social Support and Psychological Adjustment in International Undergraduate Students in a Public Higher Education Institution in Malaysia. *Journal of Studies in International Education*.
- [27] Zeeshan, M., Sabbar, S., Bashir, S., & Hussain, R. (2013). FOREIGN STUDENTS' MOTIVATION FOR STUDYING IN MALAYSIA. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 3(3), 833-846.