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Predictors of International Students' Willingness to Communicate in a Foreign Language: The Mediating Role of Study Abroad Experience

Muhammad Awais Bhatti^{1*}, Ariff Syah Juhari²

¹*Associate Professor, Department of Management, College of Business Administration, King Faisal University, Al-Ahsa 31982, Saudi Arabia.
Email: mbhatti@kfu.edu.sa*

²*College of Business Administration, Prince Sultan University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.*

Email: asyah@psu.edu.sa

** Corresponding Author Muhammad Awais Bhatti Email: mbhatti@kfu.edu.sa*

ABSTRACT

The increasing trend of studying abroad, driven by globalization, has led students to seek educational and professional opportunities in foreign countries. However, they face numerous challenges that affect their academic and social integration. This study aims to examine the factors influencing communication among Arab students studying in Malaysia. It adopts a positivist approach and a quantitative methodology, using a questionnaire to collect data from students in Malaysian universities in the Klang Valley, including Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Putrajaya. Convenience sampling was employed to distribute 450 questionnaires to students, resulting in 300 valid responses. SPSS and PLS-SEM were utilized for the data analysis. The study revealed that perceived discrimination at a university negatively impacts study-abroad experience, while homesickness has no significant influence. Teacher support, on the other hand, significantly influenced study-abroad experience. The research also explored the mediating role of study-abroad experience, finding significant mediation in all relationships except for the link between homesickness and willingness to communicate.

Keywords: Foreign Language Anxiety, Study Abroad Experience, Willingness to Communicate, Teacher Support, Instrumental Support, Emotional Support.

INTRODUCTION

The proclivity for international academic pursuits has witnessed a notable upswing in recent years. The accessibility of financial instruments such as bank loans and scholarships has facilitated the ability of students from developing nations to pursue studies abroad, encompassing prominent destinations such as the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Australia (Alromaih et al., 2022). A recently conducted study documented a surge in the global population of students pursuing education in foreign countries, reaching 5.6 million in the year 2020. Notably, the United States experienced a substantial economic contribution, with students contributing approximately 39 billion USD during the 2017-2018 academic year. In parallel, Australia similarly reaped its financial benefits, accruing approximately 40.3 billion Australian dollars, attributable to the escalating trend of studying abroad in recent years (Yang et al., 2023).

Similarly, Malaysia has also emerged as one of the leading study destinations globally and attracted numerous students from different destinations. As per the statistics, there are up to 170000 students in Malaysia, and the number of students is expected to increase to 250000 by 2025 (The Star, 2023). These statistics substantiate the substantial contribution of international students to the Malaysian economy, emphasizing a pronounced interest in augmenting their enrollment. While international students are present in Malaysia primarily for educational purposes, there is a dearth of exploration into their educational outcomes within the Malaysian university system. Additionally, extant research on students' adjustments and cultural interactions in this context remains relatively limited (Singh & Jamil, 2021). Another scholarly investigation has posited that the global proliferation of higher education has escalated; however, scant emphasis has been accorded to the adjustment processes of students in non-Western societies, particularly within the realm of education (Ahrari et al., 2019). Hence, the current study delves into the mechanisms by which various factors contribute to the study abroad experience within the context of Malaysian universities.

It is noteworthy to recognize the heightened significance of acquiring proficiency in the English language, as it serves to facilitate seamless communication and foster the acquisition of diverse skills in a general context. Proficiency in communication assumes paramount importance for second language learners, facilitating interaction with peers and faculty members. Additionally, it plays a pivotal role in obtaining feedback from teachers and engaging with the local community. Primarily, English serves as the predominant second language, enhancing students' capacity for effective communication

(Darasawang & Reinders, 2021). It is noteworthy that despite possessing awareness of a second language, students refrain from engaging in communication, influenced by various educational and contextual factors. Consequently, the study systematically explored diverse factors contributing to the propensity for communication among international students.

