

# Internationalization of Student Mobility for Higher Education Malaysia: A Systematic Review

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## Abstract

This study examines the internationalisation of student mobility within Malaysia's higher education sector, focussing on its dynamics, challenges, and impacts. Malaysia has emerged as a prominent centre for higher education, experiencing notable increases in student mobility, largely attributed to the Higher Education Blueprint 2015-2025. This study examines the language, cultural, and academic barriers encountered by international students, alongside institutional challenges such as insufficient support systems. This research investigates cross-cultural influences on student mobility, with a focus on the University of Technology Malaysia. The study employed a qualitative methodology to collect experiences from postgraduate students and administrative staff via interviews. The findings underscore the presence of language barriers, difficulties in cultural adaptation, and obstacles to academic integration, while also indicating beneficial effects on institutional research and reputation. The study recommends the implementation of improved language support, cultural orientation programs, and strengthened academic advisory services to enhance the internationalisation process. The establishment of a model for student mobility in Malaysia may provide a framework for subsequent educational initiatives and enhance the country's position as a global educational hub.

**Keywords:** Internationalization, Student Mobility, Higher Education, Malaysia, Education Hub

## Introduction

### *Background*

The internationalisation of higher education has emerged as a significant global trend, altering the interactions between institutions and students worldwide (Vidya & Gauri, 2014). According to Yee et al. (2023), the concept was developed from the wider idea of globalisation, which originally emphasised the commercial dimensions of transnational exchanges, such as education. Internationalisation prioritises exchanges in education, culture, and academia as streamlined in the Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025) in Malaysia which delineates strategic objectives aimed at establishing the nation as a global educational centre for Southeast Asia, with the intent of attracting international students. Malaysia's strategic

positioning, cost-effective tuition, and multicultural atmosphere render it an attractive option for international students. Malaysian universities have markedly enhanced their infrastructure and international outreach to address the increasing demand for student mobility. Conversely, the initiatives have resulted in a significant increase in the number of students from the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Africa, prompting universities to create programs aimed at facilitating the integration of these students into the local academic and cultural contexts.

International students encounter various challenges that hinder their academic experience in Malaysia, despite these efforts (MOE, 2015). Language barriers, academic adjustments, and socio-cultural differences represent significant challenges that impede the seamless transition of international students. Hence, this study aims to examine the challenges faced and assess the effectiveness of existing support systems in facilitating successful student mobility within Malaysian universities, with a particular emphasis on Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM).

## **Literature Review**

### *Global Trends in Student Mobility*

A recent global trend is the formation of higher education hubs and internationalization of higher education. According to OECD, 2023 report from the first UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in 1998 and publication in OECD which is "Internationalization of Higher Education and "Internationalization and Trade in Higher Education" and they became important reference for discussion. The term "internationalization" has evolved from "globalization" over the past few decades. Previous studies found that the function of globalization seems to be commercialized in the educational market then internationalization was brought out in the discussion of student mobility studies. The internationalization of student mobility is the movement in the recent academic society, especially in Malaysia. In Malaysia Higher Education Blueprints 2020-2025, the aims become the educational centre hub for Southeast Asia. Since the launch, many incentives program were brought in throughout the universities in Malaysia.

The increasing trend of international student mobility illustrates the deepening global interconnectedness that has developed in recent decades. UNESCO reports that more than 5 million students were pursuing their studies abroad by 2019, with projections indicating this figure could rise to 8 million by 2025. International students are driven to pursue education overseas due to the promise of superior academic opportunities, the chance to immerse themselves in varied cultures, and the potential for improved job prospects. Prominent educational centres around the world, including the U.S., U.K., Australia, and a growing number of Asian nations, have established themselves as appealing options for these learners.

In Asia, nations such as Singapore, China, and Malaysia are vying to establish themselves as prominent centres of education. The Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia has established strategic initiatives within the Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025) aimed at fostering the internationalisation of higher education. This encompasses elevating the standards of academic programs, augmenting research capacities, and providing financial incentives for international students. The significance of Malaysia's education sector is highlighted by its ambition to attract 250,000 international students by the year 2025. Several

barriers have been recognised in the existing body of work concerning the movement of international students. These encompass challenges related to language, difficulties in academic integration, and obstacles in adapting to different cultures. Earlier research indicates that these obstacles may impact the academic success and overall well-being of international students. Consequently, grasping these challenges is essential for formulating strategies that improve the experience of international students within Malaysia's higher education framework.