A study conducted earlier posited that the inclination to engage in communication among international students is subject to the impact of the study abroad experience (Kang, 2014). Several contextual factors influence the student experience within international universities. Notably, teacher support emerges as a factor that positively shapes student experience, particularly in the realm of English language education, although it has not received extensive scrutiny (Zhao & Yang, 2022). The undeniable impact of teacher support on student outcomes is a pivotal factor that contributes significantly to the academic success of students in university settings (Wong et al., 2018). While teacher support is generally recognized, it remains a relatively underexplored area of study. An antecedent investigation contended that instructional support constitutes a predominant aspect of teacher support in existing studies, resulting in limited research on other forms of support offered by teachers. Hence, the current study addresses this research gap by examining the roles of emotional, appraisal, and instrumental support in shaping the study abroad experience of students, responding to the contemporary call for increased research in this domain (Kikas & Mägi, 2017; Wong et al., 2018).

In addition to teacher support, foreign language anxiety emerges as another influential factor shaping students' study-abroad experience. Anxiety, as a psychologically intricate construct, encapsulates feelings of worry and fear experienced by individuals. Considerable research has been dedicated to exploring its impact on language skills and writing. Foreign language anxiety significantly affects the motivation and commitment of students to language learning, with approximately one-third of learners experiencing such anxiety to some degree. Consequently, there is a compelling need to investigate how foreign language anxiety impacts the willingness to communicate among students in the context of international studies (Rasool et al., 2023).

Conversely, homesickness is a crucial factor that not only molds the study abroad experience but also enhances the willingness to communicate among students. Homesickness refers to the psychological response triggered by the absence of significant others and family members (Mekonen & Adarkwah, 2023). Upon embarking on educational pursuits in foreign countries, students are prone to developing such ailments characterized by feelings of isolation and a dearth of social support, thereby escalating stress levels (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). In line with this perspective, the study posits that heightened homesickness among students correlates with a diminished willingness to engage in communication with others. A recent scholarly investigation revealed that extensive research has been conducted on homesickness, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic

(Mbous et al., 2022). Hence, the current study undertakes a notable endeavour to scrutinize homesickness in the post-COVID-19 scenario, aiming to contribute to an enhanced understanding of this phenomenon. In essence, the study holds significance because it systematically investigates the principal determinants influencing the willingness to communicate among students, elucidating the mechanisms through which this willingness fluctuates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceived discrimination and study abroad experience

Broadly speaking, the experience of residing in a foreign locale encompasses various activities, such as traveling to the foreign country, exploring diverse locations, and immersing oneself in day-to-day life. In contrast, the focus of the present study pertains specifically to the study abroad experience, which encapsulates the encounters of international students. Distinguishing itself from generic travel experiences, this specialized academic investigation centers on two primary activities: travel and learning. The study abroad experience for students encompasses not only cultural exchange but also educational training and various other activities (Duerden et al., 2018). A preceding academic investigation indicated that students who have studied abroad often emerge as influential advocates for their respective destinations. These individuals disseminate their experiences to others, effectively functioning as ambassadors for the studied locales (Yang et al., 2022). Conversely, students with unfavorable study-abroad experience are inclined to exhibit negative WOM. It is pertinent to recognize that student experience during international study is subject to diverse influencing factors, with discrimination being one notable element. In particular, perceived discrimination is prevalent among international students and has the potential to impact their attitudes toward pursuing education in a specific country (Yang et al., 2023). Discrimination refers to the consequences arising from subjective perceptions resulting from encountered discrimination in routine daily life activities (Schmitt et al., 2014). A prevailing ethnic majority asserts ownership over the nation and privileges within a society characterized by the coexistence of diverse ethnicities. Likewise, international students may encounter ethnic exclusion owing to their minority status in a foreign country. This circumstance may lead to instances of racial or language-based discrimination, intensifying their vulnerability within the host country. Such students may perceive mistreatment by their peers, administrators, and educators, attributing it to racial or ethnic considerations (Sun et al., 2021). Therefore, the study-abroad experiences of students may be adversely affected by perceived discrimination. Consequently, Arab students studying in Malaysia might encounter ethnic discrimination attributable to the prevailing national culture, thereby complicating cross-cultural adaptation and contributing to a negative study abroad experience. Thus, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: *Perceived discrimination and study-abroad experience are significantly associated among Arab students in Malaysia.*