Globalization, a commercial term was introduced worldwide in the early 2000s but for most educators the term is considered too commercial, so the term internationalization was the preferred term used in 2010. The supply and demand in the educational sector reacted aggressively in the process of internationalization trade market. The concept entails multi dimension development in various industries which also a drive for the development in Industry Revolution 4.0. The tremendous environment changes brought the society urge to seek for high technologies in human capital. The consequences pushed the human resources to the extreme in producing multi-talented labour to cope with the demand. In 2019, there are 5.3 million students involved in international student mobility to reap the facilities offered to study abroad. (Project Atlas, 2019). Thus, the statistic shows that there will be 8 million students are participating in student mobility by the year 2025. Multinational companies are the gigantic power that emerged as a strong economy market Asian country. This is the main motivation for countries in Asia such as Singapore, Japan, China, Malaysia and Philippine to prepare as the destination in student mobility especially in tertiary education locally and internationally.

The development in the Malaysia higher education system has been much more connected to societal development or domestic needs. In modern society, international factors such as globalization, internationalization and trade in higher education have great influences on the Malaysia higher education system (Allam, 2019). Internationalization opens the boundaries of language, cross cultural, broaden global perspectives and experiences. This encourage more universities pay extra attention and afford in internationalization of student mobility as the number of students studying abroad is multiple up from 2000 and 2019.

According to Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, (Ref) 92415 international students pursued their higher education in Malaysia either in public or private universities in 2018. Individual mobility and personal academia practices transfer are also the mass reason in the era of internationalization (Allen, 1988). There are 100 private universities and 340 private colleges in Malaysia which enrolled 25000 international students in year 2019. Sharma (2012), The rapid growth of educational institutions reflected the increment of demand in tertiary education from worldwide and the competency from Malaysia academia sector become the destination of student mobility. The competencies of Malaysia were outstanding in academia research programs, students' experiences both inbound or outbound, local hospitality and the efficiency of administrative staff of each university. In Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education), global prominence, transformed Higher Education delivery and globalized online learning were drafted earlier in the strategies. Due to the governance efforts, Malaysia was chosen as the most popular study destination from ranking 25 rise to ranking 9 in 2015 overtake the developing countries such as Australia etc. (UNESCO,2016). Targeted number of foreign students is 250000 in year 2025 resulted from the blueprint.

The main principle in the blueprint based on valued-for-money to attract most countries in the process of student mobility. To build Malaysia as an international education hub, the MOE increased the quality in academia curricular program and researchers to ensure that the certification is well recognized worldwide. Besides, universities branding system to differentiate Malaysia with its peer in the competitive market by creating a niche zone such as EduCity in Medini Nusajaya Johor. Thus, it will create more visibility and presence of Malaysia in the international arena to attract interest and awareness from international students. Furthermore, diversification of administrative staffs and students is the strength to concrete the student mobility program. For example, University Technology of Malaysia (UTM), which sit at the 187<sup>th</sup> place in QS worldwide ranking board build up the prestige among others local universities and the quality education system in the university become the top choice in student mobility. The research will study the mutual influences of cross culture in higher educational environment. UTM have 4781 PhD students. As of Dec 2020, UTM has 13858 outbound mobility students and 11591 inbound mobility students. (UTM, Office of Strategy & Corporate Affairs, March 2021). UTM is one of the research universities and developed rapidly in research study.

The triangulation relationship for lectures, international students and the administrative staffs occurs as the culture exchange which brought up the transnational bridge to link with the global. The cross-culture impact may emerge the benefits and improvement for the university in future enrolment so that we could be the role model for other universities in Malaysia. The development in internationalization in Malaysia university is on the appropriate track of national educational planning which to develop Malaysia as Edu Hub in Southeast Asia. Globalize the competition in higher education increase stronger formation of strategic alliance to introduce UTM academic cultures to another country. Malaysia university play a role model in internationalization of student mobility program in Malaysia.

## **Method**

### *Research Design*

This research utilised a qualitative approach to investigate the experiences of international students regarding student mobility at UTM. Qualitative research facilitates a thorough investigation of personal experiences, making it particularly suitable for understanding how international students manage language, cultural, and academic obstacles. This method was selected instead of quantitative approaches as it offers a deeper insight into individual experiences and organisational dynamics, aspects that are challenging to convey through mere numerical data. This study involved a carefully chosen group of postgraduate and undergraduate students from UTM, particularly emphasising those with direct experience in student mobility. Interviews were conducted with administrative personnel from UTM's International Affairs Unit to gather perspectives on the institutional aspects of the student mobility process. Participants were gathered through university email lists, guaranteeing a diverse array of backgrounds and experiences in the study. The process of gathering data included semi-structured interviews, which provided a balance of adaptability and focus on essential research enquiries. The research team employed thematic analysis to examine the data, facilitating the identification of recurring patterns and issues. The study employed triangulation by integrating perspectives from students, administrative staff, and secondary sources, thereby ensuring that the findings were both robust and comprehensive.

Participants in this study included undergraduates and postgraduate international students from a public university in Johor. Participants were recruited through university email lists around the campus. Inclusion criteria required participants to be currently enrolled as full-time students, while exclusion criteria ruled out individuals with previous international study experience. The research applied qualitative which enquired the research to understand the philosophy of the research which needed more in depth understanding whereby the data is interpreted or built on the ideas from the analysis of the data. Qualitative researcher is the study and access to the thoughts and nature being of the research participants which bring depth study in experiences of each sample data. (Jane Sutton, 2015). Qualitative research is based on the induction from the interaction with the nature being to generate unexpected data/result with the reasonable explanation and dynamic consequence from the study. In this research, qualitative method was used to explore the inbound outbound experience on the postgraduate students in UTM through the process of internationalization in student mobility, to analysis the process applied by the administrative staff in International Affair Unit and to develop a model for internationalization in student mobility in UTM. Qualitative research is the research produced the study in descriptive method from oral and writing from the study of behaviours, perspective and motivation from the third party in depth through the depth study procedure in qualitative research method. From the study, the result present that the process of internationalization of student mobility in UTM bring positive impact in the university research field achievement, and the good will in international platform among other competitors locally or internationally. Furthermore, the study of foreign postgraduate experiences produces a guideline and reference for students who plan to participate in student mobility in UTM. A development on model for internationalization of student mobility encourage the university, private colleges and institutions to understand more the procedures in the flow of internationalization of student mobility. Therefore, researcher is the key instrument in every research with the active involvement collecting sample data which consider a main factor to approach the participant with the discussion of the subject. (Moleong, 2004). Descriptive method is suitable in the study of qualitative to investigate the reality facts in social life (Cozby, 2009). Clearly prove that research could be carried out from quantitative and qualitative as the fundamental in research field. Based on the holistic approach and academia study in the research title, the researcher prefers to apply qualitative approach in this study. In this research, qualitative method is applied because the method is closed to the objectives in the study which to explore the experience of foreign postgraduate, analyse the process of student mobility and evaluate the process for the local community in the process of internationalization of student mobility in UTM. Qualitative research provides completeness in the study and mutual understanding to the nature being and reality in academy study among the foreign postgraduates, administrative staff and local community compare the quantitative method. With this, the researcher seeks for further studying on the relationship in the method of triangulation and acting as a reference for other researchers in the future.

### *Demography*

The foreign student in Malaysia university. The researcher seeks for the experience from both gender and from tertiary education in Malaysia. The researcher also collecting the data from different countries background to explore various experiences from the point of view of each country in Malaysia university. During the interview, English is the main language to communicate but there is still communication barrier with the participant except two of

the respondents who have been two years in Malaysia. There is another population contributed to the research. The administrative staffs served in Malaysia university. The researcher selected the demography of the population who attended the interview based on their working experiences. The working experience is critical in exploring the process of internationalization on student mobility in Malaysia university. According to the table above, there are four female participants attended the interview because the population of administrative staffs are mainly female compare with male. (Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 2019; Ministry of Higher Education, 2019). The others demography is student from bachelor's degree and master's Degree courses in Malaysia university. For those staying in the campus, the respondents have more time spent with the international students. The data collected from the local community respondents is important to explore the process in internationalization on student mobility from the local perspective and the data also significant in developing the model of internationalization on student mobility in Malaysia university.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The study was approved by the School of Education in the university. Participants were assured of their confidentiality and anonymity, with data stored securely and only accessible to the research team. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection, and they were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