Teacher Support and Study Abroad Experience

Teacher support encompasses the student's perceptions of the care and assistance provided by the instructor, which may manifest in various forms, such as emotional, academic, instrumental, and appraisal support (Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2023). Nonetheless, the current investigation focused exclusively on instrumental, emotional, and appraisal support. In the context of this study, emotional support pertains to the demonstration of respect, care, warmth, and friendliness that a student receives from the teacher. Academic support denotes the preparedness and attentiveness of the teacher toward fostering student learning. Instrumental support, in this context, refers to tangible assistance provided by the teacher to their students (Patrick et al., 2007). For example, a scenario may arise where a teacher allocates additional time to enhance students' comprehension. Additionally, students may receive appraisal support from their instructors in the form of feedback, suggestions, and critical evaluation regarding their academic performance (Hejazi et al., 2023). Consequently, the current study posits that study-abroad experience is likely to improve with increased teacher support, particularly for international students in the host country.

Certain pedagogical practices are embraced by international students, as they contribute to enriching their experience in a foreign country and fostering enhanced learning. Examples of such practices include culturally responsive teaching and providing feedback to students, which not only inform them about their inclusion in class but also augment their overall study abroad experience (Dong & Ishige, 2022). A prior study suggested that teachers who provide support confer value upon their students, foster positive relationships, render assistance, and offer guidance as needed (Liu et al., 2021). Students who receive timely support and guidance from their teachers are prone to experiencing a sense of security and motivation, ultimately enriching their international study experience (Wentzel et al., 2017). In accordance with the current investigation, it is asserted that the support provided by teachers contributes to an enhanced study abroad experience for Arab students. Consequently, the following hypothesis posits that:

H2: *Teacher emotional support and study-abroad experience are significantly associated among Arab students in Malaysia.*

H3: *Teacher appraisal support and study-abroad experience are significantly associated among Arab students in Malaysia.*

H4: *Teacher instrumental support and study-abroad experience are significantly associated with education among Arab students in Malaysia.*

Home Sickness, Foreign Language Anxiety and Study Abroad Experience

Students engaging in overseas studies may encounter various forms of negative emotions stemming from second language anxiety or homesickness. Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is characterized by feelings of apprehension and negative emotional responses arising from challenges acquiring a second or foreign

language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). The challenges encountered in acquiring a foreign language can impede a student's academic progress. A prior research study argued that negative emotions, including anxiety, serve as early indicators of mental health concerns among students. In such circumstances, students may grapple with foreign language anxiety, potentially compromising their learning processes (Pekrun, 2014). Consequently, students experiencing foreign language anxiety are likely to have a suboptimal study-abroad experience.

Conversely, homesickness also plays a significant role in shaping students' study-abroad experience. It is pertinent to acknowledge that pursuing education in another country demands emotional resilience. Students residing in foreign countries commonly experience homesickness, particularly those driven by career aspirations or academic pursuits, who may grapple with a sense of longing for their place of origin (Alromaih et al., 2022). The occurrence of homesickness and foreign language anxiety contributes to students' suboptimal study abroad experience. Consequently, the study posits the following hypotheses:

H5: *Home sickness and study-abroad experience are significantly associated among Arab students in Malaysia.*

H6: *Foreign language anxiety and study-abroad experience are significantly associated among Arab students in Malaysia.*

Despite students' varying experiences during their time away from home, their stay in a foreign country for educational purposes often elicits diverse emotional responses. A pivotal aspect of the study abroad experience is its influence on the willingness to communicate among students. Willingness to Communicate (WTCOM) traces its origins to initial language communication studies and refers to the trait-like inclination of individuals to engage in communication when afforded the freedom of choice (Tai & Chen, 2023). It pertains to the final stage preceding actual communication. Individuals characterized as proactive learners exhibit greater willingness to communicate than do those who lack autonomy in actively seeking opportunities to engage in second language discourse. Consequently, their willingness to communicate is diminished (Hejazi et al., 2023). In accordance with this assertion, it is posited that a positive study abroad experience is correlated with an enhanced willingness to communicate among students; conversely, a negative study abroad experience is hypothesized to result in the following:

H7: *Study-abroad experience and willingness to communicate among Arab students in Malaysia are significantly associated.*

Study abroad as a mediator

The present study endeavored to investigate the mediating role of study-abroad experience, recognizing that this experience is shaped by various factors. For instance, a prior research study indicated that students who have a positive study abroad experience often become ambassadors for the destination in question

(Yang et al., 2022). Conversely, when students encounter discrimination in the host country, they are inclined to develop unfavorable perceptions (Yang et al., 2023). A scenario may arise wherein a student undergoes ethnic, racial, or language-related discrimination, resulting in a suboptimal study abroad experience (Sun et al., 2021). Likewise, the support provided by teachers to students tends to positively shape their attitudes toward a specific institution. It is noteworthy that diverse teaching practices exist to foster positive student attitudes, with a particularly salient impact stemming from a congenial environment and supportive interactions (Dong & Ishige, 2022) and enriching their study abroad experience (Liu et al., 2021), thereby influencing their willingness to communicate. Therefore, it is argued that students' study-abroad experience, influenced by perceived discrimination and teacher support (TS) in the host country, contributes to the development of their willingness to communicate. The hypotheses are as follows:

H7: *Study-abroad experience is a significant mediator between perceived discrimination and WTCOM among Arab students in Malaysia.*

H8: *Study-abroad experience is a significant mediator between TS and the WTCOM among Arab students in Malaysia.*

H9: *Study-abroad experience is a significant mediator between home sickness and WTCOM among Arab students in Malaysia.*

H10: *Study-abroad experience is a significant mediator between foreign language anxiety and WTCOM among Arab students in Malaysia.*

METHODOLOGY

The objective of the present study is to elucidate the mechanisms by which various factors within the international learning environment can impact the willingness to communicate among students. Additionally, mediation paths were scrutinized in the investigation.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design serves as the blueprint delineating the procedures to be employed in achieving the stipulated objectives (Saunders et al., 2015). Consequently, the positivist research philosophy was embraced due to its advocacy for the application of natural scientific methodologies within the domain of the social sciences (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Aligned with the chosen research philosophy, the approach adopted is deductive and quantitative. Subsequent sections expound upon the additional methodological decisions made in the study.

Questionnaire Design and Pretesting

The respondents were collected through the use of a questionnaire. All the

measurement instruments employed in the study were adapted from prior research, with each measure comprising multiple items. The measurement of perceived discrimination involved the use of a 7-item scale (Shaffer et al., 2017). Homesickness was assessed through a 4-item measurement, while foreign language anxiety was gauged using a 5-item measurement.

In addition, a three-dimensional instrument was adapted to measure teacher support. Teacher instrumental support was evaluated using a 5-item measure, teacher appraisal support utilized a 4-item measure, and teacher emotional support employed a 4-item questionnaire. Willingness to communicate was gauged through a 7-item measurement, while study abroad experience was measured with a 5-item instrument. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1 --> Strongly disagree" to "5 --> Strongly agree" was utilized. Prior to questionnaire distribution for data collection, pretesting and pilot testing were conducted. Validation of the questionnaire involved obtaining feedback from five experts, including professionals from educational institutions. Before initiating the data collection, a pilot study was undertaken with responses obtained from 35 participants, and no amendments were deemed necessary for the questionnaire.

Sampling and Data Collection

The target population comprises students enrolled in Malaysian universities, with a specific focus exclusively on Arab students, while non-Arab students are excluded. The exact size of the population remains unknown, necessitating the application of the thumb rule and insights from prior research studies to guide the selection of the sample size. The chosen sample size adheres to the minimum requirements previously established; for example, a sample size within the range of 30 to 500 is considered acceptable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). In accordance with this, 450 questionnaires were disseminated among students selected through convenience sampling within the universities situated in the Klang Valley (Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, and Putrajaya). The data collection process yielded a total of 300 valid questionnaires. The collected data were subsequently analyzed using SPSS and PLS-SEM.

RESULTS

Measurement Model Assessment

The PLS-SEM approach was employed for hypothesis testing, encompassing a two-stage process involving the assessment of both the measurement model and the structural model" (Chin, 1998; Henseler et al., 2009). According to Henseler et al. (2009), both convergent and discriminant validity were employed in the assessment.