## **Results and Discussion**

### *Language Barriers*

The findings of the study show that language barriers were among the most significant challenges encountered by international students at UTM. A significant number of students, especially those hailing from non-English-speaking backgrounds, expressed challenges in grasping lecture content, interacting with administrative personnel, and managing routine academic responsibilities. While English is commonly used in Malaysia, the variety of accents and dialects contributes to the intricacies of communication. Moreover, although Bahasa Malaysia serves as the official language, its restricted usage among international students posed additional challenges.

The language barrier reached further than the classroom, influencing students' engagements with administrative personnel and local classmates. A number of respondents expressed their frustrations regarding misunderstandings that caused delays in administrative processes, including visa renewals and scholarship applications. In certain instances, administrative staff were observed to have limited English skills, which added to the challenges faced by students. The lack of sufficient language support intensified these issues, hindering students' ability to integrate both academically and socially.

The data underscored the necessity of enhancing language support for international students. Suggestions involve compulsory English language classes for all students and staff, along with enhanced communication protocols in administrative offices. Providing translation services and delivering essential documents in various languages would facilitate the transition for new international students.



*Cultural and Social Barriers*

Respondents emphasised the significance of cultural adaptation as a key concern. Numerous international students faced challenges in adjusting to the cultural norms of Malaysia, which frequently varied greatly from those of their home countries. Particular obstacles involved adapting to local traditions, managing religious and social norms, and coping with unfamiliar cuisine and climate. Students from monocultural backgrounds, like those from China, initially experienced the multicultural environment of Malaysia as overwhelming and disorienting.

Social integration faced additional challenges due to cultural misunderstandings. International students frequently faced difficulties in engaging with local students, as language barriers and cultural differences contributed to feelings of isolation. A significant number of students indicated feelings of homesickness and, in certain instances, psychological stress. Some students contemplated departing from the university due to insufficient social integration and support, particularly in the initial months of their experience. The findings indicate a need for stronger orientation programs to help students comprehend and adjust to Malaysian culture. Universities ought to establish peer mentoring programs, enabling local students to support international students in managing their academic and social experiences. Fostering inclusive and culturally aware environments will enhance interaction and understanding among international and local students.

The findings are the language barriers from three populations throughout the interview protocol. In the semi structure interview questions were designed to find out this topic so that to dig more constructive answer for research question: What is the international students' experience in student mobility process in Malaysia university? The respondent's feedback is Malay language is not their mother language and this language is new to them. The researcher looked at data triangulation to reach the completeness of the study. During the interview with the administrative staff to answer research question: What is the process in internationalization on student mobility faced by local administrative staff in Malaysia university?

For the administrative the must face the student affairs once they step into the university. In the other words, they are the communication bridge among the student and the university for all times. In some university in Malaysia, they are staff not well versa in English as well therefore language barrier is one of the challenging elements in this study. The researcher explored the issue among the local community which is in the campus of the university in Malaysia. The respondents, responded to the research question three: What is the attitude of local community towards internationalization on student mobility process in Malaysia university? When first step into the university, the registration is the first contact whereby the international students need to proceed with some documentation. The international student and the staff would need to have deep conversation to get the procedures done.

Social and cultural barriers was discovered as the next challenges from the participants either from the foreign students, administrative staff, and local community in Malaysia university. From the statistic showed by Ministry of Higher Education, students involved in

internationalization on student mobility are from Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa, South Africa and few from European. (MOHE,2010).

Academic Challenges experience by the foreign student in the process of internationalization on student mobility in Malaysia university. The learning environment is different for Malaysia and other countries. The internationalization on student mobility is the trend to have to intercultural waves in creating a new atmosphere of learning for both parties. The international student shared their experiences and comparison with their own country.