The study employed CR as a measure of reliability, following the recommendation by (Starkweather, 2012) that values should not fall below 0.8. Furthermore, an evaluation of factor loadings was conducted. According to Hair et al. (2014), factor loading values must exceed a threshold of 0.5. Table 1 indicates that all the values surpass this threshold, indicating that there are no issues with the factor loadings. Additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) is employed to establish convergent validity (CV) (Hair et al., 2010; Hair et al., 2014), and values must exceed the minimum threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2014). Table 1 presents the AVE values, all of which exceed 0.5. These values indicate that each latent construct accounted for more than half of the variation in their respective indicators (refer to Figure 2).

Table 1: Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

	Loadings	Items	Alpha	Rho A	CR	AVE
Foreign Language Anxiety	FLA1	0.932	0.937	0.944	0.955	0.841
	FLA2	0.919				
	FLA3	0.899				
	FLA5	0.918				
Homesickness	HS1	0.848	0.855	0.853	0.903	0.701
	HS2	0.687				
	HS3	0.892				
	HS4	0.905				
Perceived Discrimination	PD1	0.708	0.872	0.884	0.903	0.61
	PD2	0.718				
	PD3	0.864				
	PD4	0.83				
	PD7	0.699				
	PD8	0.849				
Study Abroad Experience	SAE1	0.833	0.815	0.83	0.875	0.59
	SAE2	0.701				
	SAE3	0.835				
	SAE4	0.885				
	SAE5	0.533				
Teacher Appraisal Support	TAS1	0.907	0.809	0.814	0.887	0.725
	TAS3	0.845				
	TAS4	0.799				
Teacher Emotional Support	TES1	0.597	0.645	0.676	0.811	0.594
	TES2	0.849				
	TES3	0.84				
Teacher Instrumental Support	TIS1	0.859	0.756	0.852	0.853	0.612
	TIS2	0.891				
	TIS3	0.355				
	TIS4	0.89				
Willingness to Communicate	WTC1	0.94	0.756	0.852	0.842	0.535
	WTC2	0.503				
	WTC3	0.599				
	WTC4	0.539				
	WTC5	0.941				

Discriminant validity

The heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) was employed to evaluate the distinctiveness of all the constructs within the framework, with values required to be less than 0.85 (HTMT < 0.85) (Kline, 2011). All HTMT values presented in Table 2 fall within the recommended range. Consequently, discriminant validity is confirmed.

Table 2: Discriminant validity.

	FLA	HS	PD	SAE	TAS	TES	TIS	WTC
FLA								
HS	0.332							
PD	0.446	0.788						
SAE	0.626	0.608	0.77					
TAS	0.259	0.842	0.675	0.643				
TES	0.181	0.426	0.369	0.384	0.445			
TIS	0.723	0.567	0.653	0.784	0.466	0.157		
WTC	0.285	0.642	0.826	0.616	0.599	0.417	0.568	

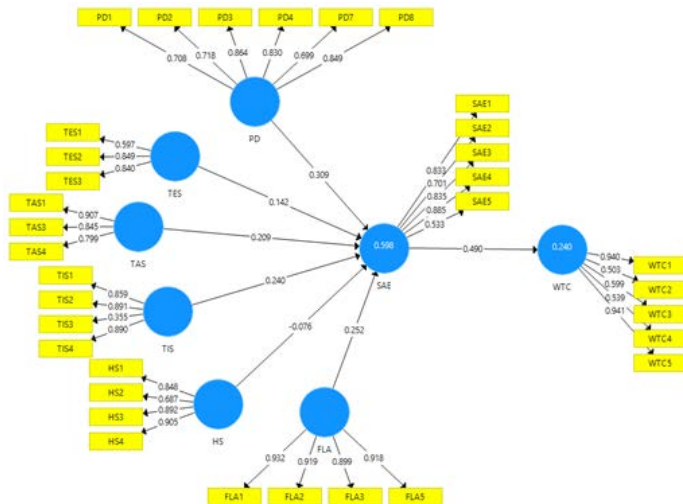


Figure 2: Measurement Model Assessment.