Financial Difficulties experience by the foreign student in the process of internationalization on student mobility in Malaysia university. The financial issue is the factor beyond the control of the international student. The fluctuation in the money market influenced the financial ability among the international student during the process of student mobility. According to the international student especially those financial aid is from the support of the family.

Psychological Difficulties experience by the foreign student in the process of internationalization on student mobility in Malaysia university. Experience of psychological difficulties was found in most of the international students during the process of internationalization on student mobility. The importance of the international students receiving the warmest welcome from the university and local community is crucial to encourage them when they first arrive to calm their emotion and spiritual support for them. (Bender et al, 2019). The social-emotional adjustment is the critical part when they are far away from their homeland especially which the cultural and language background is different, thus they felt threatening. (Brusting et al, 2021).

#### *The Challenges of Internationalization on student mobility in Malaysia university.*

##### *Language Barriers*

The international students are the individual from various countries who reside temporarily in Malaysia to pursuit their tertiary education in different method of student mobility such as educational program exchange, credit transferred program or pursuing higher education in specialized field. (Paige,1990) In Malaysia context, the internationalization on student mobility program increased from year to year according to the statistic presented by Ministry of Higher Education 2020. For Malaysia which is a country rich with multi ethic and multi lingua is great challenge for the foreign student who participant in Malaysia university.

The key issue explored in this chapter is the language barrier in new countries and the host country is a critical topic in internationalization on student mobility (Gebbru, M. and Yuksel-Kaptanoglu, I.,2020). The national language for Malaysia is Bahasa/Malay, even though English as the second language for the country still there is minority could speak or communicate fluently. The international student from the country with English as native language still faced the difficulties of accents issue when communicating with the local community. Language is the most important bridge in all aspects of the international student life either in lecture hall, campus or routine. The issue affected the study of the international student whereby some of the lecturers have the different slangs and accent when giving



lecture. The international students felt frustrated and demotivated when they faced the difficulties in the academic.

Furthermore, the language barrier created a lot of mess in the international student life when communicating with administrative staff. The international students complained that the administrative staff majority could not speak fluent English either serious accent problem. The international students faced difficulties especially in scholarship, enrollment documents and student visa problems. When the communication at the front desk failed, the international student had to visit again and again to get the procedures done. The international student feedback on this matter that feedback from the administrative staff was not clear enough due to their poor English. Furthermore, for those international students who bonded by the scholarship, the requirement of the documentation is the dominant part for the sponsor to release the scholarship each semester to the awardees but because of communication error, the procedures were being delayed and postpone. When these circumstances prolong, the international student will be in financial difficulties then their routine life would be affected. The worst part is that the foreign students could not retain their final exam result if their tuition fees were unsettled by the sponsor.

Moreover, not only communication problem the international student will face but there are no guidelines for first coming to the university and finds the lecture hall, the foreign students could not easily find the building and faculty because of all names in Bahasa. This result was supported by the literature by identifying there are two major categories of adjustment that international students must cope with (Yusliza & Chelliah, 2010).

The challenges of language difficulties brought hardship for the international students in mingling around with the local students. Their own accent is creating the barrier of communication with the local society and in the other hands the local community not proficient in English making a lot of misunderstanding and jokes in their life (Marginson, et al, 2010). When making friends with the local community especially in campus easily getting misunderstood and miscommunication when both parties are not at the same channel of communication which would make them felt not welcome. When the international student was isolated by the local community, loneliness, homesick and depression will attack their emotion. From time to time, the pressure will become a deep psychological issue for the international students which will be brought up for discussion in the next paragraph.

Another study found that language barrier restricted the international student in participating in festivals, events, campus life, co-curricular activities, social gathering etc especially in making new friendship. The complete isolation in the new environment became the roof cause in depression and pressure of the foreign student. The situation became worse when the student was burdened with the heavy assignment work which is new adjustment for the student to adapt. Studies have shown that international students with high proficiency in language have better achievement in the process of internationalization on student mobility. (Yeh & Inose, 2003)

### *Academic Challenges*

The process of internationalization on student mobility in Malaysia university dove the Malaysia academic system toward a new paradigm. For the international student who received the different education background from the native country and the host country, another adjustment the international student must bear with is the academic structure in Malaysia university. Under the process of internationalization on student mobility in Malaysia university, among the international student the mentioned that the academic system, teaching methodology and the faculty supervisor is the issue the foreigner must overcome. This data finding was supported by the previous research stated that the academic system, lecturers, and the teaching methodology are the categories of difficulty faced by the international students (Al-Zubaidah & Rechards, 2009).

The teaching and learning methodology in most universities in Malaysia is student centre based, practical and research base. The student required to plan for the individual assignment and research; it is problematic for those students who not equipped with the assignment or academic research skill from the foundation at the native country. Furthermore, the understanding of the lecture, the professors' teaching and grading style (Zhou, Freg & Bang, 2006), collecting notes, asking question during lecture, lecture participation and visiting the faculty supervisor became a challenge for the international students (Miandy & Hashim, 2019). From chapter four, the data illustrated that most of the international student's complaint that the method of teaching in Malaysia university is incompatible from the native country. The Malaysia university professor or faculty supervisor is emphasizing in producing individual assignment, journal and publishment of article which invisibly created a great pressure for the international student which learning methodology is vary from the host country.

The challenge did not stop here for international student in the process of internationalization on student mobility. The lecture with serious Bahasa accent will drive the international student especially the PhD students from quitting. The supervisor professor is the key person for the research study students, the international student found that the communication with the native professor is a big burden for the students to digest the information. Furthermore, from the data analysis in chapter four, the international students faced the misunderstanding and miscommunication such as lack of time for discussion, unclear feedback. This statement was supported by pointing out that the problem such as supervision of the supervisor professor lack of useful feedback, lack of discussion time, different perspective or expectation, cultural background cause discrimination (Blunt & Li, 1998). The conflict delayed the research progress and the graduation period in one extreme case. The case was resolved when the international students choose to change to new supervisor, some students quit and there is international student choose to have careful discussion so that the progress of research would not be delayed. (Adrian & Kimberly, et. Al, 2007)

Besides, the assignment group in the class became problematic for the international students because most of the local community choose not to join them in a group. Teamwork is the most observed situation happening in Malaysia university. The reason is the communication problem. The international student had to do adjustment in sharing the knowledge and learnings, interacting actively in assignment group to be accepted by the local community, and adapt into the host country learning environment. The situation hinders the

international student from discovery the full potential in academy. To break the communication barrier, there are international student choose to learn Bahasa slowly by hoping they can be accepted by the local community. The international students had the hardship went through the challenges.

### *Social & Cultural Challenges*

According to the result of chapter four, the international student has also faced the social and cultural challenges in the process of internationalization on student mobility. The international students came from various country especially from Middle East, South Africa, and China in Malaysia university. The social and cultural adjustment is the most challenging because it related to food, lifestyle, religion, and habit.

All the international students have the problem with the food and restaurant inside the campus. These international students not satisfied with the quality of food and the hygiene of the restaurant inside the campus. In fact, these international students have no idea where to find for suitable food. The local cuisine is spicy, oily, and sweet which is not adaptive by the foreign students which is totally different from their native country. These international students faced the difficulty in the adjustment of taste of food because there is prohibited to cook inside the hostel. Some the international students faced diarrhoea, vomiting and food poisoning at the beginning. This has been a headache for all the international students in Malaysia university.

Besides, the result from the chapter four illustrated that the transportation is one of the problems these international students faced in one of the universities in Southern Malaysia. The international students found inaccessible for public transportation inside the campus and the shuttle buses provide by the university not running in time, The huge environment of the university became inconvenience when the public transportation is not in schedule. These international students felt helpless when missed the bus for those living outside the campus. The transportation issue is another adjustment these international students must overcome. Many of the international students mentioned that there are many choices of public transportation in their country such as local shuttle buses, monorail, train, or LRT. Even though there is a GRAB or INDRIVE services inside the campus, but these international students mentioned that the cost is high and unaffordable.