PATH ANALYSIS

The paths tested through PLS-SEM are depicted in the following table (refer to Figure 3). As shown in Table 3, foreign language anxiety is positively associated with study-abroad experience (beta value = 0.252, t = 4.846, p < 0.01). Moreover, all dimensions of teacher support, namely, teacher instrumental support (beta value = 0.240, t = 3.749, p < 0.01), teacher appraisal support (β = 0.209, t = 3.647, p < 0.01), and teacher emotional support (beta value = 0.142, t = 3.002, p < 0.01),

were found to positively influence study abroad experience. Consequently, hypotheses H5 to H7 are accepted. Additionally, Table 3 indicates an insignificant relationship between homesickness and study-abroad experience (beta value = -0.076, $t = 1.244$, $p > 0.01$). Therefore, hypothesis H2 is not supported.

In addition to the direct path, Table 3 presents the mediation paths. Study-abroad experience was not found to significantly mediate the relationship between homesickness and willingness to communicate (beta value = -0.038, $t = 1.254$, $p > 0.01$). However, study-abroad experience significantly mediates the influence of foreign language anxiety (beta value = 0.121, $t = 4.784$, $p < 0.01$), perceived discrimination (beta value = 0.151, $t = 3.951$, $p < 0.01$), and beta value = 0.209, $t = 5.210$, $p < 0.01$ on willingness to communicate. Consequently, hypotheses H9, H11, and H12 are accepted. Table 4 also provides values for R^2 and f^2 .

Table 3: Hypothesis Testing Results.

Relationships	Beta	SD	T Value	P Value	Decision	R2	F2	VIF
FLA -> SAE	0.252	0.052	4.846	0	Supported	0.598	0.088	1.785
HS -> SAE	-0.076	0.061	1.244	0.214	Unsupported		0.005	2.634
PD -> SAE	0.309	0.062	5.013	0	Supported		0.105	2.26
SAE -> WTC	0.49	0.049	10.087	0	Supported	0.24	0.316	
TAS -> SAE	0.209	0.057	3.647	0	Supported		0.053	2.042
TES -> SAE	0.142	0.047	3.002	0.003	Supported		0.043	1.176
TIS -> SAE	0.24	0.064	3.749	0	Supported		0.067	2.139
Mediating Paths								
FLA -> SAE -> WTC	0.121	0.025	4.784	0	Supported			
HS -> SAE -> WTC	-0.038	0.031	1.254	0.21	Unsupported			
PD -> SAE -> WTC	0.151	0.038	3.951	0	Supported			
TS -> SAE -> WTC	0.209	0.04	5.21	0	Supported			

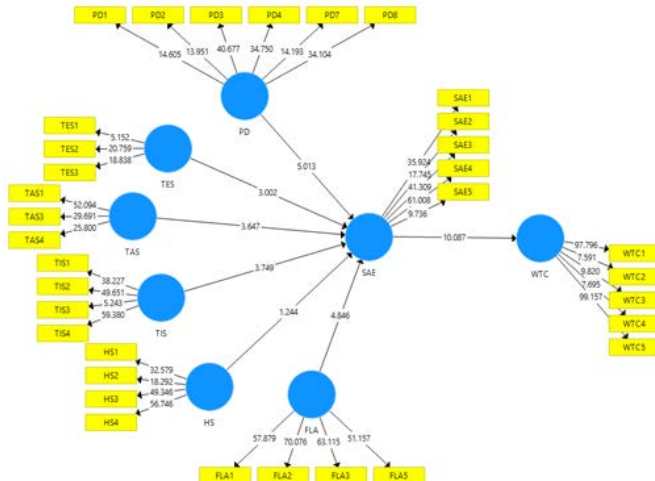


Figure 3: Structural Model Assessment.

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to investigate the willingness to communicate among Arab students enrolled in Malaysian universities, with a particular focus on examining study abroad experience as a potential mediator. The findings indicate that foreign language anxiety contributes to adverse study-abroad experiences for students. When individuals studying in international universities encounter challenges in learning and speaking a foreign language, their anxiety levels tend to diminish the quality of their study abroad experience. These findings align with previous studies that have similarly identified a significant relationship between foreign language anxiety and study abroad experience (Almusharraf & Bailey, 2023; Bielak, 2022) given their bilingual experience; this study also explored the association between perceived discrimination and study abroad experience. The findings demonstrated a significant relationship, affirming that the existence of perceived discrimination in the host country jeopardizes the positive study experience of the students. These results align with previous research; for instance, international students encountering discrimination may experience an impact on their attitudes toward studying in a particular country (Yang et al., 2023), reflecting subjective perceptions (Schmitt et al., 2014) that subsequently influence mental health among students. Consequently, their study-abroad experience has a negative impact.