Ultimately, the social and cultural background of Malaysia which is multi-ethnic, multi-religion and multi-dimension of society creating a fascinating environment for these international students. Most of the international students from the country with monoculture and mono language such as China. When these international students arrived in Malaysia university, these foreign students felt the cultural shock. The population in local has the different way of living and habit which made the international students could not adapt at the beginning. The way of greeting the elderly especially the lecturers, administrative staff and the faculty supervisor must be in the proper manner. Besides, the gesture when greeting to each other also different from each ethnic in Malaysia. These international students who used to hug another when greeting with each other are unaccepted by the local society. When the norm of their practice unaccepted locally, these international students felt isolated and not welcome. The culturally different made these international students developed psychological difficulties. These group of international students felt depressed, muscle tense, not appetite,

sleepless and restless. When these symptoms attacked these international students, the focus and concentration in the study is decrease and again it would demotivate the foreign student in pursuing the study in Malaysia university. There is partially of the international student's complaint that quitting is the first thought across when the emotion was unstable and uneasy.

Furthermore, the weather of Malaysia which is one season all over the year affected these international students' normal life as well. Malaysia is considered summer all over the year which is hot and humid at all times created disturbances to the international student. These international students could not tolerate with the hot sun compared the summer in the native country. Some of these international students affected by red rashes or some skin illness due to the weather in Malaysia. The international student needs to attend to clinic often whenever there is raining season in Malaysia.

Social and cultural impact need to take times to adapt with. These international students who stayed in Malaysia for more than two years, the comments are the language barrier had to be removed then only the local society will accept them and make friend with them.

## **Conclusion**

The internationalization of student mobility in higher education presents a dynamic and transformative opportunity for Malaysia (Suzanne, 2019). Over the past few decades, Malaysia has positioned itself as a significant player in the global education landscape, attracting a diverse cohort of international students. The country's strategic initiatives, such as the establishment of education hubs, quality assurance frameworks, and scholarship programs, have contributed to its appeal as a preferred destination for higher education. The motivations driving international students to Malaysia include access to quality education, affordable tuition fees, cultural diversity, and the opportunity to learn in English. Malaysia's multicultural environment and strategic location in Southeast Asia further enhance its attractiveness. However, the journey is not without challenges. Financial barriers, visa regulations, and cultural adaptation issues are persistent hurdles that need to be addressed. To sustain and enhance the internationalization of student mobility, Malaysia must continue to invest in infrastructure, streamline visa processes, and provide robust support systems for international students. Institutions should prioritize creating inclusive and supportive environments that celebrate cultural diversity and promote global citizenship. Collaboration with international partners and stakeholders is essential to foster academic exchanges, joint research initiatives, and cross-border partnerships. Policy makers must remain proactive in shaping policies that facilitate the seamless mobility of students while ensuring quality and equity in education. By addressing these challenges and leveraging its strengths, Malaysia can solidify its position as a global education hub, contributing significantly to the global knowledge economy and fostering a more interconnected and understanding world. The continued internationalization of student mobility will not only benefit individual students but also enrich Malaysian society, drive economic growth, and enhance the country's global standing. Despite these challenges, the internationalization of higher education has had a positive impact on UTM's research capacity and global reputation. However, the findings also underscore the need for further improvements in support systems for international students.

## **Recommendations**

To address the issues identified, the study recommends several key interventions. First, universities should implement language support services, including English proficiency courses and communication workshops for both students and staff. Second, cultural orientation programs should be enhanced to provide international students with the tools they need to adapt to Malaysian society. Finally, academic advisory services should be expanded to help international students navigate the differences in teaching and assessment methods.

#### *Future Directions*

Future research should explore the long-term impacts of international student mobility on Malaysia's higher education sector. Comparative studies across multiple universities could provide a broader understanding of how different institutions manage the internationalization process. Additionally, quantitative studies could complement the qualitative findings, offering statistical insights into the experiences of international students and the effectiveness of institutional support mechanisms.

#### *Implication of the Study*

The findings emphasise the necessity for Malaysian universities to enhance support mechanisms for international students, especially in areas such as language learning, cultural adjustment, and academic integration. By focussing on these aspects, institutions can elevate the student experience, increase retention rates, and strengthen Malaysia's standing as a global education centre. Furthermore, these results can guide decision-makers, enabling universities to create more inclusive initiatives that effectively address the varied requirements of international students.

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