Teacher support constitutes a crucial element of student satisfaction and success, assuming heightened significance within the context of international students. Accordingly, this study investigated the relationship between teacher support and study-abroad experience. The findings revealed a positive association between teacher AS and study-abroad experience. Additionally, the results indicated that both teacher instrumental and emotional support significantly contributed to a more favorable experience for students in the study abroad context. These outcomes are consistent with prior research. For example, a previous study highlighted certain teaching practices that are well received by international students, enhancing their experience in a foreign country and augmenting their learning. Culturally responsive teaching and the provision of feedback contribute to students' awareness of their inclusion in class, further enhancing their study abroad experience (Dong & Ishige, 2022). Henceforth, the assistance provided by teachers to students in various forms aids in their adaptation to the international university environment. Additionally, the study did not reveal a significant relationship between homesickness and study-abroad experience. However, willingness to communicate was found to be significantly influenced by study-abroad experience. These findings align with previous research indicating that international students who lack autonomy and struggle to adapt to international study settings tend to encounter challenges in utilizing the second language, ultimately diminishing their willingness to communicate (Hejazi et al., 2023). In alternative terms, the study outcomes revealed that enhanced study-abroad experience is positively correlated with increased willingness to communicate and, conversely, is negatively correlated with

increased willingness to communicate. Furthermore, the study also examined the mediating role of study-abroad experience. The study's results indicated that study abroad experience serves as a significant mediator in the tested relationships, with the exception of homesickness and willingness to communicate. The findings affirm that reduced perceived discrimination, lower foreign language anxiety, and greater teacher support significantly influence study abroad experience, thereby contributing to an increased willingness to communicate.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The current study has implications for both theoretical frameworks and practical applications. Primarily, this represents one of the limited endeavours to explore various factors that may impact the willingness to communicate among students, contributing significantly to the literature on international study experiences. The study's findings enrich our understanding of how diverse factors collectively contribute to fostering the willingness to communicate among students. These findings hold value as they elucidate the mechanisms through which different factors within the international study context influence students' willingness to communicate. Furthermore, the study is a valuable addition to the literature, as it scrutinizes the willingness to communicate within the specific context of Arab students, particularly those studying in Malaysian universities. One of the few investigations focusing on students in the Malaysian context concerns their willingness to communicate, advancing our understanding of how universities can enhance the study abroad experience. Overall, the study critically addresses the role of teacher support in shaping the study abroad experience, offering valuable insights into how teachers can influence and enhance the willingness to communicate. The examination of various facets of teacher support contributes to an enhanced understanding of the diverse types of support that should be provided to students.

University administrators must identify the factors influencing students' study experiences to facilitate seamless study abroad. The study, conducted within the context of Arab students, reveals the existence of discrimination at Malaysian universities. Consequently, proactive measures are imperative for addressing and eliminating such discrimination. Strategies may include organizing training sessions, fostering awareness during university orientation ceremonies, and promoting respect and tolerance through international community gatherings. Based on the study findings, it is advisable to enhance teacher support at universities to facilitate student adjustment. Regular student seminars can encourage the use of a second language. Furthermore, the study recommends diversifying forms of teacher support, as highlighted, to effectively engage the international student community. Addressing students' homesickness is also crucial, and emotional support, particularly from teachers, is suggested as a means to alleviate homesickness among students.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study has certain limitations that may pave the way for potential future directions. This research adopted a cross-sectional design to explore the willingness to communicate among Arab students in Malaysian universities. It would be valuable to scrutinize the research framework using a longitudinal research design to assess whether Arab students' willingness to communicate changes over an extended period. Consequently, caution is advised in interpreting the study findings. The study focused on Arab students and employed convenience sampling for data collection. While justified in the research methods, future studies are encouraged to employ probability sampling to replicate the path model. Additionally, the sample size was determined based on previous studies and a thumb rule, prompting a suggestion for future studies to utilize larger sample sizes for more comprehensive insights into the research framework. Considering the potential presence of poor mental health among students, future studies are recommended to incorporate measures of depression, stress, and anxiety for more nuanced insights. Although the study sought to elucidate the underlying mechanisms influencing student communication in an international study context, external factors may play a role. Consequently, future studies should explore potential moderating variables. Given Malaysia's status as a prominent tourism and education destination, future research could extend the investigation to students from other regions, providing cross-national insights into the willingness to communicate.

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SECTION A

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements. Please indicate your answer using the following 5-point scale:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	
The following questions related to Perceived Discrimination						
1	Many opportunities are denied to me	1	2	3	4	5
2	I am treated differently in social situations	1	2	3	4	5
3	I feel that I receive unequal treatment	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am denied what I deserve	1	2	3	4	5
5	I feel that my people are discriminated against	1	2	3	4	5
6	I am treated differently because of my race.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I am treated differently because of my color	1	2	3	4	5
The following questions related to Home Sickness						
1	I feel sad leaving my relatives behind	1	2	3	4	5
2	Homesickness bothers me	1	2	3	4	5
3	I feel sad living in unfamiliar surroundings	1	2	3	4	5
4	I miss the people and country of my origin	1	2	3	4	5
The following questions related to Foreign Language Anxiety						
1	I felt truly nervous when the lecturer called my name in foreign language class.	1	2	3	4	5
2	The harder I studied in preparation for the test, the more confused I became.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I don't feel any pressure to prepare well in language classes.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I always felt that other students spoke foreign languages better than me.	1	2	3	4	5
5	I do not feel confident speaking a foreign language in front of other students.	1	2	3	4	5
The following statements related to Teacher Instrumental Support						
1	The teacher shows an interest in every student's learning	1	2	3	4	5
2	The teacher gives extra help when students need it.	1	2	3	4	5
3	The teacher helps students with their learning	1	2	3	4	5
4	The teacher continues teaching until the students understand.	1	2	3	4	5
5	The teacher gives students an opportunity to express opinions.	1	2	3	4	5
The following statements related to Teacher Appraisal Support						
1	The teacher tells me about how well I am doing in my class	1	2	3	4	5
2	The teacher gives me feedback on my strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	5
3	The teacher tells us what is expected of us when we get a test, quiz or assignment.	1	2	3	4	5
4	The teacher tells me what I need to do to become better in my studies	1	2	3	4	5
The following questions are related to Teacher Emotional Support						
1	teacher truly understand how you feel about things	1	2	3	4	5
2	your teacher try to help you when you are sad or upset	1	2	3	4	5
3	you count on your teacher for help when you need it	1	2	3	4	5
4	your teacher respect your opinion	1	2	3	4	5
The following statements related to Willingness to Communicate						
1	I use English to communicate with my friends	1	2	3	4	5
2	I use English to communicate with my teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I use English to answer the teacher's questions	1	2	3	4	5
4	I use English to check meaning	1	2	3	4	5
5	I use English to ask questions	1	2	3	4	5
6	I use English for simple interactions	1	2	3	4	5
7	I use English only when I participate in class activities.	1	2	3	4	5
The following statements related to Study Abroad Experience						
1	I truly enjoyed this study experience.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I was revitalized through this study experience.	1	2	3	4	5
3	I learned something about myself from this study experience.	1	2	3	4	5
4	I had a chance to closely experience the local culture of the studying area	1	2	3	4	5
5	I experienced something new (e.g., food and activity) during this study experience	1	2	3	4	5

Author bios:

Muhammad Awais Bhatti, PhD, MBA, is an associate professor in the College of Business, King Faisal University, in Hofuf, Saudi Arabia. His areas of expertise include Human resource management, Supply Chain management, strategic management, human resource development, and entrepreneurship.

Ariff Syah Juhari holds a PhD from Loughborough University, UK and currently an Assistant Professor at the College for Business Administration, Prince Sultan University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia,