The Long-Term Benefits of Acculturation: A Longitudinal Study of Change and Self-Development among Saudi Academic Returnees.

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Abstract

The number of foreign students studying abroad has expanded substantially in the first decades of this century, with close to five million international students registered in 2014 and an increase of eight million projected by 2025 (pre-pandemic) (ICEF Monitor, 2017). Up until now, the international education literature has largely focused on students' study-abroad experiences but research on the long-term benefits to students is scarce, along with exploration of their personal development and acquisition of employability skills.

This doctoral thesis presents a systematic review and a longitudinal, mixed-methods study of the change and self-development of 72 Saudi academics who recently earned their Master's and/or PhD degrees in Western countries. The research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by looking at the long-term impact of studying abroad on Saudi academic returnees who have spent 2-10 years in western countries.

The research draws upon the theory of acculturation which examines certain predictors to understand the process and outcomes of the sojourners' adjustment. These are the psychological and sociocultural outcomes of cross-cultural adaption and the macro- and micro-level variables. The factors involved in sojourner adjustment were then studied from a social psychological perspective within the dimensions of the affective, behavioural and cognitive processes.

The primary objective of this research was to determine whether the long-term benefits of acculturation held true over time by examining the outcomes of studying abroad in terms of affective, behavioural and cognitive processes as well as the mechanisms that enabled or impeded these outcomes. We set out to extend acculturation theory by incorporating the impact of home-country transition on the long-term sustainability of these outcomes. Five predicted outcomes of study abroad were then selected based on the research aims and a comprehensive literature review: intercultural competence, self-leadership, creativity behaviour, self-discerning reflection and self-concept clarity. The data was gathered over a

year, divided according to two time-points, while a qualitative interview strategy was combined with a quantitative questionnaire approach.

The original contribution made by the research was recognition that studying abroad benefitted Saudi academic returnees in developing self-leadership and creativity. The findings showed that in place of individual factors (such as age, gender and educational level), situational factors are linked to the perceived outcomes of studying abroad (such as host country, length of study abroad and motivation to do so). Furthermore, excepting self-leadership and self-concept clarity, the returnees' perceptions of the outcomes differed considerably from those of in-country academics.

The study results also revealed that with the exception of creativity behaviour, the participants could maintain the desired study-abroad outcomes through their readjustment experience. Nonetheless, the qualitative findings revealed two levels of readjustment concerns experienced by academic returnees: (i) social and cultural level difficulties, and (ii) organisational level difficulties. Both these issues may affect the long-term sustainability of study abroad outcomes.

Focusing on readjustment-related factors, a parallel quantitative approach found that motivation to study abroad moderated the sustainability of intercultural competence, self-leadership and self-concept clarity. The returnees' awareness of the perceived benefits abroad then moderated the sustainability of creativity behaviour, self-concept clarity and self-discerning reflection.

Drawing on empirical data and responding to the scarcity of theoretical models of the long-term benefits of acculturation, these findings provide a new conceptual framework that tests and expands upon the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). Our study shows that the process of adjustment and readjustment is complex and requires special attention.

This study is a starting point for further research into the long-term benefits of acculturation, but future research might go deeper into the context of the returnees' relationships with family and work colleagues to widen the scope of the findings. It is vital to investigate how these factors translate into quantifiable and measurable business results such as innovation, performance and financial returns for businesses, and here multidisciplinary teams might be helpful in this approach, including behavioural economists. The wider context of studying-abroad is of considerable significance being that a large number of international students are funded by their government and constitute an important investment, entailing that they expect students to implement and apply what they have learnt abroad to help develop domestic systems, increase knowledge and enhance social change.

Keywords: Acculturation, Long-term benefits, Home-country transition, Change, Self-development, Self-leadership, Creativity Behaviour, Saudi Academic Returnees, Longitudinal Study, Mix Methods.

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List of Abbreviations

Explanation	Abbreviation
Kingdome of Saudi Arabia	KSA
The Saudi Ministry of Education.	MOE
King Abdullah scholarship programme	KASP
Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology	ABET
International Consultants for Education and Fairs	ICEF
General authority of statistics in Saudi Arabia	GASTAT
Institute for International Education of Students	IES abroad
Saudi Academic returnees	SARs
Research questions	RQs
Affective	A
Behavioural	B
Cognitive processes	C
Systematic literature review	SLR
Time one	T1
Time two	T2
Doctor of Philosophy	PhD
Master of science	MAS
Intercultural competence	IC
Self-leadership	SL
creative behaviour	creativity
Self-concept clarity	SCC
Self-discerning reflection	SDR
Cultural intelligence	CQ
Readjustment difficulties	RD
Perceived benefits abroad	PBA
Motivation to study abroad	Motivation

Length of studying abroad	LSA

Chapter 1.

Introduction and Relevant Literature.

1.1. Background.

Studying abroad is commonly considered to be a significant life event. Nonetheless, the impact of overseas study on the self-development of international students is still under-researched and the changes occurring in students require further understanding. Some studies have suggested that studying abroad has a crucial impact not only on students' academic learning, but also has a long-term influence on their personal growth and the success of their social lives (Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013). This observation becomes more salient as the number of international students studying abroad continues to escalate, with the demand for international education increasing by approximately 10% in the last 21st century. With close to five million international students registered in 2014 and a projected increase of eight million by 2025 (ICEF Monitor, 2017), research has increasingly sought to understand the student experience.

To date, the literature on international education has given most attention to the experience of international students during their study time abroad, looking at academic learning difficulties, cultural shock and the psychological issues associated with the students' adjustment (e.g., Lombard, 2014; Samuelowicz, 2006; Carlson and Widaman, 1988; Andrade, 2006). However, the aims for many individuals and the government supporting them financially are more far-reaching and long-term.

While it is important to understand what can be done to improve the student experience and ensure that they reach their potential while studying abroad, it is also essential to understand what benefits study abroad offers the student once they graduate. It is hoped that investigating this issue will allows for both an account and an exploration of students' reflections and post-study perceptions regarding their cross-cultural transition. This includes

an assessment of what they have learned and gained personally, and how this has affected them in the long term.

In recent years, the long-term benefits of study-abroad experience to students, organisations and society have come to constitute one of the key emerging interests in international education and intercultural studies literature. The Institute for International Education of Students (IES abroad) was the first to investigate the long-term impact of study abroad on students' personal, professional and academic lives, conducting the largest quantitative survey of study abroad graduates. Consisting of 50 years of IES Abroad graduates programs (over the years 1950-1999), these former students responded to the survey questions regarding their academic, personal, intercultural and professional development of study abroad. The research findings confirmed that study-abroad experience has educational benefits and enables cultural development, while having an impact on careers and personal growth. Furthermore, the study points out that there is a lack of studies concerning the personal growth of international students, especially in developing the skills required for their employability (McMillan and Opem, 2002).

Since then, a number of studies have shed light on the benefits of study-abroad experience on international students' change and self-development, including problem-solving skills (e.g., Cho and Morris, 2015), intercultural competence (e.g., Ramirez, 2016), self-discovery and recognition (e.g., Brown and Brown, 2009), personality development (e.g., Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013; Petersdotter, Niehoff and Freund, 2017), and high self-efficacy (e.g., Petersdotter, Niehoff and Freund, 2017). A recent study by (Gu and Schweisfurth, 2015) claims that for more than 25 years the impact of returnees' experiences on their identity and their professional careers over time, as well as their personal lives, has been under-researched. Their research conducted a mixed-methods study, using a sample of 652 Chinese students who had returned home from study abroad programmes from UK universities. Looking at Chinese students over a 20-month post-return period, one study measured changes

in their behavioural characteristics. The study found that most returnees perceived studying and living abroad as an identity transformation experience which helped them acquire new competencies, skills, and different views of the world. The experience therefore enabled them to view their life with a new understanding of themselves at 'home', where over time they continued to differentiate themselves from those around them. They suggest that new studies are needed within a different context to examine whether or not these effects are guaranteed parts of any returnees' experiences, or whether they differ according to the host culture or other factors.

1.2. The study context.

There are countless reasons motivating students to study across national boundaries, such as lack of domestic facilities in some subject areas, the perceived academic advantage of the institutions in the host countries, and the status of a foreign degree (Cummins 1993, cited in Varghese, 2008). However, seeking to gain the advantages of knowing about and gaining experience in another country and culture has inspired the provision of many governmental scholarships and encouraged many individuals to pursue their education in foreign countries. The kingdom of Saudi Arabia KSA ranks fourth after China and India in sending the largest number of international students abroad (AllahMorad, 2020).

According to GASTAT, the general authority for statistics in Saudi Arabia, 186,722 Saudi students were studying abroad, and Saudi government scholarships funded around 80% of them (GASTAT, 2019). This number of students represents a ratio of 1:9 of total Saudi students studying in Saudi universities. However, the number of Saudi postgraduates studying abroad in the same year reached 161,360 students, double the number of those studying in Saudi universities.

The increasing number of Saudi sponsored students abroad is due to the country's intention to move towards a knowledge-based economy that focuses on human intelligence, replacing a

resource-based economy that focuses on oil production. In addition, sending Saudi students abroad aims to correct general stereotypes about Islam and terrorism in western societies, as well as ease the tension between "East" and "West and the historical "us" and "them". This phenomenon can be explained by Orientalism, which refers to discourse that perverts and misrepresents the East or "the Orient" (see Said, 2019).

To achieve these objectives, the Saudi government has made tremendous efforts to support Saudi students abroad and provide lots of scholarship opportunities for graduates' students to accomplish higher degrees in various subjects. The governmental support involves paying for their study fees and accommodation, and living expenses, making the scholarship very attractive (Bukhari and Denman,2013).

1.2.1. Saudi Arabia's investment in international education.

Saudi Arabia investment in international education can be thought to have three distinct phases. The first period started in 1927 and lasted until 1953, when the first scholarship was granted for fourteen Saudi students before establishing the first university in Saudi Arabia, King Abdul Aziz University. All fourteen students were from the Al-Hijaz region and were sent to Egypt to complete their undergraduate studies due to their shared language and religion.

Upon the success of the first group, a second group was sent to England to study wireless communication, while a third group was sent to Italy to study Aviation. Ten Saudi students in the last group were sent to Switzerland and Turkey to study law, political science, and engineering. These scholarships responded to an urgent need for professional experts and particular training unavailable in Saudi Arabia at that time.

The second period occurred between 1954 and 2004, where the major focus of the scholarships shifted from undergraduate studies to postgraduate studies. The foundation of the first Saudi University in Riyadh in 1957, King Saud University, meant that more students

were educated at home, although postgraduate capacity was limited. The increased number of scholarships at that time was due to the increase in oil income, which affected the whole structure of society (Yamani, 1996). Between the 1950s and 1970s, rich families used to send their children to study abroad to other Arab countries, Europe, or the United States. However, as the schools in Saudi Arabia started to develop and higher education standards progressed, families became more hesitant about sending their children abroad (ibid).

The third period started in 2005 and saw the expansion of Saudi Arabia's international scholarships. Since then, many Saudi students have studied abroad or are presently studying abroad to accomplish a higher standard of education for themselves and their country. According to the general authority for the statistic GASTAT in Saudi Arabia and the Ministry of Higher Education (2019), the Saudi students studying abroad have made up 92,297 students so far. The increase in the number of Saudi students sponsored to study abroad is due to the vision of the High Education Ministry of Saudi Arabia to drive change to the country over the next 20 years by preparing students with the knowledge and skills needed to be future world leaders. Other objectives include a nationalist commitment, the need for cultural exchange and mutual understanding, as well as aspirations towards intellectual growth, innovation and creativity.

Current Saudi scholarships consist of two types: the first is mainly for academic staff in Saudi universities to achieve a higher educational level; mostly at postgraduate and doctorate levels. This type of scholarship is supported by the Saudi government and applied by the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE) for the universities sector. The main population selected in this thesis were the Saudi academics returning from this type of scholarship. More details about this scholarship aim and objectives are discussed later in this section.

Conversely, the second type of Saudi scholarship is the King Abdullah scholarship programme (KASP), which started in 2005 and is considered the largest scholarship program in the history of Saudi Arabia. This type of scholarship is supported by the Saudi government

and applied by the Saudi Ministry of Education (MOE). This scholarship aims to become a significant source for the public and private sectors in Saudi Arabia by improving and preparing human resources by sponsoring intellectually Saudi citizens to study in the best universities in the world. In addition, the selected degree and subject specialities selected are subject to the needs of the Saudi labour market, as graduates are expected to return and contribute to the country's development. In terms of the students' destinations, most Saudi students tend to go to English speaking countries for both types of scholarships; in particular, the United States, which has the largest number of Saudi students, and the United Kingdom with the second-highest number. Other countries hosting Saudi students include Canada, Australia, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy, and China, India, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and Japan. In addition, many Saudi students study in other Arab countries - for instance, in Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan.

As a result of this movement in the international education of Saudi Arabia, residents of the Kingdom are noticing dramatic changes to the country stemming from the massive social and cultural change that internationally educated Saudi students have brought to the country. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the internationalisation of higher education in Saudi Arabia has driven rapid changes throughout the country, resulting in (i) an increase in entrepreneurship, (ii) new ideas, (iii) and new institutions of all kinds, such as the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (Ahmed, 2015). Furthermore, workforce localisation is now proceeding gradually, with Saudi citizens on target to substitute steadily the expatriate professional from different nationals with the labour force (ibid).

Moreover, Saudi universities scholarships aim to prepare their native academic employees by achieving higher educational levels commensurate with prestigious universities in western countries in order to advance the education system in Saudi Arabia. It is anticipated that this emphasis brings benefits to the universities, society and graduates. For example, Saudi universities have competed to gain an ABET accreditation award in recent years, which 36

out of 62 private and public universities have managed to achieve to date (ABET, 2021). ABET accreditation awards recognise that an academic program has promoted standards essential to preparing graduates for entry into the critical fields of practical science, computing, engineering and engineering technology.

Graduate students from an ABET-accredited program have a solid educational foundation and are qualified to lead the way in innovation, emerging technologies and anticipating the public's well-being and safety needs (ibid). ABET accreditations bring outstanding value to the student, programs, institutions, industry and government because they affirm that graduates have met the educational requirements needed to enter high levels of professional life. Moreover, they provide an opportunity for the industry to lead the educational process to reflect current and future needs and enhance the mobility of professionals (ibid). To date, however, there is very little empirical evidence to support these assumptions and little examination of whether this investment in an overseas study is realised in terms of (i) increased creativity and innovation and (ii) changes to the educational system. While this thesis does not aim to examine the associations directly between overseas study, national innovation and systemic education change, it does aim to contribute to our understanding of the benefits accrued from an overseas study from the graduate's perspective. Firstly, if innovation and change are to occur, there is a need for returning employees to behave and think in progressive ways that benefit that Kingdom. Secondly, there is a need to understand whether returning students can cope with the transition required following a period of overseas study to implement changes and impact society effectively.

1.2.2.   The expected benefits of study abroad.

Given that the large numbers of international students are funded by the government, this suggests that study abroad is considered a worthwhile investment for the whole community (Altbach and Engberg, 2014). Therefore, it follows logically that the government will expect

students to implement and apply what they have learnt abroad and help to develop systems, increase knowledge and enhance social change. Thus, it is crucial to understand what study abroad offers Saudi students and the benefits or outcomes that they acquired. There is a growing desire amongst young Saudis to become 'global citizens', which refers to individuals with specific capabilities to analyse power structure, build global communities, or physically help to improve the lives of people worldwide (Lewin, 2009). These aspirations are in line with (Lilley, Barker and Harris, 2016), who refer to an "ideal global graduate" showing "openness, tolerance, respect, and responsibility for self, others and the planet". In other words, the study abroad graduate will develop a global mindset, and they will almost certainly demonstrate comfort when dealing with ambiguity and multiplicity. Consequently, it is expected that individuals will acquire a positive understanding of others from different cultures, which will improve cultural exchange and reduce any stereotypical image. Another concept introduced by (Triandis, 2006) is 'cultural intelligence', which refers to becoming successful in cultural interactions requiring affective, cognitive and behavioural training. Cultural intelligence can be achieved through study-abroad experience because it has 'transformative potential', providing them with an opportunity for better personal freedom, increased assertiveness, independence, self-confidence and cultural awareness (Brown and Brown, 2009; Brown and Graham, 2009).

In addition, due to the intercultural learning experience, two vital transformational outcomes can be recognised: identity development and self-discovery (Kim, 2008; Brown, 2009). These are some of the potential outcomes or benefits of study abroad. Therefore, understanding the benefits and outcomes of study abroad could help identify them and the mechanism that allow or hinder them. However, according to (Denman and Hilal, 2011), further research is required to determine whether or not these expected benefits or outcomes involving new and potentially challenging ideas and experiences are implemented and, more

significantly, welcomed. Thus, considering the investigation of the long-term impact of study abroad on Saudi students, change and self-development is essential.

1.2.3. Sustaining benefits after return.

While there is a need to capture the impact of study abroad on Saudi students change and self-development while abroad, it is necessary to find out if they can sustain these changes upon their return. Thus, it is imperative that researchers better understand the psychological, social, and practical matters associated with the cross-cultural transition and repatriation experience (Szkudlarek, 2010). However, the topic of the repatriation experience of expatriates has not received as much attention as the research on expatriation or the cultural adjustments of sojourners. This gap in the literature still exists regardless of the scholars' argument that the earlier issue is more challenging and needs more focus (Adler, 1975; Adler, 1981; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Storti, 2011; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992).

Some of the challenges faced by repatriates are their expectations that when they return home, their family and friends (if not themselves too) will be the same as before they left (Storti, 2011). Therefore, returnees assume they will deal with this perceived situation, only to comprehend later that both the environment and themselves have changed during their time abroad (Martin, 1984).

Other challenges are the results of the 'transformative learning' (see Hamza, 2010). In other words, how these individuals recognise and react to the differences between the 'academic cultures' of host and home universities (Robinson-Pant, 2009). The physical journey from their home country to the host country is often comprised of a social and psychological journey of cross-cultural adaptation, which may alter the sojourner's way of behaving, thinking and feeling (Arthur, 2003; Yang, Noels and Saumure, 2006). Furthermore, it may

cause intercultural growth and an alteration in the understanding of self (Brown, 2009; Kim, 2001).

These newly acquired values, attitudes and behaviours may thus convert into the individual's social system, forming new patterns of relations, roles, and expectations (Mehawes, 1984; Storti, 2011). However, if all or any of this happens, it might do so to varying degrees, depending on how well a person adapts to his/her new settings abroad. However, it is challenging for returning individuals who will most likely find the need to reconstruct several features in their lives (including relationships) instead of making a fresh start, and regardless of what this process involves when rebuilding could be considered easier.

In addition, reverse culture shock is an unavoidable part of the students' repatriation experience (Brabant, Palmer and Gramling, 1990; Gaw, 2000), which could produce a damaging effect on individuals' psychological wellbeing, social readjustment and identification, where returnees may face a 'different reality rather than a 'shocking reality' upon their return. Thus, the issue of returning deserves more scholarly attention, not least for impacting negatively on any of the perceived benefits of the study abroad experience.

1.3. Research purpose and questions.

Although in due course the many Saudi students studying abroad will become returnees, to the best of the researcher knowledge to date only three studies have studied the issue of readjustment in the context of Saudi Arabia precisely. Moreover, none of them has considered addressing the perceived benefits of study abroad for Saudi returnees and Saudi society, and what can be done to sustain these benefits after their return (see Mehawes, 1984; Alandejani, 2013; Almuarik, 2019). The reason for this limited number of studies may be because overseas Saudi students were not significant until 2005.

However, given the significant numbers of students studying abroad and the ongoing investment, a closer inspection of the benefits accrued and the factors that enhance the

translation of benefits is required. Furthermore, it is increasingly recognised that cross-cultural transition may lead to identity change, behavioural change, and different ways of thinking. Therefore, it is important to understand, develop and support sojourners in getting the best of their study-abroad experience and support their re-entry to deliver what they learn back to their country (Kidd, 2010; Szkudlarek, 2010; Pitts, 2016).

The focus of this research is to provide evidence of the expected benefits or outcomes of study abroad concerning the changes in the affective, behavioural and cognition processes. It is directed in particular towards those who are on a work mission to accomplish higher degrees and return to their work with comprehensive knowledge and more significant potential to lead the change and enhance the work environment with new mentality and experiences. Furthermore, the study aims to contribute to the relatively limited knowledge by exploring the adjustment and readjustment experience, while highlighting the mechanisms that allow the study abroad benefits to be perceived and sustained after the return.

The main reason for studying the Saudi Academic Returnees SARs is the complex nature of being an international student abroad while being an academic member of a Saudi university. This research thus encounters two types of sojourners which makes the study group of particular interest. Within the available literature, very few studies have focused on this group of returnees (e.g., Alandejani, 2013; Almuarik, 2019; Gama and Pedersen, 1977). Hence, this study will seek to advance our understanding of academic returnees.

In this vein, the following research questions (RQs) are a guide to tackling the concerns in the research statement and will be elaborated in chapter three:

1) Do returning academics perceive themselves to be different from those who have not been abroad in terms of their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes?

2) What are the perceived benefits of study abroad for returning academics, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behavioural and cognitive process?

3) What are the factors that determine the benefits of study abroad for returning academic, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behaviour and cognitive processes? In this sense, what are the facilitators and barriers to these processes?

4) Are the returning academics able to sustain the benefits of study abroad?

5) How does the readjustment of returnees to their home country affect their ability to sustain the benefits of study abroad?

1.4. Summary and organisation of the thesis.

The thesis consists of nine chapters, laid out as follows:

The first chapter is the introductory chapter addressing the gaps in the current international education literature in terms of investigating the long-term impact of study abroad on student change and self-development. The chapter highlights the necessity of exploring the benefits of studying abroad and examines the impact of the readjustment experience on sustaining the benefits of studying abroad. In addition, the chapter provides a background of Saudi Arabia investment in international education to facilitate the reader's understanding of the study and contribution to comprehending the findings. By the end, the chapter illustrates the study problem, purpose and research questions.

The second chapter is the literature review chapter. The chapter presents an overview of cross-cultural transition to explain the cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and western societies. The chapter will also highlight relevant theoretical approaches to cross-cultural transition to provide the reader with a full picture of the factors and consequences that support this transition, and the way individuals deal with it. In addition, the chapter will discuss some of the expected outcomes of the cross-cultural transition process, which are chosen to be examined in this study.

This section is followed by chapter three, focusing on explaining the philosophical foundation and paradigm, research design and strategy used in this research, and establishing a framework for how the studies will be conducted and the research questions answered. In addition, the chapter provides information about the main population and research setting. Finally, chapter three provides a detailed explanation of each of the research design implemented for each of the studies conducted, providing details of the participants and the data collection procedure.

The fourth chapter presents a systematic literature review that aims to broaden research about the outcomes of study abroad once students graduate. In this chapter, we present the method chosen to conduct the SLR in a narrative synthesis approach and outline the process of undertaking this approach. The SLR results and synthesis are then presented as well as an examination of several limitations within the existing body of research. Finally, based on the synthesis and limitations of the results, the study proposes a new conceptual framework to examine the long-term impact of acculturation in assisting future research in uncovering a deeper understanding of the long-term impact of study abroad on the international community.

Chapter five represents the first attempt to test the theory of acculturation. It explores the outcomes of study-abroad experience about the changes in the SARs' affective, behaviour, and cognitive processes and the mechanisms that allow or hinder these outcomes. The chapter represents the findings for the qualitative study T1, explaining the method of data collection and data analysis before presenting the study results and discussion.

The aim of chapter six is then to extend the theory of acculturation to explore the impact of home-country transition on the sustainability of study abroad perceived outcomes concerning the changes in the SARs' affective, behaviour and cognitive processes, as well as the mechanisms that allow or hinder this process. This chapter presents the findings for the

qualitative study T2, explains the method of data collection and data analysis, and presents the study results and discussion.

While chapter seven aims to validate the proposed conceptual framework of the longer-term benefits of study abroad, it is also intended to extend the previous research by considering different approaches to identifying important factors from contrasting psychological and sociocultural perspectives. This chapter analyses and discusses the longitudinal data collected using two-times measurement points from 72 newly-graduated Saudi students to answer the five research questions of this study. It also explains the method of data collection and data analysis, presenting the study results and discussion.

Finally, the very last chapter aims to discusses the findings of the research and conclusions drawn from the findings to answer the research questions (RQs). In addition, it discusses the contributions, implications and limitations of this study, then presents recommendations for the future research.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review and Theoretical Background.

2.1. Introduction.

This chapter presents an overview of 'cross-cultural transition', an important concept in the international education literature identified in the early 20th century. The review will explain the process of cross-cultural transition in the relevant literature and then shed light on the notion of cultural differences and its impact on cross-cultural transition. An overview of cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and Western cultures will then follow, before related theoretical approaches to cross-cultural transition are explained to fully understand the mechanisms that support this transition and the way individuals deal with it. Finally, the discussion will emphasise the expected outcomes of the cross-cultural transition process and highlight some of the factors that contribute to achieving these outcomes as they identified in the literature.

Some electronic databases were scanned to achieve this chapter, including ProQuest, PsycINFO and Google Scholar. The search terms applied to identify relevant studies were the following: cross-cultural transition, cultural differences, study abroad experience, repatriation, expatriation, readjustment, international students, behavioural change, self-development, skills, leadership development, and identity change. It is worth mentioning that a systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted before this chapter to find evidence of what research exists regarding the topic "the long-term impact of study abroad on international students' change and self-development", and to develop a conceptual framework of the long-term impact of acculturation to be used to test and extend the model of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). Only ten empirical studies were actually found in the SLR, reflecting the scarcity of the study topic in the literature and a need to

explore this issue. The SLR will be discussed later in chapter 4 because it is pertinent to the chosen of this topic and the direction of this research (i.e., research design, methodology).

2.2. Cross-cultural transition (adjustment).

It is acknowledged that for international students, the international experience involves a complicated transition process. This transition process is labelled in the international education literature as 'cross-cultural transition' and encompasses a variety of complex psychological and social processes (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) The phenomenon of cross-cultural transition was first encountered in the early 20th century due to the increased number of immigrants to western countries.

Since then, several theoretical approaches have been proposed to explain the process of cross-cultural transition (Schartner, 2014), with some of them presented at the end of this chapter. However, the concept of cross-cultural transition has an ambivalent definition in the literature, while a variety of terms has been used to explain the affective, behavioural and cognitive change experienced by international sojourners (Kim, 2001). The specific terms used in the literature to define a successful international experience are 'adjustment' or 'adaption' to the new environment (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001).

Nevertheless, the implementation of these two terms has been inconsistent, while theoretical frameworks have failed to make a clear distinction between the two terms, often using these interchangeably (Stanton and Revenson,2007). Schartner (2014) has distinguished between the two terms regarding their applicability. He states that 'adjustment' refers to dynamic, interactive processes involved in functioning in the host environment (Anderson, 1994) while 'adaption' refers to the outcomes of these adjustment processes (Pitts, 2005).

Accordingly, adaption could be conceptualised as a measurable outcome of the student experience in an area crucial to the international student sojourners, taking in academic, psychological and sociocultural elements (ibid). Therefore, to explore the cross-cultural

transition, both terms need to be examined because integrating the two terms will help elucidate the students' perceptions and feelings about their international experience. To do so, the longitudinal approaches utilised in this study have been selected to explore the adjustment process over time and the adaption outcomes.

Moreover, Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) assert a linkage between adjustment to a new environment and successful international experience. However, studies have shown that adjusting to a new environment is not an easy process to go through as it involves various difficulties and challenges that needed to be overcome (e.g., Mesidor and Sly, 2014; Gebhard, 2012; Zhang and Goodson, 2011). Understanding a new culture involves unexpected and sometimes unpleasant feelings that lead individuals to re-evaluate the new host and their own home culture. Overcoming these obstacles abroad thus requires coping strategies in order to adjust to the new environment.

Anderson (1994) points out that for sojourners to adjust to a new environment, they must cope with obstacles such as finding differences in values and belief systems, communication and interpersonal relationships, and physical appearance. According to Swagler and Jome (2005) there are two levels of adjustment: psychological adjustment and sociocultural adjustment. Psychological adjustment is the emotional component of intercultural adjustment measured by mental and physical wellbeing, whereas sociocultural adjustment is the cognitive and behavioural components. This is consistent with Berry (1997) who asserts that psychological adjustment is changing throughout time, and it can be determined by social support and personality variables. Conversely, sociocultural adjustment steadily increases with time, and can be predicted by cultural knowledge, the amount of contact with the host culture, and intergroup attitudes. Those who reveal reasonable psychological and sociocultural adjustment can therefore perform well in the new environment.

Many studies seek to capture the results and outcomes of successful adjustment experience to a new culture and highlight the mechanisms required to overcome adjustment difficulties. For

example, Kiley (2003) investigates students' adjustment to a new culture, suggesting that students differ in their level of adjustment due to different factors such as their age, language test score, educational level and study duration. The study then classifies the students' adjustment to a new culture into three types: transformer, strategist and conserver. The 'transformer' has changed the way in which they view the world and their ethnic identities. The 'strategists' have considered what they most need to succeed educationally and have acquired the most important knowledge and strategies to enable this. However, the 'conservers' have not recorded any significant changes in social, emotional or academic respects. Although Kiley's (2003) study testifies to the validity of this approach by conducting different qualitative data collection methods (interviews and focus groups) and employing longitudinal research design over four years, its findings cannot be generalised due to the small sample size, one nationality (Indonesian students in Australia) and one university.

Some other studies examined the relationship between the adjustment process and student change to indicate that there are a variety of factors that affect the adjustment process, such as previous international experience, language proficiency, socialisation and personality traits (e.g., Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013; Hutteman *et al.,* 2015; Niehoff, Petersdotter and Freund, 2017; Ramirez, 2016) . In this study, finding out the mechanisms that affect the adjustment processes and, as a result, the successful international experience is important because they are key to determining the outcomes of international experience and living successfully in a new environment.

2.3. Homecoming transition (readjustment).

Homecoming transition refers to the process of going through the experience of facing previously familiar surroundings after life in a different environment for an extended period

(Adler, 1981) According to Arthur (2003) in this transition the returning individual tries to present him/herself to the home environment and feel a psychological rather than physical acceptance. Various terms have been used in the literature explaining this concept, including 'repatriation transition' (Sussman, 2002) 're-acculturation' (Berry, 2005; Martin, 1984) re-entry adjustment' (Uehara, 1986) and 'repatriation adjustment' (Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992), while it is occasionally referred to as 'reverse culture shock' (Spradley, 1979). Adler (1975, p. 18) describes this experience as one that "begins with the encounter of another culture and evolves into the encounter with self", emphasising its influence on one's sense of self and its easing impact on growth.

However, the literature rarely depicts this subjective experience, which Osland (2000) labels 'the journey inward' might have many crucial impacts on the self and others. For example, Westwood, Lawrence and Paul (1986, p. 223) describe readjustment as "the continuum of experience and behaviours which are encountered when an individual returns to a place of origin after having been immersed in another context for a while sufficient to cause some degree of mental and emotional adjustment".

According to his view of readjustment, the duration of time spent abroad plays a vital role with immersion. In addition, psychological adjustment (i.e., mental and emotional adjustment) suggests change recognised in the literature as a significant outcome in the process that could impact readjustment. Due to having developed routines and encountered limitless experiences and situations while abroad, an individual's ways of thinking about himself or herself and others may be changed, along with their mode of behaviour. Consequently, these changes may result in the adoption of new attitudes and behaviour, including a change in self-concept or definition (Adler, 1975).

As a result of homecoming transition, returnees encounter many difficulties upon their returns, creating disturbances and challenges that require adjustment (Roberts, 2012). Despite the assumption that adjustment to a new culture can be significantly demanding, researchers

suggest that the readjustment to the home country is equally and sometimes more challenging than that faced when leaving (Adler, 1975; Adler, 1981; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Storti, 2011; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992). Moreover, Kiley's (2003) study indicates that readjustment problems can be associated with the length of a study-abroad experience and the level of their adjustment abroad, which could result either in more or fewer problems associated with their readjustment to their home country. Therefore, sojourners will go through different experiences in their readjustment to their home culture; some will return to their previous selves, others will experience resentment to their old situation and become global wanderers, while others become causes of change in their home, organisations and their countries (ibid).

Another possible challenge is the individuals' expectation of returning to a familiar environment. Surprisingly, however, they find that their perceptions have changed regarding their home country. Throughout their absence, many things have changed internally and externally. Returnees may find it difficult to continue from the point when they originally moved away from their home country and, in turn, may experience reverse culture shock (Adler, 1975; Adler, 1981; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Storti, 2011; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992). Martin (1984) further indicated that expectations change, and awareness of change are the key differences between the two processes, i.e., adjustment and readjustment. Therefore, sojourners might not expect to find it challenging to return home likewise, and they may be unaware of the occurrence changes to them or their home environment during their absence.

Based on Martin's claim, various terms have been presented in the literature to distinguish between reverse culture shock and culture shock: 'return culture shock' (Hogan, 1996), 'transition shock' (Bennett, 1998) and 'self-shock'. All these terms emphasise 'the double-binding challenge of identity', i.e., the individual's requirement to confirm his/her sense of self, and the capacity to do so over shared meanings of behaviours (Zaharna, 1989, p. 516-

517). These findings are consistent with Anderson's (1994, p. 297) recommendation of the term 'change shock' as an alternative for culture shock. Indeed, she found the latter to be misleading, vague, overgeneralised and far from being culture specific. In addition, Anderson (1994) asserts that change everywhere requires accommodation, which confirms Bennett's (1998) conclusion that this process is a normal one.

Consequently, clarifying the concept of 'change' becomes fundamental to this part of the study. Change is a normal and ongoing process that tends to arise in any transitional experience, such as when moving away from a 'comfort zone' in which self-confidence and self-esteem may be in danger. In addition, change happens because of maturation, regardless of any cross-cultural experience. However, the sojourn experience of living abroad and then returning home may cause a change in an individual's cultural identity (Kartoshkina, 2015) and may act as a facilitator to growth (Adler, 1975; Kim, 2005). For example, cultural immersion in a long-term sojourn facilitates intercultural growth (Pitts, 2009). As a result, individuals may acquire different coping strategies to deal with this change.

The most common theme in readjustment problems is the cultural disconnect and identity shifts with which the repatriates may struggle (e.g., Kohonen, 2008; Sussman, 2002). For example, the cultural distance between the host and home culture has been found to have a significant impact on the readjustment process of the returnees because it could result in psychological readjustment problems such as stress, anxiety, and depression (Altweck and Marshall, 2015). Altweck and Marshall (2015) found that strong heritage culture identification is associated with better readjustment, while cultural conflict is usually associated with poorer readjustment.

Moreover, Andreason and Kinneer (2005) have developed a framework that identifies the readjustment problems faced by repatriates when they return to their home company; principally personal and professional problems. Firstly, personal problems refer to the struggle of dealing with the imbalance status or the reverse culture shock. Studies show that

many repatriates find their work and social environments have completely changed, or possibly they themselves have changed during the assignment (Black, 1992; Stroh, Gregersen and Black, 2000). Studies indicate that repatriation is usually a challenging experience at the personal level (Adler, 1981; Hurn, 1999), especially for those who were deeply immersed in the local culture abroad (Black, Morrison and Gregersen, 1999; Bossard and Peterson, 2005; Osland, 2000; Paik, Segaud and Malinowski, 2002; Sussman, 2002) and had successfully adjusted abroad (Tung, 1998). Conversely, professional adjustment refers to their adjustment and readjustment to the job they will be performing, which involves different responsibilities that might be less or more difficult than they expect, leading to dissatisfaction (Tung and Andersen, 1997; Barham and Berthoin Antal,1994).

Readjustment has been described in the literature as a grieving process "grieving the loss of friends, experiences, and, to a certain extent, a way of life" (Butcher, 2002, p. 356). Thus, returnees may face some academic and interpersonal difficulties, work-related concerns, social withdrawal, depression, anxiety and grief (Black, 1992; Butcher, 2002; Chamove and Soeterik, 2006; Cox, 2004; Gaw, 2000; Martin, 1984; Rogers and Ward, 1993; Wielkiewicz and Turkowski, 2010). For example, Asuncion-Lande (1976) (cited in Martin, 1984) has placed the difficulties of returning international students into six categories: academic, professional, social, cultural, linguistic and political. However, the level of these difficulties, and the specific problems that are perceived, differ based on the place, personality, attitude, type of cultural congruity, and some other significant factors.

Despite the growing literature on readjustment difficulties of sojourners, most of them have been concerned about expatriate employees (e.g., O'Sullivan, 2002), third-culture kids and bi-cultural adults (e.g., Altweck and Marshall, 2015) who have been away for years from their home country. However, there are gaps in the literature concerning the readjustment problems of student returnees, particularly in their personal and social aspects.

2.4. Cultural differences.

Cross-cultural transition can be a very difficult experience for some individuals due to the challenges they face when interacting and moving between cultures, entailing that understanding the impact of culture on individuals is crucial. Black (1990) defines cross-cultural adjustment as reaching a status of mental comfort and familiarity with the new host culture. Sousa and Bradley (2008) point out that the term cultural distance is an indication of the degree of differences between different cultures. A number of studies have examined this concept and concluded that cultural distance indicates the differences between the home culture and the host culture regarding practical aspects of day-to-day life (including different food, lifestyle, transportations and education), as well as shared meanings and rituals that are significant aspects of one's home culture and might be different from that of the new culture. Furthermore, research has found that individuals in a high cultural distance environment face more difficulties and feel more stressed than those with lower cultural distance, as they experience difficulties in connecting with the new culture and experience anxieties about being an outsider or becoming different due to the new environment (Furukawa, 1997; Parker and McEvoy, 1993; Pan and Wong, 2011; Spradley and Phillips, 1972).

Hence, a variety of theories have addressed the concept of cultural difference, with most of them have focused on cultural values such as Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions and Triandis's (1982) cultural dimensions. Therefore, in the light of the existing theories and body of literature, and for the purpose of this study, the next sections will discuss some cultural differences between western cultures and the Saudi culture as they determine people's patterns of behaviour. Furthermore, the impact of cultural differences on cross-culture transition will also be examined.

2.4.1. Cultural differences and patterns of behaviour in Saudi culture.

Three aspects of cultural differences will be discussed in this section: individualism vs collectivist culture; styles of communication; and power distance.

i.   *Individualism vs collectivism.*

There is plenty of debate within the cultural literature arguing that it is possible to characterise a country as having an individualist culture instead of a collectivist type, and vice versa. As Hofstede (1980) cultural dimensions, one of the most widely recognised cultural differences is expressed in individualism vs collectivism, which refers to the level of people integration into groups within a society. Individualist society prefers a loose-knit social structure in which individuals experience independence from others and take care only of themselves and their close family. In a collectivist culture, people grow up in a society that emphasis dependency and are encouraged from birth to form strong, organised in-groups. These are usually extended families (uncles, aunts and grandparents) that continually protect them, so in exchange for providing them with unquestioning loyalty, they resist other in-groups (Hofstede, 2011, p. 11). Likewise, Triandis (1995, p. 43-44) considers independence as one of the four aspects differentiating individualism from collectivism. The other three aspects are: (1) Individualist societies prioritise personal goals over in-group goals, whereas collectivist societies do not prioritise any of them over the other but treat them equally (2) The social behaviour of collectivist culture follows norms, obligations and duties, while culture, attitudes, rights and personal needs guide individualist cultures (3) Dealing with relationships is different between two cultures. In collectivist cultures, the emphasis is placed on relationships, even when they are unhealthy, while in individualist cultures the emphasis is on a realistic analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of keeping a relationship.
In addition, Holliday (2011) asserts that the two types of cultures are different in terms of the critical thinking on display. He explains that individualism values the possible positive characteristics of critical thinking and openness to new experiences which collectivists lack.

He also clarifies the reason behind the lack of critical thinking in collectivist cultures, which is due to the tribal nature of those societies that honour stability, "where norms and obligations do not change" (Holliday, 2011, p. 9).

Sampson (1977) places a further emphasis on the fact that individuals have less privacy in collectivistic cultures because of their dependence on the whole group. According to Nydell (2006), the meaning of privacy among Arabs is linked to loneliness where the rejection of socialising and the requirement of privacy might be understood negatively. She adds that in a collectivistic culture, individuals always demand to be surrounded by others, even when they are sick or in a time of mourning, while those from a more western society might prefer to be alone.

However, many studies reject the claim that a culture can be characterised by one type over another and state that the degree of individualism and collectivism differs in any culture, which means both types can exist in one culture. For example, Triandis (1995) points out that people from the upper-class, urban and usually younger generations tend to be more inclined towards individualism in most societies than lower-class, rural and older generations are. In addition, he indicates that some factors influence the degree of individualism and collectivism in any culture, such as cultural 'tightness' and 'looseness', which can also be situational-related (Triandis, 1995, p. 53). Triandis notes that in a tightly regulated culture, individuals follow in-group norms, roles and values, whereas, in loose cultures, members have uncertain norms about any social situations or tolerate deviation from the norms (Triandis, 1989, p. 511). Nevertheless, both types of approach - tightness and looseness - are situational-specific (Triandis, 1995, p. 53). For instance, a culture may be described as tight in social and political situations and loose in economic or religious situations (ibid). Therefore, Saudi Arabia can be deliberated as fluctuating between the two extremes and integrating features of both.

Moreover, Voronov and Singer (2002) claim that it is insufficient to utilise a reductionist approach to describe cultures as it does not allow for the complexities of human behaviour in different situational settings. Furthermore, any approach that considers individual differences to be as important as individuals may not totally represent the entire country population; researchers should thus be alert to such a classification. The individual differences include the level of education, income and devotion to the tribe. Different studies confirm Voronov and Singer (2002) claim. For example, Triandis (2006, p. 21) points out that there are two different types of people within a culture, those who are idiocentric (think, feel and behave in a similar way to those in individualist cultures) and allocentric who are similar to people in collectivist cultures. He further adds that the increase of idiocentrism is linked to prosperity and status; that is, when the person has a leadership role, is well educated, has done much international travel and has been socially mobile or immersed in western culture for years. Conversely, allocentrism rises within an individual who depends on the in-group financially; here, he or she may be of a low social class, have had no or limited education, has done few travels, is strictly religious, and has been accultured only to a collectivist culture (Triandis, 1995; Triandis, 2006; Triandis and Trafimow,2001). In addition, Zaharna (2009, P. 184) asserts that the Arab population might match the Western definition of "collectivist", but there is a limitation to the Arab cultures as collectivist, called "individuality". Condon and Yousef (1975) highlight the difference between individualism and individuality. They stated that while individualism may imply independence from the group, individuality means an individual can act differently within the social structure (cited in Zaharna, 2009, P. 184). Whereas individualism, as perceived in Western cultures, restricts group contribution, individualism in Arab cultures adopts both individual and group connection (Ayish, 2003, p. 85). Consequently, assuming that the collectivistic nature wholly influences Saudi individuals is insufficient, as some writers discuss (Alwazzan and Rees, 2016; Long, 2005). But classifying Saudi Arabia's culture as collectivist instead of individualist is excessively naïve,

as the concepts of both collectivism and individualism are 'problematic' (Alqahtani, 2015, p. 51), 'fuzzy' and 'difficult to measure' (Triandis, 1995, p. 2).

ii.   *Communication style.*

According to Hall (1989, p. 113), cultures vary between high-context and low-context cultures. Within a high-context culture, individuals expect more of others than those in low-context cultures. Furthermore, Levine (1985) explains that Arabs' communication style differs from the West to be indirect and emotionally rich. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) categorise Arab culture as the culture of 'being' rather than the culture of 'doing', which is the western culture.

Besides, in Arab culture family background, age and rank are considerably important than achievement and accomplishments (cited in Zaharna, 1995). This reality reflects what we discussed earlier regarding individuals' goals priorities in collectivist culture compared to individualist culture.

iii.   *Power distance.*

Another cultural difference mentioned in the literature is 'power distance' (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). According to Hofstede (2001, p. 98), Saudi Arabia has a large-power distance culture indicating that power is perceived as part of society and that, generally, older people are to be respected and be afraid of. These elements are not applicable in low-power distance cultures (ibid).

The impact of large-power distance in Saudi Arabis can be seen in the teacher-student relationship and excessive dependence on the teacher from the students' side (ibid). Therefore, the performance and general quality of the teacher play a major role in the quality of the students' learning. Conversely, in small-power distance societies, the quality of learning is determined by the student (i.e., teacher-centred vs student-centred approach) (ibid). In addition, Alsuwaida (2016, P. 105) explains the teacher-centred approach in Saudi

Arabia in terms of teachers usually applying traditional teaching methods that involve memorisation and tests, where teachers have to be treated with respect. Therefore, they are almost should not be criticised or contradicted.

However, the teacher-student relationship is more formal than in the West (SeeMostafa, 2006), where each person is encouraged to be independent, self-directing, distinctive and self-confident, while valuing confidentiality and liberty of choice (Kim *et al.,* 1994, p. 7).

2.5. Impact of cultural difference on cross-cultural transition.

Various studies have indicated an association between cultural differences and cross-culture transition and adjustment (Furnham and Bochner,1982; Searle and Ward, 1990). Beginning with the study by Redmond and Bunyi (1993), this research investigated the relationship between intercultural communication competence ICC and the stress experienced by international students attending a large midwestern university in eighteen countries. The study found significant differences in the reported amount of stress, stress handling and intercultural communication competencies.

According to Redmond (2000), the variations between the different countries due to the differences between the host-country cultural values and that of the home country might moderate the effect of intercultural communication competencies on stress. Another study by Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) investigates the possible impact of cultural differences on stress and intercultural interactions. This study points to the strong impact of cultural differences on social relationships. They found that those in high uncertainty avoidance cultures consider their relationships with others to be more personal than the members of low uncertainty cultures (ibid, p. 188). Consequently, the interpersonal interactions of individuals from these two cultural extremes will be affected. They clarified that the larger the difference, the greater the difficulties that an individual might expect to face in order to

develop and maintain relationships, satisfy social needs, communicate effectively and adapt successfully to the culture (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 1988).

In their own study, Furnham and Bochner (1982) identified cultural differences as one of the main issues contributing to culture shock. They stated that the social difficulties experienced by the sojourner abroad is related to the differences between their home and host cultures. Their study categorised participants into three psychic distances of near, intermediate and far compared to British society, although these classifications were based on a previous assessment consistent with religion, language and climate. In general, their study findings support the assumption of a relationship between his or her level of social difficulty and the individual's psychic distance. In other words, when the cultural differences between the host and home cultures are very large, then the adjustment becomes more difficult for the students. Their findings are consistent with other findings in the literature (such as Faragallah, Schumm and Webb, 1997; Razek and Coyner, 2013; Searle and Ward, 1990). Similarly, Gudykunst and Hammer (1988) examine the relationship between uncertainty reduction and intercultural adaptation by investigating the similarity between the sojourners' home and host cultures. Their findings suggest that cultural similarity - in other words, a short cultural distance - results in more certainty in a sojourner's ability to predict and perceive host behaviour. Thus, it would develop and maintain interpersonal relationships and reduce the stress related to social needs (ibid). They concluded that experience culture shock represents individual incapability to predict their beliefs and attitudes and those of others (i.e., cognitive uncertainty), and in some situations their behaviour and that of others (i.e., behavioural uncertainty) (Gudykunst and Hammer, 1988, p.132).

The literature discussed above outlines the features of cultural differences that may impact the SARs' cross-cultural transition and homecoming transition. Living abroad may present a number of conflicts related to cultural differences which could affect how they act and behave abroad, and the number of changes they might encounter during their abroad journey.

The discussion also draws attention to the impact of cultural differences, particularly the relationship between uncertainty avoidance and intercultural adaption on overcoming culture shock. In this study, we are interested in exploring to what extend the cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and the host-country culture may affect the SARs' study-abroad experience and their homecoming transition.

2.6. Theoretical background.

Many approaches have sought to comprehend the nature of a sojourner's process of adjustment and readjustment. These approaches include stage theories (e.g., Adler, 1975); curves of adjustment (e.g., Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Lysgaard, 1955); coping styles (e.g., Adler, 1981); culture learning (e.g., Furnham and Bochner,1982); and intercultural communication (e.g., Martin, 1986). Nevertheless, Kim (2001) pointed out that the field of cross-cultural adjustment is still inconsistent and confusing, while there is a scarcity of a single comprehensive theory of sojourner adjustment (Church, 1982). The following section therefore provides an overview of classic and contemporary approaches to cross-cultural transition and a subsequent discussion.

1) Person-environment transition.

The theory of person-environment transitions indicates a mutual influence between environment and personality, and vice versa. The theory considers two faces of effects: the self-selection effect and socialisation effect. These effects have come under particular consideration in terms of their impact on personality traits and how they influence these traits. To give one example: Niehoff (2017) and Zimmermann and Neyer (2013) find that the self-selection effect is influenced by students' personality traits, indicating that students who are higher in openness, extraversion and agreeableness are more likely to have an interest in gaining new and social experiences, which a study-abroad experience is able to provide

(Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013; Niehoff, 2017). In addition, Zimmermann and Neyer (2013) point out that it is not only the likelihood of study abroad but also the length of the study duration that is affected by students' openness. Students with higher levels of openness tend to choose long-term study duration to gain more extensive experience with foreign cultures. However, while Niehoff (2017) agrees with the previous finding regarding the personality influence on self-selection, he indicates that personality traits are not the only trigger to study abroad. He indicates that the mutual interaction between students and the new environment is determined by two kinds of triggers: external motivation and internal motivation.

For example, Hutteman et al. (2015) have explored how the new environment can cause changes in students' personalities by examining the macro-and micro-processes of self-esteem development using the socio-genomic model of personality (Roberts and Jackson, 2008). As this model explains, for the environment to cause a change in individual personality, it should first cause a change in one's state, including thoughts, feelings and behaviour. Consequently, over time and with prolonged exposure, the change in individual states will cause personality trait change (ibid). Thus, Hutteman et al. (2015) find that the level of students' socialisation abroad is determined by the pre-international experience components of self-esteem and their level of language proficiency. Furthermore, the more sociable the students are abroad, the more impact that the international experience has on their self-esteem. Thus, different factors contribute to this influence for the environment to cause changes in students' personalities.

2) **Cross-cultural adjustment theory.**

The cross-cultural adjustment refers to the people who move to a new country and experience 'culture shock'. The concept of culture shock received critical attention in the late 1950s, with the first to introduce this concept being Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963), Lysgaard (1955) and Oberg (1960). Oberg (1960, p. 177) explained culture shock as an outcome of

being moved abroad that, as a result, activates the feeling of anxiety relating to losing all familiar signs and symbols of social contact. According to Furnham and Bochner (1986), other symptoms of culture shock include missing their home, fear of host contact, feelings of powerlessness, anger, worries about daily activities and academic difficulties. In addition, Furnham and Bochner (1982) point out that overcoming culture shock depends on the relationship between cultural distance and social difficulties in the host country. They assert that the greater the distance of the sojourner's original culture from the host culture, the more complex their adjustment becomes.

However, although culture shock has received criticism from many scholars emphasising the negative experiences, others provide some positive interpretations of the phenomenon. For example, Adler (1987, p. 30) describes culture shock as a cross-cultural learning experience, where sojourners will develop an awareness of their growth, learning and change. In addition, one of the positive impacts of cultural shock is that sojourners will adopt coping strategies such as developing individuals' communication skills, conveyed in their knowledge of the host country and their empathy (Rothwell, 2000). Furthermore, Kim (2001) describes cross-cultural learning as a 'double-edged process' that, as he explains, encounters problematic and growth elements because when people encounter difficulties in a new environment, they acquire new cultural learning and growth.

Culture shock is further explicated by the U-curve hypothesis, one of the most famous and frequently cited theories of cross-cultural transition developed by Lysgaard (1955). The model explains the four adjustment stages: starting with an initial 'honeymoon phase of excitement followed by a phase of disappointment' (or 'culture shock'), a stage of recovery and, finally, complete adaptation. Despite its popularity in the international adjustment literature and cross-cultural training, few empirical studies support the U-curve hypothesis. In fact, the U-curve hypothesis was extended by Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) in their W-curve model to include the re-entry experience of sojourners when they returned home. The

W-curve model suggests that sojourners experience a similar adjustment process as in the shape of a U-curve when they return to their home countries. This advance on the original theory indicates that sojourners will also experience re-entry culture shock where individuals feel confusion and dissatisfaction because they must cope with an unexpected crisis in their original cultural environment. However, at the last stage of their readjustment, they will adapt differently to their home culture. Some will return to their previous selves, others will experience resentment to their old situation and become global wanderers, while others become causes of change in their home, organisations, and countries (Kiley, 2003). However, empirical research has found limited support for the W-curve hypothesis. For example, Adler (1975) indicates that one of the W-curve model drawbacks is that it does not consider individual differences and identity changes. It has been proven that cultural adjustment is a personal experience, and every individual may highlight the high and low points in the curve differently which results, in turn, in a very individual version of the curve. Thus, these individual differences make the adjustment process a subjective phenomenon (Rhein, 2018). Moreover, Kim (2001) finds that both the U and W curve models categorise sojourners' adjustment and readjustment as a negative experience by ignoring the positive features of intercultural confrontations and their growth-enabling nature. He claims that participating in multiple intercultural confrontations over time (such as dealing with host nationals, facing a new academic system and managing everyday activities) contributes to developing intercultural growth and identity transformation as the sojourners will acquire a range of cultural knowledge and experiences. These observations are consistent with the revised version of the W-curve model by Ting-Toomey (1999, p. 251), who categorise the peaks and valleys in the curve as part of the 'change-and-growth process' causing identity change.

The new extended version of the W-curve model has been proposed by Ting-Toomy and Chung (2005), suggesting a seven-stage model as an extended version of the W-curve model.

The most distinctive stage they include is the ambivalence stage, which sojourners experience between their co-exist adjustment and the shock of re-entry. At the ambivalence stage, the sojourners experience various feelings from sorrow, nostalgia and arrogance to release and sadness that they are going home.

3) Kolb's theory.

David A. Kolb's experiential learning model has been one of the important theories and practices of adult education, informal education and ultimate learning. According to Kolb (1984), effective learning can be seen through an individual's progress over a four-stage cycle, starting with (1) having a real experience followed by (2) observation of and reflection on that experience followed by (3) analysis of the abstract concepts that lead to conclusions, which are then (4) used to examine a proposition in future circumstances, so resulting in new experiences.

Although the Kolb model is mostly used in university or school settings, a study-abroad experience allows for cross-cultural learning experience beyond these types of settings because the transformation experience is the process whereby knowledge is created (Kolb, 1984, p. 42). The study-abroad experience thus has a unique nature that differentiates it from other experiences in the home country (e.g., marriage, changing university). In addition, as a social experience, it requires adaptation to a new culture while completing the course requirements of foreign professors who might have different techniques of teaching and assessing. Furthermore, exposure to a new culture in an international setting provides many opportunities for experiential learning (Ng, Van Dyne and Ang, 2009).

4) Intercultural transformation.

Experiential learning theory has been extended by the intercultural transformation theory (Kim, 1993). Intercultural transformation theory explains the process of the personal growth that students experience during their intercultural experiences. According to this theory, a self-reflexive system is activated in the students while they continuously interact with their environment. However, when an individual perceives that an external factor or stimulus does not match what is expected, their balance will be disrupted, triggering stress and pushing them to develop adaptive strategies to recover their balance. As a result, an individual will learn great lessons through these imbalance experiences, resulting in stressless and more flexibility in similar situations due to developing affective, behavioural and cognitive ability (Milstein, 2005). This idea is in line with the theory of behavioural applicability (Brown and Brown, 2009), which indicates that when there is a gap between the original culture norms and the new environment, entailing that behaviour must match the new environment for the students to be culturally and socially involved, and for stress and anxiety to ease. If this process did not occur, then students would suffer uncertainty and normlessness until some changes are made.

According to Kim (1993), owing to the difficulties faced while living abroad, sojourners must adjust and change their behaviour to be able to live normally and accomplish their daily life activities while improving their quality of life in the new environment (p. 21). Therefore, study abroad experiences are reported to provide experiential learning opportunities to grow cognition processes and acquire specific skills and behaviours to fit with the new culture and overcome day-to-day obstacles.

5) **Theory of acculturation.**

Since the rejection of the traditional view of cultural shock in the 1980s as a negative experience, a new theoretical framework has been developed beyond mental health concerns (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). A number of theoretical backgrounds have guided the

development of this framework, such as the work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the model proposed by Berry (1994) and the theory and research on culture learning by Furnham and Bochner (1986). The model incorporates stress and coping framework and culture learning perspectives on acculturation, examining the psychological and sociocultural outcomes of cross-cultural adaption and the macro and micro level variables as predictors in the process of sojourners' adjustment and outcomes. This model also defines cross-cultural transition as life-changing events that encounter several unaccustomed changes and an unfamiliar intercultural contact. As a result, these experiences may be perceived as interesting, challenging or confusing, leading to learning and growth through managing and coping effectively with new life events and demanding situations. Based on the person's theoretical perspectives, these effects can lead to devastating stress or lacking social skills. In both cases, personal and situational factors entail reflection and action, involving cognitive, behavioural and affective responses, resulting in both stress management and the acquirement of culture-specific skills.

The theory of acculturation thus draws attention to the importance of both the macro-level and micro-level characteristics. The macro-level involves the society of settlement (the host country) and the society of origin (the home country). Outstanding features include socio-political and demographic factors. Conversely, the micro-level characteristics consist of personal and situational characteristics. While situational characteristics include language competence, personality, cultural distance and acculturation strategies, the corresponding personal characteristics include friendship networks, cultural distance, intergroup relations, or social support. By considering all these factors, this model will be particularly efficient to use for examining the acculturation process. Moreover, by predicting the psychological and sociocultural mechanisms of intercultural adaptation, it guarantees the integration of important features of current social identity work and the associated theory and research.

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SOCIETY OF ORIGIN                        SOCIETY OF SETTLEMENT
• Social factors                         • Social factors
• Political factors                      • Political factors
• Economic factors                       • Economic factors
• Cultural factors                       • Cultural factors

              SOCIETAL LEVEL VARIABLES

CROSS-CULTURAL    STRESS      RESPONSES
TRANSITION        AND         • Affective      OUTCOMES
• Life changes    SKILLS      • Behavioural    • Psychological
• Intercultural   DEFICITS    • Cognitive      • Sociocultural
  contact

              INDIVIDUAL LEVEL VARIABLES

Characteristics of          Characteristics of
the Person                  the Situation
• Personality               • Length of cultural
• Language fluency            contact
• Training and              • Amount of intra- and
  experience                  intergroup contact
• Cultural identity         • Quality of intra- and
• Acculturation               intergroup contact
  strategies                • Cultural distance
• Values                    • Amount of life changes
• Reasons for migration     • Social support
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Figure 2.1. The acculturation process (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001)

In this new framework, the sojourner adjustment has been considerably examined from a social psychological perspective, studying its affective (A), behavioural (B) and cognitive (C) factors. It is noteworthy that the three integrated factors of the ABC model (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) are not specifically designed to explain the student sojourn experience. However, the theories of stress, coping and culture-learning perspectives were found to be relatively tailored to the study of student sojourners' adjustment and adaptation (Schartner, 2014). Therefore, students must implement coping strategies to deal with the stress raised by the transition between their home academic culture and host culture to adjust to the new academic environment successfully. Furthermore, they must learn new academic conventions and practices specific to the host university settings (ibid).

a) *Affective (The Stress and Coping Framework).*

According to Berry (1997), the Stress and Coping Framework emphasises the significance of life changes for the sojourner during the cross-cultural transition and the consequence of acculturation stress. According to this logic, intellectual assessment and coping strategies are needed to deal with acculturation stress and life-changing events (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). In addition, previous studies have identified a number of influential factors characterised as individual and situational characteristics that are considered effective in dealing with these changes, such as personality (e.g., Ward and Chang, 1997; Ward and Kennedy, 1992), social support (e.g., Adelman, 1988; Hayes and Lin, 1994), coping styles (e.g., Zheng and Berry, 1991; Ward and Kennedy, 2001), cultural distance (Berry, 1997), and the degree and quality of social relationships (Furnham and Alibhal, 1985; Young *et al.,* 2013).

b) *Behavioural (the culture-learning and social skills perspectives).*

Cultural learning theory has been strongly influenced by Argyle's (1980) work on social skills and interpersonal behaviours, which suggests that sojourners experience difficulties handling everyday social life in the early stage of their arrival in the host country. The concept of culture learning theory thus stresses the significance of learning the important features of the new environment (Furnham and Bochner,1982; Furnham and Bochner, 1986). In addition, it categorises cross-cultural transition as a growth-enabling experience, being that the initial adjustment difficulties are followed by solid improvement, representing an uphill learning curve, where the sojourners acquire the cultural-related skills required to function effectively in the new environment (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001)

Culture-related skills include the acquisition of culturally relevant skills, be they verbal and non-verbal communication skills (Gardner, 1952; Ruben and Kealey, 1979) and the learning of social behaviours (Triandis, 1977; Triandis, 1980). Moreover, a number of factors or mechanisms have been identified as pretty crucial to the sojourner adjustment experience, including knowledge about the host culture, length of stay in the host country, language proficiency, communication capability, quantity and quality of social contact with host nationals or social connection, cultural distance, and cross-cultural training (see Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001for a review). For example, Kiley (2003) conducted an empirical study that investigated the international students' adjustment and found that the greater immersion the students have in culture leads to integrated identity and better shift. Thus, for the students to better adjust to the host culture, they must adjust their behaviour to fit with new cultural norms.

c) *Cognitive (Social identification theories).*

Social identification theories (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) have been developed based on works on social cognition (e.g., Kunda, 1999) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978). Social identification theories focus on how people view themselves and perceive in-group and out-group members (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). In addition, it examines the cognitive element of sojourner adjustment such as pre-sojourn expectations (e.g., Pitts, 2009), stereotypes and intergroup attitudes (e.g., Gudykunst, 1983), cultural identity (e.g., Kim, 2001), or value changes as a result of cross-cultural transition (e.g., Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver,2006).

Based on the review of the theoretical background of cross-cultural transition discussed above, the study aims to explore the long-term impact of study-abroad experience on SARs concerning the changes in their affective, behaviour and cognition processes. This study will thus adopt the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) to find out the

expected outcomes of study abroad and the mechanisms that allow for these outcomes to be perceived. Moreover, the study aims to extend the theory by examining the impact of home-country transition on the sustainability of these outcomes over time.

2.7 Anticipated outcomes of studying abroad from the lens of the ABC model.

This section will present and discuss some of the anticipated outcomes of study abroad concerning the three factors of the theory of acculturation model: affective, behavioural, and cognitive processes, which will be examined in this study.

2.7.1   Affective.

Affective refers to the sojourners' emotional and mental well-being, while learning to acquire some coping strategy to adjust abroad (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). Berry (1997) distinguishes between two types of adjustment experienced by the sojourner abroad: psychological adjustment and sociocultural adjustment. Psychological adjustment refers to changes throughout time, which can be determined by social support and personality variables (Berry, 1997). It also considers the emotional component of intercultural adjustment that is measured by mental and physical well-being (ibid). Thus, psychological adjustment represents the affective factor of the model. Conversely, sociocultural adjustment steadily increases with time, and can be predicted by cultural knowledge, the amount of contact with the host culture and intergroup attitudes (ibid).

In addition, this study attempts to learn about the participants' affective outcomes (i.e., emotional and mental well-being) during their adjustment and readjustment experience, discussing its possible impact on other expected outcomes (i.e., behaviour and cognitive parts).

2.7.2. Behaviour.

A study-abroad experience provides a unique cross-cultural learning experience as the students are exposed to different ideas and teaching techniques, interacting with different cultural norms, values and behaviour, and dealing with people from different cultures. While there are a variety of behaviours and skills that could be included in this study, for the purposes of our research we have chosen to study three specific behaviours or skills because they are more salient to the Saudi scholarship programme: intercultural competence, self-leadership skills and creative behaviour. The theoretical rationale underpinning the practical case for inclusion is then outlined in the sections that follow.

A. Intercultural competence.

The first behaviour is intercultural competence, and as one of the main objectives of the Saudi scholarships, it allows for cultural exchange, mutual understanding and intellectual growth. Intercultural competence refers to the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to interact effectively and appropriately in culturally diverse situations (Bennett, 1986; Deardorff, 2006; Graf and Harland, 2005; Johnson, Lenartowicz and Apud, 2006). It is a significant natural outcome of study abroad as it is linked to a successful international experience. According to the cultural learning theory, the student level of adjustment to the new culture is determined by acquiring cultural and social skills, including knowledge about host-country, verbal and non-verbal communication skills (Gardner, 1952; Ruben and Kealey, 1979) as well as learning social behaviour (Triandis, 1980; 1977). The various studies seeking to understand intercultural competence (e.g., Black and Duhon, 2006; Kiley, 2003; Ramirez, 2016) thus found that the urgent need for adjustment abroad acts as a transformative trigger that influences students' intercultural competence development.

However, the importance of intercultural competence and the steady increase of studies regarding this behaviour is due to the expansion of international and global businesses. Companies realise that for their business to succeed, it is important to recruit managers with high cultural and social skills and the ability to deal with cultural challenges (Black, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991; Johnson, Lenartowicz and Apud, 2006). Therefore, managers' ability to understate foreign cultures and interact effectively with their colleagues overseas is one of the determining factors to avoid business failures (Johnson, Lenartowicz and Apud, 2006; Jyoti and Kour, 2015; Rehg, Gundlach and Grigorian, 2012). Moreover, intercultural competence is an important skill for businesses to succeed and for any individual to feel confident and respectful when dealing with people from different cultures (Ramirez, 2016). While an effective interaction requires the ability to achieve the objectives of interactions, to be appropriate in a diverse cultural environment requires the ability to achieve the basic contextual requirements of a given situation (Chen and Starosta, 1996). Instead, an interculturally competent person must have an ability to understand different methods and styles of communication, along with an ability to deal with people from different cultural settings and a passion for using their knowledge and abilities.

Therefore, intercultural competence is a skill that should be developed due to the experiential interaction with new cultures that occurs while studying abroad (Ramirez, 2016). Initial studies of intercultural competence have been driven by the necessity to clarify variables that influence the performance of expatriates to develop selection and training tools that decrease the possibility of failures in the foreign country (Ruben, 1989). In the last decade, the research on intercultural competence has examined a wide range of interesting topics from workplace diversity (e.g., Ghosh, 2014) to international business management (e.g., Johnson, Lenartowicz and Apud, 2006), from students' academic trips (e.g., Vande Berg, Connor-Linton and Paige, 2009) to adaptation of expatriates in foreign cultures (e.g., Graf and

Harland, 2005). Thus, this study proposes that SARs could acquire intercultural competence because of their study abroad experience.

B. Self-leadership.

Self-leadership is an extension concept to self-management, first introduced by Manz and Sims (1980). Its development was based on the social learning theory, which proposes that individual behaviour can be explained by a combination of cognitive and environmental triggers, stressing the self-regulatory behaviours of people as well as recognising external consequences (Bandura and McClelland, 1977; Manz and Sims, 1980). Based on Manz and Sims' original work, self-leadership has been defined by Neck and Houghton (2006) as "a self-influence process through which people achieve the self-direction and self-motivation necessary to perform" (p. 271). It consists of specific behavioural and cognitive strategies designed to influence personal effectiveness positively.

Based on the social learning theory, individual behaviour can be changed and redirected based on external triggers which, in the case of a sojourner, involves a new culture with different norms and expectations to accept. Thus, for sojourners to fit successfully into a new culture, they will have to discover new strategies to deal with daily life problems and overcome any obstacles during their adjustment process. Kazan and Bryant (2012) have identified the important aspects of self-leadership, which involve understanding who you are, your abilities, where you are going, and the ability to influence your communication, emotions and behaviour instead of getting what you want. Consequently, a number of studies have considered self-leadership as a foundation of any leadership development initiative, while its infinite process needs to be evaluated from time to time.

Since the development of self-leadership, a wide range of cross-cultural studies have been conducted to understand and explore the correlation between cultural characteristics and self-leadership (e.g., Alves *et al.,* 2006; Georgianna, 2007; Ho and Nesbit, 2013; Houghton,

Carnes and Ellison, 2014; Kawondera, 2007; Ram, 2015; Thomas, 2015). However, the international literature concerning sojourner experience and learning lacks studies the relationship between international experience and leadership skills development, particularly self-leadership. According to Alves et al. (2006), self-leadership practice is related to context and situations where individuals will focus their efforts into specific strategies as situations develop. In addition, previous researchers have discovered a relationship between an individual's cultural characteristics and his or her self-leadership and, as a result, he or she developed different skills than those who have not been abroad. Thus, this study proposes that SARs managed to acquire self-leadership skills due to their study-abroad experience, and through these types of skills, differentiate themselves from those who have not been abroad. Besides, a great deal of research has already looked at the possible outcomes for self-leadership and found that self-efficacy is the most frequently mentioned outcome (e.g., Manz, 1986; Neck and Manz, 1996; 2013).

Studies have revealed empirical support for self-efficacy as a critical mechanism through which self-leadership affects performance (e.g., Neck and Houghton, 2006; Prussia, Anderson and Manz, 1998). Another anticipated outcome of self-leadership is psychological empowerment because self-leadership is usually presented as a critical process for facilitating such improvements to the individual (e.g., Houghton and Yoho, 2005). Commitment and independence are also often presented as the outcomes of self-leadership (e.g., Houghton and Yoho, 2005; Manz and Sims, 2001), with self-leadership providing a sense of ownership for individuals with regard to their tasks and work processes. In addition, creativity and innovation have also been identified as two possible outcomes of self-leadership (e.g., Carmeli, Meitar and Weisberg, 2006; Diliello and Houghton, 2006; Houghton and Yoho, 2005; Manz and Sims, 2001). For example, DiLiello and Houghton (2006) suggest that many of the essential concepts in the creativity literature are directly or indirectly related to self-leadership.

C. Creativity behaviour.

Achieving a successful adjustment abroad requires sojourners to adopt specific strategies to achieve a harmony between their behaviour and the new environment in order for them to overcome any psychological imbalance (Torbiörn, 1982). The necessity and urgency for adjustment has led to the adoption of a number of cognitive and coping strategies that subsequently result in changes that are permanent and even transformational (e.g., Osland, 2001). The studies in the psychological outcomes and cultural adaption indicate that psychological outcomes are double-edged. While one edge involves short-term pain, such as anxiety, stress and frustration (e.g., Oberg, 1960), the second edge involves long-term outcomes, such as developing cultural awareness and problem-solving skills (e.g., Anderson, 1994; Kim, 2001).

One recent study underlines a key outcome for the sojourners: the way they perceive their time abroad is determined by how their psychological adjustment and self-reflexive processes develop a flexible and creative mindset that reflects their way of thinking (e.g., Fee and Gray, 2012). However, although a growing stream of literature sheds light on the benefits to the organisation of having employees with multicultural experience who have unique perceptions and knowledge (e.g., Benet-Martínez, Lee and Leu, 2006; Tadmor and Tetlock, 2006), few studies have explored the process of developing creative abilities and behaviour of those with multicultural experience (e.g., Fee and Gray, 2012). This study will thus investigate the relationship between study periods abroad and the creative behaviour acquired by SARs as an outcome of their study abroad experience. As creativity is one of the objectives of the Saudi scholarship, we think it is an important outcome to evaluate.

2.7.3. Cognitive processes.

One of the important theories of cross-cultural transition is the social identification theory, which focuses on how people view themselves and how they perceive others. Although the theory has examined a number of cognitive elements linked to sojourners' adjustment, it also supports the evidence presented in the study entitled "Hitting the road has substantial effects on who we are" by Zimmerman and Neyer (2013). In this section, two of the cognitive processes' outcomes will thus be reviewed - the self-concept clarity and self-discerning reflection - with an examination of their theoretical rationale and the practical case for their inclusion.

A. Self-concept clarity.

By focusing on social identification theory, few studies have looked at the impact of cross-cultural transition on sojourner's psychological well-being, and particularly how international experience has a long-term effect on a sojourner's sense of self. This cognitive aspect is known in social and humanistic psychology as self-concept. Self-concept is defined by Baumeister (1999) as "the individual's belief about himself or herself, including the person's attributes and who and what the self is". Despite Michael Crichton's assertion that going abroad may clarify our notions of who we are, a number of researchers have elucidated how the international experience can lead individuals to integrate different cultural identities within their self-concept (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos, 2005; Saad *et al.,* 2013). However, little attention has been paid to the impact of international experience on the sojourner's main structure of self-concept (Adam *et al.,* 2018). To address this issue, our study will test the idea that international experience involving definite exposure to a new culture and related norms, values and behaviour will lead to a change in the key structural aspect of the self (i.e., self-concept clarity).

The self-concept clarity refers to the degree to which the elements making up an individual's self-concept are visibly described, internally reliable and temporally steady (Campbell *et al.,*

1996, P. 141). The nature of self-concept structural aspect of the self, such as self-concept clarity, has been conceptualised recently in two streams of research. The first concerned those who see self-concept as moderately stable over time (Campbell *et al.,* 1996; Wu, Watkins and Hattie, 2010) and those who claim that the structure of people's self-concepts is flexible (Light and Visser, 2013; Slotter, Gardner and Finkel, 2010). A very recent study by Adam et al. (2018) was the first study that examined the impact of living abroad experience as a personal experience on self-concept clarity, anticipating their findings to be aligned with those who suggest that the structure of self-concept is flexible.

However, while other studies found that transactional experience, such as job changes or romantic breakup, usually decrease self-concept, this study found that living abroad would increase self-concept clarity. Hence, the hypotheses of Adam et al. are driven by a number of studies that linked self-concept clarity with acquiring positive outcomes such as psychological well-being (Nezlek and Plesko, 2001), psychological adjustment (Campbell, Assanand and Paula, 2003), relationship satisfaction (Lewandowski, Nardone and Raines, 2010), life satisfaction (Mittal, 2015), purpose in life (Błażek and Besta, 2012), adaptation to stress (Lee-Flynn *et al.,* 2011), cooperative problem-solving in conflict situations (Bechtoldt *et al.,* 2010), and job performance (Earl and Bright, 2007).

B. Self-discerning reflection.

Studying abroad and being in a different country involves exposing yourself to an unfamiliar environment with different norms, values and behaviours – an experience that can be disruptive and unsettling. Nonetheless, the importance of this type of experience is that it allows people to develop a clear sense of who they are through the self-perception process; that is, as they reflect on their norms, values and beliefs based on the behaviour they perform and perceive themselves performing (Bem, 1972). However, the development of a clear sense of self can be complex and uncertain to achieve because the lack of a link between living

abroad and living in one country only prevents individuals questioning the beliefs and values consistent with the core beliefs of the culture in which they grew up (Zou *et al.,* 2009). Conversely, living abroad can open the door wide to so many opportunities when people's previously unquestioned values and beliefs put to the test are either rejected or strengthened (ibid).

Furthermore, people in a foreign experience frequently face new situations involving different values and norms. Hence, constantly reflection on oneself may strengthen self-concept clarity because they make people more confident in their beliefs and who they are (ibid). In the literature, this repeated process is called "self-discerning reflection" (i.e., reflections on whether parts of their identity truly define who they are or merely reflect their cultural upbringing). It involves attributing insights about one's identity (e.g., traits, values, beliefs) either to the self or to cultural norms depending on the transformation of the cultural context (Kelley, 1967).

Drawing on a study by Adam et al. (2018) this research has first examined the impact of study abroad on students' self-concept clarity and sought to determine whether or not their level of self-concept clarity is different from those who have not been abroad or those who have had the intention to study abroad but have not yet been able to do so. The study found that the participants who had already lived abroad reported greater self-concept clarity than participants who had not been abroad or had signed up to live abroad but had not done so yet. Furthermore, the study examined the self-discerning reflection and found that the research participants who had lived abroad reported greater self-discerning reflections than participants who had signed up to live abroad but had not been yet. Finally, the study has tested the mediation effect of self-discerning reflections on the relationship between living abroad and self-concept clarity using bootstrapping analysis (Hayes, 2013), to conclude that self-discerning reflections mediated the effect of living abroad on self-concept clarity. Therefore, this study aims to examine self-concept clarity and self-discerning reflection in

proposing that SARs were able to develop these two processes due to their study-abroad experience, and that with regard to their cognition processes they perceived themselves differently than those who have not been abroad.

Based on the review of the literature review and the theoretical background discussed above, this research thus aims to find answers for the following five research questions:

1) Do returning academics perceive themselves to be different from those who have not been abroad in terms of their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes?

2) What are the perceived benefits of study abroad for returning academics, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behavioural and cognitive process?

3) What are the factors that determine the benefits of study abroad for returning academic, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behaviour and cognitive processes? In this sense, what are the facilitators and barriers to these processes?

4) Are the returning academics able to sustain the benefits of study abroad?

5) How does the readjustment of returnees to their home country affect their ability to sustain the benefits of study abroad?

Chapter 3.

Research Design and Methodology.

This chapter highlights the research design and methodological approach implemented in this study, beginning with an explanation of the study philosophical foundation and paradigm

adopted by the researcher. This discussion is followed by an overview of the research design, research strategy and data collection methods as well as the research setting will be discussed. Lastly, details of the conducted studies in this research will be presented.

3.1. Philosophical foundation and paradigm.

Previous scholars have underlined the importance of understanding the research paradigm deeply, as it provides the foundation and significant implications to the research processes such as the selection of methodology and methods because it affects the researcher decision (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). The first to use the concept of paradigm was the American philosopher Thomas Kuhn (1962) who indicated that it refers to a philosophical way of thinking. According to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), a paradigm is used to depict a researcher's 'worldview'. It influences how a researcher views the world, and how interpretations are made by a researcher within that world based on his/her beliefs and principles (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Guba and Lincoln (2005) indicate that a paradigm might be defined as an essential set of principles or worldview that influences a research action or an examination.

The importance of understanding the research paradigm lies with its role in explaining the philosophical orientation and making a decision about the methodology and methods used in the research process. However, for a researcher to have a firm acknowledgement of his/her research's paradigm, the researcher should acknowledge elements associated with the paradigm because they reflect the assumptions, beliefs, norms and values that guide the research process. A research paradigm includes four elements: epistemology, ontology, methodology and axiology (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Regarding the first element, epistemology explains what is considered knowledge within the world (Cooksey and McDonald, 2011). In other words, it answers the question of how we found the knowledge and how we know if it is truth or reality. According to Schwandt (1997), epistemology refers

to an examination of the nature of knowledge and justification. The importance of acknowledging the research epistemology stems from its position in helping create confidence in the research process and how the researcher goes about discovering knowledge in the social context that they will examine.

However, ontology is concerned with the researcher assumptions about the social phenomenon being investigated to believe that something makes sense or is real (Scotland, 2012). These assumptions suggest that the nature of reality is important for explaining how the research will drive meaning from the collected data. Consequently, they will help to guide the researcher thinking towards the research problem, its significance and the methodological approach used to find solutions (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). The third element, methodology, is then the general term for the research processes that are implemented to investigate something; it encompasses the research design, methods, approaches and research procedures (Keeves, 1997). While axiology then describes the important ethical issues in planning research, it is considered the philosophical approach to producing factual decisions (Finnis, 1980). It encompasses the process of describing, appraising and comprehending perceptions of right and wrong behaviour in conducting research.

3.1.1 Types of paradigms.

A large number of paradigms have been proposed by leading researchers in the field. However, Candy (1989) suggests that they all fall under three main classifications within the Positivist, Interpretivist or Critical paradigms. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) then recommend a fourth category called the Pragmatic paradigm that combines the features of the three mentioned paradigms above. The four paradigms are discussed below in an account of

their definition, practice and related elements. In addition, the paradigm selected for this research will be highlighted.

The Positivist Paradigm.

It was Auguste Comte (1798 – 1857) who first suggested the positivist paradigm as a research worldview. Now it is known in research methods as the scientific method of investigation used for exploring observations, answering questions and determining cause-and-effect relationships in nature. According to Fadhel (2002), it is now the preferred paradigm for a research worldview, as it tries to interpret observations based on facts or measurable objects.

Moreover, positivist research uses a deductive approach, creating hypotheses, examining those hypotheses and proposing functioning definitions, mathematical equations, calculations and expressions in order to develop conclusions (Chen and Hirschheim, 2004). The research in this paradigm supports the use of quantitative research methods because it is considered the foundation for the researcher's ability to be specific and accurate in describing the parameters and coefficients in the collected, analysed and interpreted data and to recognise relationships embedded in the data analysed (Creswell, 2009). However, the four foundational elements of the Positivist paradigm have objectivist epistemology, naive realism ontology, experimental methodology and its beneficence axiology. This paradigm is commonly validated by employing criteria, internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity.

The Interpretivist paradigm.

The Interpretivist paradigm aims to understand the subjective realm of human experience (Guba and Lincoln,2005). It focuses on meaningfully understand the subject meant to be observed rather than the observer's perception (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). The data being

collected to use this paradigm is usually gathered and analysed based on grounded theory. This paradigm has a subjectivist epistemology, a relativist ontology, a naturalist methodology and balanced axiology. It is commonly validated by credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability, which has replaced the positivist criteria of internal/external validity and reliability used in the Positivist paradigm (Guba, 1981).

The Critical paradigm.

The Critical paradigm is commonly implemented by research into social justice issues, aiming to tackle the political, social and economic problems which lead to social repression, division and power configurations that can occur at any level. This paradigm has a transactional epistemology, a historical-realism ontology, a dialogic methodology and an axiology that respects cultural norms (Guba and Lincoln,2005).

The Pragmatic Paradigm.

Some philosophers (such as Alise and Teddlie, 2010; Biesta, 2010; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Patton, 1990) argued that relying on only one paradigm such as the Positivist one to understand the worldview is not sufficient for finding the truth about the real world. Instead, they argue that there is a need for a more applicable worldview to allow flexibility when choosing the research methods that help study the investigated phenomenon. They thus search for practical approaches to research that might allow the combination of methods to highlight the participants' actual behaviours and their beliefs based on these behaviours. These lead to a proposition of the Pragmatic paradigm that focuses on using mixed methods to understand human behaviour. This paradigm has a relational epistemology, a non-singular reality ontology, a mixed methods methodology and a value-laden axiology.

In addition, based on previous research (such asCreswell, 2003; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Patton, 1990; Mertens, 2014), this type of paradigm indicates that some of the

Pragmatic paradigm also features. They assert that it allows research methods to be chosen based on the research purpose and not strictly based on the research chosen paradigm (Interpretivist vs Positivist). Furthermore, in relation to the knowledge being investigated, the Pragmatic paradigm allows them to employ the best approaches and use the most suitable methodologies and modes of action.

The Pragmatic paradigm thus influences a worldview that permits selecting a research design and methodologies that are best to achieve the purpose of the study. Finally, it helps with finding valuable themes within the research project that enables comprehending of the situation. As a result, multiple research methods can be integrated into one study as qualitative, quantitative, and action research methods to advance the research in the best possible manner (Wilson, 2010).

Based on the above discussion of the most used research paradigms, we have decided that the Pragmatic paradigm is the best approach to use in this research. Here, the main research objective is concerned with understanding human behaviour Saudi academic returnees (SARs) affected by different settings (studying abroad vs home-country transition) and external triggers (adjustment and readjustment mechanisms). In addition, our study investigates the questions of what, how and why the outcomes of studying abroad are observed and the associations between these outcomes. Thus, locating this research in a Pragmatic paradigm has allowed flexibility in choosing the suitable research design and different methodology to reach valuable themes that help understand the situation.

Adopting the Pragmatic paradigm in this research entails selecting the abductive approach, which combines deductive used by the Positivist paradigm and the inductive used by the Interpretivist paradigm. These two approaches have been criticised in the literature owing to their weaknesses. For example, according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) the deductive approach has been criticised because it lacks the clarity required for choosing a theory to be tested by creating hypotheses. Conversely, the inductive approach is criticised

because a limitless amount of empirical data is needed to facilitate theory-building. However, using the abductive approach still helps to generate triangulation between multiple data collections, which can add more insights to the findings (Bryman and Bell, 2011).

3.2. Research design and strategy.

This research used a convergent- holistic triangulation research design to understand a chosen theory or concept (Burton and Obel, 2011; Singleton and Straits, 1999). Using this research design will allow for multiple research strategies to be utilised to gain a better understanding because the chosen methods have the opportunity to present convergent results in a certain area. Hence, through exceptional perceptions or viewpoints one or more of the different methods can deliver in other areas. For the purposes of this study, the reason for selecting this research design is that the theoretical purpose of the study entails theory testing and development. Meanwhile the purpose of the methodological approach is to maximise generalisability about the population and its accuracy in controlling and measuring the variables associated with the behaviour of interests (Turner, Cardinal and Burton, 2017).

In addition, this research has followed a longitudinal research strategy concerned with the change and development over time, which is the opposite of a cross-sectional study seeking to study a particular phenomenon at a specific time (Bryman and Bell, 2011). According to Goodwin (2010), a longitudinal research design studies a single group of participants over a certain period of time, adopting a "within-subjects or repeated-measures approach" (p. 224). For the purposes of this research, the data will be carried out over six months with two-time measurement points: T1 within the first six months, the SARs returned to their workplaces; and T2 over six months later.

In terms of data collection methods, this research has employed two types of data collection methods: qualitative and quantitative data collection. Both methods were utilised on two-time measurement occasions. At the time of each method, we aimed to test the model of

acculturation adopted by this research, considering the outcomes of study abroad and the

mechanisms that allow or hinder these outcomes. At time 2, we aimed to extend the theory to

involve the impact of home-country transition on the sustainability of these outcomes.

Based on the research design, strategy and data collection methods discussed earlier, this

research followed the research design and strategy process framework illustrated in Figure

3.1. In addition, we show in table 3.1 how the research questions will be answered

concerning the theoretical and methodological purpose, and the data collection and strategy.
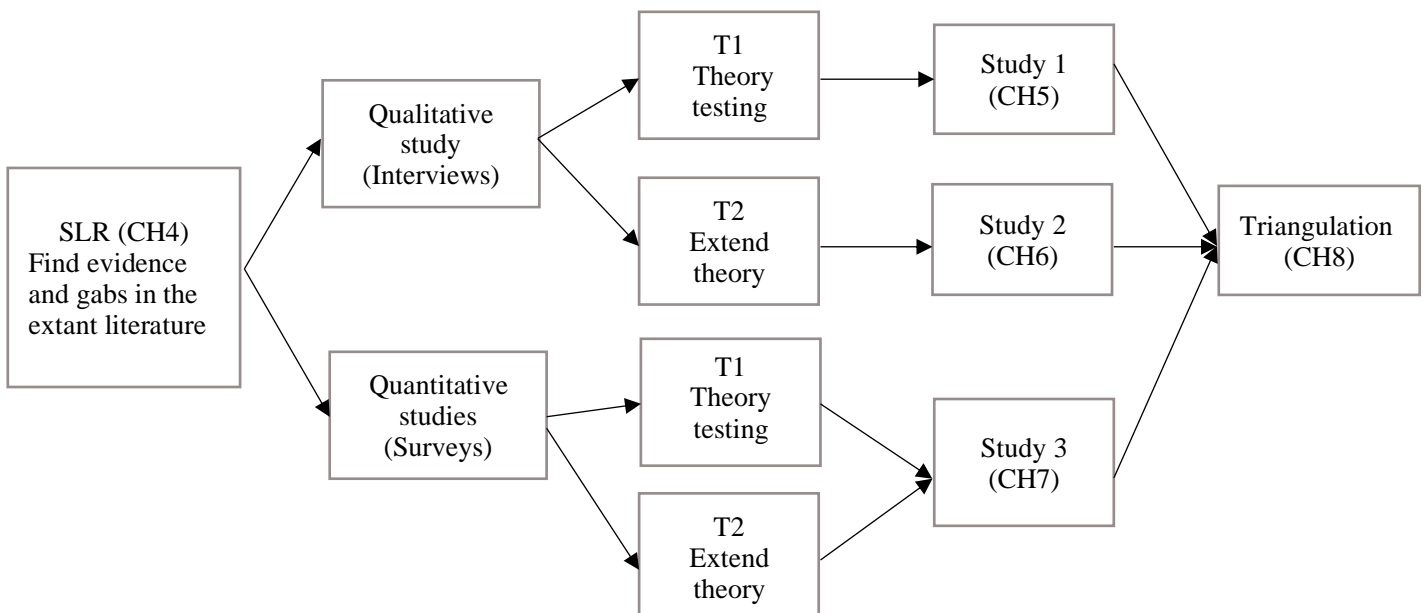
Figure 3.1. Research design and strategy process framework

3.3. The research setting.

The setting of this study is the public and private universities of Saudi Arabia. The participants were the academic staff (male and female) who have recently returned to their workplace after an overseas study experience in western countries (SARs). According to the general authority for the statistics in Saudi Arabia GASTAT and the Ministry of Higher Education (2019), 92,297 Saudi students studied abroad of which 54.9% studied in the USA (50,671 students), 15.7% (14,491 students) studied in the UK, 8% (7,384 students) studied in Canada, and 7.2% (6,645 students) studied in Australia. Therefore, we have limited our population only to those who have studied in these four destinations and to those who recently returned to their workplace with no intention of continuing their studies abroad in the next year to capture accurate perceptions of their readjustment experience.

Table 3.1. The process of answering the research questions.

Theoretical purpose	Methodological purpose	Research questions	Qualitative (Interviews)		Quantitative (surveys)	
			T1	T2	T1	T2
Testing the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001)	Accuracy + Maximise generality	Q1: Do returning academics perceive themselves to be different from those who have not been abroad in terms of their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes?		✓	✓	✓
		Q2: What are the perceived benefits of study abroad for returning academics, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behavioural and cognitive process?	✓			
		Q3: What are the factors that determine the benefits of study abroad for returning academic, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behaviour and cognitive processes? In this sense, what are the facilitators and barriers to these processes?	✓		✓	
Extend and develop the theory of the long-term benefits of acculturation		Q4: Are the returning academics able to sustain the benefits of study abroad?		✓	✓	✓
		Q5: How does the readjustment of returnees to their home country affect their ability to sustain the benefits of study abroad?		✓		✓

3.4. Overview of the studies conducted.

In this section, an overview of the studies conducted in this research will be outlined including details and a discussion of the data collection methods and procedures utilised.

3.4.1   The systematic literature review (SLR).

In chapter 4 the systematic literature review (SLR) will be presented. In the SLR, we synthesise the existing literature regarding the long-term impact of study abroad on international students' change and self-development. This study aims to broaden research knowledge of what happens to the outcomes of study abroad once the students graduate. It also intends to use the SLR findings to help develop a conceptual framework of the long-term impact of acculturation that aims to test and extend the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). For the purposes of this study, we have implemented a narrative synthesis approach following Briner and Denyer's (2012) five stages method of Narrative analysis, limiting our search to longitudinal studies that examine student changes concerning the students' knowledge, skills, attitudes, opinions and behaviour before and after graduation. After conducting a broad search and applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, ten studies were identified that have primarily examined intrapersonal level change over time. The methodological quality of each study was then evaluated by adopting well-defined steps to lessen reviewer bias (Bennett *et al.,* 2005; Bowman, 2007).

The SLR results and synthesis was presented in line with the theory of acculturation factors by discussing the outcomes and the mechanisms that underpin change and self-development over time. The study also identified several limitations to the existing body of research. First, none of the studies assessed whether specified changes occurred after the students returned to their home country; second, we found a limited sampling of diversity regarding home-country and age; and third, few studies met pre-specified quality standards. To advance

knowledge in this area and to encourage a rigorous future research agenda, we suggest that it is now important to

1. Use more robust research designs,

2. Sample from a wider diversity of international students, and

3. Follow up with students as they return to their home countries after their studies.

Based on the results and limitations, the study proposes a conceptual framework able to assist future research to uncover a deeper understanding of the long-term impact of study abroad on the international community. The SLR has a great impact on this research. Not only did it help narrow the focus to the most needed areas in the field to be examined, but it also widened the research design to capture the adjustment process and the measurable outcomes the international students perceived on their international experience.

3.4.2 Qualitative study of the long-term impact of study abroad on SARs' change and self-development.

Introduction.

First of all, it is worth mentioning that as part of the data collection methods, two waves of interviews were incorporated, carried out over two time periods. The T1 was within the first six months when the SARs returned to their workplaces, while T2 took place over a six months later. Each wave of the interviews will be discussed in a separate chapter – T1 in chapter 5 and T2 in chapter 6. Before discussing the details of each study, this section will outline the content of both chapters, including the data collection method, selection of the participants' procedure and ethics. This was necessary to avoid conflict in addressing each study method and to help make each stage of data collection clearer for the reader.

Data collection method.

While requiring predetermined questions, the chosen qualitative data collection method is a semi-structured interview because of its flexibility in exploring further topics that the researcher may feel are important during the interview (Qu and Dumay, 2011). Thus, semi-structured interviews provide a meaningful way to learn about the SARs experience abroad, including their cross-cultural transition abroad and home-country transition to find out the mechanisms that allow or prevent the outcomes of the study abroad experience. For the first wave of interviews, the researcher conducted the interviews between November 2018 and May 2019 over the phone and using the Skype application according to the participants' preferences, allowing about six months for each wave of the interviews to find the right participants that matched the required criteria.

In addition, we found that graduation ceremonies and awards differ between the four chosen countries, especially for those doing their PhDs. For example, the graduation period for UK students is supposed to occur in June and September, but in fact this only happens for some universities which limited our chances to find more participants. The interviews were conducted in the English language and were audio-recoded and transcribed for analysis.

Sampling.

As we mentioned earlier, the setting for this research was Saudi Arabia's public and private universities. In order to find the right participants, the convenience sample technique was utilised by using the personal connection and social media channels to invite those who are suitable participants and match the recruitment criteria. The participants' criteria include:

1- Saudi academic employees working in Saudi Arabia's public or private universities.

2- Recently graduated and returned to work within the last six months from overseas' studies.

3- Studied at one of the four popular destinations for Saudi students: the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia.

4- Has no intention of continuing his/her study abroad for the following year.

However, attempts were made to ensure sample diversity (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Regarding the sample size, the aim was to choose the right participants that meet the participant's criteria, based on the informative and readiness of the participants. However, due to the study's sensitivity and nature that required specific criteria in the participants and the difficulties of finding them, only fourteen participants were willing to be interviewed. It is vital then to mention that finding the right participants was quite tricky. The first difficulty was regarding the proper channels. The researcher thus attempted to use official channels such as the Higher Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia and the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia Cultural Bureau. However, her requests were rejected due to the confidentiality of the Saudi students' information that cannot be infringed by the authority. In the end, she found that using social media (such as Twitter and Facebook) and personal connections through mutual friends was somewhat helpful.

In addition, another difficulty concerned the participants' willingness to participate. For example, most potential participants were not comfortable talking about their experience, while some of them have refused because of family restrictions on recording their voice, especially for the female candidates. Others were not comfortable speaking in English, while others expressed that they had a bad experience and did not want to remember the details of it. Furthermore, the selecting criteria was a little challenging in terms of locating someone who had just graduated only within the last 1-6 months, although it was an essential criterion to ensure that the experience was still fresh in their mind before they start to readjust back to the home-country. According to Baker and Edwards (2012), there is no specific way to decide the sample size for a qualitative study; it depends on different elements such as the research objectives and practice considerations such as - in the case of this research - the difficulties to access participants. Therefore, the researcher has allocated six months to search for suitable candidates.

Ethical considerations.

Before the interviews, the fourteen participants were provided with a participant information sheet that includes information regarding the research topic, what personal information will be gathered during the interviews, confidentiality and privacy information. Also, it includes the main researcher contact information, her supervisors, and the ethical committee to contact when having an issue regarding their confidentiality during or after the interviews. In addition, they were informed of the interview purpose, duration and how many times they will be interviewed. (See appendixes B for interview recruitment invitation; C for participant information sheet; and D for informed consent form)

3.4.2.1 Qualitative study at time one.

The aim of conducting the qualitative study at T1 is to provide evidence regarding the contribution and the importance of study abroad scholarships to the Saudi education system. In particular, the emphasis is on exploring the outcomes of study-abroad experience to the SARs and better understanding the barriers and facilitators to accruing the benefits of study abroad. The study has attempted to answer the following research questions beginning with:

1) What are the perceived benefits of study abroad for returning academics, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behavioural and cognitive process?

2) What are the factors that determine the benefits of study abroad for returning academic, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behaviour and cognitive processes? In this sense, what are the facilitators and barriers to these processes?

The purpose of the interview questions was to collect specific information regarding the SARs' experience, so learning about their feelings and thoughts and whether or not they find their experience abroad beneficial. Therefore, the questions were developed based on the theory of acculturation considering its affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects. The

interview questions consisted of three parts: (1) SAR adjustments to the host country and their feeling (Affective), (2) their behavioural change during their adjustment abroad, and (3) and the development or change in the cognitive processes. After developing the interview questions, they were examined by the two supervisors to check their accuracy in relation to the main research questions, and whether or they are covering the three aspects of the theory of acculturation. (See appendix E for interview questions at time one)

3.4.2.2 Qualitative study at time two.

At time two, the qualitative study aims to learn about the SARs home-country transition and their feelings and perspectives concerning their readjustment. Also, the study intends to explore the impact of their readjustment experienced on their perceived outcomes of study abroad, highlighting any mechanisms after returning that might influence the sustainability of these perceived outcomes. Therefore, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1) Do returning academics perceive themselves to be different from those who have not been abroad in terms of their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes?

2) Are the returning academics able to sustain the benefits of study abroad?

3) How does the readjustment of returnees to their home country affect their ability to sustain the benefits of study abroad?

The nature of the interview questions is based on findings from the qualitative study at T1, including the important themes and issues drawn from the data that will need to be checked again if any changes occur regarding their home-country transition. The questions were divided into four parts (1) SARs readjustments to their work and their feelings (Affective), (2) Evaluation of any changes in their perceived behavioural change abroad, (3) Development or change in their perceived cognitive processes, and (4) Learning about their opinions on their transition due to the study-abroad experience, and any difficulties or support to sustain

what they have perceived. After developing the interview questions, they were examined by the two supervisors to check their accuracy in relevance to the research questions and covering all the aspects of the theory of acculturation. The interviews were conducted between October and December 2019. (See appendix F for interview questions at time two)

3.4.3 Quantitative study of the long-term impact of study abroad on SARs' change and self-development.

In chapter 7 the Quantitative study will be presented. In this section, the data collection methods and sample selection procedures will be discussed. The aim of conducting the quantitative study is to answer the following questions:

1) Do returning academics perceive themselves to be different from those who have not been abroad in terms of their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes?

2) What are the perceived benefits of study abroad for returning academics, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behavioural and cognitive process?

3) What are the factors that determine the benefits of study abroad for returning academic, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behaviour and cognitive processes? In this sense, what are the facilitators and barriers to these processes?

4) Are the returning academics able to sustain the benefits of study abroad?

5) How does the readjustment of returnees to their home country affect their ability to sustain the benefits of study abroad?

Data collection methods.

The study has implemented a self-completion questionnaire method created and administrated using the online software tool, Qualtrics. The access to the software was

through the university email and password to ensure the security of the data. The study information was gathered over two time periods: T1 within the first six months of the SARs returning to their workplaces, and T2 six months later. In addition, a control group was used to answer the research questions. The control group included a sample of the academic staff of Saudi universities, either those who have obtained their higher education degrees in Saudi Arabia or have not yet been assigned to an overseas scholarship before (i.e., they have not experience studying in western universities). Thus, three sets of questionnaires were created for this study: Quantitative study (T1), Quantitative study (T2) and control group Questionnaire. However, the targeted sample of the study was informed that their acceptance to participate in the study required completing the questionnaires at both times (T1 and T2). Failing to complete the survey at T2 would result in deleting the participant's data from the study. (See appendixes G, H, I and J for the Questionnaires)

Sample selection procedure.

To reach suitable participants, purposive sampling techniques and Snowball sampling techniques were utilised. The purposive sampling technique is a non-probability sampling technique that refers to selecting participants accessible to the researcher (Bryman and Bell, 2015), while Snowball sampling techniques are where the selected participants help recruit other participants for the study. The usage of both sampling techniques in this study is due to the difficulties that the researcher experienced in finding the potential participants. However, attempts were made to ensure sample diversity (ibid).

Measures.

The survey consists of six sections: general demographic information and the main variable scales, including intercultural competence, self-leadership, creativity behaviour, self-concept

clarity and self-discerning reflection. The measurements scales for each variable will be presented and discussed in chapter 7.

The study's research design and data collection methods were informed by a related literature review and theoretical background discussed in chapter 2. The research has principally been developed based on the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001), underpinning a clearer and describable picture of the adjustment process from a social psychological perspective. In addition, the shape and direction of this research in terms of the literature gap and the research design has been acknowledged through a systematic literature review (SLR) conducted at an earlier stage in order to compile the available evidence regarding the long-term impact of study abroad on students' change and self-development. Moreover, building on the theory of acculturation and the SLR, we have opted for this conceptual research framework of the long-term benefits of acculturation.

Chapter 4.

The long-term impact of study abroad on international students' change and self-development: A systematic literature review.

4.1. Introduction.

This study intends to synthesise the existing body of research and knowledge to draw upon the evidence available concerning the long-term impact of study abroad on international students' change and self-development. Undertaking this study will help to explore what has been done regarding this topic of interests, including what outcomes have been examined, what research design, data collection and measures have been used, and which theories have informed their works, as well as understanding the weaknesses and limitations of these studies.

In addition, the intention of undertaking a systematic literature review has been to develop a conceptual framework of the long-term benefits of acculturation to overcome the limitations of previous research in the field and to expand the model of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001), which will include the impact of home-country transition on the perceived outcomes of study abroad. Moreover, this study was conducted at the first stage of this research to help narrow the focus to the most needed areas in the field to be examined. Based on an initial review of the literature, five research questions were identified as forming the key focus of the systematic review:

- RQ1: Relating to students' change and self-development, what outcomes have been found to be associated with the experience of study abroad?

- RQ2: How have the outcomes of the study-abroad experience been (a) explained and (b) theorised in the academic literature?

- RQ3: How have the associated outcomes of the study-abroad experience been measured and assessed?

- RQ4: What individual characteristics are associated with the experience of study abroad?

- RQ5: What situational characteristics are associated with the experience of study abroad?

4.2. Methodology.

The systematic review approach is an effective method and rigorous approach to examining a body of research, stipulating the need to establish clear search criteria, assessing the methodological quality of included papers, and following well-defined steps to lessen reviewer bias during the synthesis of results (Bennett *et al.,* 2005; Bowman, 2007). Reviews allow researchers to undertake a summary of the research that has been undertaken to date with regard to a specific phenomenon, whilst also allowing researchers to set out a future research agenda in order to address limitations in the extant literature. Systematic literature reviews can also bring insights into issues that are overlooked by other approaches, such as meta-analysis, and can include different types of studies (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, review papers) while still lessening researcher bias and optimising validity (Briner and Denyer,2010).

We followed the five procedures recommended by Briner and Denyer (2010) for undertaking a systematic review: (i) planning and scoping; (ii) implementing a structured search; (iii) appraising search results against agreed criteria; (iv) highlighting evidence from the included items and (v) developing analysis or synthesis for presentation of key themes emerging. These stages are now outlined in turn, as given below.

4.2.1. Planning and scoping.

For the planning and scoping stage, we developed and decided on our five research questions. Then based on the scope of this study, we piloted the search of databases using the following

key terms, each with the following Boolean tags: "International students" OR "study* overseas", OR "study* abroad" OR "international education". Our initial scoping reviewed the returns from a number of databases. Following discussions between the research team and librarian, two databases were selected - Business Source Premier (EBSCO) and PsychINFO, using open field searches, yielding 3,155 papers.

These initial findings suggested the need for a more focused search strategy by using a search string based on more specific terms, while developing a list of inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the final results were appropriate for the paper's aim and questions. To come up with an inclusion criteria, we only looked for papers that principally addressed the impact of study abroad on students' personal development and change. Conversely, we excluded papers that conducted studies on counselling and intervention or training programs (e.g., Cho and Morris, 2015).

In addition, we excluded comparison studies between locals and international students, immigrants, refugees or migrants, as well as cross-cultural studies. Lastly, we eliminated those that had the main purpose of discussing, exploring or investigating the students' adjustment, transition, adaption and coping when study abroad, along with studies related to health problems, such as those concerned with food consumption and dietary issues.

4.2.2. The structured search.

For the structured search, we drew on original two databases using the search string "international students" OR "study* overseas", OR "study*abroad", OR "international education", along with "personality" OR "values" OR "identity" OR "attitude" OR "belief." The research team decided to add these specific terms to the initial search in order to ensure variety in terms of results and their appropriateness to the aims of this study. Use of these key terms produced 1,939 results altogether (including item title, abstract and author information).

4.2.3 Screening.

We first filtered the results at the screening stage by applying the "de-duplication" function in the RefWorks (Version 4) bibliographic management software, which brought the number of search results for appraisal to 1866. The author refined these results by scanning each study title and abstract, then applying inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The inclusion criteria were: studies published only in English; and empirical studies included in peer-reviewed publications, of a longitudinal nature. The exclusion criteria were the removal of books, book chapters, unpublished studies, and purely theoretical or conceptual pieces. A total of 1804 papers were thus removed that did not match the inclusion and exclusion criteria described above, which brought the number of search results for assessment to 35.

4.2.4. Eligibility.

Throughout the next stage of assessment of the search results, the first author and the research assistant completed three sifts independently: a title sift, abstract sift, and full papers sift. The evaluation of the studies began once the two researchers reached an agreement. During the scanning, both the first author and the research assistant applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria again independently, making identifications at the scoping and scanning stage to confirm that the studies included in the SLR were only relevant to the research topic and chosen research design; for example, only longitudinal studies have been included. Ten papers met the inclusion criteria and were retained for evaluation and synthesis. The PRISMA diagram below summarises the search and sifting process (see Fig. 4.1).
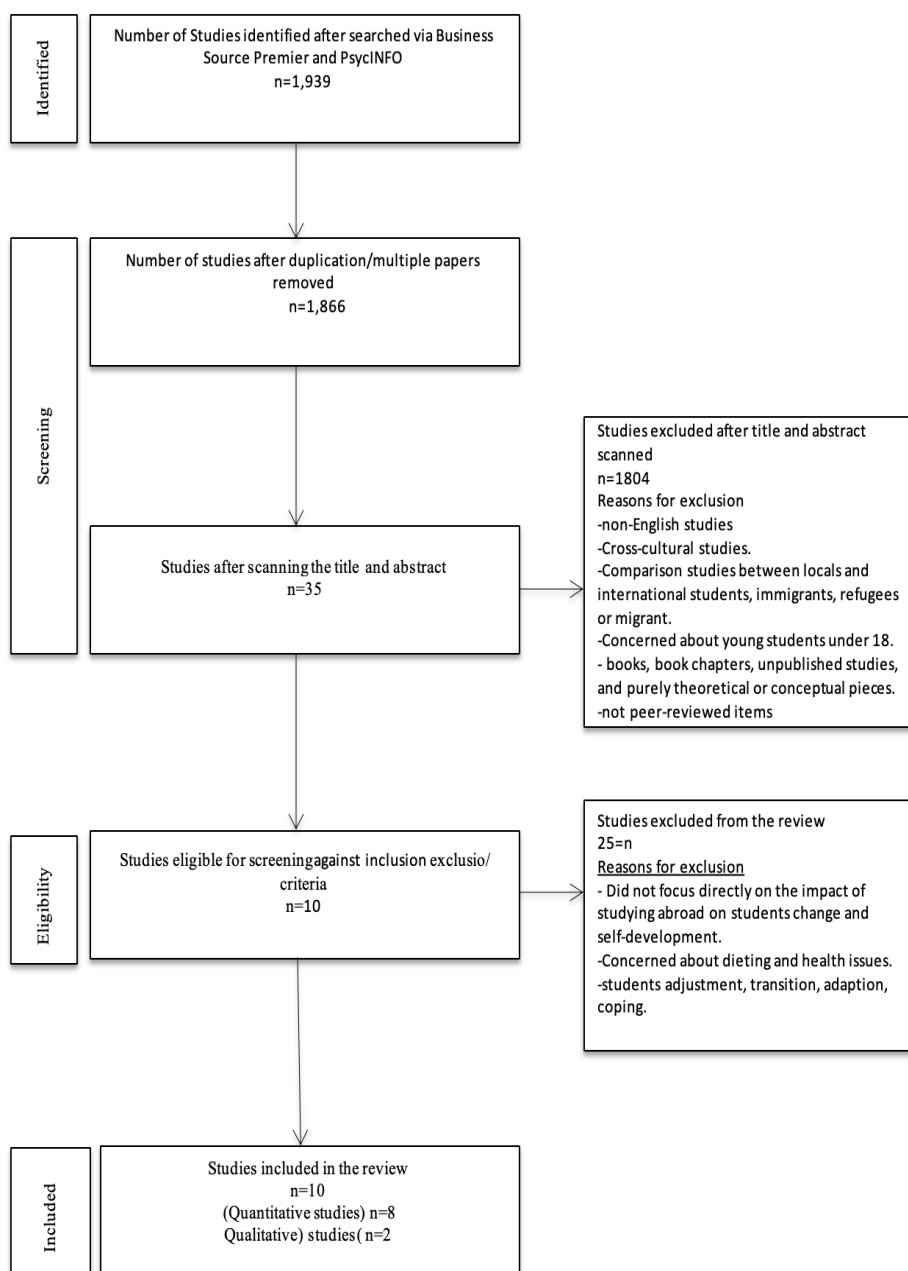
Figure 4.1. Flow diagram showing identification and selection of publication

4.2.5 Studies included and process of data extraction.

The five-stage data extraction process began with the use of the Matrix method (Garrard, 2007), which is well-known for providing both a structure and a process for systematically reviewing the literature. The Matrix method involves recording notes about each selected

paper in a matrix table using columns and rows. This process provides a standard structure for comparison and analysis of the data. To facilitate this, the author evaluated each of the ten studies using a structured abstraction form within two sets of tables, including of the studies and research design overall (see Table 4.1: Overall of the Included Studies), and the mechanisms and outcomes of the impact of study abroad on students (see Table 4.2: Mechanisms and outcomes).

Table 4.1. Overall representation of the included studies.

Design (Time of measurements)	Intervention	Duration of the study
before, during ...ce and at the ...d	Control group	1year (short-term and long-term sojourn)
...fore and at ...nd	Control group	6 months
...fore and at ...nd	Control group	6 months
...fore and at ...nd	Control group	1 year

Table 4.2. Outcomes and mechanisms.

Study number	Study	Outcomes	Mechanisms (Individual level)					
			Individual characteristics				*Situational characteristics*	
			Demographic characteristics	*Personality*	*Capability and experience*	*Others*	*"Cultural and social life*	*"Education characteristics*
1	Zimmermann and Neyer (2013)	Personality traits					Relationship Fluctuation	The study duration

No.	Author							
2	Petersdotter, Niehoff and Freund (2017)	Personality traits and Self-efficacy		High self-efficacy			Social contacts per week	
3	Ramirez (2016)	Personality traits Culturally related outcomes		Openness and extraversion				
4	Niehoff, Petersdotter, and Freund.(2017)	Personality traits and Self-efficacy	Age		Previous International experience			Educational level
5	Eby (2005)	Personality traits					Cultural immersion	The study duration
6	Hutteman, et al. (2015)	Self-esteem						
7	Black and Duhon (2006)	Culturally related outcomes		State self-esteem	Language proficiency Educational Level Mastered of challenges		Social inclusion	
8	Kumagai (1977)	Personality traits					Social relations	
9	Kiley (2003)	Culturally related outcomes	Age		Language proficiency Educational Level			The study duration
10	Brown and Brown (2009)	Identity change				Freedom from cultural and family expectation		

4.3. Results and discussion.

This study presents a systematic literature review on the long-term impact of study abroad on international students' change and self-development, with the aim of instrumentalising all the evidence available on this topic (i.e., what we know) to achieve an understanding of the weaknesses and limitations of the existence knowledge (i.e., what we do not know). In addition, the SLR was conducted in order to assess the construction of a conceptual framework of the long-term benefits of acculturation that explains the process of the impact of study abroad on international students change and self-development adopting the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). Therefore, this study section consists of two parts: key themes emerging from the SLR, and limitations in the extant literature.

4.3.1 Key themes emerging from the SLR.

Overview of the studies included:

Following an initial search of 1939 studies, we identified ten studies that primarily looked at the impact of study abroad on international students' change and self-development. The ten articles reviewed were published in eight different journals. Half of the articles were published in the Journal of Education (Black and Duhon, 2006; Kiley, 2003; Kumagai, 1977), Psychology and Education (Eby, 2005) and Sociology and Education (Kumagai, 1977). The other half were published in the Journals of Personality and Social Psychology (Niehoff, Petersdotter and Freund, 2017), Personality and Individual Differences (Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013), and Existential Analysis (Hutteman *et al.,* 2015).

Quality assessment:

The quality of each paper was independently reviewed by two reviewers to make the quality ratings as transparent as possible. A quality checklist based on recommendations was then used on the contributions of a number of researchers (Briner and Denyer,2010; Rojon,

McDowall and Saunders, 2011; Walsh and Downe, 2006; Snape *et al.,* 2017). By implementing this approach, each paper was granted a quality rating out of a possible nine points (Robertson *et al.,* 2015). The overall quality rating was 7.5 out of possible 9 for the papers included. The quality appraisal method and the included studies ratings can be found in Appendix Table A.

The independent judgments of quality presented by the reviewers were significantly matched, showing a high level of agreement. Hence, based on the theory of acculturation, the results and synthesis of the SLR will be discussed across three themes: acculturation outcomes; mechanisms; and research design implemented by the included studies.

I.   Acculturation outcomes.

An analysis of the relevant studies here has revealed several different acculturation outcomes related to the study abroad experience. Five studies have linked personality traits to the experience of study abroad (Eby, 2005; Kumagai, 1977; Niehoff, Petersdotter and Freund, 2017; Ramirez, 2016; Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013). Three studies indicated culturally related outcomes (Black and Duhon, 2006; Kiley, 2003; Ramirez, 2016). One study indicated self-efficacy (Petersdotter, Niehoff and Freund, 2017), another self-esteem (Hutteman *et al.,* 2015) and a third study, saw identity change (Brown and Brown, 2009) as outcomes of the study abroad experience.

II.   Mechanisms.

Overall, the ten studies included in the SLR have only examined some of the mechanisms at the micro-level (i.e., individual level). Table 4.2 shows the fragmented structure of the studies, revealing a number of mechanisms found to be relevant to explaining how the study-abroad experience influences students' change and self-development. Only the study by Black and Duhon (2006) has failed to indicate any mechanisms associated with the impact of the study-

abroad experience on the outcome examined. We grouped these factors under the over-arching dimension type with a primary focus on "individual characteristics" and "situational characteristics" based on the theory of acceleration (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001).

a. Individual characteristics.

The ten studies reveal a number of mechanisms salient to the relationship between study abroad and the students' change and self-development. These mechanisms reflect the students' individual differences because each has his/her characteristics and experience, leading them to have different outcomes. As can be seen in Table 4.2, we have divided individual mechanisms into four different categories: demographic characteristics; personality; capability and experience; and others.

*Demographic characteristics***:** The only factor identified in this category is age, identified by two studies (Kiley, 2003; Niehoff, Petersdotter and Freund, 2017) as a predictor of students' adjustment. In Kiley's study (2003), student age is considered as a predictor of students' degree of adjustment. The study suggests that there are three degrees reflecting the students' level of adjustment abroad: the transformer, the strategist and the conserver profiles. Here, each degree has specific characteristics. For example, transformers have changed the way they view the world and recognise through experience and reflection how the new society influences and affects them. The change that they have perceived is then at the cognitive and behavioural levels. Conversely, the strategist indicates that the students adapt strategies necessary to fulfilling all their requirements and meet all the expectations aboard to enable them to return home feeling their stay has been a success. However, the conserver did not report any significant changes in the social, emotional or academic aspects of their life. Kiley's (2003) study considered age as a predictor of students' degree of adjustment and found that an individual with transformer characteristics is more likely to be less than 35

years old, while an individual with strategist or conserver characteristics is more likely to be over 35 years old. Other characteristics identified by each group will be mentioned in the upcoming categories. Conversely, the study by Niehoff, Petersdotter and Freund (2017) indicates that age has an unexpected effect on students' motivation to study abroad, finding that older students tend to oppose study abroad due to the fear of a long period of study, together with higher pressure to finish the course as quickly as possible due to their circumstances, such as family responsibilities.

*Personality***:** Four personality traits were highlighted. First, Petersdotter, Niehoff and Freund (2017) indicate that students with high self-efficacy could overcome challenges easily and have a retrospective perception of fewer challenging' situations. Second, Enrique (2016) stresses that the role of openness and extraversion, and the other three traits of the big-five personality theory (conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism), are highly correlated with the initial level of intercultural competence with the decision to study abroad. However, this study also found that individual personality plays a role in predicting the main independent variables and the initial level of intercultural competence, but it does not moderate the relationship between study abroad and intercultural competence.

State self-esteem is the fourth personality characteristic reported in Hutteman et al. (2015). The study found that there is an interchangeable relationship between state self-esteem and social inclusion, finding that the student's level of state self-esteem predicts the change of self-esteem level in a one-year sojourn experience.

In conclusion, four specific personality traits and characteristics were found to be very effective in facilitating students' adjustment and achievement of a better experience abroad at the individual, social and cultural levels. These, in turn, had a big impact on their growth, yet only high levels of these traits have a positive impact. Meanwhile, at lower levels, students face challenges in their adjustment socially and culturally.

Capability and experience: Four factors were identified here: previous international experience; language proficiency; educational level; and the ability to master challenges. Previous international experience has been found to impact positively on students' commitment to study abroad (Niehoff, Petersdotter and Freund, 2017). Furthermore, in their study, Niehoff, Petersdotter and Freund (2017) suggest that previous sojourners (with previous study abroad experience) are at an advantage as they have acquired familiarity with living abroad and know what to expect there, which make the next experience less challenging for them.

Two studies by Hutteman et al. (2015) and Kiley (2003) stress the importance of the two factors of language proficiency and educational level here, concluding that these two play a significant role in students' adjustment. According to Kiley (2003), language proficiency and educational level are predictors of the students' degree of adjustment. As explained earlier, Kiley's (2003) study indicates three degrees of adjustments, transformer, strategist, and conserver. Each degree has different levels of these two capabilities (i.e., language proficiency and educational level), where the transformer students have the highest scores on the language test and are usually enrolled at a PhD course, whereas the strategist and conserver students have lower scores in English tests and lower educational attainment levels. However, Hutteman et al. (2015) find that the student's proficiency in the host-country language indicates increases in state self-esteem and perceived social inclusion. After these three indicators, a fourth is the ability to master challenges, as reported by Hutteman et al. (2015). Here, the researchers found that students who have more experience in overcoming challenges are more able to adjust when study abroad. In conclusion, these studies have revealed four capabilities that could improve the student experience abroad. The question of whether the student has one or more of these capabilities could contribute to a more successful experience and better adjustment abroad.

Others: The fourth category of individual differences includes the feeling of freedom from family and cultural expectations. Brown and Brown (2009) found this to be a vehicle for students' self-discovery and learning to become independent, flexible and assertive.

b. Situational characteristics

We classified the situational characteristics into two groups: cultural and social life, and educational experience.

Cultural and social life: Being social and having good contacts with locals or international students is one of the catalysts that drives students' change and affect their growth process abroad. Six other studies have emphasised the importance of social relationship status during the experience of study abroad and its impact on students' personality change. The first study to investigate this issue was Kumagai's (1977) who found that social relations mediate the impact of study-abroad experience on attitudes and personality of Japanese students. However, Ramirez (2016) linked relationship gain and loss with a change in the personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness and openness. For example, the study found an adverse effect of national relationship gains (i.e., with other international students from the origin country) on agreeableness change. Petersdotter, Niehoff and Freund (2017) asserted that the number of social contacts met with per week mediates the development of high self-efficacy abroad.

Conversely, Hutteman et al. (2015) emphasise that there is an interchangeable relationship between self-esteem and social inclusion, concluding that students who are more socially inclusive show higher self-esteem than those who are socially exclusive. Two further studies highlight the impact of cultural immersion and engagement with local people on the personality of study abroad participants (Eby, 2005; Niehoff, Petersdotter and Freund, 2017).

In conclusion, the quantity and the quality of their relationships abroad influence students' experience in relation to their personality change, adaptation to the culture and self-development.

Education experience: The length of the study abroad programme has been found to play a significant role in the impact of study-abroad experience on students (Eby, 2005; Kiley, 2003; Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013). Eby (2005) suggests that the length of the study programme and the amount of time spent abroad has an impact on changes in students' personality traits. This study's (2005) findings revealed that students on long-term programmes had a "great signature" for personality change compared to only short-term study abroad students and control groups. Personality changes include an increase in abstract reasoning, a decrease in consciousness, an increase in self-reliance, a decrease in extraversion, and a decrease in self-control.

In addition, Kiley (2003) finds that study duration has an impact on student adaptation to a new culture, and so affects the degree of their adjustment. These findings indicate that transformers experienced better adjustments than other character types because they usually spend more than three years abroad being that their programmes are usually research-based, including frequent meetings with their supervisors. However, the other types spend less time abroad (i.e., strategies: 2-3 years, conservers less than 2 years), so experiencing less adjustment than the transformers. Moreover, Zimmermann and Neyer (2013) find that the longer the duration of the study programme, the greater the relationship fluctuation that the students encounter (i.e., national relationship loss, international relationship loss, national relationship gain and international relationship gain) which, in turn, leads to changes in personality traits. For example, they found in their (2013) study that the study-abroad experience has an impact on the openness traits of students when they socialise more with international students.

Moreover, the characteristics mentioned above differ in terms of their related effective domains. For example, while personality is a feature of the psychological domain, taking in students' capabilities and their cultural and social life, educational factors represent the sociocultural domain. These two domains were identified by Ward and Kennedy (1999) in their sojourn adjustment framework, where they argue that the psychological and sociocultural adjustments attained are affected by different types of predictors. However, a number of studies, including (Hart, 1998; Zhang and Goodson, 2011; Furnham and Erdmann, 1995; Oguri and Gudykunst, 2002), have indicated that psychological and sociocultural adjustments are interrelated domains, as some factors predicting one domain may also predict the other domain. Reflecting on the studies included here, we can confirm this interrelationship between the mechanisms' factors. For example, a study by Hutteman et al. (2015) finds that language proficiency, education level and the feeling of mastering challenges predict students' social inclusion which, in turn, predict students' high level of self-esteem.

In conclusion, in the light of the results given above we should note that both types of mechanisms work effectively together to support the cross-cultural transition and to explain the process of its impact on students' change and self-development. However, cultural and social relations and the study's duration are key factors in this relationship becoming effective. First, the length of the study abroad duration has an impact on students' level of adjustment, i.e., the longer the study abroad programme, the better the chance that the students will adjust to the host-country. Second, the culture and social life encountered by students while stems from individual characteristics discussed earlier.

III.   Research design.

The research design used by the studies included in this research both show some variations and demonstrate similarities and dissimilarities. This section thus discusses three issues,

beginning with the study context then moving to data collection methods and concluding with the implemented research design procedures (see Table 4.1).

a. Study context.

The ten studies were all conducted in western countries with the greatest number of studies carried out in Germany (Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013; Petersdotter, Niehoff and Freund, 2017; Niehoff, Petersdotter and Freund, 2017; Hutteman *et al.,* 2015). Two studies were carried out in the USA (Eby, 2005; Kumagai, 1977), two studies were conducted in the UK (Black and Duhon, 2006; Brown and Brown, 2009), and the other two studies were conducted in Australia (Ramirez, 2016) and Colombia (Kiley, 2003). In addition, we noted the six studies relying on the participation of national students. For example, the study by Eby (2005) was conducted in the USA and selected American students who were on an international assignment.

However, four studies chose international students receiving education at their national universities (Black and Duhon, 2006; Kumagai, 1977; Kiley, 2003; Brown and Brown, 2009). For example, American students in the UK were studied in (Black and Duhon, 2006), while Japanese students in the USA were studied in (Kumagai, 1977).

It is important to note that seven out of ten studies have used interventions to control their outcomes. We also noted that the six studies selecting their candidate students from their home-country where the study was conducted have implemented control groups that include students similar to the study participants but who did not go abroad, such as (Hutteman *et al.,* 2015). However, by choosing the study candidates from international students, Ramirez (2016) controlled the outcomes by implementing a cultural awareness course to record students' levels of cultural awareness before and after their course abroad.

b. Data collection methods.

Eight of the ten studies were explicitly longitudinal quantitative studies, while the other two employed longitudinal qualitative methods. The quantitative studies used a self-report questionnaire survey, but the two qualitative studies differed in the nature of their data collection strategy. The study by Kiley (2003) conducted informal interviews with each participant together in a group workshop setting, while the study by Brown and Brown (2009) employed in-depth interviews with each participant alongside the participants' observation.

<div align="center">

c. Research design procedures.

</div>

Whilst all ten studies implement longitudinal research design to capture changes in the intended variables over a defined period, the studies varied regarding their study time duration, i.e., between long-term and short-term study duration. The long-term study duration ranges from six months to four years, while the short-term study duration is between three weeks and three months (see Table 4.1). We can see that seven studies employed long-term study duration, but where two used both long-term and short-term study duration, only one used a short-study duration.

In order to capture any changes that occurred, these studies used a number of measurements occasions over time. The time measurement occasions used by the selected papers differed due to the study objectives. In this sense, four studies implemented a two-time test, three employed three-time tests, two used four-time tests, and one used an eight-time test. Moreover, we found that the number of time measurements used by the studies seemed to increase with the duration of the study. The three studies with short-term duration implemented two-time tests for their short-term students, whereas the studies employing long-term study durations used three-times and four-times measurements. The only study that used the highest number of time measurements (i.e., eight times) was the longest time duration of four years (Kiley, 2003).

4.3.2. The limitations of the extant research.

Drawing on the SLR results and synthesis presented above, a number of limitations have been highlighted. First, while many approaches have sought to understand the cross-cultural transition and the consequence outcomes and, taking into consideration the psychological and sociocultural mechanisms, the role of cultural differences between the sojourners' home-country and the host-country was not mentioned by the included studies. Cultural differences can be significant in determining the difficulties of cross-cultural adjustment experiences as some individuals can face challenges when interacting and moving between cultures.

A number of studies have indicated an association between cultural differences and cross-culture transition and adjustment (e.g., Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey and Chua, 1988; Redmond and Bunyi, 1993). An examination of this concept is thus vital in exploring the long-term impact of study abroad on international students' change and self-development.

Second, in terms of the research context, all the studies included here are conducted in western cultures, while only three studies have examined non-western participants given the fact that international students exceeded five million in 2014 and a projected to increase to eight million by 2025 (ICEF Monitor, 2017).

The ICEF Monitor (2017) does indicate the non-western countries that also host international students, such as China, Japan, and Russia. Moreover, in terms of the nationalities of international students abroad, there are recorded variations of international students abroad. For example, as of 2020, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) addressed in its website where do higher education students come from? A high volume of international students in the UK came from non-western countries, including China, Malaysia, Middle East, India, Singapore, Thailand and Nigeria. Thus, we suggest that not only should future studies consider more non-western international students studying in western societies, but that they should consider non-western host cultures where a large number of international students also study. Furthermore, we believe it is valuable to identify other sorts of changes,

mechanisms and predictors that might be associated with the impact of these different societies, cultures and ethnicities on students because they differ culturally, politically and economically from western societies and so may result in different outcomes.

Third, regarding data collection methods and the occasions where time measurements are used by the studies included here, we found that none of the studies assessed whether macro-level changes occurred after students returned to their home countries. It is important to understand the nature of the international experience over time and evaluate its impact in order to understand whether the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours acquired while study abroad have a lasting impact. Therefore, it is a necessary requirement to examine the same variables after the participants return to their home countries.

In addition, the use of a mix-methods approach (a longitudinal approach combined with other methods) has been found to be very effective in studying people's experiences and change over time (Malina, Nørreklit and Selto, 2011). However, most of the studies selected in this review have only used quantitative methods, while only two have used qualitative methods. Therefore, we suggest that future studies consider using mixed methods to capture more holistic evidence regarding this topic.

Lastly, longitudinal research design is known for its meaningful benefits in gathering information on individuals' knowledge, skills, attitudes, opinions and behaviours which can develop or change throughout their lifetime or due to changes in environmental factors (Holland, Thomson and Henderson, 2006). Thus, we urge fellow researchers to undertake more longitudinal studies because little research has currently been conducted on this topic using this specific design.

4.4. Development of a conceptual framework.

While the number of international students had increased dramatically in recent decades, most of the research has focused on the adjustment difficulties of international student. When

researching the benefits of study abroad to international students, change and self-development has received little attention so far.

 Since the latest findings of the Institute for International Education of Students (IES) (McMillan and Opem, 2002) confirmed that study-abroad experience has educational benefits, cultural development, career impact and personal growth, a number of studies have shed light on the benefits of study-abroad experience on students' change and personal development. These include problem-solving skills (e.g., Cho and Morris, 2015), intercultural competence (e.g., Ramirez, 2016), self-discovery and recognition (e.g., Brown and Brown, 2009), personality development (e.g., Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013; Niehoff, Petersdotter and Freund, 2017) and high self-efficacy (e.g., Petersdotter, Niehoff and Freund, 2017). However, based on the SLR results and limitations, existing studies have still retained a narrow focus in terms of study abroad outcomes mainly concerned with changes in personality traits (Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013; Petersdotter, Niehoff and Freund, 2017; Eby, 2005) and related cultural outcomes such cultural intelligence and competence (Ramirez, 2016; Black and Duhon, 2006; Kiley, 2003). Therefore, more studies are required to find out other outcomes and benefits of study abroad the international students might acquire abroad concerning their affective, behaviour and cognitive processes.

The value inherent to considering this topic stems from the lack of acknowledgement about what to expect from study abroad experience, which goes beyond obtaining students obtaining a degree; instead, it is considered an experiential learning experience that leads to greater personal and professional benefits (Ng, Van Dyne and Ang, 2009). Therefore, international students acquiring this kind of knowledge about the benefits of study-abroad experience and how to attain these benefits will help the students maximise the benefits of their study abroad experience. Besides, the governments supporting them consider study abroad a worthwhile investment for the whole community (Altbach and Engberg, 2014). Therefore, being aware of what to expect from their study abroad, upon their return graduates

help focus the attention on educating their future students in what are the expected benefits of study abroad, how to achieve these benefits and how to help putting strategies in place to support the sustainability of these benefits for a long run. Therefore, understanding the benefits and outcomes of study abroad could help recognise them and identify the mechanisms that facilitate or hinder them.

However, further investigation should be made of whether these expected benefits or outcomes are sustained after return. It is thus crucial to investigate the long-term impact of study abroad on international students change and self-development. As a consequence, this study intends to identify the available evidence in the existing literature to build on the SLR findings and propose a conceptual framework of the long-term benefits of acculturation for future research to adopt and evaluate. The process of developing the conceptual framework was informed by the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) and aim to incorporate some of the limitations in the extant literature and to extend the theory to include the impact of home-country transition on the sustainability of the perceived benefits of study abroad — a full discussion of the theory of acculturation is presented in chapter 2.

The main purpose of developing this conceptual framework is to explain the long-term impact of study abroad on students' change and self-development, indicating the possible benefits or outcomes of study abroad (in terms of affective, behaviour and cognition processes) and the mechanisms that allow for these outcomes to be achieved. Thus, the framework incorporates two phases; the first phase during study abroad, and the second phase after six months of returning home to highlight the impact of home-country transition on the perceived outcomes of study abroad - the proposed conceptual framework presented in Figure 4.2.
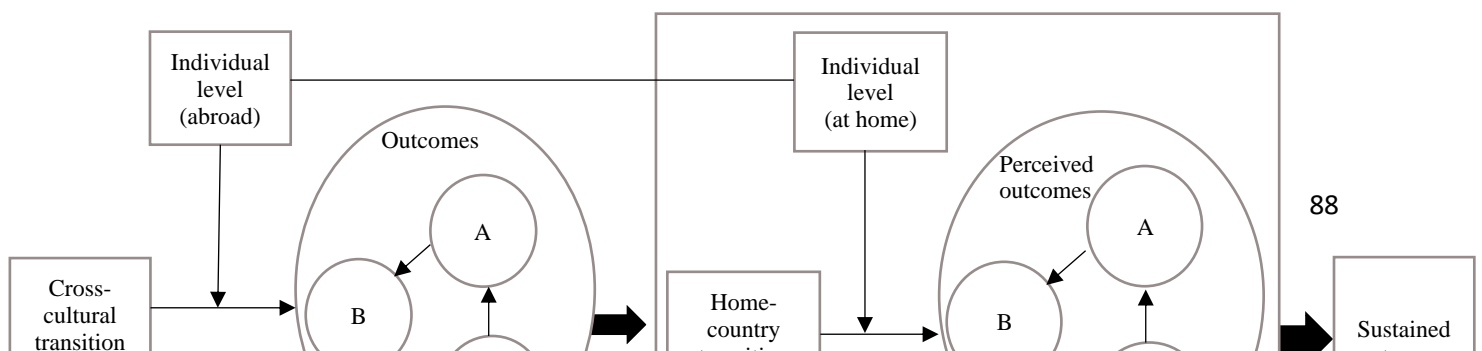
Figure 4.2. The conceptual framework (the long-term benefits of acculturation).
Note: A: Affective; B: Behavioural outcomes; C: Cognitive process

4.5. Conclusions.

This study has presented a systematic review and synthesis of the existing literature regarding the impact of study abroad on international students' change and self-development. Specifically speaking, we have examined the micro-level factors associated with students' change and self-development concerning their knowledge, skills, attitudes, opinions and behaviours. We implemented a narrative synthesis approach, which is the most common approach within social sciences and organisational behaviour.

There are a number of implications of this study. First, while the studies included indicated some of the expected outcomes of study abroad and some predictors of these outcomes to occur, the whole story of their experience is unclear. Analysing the different approaches to identifying the most critical factors from psychological and sociocultural perspectives is essential, especially for potential and future students, governments and universities interested in the benefits of study abroad.

Secondly, it is vital for research to determine whether the changes specified occurred after the students return to their home-country. Thirdly, we found a limited sampling of diversity regarding their home-country and age. Fourthly, few studies have been designed in line with quality assurance standards. Therefore, a conceptual framework has been developed adopting the model of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) to incorporate the impact of home-country transition on the perceived outcomes of study abroad and to extend the existing literature.

The framework suggests that it is vital to use more robust research designs, follow up with students after their studies and consider psychological and sociocultural elements (at the individual level) after return which could impact the sustainability of the outcomes of study abroad. Only then we will be able to understand the actual benefits of study abroad in the international community.

Chapter 5.

Qualitative study of the long-term impact of study abroad on SARs' change and self-development (time one).

5.1. Introduction.

Previous studies have proposed that the study abroad experience has crucial benefits to the students' personal growth and development (Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013). Students expect to return to their home countries offering exceptional benefits to their community, organisations and society. Yet little is known of the long-term impact of studying abroad and the specific outcomes to the individual and their self-development.

Nonetheless, new research knowledge that understands the benefits and outcomes of studying abroad will help to inform future decisions. For students looking to study abroad, or for those funding them, it is important that people know what to expect as a result of the journey abroad and how this affects the students personally, their family, organisations and the government supporting and investing in them.

This study aims to explore the outcomes of studying abroad for the Saudi academic returnees (SARs) and the mechanisms that allow or hinder the acquisition of these outcomes. The study explores the study abroad outcomes adopting the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) to investigate the outcomes in terms of change in the SARs affective, behaviour and cognitive processes. Furthermore, the study aims both to validate and extend previous research using a conceptual framework for the long-term impact of acculturation (phase one) presented in chapter 4.

This conceptual framework is based both on the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001), and the results and synthesis of the systematic literature review presented earlier in chapter 4. The SLR has identified some limitations in the extant literature and implications that needed to be considered by future research to understand the anticipated outcomes of study abroad and the mechanisms to accrue these benefits. This study intends to

extend the previous research by considering different approaches to identify the important factors from psychological and sociocultural perspectives. Therefore, this chapter focuses on two research questions (1) What are the perceived benefits of study abroad for returning academics, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behavioural and cognitive process? and (2) What are the factors that determine the benefits of study abroad for returning academic, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behaviour and cognitive processes? In this sense, what are the facilitators and barriers to these processes? This chapter hence explains the method of data collection and data analysis as well as presenting the study results, discussion and conclusion.

5.2. Data collection and analysis.

*The participants***:**

Fourteen immediate SARs were selected for the interviews using a convenience sample technique (refer to chapter 3 for the sampling procedure and criteria). Out of the fourteen participants, eight had their overseas study experience from the USA, three from the UK, one from Canada and two from Australia. Furthermore, the participants in this research differed in terms of their study subject between law and politics (two participants), management studies (five participants), computer science or engineering (four studies), education (one participant) and medical science (two participants).

The participants' ages were 26-40 years old. Ten were male and four were female. In terms of their education level, half of them have just finished their PhDs, while the other half just had their Masters' degrees. Nine out of the fourteen participants were married. The participants' full characteristics are explained in Table 5.1.

Data collection procedure

Our study employed semi-structured interviews to provide a meaningful way to learn about the experience abroad of SARs. The interview questions were developed based on the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) expressed in terms of affective, behavioural and cognitive processes. The questions thus consisted of three parts:

1- SARs host-country transition and their feelings about the experience (affective).

2- Their behavioural change owing to their experience and adjustment abroad.

3- Cognitive processes development or change.

After developing the interview questions, these questions were examined by the two supervisors to check their accuracy in terms of their relevance to the main research questions, while they covered the three aspects of the theory of acculturation. However, to evaluate the research applicability, its length and validity, and to determine any difficulties that might occur during the data collection, the researcher conducted a pilot study with a single participant who fitted the study criteria (Maxwell, 1997; Roberts, 2010). The pilot study interview was then included as one of the time-one study interviews (see Appendix E for the time-one interview questions). Based on the participants' preferences between November 2018 and May 2019, the researcher conducted the interviews of this study over the phone and using the Skype application. The length of each interview was 30-60 minutes.

Methodological orientation and theory

We used the thematic analysis method to analyse the interview data, which is widely used in qualitative analysis in different fields of research, including psychology (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is considered a foundation for qualitative data analysis because of its flexibility and useful implications for other forms of qualitative analysis. Other theoretical frameworks include grounded theory, ethnography, phenomenology, discourse analysis and content analysis.

Employing thematic analysis involves recognising, analysing and recording patterns or themes within the data gathered from the interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The steps involved in thematic analysis include recognising the initial themes by an inductive approach, transcribing interviews recordings, coding interviews data, developing themes and, lastly, checking the validity and credibility of the data. The themes and coding processes were conducted manually using NVIVO 10 to develop the nodes (themes) and record the data. Many trials were involved in this procedure where the coding element represents a basic unit of the interview transcript to be coded.

Finally, the researcher carefully examined all the interview transcripts to develop the relevant themes. These final themes adapted the dimensions of the theory of acculturation and included the following: cross-cultural transition; individual level; and affective, behavioural and cognitive processes.

Table 5.1. Participants' characteristics.

No.	Participants code	Gender	Age	Status	No. of kids	Host-country	Duration of study abroad	Months since Return to work	Education level studied	Subject studied	Previous experience abroad
1	*F1DUSA	Female	31	M	1 kid	USA	4 years	3 months	PHD	Law	yes
2	F2MUSA	Female	27	S		USA	4 years	3 months	MSc	HR	No
3	M1DUSA	Male	32	S		USA	9 years	2 months	PHD	Computer science	No
4	M2MUSA	Male	29	S		USA	3 years	6 moths	MSc	Pharmacology	No
5	M3MCA	Male	33	M	1 kid	Canada	4 years	2 months	MSc	Exercise science	No
6	M4MUSA	Male	28	M		USA	3 years	6 moths	MSc	Computer science	No
7	M5MUSA	Male	28	S		USA	3.5 years	3 months	MSc	Management	No
8	M6DUK	Male	40	M	4 kids	UK	6 years	5 months	PHD	Management	No
9	M7DUSA	Male	33	M		USA	8 years	6 moths	PHD	Political science	Yes
10	M8DUSA	Male	31	M	2 kids	USA	9 years	3 months	PHD	Computer engineering	No
11	M9DAUS	Male	32	M	2 kids	Australia	6 years	2 Weeks	PHD	linguistic	No
12	F3MAUS	Female	29	M	2 kids	Australia	3 years	3 Months	Master	Computer science	No
13	M10DUK	Male	36	M	2 kids	UK	5 years	3 weeks	PHD	Human resource management	Yes
14	F4MUK	Female	26	S		UK	2years	1 month	Master	Accounting	No

*The participant code consists of gender, participation number, level of education and the host-country. For example, F1DUSA: participant number 1 is female and obtained her PhD in the USA.

5.3. The study findings.

This section illustrates the results of data gathered during semi-structured interviews, including detailed explanations of the benefits of study-abroad experience for SARs regarding the changes in their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes, and the mechanisms that determine those benefits. The data obtained was analysed and classified around five main themes adopting the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001), including Cross-Cultural Transition, Individual Level, Affective, Behaviour and Cognitive Processes. In addition, several subthemes and codes have been identified under each theme. The overarching themes and subthemes are presented in table 5.2.

Table 5.2. The overarching themes and subthemes.

Main themes	Sub-themes
Cross-cultural transition	
Individual level	1. Personal characteristics
	2. Situational characteristics
Affective	1. Responses
	2. Outcomes
Behaviour	1. Intercultural competence
	2. Self-leadership
	3. Creativity behaviour
Cognitive processes	1. Self-concept clarity- responses
	2. Self-discerning reflections- outcomes

Two tables were created to simplify each of the main themes presented above in Table 5.2, as follows:

1. Table 5.3. Mechanisms.

2. Table 5.4. Outcomes.

The themes and subthemes are discussed in detail here, while quotes are provided in the section below along with the related tables. To illustrate the main themes and subthemes more clearly, a further five tables of themes have been created with a summary of each theme's findings to give an overview of the findings.

Table 5.3. Mechanisms.

Main themes	Sub-themes	Codes	Sub-codes
Cross-cultural transition	Explains the difficulties of SARs regarding life changes and problems		
Individual level	1. Personal characteristics	Marital status Upbringing and Personality Acculturation skills and previous international experience	
	2. Situational characteristics	Cultural and social life	- Amount and quality of inter and intra relationships - Quality of life changes - Host-country and socialisation - Exposure to different ideas and ideologies - Feeling of freedom - Social support
		Education-related characteristics	- Education level and the length of stay abroad - Language proficiency - Motivations to study abroad

Table 5.4. Outcomes.

Main themes	Sub-themes	Responses	Outcomes
Affective		- Facing the differences - Feelings about making friends	- Feelings about the whole experience
Behaviour	1. Intercultural competence	- Daily contact with people from different culture - Allowing and facing confrontations	- Communication skills - Open-minded
	2. Self-leadership	- Independent and responsible - Recognising the importance of time and goal setting - Self-motivation	- Practicing and sharing the skills with others - Learn*ing* life skills
	3. Creativity behaviour	- Appreciating the journey and recognising the differences	- Knowledge transfer - Conducting research - Uniqueness
Cognitive processes	1. Self-concept clarity-responses 2. Self-discerning reflections-outcomes	- Knowing their strengths and weaknesses - Observing, reflecting and learning	- Knowing themselves and stay loyal to their values - Updating and adjusting their goals and values

5.3.1. Cross-cultural transition.

Table 5.5. Cross-cultural transition.

Main theme	Summary
Cross-cultural transition	The SARs went through a number of difficulties during their adjustment abroad including facing life changes and adjustment problems.

The interviews involved some questions regarding the participants' adjustment to the new country, included their facing difficulties due to life changes and problems abroad.

The participants have explained some of these difficulties, such as difficulties in finding a balance while being alone in the process and dealing with other life responsibilities. M10DUK pointed out the difficulties he faced when he was doing his PhD in the UK. He asserted that most of the problems happened at the beginning of the study course, which were mainly related to their study, such as working with supervisors and meeting their expectations. While M5MUSA experienced difficulties regarding his English language proficiency, primarily after he enrolled in a master's degree course, he explained the following.

> *The professors were talking very fast, not as in English school... I felt difficulties in understanding them. I went to record their lectures so I could listen to lectures more and more. After two months or three, I got used to it. My English become better in terms of writing and listening (M5MUSA).*

However, some participants pointed out that being in a society different to what they used to and being in a position where they must interact with people who might not like them, misunderstand them or judge their behaviour, sometimes made their life harder. F2MUSA explained that even though she likes to be open-minded and volunteer to answer other curious questions, it is sometimes overwhelming, showing disrespect and humiliation from others.

> *They judge you based on their perceptions without explicit knowledge or evidence of what they talk about (F2MUSA).*

Moreover, F3MUSA had a similar experience with a classmate who asked her about Saudi culture because of some fake stories on the internet about how men treat women in Saudi Arabia. She said:

I responded by giving examples from my real-life and how me and my husband study

abroad, and nothing of these stories ever happened to me (F3MUSA).

5.3.2. Individual level.

Table 5.6. Individual level

Sub-themes	Summary
1. Personal characteristics	The study highlights the important mechanisms at the individual level that might facilitate or lessen the SARs adjustment abroad.
2. Situational characteristics	

The participants in this study differ based on two types of individual differences: personal characteristics and situational characteristics. Personal characteristics refer to demographic characteristics, experiences and personal skills and capabilities, whereas situational characteristics refer to cultural and social life and education-related factors during their study abroad experience.

5.3.2.1 Personal characteristics.

Based on the interviews, the fourteen participants in this study could be said to differ regarding their personal characteristics, including their marital status, upbringing and personality, and acculturation skills and previous international experience. Consequently, these characteristics affected the participants' cross-cultural transition and might affect the study abroad outcomes as a consequence.

Marital Status

Although the interviews show that most of the participants were able to derive the most benefit from their experience abroad, we found that some have missed some of these potential benefits due to family responsibilities, lack of time or some restrictions from their

partners. For example, F3MAUS went to Australia with her husband and son, but was only used to socialising with other females from Saudi Arabia because of her husband's concerns.

> *Most of the time I socialise with Saudi women, to be honest, because my husband does not like me to go out with foreigners. He would not feel comfortable (F3MAUS).*

Another example was given by F1DUSA. She found that becoming independent and responsible was something she did not expect when she went abroad because she used to be with her husband. However, her situation changed when he had to go back to Saudi Arabia, leaving her alone with their son. According to her, this new situation made a significant difference to her experience.

> *The experience was life-changing for me. I respected myself more. Just being able to handle my situation, my son, myself... I worked for long hours at the library. I feel like it changed me. It made me better in many ways (F1DUSA).*

Being with a companion abroad not only affects women, but also men, as they both found that studying abroad helped them to become more responsible and to learn how to balance their lives.

> *I started to think about my family while I am doing my work… Do not be overwhelmed with your PhD work and forgot about your family and your responsibility (M9DAUS).*

Conversely, some others pointed out that being alone abroad has affected them emotionally.

> *I get depressed because I was alone. My brother had to stay in DC and, I had to continue in a different state alone, by myself (F2MUSA).*

Upbringing and personality

According to some interviewees, coming from a conservative family affected the participants' decision-making in the foreign context. As F3MAUS explained:

> *I have a close family. They are not that much open, to be honest. They let you work, they let you study abroad, but there are some rules I must respect. I tried not to break it (F3MAUS).*

However, F1DUSA indicated many times during the interview that study abroad did not change her because of how she was brought up.

> *I have my own values and sometimes… I'm not very conservative anyway… so, living in the States did not really change me dramatically because who I am was just who I was before I even left (F1DUSA).*

Although the interviews did not involve direct questions regarding personality, some participants responses showed that there is a relationship between their personality and socialisation.

According to M7DUSA, study-abroad experience might not help an introvert to gain socialising skills. He said:

> *If a person were an introvert, it would be tough for him or her to talk to people even here… so it just depends on the person himself how he interacts with people here. It will be more difficult over there. However, he/she must take the initiative and take advantage of whatever they have (M7DUSA).*

M7DUSA statement can be true and the most prominent example for the interviews to validate was M1DUSA, as he had a profound experience that transferred his behaviour from being an extreme introvert to communicate openly with others. He said:

> *I used to be so afraid of people. I grew up with having autism, so I grew up not being comfortable with people at all. Nowadays, starting in the States, maybe being alone*

and no one around me helped me break that ice between me and others. I became

much more willing to talk to random strangers on the streets (M1DUSA).

Acculturation skills and previous international experience

Developing acculturation skills and the ability to adjust quickly to the new culture due to previous international experience, or being in a multicultural workplace, made some participants' experience abroad more relaxed and tolerable. Here are some examples of those who had previous experience abroad:

I already lived in the states for two years before going for my PhD (F1DUSA).

Specifically, why I chose the United States because I was raised there in the 90s, so I prefer going there, let's say, back to my second home (M7DUSA).

Some other interviewees pointed out that because they had previous experience in multicultural societies at their work in Saudi Arabia. It prepared them with the acculturation skills that ease their adjustment experience abroad, especially in dealing with foreigners.

In my university in Saudi Arabia, where I work, all the faculties are international employees, and some of them are not Muslims (F4MUK).

I worked for some time in Saudi Aramco Company, and it had a multicultural society there (M4MUSA).

5.3.2.2. Situational characteristics.

The situational characteristics outlined here encompass two types. In the first place, cultural and social life, and then educational characteristics that might have an impact on acquiring the potential benefits of study abroad.

Cultural and social life:

- *Amount and quality of inter and intra-relationships.*

The interviews records show that the SARs had different experiences based on the amount and quality of their inter- and intra-relationships, which affects their adjustment and the potential benefits abroad. Almost half of the participants in this study indicated that they used to spend their free time with Saudis and Arabic speakers.

> *They usually invite me: Saudi friends and friends from the Gulf countries (M2MUSA).*

> *Most of the time, I socialise with Saudi women (F3MAUS).*

However, some of them were aware of the problem and thus tried to make the most of being in a different country to socialise with people of different nationalities.

> *I know several friends who went all the way together, and they even became roommates. They would just talk Arabic all the time, watch whatever Arabic shows on YouTube. They learned virtually nothing about living in the states (M1DUSA).*

> *...every weekend they meet and cook together. What is your goal of being here (abroad)? The goal I think, is to deal with the culture, meet the people and learn how to make friends (M10DUK).*

According to some participants, becoming a friend with people from different countries and cultures will contribute to better adjustment abroad and, in turn, acquire the potential benefits of studying abroad.

> *I start socialising with Europeans, the Chinese and the Japanese. Furthermore, there was a Vietnamese guy who used to motivate me to study when I was studying language, and we used to spend lots of time together (M4MUSA).*

We have a lot of native speakers, not Americans. That was very good or helpful for

our English. Then they became our friends (M5MUSA).

In general, having friends abroad is essential as some of the participants indicated that they are helpful in bad situations. For example, F2MUSA stated that one of her American friends helped her a lot in her journey by sharing good ideas and information and checking from time to time if she needs help. Furthermore, her friend helped her when she had some problems with her project.

Even though I haven't seen her for a while, she comforted me and helped me manage

my time and get everything done (F2MUSA).

- *Quantity of life changes.*

Some of the participants stressed the difficulties or opportunities they handled abroad, which presented challenges due to life changes between their home-country and the host-country. One of these challenges was to become fully independent and responsible. According to the participants, the nature of the culture and family structure in Saudi Arabia is that people tend to depend more on their families, parents or siblings, especially women. There is no room to experience freedom away from family opinions and restrictions. The participants thus viewed this behaviour as important to develop to survive and succeed abroad.

When you go abroad anywhere, you have the opportunity to improve yourself and rely

on yourself and solve your problems, and this is your way to survive or succeed. I

become more mature than before study abroad (M3MCA).

Another life change faced by the participants was the lack of segregation between men and women abroad, which is not something they were used to in Saudi Arabia. M2MUSA pointed

out that one of the changes that he faced abroad is being in a mixed-gender society and dealing with women as classmates in the university.

> *Being involved with females at work was something unusual before travelling abroad in our region. For example, when one of the clinical rotations at the hospital, I was the only male in the team. It's not a big deal, but how to deal with them (M2MUSA).*

This issue was not only in the school, but also in social life as M3MCA mentioned the changes in how they had to deal with things such as men shaking hands with women and vice versa.

> *Sometimes you shake the hand, which is sometimes – even for my wife was, like, she wasn't prepared for this thing, but it was okay (M3MCA).*

However, F2MUSA asserted that the life changes that she went through helped her understand herself and function in the real world. She was thus able to take advantage of her experience and do her best to overcome her weaknesses.

> *After I went to the USA and came back, my family started to see me as a successful person. They know that I was able to handle a lot of bad situations. So, they do not interfere as they used to do before my abroad experience (F2MUSA).*

- *Host-country and socialisation.*

While the number of participants varied between the four destinations (i.e., USA, the UK, Canada and Australia), their perceived outcomes of study abroad were found to be different between the participants. According to the findings, each of these four host countries has a different culture and social structure. According to the interviewees, the more important factor to choose a country to study is how they treat foreigners, i.e., if the type of people who live there are friendly, welcoming differences, accepting diversity and open-minded. For

example, those who went to a host-country that is open and diverse reported a positive experience. Interestingly, those students typically graduated from the USA, Canada and the UK. The findings showed that they had a much easier adjustment and perceived more benefits than those who graduated from Australia.

> *I did not find any problem with racism. I am not sure if this is the case everywhere in the country, but where I live, a lot of Muslims are living here (M6DUK).*

> *I was scared a little bit of how people will accept me as a person from the middle east, but I found them very friendly. They treat me as one of them (M5MUSA).*

> *One of the things that encouraged me to go to Canada was the people; they accept different races and cultures (M3MCA).*

Therefore, the nature of the host county impacts on the possibility of becoming social and having friends with native speakers and international residents. The participants in this study hence showed different responses when it comes to their socialisation with foreigners. For example, those who spent time in the USA found it easy to socialise and build friendship even with native speakers, different to the participants who went to other countries. However, even those how graduated from the USA stated that each state is different when it comes to socialisation. For example, as M7DUSA explained:

> *I used to live in an area near the capital, and its people were very busy, so you cannot get along with them. However, when I moved to a different city to get my Master's degree, its people have this hospitality culture. Even when I did my PhD, I lived in a different city, and we got to attend a couple of events over there with them and the holidays, of course (M7DUSA).*

In comparison, F3MAUS, who graduated from Australia, explained that interacting with Australians was quite a challenge that hindered her from making a connection with them.

> *To be honest, I have not met any native, and I think they feared us. When I met someone, he asked me, "Why did you come here (to AUS)?" I hate this question! Then would ask, "Don't you have any university in your country?" I said, "Yes, we have, but we came here to meet you and learn from you" (F3MAUS).*

An example of finding differences between the countries in terms of the challenges to socialise and build friendships with the host nationals was introduced by M10DUSA. As he explained:

> *In the USA, I have friends who visited me in my home, and I visited them. We were all together, and we travelled together as well. I am a social person, but I lived for five years in the UK; everything is fine, but there were no many friends like what I had in the USA (M10DUSA).*

However, F1DUSA who also graduated from the USA, stated that she found having native speaker friends or keeping the relationship for a long time was quite difficult. As she explained:

> *They do not really connect with you on a higher level which is something disappointing. I feel like they act this way with the foreigners; they want you to be their friends, but they do not want to get close to you (F1DUSA).*

- ***Exposure to different ideas and ideologies.***

Although participants found it difficult to develop a deeper relationship with host nationals, they still indicated how living abroad in multicultural societies provided them with daily confrontations with different ideas and ideologies which helped them to grow. According to

the participants, this gave them the opportunity to interact with people who are different in their religions, culture and values. This opportunity hence opened the door for them to learn and benefit from the diversity and different way of thinking of the other people present.

> *A person must put in his mind that you will approach people that do not agree with you, that have different core ideas from you, and you must respect that, and you have to talk to people to know that there are a variety of cultures and how people think (M7DUSA).*

Furthermore, some participants indicated the benefits of being exposed to different ideas and ideologies abroad as it helped them to reflect on their values and develop themselves. Here they concluded that studying abroad was an incredible life-changing experience:

> *I encouraged myself to expose myself to different ideas and ideologies because I think going all the way down helped and loosened me up, and starting afresh, per se, to reconsider all my values. The way I was thinking I was able to see things clearer (M1DUSA).*

> *Because when you are used to meeting the same people from your country, we usually have the same environment and similar perspectives. When you go to a different country or meeting people from different countries, you will know or understand another perspective (M3MCA).*

Besides, some of them asserted that having the opportunities to interact with different kinds of people helped them think and learn about their own culture and values, especially when they faced some questions from others regarding Islam, women, relationships and cultural values. According to the participants, these opportunities encouraged them to learn and expand their knowledge about their own culture, traditions and values. M3MCA indicated

that the experience motivated him to understand the reasons and facts behind some traditions in Saudi Arabia. He gave an example:

> *When I went abroad, one of my friends, a Canadian friend who's a Muslim, said to me, "When you invite people to your house, it is like the angel come to your house. This is one of the things you have to consider when inviting people". We used to do it (in Saudi Arabia) as a part of the culture because we grew up like this, and we do not know why we do this (M3MCA).*

F2MUSA pointed out how the confrontations she got into with others abroad helped her grow and become open-minded. Amongst the other Saudi students, she was the only one in the class to volunteer to answer some of her classmates and teachers' curious questions. As she explained:

> *They judge you based on their perceptions without explicit knowledge or evidence, but when I get myself in a difficult situation, I will keep answer them until I get to a point where I do not have an answer. They have not lived in Saudi Arabia before. They do not even know what is going on there (in Saudi Arabia) (F2MUSA).*

- *Feeling of freedom.*

One of the profound life changes that the participants experienced was the sense of freedom which played a significant role in their experience. However, this could be associated with good or bad behaviour, which depended on how the individual viewed his/her freedom and understood their responsibilities. In terms of the good aspects of feeling freedom abroad, it included having free time away from all the participants' responsibilities back in Saudi Arabia, including family, which thus encouraged more good behaviour.

> *You have your own time. It made me read more, and then I started to think about different things (M3MCA).*

I learned new skills. I tried when I have free time to involve in some volunteering activities. I had one experience volunteering with kids with autism. I figured out that I could do something new that I did not use to do in Saudi Arabia (M2MUSA).

Furthermore, being away from other people interfering in their life decisions is another benefit that allowed for more self-reflection and directed their thoughts and focus towards their goals.

I like how people are friendly over there. How you can do whatever you want without anyone even looking at you (F1DUSA).

I would not even think that I will travel alone or with only girls. But I did go by myself driving to other states, and I did not even ask anyone for permission. I just did it because I lived by myself, and I had to do it to get some important things done (F2MUSA).

However, F3MAUS expressed that she did not have total freedom abroad because she was with her husband. Yet being away from her family (in Saudi Arabia) and her culture gave her a modicum of freedom that her husband did not mind while they were abroad.

There is something that I can do abroad, but I cannot do it here in Saudi Arabia. For example, talking to men and dealing with other stuff such as brining a handyman into my home. But here (in Saudi Arabia), it is a bit difficult; because of our culture, the man represents the family and not the woman (F3MAUS).

Conversely, M2MUSA pointed out that some students understood their freedom in the wrong way, entailing that they forgot about their main responsibilities.

Sometimes, they do not care about the quality of learning, or maybe they know their responsibilities, but they do not care about them maybe because they have a chance to enjoy life over there, no commitments, no family or office (M2MUSA).

- *Social support.*

From the testimony provided in their interviews, we learnt that the SARs claimed that they received different types of support. Some notes that they received family support from their family back home, or even had some of them by their side in their journey. Those who received family support found that it helped them overcome problems or acted as an emotional support.

Because I think my dad did his master's degree and PhD studies in the USA. I learned a lot from him before I go there. He told me what to do and what other things that I should avoid doing (M8DUSA).

However, others preferred not having someone with them abroad because they believe this is what helps them derive the most benefit of the experience.

If you go by yourself, it will have more impact than if you had somebody or some community to go back to. I think you would not learn much, and I've seen it happening (M1DUSA).

Another form of support was provided by the other Saudis students abroad. Based on their observations, the participants gave a brief explanation of why they divided this support into two types: good examples, and most other Saudi students. The 'good example' were the Saudis who worked hard to achieve Saudi Arabia scholarship objectives, including developing themselves to achieve a higher degree and proving their unique talent and skills abroad. Here, F3MAUS talked about one of the Saudi students in Australia who developed an

Australian university-funded project after finishing his PhD. Conversely, the majority of Saudi students just tried to find an easy way to complete their masters and PhDs in order to return to their workplace in Saudi Arabia. F3MAUS suggested that in these cases the students just felt too lazy to invent or create something new, or even do something that benefits their country.

Moreover, F2MUSA added that some of them tried to prevent other Saudis from socialising with others abroad. She explained that they are watching them, helping them or telling them what to do and not to do. As a result, these students are not letting themselves explore and live their new experience with all that costs, despite the fact that this is beneficial to their development.

> *They did not like me to be open with other people. They feel I am single, and I am talking too much. I am learning too much. I do not know why they feel that way (F2MUSA).*

The third type of support is at the university and with their classmates. M2MUSA found that having a positive relationship with his classmates in the schools presented him with an effective environment that encouraged him to put more effort into studying and preparing for his lectures.

> *When I saw all the students are competing and participating in answering the questions during the lectures, I changed my mind. I started to study every day and allocate time for reviewing and studying ahead of time before the lecture (M2MUSA).*

Some indicated the importance of university support, their supervisors, library staff and administrative staff:

Then we started the strategic process, which is the trickiest part. It was the part where I felt a little lonely. With my adviser and committee members' help, I was able to accomplish my goal (F1DUSA).

I used to spend most of my time in the library. I think spending more time in the library and talking to other researchers helped me achieve my goals (M8DUAS).

Education-related characteristics:

- *Education level and the length of stay abroad.*

Here the participants varied in terms of their level of study. Almost half of the participants were PhD students. According to them, doing a PhD is not a comfortable experience to go through because it involves a lot of pressures while striving to stand on your own feet to work hard to achieve it. For example, M2MUSA differentiated between his PhD and Master's degree, and the change in the level of difficulty between them.

My Master's degree was just one year, and it was more a course-based degree in my situation. Then, when I had to do the huge research for my PhD degree that depended mostly on me. It was a big experience; it was the first time I went through something like this. Not only when it comes to studying but also living there (M2MUSA).

Moreover, the findings show there are differences in the education system between Saudi Arabia and the western countries, such as teaching style, curriculum and assessment. These differences then affected the SARs' outcomes:

I didn't use to have blackboard access in Saudi Arabia. The first year abroad, it was the first time. Dealing with the new technologies was an issue initially, but after time I got used to these things (M2MUSA).

The evidence of the interviews established a relationship between the duration of their stay abroad and the potential benefits of studying abroad, as the participants show different changes based on the length of their experience.

> *Out of those nine years, I came to Saudi, like, four times or so. I became not so accustomed to that. My friends think that I became more Americanised, and some see that as a negative thing, I think (M1DUSA).*

> *My close friends, I've been absent from for three and a half years. They said, "you've changed" (M4MUSA).*

- *Language proficiency.*

Some participants indicated that English language proficiency is essential to realising their study abroad objectives. Not only did language enable them to get their degree, but to enjoy the most benefits from socialising and interacting with others.

> *I had some difficulties developing my English language, which prevented me from understanding people for a while (M9DAUS).*

> *I think because English is not our first language, sometimes it's a challenge, or it's hard to communicate with people at the beginning (M2MUSA).*

Furthermore, language skills affect the level of clarity when speaking and expressing themselves in some circumstances. For example:

> *Sometimes we need to talk about our religion (Islam) and how Islam is kind and helpful to people and love peace. These things were a bit of a challenge; because I think the language sometimes does not help you clarify these things to others from other religions (M2MUSA).*

- *Motivations to study abroad.*

In terms of the participants' motivation to study abroad, there are two types of motivation: internal and external motivation. Starting with the internal motivations, some of the participants indicated that their motivation for going abroad is mainly based on academic preferences and a desire to study at the best place that offers them specialised education and a suitable learning environment.

> *I decided to choose the USA because education in the USA is one of the world's best. My major is special education; the best universities in that field are in the US (M8DUSA).*

> *I wanted to do something for the community in my city and for my university where I work… we do not have a lot of people who have this experience (studying abroad) (F2MUSA).*

However, in terms of the external motivations to study abroad, there are two types of external motivations. The first was it is a requirement and part of their job.

> *It is something we must do to continue our postgraduates' study. It's a part of my job to do so (M8DUSA).*

The second type of motivation was some participants being inspired by others – who are like role models – to follow their path.

> *One of the professors who taught me before in my first year in the university, also studied in Colorado… he was like a role model to me because I liked his personality and education level (F2MUSA).*

My father was a university professor, so my ambition is to be like him (M5MUSA).

5.3.3. Affective.

Table 5.7. Affective

Response	Outcomes	Summary
- Facing the differences - Feelings about making friends	- Feelings about the whole experience:	The SARs feelings and emotions at the end of their journey and immediately after returning.

5.3.3.1 Response.

Facing the differences

The interviews demonstrate how the participants in this study used to feel about their first phase of cross-cultural transition. Nearly half of the participants expressed some negative emotions towards the changes in their lives, including frustration, fear, depression, homesickness and nervousness.

> *I was like, "There is no actual need for it, what am I doing to myself? I am just humiliating myself. There is pretty much no one that I know, and I do not know the language" (M1DUSA).*

> *The main problem for me was the homesickness and being alone over there. I got depressed over there and the weather is different (M2MUSA).*

On the other hand, some participants indicated that they experienced a sense of excitement, engagement and fun.

It was enjoyable and exciting to meet people, different people, different characters, and backgrounds. It is like having your coffee and sweet and enjoying your time at a good place (M4MUSA).

Furthermore, in the interviews many of the participants expressed feelings about their educational difficulties abroad. Most of them found themselves feeling stressed and depressed at the beginning of their studying experience. Other difficulties included adapting to a different academic lifestyle, with the expectation of too much work to be done within a short time. They also experienced English language difficulties, different expectations from in Saudi Arabia, and a lack of critical thinking skills or research skills.

It was not easy. I just got an overwhelming feeling of not understand everything that it's going on; to deal with the different academic lifestyle (F1DUSA).

I felt a lot of difficulties, especially with the research. I felt too sad, and I was crying all night (F4MUK).

Moreover, some participants found themselves overwhelmed because of feeling lonely and having to cope with their independence abroad.

It was not easy for me at all. I respected myself more, just being able to handle my studies, my son, myself… It changed me and helped me to become better in many ways (F1DUSA).

I became independent, to be honest. There were a lot of conflicts between my husband and I, and as a result, we learned how to live with the difficulties we face (F3MAUS).

Feelings about making friends

The participants had different feelings about making friends with foreigners. Some of them recounted how they felt at the beginning of their study abroad journey about interacting with people from different countries.

Oh God, in the beginning, it was more challenging; it was like when you first try to push a wheel, the hardest is when you start pushing it (M1DUSA).

When I arrived in the USA, I felt scared to start a conversation with people because I did not know about their cultures. Are they friendly to talk to a stranger? (M2MUSA).

Some participants expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to have friends from around the world.

I had more relationships with people in different areas of the world. This has motivated me to feel like I am getting something more than just education (F2MUSA).

I enjoyed conversations with them. Lots of dialogues and learning about them and their culture. I also had the opportunity to teach them about my culture too. I felt like (as) I accepted them, and they accepted me (M8DUSA).

However, some felt upset about not having this kind of opportunity because of the difficulties of having host nationals as friends.

I cannot meet a lot of British people there. I am not sure if this is just my case, or all students face the same problem (M6DUK).

I had some difficulties getting in touch with Australians specifically; it was not easy to have Australians' friends (M9DAUS).

5.3.3.2 Outcomes.

Feelings about the whole experience

The participants indicated how they felt about the whole experience, which included their appreciation of the journey abroad and the benefits they obtained. These feelings ranged from acquiring the degree, to improving themselves and enjoying the journey.

> *It was fantastic, but I had a lot of responsibilities. I can say it was a huge experience, I faced many difficult situations, but I managed them all. I got back home now, and I am grateful (M10DUK).*

> *To be honest, it was amazing. It was a big experience that helped me improve myself (F4MUK).*

The participants expressed their feelings of how the study abroad journey has helped them to learn about themselves. The findings showed that each of them has his or her own special experience. Hence, as seen below, their feelings are different one from another

> *When I worked in one office with other PhD students, I saw how they worked. Most of them have part-time jobs to cover the tuition and living expenses, and I noticed their difficulties. This motivates me to work harder, that I had many good opportunities to study and keep myself learning (M10DUS).*
> *Even here, where I work (in Saudi Arabia), it makes me (the benefits of study abroad) describe myself more. I know what is important to me. I know who I am and what makes me happier (M10DUK).*

One of the benefits they acquired, and subsequently described in the interviews, is becoming more self-confident. They felt this benefit in terms of public speaking, conducting research, pursuing higher-level education abroad and attending online courses.

By the end of my journey, one of the keynote speakers could not come, and he gave us

a very late notice. I'm the one who presented the work. Now, back in the days I will

not be comfortable with people at all, but I had pretty much no issue and no hesitation

of me standing up and presenting (M1DUSA).

Since I graduated, I'm thinking about starting new research. Now research became

easy for me. I am starting to think about different opportunities for the future. I don't

know what for now but not staying where I am for a long time, like I used to think

(F1DUSA).

5.3.4. Behaviour.

Table 5.8. Behaviour

Sub-themes	Summary	
	Response	Outcome
1. Intercultural competence	Developing intercultural competence as a response that the SARs take to interact better with multicultural societies and to adapt to the new way of living.	What are the important intercultural skills the SARs have developed as an outcome of their study abroad experience?
2. Self-leadership	The SARs had developed self-leadership skills in their way to manage their own lives abroad to achieve their goals	Practicing and sharing their skills and learning important life skills are the outcomes of self-leadership.
3. Creativity behaviour	Through observing and learning, the SARs developed creative behaviour and cultivated unique ideas.	Implementing changes and sharing creative ideas at the workplace are the outcomes of creativity behaviour.

5.3.4.1 Intercultural competence.

The participants agreed that study-abroad experience has helped them learn how to respect, deal and interact with people who have different cultures, religions values and way of thinking.

Responses:

- *Daily contact with people from different culture.*

Being in multicultural societies and interacting daily with people from different culture have led the SARs to observe, reflect and act in a suitable way to fit within the new society, while preserving the values they carried with them abroad. For them, it was not easy to relinquish their own identity and who they are, but it was possible to give others a chance to show what they offer.

Therefore, at the basic level, the development of intercultural competencies happened because they had to interact with others all the time in their new life, including neighbours, classmates, flatmates and the people they met everywhere they went. This reality gave them opportunities to learn how to deal with others and the necessary skills and behaviour to survive.

> *One of my friends is Christian. She helped me a lot. She was so kind to everyone who was from a different culture or different regions. This gives you a nice impression of how you must deal with a human being. It is not about what they believe or what they think (M10DUK).*

> *I had a Chinese flatmate for one year. Although he is different from me in almost everything, I tried to be kind and tolerate him. For example, he cooks pork, whereas eating pork is forbidden in Islam, but I did not stop him. I used to feel happy when he is happy and celebrate his achievements (M4MUSA).*

- *Allowing and facing confrontations.*

According to the participants, to develop intercultural competencies you need not only to rely on taking the advantage of daily interacting. You also need to force yourself to be open-minded to cultural differences with others to cope with any conflicts that might test your values and believes. Consequently, the participants agreed that these challenges show you who you are and what you stand for, as well as resolving any misconception or doubts generated from prejudice. Knowing the benefits of interacting with others led some of the participants to make efforts to find the best way to interact and engage with the host nationals.

> *If I can open any conversation, I will give it a chance… that's helped me a lot with my journey. For example, I got contact information from a banker; when I had a case study in the university, I sent him my concern or my question, and then he answered me. I think I developed communication skills a lot (F2MUSA).*
>
> *We did not participate in any religious stuff like Christmas or something like that, but in other celebrations like Halloween or the Irish day. We just wear costumes and join them (M8DUSA).*

F3MAUS gave an example when she had a conversation with her Mexican classmate about some Muslim families abroad who force their women to cover all their bodies, including their faces and hands. Her classmate said she found this disrespectful towards the people of the West because they cannot identify the person with the face covered, and the participant agreed with her. As she said:

> *She was right! We must accept their culture; they use the face as an identity, and when they come to our countries, they respect us, and they wear our traditional clothes (Abiah) (F3MAUS).*

Outcomes:

- *Communication skills.*

The development of intercultural competencies abroad resulted in the preparation of the SARs to work in any environment because the study-abroad experience enhanced their communication skills and helped them become open-minded. According to the participants, they learnt to work better in their occupation, regardless of whom they are interacting with because the experience helped dissolve the boundaries generated from judging others. Their recent experience educated them and enabled them to open their minds to understand the different opinions to which others might be exposed. These new skills helped them feel a greater sense of harmony with one another.

> *I can now engage easily in the work environment if I work now with anybody from any country. I can accept even hanging out with anyone like going to their house or accepting their invitation to a wedding. I know the protocols at some weddings. This something I gained from sticking with different cultures and different views (M4MUSA).*

The interviews showed that the study-abroad experience has influenced the SARs' communication skills and helped them develop the necessary skills needed to interact with others in their social and academic life. For example, F1DUSA pointed out how others had noticed that her conversation style has changed after returning to Saudi Arabia. As she explained:

> *I became calmer and more willing to prolong any conversation with others (F1DUSA).*

Conversely, before his study abroad experience, M1DUSA was afraid of talking to people. However, the study-abroad experience affected him dramatically as he flourished and learnt better communication skills.

> *Eventually, I started collecting myself. By the very end, I realised that humans are humans everywhere, which improved my humanity and my skills in dealing with humans (M1DUSA).*

- ***Open-minded.***

Intercultural competencies include becoming open-minded and less judgmental, not only when interacting with others in social life but also in their academic life. According to most of the participants, becoming open-minded and less judgmental is one of the essential values gained abroad.

> *Nowadays, I am pretty much open to any way of living. I am not so nosy about looking into other people businesses as I used to be. There is no such thing as a bad person. The way I used to look at it, if someone is not like my dad or the prophet Mohammed (PBUH), then they are not good enough as humans. Now, I have become more helpful, I guess, to people because I've realised that all of us need all of us (M1DUSA).*

> *Do not be prejudiced; you must consider that you will approach people who disagree with you. They have different core ideas from you, and you must respect that, and you must talk to the person to know that. There are a variety of cultures and how people think. A person must embrace that and accept that (M7DUSA).*

Becoming open-minded allowed the participants to develop a level of understanding and accepting others, especially how they take criticism from others.

Having patience and accepting others' points of view or not taking them in a criticism kind of way. I feel as if all these things helped me grow and be effective and have shaped who I am today (F1DUSA).

As Saudis, we usually have the same environment, the same or similar perspective. However, when you meet someone from a different culture or different belief, they have a different perspective. Sometimes it is tough to be different so that you will see things from the other side. I think when you have this, you can improve yourself (M3MCA).

Even though those who lived in a country where people are not open-minded people and there is less interaction with host nationals, they agreed that living abroad and just meeting different people every day allowed them to become open-minded and accept others.

It allowed me to understand how people think, and I found out that there is more than one way. I recognised the need to understand the situation, the social-cultural aspect before judging people (M9DAUS).

However, refusing to be open-minded abroad could lead to facing difficulties with others. For example, M10DUSA gave the example of one of his friends, a Saudi student, who was not able to be open-minded with his PhD supervisor in the last year of his program. He ended up withdrawing from the program and went back home to Saudi Arabia.

He (his friend) was really doing great in his research, but sometimes because of the mentality or skills from the person, he cannot deal with other people even if he is creative or has the skills. But maybe sometimes he does not get along with them (M10DUK).

Consequently, developing intercultural competence abroad was an important influence on how the participants perceived people and dealt with them by acting liberal and less judgmental.

> *It helped me to see people as humans beings, not human doings. I used to look down on people who do not share religion or sexual orientation or even the same tribe (M1DUSA).*

> *When I went abroad, I started to think about the worker, the foreign workers in Saudi Arabia. How they are treated sometimes with disrespect. This is one of the issues I started really to pay attention to (M3MCA).*

5.3.4.2 Self-leadership.

The interviews revealed how the SARs developed self-leadership skills to cope with their transition abroad and then managed their lives using different techniques.

Responses:

- *Independent and responsible.*

Becoming independent and responsible was one of the important transformations that the participants recognised to be part of their experience abroad. In fact, they found these qualities to be life changing. Recognition of this behaviour came from the fact that the family structure in Saudi Arabia does not allow individuals to become fully independent and be responsible. People tend to depend more on their families, their parents or siblings, especially women. There is no room to experience freedom away from family opinions and guidance. Therefore, with the absence of family present abroad, the participants found themselves forced to learn how to become independent and responsible.

> *When I went to the States, I had to be the one who decides what and where I'm going. For example, what to eat and how to create activities for myself (M1DUSA).*

When you go abroad anywhere, you have the opportunity to improve yourself and rely on yourself and solve your problems, and this is your way to survive or succeed. I become more mature (M3MCA).

However, the female participants perceived this as a major change over male participant. Common to the four female participants, regardless of their marital status, was that the experience abroad gave them the freedom to depend on themselves to solve problems and fulfil their goals. We might conclude that becoming independent and responsible goes together with a shift in behaviour. The participants thus found that the experience made them solid and more mature, giving them the courage to face any obstacles.

I've become independent. In the past, my mom and dad did everything for me, but now no. In the UK, I do everything by myself… Before, I was not strong (F4MUK).

- ***Recognising the importance of time, and goal setting.***

The participants indicated that the overwhelming feeling of managing their life drive them to recognise more the importance of time and to manage it wisely and priorities their tasks to overcome any challenging difficulties and stress.

I felt like I am alone. So, I put all my stress on my study. I study from 7am until 4pm to get myself busy. Then I was taking a cup of coffee or visiting anyone. Then, preparing my food, then sleep. Every day the same routine (F2MUSA).

I remember when I was in Saudi Arabia, I used to study on the night of the exam. But when I went abroad, this changed. You need to study at least three days in advance. You need to put a schedule for that. You need to allocate time for everything (M2MUSA).

Moreover, it made them feel cautious about their time. They learnt to have a set of goals and deadlines that marked any upcoming events and any conferences to attend.

> *I put a big calendar in front of my desk and a schedule for each day (F4MUK).*

> *I am not used to time management. When I went there, I started to put my goals in sequence to prioritise them (M2MUSA).*

- ***Self-motivation.***

The participants pointed out some of the self-motivation techniques that helped them achieve their goals. One of these techniques was learning to listen to their emotions and become self-aware of how they feel.

> *When you feel you are not feeling it and forcing it, it's a dead end. I feel like I need to trust my intuition, my gut (F1DUSA).*

> *My emotions sometimes are my motivations, especially anger. For example, almost within the submission day for my paper, I lost a copy of it, and my advisor understandably became so angry. Pretty much by the end of the late afternoon, I was able to rewrite the whole paper, and it was submitted, and I took an award as well (M1DUSA).*

Another technique mentioned by other participants is self-rewarding, which can be tangible or intangible.

> *We used to study all the weekdays and do some self-rewarding in the weekend. Such as travelling (M2MUSA).*

If I finished this assignment within two weeks, I would reward myself with new glasses or save money to the end of the term and buy myself a nice bag (F3MAUS).

Outcomes:

- ***Practicing and sharing the skills with others.***

For the participants in this research, the outcomes of developing self-leadership centre upon achieving their goals of getting the degree and returning successfully to their home-country and workplace. However, after returning to their home-country, they found that they still retained self-leadership. They pointed out that this skill should be transferred back with SARs, and that they have the duty to teach others about it. For example, *M4MUSA* found himself encouraging everyone to take advantage of their time and spend it correctly. He advised to:

Take advantage of your time, such as, learn something, read books, surf the internet, find information, and seek solutions. Before you start talking about something, you should know what you are talking about. I mean, like facts, not just your opinions (M4MUSA).

Furthermore, helping their society and their family came naturally because of their sense of responsibility.

I am more willing to help because I have realised that we all need all of us (M1DUSA).

I feel I became more responsible for my family and the whole family, including how everyone is doing and how we can solve any issues they have (M2MUSA).

M8DUSA mentioned how his experience taught him to become more helpful to others due to some volunteer jobs abroad.

> *We had to do some volunteer jobs as a part of some of our classes. We had to do some painting for some old buildings. We had to do some trash picking and stuff like that. It was a good experience (M8DUSA).*

- *Learning life skills.*

The participants found that the experience helped them to improve and learn the necessary skills to successes. The first one is becoming patient when facing problems.

> *No matter how hard it might seem, it will be over one day, and it will be fine (F1DUSA).*

> *I am more patient now with everything. Especially when I face problems or any conflicts now, in work (M2MUSA).*

Second, the experience allowed them to become clearer about their own opinions and what they would like to become. They came to recognised there are many opportunities are waiting for them and this realisation made them believe in themselves, the knowledge that they had acquired and acknowledgement that every effort they made during their journey has paid off.

> *The way I look at it, I owe it to myself to be the best person I can become. Wherever I am going to feel that I can be the best I can become, I would be there, hopefully. I am looking for what's the best way to use my PhD (M1DUSA).*

Moreover, this realisation inspired them to keep growing even after returning.

> *There are many things, many goals that I need to reach, and there are huge opportunities to do so. Because I saw people there in their early ages, they achieved*

academic successes and achieved great goals. Not just the usual things that people

think of, such as a good salary (M9DAUS).

I was not planning to do these things (keep learning and growing) when I went there

(abroad). Now I put it as my goal for the next three to four years. I keep my eyes open

for any opportunity that makes me grow. (M10DUK).

5.3.4.3 Creativity behaviour.

The interviews revealed that SARs have developed some creativity behaviour thank to their

study-abroad experience and their activities in observing, reflecting and practicing. After

returning to Saudi Arabia, they admitted that these behaviours differentiate them from other

academics who have not been abroad in terms of their progressive way of thinking and

contribution to their work and society.

Response:

- ***Appreciating the journey and recognising the differences.***

The interviews provided great details of how the SARs perceived their journey abroad, which

involved appreciation and recognition of the significant differences between the host-country

and Saudi Arabia, particularly at the academic level. Consequently, despite their level of

education, age, gender and marital status, the SARs recognised the necessity of

acknowledging these differences at the individual level first while they were abroad. They

could then make the appropriate effort to transfer the knowledge and experience acquired

back to their workplace.

All that effort that I spent on getting that experience, I think it should be rewarded,

and I think one of the ways to reward is to spread it and to make it more active

(M1DUSA).

I was really immersed in my studies. I felt that I have a noble message or let say a project where I must translate knowledge from the States to here. I felt the sense of commitment, the sense of responsibilities that I have. This has been reflected in my teaching style and how I deal with my students here (M7DUSA).

Outcomes:

- *Knowledge transfer.*

After returning to Saudi Arabia, the participants showed their commitment to transferring their acquired knowledge to their students.

I started with the first people that I meet every day, my students. Anything that I missed through my bachelor study, I try to fill that part with my students (M4MUSA).

Besides the knowledge, they found that the teaching techniques they observed abroad were valuable to apply and practice at their workplace.

I used to learn from all my professors, their way of teaching, their way of contacting their students. I learnt some good stuff from my professors, such as teaching style, counselling for the students, and implementing outside class activities (M8DUSA).

My teaching techniques have changed since the first time I taught my students. I learned a lot in Australia. I started to employ and use teaching strategies, more creative and more learner's interest approaches. Yes, I'm trying to achieve and implement these things (M9DAUS).

These are some examples of the teaching techniques that the participants start to apply.

I do some creative classes, and I try to do new stuff with my students, like discussion groups or presenting some TED talk videos related to the topic (F2MUSA).

I can see the students abroad have the confidence to present their ideas in front of people and negotiate with people, especially if your course has presentation research (M4MUSA).

Besides implementing changes to their work in Saudi Arabia's universities, some of them were eager to benefit their society as well. For example, M9DAUS indicated that his mission is to be open-minded with others and discuss his interests with them.

I started to be active in teaching people and share good stuff with them regarding my major. If I got a new idea or new information, I always try to share them with others in social media. That is the one thing that keeps me motivated and allows me to see the value of what I am doing (M9DAUS).

Moreover, M6DUK explained that his experience made him think bigger at the country level. The study-abroad experience has opened his mind to some changes that could be implemented in the country.

My research is about implementing new things from Western countries. I have many ideas, not just in education. I'm now trying to import some training programs from the USA, basically, to improve our schools (M6DUK).

- *Conducting research.*

The ability and the familiarity of conducting research is one of the skills that the participants are grateful to develop. They thus emphasised their eagerness to keep practicing and conducting research.

I like to discuss publication for a new paper when I meet my friends who got their PhDs from the UK (M10DUK).

Constantly, I think about doing research. Constantly, I try to encourage myself to write a book or translate a book from English to Arabic (M7DUSA).

It is not only a matter of them continuing research but also their recognition that the ability to conduct research is critical, and a real source of knowledge of any subject. Some of our participants subsequently asserted that it is necessary to teach students research skills.

Because what I really see, in the UK, the knowledge you can get from the research and what I notice in Saudi Arabia where they rarely focus on assignment or research… A student should be more serious about knowledge; not just meet the teacher to get the information. I decided with the head of the department that the student should do more research exams or quizzes from the next year (F4MUK).

- *Uniqueness.*

Some of the research participants noticed that their study-abroad experience has provided them with important skills that made them academically exceptional compared to non-Saudi colleagues, or to those who have not been to western countries.

Those who studied abroad can publish in a very high-level journal, and they have the ability. They published articles in Scopus and other journals. Of the other colleagues from Arabic countries, 90% of them studied in their country so they cannot speak English. They cannot write English. They cannot read articles or be open-minded with others (M6DUK).

One of my students noticed, and he told me, "You're different from other professors. I asked him, "Why?" He said, "You give us your contact information, and your office is always open" (M8DUSA).

5.3.5. Cognitive processes.

Table 5.9. Cognitive processes

Sub-themes	Summary
1. Self-concept clarity- responses	What are the main aspects within themselves which have been affected while they were on their visit abroad?
2. Self-discerning reflections- outcomes	What are the outcomes of becoming explicitly who they are, while achieving their desired goals and reflecting on their values?

Here the cognitive processes findings have been examined based on two main concepts: self-concept clarity and self-discerning reflection. However, based on the findings, the self-concept clarity represents the "response" findings, while self-discerning reflections represent the "outcomes" findings.

5.3.5.1 Self-concept clarity - responses.

According to the participants, study-abroad experience greatly impacts the fundamental structure of their self-concept. The participants revealed how their experience abroad helped them find out who they are, resulting from the accumulation of a variety of small experiences within their journey abroad. This includes the following elements:

- *Knowing their strengths and weaknesses.*

The participants indicated that the experience helped them to know themselves better, especially when facing problems or difficulties in their way to achieve their goals. Based on becoming knowledgeable of who they are, it helped improving their decision-making skills to be aligned with their values and to support their intuitions.

I learnt that I am not the kind of person who can be alone. I feel like if you know yourself, you will do a good job because the most important thing that you will know your threats and weaknesses (F2MUSA)

I do not want to say one of my difficulties, but I need to improve myself. I joined a public speaking society. I attended weekly training, mainly because I used to participate in conferences. I could sweat in presenting a poster (M10DUSA).

- ***Observing, reflecting, and learning.***

Some participants pointed out that the study abroad experiences allowed them to think freely and provided a suitable environment that encourages and supports good thoughts and more profound observations. Consequently, they reflected on their self-concept, and they become more positive about themselves and the world surrounding them.

Although it is not so cosy, it gives you time to clear up your mind, away from the cultural norms and all that you have learned from family, the government, and the educational system, and sit down with yourself through the ups and downs and try to navigate your way through the experience. I think that shows you who you are to yourself first before shows your authentic self to anyone else (M1DUSA).

I started to see things differently. I feel it was not in my mind before I went abroad. I had the time to think more, read more, and figure out why I do some of the things without understanding why I am doing them (M3MCA).

Furthermore, meeting people with different ideas and ideologies helped them examine their future goals from a different perspective. In addition, it made them identify the suitable mechanisms to develop who they are, such as choosing the right friends.

> *I learned to choose my friends. Some friends that you have, live with or travel with or*
> *you like to spend more time with (M8DUSA)*

They indicated livening abroad allowed them to observe others get inspired and opened their minds to achieve the best of their journey abroad.

> *You will have free time to do lots of thinking and meet people who encourage you to think*
> *and critically analyse any thought or situation. I was interested in how people think about*
> *their religion and their decisions (M6DUK).*

5.3.5.2 Self-discerning reflections - outcomes.

In the interviews, the participants placed the emphasis on the importance of reflecting on their value system and examining the differences in values and norms between their home-country and the host-country. The process of constant reflection affected their daily and life decisions, while the host environment gave them the freedom to evaluate what is best for them. Some examples of self-discerning reflections are presented below.

- *Knowing themselves and staying loyal to their values*

The participants in this study pointed out that despite the feeling of conflicts in some situations abroad, they felt encouraged to evaluate the importance of their values and make their own choices.

> *I remember I was the only male in a team of females. It was not a big deal, but how to*
> *deal with the females. So, I decided to be in the middle. Sometimes, when a female*
> *classmate approaches me to explain something and asks to meet somewhere in the*
> *library, I must decide between my values. I am teacher assistant in a university, so I*

need to teach others, and I used to say yes when someone asks me for help, and this is my value (M2MUSA).

Most of the participants revealed that they became highly aware of their behaviour and values while abroad. At the same time, they stopped paying so much attention to the judgements of others and to the opinions that did not serve them.

I am not even afraid to dress up casually, even at work. I am not afraid of expressing my feelings and that I am different. I used to be afraid of being negatively judged by others when they knew I was different because I used to judge them when they were different from me (M1DUSA).

When I delivered my second baby, I didn't do what I did before with my first baby because when I went abroad and saw how people are simple, I preferred to become simple. I liked it; it made me save lots of money and efforts, and much more (F3MAUS).

F3MAUS pointed out that what she most learnt abroad was to be responsible and persistent at work. She gave one example about returning to her work in Saudi Arabia. She had an important managerial task to complete and submit, but she was in the last days of her pregnancy at the time of the deadline. But now that she had developed a high sense of responsibility towards her work, she insisted on finishing her work and refused to submit it incomplete even though her manager did not force her to do so.

I couldn't submit something missing or uncompleted (F3MAUS).

- ***Updating and adjusting their goals and values***

As they attested, the experience allowed the participants to observe western values, acknowledge them and choose what resonates with what kind of person they want to be, besides evaluating and testing their own values. In terms of observing the values of others and selecting what suits their values, M9DAUS found that he started to see everything as an opportunity to reflect on his values. As he explained:

> *In general, people there (in Australia) are individualistic. They focus on themselves and depend on themselves and appreciate autonomy; you are responsible for what you are doing. I like and appreciate autonomy and do not like individualism (M9DAUS).*

Some participants found that study abroad influenced their choices and goals in life, changing what they used to think was important to achieve. For example, F2MUSA indicated that she used to think that getting married is the most important thing to do in life. However, the experience changed her perspective about it, and she found herself thinking that marriage is a good thing but only with the right person who helped her to achieve all her goals.

> *I thought if I have goals in my life, I do not want to be married to someone who is not supportive and not give me any rich experience and only depend on me. This will just make the world heavier, and this is something I do not want (F2MUSA).*

Lastly, according to M6DUK the study abroad made him realise the importance of freedom to think and act in a way that suits himself and not others:

> *All people should be given the freedom to choose how they live and how they think. This is what the study-abroad experience taught me (M6DUK).*

5.4. Discussion.

This study has set out to explore the outcomes of studying abroad for the Saudi academic returnees interviewed (SARs), and the mechanisms that allow or hinder the acquisition of these outcomes. The study abroad outcomes were examined in terms of change in the SARs' affective, behavioural and cognitive processes by adopting the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001). In addition, this research has aimed to validate and extend previous research using the proposed conceptual framework of the long-term impact of acculturation - phase one, as presented in chapter 4.

The interviews revealed five overarching themes shaping the students' study-abroad experiences, including cross-culture transition, individual level, affective, behaviour and cognitive processes. This discussion intends to pinpoint some of the profound answers tailored to the study questions, while deliberately reflecting on previous studies and theories in the field found in the literature review and the theoretical background presented in chapters 2 and 4.

Culture shock as fuel for successful study-abroad experience:

The impact on SARs of studying abroad involved their experiencing some negative feelings and emotions such as feeling lost, depressed and lonely. However, the findings showed that these feelings occurred at the beginning of their journey abroad. They soon learnt to amend their behaviour and way of thinking to adapt to the new culture.

Although some participants did not indicate any cultural shock difficulties, particularly those doing their Masters' degrees or spent less than three years, the findings revealed the levelling-up experience that the participants all went through. They were overwhelmed by their studies and ignored the symptoms of culture shock. These findings can be explained by the cross-cultural adjustment theory, as the negative feelings represents the second stage of culture shock (frustration stage), while the sojourner will overcome this stage when learning

to adapt to the new way of living and become accustomed to the host-country environment (Furnham and Bochner,1982).

However, due to the cultural differences between Saudi culture and the four host countries (the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia), learning to adjust is difficult (ibid). Thus, facing culture shock is a common issue, and it may vary in length from one person to another.

The study confirmed the findings of previous studies that psychological outcomes of cultural adaption are double-edged. One edge is a temporary pain representing culture shock and results in feeling lost, depressed and angry (Oberg, 1960), while the second edge involves long-term outcomes (Anderson, 1994; Kim, 2001).

The findings revealed that even if the cultural shock is perceived as a negative experience at the beginning, it acts as fuel for a successful abroad experience. For example, the complications that the SARs faced abroad helped them focus their energy on cultural discovery. Starting with themselves, they went on to observe their surroundings more carefully, having the time and freedom to think clearly and reflect on their new circumstances. Consequently, the experience helped open their mind to diversity, elevate their spiritual stamina, and make them feel accepted and accept others, while encouraging them to seek answers for their wondering questions. These findings suggest that with an affective influence, behavioural and cognitive processes change.

Their individual choices are the main drive:

Although previous research findings indicated, that due to individual differences, individuals may not represent their entire country population (Voronov and Singer, 2002), this study found individual differences were insufficient for achieving better adjustment and the potential outcomes of studying abroad. Furthermore, the study found that the motivations to study abroad represents only inspirational motives to step out of their comfort zone, whereas the reality could differ when they reached the host-country.

Instead, the findings suggested the role of individuals' choices and cognitive ability; in particular, their internal motivation to acquire the skills needed for better adjustment. Moreover, the participants' determinations and demand to change as well as the effect of loneliness and loss have helped convert bitterness into sweetness. Furthermore, those who were single or had no immediate family support went through more difficulties than others which, interestingly, helped them stand up strongly, work towards their planned goals and experience massive changes.

Our research also found that the SARs' motivations to study abroad were primarily inspirational motives to step out of their comfort zone, whereas the reality often differed when they reached the host-country. The above finding matches Torbiörn's (1982) conclusion, indicating that the adjustment processes to a new culture requires some changes and modification to the sojourner's behaviour and their adoption of new perspectives about the world to achieve harmony between their behaviour and their sociocultural environment in order to overcome any psychological imbalance due to their new environment.

In this sense, the mechanisms within the individual level are not enough to drive the person for a change, but it is the personal choices throughout their experience. Knowing this before the experience abroad is important for the individual not only to rely on their existing circumstances but to keep an eye on every opportunity for growth and learning. In addition, because the participants were sponsored by their workplace, their situations and goals are most probably different from those who are not sponsored or have no workplace to return to upon their return. This study thus adds to the extant knowledge about how being a sponsored employee affects the way they learn and change abroad.

The role of the host-country:

The findings suggested that one of the key outcomes of the role of the host-country in facilitating socialisation is to influence cross-cultural transition. Although the sample's distribution between the four host countries (the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia) is unequal - which should be considered a limitation of this study - the participants responded differently regarding their socialisation with foreigners. For example, the US graduates found socialising easy, even with native speakers, whereas others indicated socialisation difficulties with locals and described them unfriendly. In this sense, the host-country affects the participants' socialisation and with whom they socialised. The importance of socialisation stems from its role in facilitating study abroad outcomes. Socialisation with foreigners from different cultures leads to a number of confrontations because the more people with whom they have contact, the more they realise the differences between them which activates their self-concept clarity and reflecting. Consequently, whether they accept each other or not, socialisation is the way to survive and fit in, and they will have to learn to cope with it. Moreover, the findings suggest that a host country or city having the profile of a friendly environment welcoming differences, accepting diversity and having open-minded people can well contribute to better adjustment abroad. Socialisation and building friendships with different nationalities will be encouraged in such an environment, which results in improving English competency and ensuring a successful international experience.

Lacking the knowledge on which to base a decision about the optimal host country and focusing the students' attention on which university is best for their subject leads to a disregard for other critical factors such as socialisation. However, our study findings added new knowledge because to the best of the researcher's knowledge, they explore the impact of host country on SARs intercultural and socialisation competencies across four different countries.

Acquiring important skills for their workplace:

Our research found that study abroad affects the development of creativity behaviour. Besides completing their degrees, the participants also observe, reflect, learn and set up future goals to benefit their workplace after returning. Based on the findings, we discovered that the SARs hoped and planned to adapt their newly acquired knowledge and observations to their workplace, society and country, including teaching style, research skills, communication skills, leadership skills, organisation skills, decision-making and dealing with stress.

Here the findings aligned with Fee and Gray (2012), indicating that the acquisition of a flexible and creative mindset is one of the natural consequences that the sojourners perceived due to their psychological adjustment and self-reflexive processes. Moreover, the findings showed that the participants become more self-confidence, which can be seen in their research skills and published papers. Moreover, some of them were eager to incorporate new learning techniques to their work, such as group discussion and out-of-class activities. However, except for obtaining their degrees the participants lack the knowledge of what is expected from them to achieve abroad, entailing that they must allow time to realise these new skills and enact the corresponding change in behaviour after their return.

Developing self-leadership:

The study findings add new knowledge indicating that, for the first time, the impact of studying abroad is the development of self-leadership. This development entails the existence of personal guidance created by the sojourners themselves based on their observations and reflections throughout their journey abroad, ultimately to achieve their goals and vision. Developing self-leadership stems from the SARs' determination and commitment to achieve their desired goals while not neglecting any opportunity for improvement throughout their experience abroad, despite their gender, level of education and the culture of their host-country. However, the study revealed the existence of some facilitators to develop self-

leadership, such as free time, fewer responsibilities and freedom and independence abroad. Moreover, the length and the nature of their experience play a significant role in how much they perceived and practised these skills abroad (Manz and Sims, 1980).

However, the findings suggested that the impact of studying abroad on self-leadership is due to the changes in their cognitive processes. The participants revealed that their experience gave them the chance to reflect and gain a clear picture of themselves, including identifying their obstacles or weaknesses, figuring out their plans, distinguishing their priorities and motivating themselves when needed. The study suggested that this process is activated by two types of motivations: external motivations and internal motivations, where external motivations play a major role in how they perceive and reflect while navigating what they want to achieve. For example, the participants revealed that having the opportunity to observe others during their lectures or conferences encouraged them to put more effort into developing their skills. The above finding is consistent with social learning theory (Manz and Sims, 1980), indicating that the person will change due to external trigger, which in the case of a sojourner in a new culture involves dealing with different norms and expectations to be attained.

Study abroad impacts on cognitive processes:

While previous studies (Ramirez, 2016; Niehoff, Petersdotter and Freund, 2017; Zimmermann and Neyer, 2013) suggested the role of personality traits, especially extraversion and openness in achieving successful experience abroad, the current study highlights the significance of the cognitive processes. Our findings show that study-abroad experience allows the participants to gain a clearer picture of both themselves and the external world, thus developing their cognitive processes. Starting with themselves, they begin to understand what they like and dislike, along with their values and goals.

Due to the cultural differences between their home-country and the host-country, the participants experienced continuous reflection on their values and, as a result, they became

more understanding of others and open-minded. Even for those who revealed a lack of openness and extraversion, the experience influenced their personality and help them overcome some of their weaknesses, especially when it came to socialisation and accepting others. Furthermore, the recognition of their values benefited them in different ways: first, it helped them learn how to adapt to a new culture; second, they learnt how to stop caring about others' negative behaviour, especially judgemental behaviour; and third, they developed an open-minded mentality and the ability to reflect on their values and why they believe in them. However, the development of cognitive processes resulted in accumulated benefits to the SARs behaviour, including developing their career, choosing the rightful friends, improving communication skills and becoming open-minded. These outcomes are consistent with previous studies that linked self-concept clarity with acquiring positive outcomes such as psychological well-being (Nezlek and Plesko, 2001), psychological adjustment (Campbell, Assanand and Paula, 2003), relationship satisfaction (Lewandowski, Nardone and Raines, 2010), life satisfaction (Mittal, 2015), purpose in life (Błażek and Besta, 2012), adaptation to stress (Lee-Flynn *et al.,* 2011), cooperative problem-solving in conflict situations (Bechtoldt *et al.,* 2010) and job performance (Earl and Bright, 2007).

Based on these findings, the study abroad experiences proved to be one of the unique experiences that a person can go through. It contributed an overall upgrade to their mental health and behaviour. We can conclude that the self-concept clarity and self-discerning reflection are thus expected during the abroad experience. However, the outcomes were crucial in achieving successful abroad experience and long-lasting benefits at their personal and organisational level.

*Conclusion***:**

These study findings broadly support the theory of acculturation by Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) while offering unique insights into the SARs' study abroad experiences.

Overall, the study contributed to the existing body of knowledge by pointing out the importance of the host country in improving socialisation and intercultural competencies. Furthermore, the study indicated the importance of affective reflected on the participants feeling and the experience of culture shock which contributes to the development of other potential benefits of the study abroad experience. The findings are consistent with Adler (1975) who states that to readjust abroad and overcome the cultural shock, sojourners will develop routines and encounter limitless experiences and situations, including their way of thinking about themselves and others, meaning that their way of behaviour may be changed. Consequently, they will adopt new attitudes and behaviour, including changing self-concept or definition (ibid).

The study found no significant role for the mechanisms at the individual level in developing any of the potential outcomes of study abroad, except for the personal choices of taking the opportunity to grow or let go. It is their personal responsibility to observe, reflect and act accordingly to achieve these benefits.

Furthermore, in terms of their behavioural change, some SARs have the vision to learn the skills needed to thrive on their journey abroad and after their return, such as developing self-leadership, learning new teaching skills, practising research and participating in conferences. Moreover, the study confirmed that any changes that the person experienced abroad started from their cognitive functioning, while the igniting of self-concept clarity and self-discerning reflection are at the essence of their development. Thus, the study confirmed the findings of Adam et al. (2018) who emphasise the mutual influence between cognitive process and any potential benefits of the study-abroad experience.

In addition, the role of socialisation and facing confrontations with others due to cultural differences should not be neglected in triggering self-concept clarity and self-discerning reflection. Those who lived in an environment where they had endless opportunities to interact with host nationals or international people were, in general, more likely to practice

these two outcomes than others. The participants thus differed in terms of the outcomes of studying abroad based on the host-country.

This research has also offered some practical recommendations for optimising the benefits accrued from study abroad. The findings suggest that it is important to provide future potential Saudi Academic employees with explicit knowledge of how to progress abroad, including what to expect during their journey, the potential outcomes of study abroad and how to achieve these outcomes. Furthermore, it is important to explain that change is not a scary phenomenon, as its benefits exceed the personal level in the workplace, community and country.

Finally, understanding the impact of study-abroad experience on SARs concerning their affective, behaviour and cognitive processes leads to a crucial question about the corresponding impact of the home-country transition on their accumulated outcomes. Have they been able to sustain these changes, and what are the challenges they pose to their home-country? Thus, a new scope for research should consider answering the above questions, determining what could be done to gain the maximum benefits of study abroad for the risk is that we will lose the benefits if we neglect the importance of maintaining and fostering these benefits after the SARs return home. Thus, the following chapter will attempt to answer these questions in follow-up interviews with the same participants.

Chapter 6.

Qualitative study of the long-term impact of study abroad on SARs' change and self-development (time two)

6.1. Introduction.

Previous research has indicated that the readjustment experience is more complex than adjustment (Adler, 1981; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992; Chamove and Soeterik, 2006; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Martin, 1984; Storti, 2011). This is because the returnees go through a number of difficulties upon their return that involves readjustment processes in the psychological more than the physical sense (Arthur, 2003), so affecting the sustainability of study abroad outcomes. The complexity of readjustment stems from the inward journey and the impact on self and others (Osland, 2000) While the impact of studying abroad on students' change and self-development is under-researched, the existing body of knowledge on the impact of readjustment on the study abroad outcomes is limited. This study hence expands the previous literature, examining the impact of home-county transition on the Saudi academic returnees (SARs) study-abroad outcomes and the readjustment related-mechanisms that affect the sustainability of these outcomes.

In chapter 5, the study abroad outcomes in relation to the changes in SARs' affective, behaviour and cognitive processes were explored using semi-structured interviews. This chapter covers the follow-up interviews conducted to investigate the role of home-country transition on the sustainability of the perceived outcomes of studying abroad. The study

extends the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) to test and validate the proposed conceptual framework of the long-term impact of acculturation - phase two. Here the conceptual framework was developed based on the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) as well as the results and synthesis of the systematic literature review SLR presented earlier in chapter 4. The SLR identified some limitations in the extant literature while drawing out the implications needing to be considered by future research to deepen understanding of the expected outcomes of study abroad. It also covered the barriers to accruing these outcomes, and the facilitators, as well as exploring the impact of returning home experience on the sustainability of these outcomes (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001).

Our study thus focuses on answering three research questions: (1) Do returning academics perceive themselves to be different from those who have not been abroad in terms of their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes? (2) Are the returning academics able to sustain the benefits of study abroad? and (3) How does the readjustment of returnees to their home country affect their ability to sustain the benefits of study abroad? Answering these questions is essential because finding out what could be done to maximise the beneficial outcomes of study abroad is worthless if the importance of sustaining and supporting these outcomes after returning home is neglected. This chapter hence explains the method of data collection and data analysis as well as presenting the study results and discussion.

6.2. Data collection and analysis.

This section covers three main points regarding the methodology of this study. These points have been signposted to highlight the process the researcher implemented before presenting the main findings of this study. While full details are provided in the methodology chapter, these three points are given below, as follows:

The participants.

Twelve Saudi academic returnees out of fourteen took part in the follow-up interviews over six months after their first interviews at T1 (refer to chapter 3 for the sampling procedure and criteria). Although the study aimed to interview the same participants as in chapter 5, two participants withdrew because they showed unwillingness to participate in the follow-up interviews for various reasons, such as being busy and overwhelmed with responsibilities. The participants' full characteristics were explained in table 6.1.

Data collection procedure.

The study employed semi-structured interviews to provide a meaningful way to learn and explore the readjustment experience of the SARs and its impact on the sustainability of their study-abroad outcomes in relation to changes in their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes after one year of their repatriation. The interview questions were based on the second phase of the proposed conceptual framework of the long-term impact of acculturation (see chapter 4, Fig. 4.2), as well as the findings of the first phase captured in chapter 5. Therefore, the questions consisted of three parts:

1. SARs home-country transition and their feelings about returning home.
2. Their behavioural change in terms of intercultural competence, self-leadership and creativity behaviour because of their home-country transition.
3. Any changes in their cognitive processes development since returning.

After their development, the interview questions were examined by the two supervisors to check their accuracy in relevance to the main research questions and the purpose of extending the extant literature and validate the proposed conceptual framework (See appendix F for the time-two interview questions). The researcher conducted the interviews of this study over the

phone and Skype application based on the participants' preferences between October and

December 2019. The length of each interview was between 30-60 minutes.

Methodological orientation and theory.

Similar to the time-one qualitative study in chapter 5, a thematic analysis methodology was

employed to analyse the interviews data for the purposes of this study. The themes and

coding processes were conducted manually, using NVIVO10 to develop the nodes (themes)

and record the data. Many trials were involved in this procedure. The coding element

represents a basic unit of the interview transcript to be coded. Finally, the researcher carefully

examined all the interviews transcripts to develop corresponding themes. The final themes

adapted the dimensions of the theory of acculturation, including home-country transition, the

individual level, and affective, behavioural and cognitive processes.

Table 6.1. The participants' characteristics.

no	Participants' code	Gender	Age	Status	No. kids	Host-country	Duration of study abroad	Months since Return to work	Education level studied	Subject studied	Previous experience abroad
1	*F1DUSA	Female	31	M	2	USA	4 years	13 months	PHD	Law	yes
2	F2MUSA	Female	27	S		USA	4 years	11 months	MSc	HR	No
3	M1DUSA	Male	32	S		USA	9 years	12 months	PHD	Computer science	No
4	M2MUSA	Male	29	M		USA	3 years	15 months	MSc	Pharmacology	No
5	M3MCA	Male	33	M	1	Canada	4 years	12 months	MSc	Exercise science	No
6	M4MUSA	Male	28	M		USA	3 years	14 months	MSc	Computer science	No
7	M5MUSA	Male	28	M		USA	3.5 years	11 months	MSc	Management	No
8	M6DUK	Male	40	M	4	UK	6 years	13 months	PHD	Management	No
9	M7DUSA	Male	33	M		USA	8 years	16 months	PHD	Political science	Yes
10	M8DUSA	Male	31	M	2	USA	9 years	12 months	PHD	Computer engineering	No
11	F3MAUS	Female	29	M	2	Australia	3 years	13 Months	Master	Computer science	No
12	M10DUK	Male	36	M	2	UK	5 years	12 weeks	PHD	Human resource management	Yes

*Participant code consists of gender, participation number, level of education and the host-country. For example, F1DUSA: participant number 1 is female and got her PhD from the USA.

6.3. The study findings.

This section illustrates the results derived from the data gathered during the semi-structured interviews, including detailed explanations of the home-country transition on the sustainability of the study-abroad outcomes for SARs regarding the changes in their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes and the mechanisms that determine those outcomes. The data obtained was analysed and classified around five main themes, including home-country transition, the individual level, and the affective, behavioural and cognitive processes. In addition, several subthemes and codes were identified submitted under each theme. The overarching themes and subthemes are presented in table 6.2.

Table 6.2. The overarching themes and subthemes.

Main themes	Sub-themes
Home-country transition	
Individual level	1. Personal characteristics 2. Situational characteristics
Affective	1. Responses 2. Outcomes
Behaviour	1. Intercultural competence 2. Self-leadership 3. Creativity behaviour
Cognitive processes	1. Self-concept clarity- responses 2. Self-discerning reflections- outcomes

To clarify and simplify each of the main themes presented above in table 6.2, two tables were created, as follows:

1. Table 6.3. Mechanisms.

2. Table 6.4. Outcomes.

The themes and subthemes are discussed in detail here, while quotes are provided in the section below. To illustrate the main themes and sub-themes more clearly, seven tables of the

main themes have been created with a summary of the findings of each theme to give an

overview of the findings.

Table 6.3. Mechanisms.

Main themes	Sub-themes		Codes
Home-country transition			
The individual level	1. Personal characteristics	Upbringing Extension of their social life	
	2. Situational characteristics	Culture and social life	- Amount and quality of inter and intra group relationship - Society behaviour and cultural values
		Education and work-related characteristics	- Support in the workplace - Length of stay abroad

Table 6.4. Outcomes.

Main themes	Sub-themes	Responses	Outcomes
Affective		- Facing differences in terms of Social and cultural values - Findings differences at work	- Feelings about their return - Feeling unsettled at the workplace
Behavioural	1. Intercultural competence	- Limited exposure to different cultures	- Communication skills - Open-minded
	2. Self-leadership	- Independent and responsible - Recognising the importance of time and goal setting - Self-motivation	- Coping strategy and organisation skills - Learning life skills
	3. Creativity behaviour	- Appreciating the journey and recognising the differences	- Knowledge transfer - Conducting research - Uniqueness
Cognitive processes	1. Self-concept clarity- responses 2. Self-discerning reflections- outcomes	- Knowing their values and priorities - Observing, reflecting and learning	- Knowing themselves and staying loyal to the main values - Updating and adjusting their goals and values

6.3.1. Home-country transition.

Table 6.5. Home-country transition.

Main theme	Summary
Home-country transition	Explains the SARs' difficulties regarding life changes and problems upon their return

The interviews involved some questions regarding the participants' readjustment experience and the challenges and difficulties they experienced. In general, the interviews show that home-country transition experience differs between the participants, being that some perceived it as an easy transition, while others took it to be a difficult one.

I found it to be an easy transition. Everything is smooth, and I believe I am doing great work (F2MUSA).

It was somewhat good; I cannot say it was perfect. I have experienced a couple of hurdles and obstacles. So, the transition was kind of slow (M7DUSA).

The SARs faced number of challenges and difficulties during their home-country transition. They can be summed up under finding and presenting their new identity while reflecting and learning some coping strategy to fit back. One of these challenges is lack of knowledge about their workplace culture due to their absence abroad and the fundamental changes to their identity. Consequently, they found it challenging to adopt a suitable workstyle at work because there were unwritten procedures and rules to recognise, which drew them into conflicts at the beginning until they discovered their way and adjusted their behaviour.

I may have liked to work exactly in the same way I worked in the UK, just following the rules. When I arrived in Saudi Arabia, I dealt with conflicts just in the regulations and terms. But now, no, I need to be clever to understand the situation, not just take it literally (M6DUK).

I used to take every task seriously, but I found out that whatever they ask is unplanned and not well organised enough. When I take it seriously, I discovered later that it was not serious since the beginning, so why should I put all the effort and work, and in the end, it is not that serious? (M7DUSA)

The second challenge was finding a work-life balance. The participants in this study experienced difficulties due to heavy workloads and overwhelming responsibilities which have distracted them from pursuing their goals.

I am the head of the department, and I am dealing with a lot of things daily, but I am really interested in self-growth. I am taking the things that will help me be a better leader, but right now, I do not have the time in my schedule to work on that (F1DUSA).

The workload was piling up, I have experienced some disorganisation. Basically, some requests and some tasks were not organised in a timely manner (M7DUSA).

The third challenge is facing a society and culture assuming that academic employees, especially those with a PhD degree, have a prestigious social status, which means they must act in a highly profound way to be admired and respected by society and to protect their reputations. This obligation entails hiding and sacrificing their real self. Thus, some SARs found it to be a burden because it affects their daily and personal lives.

When I talk with another doctor or some professors, I have to say prof or 'Dr" first. This applies to the students in the first place. You must be concerned about the kind of stuff, especially when writing on Twitter or social media, or even when adding comments to your friends. For example, before I used to send some jokes or be informal, such as sending "What is up now?" Now there are some rules and special manners that I must be careful with because of society and my status (M10DUK).

6.3.2.   The individual level.

Table 6.6. The individual level

Sub-themes	Summary
1. Personal characteristics 2. Situational characteristics	The study highlights the important mechanisms that might facilitate or lessen the SARs home-country transition.

The participants in this study differ based on two types of individual differences: personal characteristics and situational characteristics. Personal characteristics refer to demographic characteristics, experiences, and personal skills and capabilities, whereas situational characteristics refer to cultural and social life, and the education and work-related factors during their home-country transition.

6.3.2.1 Personal characteristics.

Based on the interviews, the twelve participants differed in their personal characteristics, including their upbringing and expansion of their social life. Consequently, these characteristics affected the participants' home-country transition and, as a result, might affect the sustainability of their study-abroad outcomes.

Upbringing.

Some of the study participants attribute their overall skills to their upbringing and not only to the study abroad experience. For example, F1DUSA explained that her personality and leadership skills came from her upbringing as well as her study-abroad experience.

> *I think I have it in my character. My mom is an ex-dean at the university (F1DUSA).*

In addition, M7DUSA pointed out that his upbringing – specifically, how his American mother raised him - affected his behaviour, particularly in being open-minded and accepting others.

> *I was raised there (in USA), but it is how I have been nurtured. It is how my mother has raised me. My mother taught me a lot of things that I realised I have gained from her, not from living in the United States. Like accepting other cultures, being humble, and not being biased towards any race or gender (M7DUSA).*

Extension of their social life.

For some participants, returning home meant being transferred from a smaller family to a bigger one, which in turn involved more commitments and responsibilities. They thus pointed out that the extension of their social life affected their time management, being independent and keeping up with the things they like to do.

> *It is a different life, especially with my bigger family. I have more commitments and spend less time with my wife and so my son. Sometimes I do not have time for training and going to the gym (M3MCA).*

> *I feel I am now less independent just because we are always connected with the family and the bigger family. We have family gatherings, and we socialise a lot. I socialise with my family and my in-laws at least two or three times a week (F1DUSA).*

6.3.2.2 Situational characteristics.

The situational characteristics includes two types of cultural and social life, and education and work-related characteristics.

Cultural and social life

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- *Amount and quality of inter- and intra-relationships.*

Some participants explained their socialisation after returning. The element they most perceived was their relationship with their colleagues. For example, M5MUSA discussed his relationship with others, particularly his old friends and friends from work. On the subject of his old friends, he noticed himself becoming mentally disconnected from them, unlike his friends at work. He explained that this could be related to changes in his interests and his focus after the study-abroad experience.

> When I go with my friends, I do not enjoy being with them. Their mentality is not the same as mine, because I feel when I am talking, they do not get my point that I am trying to explain to them, and they are talking about different points. Whereas with my colleagues, I find myself talking with people who understood everything I am saying (M5MUSA).

- *Societal behaviour and cultural values.*

The interviews reveal that certain issues related to the cultural values and behavioural characteristics of Saudi society might affect the SARs home-country transition and, in turn, the sustainability of the acquired benefits of study abroad.

The first issue was that the returnees found themselves in a society that appreciates conformity and criticised those who act differently. They explained that their new habit of sharing their opinions and curiosities has been perceived negatively and not been welcome in society.

> When we have different opinions, they feel that I will not agree with them, and I might even have changed my beliefs and the kind of people I synchronise with. They will judge me just because I become different (F2MUSA).

... you should be careful of what you are saying. Sometimes they take it seriously with hurt feeling, or they classify you somehow; you are from that group, you are from this group. This is what I found (M4MUSA).

As a result, owing to the influence of the Saudi society, some participants found out that some Saudi graduate returnees made sure to preserve and protect themselves while abroad by avoiding anything that might challenge their beliefs and values system and would, as a result, change them.

Some people go abroad and pretend they are the same people. This is what beats me (F2MUSA).

According to the participants, people with a normal lifestyle focused on earning their salary and enjoying their time with family and friends are strangely more appreciated in the society. Surprisingly, putting in extra effort at work by being creative or taking the initiatives are taken as odd and abnormal actions, for which you might find yourself criticised. Accordingly, the participants aimed to do so in their work as they had been instructed by a higher authority.

They kind of get stuck into the bureaucratic process here. I might be wrong, but I feel that they become just regular bureaucrat. They just want to finish whatever they must do in terms of teaching (M7DUSA).

In effect, they became demotivated and dissuaded from making an extra effort or progressing in their work, such as continuing their study abroad.

They do have the opportunity to go and study abroad, but they don't want to! They keep finding justifications to avoid going. For example, one of the excuses one of my

colleagues saying is that he wants to get his PhD from anywhere the easiest and

fastest way, and he hasn't gone until now (M6DUSA).

Nevertheless, F2MUSA explained that her colleague has criticised her for making some effort to educate her society about breast cancer.

She was feeling so bad: "Why are you' doing this?" She felt like I am doing a lot, and

this is not required from me; she treated me as stupid (F2MUSA).

The second issue is judgmental behaviour, which part of the society find to be natural behaviour. They thus have the right to express how they feel about others.

...here in Saudi, pretty much everyone is going to turn against you if you start arguing

with them about, "Hey, what you said is just so wrong, it's so judgmental." The people

here don't think that this is wrong, or they don't even consider it being racist, they just

consider it as a fact for some reason. No one needs to do anything about it (M1DUSA).

We are not easy to accept people from a different ethnicity or a different culture or

different religion, it was hard for us to accept, and I still feel it's hard (M3MCAN).

Education and work-related characteristics

- ### Support in the workplace.

In terms of their workplace environment, the participants differed between having a supportive and encouraging environment and facing conflicts and an unhealthy working situation.

The team is just very nice. They like you to be motivated and give ideas from other

countries. So, there's somewhat opportunity to change and give your ideas

(M10DUK).

I can still have the same ambitions because I have the environment that supports me. My workplace provides many benefits for us as the faculties, such as opportunities to study abroad, to publish articles, and many rewards and compensations(M6DUK).

However, some of the research participants found themselves stuck in some situations that affect their well-being at work. Such behaviour includes prejudiced behaviour at work because of their gender, level of education, or where they studied abroad. For example, M7DUSA pointed out that his colleagues displayed some jealousy and disrespectful behaviour towards USA graduates.

... because of the university administration and the government, itself, they put a higher priority to those who get their PhDs from the United States. Other people (who did not study abroad or in the USA) sometimes try to mock us and try to look down upon us and try to make us, I do not know, just feel bad (M7DUSA).

Regarding the level of education, unlike the participants with PhDs the Masters' degree graduates were not given the chance to contribute to development and changes at their work because of lacking experience and not yet having their PhD.

You cannot decide or make your voice unless you have a PhD, then your ideas will be welcomed or maybe can be implemented at your work (M3MCA).

The problem that they look at you that you need experience, you are still a teaching assistant or a lecturer who does not have the experience to participate or to recommend a change (F2MUSA).

Even when attending the department meeting, F2MUSA explained how she felt during the meeting. She observed how the ideas and opinions of the female members of the department were unheard and neglected.

> *The meetings are conducted through an online service between the male and female members of our department. However, the control is with male members, and they will not hear us (ignore us), and whatever happened, the female members will talk to each other and discuss their ideas alone. While the male members are not giving them their chance to share or be responsible (F2MUSA).*

Besides, the SARs indicated the importance of the leader's role at work to provide guidance and support to the returnees when needed so they can work effectively.

> *...I think the cause of the problem was the leadership or the supervisors they just let us to start the work without explaining what our responsibilities are, and what is expected from us (M2MUSA).*

> *The dean of the school gave me the freedom to move anywhere I can go by applying good things for the school. He just gave me a good chat to address a good ground for the students with my other colleagues (M4MUSA).*

In addition, the participants discussed the importance of having a vibrant, supportive environment that is efficient in sustaining the skills that they have acquired abroad and wish to practice and implement.

> *I hope that they leave their way of practising work like before. Even administratively, they procrastinate for writing a letter, for example. When we ask to change this type of work behaviour, it does not mean that we are going against you, but we just want a vibrant, energized work environment (M7DUSA).*

If you have a good leader who listen and apply what you suggest, this is going to be

helpful. But if you find the other way, your leader does not want to do any changes or

feels he or she is the best, that is going to be difficult to deal with (M2MUSA).

- ***Length of stay abroad.***

Some participants suggested a possible positive link between the length of their study-abroad experience and the extent of the changes they perceived themselves to undergo abroad. They believed that such changes might therefore affect their home-country transition.

I think my personality changed a lot. Four years, it is not something simple

(F2MUSA).

Besides, some indicated that they have not perceived changes within themselves occurring while they were abroad.

… because if you have been raised for a long time in a country and you just left that

country for a couple of years and came back, it is kind of very fast to readjust your

situation to Saudi life (M3MCA).

I do not think (I changed) much because it is who I am… my PhD was longer (more than

four years), but I was in Saudi Arabia for the rest of the time because my husband could

not stay with me in the USA, and we chose to stay together (F1DUSA).

6.3.3. Affective.

Table 6.7. Affective.

Sub-themes	Summary
1. Responses 2. Outcomes	Identified some of the participants' feeling and emotions within one year of their return.

6.3.3.1 Responses.

Facing differences in terms of social and cultural values.

The interviews revealed how the SARs felt about their home-country transition. Most of these feelings were about dealing with Saudi culture which they felt unaccustomed to. The first difference that some of them experienced was facing a different life than the one they were used to while abroad.

When I was there in the USA, if I wanted to socialise, it is my choice, but here, it is like the culture pushes you to socialise (M5MUSA).

… I am much comfortable here (in Saudi Arabia). The only thing that I miss here is privacy; I feel I want to be with my family, but I need my own private time (F2MUSA).

It might sound silly but especially talking to women is taboo, which is weird as well. Well, I know this is Saudi, but because out of those nine years, I came to Saudi like four times or so. I became not so accustomed to that (M1DUSA).

Findings differences at work.

Besides finding differences in terms of the cultural values, the participants shared their feeling about being overwhelmed because of their work.

There are many responsibilities at work. Even at the weekend I go to work because I have administrative responsibility and teaching responsibility too (M10DUSA).

In addition, they described facing differences at work, especially when dealing with their students, work environment and colleagues. For example, some participants revealed frustration and confusion in how to deal with their students due to their mindset and the perception of not expressing their opinions which have affected their learning behaviour.

When I went to America, I found that their teaching style literally different from Saudi Arabia. They want you to write when you have an assignment, and they want to know your opinion. However, the Saudi students here don't want to say their opinions and only want to know what their teachers want them to know (M5MUSA).

With regard to dealing with their work environment and colleagues, M2MUSA shared his feeling of resentment towards some of the Saudi returnees who had completed their study abroad in the western country, claiming that they are better than others regardless of the quality of their experiences.

If they find someone who is disagreeing with them about any idea, they will just finish the conversation and end it by saying, "I know more than you, because I graduated from the USA or the UK". That is not very pleasant, you know! (M2MUSA).

6.3.3.2 Outcomes.

Feelings about their return.

The participants in this research expressed some gratitude of having the opportunity to study abroad and accomplish their goals.

I think I had the privilege of having a very good experience as an actual experience instead of just changing the address per se, as in living and being with people from abroad (M1DUSA).

One of the positive outcomes that made them feel satisfied at work is having the confident and the ability to enjoy spreading and sharing their knowledge with their students.

This semester, I am teaching for about twenty hours a week, but I do not feel overwhelmed; I love these courses, and I love what I am doing (F3MAUS).

My transition was smooth and fine. I really liked going back to my work again and teach my students some knowledge and experience that I have learned abroad. I feel proud of myself for what I have done so far (M3MCA).

According to some participants, the recent changes in Saudi Arabia are in line with Prince Mohammed bin Salman's 2030 vision. These reforms have made their transition much easier and they confirm that they are happy about it.

Actually, Saudi society has changed as well as us (after study abroad experience), so we go in the same way (M6DUK).

My country now is not as when I left. I'm happy with the changes we have right now, and I hope we could improve it more, and we can do that if we continue to work as we do back in the foreign country (M3MCA).

Feeling unsettled at the workplace.

In contrary, some SARs shared some hapless and disappointment feelings due to difficulties at work to apply what they have learnt abroad.

At work, they are making me feel depressed; they change my courses a lot, even after the third week. This has affected me a lot. Usually, I am an organised person, all planned, but now, I feel I am not doing the same way I used to do (F2MUSA).

My colleagues and I started to get disappointed. we give up on doing and suggesting all these creative ideas (M2MUSA).

6.3.4. Behaviour.

Table 6.8. Behaviour

Sub-themes	Summary
1. Intercultural competence	*Response* The SARs recognised that interaction with different nationalities is very limited in Saudi Arabia
	Outcome What are the most important outcomes of intercultural skills the SARs sustained after returning home?
2. Self-leadership	*Response* How the SARs practice self-leadership after returning home
	Outcome Different outcomes of self-leadership recognised by the participants including using target strategy and target behaviour.
3. Creativity behaviour	*Response* How did the SARs perceive the whole experience of study abroad and returning to their home-country?
	Outcome

	What are the profound outcomes of recognising the impact of their experience abroad on their growth and career after their return?

6.3.4.1 Intercultural competence.

Responses:

- *Limited exposure to different cultures.*

The participants explained that interacting with different nationalities is very limited in Saudi Arabia. They added that they only interact with different nationalities from Arabic countries, and they already know how to deal with them before studying abroad.

> *The problem here is that we do not have diversity at work. We have people from different nationalities, from India and Egypt, but these people have adapted to our society. I do not have a lot of conversations or arguments about my belief or my society belief. I believe that here (in Saudi Arabia), I am missing those things (F2MUSA).*

> *I had opportunities to meet Saudis who came from different cities to study in the UK. But here in Saudi Arabia this is quite difficult to happen (M6DUK).*

Outcomes:

As a result of study abroad and acquiring some intercultural competencies, according to the participants, they have developed better communication skills and have become open-minded.

- *Communication skills.*

> *I tried to be receptive, I listen and I make my argument. If the other person agrees, then fine. If he maybe has a good argument and convinces me, then I am open to that (M7DUSA).*

> *I am listening more now to anyone around me. Now I am giving the time and space for everyone around me to share and discuss their ideas. They can recommend or advise or do whatever they want. I am having more patience than before (M2MUSA).*

The participants have also shed the light on some advice for potential Saudi students regarding the importance of having better communication skills to overcome culture shock and adjust better to the host-country.

> *Try to be patient because this is a new experience for you, a new culture. Even the people over there are different from what they used to deal in your country. That would be the way to get the experience and the patience from that experience (M2MUSA).*

> *You will find a lot of difference between our culture and their culture. So, do not be shocked because the American style or Western style is different (M5DUSA).*

A good way to overcome culture shock experience and become open-minded is by having friends from different cultures.

> *Try to learn, try to meet as many people as you can. Talk to people and have random conversations. You never know whom you can learn from (F1DUSA).*

> *Try to be more social with people; try to understand their culture. Also, some of them may need to understand your culture, so they can accept you (M3MCA).*

Regarding having Saudi friends abroad, the participants differed in their perspectives. Some of them were advised not to have Saudi friends while abroad because it was a distraction from getting the best of study-abroad experience, especially in regard to developing intercultural competence.

> *If that person goes to Saudi clubs and Saudi club events and live with Saudis, I would say there is no need to even bother with it. Just stay in Saudi, really. That is less of a hassle (M1DUSA).*

> *Stay away from Arabs or anyone who is speaking your language. Try to gain the language of the country that you are in. Try to be a part of any academic gatherings or conferences at your university. Try to get the most educational things from the culture that you are in (M2MUSA).*

Conversely, some others indicated that engaging with the Saudi community is somehow beneficial at some level.

> *It would be helpful if you had some Saudi friends because of the culture. They are helpful in difficult situations (M5MUSA).*

> *I think it is important to engage with the Saudi community abroad, especially with people in your subject, because all of us need each other. So, try to create a good friendship with them; you will need them after, maybe even when you come back (M6DUK).*

- *Open-minded.*

Some participants indicated that interacting with others at work, even if they are non-Saudis, could help in knowledge exchange.

Even though they have a different teaching style, I might learn something or like something from their thinking. I think we add to each other (F2MUSA).

In Australia, I learned how to do the calculation simply without using a calculator, just using my mind. My colleague at work was using tough equations, and I taught her my way. And I told her "The students can do it quickly, and this is what we need to focus on, the time. It is okay to give the student many alternative ways to answer the question. It is their choice to choose which one is the best" (F3MAUS).

M6DUK gave an example of a situation that he dealt with at work regarding not being open-minded when it comes to one's choice of approach in conducting research. He added:

In general, they do not like qualitative research. Even if you, for example, publish your article, you will face difficulties with getting promotions or becoming a professor or something like that. They want you to work again in quantitative. Even with our students now, they just learned quantitative research in their subjects, neglecting qualitative research (M6DUK).

Besides, some of the participants explained that being in a society that was not yet open-minded makes it harder for them to practice this quality. They thus learnt to cope with this situation and deal with others by being open-minded and accepting them for who they are.

I have been through many conflicts about being that much open-minded, but deep in my heart, I am still more open-minded and non-judgemental, but I really cannot express it, and I cannot argue with people that express otherwise (M1DUSA).

Because people are always going to be different from you and how you think. If you do not accept them and just deal with them the same way they are, you are always

going to have differences, and it is going to be a cause of a problem, but if you are

open about it and just accept how people are, it is going to be easier for you

(F1DUSA).

6.3.4.2 Self-leadership.

The interviews showed the practical aspects of self-leadership that the SARs perceived and developed due to their study-abroad experience. After returning to their home-country, the participants asserted that the recognition of time, goal-setting strategies and self-motivation are all skills that helped them cope and be alert in their way to achieving their goals and fulfilling their commitments.

Responses:

- *Independent and responsible.*

The participants registered different responses regarding the challenges they faced of losing some of their independence due to the influence of Saudi culture. While becoming independent and responsible were changes that were initially practised and developed abroad by our participants, becoming open-minded was another behaviour that seemed to go hand-in-hand with their choice of action. Both modes of behaviour have helped the SARs to accept and endure the challenges openly while readjusting to their home country.

In the interviews, the participants testified that after returning the effect of these two behaviours can be seen in their decision-making, although this differed according to their style of work, workplace or other factors. Some of the SARs explained that they prefer to take a collective decision and consult others before making a decision.

> *I try to see the task of the situation; if I must make my decision or I see others and*
>
> *make a collective decision. You cannot really make your decision by yourself without*
>
> *asking others about what they feel or what they want (M3MCA).*

Sometimes you need to be patient with everything around you and study the whole

thing before deciding. Also, sometimes I consult some of my colleagues or anyone

with experience (M2MUSA).

Some prefers to make their decision based on their own values and sense of what is right.

I like to think that I make the decision that I think would benefit me the most. Usually,

it would mean something like- I would not feel that I have been unfair, that I am

making the most out of it without harming others (M1DUSA).

I would not say I like to change things; it is hard to do. Sometimes I do decide, but

when I make a decision, I do not make it authoritatively. I try to convince those who

are around me of my decision (M7DUSA).

- ***Recognising the importance of time and goal setting.***

Most of the SARs stressed the importance of prioritising their tasks and setting goals, which

is something they learnt and practiced while abroad.

I always take my deadlines seriously. I prioritise, and I have many lists; this is called

pending, this needs follow-up, which is a deadline soon. I prioritise, and I just meet

my deadlines (F1DUSA).

I would say scheduling your tasks, writing good proposals and a timeline for your

projects. You should divide the project into small tasks and putting due dates for each

task. By achieving these small tasks, you can expect the project to be achieved at the

time or below the time (M4MUSA).

However, some participants asserted that it is important to consider all relevant factors while managing their tasks and setting deadlines in order not to become overwhelmed, which might affect their mental health and well-being.

> *I know that taking a break whenever you need is really the smart thing to do, but I feel like my life situation right now requires me to push myself just to get things through because I do not have the privilege to have enough time to do it later (M1DUSA).*

> *I prepared for my proposal during the summer just because I want to work more with my students because I saw them this semester; they have great ideas (F3MAUS).*

Moreover, some participants pointed out that practicing self-leadership abroad while learning to be independent and responsible has helped them to adopt a more efficient workstyle, placing the focus on prioritising their tasks and setting goals to speed up processes and getting everything done on time.

> *In terms of administrative work, I came up with an idea to arrange a monthly meeting with all the faculties. In the meeting, we will check in together, update everything we are working on, and then commit in front of each other about what we will achieve this month (F1DUSA).*

> *They call me at work "the hard worker", which is why I became the Vice Dean in less than a year because I really work hard. One of the skills I learned in the USA is to do everything at work, and when you go home, you have your family time. I learnt this from one of my professors in USA (M8DUSA).*

However, some participants, and particularly those with Masters' degrees, found themselves falling behind. Here they gave excuses for factors such as overwhelming responsibilities or

lacking time-management skills which hinder them from pursuing their goals and showed that their self-leadership was affected upon their return to their home country.

> *I think I am having issues now because whenever I think I should start my thesis, for example, or just thinking about any topic to start my PhD, I just ignore it. Because I feel I am already busy even though I am not full busy (F2MUSA).*

> *It becomes challenging for me to go to the gym as I am busy. It is one of the things that I feel is important. I used to go to the gym when I have difficulties in any situation (M3MCA).*

- *Self-motivation.*

After returning, the participants found themselves more eager and confident about fulfilling their dreams and achieving their next goals due to their success abroad.

> *Now I believe in myself more. I know that there is nothing that is very hard in life. It is all about time management and believing in yourself (F1DUSA).*

> *I just received a PhD offer and I feel great because my PhD's supervisor was happy with my master's work, including my publication during my masters, it was interesting to him. I feel it is a vast reward. (M3MCA)*

Some of the participants asserted that because of their successful achievement abroad, they found themselves immersed in their work and inspired to conduct research. Hence, their subject of study or of research become more interesting to them.

> *Nowadays, there are many case studies in English in my subject of management. They changed me a lot and made me motivated because many of them are inspiring. I can*

read them, try to get solutions, and give them to my students when I reach the
solution. Most of these case studies do not have the right answer (M5MUSA).

An important factor that enriches my experience abroad is my major, political
science. Studying in the USA engaged me in doing many things and getting
experience from different cultures, studying about different cultures and countries
(M7DUSA).

Furthermore, some of the participants indicated that they became more inspired and
determined to work towards bigger goals that exceed their individual level or go beyond just
benefitting their small circle of interests.

I am thinking about improving the research environment here in Saudi for it to be
more suitable, maybe for the newer generations. We do research; because we want to
improve humanity as all, instead of focusing on our individualistic goals and dreams
(M1DUSA).

Next semester, I am going to be the head of the department, so now I must learn
different communication skills and how to deal with a different department or people
outside my current department. I believe that every stage of life requires different
things, and maybe for a different work position (M10DUK).

Outcomes:

The interviews show some outcomes of developing self-leadership, given as follows:

- *Coping strategy and organisation skills.*

According to the participants, having a busy schedule and many responsibilities should not
hinder them from finding a balance and managing their life wisely.

What I have learnt so far is that your life is not only about studying or working. There is a part of my life that I need to enjoy. So, not to waste time, but we need to manage our time (M5MUSA).

I do not have a fixed schedule at work. For example, sometimes I have evening classes, sometimes early morning classes. However, I try to see the positive side of things. So, sometimes I use my break time to do a lot of things at work (F2MUSA)

Furthermore, several participants found themselves to have developed a unique workstyle as they became more self-confident and independent at work, which helped them to overcome challenges.

For me, I do what I believe, even though other people will not accept it. I will put the responsibility on myself. For example, I change the projects for my students because I believe this is my freedom to change whatever needs to be changed (F2MUSA)

I have realised that if I kept a low profile, did not take the initiatives, and try to do new things, nothing will happen. Because of that, right now, I am a member of the college board (M7DUSA).

- *Learning life skills.*

The participants in this study indicated that they learnt to be the captain of their ship and to have the skills needed for their growth and development. With regard to any disappointments at work, they still thrived and worked to achieve their goals.

I would say life is a marathon; it is not a sprint. So, whether things are going my way, I should be ready for the opportunities. I am still publishing and still working. I am

not at the rate that I assumed that I am going to be doing, but it is still better than

nothing, better than just sitting around and whine about the situation (M1DUSA).

I am enrolled in a course that related to my specialist in management, and I have an

exam one month from now. Also, I am thinking about the future as I started to put

some plans, including some investment for my kids and my family (M10DUK).

Besides, some SARs found themselves more focused on developing themselves, learning new habits and improving the quality of their lives.

Before I went to America, I used not to like reading. So, if I want to learn anything

new, I go to YouTube and watch a documentary about it, and this is enough. But in

America, I found that reading is more important than documentary, and books are

more important than documentary. Now after returning, I use the Saudi digital

library. I have access through my school so that I can read anything from there

(M5MUSA).

It was okay for me to waste weeks or months in the old days and not have any updates

on my work, my life, relationship, or anything. Now the situation has changed. I

usually have something to look for. This could be travelling, searching for new things,

discovering new places, or anything like this, that might add to my experience and my

interests (F2MUSA).

Due to study-abroad experience, the participants felt responsible for helping other potential Saudi academic students with the skills needed to help make their transition abroad easier and get the best of their experience, such as developing self-leadership to achieve bigger goals in life. Examples of their advice are given below:

Learn the flexibility over there. There is a solution to everything, so try to be flexible (M7DUSA).

The important thing is to know your weaknesses and strengths. Since you know this, then you will be more productive (F2MUSA).

Moreover, the participants depicted that it is essential to have a mission while abroad to develop as many skills as possible, whether at the personal or academic level.

They must attend courses to improve their leadership and presentation skills. They must attend workshops from different area, from business to presenting at the college's teams (F3MAUS).

One of the things that benefited me the most is internships. As much as that person does not waste it, get internships, even work at the school. You are not just getting exposed to the day-to-day culture. It is also the work culture itself, which is an infrequent exposure (M1DUSA).

6.3.4.3 Creativity behaviour.

Responses:

- ***Appreciating the journey and recognising the differences.***

The interviews provided remarkable details of how the SARs perceived their journey abroad upon their return. Their testimonies spoke of their appreciation and recognition of the significant differences between their skills before and after their journey abroad, and how this has impacted their capabilities and competencies at the academic and organisational level. M6DUK indicated that study abroad and gaining English language proficiency gave them the ability to read an international journal and expand their knowledge.

> *I think learning a new language is the main thing. When you just read in one language, such as the Arabic language, you will be limited in your field. You cannot read international journals. But now I can follow up and update my information about everything in my subject (M6DUK)*

The participants reflected on both the quality and quantity of knowledge, experiences and skills they acquired abroad. They subsequently felt excited to bring them back to their work to apply change and enhance the quality of their work.

> *I really liked going back to my work and teach my students some knowledge and experience. I tried to teach what I have learned from my studies, and I found it enjoyable. I felt proud of myself for what I have done so far (M3MCA).*

However, some participants pointed out that not finding support at their work reduced the sustainability of the study abroad outcomes, restricting the implementation and application of important changes to improve their work.

> *I do not like my work environment. I believe, we do not have a creative work environment. When I started working, I had a lot of ideas, and I was hoping to apply them. But then, I discovered that nothing would be easy to change (F2MUSA).*

> *I cannot really do much because research is a teamwork, it is not individuals. I had some dreams about making many changes and improving the research environment, but now it is more of a dream it is not going anywhere so far (M1DUSA).*

Outcomes:

- *Knowledge transfer.*

The interviews show that the SARs recognised the necessity to apply what they have learnt abroad. They started to make reasonable efforts to do so, which include implementing some of what they have observed and learned abroad.

In terms of their teaching techniques, the study participants highlighted some of the contribution and implication they applied to their work upon their return. These included developing new courses, improving the existent ones and arranging some out-of-class activities to enhance the quality of education at their universities.

> *I already applied and organised two things from what I have learnt from Australia. I first developed a new lab manual for academic writing because we have issues with our graduate students. Most of them do not know how to write well. The second course is networking. We have good devices, but none of the teachers or lecturers knows how to deal with them (F3MAUS).*

> *I have organised the students' activities in my college, including a hackathon that allowed all majors to participate; we reached more than 300 students. Importantly, the students were allowed to participate and employees from different sectors. The dean of students' affair admired what we have done and said, "That is what we are looking for. That is something really amazing for us" (M4MCA).*

Furthermore, the SARs indicated that they have started to use different in-class techniques with their students. They now reflect on whether to support them to learn better, or to create a pleasant atmosphere to help them engage and learn the subject.

> *Last year I was reading about how to deal with the students. I found many ways. One of the ways I found is telling jokes to the students to attract them. Nowadays, I tell a lot of jokes in my class to help the students focus or pay attention to what I am saying (M5MCA).*

Because being in an environment where I had the privilege of seeing a professor as a team member, not even as a team leader, gave me that curiosity and approach with the students to work with them as team members, not as followers. I would say they became much more open to talk and discuss in class and reflect. I found it also helps me as a professor because they start to share with me how they can learn better and how the material can be presented better for them (M1DUSA).

Moreover, some participants are interested in enhancing their work environment by implementing some of the things they observed and learnt abroad. For example, M8DUSA contributed to his work by developing software to convert the official paperwork to an electronic version. As he explained:

About a month ago, we changed some of what we call the mass paperwork, and everything is written on paper and have it electronic. Now we deal more with technology. This is one of the things that we (M8DUSA and his colleague who studied abroad) had to talk about with university leadership on the scale. We convinced them to use technology. We created some good software that really helped to make it easier for us to do that (M8DUSA).

- *Conducting research.*

The ability and the familiarity of conducting research is one of the skills that the participants are grateful to develop. They thus emphasised that after their return it helped them to continue working on research and publishing, as well as making the search for knowledge relatively easy.

The idea that I graduated from the States gave me more experience than several other people, which is so humbling. It is a privilege that I can use my degree from the States

to pursue more research much easier than if I did not have my degree from the States (M1DUSA).

I try to transfer my knowledge and experience to my students by really working hard on my content or any other things I try to develop. I try to find different resources, different places to improve myself (M3MCA).

In addition, M6DUK asserted that he is planning on set up a reading group to help encourage the sharing of knowledge and collaboration in doing research.

I love to cooperate with others, share ideas and create a group to study. However, until this moment, I did not find someone who is really interested. If you study abroad, you may find some or many reading groups, and it is rare to find someone who published an article alone (M6DUK).

- *Uniqueness.*

According to some of the participants in this study, they noticed that their study-abroad experience has provided them with important skills that made them academically exceptional compared to non-Saudi colleagues or those who have not been to western countries. They explained some of these differences that they observed at work concerning their behaviour and skills. The following are extracts from some of their interview testimonies:

Intercultural competence

A person who is a very close friend of mine, he is a very amazing person. I noticed that sometimes he does not really have that tolerance to people who are different. He would not really act upon it, but when you talk with him, he will let you know that this person is different and, for some reason, that this is wrong. Alternatively, that means

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that this person is less valuable than us, per se. It is always us versus them kind of

mentality (M1DUSA).

One of my friends has the same position as me at work, but he never been abroad.

When we discuss some points, I consider my opinion based on multiple factors since I

experienced different lives and lived with different people and nationalities.

Conversely, my friend has only Saudi friends. I can perceive from his opinion and

experience that he has a gap in his opinions in terms of accepting others. You can say

he is being judgmental in some of his opinions and does not think about others at all

(M4MUSA).

Teaching style

My students are usually narrow-minded, and they want to know the information from

you, they do not want to search for it... they need to have a textbook and you tell them

very clearly what parts they need to study (F1MUSA).

In terms of searching the information and being more creative, I noticed some of my

colleagues just want to say, "Give me what you want me to teach them. This is my

job". Currently, I am teaching a course for students in their first semester. I always

give them extra examples and complicated ones more than what they already have.

When my colleague knew I did this, she told me, "Why you did not follow just the

book?" I said, "It is nothing in the book. We have to give them more to prepare them

to be a programmer one day" (F3MAUS).

Dealing with students

Their offices are always closed, so they are not interacting with their students. One of the skills that I learned in the USA is that professors always open their doors for their students and talk to them (M8DUSA).

Although some colleagues of mine said that I am too nice with the students, I do not see it that way. I do not see it as being too nice as in a negative way as they probably try to convey, whatever that means, "they will start misbehaving because you are so nice to them, so it is safer not to be nice to them". It is interesting to see my friends become very different when they are with the students (M1DUSA).

Conducting research

Sometimes they do not know many things, like when we talk about a practice that has been done in a different university, especially abroad. We know them because when we studied abroad, we heard this news and read the news there. We are more open to the news in different parts of the world, whereas they are only interested in news basically in Saudi Arabia mostly (F1DUSA).

I might be much better in my language than them. So, I could have more knowledge and more resources different from my colleagues. I feel I might be more qualified to conduct research and read English papers and try to critique any research (M3MCA).

6.3.5. Cognitive processes.

Table 6.9 Cognitive processes.

Sub-themes	Summary
1. Self-concept clarity-responses	What are the main aspects within themselves which have been affected after returning home regarding what they have gain while study abroad?
2. Self-discerning reflections-outcomes	What are the outcomes of becoming explicit about who they are, while achieving their desired goals and reflecting on their values?

Analysis of the research findings on cognitive processes are based on two main concepts: self-concept clarity and self-discerning reflection. However, building on the findings, the self-concept clarity represents the "response" findings, while self-discerning reflections represent the "outcomes" findings.

6.3.5.1 Self-concept clarity – responses.

According to the participants, returning home has a similar effect on their study-abroad experience regarding the fundamental structure of their self-concept clarity. The participants revealed that their home-country transition experience contributed to some unexpected outcomes in their mental health in terms of how they deal with the difficulties and challenges this experience involved.

Consequently, the participants tried and tested the practical aspects of what they have learnt about themselves during their readjustment, considering their possible implications in their home-country setting. As a result, three sub-themes fall under this category, as follows:

- *Knowing their values and priorities.*

Some participants indicated that the experience helped them to know themselves better and recognise their values and priorities in life. Accordingly, this helped improve their decision-making skills to align these decisions with their values and to support their intuitions.

For example, F2MUSA discovered that she is more an outgoing person and this is important to her well-being. After returning, she continued working outside.

> *I am an outgoing person, so I try not to be at home a lot. Usually, being with family is very important to stop whatever is giving me depression, but I found going out with my friends or having anything outside, such as going to a coffee shop or even to my office, is helpful for me (F2MUSA).*

M8DUSA discovered that he values segregation between men and women even after spending nine years in the USA, as dealing with women made him feel uncomfortable. Thus, he feels thankful for returning home.

> *Back in the USA, I think I was more comfortable talking with only men, but I must be careful when I have women in the class. Here in Saudi Arabia, I am working with men only. Furthermore, I teach women but not face to face but through electronic network or blackboard (M8DUSA).*

Besides, M4MCA indicated that he missed connecting, socialising and enjoying his time with his family and friends due to his absent and study abroad. After returning, he decided to cherish this as one of his priorities.

> *So, when I was abroad, I did not have much time for my family, entertainment, my friends, and I lost some friends during study abroad. After I came back, I am trying to bring that back again and to appreciate these values (M4MCA).*

- ***Observing, reflecting and learning.***

Due to facing some rejection and resistance at work, those with a Masters' degree came to the point where they start to evaluate the situation in a more positive way. Thus, instead of continue feeling depressed they used the situation as fuel to plan their future. For example, M2MUSA realised the importance of getting a PhD degree to implement his new ideas and have an influence upon his workplace.

> *That will make me think, prepare or prioritise new goals in my life to get the PhD degree or to do higher education that might affect the whole environment in my college (M2MUSA).*

When F2MUSA reflected on her current situation, she pointed out that living alone makes her feel depressed, which was the biggest challenge she faced abroad. As she is now planning to get her PhD abroad, she is making sure to be busy at work and with her family and friends, which helps her feel happier and less anxious about the future.

> *I do not give myself any space to get depressed because I feel that I am in a transition between being abroad in the past and being abroad in the future, so I need to benefit from these current moments. I just want to be happy in any way, so every time I have stress about the future, I just try to do something I love and just continue working (F2MUSA).*

With regard to not finding support or people with whom to *synchronise* with at work, some participants highlight the importance of changing their mentality from the need to have external support to focusing on internal motivation and their awareness of the outcomes of their actions. For example, F1DUSA explained:

> *It is always better to find who supports you, but sometimes you just cannot. You cannot always have the same setting in your life as things flow smoothly, and people support you. Not always. Life is about ups and downs (F1DUSA).*

She added:

> *I think if someone feels that there is a difference in their life, a positive difference,*
>
> *because they changed a feature or a way of thinking or something they are doing,*
>
> *then they are going to want to sustain that (F1DUSA).*

6.3.5.2. Self-discerning reflection - outcomes.

The participants revealed the self-reflection processes affecting their daily-life decisions after their study-abroad experience. They revealed and captured some of the important decisions they made at their work which have been affected by their experience abroad. According to the participants, having the freedom abroad to choose the best they can has prepared them for making the best decision after returning to work or with family. Some examples of self-discerning reflections after returning home are presented below:

- *Knowing themselves and staying loyal to their values.*

Some of the participants indicated that they learnt to make their decisions without risking any of their priorities or values.

> *I have a small family; we are not too big because our relatives are living in different*
>
> *cities. I do not go out. I do not travel to attend relatives' weddings. I do not do this*
>
> *because my job and my family are the highest priority (F3MAUS).*

M1DUSA indicated that he chose to be authentic and honest at work regardless of any ethical issues occurring during the process of publishing his research. As he explained:

> *All my publications have been published with colleagues I met in the USA or a conference abroad. None of the research teams, if we can even call them that, that I have been working with here in Saudi are published anything so far (M1DUSA).*

Some participants pointed out that while their journey abroad gave them the freedom to speak and express themselves, returning home let them think more carefully about their words and choose them more wisely. They figured out that living and interacting with others in Saudi Arabia requires different ways of thinking and attitudes. They hence chose to limit and be cautious about what they have to say based on their situation.

> *I start to be less confrontational as an approach. I became less vocal about my thoughts and beliefs. Thinking that pretty much I do not need to express them every now and then, especially when I am not asked to and when it is leading to nowhere or maybe to some issues or arguments that I can really avoid (M1DUSA).*

> *I choose not to take everything serious unless something affects my career, life, or family directly. I do not spend my time discussing people thoughts, people change, people conflict, wars, or politics. I do not get much curious; because this is what I believe. I see using my time in happy ways rather than just living in sadness and conflicts (M4MUSA).*

- ***Updating and adjusting their goals and values.***

Some participants indicated that their recent experience abroad enabled them to learn more about themselves which led them to adjust their goals and values and align them with whom they want to be. In terms of adjusting and deciding their goals, M3MCA pointed out that his goals and plans have changed. In his case, getting promoted at work and becoming a consultant in his subject has become his career goal.

> *I think I want to be just in a high position and helping to consult (M3MCA).*

M4MUSA added that finding a balance in what you are doing should be your primary concern in succeeding and feeling happy.

> *Be fair with what you have. Sometimes you just think you are a superhero, throwing yourself into this and that, whereas you did not have that factor to support your thinking. Be fair with what you have and work wisely (M4MUSA).*

While F2MUSA decided to follow her goals and plans and not allow the opinions of others to change whatever she believes or plans to do. As she explained:

> *I understand myself more, and I know what I can do and when I can do it. I want to do everything with confidence. For example, now I do not have a career plan for my PhD. They are telling me, "Do not be late, just do draft your PhD". For me, I believe I am not ready. My decision now is to just go for a PhD with a clear path. (F2MUSA).*

After returning, F1MUSA discovered that it is important to reflect and monitor some of her behaviour that prevented her from managing her time and achieving her goals.

> *When I came back, I believe I used to over-socialise. Then I thought I have to focus, especially on my life and my plan. I need to have some limits in my relationships (F1MUSA).*

6.4. Discussion.

This study aimed to explore the impact of readjustment experience on the sustainability of study abroad outcomes for the Saudi academic returnees (SARs). The follow-up interviews were subsequently conducted to understand this relationship, building on previous interviews conducted in chapter 5. Moreover, this study extends the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) and tests and validate the proposed conceptual framework of the long-term impact of acculturation, phase two, in chapter 4.

The interviews revealed five overarching themes shaping the SAR's readjustment experience: home-country transition, experience on the individual level, and affective, behavioural and cognitive processes. The following discussion intends to analyse some of the in-depth answers tailored to the study questions while deliberately reflecting on previous studies and theories in the field found in the literature review and theoretical background presented in chapters 2 and 4.

The slow process of readjustment:

The study confirmed that home-country transition has an affective influence on the SARs as it revealed the unexpectedly long period of readjustment that the SARs experienced upon their return. The finding above confirmed that readjustment is more complex than adjustment (Adler, 1981; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992; Chamove and Soeterik, 2006; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Martin, 1984; Storti, 2011), and as Osland (2000) states, it is an inward journey in question which has an impact on the self and others. After returning, the participants' feelings and emotions were based on their readjustment difficulties due to the nature of their experience abroad, and the struggle to fit in while keeping some of the habits and routines they used to abroad. Consequently, the home-country environment and culture

might not be prepared to welcome and accept the new identity that the person exposed and they might resist it.

The findings showed three readjustment-related mechanisms possibly associated with the intensity and length of the SARs' readjustment experience: the length of study abroad, the host country and the level of education. For example, for those who lived for a long time abroad and were immersed in the host culture, their home-country transition was more difficult than for others. In contrast, the masters' degrees graduates spent less time abroad and revealed better readjustment because, upon returning home after only one year, they were better able to restructure their thoughts and behaviour to cope back to their home country. Again, those who accomplished their PhDs in the USA and the UK referred to more difficulties in readjusting and ran into some conflict in choosing the right style of work and presenting their new self to society upon their return.

These findings are consistent with those of Westwood et al. (1986) indicating a link between readjustment experience and the time spent abroad, as it plays a vital role in immersion. The results of immersion abroad involve developing routines and encountering limitless experiences and situations that might alter an individual's way of thinking and their behaviour, and so lead to a change in their self-concept or definition.

However, upon returning the participants struggled to fit back and found conflicts in restructuring themselves to align with the new people they had become. The restructuring process itself did not entail that what they have learnt abroad will be neglected, but they will become more resilient with a new mindset. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the existence of the three mechanisms suggested that we should expect some SARs to return to their previous selves. Others will experience resentment to their old situation and become global wanderers, then others again would become causes of change in their communities, organisations and countries.

Facing readjustment challenges and difficulties:

The study revealed two types of readjustment challenges and difficulties faced by the SARs, including challenges to their social life and challenges in work. Regarding challenges to their social life, the SARs explained that living abroad affects their relationship with their family and friends. On the one hand, due to the physical distance between the host country and home country entails infrequent visits, while their relationship with their family became quite limited in comparison to their immediate one. This finding reflected the USA graduates in particular.

Upon returning home, the SARs generally became overwhelmed by their family responsibilities and obligations. Family relationships in Saudi Arabia go beyond the immediate ones and they feel somehow forced to connect with their relatives, including accepting their calls, invitations, and gathering or attending their weddings. On the other hand, their relationship with their friends has changed, which could be due to the changes in their socialisation preference, unmet expectations of themselves and others, and the consequences of their unawareness of the number of changes they acquired within themselves. This finding is in line with Martin's research (1984), who states that expectations, change and awareness of change are the key differences between adjustment and readjustment. A number of participants thus revealed that they feel distant when they meet with their old friends, and they prefer to socialise with their colleagues at work because some of them have gone through similar experience or have a similar interest.

Regarding challenges at work, the participants explained that they face many difficulties and challenges with their superiors and students. The challenge most mentioned here was facing an unstable and resistant work environment which made them feel neglected. According to the participants, regardless of their gender, host country and educational level as time passes not finding support might limit their ambitions and reduce the impact of the culture and the environment that they have observed to their benefit abroad. These findings align with previous research suggesting that readjustment difficulties at work might lead to

dissatisfaction (e.g., Tung and Andersen, 1997; Barham and Antal,1995). Further research is thus needed to confirm and test this relationship.

The education system and cultural differences:

The second type of readjustment difficulties involves facing cultural differences. According to the findings, this is considered a common issue and a leading cause for reverse culture shock, especially for those who have the experience of living abroad and experiencing acculturation to a new set of rules while interacting with people who act and speak differently than the way he or she used to in Saudi Arabia (Adler, 1981; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992; Chamove and Soeterik, 2006; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Martin, 1984; Storti, 2011). The most common cultural differences mentioned by the SARs are related to the differences in the education system between Saudi Arabia and the host countries, particularly the students' learning process.

The findings revealed that the student's learning process in Saudi Arabia had been affected by the large power distance determining how they perceive information and deal with their teachers. The learning process adopted in the country is the teacher-centred approach proposed by Hofstede (2001) that suggests teacher performance and skills play a significant part in the quality of the students' learning. Furthermore, the finding is consistent with Hofstede's reserach (2001), indicating that the large power distance in Saudi Arabia entails the students' excessive dependence on their teachers. Alsuwaida (2016) clarifies that the teacher-centred approach in Saudi Arabia involves the teachers commonly utilising traditional teaching methods that include memorisation and tests, while the teachers must be treated with respect and almost certainly not be criticised or contradicted.

In contrast, the education system in western countries has been affected by the small power distance that leads to adopting the student-centred approach. This approach entails that each person is encouraged to be independent, self-directing, unique and assertive; respecting

privacy and freedom of choice (Kim *et al.,* 1994, P. 7). Moreover, the findings revealed that large power distance not only affects the learning processes but influences the students' behaviour in schools. For example, the teachers appraised well-behaved students who are silent, shy and obey their teachers, who are not supposed to have more information than what their teachers deliver to them.

As a result, the relationship between teachers and students has been affected, as well as students' curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Therefore, facing these differences in the education system put pressure on the SARs to determine the best approach to develop and improve their students' learning process while comprehending the limitations. For example, the USA graduates revealed some frustration and confusion in dealing with their students, mainly after being abroad for several years, cultivating new ideas and strategies to help improve the education in the country. The above findings need further investigation, while future research may consider examining the impact of cultural differences on the perceived outcomes of studying abroad.

Practical aspects of intercultural competence:

Although most participants indicated a lack of interaction with people from different cultures in Saudi Arabia compared to living abroad, gaining intercultural competence abroad helped them become open-minded and have better communication skills. As a result, learning from each other at work becomes possible as they become more open to new ideas and criticisms because there is always a space for change and improvement. The findings are in line with Ramirez (2016), stating that an interculturally competent person must have an ability to understand different methods and styles of communication, an ability to deal with people from different cultural settings and a passion for using their knowledge and abilities.

However, in terms of acquiring this skill the participants differ based on their gender, education level, length of study abroad and stay in the host-country. According to the

findings, Saudi male participants engaged socially with strangers more than female participants who tended to keep their socialisation at school campuses and spend their time with family and completing study tasks.

Furthermore, the study found that those who spent longer time abroad, particularly those who completed their PhDs, had more opportunities to develop intercultural competence by working with other PhD students and researchers and attending conferences, events and workshops. Finally, the USA graduates had more chances to socialise with Americans and other nationalities than those who graduated from other countries, allowing for the development of better intercultural competence.

Self-leadership and coping strategy:

Although returning home involves a number of difficulties that could affect the SARs, the findings showed that their experiences abroad made them realise how to deal with these difficulties using their self-leadership, so they could adjust their behaviour to achieve their goals. This process of adjusting their behaviour is the most recognised highlight of the findings, and it involves acknowledging their feelings and adopting some coping strategies. Consequently, the SARs became more flexible in dealing with life changes, which they were used to experiencing constantly during their study abroad. For example, the participants indicated a shift in their negative feelings at the beginning of their return to being slightly uplifted towards the end of the adjustment period. This process represents the development of intercultural growth (Pitts, 2009) because living abroad for several years and then returning home may cause a change in an individual's cultural identity (Kartoshkina, 2015). As a result, the participants needed to acquire different coping strategies to deal with this change. Some of the coping strategies mentioned by the SARs are becoming proactive instead of reactive when facing work problems and choosing themselves to be the basis of any equation in any situation. For example, some USA graduates indicated that they choose to act based on

what is best for them to have a peaceful environment, especially when dealing with the judgmental behaviour of others. According to some male PhDs participants who graduated from the USA, this is our society and it is hard to come back after years of absence and try to change them suddenly as this will result in conflicts and more judgements that lead to stressful relationships and resentment.

Furthermore, instead of trying to change others, they chose to give up on talking or discussing unimportant issues, focusing on using their time actively to develop themselves and their students. For example, they focused on publishing papers and using creative ideas such as planning some activities to enhance the work environment and the education system. The findings here are consistent with previous studies suggest self-leadership outcomes include self-efficacy (e.g., Manz, 1986; Neck and Manz, 1996; 2013), psychological empowerment (e.g., Houghton and Yoho, 2005), and commitment and independence (e.g., Houghton and Yoho, 2005; Manz and Sims, 2001). This study is the first to examine self-leadership in the study abroad context, while further research is needed to validate this relationship.

Creativity behaviour and developing a flexible mindset:

The findings showed that upon returning home, the SARs noticed significant differences and changes in their skills at work at the academic and organisational level compared to what they had been before studying abroad. Consequently, they felt the urge to practice what they had learned abroad at work. The findings revealed a range of creativity behaviour that differentiated the SARs from others. Despite their gender, education level and host country, their creativity behaviour can be seen in their unique teaching techniques, relationships with their students, and working style and strategy.

The findings confirmed what Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) described as an identity transformation experienced by most returnees studying and living abroad, one that helped them acquire new competencies, skills and different views of the world. This transformation

enabled them to view and live their life with a new understanding of self at 'home', thus, performing in ways that continue to differentiate themselves from those around them over time.

However, the findings indicated that returning home could affect the sustainability of the participants' creativity behaviour due to some behavioural issues such as judgmental behaviour and appreciating similarities from others. According to the participants, during their study abroad experience, they learnt to be different therefore became different and unique in terms of their feelings, behaviour and ways of thinking. Hence, they expected that these changes would be celebrated by their society and not suppressed. For example, the female Saudi participants highlighted some of the restrictive behaviour of people around them, including interfering in their personal choices over the values, priorities and ambition to help others and benefit society. This problem is quite prominent in Saudi culture despite previous studies claiming individuality in Saudi culture, as the reality is that the behaviour of an individual - his or her thoughts and ideas - should match those of the majority, and this is applied at work and with friends and families (Condon and Yousef, 1975; Zaharna, 2009, p. 184).

Despite the above challenges, the findings showed that the SARs react uniquely to others due to their flexible mindset and self-confidence in finding effective coping strategies to target their feelings and behaviour to achieve their goals. According to them, not every rejection is a rejection but an opportunity to learn to be a creative and much better influencer to stick to their goals. Furthermore, the way they were talking about their experience abroad and the number of struggles and helpless situations they went through in a stranger country made their struggle in their own country less painful because they believe that they are in a position where they can achieve what they want, which only requires them to be patient and keep making their steps towards their higher goals.

Outcomes of cognitive processes:

The findings indicated that home-country transition affects the SARs cognitive processes due to the difficulties and challenges of readjustment, such as facing cultural differences. Consequently, they continually examine their weaknesses and strengths, priorities and values, which affect their decision-making and loyalty to their values. The participants acknowledged that the effect of living abroad on their cognitive processes and found it significant for their development.

After returning, they found how self-concept clarity and self-discerning reflection are helpful for their readjustment and achieving their goals. According to the participants, they became stronger as they discovered who they are and what they want to be regardless of the thoughts and judgments of others. However, the findings highlighted that living abroad is not the only reason for developing these outcomes but it was also the depth of their experience that made the difference in them.

In addition, their self-discerning reflection helped them to know themselves better, entailing that they were less likely to sacrifice themselves to seek happiness or acceptance and not be influenced by the opinions of others. According to Zou et al. (2009), living abroad and away from their home-country gave them opportunities to question and make sure that what they believe is driven by their thoughts and behaviour and is consistent with their own core beliefs about the culture they grow up in. As a result of their new cognitive processes developing abroad, upon returning they found themselves to some extent becoming patient, self-confident and constantly working on their self-development, leading them to make better decisions at work and with their family. Here the findings notably showed that female participants benefitted the most from being abroad and learning to become independent. According to them, the experience of independence abroad gave them a clearer vision of what to expect from different life circumstances and how to deal with them.

Conclusion:

Our study findings support the theory of acculturation of Ward, Bochner and Furnham, (2001), offering unique insights into the SARs' home-country transition and the impact of the sustainability on study abroad outcomes concerning changes in the SARs' affective, behavioural and cognitive processes. Overall, the study supports previous studies indicating that home-country transition is more challenging than the host-country transition (Adler, 1981; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992; Chamove and Soeterik, 2006; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Martin, 1984; Storti, 2011). Our findings are in line with Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) who conclude that most returnees recognise living abroad as an identity transformation. Therefore, the complexity of the home-country transition stems from the overlapping processes that present new shifts in the SARs' behaviour and identity while trying to fit into their previous setting.

However, the findings indicated two types of readjustment difficulties at the socio-cultural level and at work, which create considerable obstacles to the returnees thriving and achieving their goals. However, according to the participants their life-changing experience abroad has influenced their sense of responsibility alongside the flexibility and resilience through the constant ups and downs involved in meeting their goals abroad. Consequently, their cognitive processes were activated, so enabling them to learn new coping strategies that used their self-leadership and open-minded mentality. However, after returning, the findings showed that the SARs' cognitive processes played a crucial role in turning the negative feelings about their readjustment difficulties into positive one as they became more proactive and determined to overcome the challenges need to work towards their goals.

As a result, the participants were eventually able to continue their self-development after returning. They developed themselves at their work and improved their skills by joining practical courses, so focusing on enhancing and overcoming their weaknesses. However, due to lack of time and overwhelming work and family responsibilities, some of the benefits of

studying were weakened, such as those concerning health habits and spending time on activities or hobbies they enjoyed.

In essence, however, the study highlighted that the SARs' awareness of their outcomes of study-abroad experience is crucial to sustaining these outcomes. The findings support Martin's (1984) proposition that expectations, change and awareness of change are the key differences between adjustment and readjustment. As the research participants recognised the change within themselves, they tried to utilise the outcomes acquired in their work and daily life, which will differentiate them from others who have not studied abroad.

In addition, this study offers some practical recommendations for optimising the outcomes accrued from study abroad. The findings suggest that it is crucial to provide the returnees with an orientation welcoming programme to explain to the SARs the role and policy of their workplace. Furthermore, they need to be introduced to their co-workers and colleagues to encourage a supportive and welcoming environment. It is essential for those who returned home that their voices be heard and put into practice to afford them the opportunities to initiate and manage change in their workplace and implement what they have learnt abroad. Otherwise, all the expenses spent on these scholarships might go to waste which is against the main objectives of Saudi scholarships to bring creativity and innovative ideas and develop leadership skills. Finally, although the qualitative studies in chapters 5 and 6 provided an in-depth explanation regarding the Saudi academic returnees' experience abroad and after their return, different methodological approaches have been required to explore this topic, confirm the findings and provide more supportive evidence from a larger sample to answer the research questions. It is for this reason that the study used a quantitative methodological approach presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 7.

Quantitative study of the long-term impact of study abroad on SARs' change and self-development.

7.1. Introduction.

The repatriation experience of students who have studied abroad has not received as much attention as other areas of research, despite many scholars arguing that the readjustment is challenging and needs more focus than the adjustment experience (Adler, 1975; Adler, 1981; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Storti, 2011; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992). Being aware of the outcomes of studying abroad and identifying the mechanisms that allow or hinder them is vital to progressing our understanding. According to previous studies, two

vital transformational outcomes can be recognised in the intercultural learning experience: identity development and self-discovery (Kim, 2008; Brown, 2009). However, upon their return, it is unclear whether these expected outcomes involving new and potentially challenging ideas and experiences are implemented and, more significantly, welcomed, and warrants further research (Adler, 1975; Adler, 1981; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Storti, 2011; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992).

This study thus investigates the long-term impact of study abroad on Saudi academic students' (SARs) change and self-development. This study is part of the longitudinal mixed-methods research design used in this research, and it was simultaneously conducted with the qualitative studies presented in chapters 5 and 6 where we describe how semi-structured interviews were conducted over two time-periods to explore qualitatively the topic of the long-term impact of studying abroad on the change and self-development of SARs, considering the changes in their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes.

Five studying abroad outcomes were then identified: intercultural competence, self-leadership, creativity behaviour, self-discerning reflection and self-concept clarity. Moreover, the two studies contributed to our understanding and added new knowledge by deeply explaining the role of readjustment experience on these outcomes. Using a quantitative data collection approach, the current study aims to provide further evidence regarding the topic and to maximise the generalisability of the previous research findings.

This study has an overall theoretical purpose of testing and developing theory, while the methodological purpose of maximising generalisability about the population and guarantee accuracy in controlling the measurement of variables associated with the behaviour of interests (Turner, Cardinal and Burton, 2017). The contribution this study makes to the generalisability of qualitative study findings is its use of a larger sample. Here, the study supports and extends the findings by testing associations, significant differences and

moderation effects. The study also adds to the accuracy of measuring the study abroad outcomes using reliable measures employed and tested in previous research.

The study examined longitudinal data over two time-points to understand the nature of the international experience over time and evaluate its impact in order to better understand whether the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours acquired while studying abroad have a lasting impact. Moreover, this study intends to test and validate the proposed conceptual framework of the long-term benefits of acculturation. The conceptual framework was developed based on the theory of acculturation by Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001), then taking into account the results and synthesis of the systematic literature review SLR presented earlier in chapter four. The SLR identified some limitations in the extant literature and implications that needed to be considered by future research in order to deepen understanding of the expected benefits of study abroad and the mechanisms to accrue these benefits. This chapter thus focuses on answering the following research questions:

1) Do returning academics perceive themselves to be different from those who have not been abroad in terms of their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes?

2) What are the perceived benefits of study abroad for returning academics, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behavioural and cognitive process?

3) What are the factors that determine the benefits of study abroad for returning academic, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behaviour and cognitive processes? In this sense, what are the facilitators and barriers to these processes?

4) Are the returning academics able to sustain the benefits of study abroad?

5) How does the readjustment of returnees to their home country affect their ability to sustain the benefits of study abroad?

The rationale of the study:

As mentioned above, this study was conducted as a part of longitudinal mixed-methods research seeking to achieve the benefits of a close proximity to the situation researched, and so enrich, strengthen and illuminate the results of the two qualitative study' findings presented in chapter 5 and 6.

The qualitative studies have highlighted how the academic returnees (SARs) perceived themselves to be different from those who have not been abroad in terms of their open-minded and judgmental behaviour, as well as their self-leadership and creativity behaviour. The study revealed that the reason could be due to their upbringing and the culture in Saudi Arabia. However, the SARs appreciate the impact of their study abroad journey in allowing them to transform and reshape themselves to a better version. Accordingly, the first hypothesis to be examined in this study is:

 __Hypothesis one (H1)__: There is a significant difference between study-abroad and at home academics in relation to their behavioural and cognition processes.

To explore the impact of studying abroad on the change and self-development experienced by the SARs, the first qualitative study contributed to the existing knowledge by pointing out that the changes and skills acquired abroad depend on several factors. The first important factor is that facilitators and barriers at the individual level are not enough to drive people towards a change, which requires the intervention of personal intentions and choices throughout their experience.

According to Torbiörn (1982), the adjustment processes are an indication of how the new culture requires a few changes and modifications to the sojourner's behaviour, in terms of them embracing new perspectives about the world to achieve harmony between their behaviour and their sociocultural environment and to overcome any psychological imbalance due to the new environment. Research findings have shown that one way to do that is for the

person to take individual responsibility and observe, reflect and act accordingly to achieve these benefits. This study hence suggests a link between the participants' motivations to study abroad and the outcomes of study abroad. Internal motivation (such as to fulfilling their dreams), rather than external motivation (such as work requirements), lead to better personal adjustment abroad and, in turn, higher potential to achieve the best of their study abroad experience.

The second factor highlighted by the study was the importance of the host country in improving socialisation and intercultural competencies. Based on the findings, the USA graduates were better able to socialise and make more new friends than the UK and Australia's graduates, who found it difficult to interact with host nationals. The study thus suggests the participants differ in their development of intercultural competencies based on the host country and with whom they socialised. Third, the study also sheds light on the association between the length of study abroad and the outcomes of study abroad, indicating that those who stayed longer had more opportunities to immerse themselves in the culture abroad and take more time to think and reflect, which resulted in significant changes in their affective, behaviour and cognitive processes. Therefore, the second hypothesis to be examined in this study is:

Hypothesis two (H2): There are associations between study-abroad experience and changes in behavioural and cognitive processes at time-one.

The second qualitative study revealed that the nature of home-country transition might be associated with the quality and length of their experience abroad, including details of whom they were with socialising abroad, the length of their stay and how efficient they were in accomplishing their goals. This study found that the number of changes perceived by a person during study-abroad experiences affects their social life and the type of people with whom they enjoy synergies after returning, resulting in shrinking social circles. Furthermore,

the study captured a relationship between their readjustment and the time spent abroad, indicating that easier readjustment for those who spent less time abroad and immersed less in western cultures. This does not mean that those who spent more time abroad will not readjust, but they will foster a new mindset that helps them maintain what they have gained while adapting back to life in their home country.

The study has also highlighted the challenges faced by the participants when trying to sustain the benefits of study abroad. The most prominent challenges are the following: extended family responsibilities, not finding free time or time alone, unmet expectations, lack of support at work, facing judgmental behaviour from others, the education system and difficulties dealing with students.

As a result, the study pointed out that some of the outcomes of studying abroad can be weakened due to the home-country transition because of the challenges they faced and the limited exposure to external triggers, such as interaction with new ideas and people from different cultures. However, the associated behaviour remained intact as they became integral of the new shift in their identity and behaviour, which confirms Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) findings that most returnees perceived studying and living abroad as an identity transformation. This transformation enabled them to view and live their life with a new understanding of self at 'home' and, therefore, performing in ways that continue to differentiate themselves from those around them over time. For example, the outcomes of the cognitive processes while studying abroad still served the SARs after their return, even though they lack time and freedom. The outcomes of the cognitive processes experienced abroad helped them acknowledge their weaknesses or difficulties and their priorities, enabling them to reflect on their values, open their minds to different perspectives and improve their decision-making process.

Overall, the study asserted that the development of self-discerning reflection and self-leadership abroad helped strengthen their resolve to face challenges. Even those who faced

difficulties at work still strive to apply what they have learnt abroad because they have more significant goals beyond their current conditions to serve the education sector and the nation. Based on the overall discussion of the second qualitative study, two hypothesises were then created:

> *__Hypothesis three (H3):__ There is a significant difference between those who positively readjust to their home country and those who had negative readjustment on sustaining the perceived changes in their behaviours and cognitive processes.*
>
> *__Hypothesis four (H4):__ The SARs' readjustment moderates the sustainability of behavioural and cognitive processes changes.*

7.2. Data collection procedure.

This study used a sample of the SARs who acquired their postgraduate degrees in western countries and have returned to their workplace (see chapter 3 for the participants recruiting process). Regarding the data collection procedure, we gathered the data over two time periods: T1 - within the first six months of the SARs returned to their workplaces; and T2 - over six months later. Furthermore, the study used a control group that consists of Saudi academics who have not yet experienced living in Western countries.

Three sets of surveys were therefore produced for this study, including two surveys targeting the SARs at two periods T1 and T2, and one survey to gather data from control group participants. However, completing the questionnaires at both times for the SARs was obligatory for their participation. In addition, for T2 recruitment, the participants were required to provide a valid email address at T1. Failing to complete the survey at T2 will result in deleting the participant's data from the study. Moreover, the study has received ethical approval from the faculty of the research ethics committee at Kingston University. The survey's dissemination process included the following steps:

1. Sending out the T1 survey. (See Appendix G and J)

2. Checking the completed responses and whether or not the participants matched the characteristics of our sample

3. Using the respondent's email address provided at T1 to send out the T2 survey. (See Appendix H and J)

4. Asking the control group to complete the survey for one time only. (See Appendix I and J)

The survey instrument consisted of 80 questions at T1, including closed-ended questions designed to collect information on participants characteristics, such as demographics (gender, level of education and age) and situational characteristics (host-country, length of their study abroad), to which were added five Likert-scale questions to measure the changes in their behavioural and cognitive processes.

In terms of measuring the affective impact, the survey at T1 included two Likert-scale questions. The first one asked them to rate their educational experience, and the second one their overall experience. The rating scale was between 1= very bad and 5= Excellent. However, the participants' responses to these two questions were the same (5= Excellent or 4=Good), which might indicate some bias in answering these two questions. The researcher thus decided to eliminate these two questions from the affective data analysis and relied only on the qualitative findings because the latter method provided deeper insights into the feelings and emotions of the participants. This study is thus limited in measuring affective changes (see affective sections in chapters 5 and 6).

Conversely, the survey at T2 consisted of 69 questions. We subsequently excluded the participants' characteristics questions and added two further questions about their readjustment experience. Conversely, the control group survey only focused on gathering data regarding the five Likert-scale questions to measure their behavioural and cognitive

processes. However, the demographic questions were mainly asked to ensure the participants variations and they are fit for this study.

We followed some steps to address any potential limitations, including checking all the questionnaires to minimise errors or reduce missing information. The language chosen for the surveys for the main participants (i.e., SARs) at T1 and T2 was in the English language because the participants had their Masters' degree and/or PhDs from English-speaking countries where English language proficiency is a compulsory requirement to access any university.

Conversely, the control group's survey language has two options - Arabic and English - because the participants have not studied abroad and the English language is not a second language in Saudi Arabia, which might deter them from completing the survey. Subsequently, the measurement scales used in the survey were initially in English, while translating the survey to Arabic was necessary for the control group participants. The researcher thus used the back-translation technique, adopting the procedure discussed in the study (Tyupa, 2011) to ensure the survey linguistic validity. In addition, to comply with ethics procedures and privacy policies, the data gathered was securely stored, including respondents' emails and personal information. It was only used by the researcher to help with data collection and analysis and was not intended to be shared in the actual thesis. The survey cover assured the participants' confidentiality.

7.2.1. Measurements.

This study set out to measure the changes in behavioural and cognitive processes and test the study hypotheses. Five measurements scales have thus been adopted from previous studies which help to ensure the robustness and reliability of the scales. The scales presented are as follows:

Measuring behavioural change

Intercultural competence (IC):

The Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) was developed by Ang et al. (2007) as an instrument to measure an individual's capacity to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings. The CQS measured the collective multidimensional construct of cultural intelligence over 20 items clustered into four factors: Strategy (four items), Cognitive (six items), Motivational (five items) and Behavioural (five items).

The CQS uses a 7-point Likert scale for each of the 20 statements, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Ang et al.'s (2007) research then provides empirical evidence that the CQS accurately measures the cultural intelligence construct because it shows reliability and validity among students and business executives. Sample items included "I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds", and "I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions."

Self-leadership (SL):

This study used the Abbreviated Self-Leadership Questionnaire (ASLQ) developed by Houghton, Dawley and DiLiello (2012). The questionnaire is a shorter version of the widely used Revised Self-leadership Questionnaire RSLQ that consists of 35 items. The ASLQ consists of 9 items in three distinct sub-scales within the three primary self-leadership dimensions: Behaviour awareness; Task motivation; and Constructive cognitive. These factors sum up the core of the classic self-leadership strategy dimensions (e.g., Neck and Houghton, 2006) while reflecting some of the additional self-leadership strategies suggested in more recent research (e.g., Georgianna, 2007). However, due to the limited number of items available in this instrument it has been suggested that these abbreviated sub-scales must not be used in isolation to measure specific categories of self-leadership strategies

(Houghton, Dawley and DiLiello, 2012). The ALSQ uses a 5-point Likert scale for each of the nine statements ranging from 1 (not at all accurate) to 5 (mostly accurate). Sample items included "I establish specific goals for my own performance" and "I visualise myself successfully performing a task before I do it".

Creativity behaviour (Creativity):

To measure creativity behaviour, two aspects of creativity behaviour were measured: Creativity roll-identity, and employees' self-view of creativity behaviour. Creativity role-identity was measured using the measure developed by Farmer, Tierney and Kung-McIntyre (2003) adapted from Callero (1985) to measure how employees viewed creativity as a central aspect of their self-identity. The former consists of three items, including "I often think about being creative", "to be a creative employee is an important part of my identity" and "I do not have any clear concept of myself as creative employees". To measure employees' self-view of creativity behaviour, an eight-item scale (Kirton, 1976) was utilised (used in Dollinger and Danis (1998) and Amabile et al. (1995)). The scale consists of eight items requesting the participants to indicate how often they could be described as a person who, for example, "Would sooner create something than improve it", and "Has lots of new ideas".

Measuring cognitive processes

Self-concept clarity (SCC):

A scale developed by Campbell et al. (1996) was used to assess the participants' self-concept clarity. The scale consists of 12-items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items included 'My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another', and 'My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently'. The scale has been recently used

by Adam et al. (2018). Their study coded that response with a higher score indicates a higher level of self-concept clarity.

Self-discerning reflections **(SDR):**

A five-item scale developed by Adam et al. (2018) was used in this study. The response scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items included "I have determined whether my personality is defined by who I truly am or by the culture I grew up in" and "I have figured out if my relationships with others are driven by my own values or follow the values of those around me".

Moderators

Drawing on the existing literature and the qualitative study findings (see chapter 5 and 6), different factors related to the SARs adjustment abroad could affect their readjustment experience. Some studies claim that readjustment problems can be associated with the length of the study-abroad experience and the level of their adjustment abroad, which could result either in more or fewer problems associated with their readjustment to their home country (Adler, 1981; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992; Chamove and Soeterik, 2006; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Martin, 1984; Storti, 2011). Furthermore, the qualitative study findings confirmed that the longer the study abroad journey is, the more immersed in the foreign culture they become, according to the participants. We therefore considered that the length of study abroad (denoted as LSA) is related to the readjustment experience in this study.

Besides, the qualitative study found that the participants' motivation to study abroad, particularly how they were internally feeling about their abroad experience, greatly impacted how they spend their time abroad and willingly acquired shifts in their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes. The survey thus included a multiple answer question about the

participants' motivations to study abroad that consists of six different motivations. The researcher then added a new binary variable to the dataset called motivation (1= internal; 2= external) and assigned each case to one of these categories based on their choices. Moreover, to capture their affective and feelings about their study abroad journey and their readjustment experience, we added two questions, including whether or not they feel their study abroad benefitted them and whether they feel it has been difficult or impossible to practice these benefits at work. Two separate dummy variables were subsequently created: perceived benefits abroad (PBA; 0=yes, 1=No) and readjustment difficulties (RD; 0=yes, 1=No).

We suggest that the readjustment experience - including the length of study abroad (LSA), motivation, perceived benefits abroad (PBA) and readjustment difficulties (RD) - moderates the sustainability of the behavioural and cognitive processes changes that the SARs perceived, i.e., intercultural competence (IC), self-leadership (SL), creativity behaviour (creativity), self-concept clarity (SCC) and self-discerning reflection (SDR). The moderation effect will be examined in hypothesis 4.

Demographic data

The survey at T1 involved some questions regarding the participants' demographic information, including gender (male vs female), age (24-29; 30-34; 35+) years old, education level (Master's degree vs PhD), and host-country (the USA; the UK; Canada; Australia) to ensure the variety between the participants.

7.3. Data analysis.

To test the study hypotheses and answer the research questions, the quantitative data was analysed for descriptive information (percentages of responses and measures of central tendency) and the relationships between variables. The study's data analysis and graphical

outputs were then carried out using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 26 (IBM SPSS Statistics v26). Before conducting any analysis, the data was first scanned for missing data and uncompleted responses. Then, uncompleted responses were excluded from the dataset. After, we matched the dataset for T1 with T2 using the participants' emails, where the unmatched responses were excluded. In addition, we added the control group responses to the same dataset and finally, to differentiate between the main participants and the control group, we added an additional nominal variable called "studied abroad" (1=Yes; 2= No).

All the variables were carefully assessed to understand better their characteristics and relationship with the following data analysis stage. The process of assessing all the variables included checking what type of statistical tests to use. By itself, statistical software such as SPSS cannot decide which statistical test is to be used. The researcher subsequently had to check four elements before selecting a statistical test: a. Scales, b. Hypothesis, c. Types of variables, and d. Sets of measurements. Scales can be classified into three types: nominal, which uses number to label categories like "gender"; ordinal, where a number is used to label categories that have an order such as Likert scale items options (agree, neutral, disagree); and interval scales, where the differences between two numbers assigned has a real zero and real meaning such as "height".

The variables used in this study varied in terms of their types between nominal, ordinal and interval. Although the measures we used in this study are Likert, which indicates that they are ordinal, we considered them to be of the interval or continuous type since they supported latent variables in the frame of this study. We summed up the scores for each case in each measurement scale. In this case of having categorical and continuous variables, the decision should then be taken to opt for parametric or non-parametric tests.

7.3.1. Normality test.

To decide whether to choose parametric or non-parametric tests, we conducted a normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test as our numerical means of assessing normality because this test is more appropriate for a small sample size <50 and handles a large sample size up to 2000. The sample size in this study is 72, while the results of the Shapiro test for the majority of our summing scores scales show that all Significant values are less than 0.05. As a result, the data is not normally distributed. Based on the normality test, the decision was taken to select non-parametric tests and use some other tests unaffected by data being abnormally distributed, so accommodating small sample sizes as appropriate tests such as the generalised estimating equation (GEE).

7.3.2. Testing the hypothesis.

This study intends to answer four hypotheses, as follows:

Hypothesis one *(H1)*: *There is a significant difference between study-abroad and at home academics in relation to their behavioural and cognition processes.*

To test hypothesis one, we used a non-parametric 2-independent sample Mann-Whitney U test to determine whether or not there were significant differences between those who studied abroad and those who did not, concerning the measure outcomes variables. We conducted the test twice: the first time between the control group and T1 data; and the second time between the control group and T2 data for the variables of the same outcomes.

Hypothesis two *(H2)*: *There are associations between study-abroad experience and changes in behavioural and cognitive processes at time one.*

To test the second hypothesis, we examined the bivariate correlation of measures and the demographic information from T1 using different correlation tests. Spearman's ρ correlation analysis was conducted to examine the correlation between the outcomes variables. An eta coefficient test was used to examine the correlation between the outcomes variables and the demographic variables (categories), and a Chi test was used to assess the correlation within the categories' variables. In addition, the non-parametric k-independent sample Kruskal Wallis H test and 2-independent sample Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to determine the association between the measure outcomes at T1 and demographic variables. To ensure the robustness of the results, significant associations were evaluated by using a probability level of $p < 0.05$.

Hypothesis three (H3): *There is a significant difference between those who positively readjust to their home country and those who had negative readjustment on sustaining the perceived changes in their behaviours and cognitive processes.*

The statistical analysis of the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test was used to compare the difference between the measure outcomes at T1 and T2. Statistically, significant test results indicate that the difference between the two scores is not equal to zero, which means that the participants could not sustain the changes in their behaviour and cognitive processes between T1 and T2. In addition, a follow-up test using 2-independent sample Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to determine whether or not the readjustment experience had an impact in terms of sustaining the behavioural and cognitive processes of change. These results can be detected based on comparing the scores of those who believe that they had a positive readjustment experience and those who believe that they had a negative readjustment. We used the readjustment difficulties variable as a base for comparison (1= Yes, 'negative readjustment'; 2= No, "positive readjustment").

<u>Hypothesis four</u> *(H4)*: *The SARs' readjustment moderates the sustainability of the changes in their behavioural and cognitive processes.*

To test hypothesis four, we first examined the correlation of measures at T2 with the T1 measures and the readjustment moderators. For the hypotheses test, the generalised estimating equations (GEE; Liang and Zeger, 1986) were used for the analysis, extending the generalised linear model (GLM). GEE is a multivariate analysis that enables analysis of the correlated data which can occur from clustering in which measurements are taken from participants who have a shared characteristic (SAS Institute Inc, 2018). It also uses a working correlation matrix to explain the form of within-subject correlation of responses on dependent variables and produces robust results even when correlation structures are indicated inaccurately (e.g., Ballinger, 2004; Ghisletta and Spini, 2004). Therefore, to explore whether or not readjustment moderates the sustainability of the behavioural and cognitive processes changes, we estimated a GEE model for each measurement outcome (i.e., IC, SL, SCC, SDR Creativity) with each of the four moderators which resulted in twenty models i.e., the length of study abroad (LSR), motivation, perceived benefits abroad (PBA) and readjustment difficulties (RD). Continuous independent variables were mean-centred to facilitate interpretation of the intercepts following previous studies recommendation for mean-cantering predictors before multiplying them (e.g., Hayes, 2013; Kenrick *et al.,* 2016). Due to the existence of only a small number of time points, only T1 and T2, and the nature of the bivariate correlation, we specified an exchangeable structure for the dependence and the Gamma response (log link) function for the continuous outcome data (Hardin and Hilbe, 2003).

Finally, to better isolate the effects of the measure variables at T1 on corresponding measure variables at T2 in each of the GEE models, we controlled for age, gender and education level because they are most likely to be associated with the participants' adjustment and

readjustment difficulties. In addition, the host country was controlled because we assume an impact of host country on participants' changes in developing their skills abroad.

7.4. Results.

7.4.1. Participants and response rate.

Table 7.1. Response rate.

	Responses	Valid responses	Valid % (Percentage)
T1	169	101	59.76
T2	101	83	82.18
Matched T1 & T2		**72**	**72.73%**
Control group	120	**72**	**60%**

At T1, 169 Saudi academic returnees SARs volunteered to participate in this study, but only 101 responses were qualified at a participants' rate of 59.76% (101 out of 169). The excluded responses were due to unmet study criteria, such as being newly graduated and returning to work within six months. However, for this study's purpose, the same qualified participants (101) had to complete a second survey at T2, and here 83 volunteers responded, representing a participants' rate of 82.18%. Besides, after matching T1 data with T2, only 72 participants were found to be valid for this study because 27 participants did not complete the whole T2 survey for various reasons, such as being overwhelmed with their work and returning overseas. Therefore, this study's overall participants' rate was 72.73% (72 out of 101). This sample size is reasonable compared to the qualitative study samples of 14 participants at T1 and 12 participants at T2, which would provide opportunities to validate or support the qualitative results. In addition, 120 Saudi academics who had not been abroad were invited to participate as a control group, and here 72 volunteers completed the survey. The overall response rate for the control group was thus 60%. Table 7.2 presents the descriptive statistics for this demographic sample.

Table 7.2. Descriptive statistics of the study sample.

Variables	SARs	Control group
	N=72	N=72
	% (N)	% (N)
Gender		
Male	58.3% (42)	25.0% (18)
Female	41.7% (30)	75.0% (54)
Age		
25-29	26.4% (19)	29.2% (21)
30-34	43.1 (31)	44.4% (32)
35+	30.5 (22)	26.4% (19)
Educational level		
Bachelor's degree	0	6.9% (5)
Master's degree	45.8% (33)	26.4% (19)
PhD	54.2% (39)	43.1% (31
Post PhD	0	23.6% (17)
Host-country		
USA	58.3% (42)	
The UK	30.6% (22)	
Canada	5.6% (4)	
Australia	5.6 (4)	
Length of study abroad (LSE) (years)		
1-3	33.3% (24)	
4-7	26.4% (19)	
8+	40.3% (29)	
Motivations		
Learn from different environment, culture and lifestyle	21.6% (48)	
Ambition to achieve more	19.8% (44)	
Fulfil your dreams	18.9% (42)	
Family encouragement	10.8% (24)	
Successful previous experience	4.1% (9)	
Job requirement	24.77% (55)	
Socialising		
Saudi and Arabs	18.1% (13)	
Mixed nationalities including Arabs	52.8% (38)	
Mixed nationalities avoiding Arabs	29.2% (21)	
Perceived benefits abroad (PBA)		
YES	69 (95.8)	

NO	3 (4.2)	
Readjustment difficulties (RD)		
YES	44 (61.1)	
NO	28 (38.9)	

7.4.2. General descriptive statistics for SARs and control group.

Out of the 72 SARs, 58.3% (42) were male and 41.7% (30) were female, while of the 72 of the control group, 25.0% (18) were male and 75.0% (54) were female. Furthermore, the majority of the sample was between 30-34 years old for both SARs and control groups, 43.1% (31) and 44.4% (32), respectively. Regarding the educational level, 54.2% (39) of SARs have completed their PhDs abroad, while 33 (45.8%) have completed their Masters' degree. Conversely, of the 72 of the control group, 31 (43.1%) have completed their PhD, 26.4% (19) have completed their Masters' degree, 23.6% (17) have completed their post PhD, and only 6.9% (5) have a bachelor's degree.

Table 7.2 shows the descriptive statistics gathered from the main participants (SARs) at T1 regarding their study abroad experience. The majority of the participants studied in the USA 58.3% (42), then the UK at 30.6% (22), while 5.6% (4) participants have been to Canada and 5.6% (4) participants have been to Australia. The participants differ in terms of the length of their experience abroad, with the highest stay over 8 years 40.3 % (29), while 33.3% (24) stayed for 1-3 years and 26.4% (19) stayed for 4-7 years. The participants had different motivations to study abroad: the first one was job requirements, 24.77% (55); the second was to learn from a different environment, culture, and lifestyle 21.6% (48); the third was their ambition to achieve more, 19.8% (44); the fourth was to fulfil their dreams 18.9% (42); the fifth was family encouragement, 10.8% (24); and six was because of their successful experience abroad, 4.1% (9). Many of the participants had socialised with people of mixed nationality, including Arabs 52.8% (38). Meanwhile, most of the participants agreed that they

perceived benefits of study abroad 95.8% (69), while many of them struggled with readjustment difficulties at their work, 61.1% (44).

7.4.3. Testing the hypotheses.

<u>Hypothesis one (H1):</u> There is a significant difference between study-abroad and at home academics in relation to their behavioural and cognition processes.

Table 7.3. shows the means, SDs, and the correlations between the outcome variables at T1 and T2 and the control group. The results of the Spearman rho test indicate no significant correlations were found between the two groups which indicates that they are different from each other regarding the variables applying to the measures.

Furthermore, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to evaluate the difference between those who studied abroad at T1 and those who did not regarding the measured variables. The test revealed a significant difference regarding self-discerning reflection SDR in the preference of those who studied abroad (mean rank= 91.85) and those who did not (mean rank= 53.15), U=1198.50, z= -5.598, p=0.00, r= 0.47. Moreover, the test revealed a significant difference regarding creativity in the preference of those who studied abroad (mean rank= 94.78) and those who did not (mean rank = 50.22), U= 988.00, z= -6.418, p= 0.00, r= 0.53 (see table 7.4). However, there was no significant difference between the two groups concerning other outcomes (i.e., intercultural competence IC, self-leadership SL, and self-concept clarity SCC).

We then conducted the same test to examine the difference between those who studied abroad at T2 and those who did not, concerning the outcomes' variables. The test revealed a significant difference regarding IC in the preference of those who studied abroad

(mean rank= 80.76) and those who did not (mean rank= 64.24), U= 1997.50, z= -2.376, p=.02, r= 0.28. Besides, the test showed a significant difference regarding SDR in the preference of those who studied abroad (mean rank= 97.26) and those who did not (mean rank= 47.74), U= 809.500, z= -7.147, p= 0.00, r= 0.84. In addition, the test revealed a significant difference regarding creativity in the preference of those who studied abroad (mean rank= 96.34) and those who did not (mean rank= 48.66), U= 875.500, z= -6.866, p= 0.00, r= 0.81 (see table 7.4). However, there was no difference between the two groups regarding other outcomes (i.e., SL and SCC). In conclusion, the study confirmed that the study abroad academics returnees perceived changes in their IC, creativity and SDR compared to at-home academics.

Table 7.3. Means, Standard Deviation and Correlation among measures and dependent variables at T1, T2 and the control group.

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. IC_T1	102.07[1]	18.80	1.00														
2. SL_T1	33.64	5.53	.35**	1.00													
3. SCC_T1	60.29	11.23	-.11	.16	1.00												
4. SDR_T1	24.61	4.43	.38**	.43**	.42**	1.00											
5. Creativity_T1	50.89	5.89	.43*	.40**	.08	.46**	1.00										
6. IC_T2	106.03	19.24	.49**	.34**	.14	.43**	.29*	1.00									
7. SL_T2	33.63	6.73	.18	.53**	.22	.36**	.28*	.37**	1.00								
8. SCC_T2	59.07	13.51	.06	.06	.59**	.35**	.04	.14	.27*	1.00							
9. SDR_T2	25.03	3.27	.02	.16	.41**	.53**	.29*	.24*	.26*	.17	1.00						
10. Creativity-T2	51.82	7.404	.23	.39**	.24*	.25*	.19	.55**	.49**	.09	.15	1.00					
Control group																	
11. IC (control)	98.90	21.33	-.04	.05	-.17	.18	-.05	.00	-.18	-.21	.08	-.11	1.00				
12. SL (control)	33.68	7.28	.14	-.17	-.19	.04	-.11	-.10	-.21	-.05	-.04	-.16	.29*	1.00			
13. SCC (control)	61.08	9.52	.01	-.12	-.02	-.11	-.00	.04	.12	.07	-.04	.23	-.03	.07	1.00		
14. SDR (control)	20.35	3.46	.09	.04	-.13	.15	-.13	-.03	-.02	-.11	.04	.04	.16	.22	.20	1.00	
15. Creativity (control)	43.61	6.27	.10	.04	-.15	.04	.01	-.05	-.17	-.18	-.01	-.14	.30*	.47**	.05	.29*	1.00

Note: N= 72 for T1and T2. N= 72 for Control group. T1= time one, T2= time two

Table 7.4. Hypothesis one: significant differences between SARs and the control group.

Exposure variables	Intercultural competence			Self-leadership			Self-concept clarity			Self-discerning reflection			Creativity		
	Mean Rank	U	p	Mean Rank	U	p	Mean Rank	U	p	Mean Rank	U	p	Mean Rank	U	p
T1	74.71			71.68			72.09			91.85			94.78		
		2433.00	.52		2533.000	.81		2562.500	.91		1198.500	.00		988.000	.00
Control group	70.29			73.32			72.91			53.15			50.22		
T2	80.76			71.41			70.29			97.26			96.34		
		1997.50	.01		2513.500	.75		2433.000	.53		809.500	.00		875.500	.00
Control group	64.24			73.59			74.71			47.74			48.66		

Note: N= 72 for T1 and T2. N= 72 for control group.

Hypothesis two (H2): There are associations between study-abroad experience and changes in behavioural and cognitive processes at time-one.

Table 7.5. shows the means, SDs and the correlations between the outcome variables and demographic variables. The Spearman rho test results indicate a significant medium-strength correlation between IC and SL (ρ (rho)= .40; p=<.01), between IC and SDR (ρ (rho)= .38; p=<.01), between IC and creativity (ρ (rho)= .43; p=<.05), SL and SDR (ρ (rho)= .43; p=<.01), SL and creativity (ρ (rho)= .40; p=<.01), and SDR and creativity (ρ (rho)= .46; p=<.01). However, SCC has only a significant medium-strength correlation with SDR

(ρ (rho)=.42; p=<.01). The eta coefficient results show a statistically significant medium correlation (η (eta)+/= 0.30) between the host country and IC, SDR, and creativity. Furthermore, there is a statistically significant medium correlation (η (eta) +/= 0.30) between motivation and SL and between the length of study abroad and SDR. Finally, there is a statistically significant medium correlation between socialising and IC (η (eta) +/= 0.30).

However, SCC results show a week statistically significant correlation (η (eta) < 0.30) with the four mentioned demographic variables. Regarding age, gender, and education level, all have a weak statistically significant correlation (η (eta) < 0.30) with all of the outcomes' variables. As a result, we rejected the null hypothesis that there is no significant association between the outcomes variables and the four demographic variables (host-country, motivation, length of study abroad, socialising).

We concluded that there is an association between the outcomes' variables and the four demographic variables. Based on the results, we only included the four demographic variables mentioned above that showed a moderate statistically significant correlation with outcomes variables to test hypothesis two. To test H2 then, four sub-hypotheses based on the four demographic variables were examined — see table 7.6.

H2a: There is a relationship between the SARs' host-country and the changes in their behavioural and cognitive processes at time-one.

The Kruskal Wallis H test revealed significant differences in the participants' IC across the four different host countries, $H(3) = 7.860$, $p = .05$. In particular, the pairwise comparisons with adjusted p-values showed a significant difference between IC scores assigned to those who studied in the UK compared to the USA ($p = .01$, $r = .31$). Thus, the SARs who studied in the USA have greater IC than those in the UK. The test also revealed a significant difference in the participants' SDR across the four different host countries, $H(3) = 11.876$, $p = 0.008$. The Pairwise comparisons with adjusted p-values showed a significant difference between those who studied in the UK compared to the USA concerning SDR ($p = .006$, $r = .35$) or Canada ($p = .01$, $r = .52$). Thus, SARs who studied in the USA and Canada have greater SDR than those in the UK. However, the test confirmed no significant differences regarding SCC, SL and the creativity that the participants perceived across the four host countries.

H2b: There is a relationship between the SARs' length of study abroad (LSA) and the changes in their behavioural and cognitive processes at time-one.

The Kruskal Wallis test revealed a significant difference between the length of study abroad and the SDR the participants perceived across the three different categories (i.e., length of study abroad categories) $H(3) = 7.71$, $p = .02$. In particular, the pairwise comparisons with adjusted p-values showed a significant difference concerning SDR between those who stayed abroad for 1-3 years compared to 8+ years ($p = .03$, $r = .37$). The results showed that the SARs who stayed for a longer time (i.e., 8+ years) had greater SDR than those who stayed for a shorter time (i.e., 1-3 years). However, the test confirmed no significant differences regarding

other outcome variables that the participants perceived across the three lengths of their study abroad.

H2c: there are association between SARs socialisation to study abroad and the changes in their behavioural and cognitive processes at time-one.

Using the same test to evaluate the differences across the three socialising types with the outcomes' variables, this revealed significant differences in the participants' IC across the three different socialising types, H (2) = 9.622, p= .01. Furthermore, pairwise comparisons with adjusted p-values showed that there were significant differences in IC perceived between those who were only socialising with Saudis and Arabs compared to those who befriended mixed nationalities while avoiding Arabs (p= .02, r= .41), or mixed nationalities excluding Arabs (p= .002, r= .43). The test therefore confirmed that those who socialised with mixed nationalities, including Arabs, and those who socialised with mixed nationalities, including Arabs, have a greater level of IC than those who only socialised with Saudis and Arabs. However, the test confirmed no significant differences concerning other outcome variables regarding the question of the participants socialising abroad.

H2d: There is a relationship between the SARs' motivation to study abroad and the changes in their behavioural and cognitive processes at time-one.

A Mann-Whitney U test was used to evaluate the differences between those who were internally motivated to study abroad to fulfil their dreams and those who were externally motivated. The test revealed that perceived IC differs significantly between those who were internally motivated (mean rank=44.29) and those who were externally motivated

(mean rank =32.10), (U= 395.50, z= -2.375, p=0.02, r= 0.28). The test also showed that perceived SL differs significantly between those who were internally motivated (mean rank =46.29) those who were externally motivated (mean rank =30.97), U= 343.50, z= -2.994, p=0.00, r= 0.35. Similarly, SDR significantly differ between those who had internal motivation (mean rank = 32.77) and those who had external motivation (mean rank = 43.10), U= 426.50, z= -2.025, p=0.04, r= 0.24. Therefore, the results indicated that SARs who were internally motivated had greater IC and SL than those externally motivated to study abroad. However, those who were externally motivated had greater SDR than those who were internally motivated. Nevertheless, the test confirmed no significant differences concerning other outcome variables regarding the participants' motivations. Therefore, based on the results explained above we conclude that the four variables mentioned above can, to an extent, explain the differences in the outcomes variables which indicates that there is an association between the host-country, IC and SDR. In particular, there is an association between length of study abroad and SDR, and between socialisation and IC. Furthermore, there are significant associations between motivation, IC, SL and SDR.

Table 7.5. Means, Standard Deviation and Correlation among measures and dependent variables at T1.

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. IC_T1	102.07[1]	18.80	1.00										
2. SL_T1	33.64	5.53	.35**	1.00									
3. SCC_T1	60.29	11.23	-.11	.16	1.00								
4. SDR_T1	24.61	4.43	.38**	.43**	.42**	1.00							
5. Creativity_T1	50.89	5.89	.43*	.40**	.08	.46**	1.00						
Dependent variables													
6. Host-country	1.58[2]	0.84	.35	.19	.09	.39	.32						
7. LSA	2.12	0.95	.25	.28	.24	.35	.10	10.517 (.10)					
8. Socialisation	2.11	0.68	.42	.19	.03	.14	.22	10.82 (.09)	4.36 (.36)				
9. Motivation	1.36	0.48	.28	.30	.19	.26	.15	.80 (.85)	1.62 (.44)	3.64 (.16)			
Demographic													
10. Gender	1.42	0.50	.02	.20	.27	.17	.03	4.99 (.17)	.30 (.86)	.31 (.86)	2.48 (.12)		
11. Age	2.11	0.88	.11	.18	.29	.18	.04	7.81 (.25)	30.23 (.00)	1.99 (.74)	.27 (.87)	1.12 (.57)	
12. Education level	1.54	0.50	.07	.11	.22	.19	.05	1.55 (.67)	52.92 (.00)	.35 (.84)	.00 (.97)	.01 (.91)	37.75 (.00)

Note: N= 72, IC intercultural competence, SL self-leadership, SCC self-concept clarity, SDR self-discerning reflection, RD readjustment difficulties (1= yes "negatively readjust"; 2= No "positively readjust") N = 72 (Yes=44; No=28). 1. For IC, SL, SCC, SDR and Creativity, Spearman ρ rank-order correlation was used; *p < .05, **p < .01. 2. For the correlation between dependent variables and IC, SL, SCC, SDR and Creativity, eta coefficient test was used. 3. For the correlation between demographic variables, Chi square x2 was used.

Table 7.6. Hypothesis two, significant association between demographic variables and outcomes variables.

Exposure variables	IC _T1				SL _T1				SCC_T1				SDR_T1				Creativity_T1			
	N	Rank mean	X2	p	N	Rank mean	X2	p	N	Rank mean	X2	p	N	Rank mean	X2	p	N	Rank mean	X2	p
Host-country			7.86	0.05			2.131	0.55			0.52	0.91			11.88	0.01			6.34	0.09
USA	42	41.26			42	38.05			42	36.58			42	40.05			42	39.76		
The UK	22	27.52			22	31.45			22	34.75			22	24.89			22	27.41		
Canada	4	45.63			4	42.75			4	41.88			4	55.00			4	45.25		
Australia	4	26.75			4	41.75			4	39.88			4	44.63			4	43.50		
LSA			2.37	0.31			4.21	0.12			3.17	0.21			7.71	0.02			0.08	0.96
1- 3 years	24	33.35			24	37.73			24	32.52			24	29.92			24	35.85		
4 - 7 years	19	33.42			19	28.37			19	33.39			19	32.29			19	37.58		
8 + years	29	41.12			25	40.81			25	41.83			25	44.71			25	36.33		
Socialising			9.62	0.01			2.38	0.30			1.09	.058			1.01	0.60			4.10	0.13
Saudi and Arabs	13	20.42			13	28.42			13	38.23			13	31.38			13	26.42		
Mixed nationalities including Arabs	38	41.05			38	38.25			38	34.12			38	38.08			38	40.01		
Mixed nationalities avoiding Arabs	21	38.21			21	38.33			21	39.74			21	36.81			21	36.38		
Motivations (Mann-Whitney U)			395.50	.02			343.50	.00			453.50	.09			426.50	.04			520.50	.36
Internally motivated	46	32.10			46	30.97			46	33.36			46	32.77			46	34.82		
Externally motivated	26	44.29			26	46.29			26	42.06			26	43.10			26	39.48		

study abroad.

Hypothesis three (H3): ***There is a significant difference between those who positively*** ***readjust to their home-country and those who had negative readjustment on sustaining the*** ***perceived changes in their behavioural and cognitive processes.***

Based on nonparametric statistics analysis of Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test, comparison of T1 and T2 scores for the outcomes' variables (i.e., intercultural competence IC, self-leadership SL, creativity, SCC self-concept clarity and self-discerning reflection SDR) revealed that IC score at T2 was significantly higher than the T1 score (z= -3.010; p= .003). In addition, the test discovered that SL, SDR and creativity scores at T1 were higher than T2 scores (SL: z=-.340; p=734, SDR: z=-.754, p=.451, creativity: z= -1.730; p= .084). Conversely, the test showed that the SCC score at T2 was higher than the T1 score (z= -.231; p= .817). The statistics of the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test are displayed in Table 7.7.

To examine whether or not there are differences between those who believed that they had a positive readjustment experience and those who believed that they had a negative readjustment in relation to the changes in the outcomes scores between T1 and T2, the Mann-Whitney U test was used. The test revealed a statistically significant difference concerning SDR at T2 between those who positively readjusted (mean rank= 41.07) and those who negatively readjusted (mean rank=29.32), U= 415.00, z= -2.025, p=0.02, r= 0.24. However, the test discovered no statistically significant differences between those who believed that they had a positive readjustment experience and those who believed they had a negative readjustment in relations to IC, SL, creativity and SCC in both times. The statistics of the Mann-Whitney U test are displayed in Table 7.8.

Table 7.7. Hypothesis three, significant differences between T1 and T2 regarding study abroad outcomes

using the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test

Ranks		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	z	Sig. (2-tailed)
IC_T2 - IC_T1	Negative Ranks	22[a]	28.84	634.50	-3.010"	.003
	Positive Ranks	44[b]	35.83	1576.50		
	Ties	6[c]				
SL_T2 - SL_T1	Negative Ranks	34[d]	34.84	1184.50	-.340"	.734
	Positive Ranks	36[e]	36.13	1300.50		
	Ties	2[f]				
SCC_T2 - SCC_T1	Negative Ranks	31[g]	37.94	1176.00	-.231'	.817
	Positive Ranks	36[h]	30.61	1102.00		
	Ties	5[i]				
SDR_T2 - SDR_T1	Negative Ranks	29[j]	33.02	957.50	-.754"	.451
	Positive Ranks	36[k]	32.99	1187.50		
	Ties	7[l]				
Creativity_T2 - Creativity_T1	Negative Ranks	27[m]	31.94	862.50	-1.730"	.084
	Positive Ranks	40[n]	35.39	1415.50		
	Ties	5[o]				

Note : IC interculturel competence, SL self-leadership, SCC self-concept clarity, SDR self-discerning reflection, IC_T2 < IC_T1, b. IC_T2 > IC_T1, c. IC_T2 = IC_T1, d. SL_T2 < SL_T1, e. SL_T2 > SL_T1, f. SL_T2 = SL_T1, g. SCC_T2 < SCC_T1, h. SCC_T2 > SCC_T1, i. SCC_T2 = SCC_T1, j. SDR_T2 < SDR_T1, k. SDR_T2 > SDR_T1, l. SDR_T2 = SDR_T1, m. Creativity_T2 < Creativity_T1, n. Creativity_T2 > Creativity_T1, o. Creativity_T2 = Creativity_T1. '. Based on positive ranks. ". Based on negative ranks. N=72

Table 7.8. Hypothesis four, significant differences between time-one and time-two in regard to the study abroad outcomes using the Mann-Whitney U test.

	RD	IC Mean Rank	z	r	U	p	SL Mean Rank	z	r	U	p	SCC Mean Rank	z	r	U	p	SDR Mean Rank	z	r	U	p	Creativity Mean Rank	z	r	U	p
Time one	Yes	38.38	-.95	.11	533.50	.34	39.80	-1.68	.20	471.00	.09	34.73	-.90	.01	538.00	.37	37.64	-.58	.07	566.00	.561	38.75	-1.15	.13	517.00	.25
	No	33.55					31.32					39.29					34.71					32.96				
Time two	Yes	37.68	-.60	.70	564.00	.55	37.88	-.70	.08	555.50	.48	33.30	-1.63	.19	475.00	.10	41.07	-2.34	.27	415.00	.020	35.02	-.75	.09	551.00	.45
	No	34.64					34.34					41.54					29.32					38.82				

Note: *IC intercultural competence, SL self-leadership, SCC self-concept clarity, SDR self-discerning reflection,* RD: readjustment difficulties (1= yes "negatively readjust"; 2= No "positively readjust") N = 72 (Yes=44; No=28)

__Hypothesis four (H4)__: The SARs' readjustment moderates the sustainability of the changes in their behavioural and cognitive processes.

Table 7.9 shows the means, SDs and correlations between the moderators and the outcome variables at T1 and T2. The Spearman p test results indicated a statistically significant and positively medium-strength correlation between IC at T1 and T2. Furthermore, there is a statistically significant and positively strong correlation between T1 and T2 concerning SL, SCC and SDR. However, the test revealed an insignificant and positive correlation between creativity at T1 and T2.

To determine whether or not the four moderators affect the sustainability of the study abroad outcomes, we estimated a GEE model for each measurement outcome with each of the four moderators (i.e., the length of study abroad LSA, motivation, perceived benefits abroad PBA, and readjustment difficulties RD). This resulted in (5 dependents * 4 moderators) 20 models - - see table 7.10. – table 7.14.

Intercultural competence (IC)

To test H4 regarding IC, four sub-hypotheses were created based on each moderator, as follows:

H4a1: LSA moderates the sustainability of IC.

H4a2: Motivation moderates the sustainability of IC.

H4a3: PBA moderates the sustainability of IC.

H4a4: RD moderates the sustainability of IC.

First, to determine whether or not readjustment moderated the sustainability of IC, we estimated a GEE model that included IC at time-two (IC_T2), IC at time-one (IC_T1), and the interaction term of IC_T1 by readjustment. Four GEE models were estimated for each of

the four moderators. As shown in Model 2 for IC_T2 as a dependent variable, there was a significant (negative) main effect for motivation in model 2 and an insignificant (negative) main effect for IC_T1. The coefficient on the interaction term of IC_T1 (mean cantered) by motivation was positive and statistically significant (B = .01, p < 0.05).

We therefore considered that motivation moderated the sustainability of IC (supporting H4a2). Other interactions for moderating analysis were not significant (Table 7.10). The moderation was plotted, following Aiken and West (1991). Fig. 7.1 shows the plot. The results suggest that motivation altered the strength of the relationship between IC_T1 and IC_T2. More specifically, the size of the positive relationship between IC_T1 and IC_T2 increased when the participants were internally motivated to study abroad.

Self-leadership (SL)

To test H4 regarding SL, four sub-hypotheses were created based on each moderator, as follows:

H4b1: LSA moderates the sustainability of SL.

H4b2: Motivation moderates the sustainability of SL.

H4b3: PBA moderates the sustainability of SL.

H4b4: RD moderates the sustainability of SL.

Second, to explore if readjustment moderated the sustainability of SL, we estimated a GEE model that included SL at time-two (SL_T2), SL at time-one (SL_T1) and the interaction term of (SL_T1) by readjustment. Four GEE models were estimated for each of the four moderators. As shown in Model 2 for SL_T2 as a dependent variable, there was a significant (negative) main effect for motivation in model 2 and an insignificant (positive) main effect for SL_T1 (mean cantered). The coefficient on the interaction term of SL_T1 (mean cantered) by motivation was positive and statistically significant (B = .02, p <= 0.0001). We

therefore considered that motivation moderated the sustainability of SL (supporting H4b2). Other interactions for moderating analysis were not significant (Table 7.11).

The moderation was then plotted. Fig. 7.2 shows the plot. The results suggest that motivation altered the strength of the relationship between SL_T1 and SL_T2. More specifically, the size of the positive relationship between SL_T1 and SL_T2 increased when the participants were internally motivated to study abroad.

Self-concept clarity (SCC)

To test H4 regarding SCC, four sub-hypotheses were created based on each moderator, given as follows:

H4c1: LSA moderates the sustainability of SCC.

H4c2: Motivation moderates the sustainability of SCC.

H4c3: PBA moderates the sustainability of SCC.

H4c4: RD moderates the sustainability of SCC.

Third, to determine whether or not readjustment moderated the sustainability of SCC, we estimated a GEE model that included SCC at time-two (SCC_T2), SCC at time-one (SCC_T1) and the interaction term of SCC_T1 by readjustment. Four GEE models were estimated for each of the four moderators. As shown in Model 2 for SCC_T2 as a dependent variable, there was a significant (negative) main effect for motivation and a significant (positive) main effect for SCC_T1 (mean cantered). In addition, the coefficient on the interaction term of SCC_T1 (mean cantered) by motivation was positive and statistically significant (B = .02, p <= 0.05). We therefore considered motivation moderated the sustainability of self-concept clarity (supporting H4c2).

In addition, model 3 for SCC_T2 showed a significant (negative) main effect for SCC_T1 (mean cantered) and a significant (negative) main effect for perceived benefit abroad PBA.

The coefficient on the interaction term of SCC_T1 (mean cantered) by PBA was positive and statistically significant (B = .04, p <= 0.001) (supporting H4c3). Other interactions for moderating analysis were not significant.

We then considered motivation and PBA moderated the sustainability of self-concept clarity (Table 7.12). The moderation effects for both moderators were plotted. Fig. 7.3 and fig. 7.4 show the plots. First, the results suggest that motivation type altered the strength of the relationship between SCC_T1 and SCC_T2. In particular, the size of the positive relationship between SCC_T1 and SCC_T2 increased when the participants were internally motivated to study abroad. Second, the results indicated that PBA altered the strength of the relationship between SCC_T1 and SCC_T2. In particular, the size of the positive relationship between SCC_T1 and SCC_T2 increased when the participants agreed that they had perceived the benefits of studying abroad.

Self-discerning reflection (SDR)

To test H4 regarding SDR, four sub-hypotheses were created based on each moderator, given as follows:

H4d1: LSA moderates the sustainability of SDR.

H4d2: Motivation moderates the sustainability of SDR.

H4d3: PBA moderates the sustainability of SDR.

H4d4: RD moderates the sustainability of SDR.

Fourth, to determine whether or not readjustment moderated the sustainability of SDR, we estimated a GEE model that included SDR at time-two (SDR_T2), SDR at time-one (SDR_T1) and the interaction term of SDR_T1 by readjustment. Four GEE models were estimated for each of the four moderators. As shown in Model 3 for SDR_T2 as a dependent

variable, there was an insignificant (positive) main effect for perceived benefit abroad (PBA) and a significant (positive) main effect for SDR_T1 (mean cantered).

The coefficient on the interaction term of SL_T1 (mean cantered) by PBA was negative and statistically significant (B = -.04, p <= 0.001). We therefore considered that PBA moderated the sustainability of SDR (supporting H4d3), while other interactions for moderating analysis were insignificant (Table 7.13).

The moderation was then plotted, and Fig.7.5 shows the plot. The results suggest that PBA altered the strength of the relationship between SDR_T1 and SDR_T2. More specifically, the size of the negative relationship between SDR_T1 and SDR_T1 increased when the participants disagreed that they have perceived the benefits of study abroad.

Creativity behaviour (Creativity)

To test H4 regarding creativity behaviour, four sub-hypotheses were created based on each moderator, as follows:

H4e1: LSA moderates the sustainability of Creativity.

H4e2: Motivation moderates the sustainability of Creativity.

H4e3: PBA moderates the sustainability of Creativity.

H4e4: RD moderates the sustainability of Creativity.

Fifth, to explore if readjustment moderated the sustainability of creativity, we estimated a GEE model that included creativity at time-two (Creativity _T2), creativity at time-one (Creativity _T1) and the interaction term of creativity _T1 by readjustment. Four GEE models were estimated for each of the four moderators. As shown in Model 3 for creativity _T2 as a dependent variable, there was a significant (positive) main effect for perceived benefit abroad (PBA) and a significant (negative) main effect for creativity _T1 (mean cantered).

The coefficient on the interaction term of creativity _T1 (mean cantered) by PBA was positive and statistically significant (B = .01, p <= 0.01). We therefore considered that PBA moderated the sustainability of creativity (supporting H4e3). Other interactions for moderating analysis were insignificant (Table 7.14). The moderation was plotted. Fig.7.6 shows the plot. The results suggest that PBA altered the strength of the relationship between creativity_T1 and creativity_T2. More specifically, the size of the positive relationship between creativity_T1 and creativity_T2 increased when the participants agreed that they had perceived benefits of study abroad.

Table 7.9. Means, Standard Deviation and Correlation between the outcome variables at T1, T2 and the predictor variables.

Measure	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. IC_T1	102.07[1]	18.80	1.00												
2. SL_T1	33.64	5.53	.40**	1.00											
3. SCC_T1	60.29	11.23	-.11	.16	1.00										
4. SDR_T1	24.61	4.43	.38**	.43**	.42**	1.00									
5. Creativity_T1	50.89	5.89	.43*	.40**	.08	.46**	1.00								
6. IC_T2	106.03	19.24	.489**	.341**	.139	.434**	.292*	1.00							
7. SL_T2	33.63	6.73	.184	.534**	.224	.362**	.280*	.371**	1.00						
8. SCC_T2	59.07	13.51	.055	.062	.596**	.351**	.038	.140	.270*	1.00					
9. SDR_T2	25.03	3.27	.018	.157	.406**	.534**	.293*	.240*	.256*	.166	1.00				
10. CreativityT2	51.82	7.404	.229	.395**	.240*	.253*	.188	.548**	.485**	.088	.154	1.00			
Moderatos															
11. RD	1.39	0.49	.35	.19	.09	.39	.32	.14	.13	.20	.28	.00			
12. LSA	2.12	0.95	.26	.28	.25	.35	.10	.34	.31	.18	.16	.33	3.46 (.17)		
13. PBA	1.04	0.20	.42	.19	.03	.14	.22	.14	.12	.19	.13	.37	.04 (.84)	2.36 (.31)	
14. Motivation	1.36	0.48	.28	.30	.19	.26	.15	.14	.32	.34	.15	.12	6.62 (.01)	1.63 (.44)	1.77.18)

Note: IC_T1 intercultural competence at time-one, IC_T2 intercultural competence at time-two, SL_T1 self-leadership at time-one, SL_T2 self-leadership at time-two, SCC_T1 self-concept clarity at time-one, SCC_T2 self-concept clarity at time-two, SDR_T1 self-discerning reflection at time-one, SDR_T1 self-discerning reflection at time-two, LSA length of study abroad, RD readjustment difficulties, PBA perceived benefits abroad. *p < .05, **p < .01. ***p<.001. [1]. For IC, SL, SCC, SDR and Creativity Pearson r was used; for the correlation between moderators and IC, SL, SCC, SDR and Creativity Eta test was used. [3.] For the correlation between demographic variables Chi square x2 was used.

Table 7.10. GEE analysis of the result of readjustment moderating the sustained benefits of intercultural competence at T1 and T2.

Predictors/T1	Model 1 B	(SE)	Model 2 B	(SE)	Model 3 B	(SE)	Model 4 B	(SE)
Intercept	4.762*	(.04)	4.80*	(.04)	4.64**		4.71*	(.04)
IC_T1(mean cantered)	.00	(.00)	-.01	(.01)	.01	(.00)	.00	(.00)
LSA (1-3 years)	-.21	(.11)						
LSA (4-7 years)	-.09	(.06)						
Motivation (Internal)			-.13*	(.04)				
PBA					.09*	(.04)		
RD							.07	(.06)
IC_T1 (mean cantered) *LSA (1-3 years)	-.00	(.01)						
IC_T1 (mean cantered) *LSA (4-7 years)	.00	(.01)						
IC_T1 (mean cantered) *Motivation			.01*	(.01)				
IC_T1(mean cantered) *PBA					-.01	(.00)		
IC_T1 (mean cantered) *RD							.00	(.00)
Gender (female)	.09**	(.04)	.11**	(.05)	.08	(.05)	.07	(.05)
Age (24-29)	.09	(.10)	.01	(.07)	.08	(.09)	.10	(.10)
Age (30-34)	-.07	(.05)	-.10*	(.05)	-.05	(.05)	-.04	(.05)
Education level (Master's degree)	.02	(.08)	-.09	(.06)	-.12	(.08)	-.13	(.09)
Host (USA)	-.07	(.06)	-.00	(.04)	-.05	(.05)	-.09	(.06)
Host (the UK)	-.09	(.06)	-.07	(.05)	.11*	(.05)	-.13*	(.05)
Host (Canada)	-.01	(.04)	.07	(.04)	.04	(.03)	.05	(.04)

*Note: IC_T1 intercultural competence at time-one, LSA length of study abroad reference +8 years, PBA perceived benefits abroad, RD readjustment difficulties, motivation reference external, gender reference male, age reference 35+ years old, education level reference PhD, Host reference Australia. *p < .05, **p < .01. ***p<.0*

Table 7.11. GEE analysis of the result of readjustment moderating the sustained benefits of self-leadership at T1 and T2.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Predictors/T1	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
Intercept	1.41***	(.04)	1.47***	(.03)	1.19***	(.10)	1.36***	(.04)
SL_T1(mean cantered)	.03***	(.00)	.01	(.01)	.03	(.03)	.02***	(.01)
LSA (1-3 years)	-.15	(.12)						
LSA (4-7 years)	-.05	(.06)						
Motivation (Internal)			-.10**	(.04)				
PBA					.19*	(.09)		
RD							.07	(.06)
SL _T1 (mean cantered) *LSA (1-3 years)	-.01	(.01)						
SL _T1 (mean cantered) *LSA (4-7 years)	-.01	(.01)						
SL _T1 (mean cantered) *Motivation			.02***	(.01)				
SL _T1(mean cantered) *PBA					-.01	(.04)		
SL _T1 (mean cantered) *RD							.00	(.01)
Gender (female)	.00	(.05)	.00	(.04)	.01	(.05)	.00	(.05)
Age (24-29)	.15	(.09)	.08	(.09)	.15	(.09)	.14	(.09)
Age (30-34)	-.05	(.05)	-.06	(.05)	-.05	(.04)	-.05	(.05)
Education level (Master's degree)	-.04	(.09)	-.13	(.08)	-.14	(.08)	-.16	(.08)
Host (USA)	-.06	(.06)	-.03	(.05)	-.03	(.06)	-.06	(.06)
Host (the UK)	-.02	(.06)	.01	(.04)	-.02	(.05)	-.03	(.06)
Host (Canada)	.01	(.05)	.06	(.03)	.06	(.04)	.07	(.04)

*Note: IC_T1 intercultural competence at time-one, LSA length of study abroad reference +8 years, PBA perceived benefits abroad, RD readjustment difficulties, motivation reference external, gender reference male, age reference 35+ years old, education level reference PhD, Host reference Australia. *p < .05, **p < .01. ***p<.001*

Table 7.12. GEE analysis of the result of readjustment moderating the sustained benefits of self-concept clarity at T1 and T2.

Predictors/T1	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
Intercept	3.98***	(.10)	4.03***	(.10)	3.62***	(.13)	3.98***	(.09)
SCC_T1(mean cantered)	.01**	(.00)	.01***	(.00)	-.02**	(.01)	.02***	(.00)
LSA (1-3 years)	-.16	(.10)						
LSA (4-7 years)	.05	(.06)						
Motivation (Internal)			-.11**	(.04)				
PBA					.34***	(.08)		
RD							-.07	(.04)
SCC _T1 (mean cantered) *LSA (1-3 years)	.00	(.00)						
SCC _T1 (mean cantered) *LSA (4-7 years)	.00	(.01)						
SCC _T1 (mean cantered) *Motivation			.01*	(.00)				
SCC _T1(mean cantered) PBA					.04***	(.01)		
SCC _T1 (mean cantered) *RD							.00	(.00)
Gender (female)	-.09	(.05)	-.07	(.05)	-.11**	(.04)	-.10*	(.05)
Age (24-29)	.08	(.08)	.05	(.07)	.01	(.07)	.05	(.08)
Age (30-34)	-.01	*.05)	.00	(.06)	.00	(.06)	.00	(.06)
Education level (Master's degree)	.09	(.07)	-.01	(.06)	.03	(.05)	.01	(.06)
Host (USA)	.15	(.11)	.16	(.11)	.19	(.12)	.21*	(.10)
Host (the UK)	.15	(.10)	.12	(.11)	.13	(.11)	.14	(.09)
Host (Canada)	.14	(.11)	.19	(.11)	.18	(.11)	.17	(.09)

Not: IC_T1 intercultural competence at time-one, LSA length of study abroad reference +8 years, PBA perceived benefits abroad, RD readjustment difficulties, motivation reference external, gender reference male, age reference 35+ years old, education level reference PhD, Host reference Australia. *p < .05, **p < .01. ***p<.001

Table 7.13. GEE analyses result of readjustment moderating the sustain benefits of self-discerning reflection at T1 and T2.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4

Predictors/T1	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
Intercept	3.26***	(.06)	3.26***	(.07)	3.25***	(.07)	3.24***	(.05)
SDR_T1(mean cantered)	.02***	(.01)	.02**	(.01)	.04**	(.01)	.01*	(.01)
LSA (1-3 years)	-.01	(.06)						
LSA (4-7 years)	.06	*.06)						
Motivation (Internal)			-.00	(.03)				
PBA					.01	(.04)		
RD							.07*	(.03)
SDR _T1 (mean cantered) *LSA (1-3 years)	.00	(.01)						
SDR _T1 (mean cantered) *LSA (4-7 years)	.00	(.01)						
SDR _T1 (mean cantered) *Motivation			-.01	(.01)				
SDR _T1(mean cantered) *PBA					-.03*	(.01)		
SDR _T1 (mean cantered) *RD							.01	(.01)
Gender (female)	.02	(.03)	.01	(.03)	.02	(.03)	.02	(.03)
Age (24-29)	-.02	(.56)	-.03	(.05)	-.02	(.05)	-.03	(.05)
Age (30-34)	-.04	(.03)	-.05	(.03)	-.04	(.03)	-.06	(.03)
Education level (Master's degree)	.01	(.06)	.01	(.04)	.01	(.04)	.00	(.04)
Host (USA)	-.04	(.68)	-.02	(.07)	-.03	(.07)	-.05	(.06)
Host (the UK)	-.05	(.07)	-.04	(.07)	-.03	(.07)	-.05	(.06)
Host (Canada)	-.16*	(.07)	-.13*	(.06)	-.13*	(.06)	-.11*	(.06)

*Note: IC_T1 intercultural competence at time-one, LSA length of study abroad reference +8 years, PBA perceived benefits abroad, RD readjustment difficulties, motivation reference external, gender reference male, age reference 35+ years old, education level reference PhD, Host reference Australia. *p < .05, **p < .01. ***p<.001*

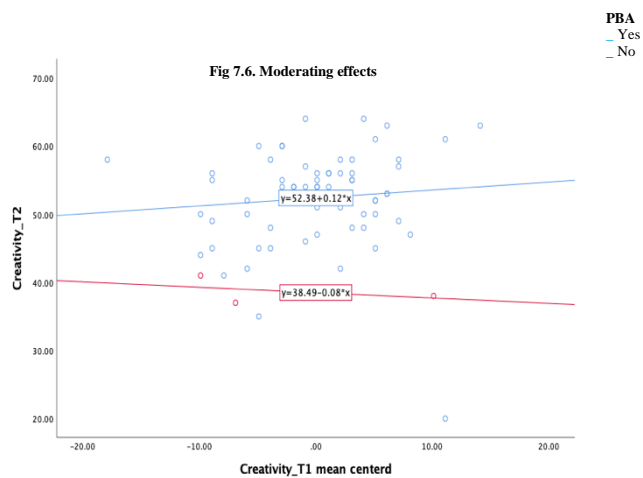Table 7.14. GEE analysis of the result of readjustment moderating the sustained benefits of Creativity at T1 and T2.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Predictors/T1	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)

Intercept	4.01***	(.05)	4.07***	(.05)	3.73***	(.06)	4.04***	(.04)
Creativity_T1(mean cantered)	.00	(.00)	.00	(.10)	-.01*	(.00)	.00	(.01)
LSA (1-3 years)	-.15	(.09)						
LSA (4-7 years)	-.11*	(.05)						
Motivation (Internal)			-.04	(.03)				
PBA					.31***	(.03)		
RD							.01	(.05)
Creativity _T1 (mean cantered) *LSA (1-3 years)	.01	(.01)						
Creativity _T1 (mean cantered) *LSA (4-7 years)	.01	(.01)						
Creativity _T1 (mean cantered) *Motivation			.01	(.01)				
Creativity _T1(mean cantered) *PBA					.01**	(.00)		
Creativity _T1 (mean cantered) *RD							.00	(.01)
Gender (female)	.03	(.05)	.03	(.04)	.03	(.04)	.02	(.04)
Age (24-29)	.02	(.05)	.03	(.06)	.05	(.06)	.03	(.06)
Age (30-34)	-.02	(.03)	.00	(.04)	.02	(.03)	.00	(.04)
Education level (Master's degree)	.02	(.07)	-.08	(.04)	-.09*	(.05)	-.09	(.05)
Host (USA)	-.08	(.08)	-.09	(.07)	-.08	(.06)	-.08	(.06)
Host (the UK)	-.05	(.07)	-.08	(.06)	.07	(.06)	-.08	(.06)
Host (Canada)	-.10	(.07)	-.08	(.06)	-.07	(.06)	-.08	(.06)

Note: IC_T1 intercultural competence at time-one, LSA length of study abroad reference +8 years, PBA perceived benefits abroad, RD readjustment difficulties, motivation reference external, gender reference male, age reference 35+ years old, education level reference PhD, Host reference Australia. $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$
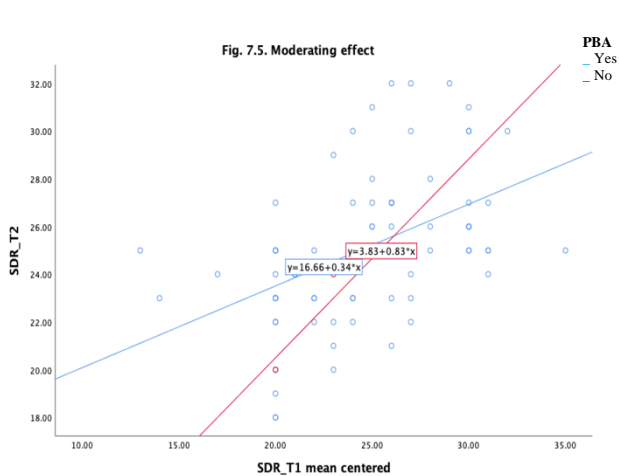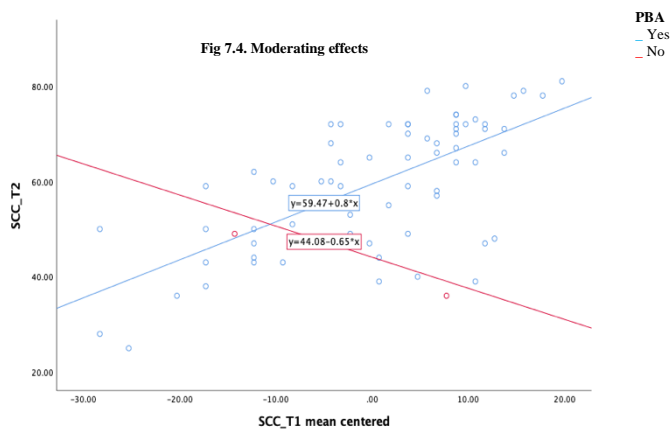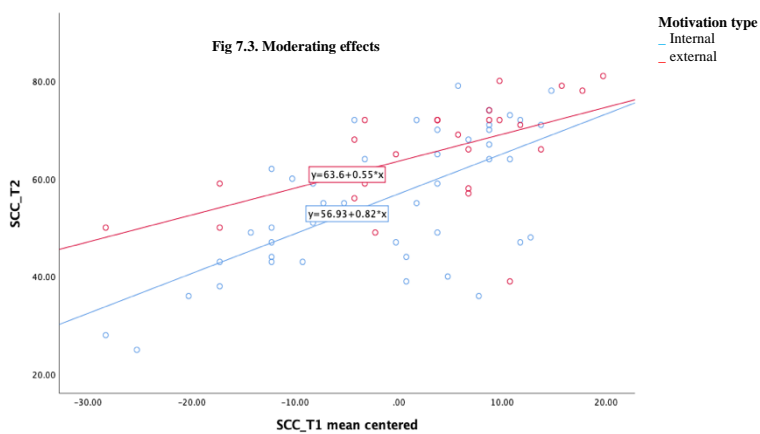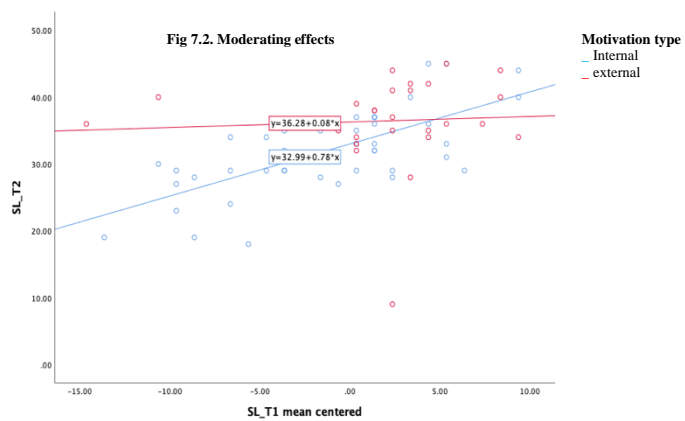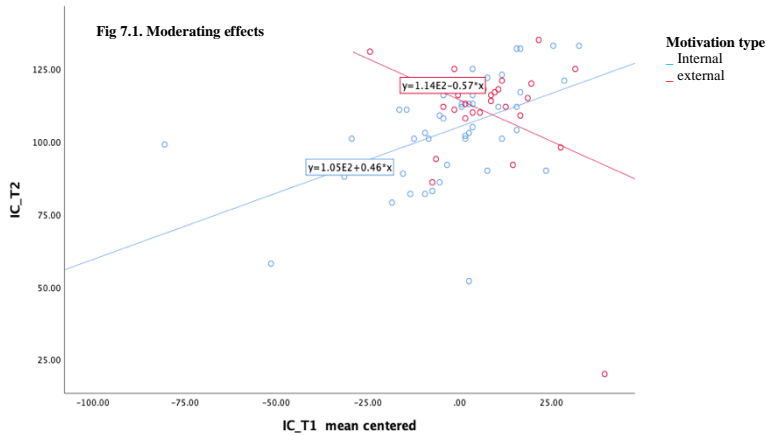
Fig 7.1. Moderating effects

$y=1.14E2-0.57*x$

$y=1.05E2+0.46*x$

Motivation type
Internal
external

Fig 7.2. Moderating effects

$y=36.28+0.08*x$

$y=32.99+0.78*x$

Motivation type
Internal
external

Fig 7.3. Moderating effects

$y=63.6+0.55*x$

$y=56.93+0.82*x$

Motivation type
Internal
external

Fig 7.4. Moderating effects

$y=59.47+0.8*x$

$y=44.08-0.65*x$

PBA
Yes
No

Fig. 7.5. Moderating effect

$y=3.83+0.83*x$

$y=16.66+0.34*x$

PBA
Yes
No

Fig 7.6. Moderating effects

$y=52.38+0.12*x$

$y=38.49-0.08*x$

PBA
Yes
No

252

7.5. Discussion.

This study examined longitudinal data over two time-points to understand the nature of and evaluate the impact of the international experience over time. We thus set out to understand better whether the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviour acquired while studying abroad have a lasting impact. Moreover, this study intends to test and validate the proposed conceptual framework of the longer-term benefits of acculturation which was developed based on the theory of acculturation by Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001). In the following sections, the study results will be discussed based on the study hypotheses, while deliberately reflecting on previous studies and theories in the field found in the literature review and theoretical background as discussed in chapter 2 and 4.

__Hypothesis one (H1):__ There is a significant difference between study-abroad and study at home academics in relation to their behavioural and cognition processes.

Intercultural competence (IC)

The findings are consistent with (Hanada, 2015), confirming a significant difference between studying abroad and studying at home academics concerning IC only at T2, and with no significant difference at T1. This finding was extremely interesting. One possible explanation could be the timing of the T1 survey; namely, that the SARs had recently returned and were most likely experiencing reverse culture shock. Therefore, they may have reported lower IC at the start of their return.

According to Roberts (2012), returnees may encounter several difficulties upon their return, creating disturbance and challenges that require adjustment (Roberts, 2012). Furthermore, researchers suggest that the readjustment to the home country is equally and sometimes more challenging than that faced when leaving home (Adler, 1981; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992; Chamove and Soeterik, 2006; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Martin,

1984; Storti, 2011). Although psychological readjustment difficulties then affect the participants' IC evaluation, their IC still surpass those who have not been abroad.

Self-discerning reflection (SDR)

The findings confirmed a significant difference between studying abroad and studying at home academics regarding SDR at T1 and T2. Furthermore, the findings support Adam et al.'s (2018) conclusions that those who had lived abroad scored higher in SDR in comparison to the control group who had signed up to live abroad but had not yet done so. They explained that living abroad is different from other experiences because it involves interacting with a new culture with different norms, values and behaviours, regarding which they repeatedly feel the need to reflect on their values and beliefs, either ignored or strengthened.

This experience is more likely to trigger SDR than other experiences, such as divorce and getting sacked. In contrast, living in a home country entails interacting with people who share the same values, norms and behaviours, entailing that they are not obligated to reflect consistently on their values and cultural values. In this way, SDR is uniquely triggered by living abroad, making SARs different from those who have not been abroad.

Creativity behaviour (Creativity)

The findings confirmed a significant difference between studying abroad and studying at home academics with regard to creativity behaviour at T1 and T2, which came out in favour of those who studied abroad. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies indicating that international experiences improve creativity (e.g., Godart *et al.,* 2015; Leung and Chiu, 2010; Lu *et al.,* 2017; Maddux and Galinsky, 2009). According to Maddux and Galinsky (2009), the impact of living abroad on creativity stems from the crucial elements that incite the creativity processes (e.g., Finke, Ward and Smith, 1999), and these involves

three elements. First, perceiving new ideas and perceptions due to living abroad can be helpful with the creative process. Second, SARs can seize opportunities to develop problem-solving skills through observation, learning and reflection, as the following example shows. Living abroad enables sojourners (i.e., international students) to learn and understand the behaviour of others as it reflects their culture and customs; for example, leaving some food on a plate is important in Chinese culture as it shows that the host is generous, whereas in American culture it is important to eat all the food on the plate as a sign of respect that the food was outstanding.

Third, living abroad increases openness and makes the sojourner accept the implementation of different ideas from unacquainted sources, which help facilitate the generation of unconscious ideas (Schooler and Melcher,1995) and intellectual growth (Leung *et al.,* 2008b; Ward, 1994). Consequently, those who live abroad are more likely to produce and incorporate thoughts in unique ways. The findings align with the qualitative finding in chapters 5 and 6, confirming that SARs are equipped with many creative ideas reflecting on their teaching style, research skills, working strategy and benefiting their community and country.

Self-leadership (SL), and self-concept clarity (SCC)

The finding was unexpected regarding SCC and SL as no significant differences were found between the two groups. This finding is in contrast to Adam et al. (2018) who confirmed a significant difference in SCC between those who studied abroad and those who did not. Meanwhile the lack of studies examining SL in the context of study abroad entail that no conclusions can be drawn.

Four possible different reasons might explain the unexpected result of this study. The first reason may be that readjustment difficulties have affected the SARs' self-view and the realisation of their abilities concerning SL and SCC. The second reason is that the control

group have developed these two outcomes because of their age, position at work, length of their work experience and some other circumstances, which possibly inherit their behaviour and cognitive, particularly their SL and SCC.

The third possible explanation is consistent with a related concept within experimental psychology by Kruger and Dunning (1999) called the Dunning-Kruger effect (DKE). DKE suggests that individuals tend to be inaccurate and excessively optimistic when evaluating their performance on societal and rational tasks. As a result, the lack of skilled performers causes their performances to be overrated entailing that they do not recognise the lack of their rating because of their skill deficiency. This pattern of behaviour has been recognised in different studies investigating the concept in a different setting, such as between students answering a classroom exam (Dunning *et al.*, 2003), or medical students evaluating their interviewing abilities (Hodges, Regehr and Martin, 2001), and administrators rating their performance (Edwards *et al.*, 2003).

The fourth and final reason is supplied by Burson, Larrick and Klayman (2006) who propose another explanation of the DKE (2006) model called the noise-plus-bias model, which entails that uncertain self-evaluation (noise) goes hand-in-hand with a bias concerning task-specific default evaluation. Therefore, respondents who lack self-awareness concerning their performance entails that their evaluation lacks certainty irrespective of their level task skill - a conclusion that is valid for all participants (McIntosh *et al.*, 2019).

Reflecting on this study, both SARs and at home academics could fall into the noise-plus-bias effect. Consequently, those who developed these skills (i.e., SL, SCC) will evaluate their performance better, even if they lack a self-awareness view of their performance in comparison to those who might not have the same skills and, as a result, overestimate their evaluation. Moreover, since the SARs developed SDR abroad they have become much more aware of their abilities and skills because of their study abroad experience. However, the

control group participants are most likely to lack the self-awareness of their skills and have
thus overestimated their abilities.

***Hypothesis two (H2): There is associations between study-abroad experience and changes
in behavioural and cognitive processes at time one.***

The study found four factors related to the situational characteristics associated with the study
abroad outcomes: host-country, motivation, length of study abroad (LSA) and socialisation.
The findings demonstrated that IC is associated with the host country, socialisation,
motivation and not with LSA. SL is only associated with motivation. SDR is associated with
the host country, motivation and LSA and not with socialisation. However, no association
was found between the SCC and the four factors, and between creativity and the four factors.

Intercultural competence (IC)

The findings demonstrate that IC is associated significantly with the host country, with
socialisation and with motivation, but not with LSA. This study finding adds new knowledge
insofar as it shows that the participants differ in their IC in relation to their host country,
possibly due to the cultural differences between the home country and the host country.
According to cultural learning theory (Ward, 1996; Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001;
Wilson, Ward and Fischer, 2013), when cultural differences are narrow, the development of
competency-based IC is more effective than when there are significant cultural differences.
For example, Wolff and Borzikowsky (2018) investigated whether or not there was a
significant difference in the development of IC for a group of 199 German students studying
in the USA and Canada. The study found no significant differences in IC development
between the two countries due to their cultural similarities. However, even though there are
cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and the four western countries, the discovery of

significant differences regarding IC between the participants based on the host country suggests that there may be certain characteristics that distinguish each country from the other. These differences may have contributed to the development of IC for some without the other such as openness, acceptance and ethnic and cultural diversity. Nevertheless, further research is needed to investigate this association.

Regarding the association between IC and socialisation, the findings here align with the research of Meleady, Seger and Vermue (2020), indicating an association between intergroup contact and IC for a group of British nationals on their contact with Eastern Europeans and black Africans. Those who had positive, pleasant and friendly contact had a higher IC than those who had negative, unpleasant and unfriendly experiences. Furthermore, the results confirmed a mutual causal relationship between IC and an intergroup contact employing a longitudinal test. It was notable that only positive contact at T1 was associated with improvements in IC at T2.

In addition, IC at T1 was associated with reducing negative contact at T2 and not with positive contact. Accordingly, the IC level was affected by the experience of intergroup contact, where only positive contact promised an increase in IC over time. Reflecting on the research outlined above, it is clear that the SARs who only socialised with Saudis and Arabs had a lower score of IC than those who socialised with different nationalities, which may explain why they might have experienced negative feelings when interacting with non-Saudis or non-Arabs, so putting them off from such interaction. The negative experience could be due to cultural differences, language difficulties or feeling unwelcomed among them, which affects their socialisation preference and, as a result, the development of IC.

Clear gaps exist in the literature in terms of measuring the association between IC and motivation. However, since the cultural intelligence CQ scale was used in this study to measure IC and CQ and IC are highly correlated (Li, 2020), we were able to look at some other studies that explored the association between CQ and motivation. We found that the

current findings align with previous research, indicating that external motivation is not significantly and positively related to CQ (Ang, Van Dyne and Koh, 2006; Harrison, 2012; MacNab and Worthley, 2012; Holtbrügge and Engelhard, 2016). In contrast, internal motivation and independence are vital for intercultural interest and competence (Chirkov *et al.,* 2007; 2008).

Furthermore, people who are externally motivated by their social circle (such as family status) their driven attention and energy to understand or conquer cultural differences is weak, and as a result, their benefits are weakened in terms of CQ (Van Dyne, Ang and Koh,2008; Holtbrügge and Engelhard, 2016). As a consequence, having a strong internal motivation to study abroad is crucial in developing IC due to the many socialisation challenges that students may face abroad, such as language difficulties and cultural differences. Facing these challenges might thus discourage them from stepping out of their comfort zone unless they are internally motivated.

Regarding the association between IC and LSA, the findings are consistent with Hanada (2015) in indicating no significant differences between short-term and medium-term study programs on IC development. However, other surveys have researched the association between the IC and LSA and some studies found that longer-term programs abroad contributed to the development of IC in comparison to short-term programs. For example, Engle and Engle (2004) compared a year-long program and a semester-long program in terms of the development of IC; the findings confirmed that longer-term programs are more significant for developing IC. These results align with previous studies (e.g., Behrnd and Porzelt, 2012; Engle and Engle, 2004; Wilson, Ward and Fischer, 2013), suggesting an association between a more extended time abroad and higher IC.

However, some studies point out that short-term study abroad contributes to the development of IC (Ramirez, 2016; Wolff and Borzikowsky, 2018). For example, Wolff and Borzikowsky (2018) found an increase in IC after only three months living abroad, suggesting that a further

increase is expected with a longer time spent abroad. However, the development of IC during a short period revealed an ambiguous result as some studies found a non-gain or just a marginally significant gain in IC (e.g., Stewart, Wilson and Miles, 2014; Leong, 2007; Savicki *et al.,* 2004). These contradictory findings on the association between IC and short-period study abroad imply that short-term study abroad does not guarantee IC development. To conclude, although the current study results indicated no significant association between the participants' IC development and LSA, the results of the Kruskal Wallis test showed that those who stayed abroad for 8+ years had higher IC compared to stays of 1-3 years and 4-7 years.

Self-leadership (SL)

The analysis provided by this study has contributed new knowledge showing a significant association between SL and motivation. Although there is a lack of research in international education concerning SL development as an outcome of study abroad, some research in leadership literature has linked SL with internal motivation. For example, one of the classical theories in this domain - SL strategies - has been influenced by intrinsic motivation theory (e.g., Deci and Ryan, 1985). In particular, SL definition includes continuous steps starting with the person taking initiatives to achieve his or her goal through self-determination and self-motivation (Manz, 1986; Manz and neck, 2004; Manz and Sims, 2001). Self-influence is subsequently one of the SL strategies that utilises natural self-rewarding, where the person effectively relies on his or her internal motivation to perform a task because they fully want to and not because of the influence of others (Manz, 1986). As a result, an essential part of SL is self-influence through internal motivation, which turns the meaning of "should" to "want" when performing a task (Maykrantz and Houghton, 2018). Thus, finding a significant association between SL and motivation in preference to internal type suggests that SARs who

were internally motivated to study abroad naturally had SL skills within them since they established their intentions to study abroad and work towards achieving their goals.

<u>Self-discerning reflection (SDR)</u>

The study found a significant association between the level of SDR and the host country. As discussed earlier in hypothesis one, living abroad generally triggered the development of SDR (Adam *et al.,* 2018). This finding is consistent with a qualitative study by Osland (2000). In addition, the study explored living abroad adjustment experience for freshly repatriated American managers. The study found that their adjustment strategy to adapt to the new culture, such as embracing their values and norms, did not always undermine their cultural values and identity but helped clarify and strengthen them.

The findings here suggest that living abroad prompts SDR where people struggle with their own culture and values and the host cultures and values. As a result, people choose which values represent who they are and which ones do not (Adam *et al.,* 2018). Nonetheless, further research is needed to validate these conclusions.

Certainly, the findings show a significant association between SDR and motivation. In particular, externally motivated participants scored higher in SDR than internally motivated ones. The finding suggests that the participants accumulate many opportunities and challenges that lead to constant reflection and a comparison between the home and host country due to living abroad. Accordingly, they might face self-doubt and self-criticism about the choices and decisions they have made throughout their journey from start to finish. In contrast, internally motivated participants were profoundly interested and might have better knowledge of what they will face abroad even before going away. This motivation thus helped them to adjust to the new culture easier entailing that they possibly faced fewer challenges abroad.

Although there is a lack of study to back up, the findings from the qualitative study in chapter 5 resonate with these study findings. In chapter 5, the study found that SARs who were motivated by their work requirement or family encouragement had more difficulty engaging with the host culture because of cultural differences. Although they expressed their admiration for the host culture, they recognised their boundaries in reflecting on their values and culture. Nonetheless, some of them confessed that living abroad helped them learn about their values and culture, which helped strengthen them. It was in facing adjustment difficulties abroad, such as cultural differences, that triggered SDR (Adam *et al.,* 2018). Moreover, these findings are consistent with Adam et al. (2018) study, confirming a significant association between SDR and LSA. Their study found that the depth of international experience (i.e., LSA) is associated with SDR because the longer people live abroad, the more opportunities they will have to engage in SDR. Such opportunities include intensive learning about the host culture (Maddux, Adam and Galinsky, 2010; Maddux and Galinsky, 2009) and distinguishing similarities and dissimilarities between the home and host country (Leung *et al.,* 2008a).

According to Adam et al. (2018) the deeper the experience abroad, the more opportunities to trigger SDR, which lead to a reflection on their values, expectations and behaviour, so contributing to a better understanding of the self. In conclusion, while developing SDR is a natural process when living in a different culture, it is a subjective experience because it depends on the individual knowledge about the host country, the length of their stay and how the individual is dealing with the difficulties and challenges of living abroad.

Self-concept clarity (SCC)

Although the data analysis found no significant association between SCC and any of the four mechanisms, previous research found that SCC is similar to SDR and associated with the host-country, motivation type and LSA (Adam *et al.,* 2018). In their study, Adam et al.

(2018) confirmed that SDR is strongly associated with SCC, while SDR moderates the impact of living abroad on SCC.

Creativity behaviour (Creativity)

The data analysis found no significant association between creativity and the four mechanisms. Although no study examined creativity in the context of studying abroad, few studies suggested an association between creativity and LSA (e.g., Godart *et al.,* 2015; Maddux and Galinsky, 2009). For example, Godart et al. (2015) found that the number of years fashion managers had worked internationally is a strong predictor of the creativity at their fashion company. In their experimental study, Maddux and Galinsky (2009) found that the amount of time participants spent living abroad had a direct relationship with their finding creative solutions when they experimented with the Duncker candle-mounting task. Regarding the association between creativity and motivation, several previous studies indicated that individuals' internal motivations rather than external drives show greater creativity (e.g., Amabile, 1985; Amabile and Gitomer, 1984). Further study is needed to examine these relationships in the context of studying abroad

Hypothesis three (H3): There is a significant difference between those who positively readjust to their home country and those who had negative readjustment on sustaining the perceived changes in their behaviours and cognitive processes.

The results showed the level of IC that the SARs perceived at T2 is significantly higher than T1, while SL, SDR and creativity behaviour declined from T1 to T2. As mentioned earlier in hypothesis three, the explanation here might be the impact of home-country transition and the stress caused by the reverse-culture shock, which affects their perceived outcomes or leads to overestimating or underestimating their abilities. According to Roberts (2012), returnees

encounter a number of difficulties upon their returns which create disturbance and challenges that require adjustment. However, the findings revealed an increase in SCC from T1 to T2 which could be associated with the participants' successful readjustment experience resulting in a clearer view of themselves. The findings are consistent with Arthur (2003) indicating that returning individual try to present him/herself to the home environment and feel accepted psychologically more than physically.

Furthermore, the study has examined the association between the readjustment experience and the sustainability of the study-abroad outcomes. Here the data analysis found that those who perceived difficulties at work their SDR is higher at T2 compared to others. This finding suggests that facing difficulties at work allows for a similar reflection process to cross-cultural adjustment as they struggle between their newly perceived values and perceptions and the home country values and culture.

As mentioned earlier, new experiences trigger SDR, and as the participants have spent several years abroad, returning home can be considered a new unique experience. The reverse-cultural shock and facing difficulties at work could affect these individuals' psychological wellbeing, social readjustment and identification, while they may face a "different reality" rather than a 'shocking reality' upon their return (Brabant, Palmer and Gramling, 1990; Gaw, 2000).

The findings also showed that the participants were able sustain the other outcomes of study abroad, including IC, SL, and SCC but excepting creativity. Those who found difficulties at work even showed a slight decrease in their creativity behaviour compared to those who did not face difficulties. The findings suggest the importance of supporting the SARs to help boost their creativity behaviour and job satisfaction. However, examining the sustainability of study abroad outcomes and the effect of readjustment is under-researched, suggesting that further study is needed to validate these findings.

Hypothesis four (H4): The SARs' readjustment moderates the sustainability of the changes in their behavioural and cognitive processes.

Intercultural competence (IC)

The results confirmed the findings from hypothesis two, indicating that the sustainability of IC depends on the participants' motivation, where internal motivation and independence play a vital role in intercultural interest and competence (Chirkov *et al.,* 2007; 2008). The findings here can be explained by looking at externally motivated students (Adam *et al.,* 2018; Ang, Van Dyne and Koh, 2006; Harrison, 2012; MacNab and Worthley, 2012; Holtbrügge and Engelhard, 2016), the nature of their social circle (such as family status), bearing in mind that their drive and energy to understand cultural differences is weak and consequently, their IC's are weakened (Van Dyne, Ang and Koh,2008; Holtbrügge and Engelhard, 2016). Therefore, having a strong internal motivation to study abroad is crucial in developing IC. Besides, internal motivation help sustaining IC because developing IC abroad will equip the students with the practical aspects of IC. According to Enrique (2016), an interculturally competent person should have the ability to understand different methods and styles of communication, an ability to deal with people from different cultural settings and a passion for using their knowledge and abilities.

Self-leadership (SL)

The results confirmed the findings from hypothesis two, indicating that the sustainability of SL depends on the participants' motivation. This finding aligns with previous research indicating an association between SL and internal motivation (e.g., Deci and Ryan, 1985; Manz, 1986; Maykrantz and Houghton, 2018). In particular, having an internal motivation to study abroad contributes to developing SL and, after returning, it becomes a source for sustaining SL skills. This finding could be due to the participants' awareness of the skills that

they have accumulated and developed abroad based on different habits and routines to help manage their lives and work abroad. The findings thus show that the benefits presented by this behaviour abroad have encouraged the SARs to continue practising them after returning to achieve their upcoming goals.

Self-concept clarity (SCC)

The study confirmed hypothesis three findings that the participants were able to sustain SCC and found that the sustainability of SCC depends on the participants' motivation and PBA. These findings suggest that since previous studies have considered returning home to be more complex than adjustment abroad (Adler, 1981; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992; Chamove and Soeterik, 2006; Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Martin, 1984; Storti, 2011), the participants' ability to sustain SCC after their return is most likely more difficult due to their readjustment experience and facing cultural differences. Bearing in mind that living abroad helped restructure and transform the identity of the SARs (e.g., Kohonen, 2008; Sussman, 2002), they face a reality that is different from their expectations after returning and thus trigger SCC. For example, when living abroad, the internal motivations of the SARs have guided them to take advantage of many opportunities to grow and develop as they faced a number of events that required reflection and understanding who they are and what they stand for (e.g., Adam *et al.,* 2018; Benet-Martínez and Haritatos, 2005; Saad *et al.,* 2013). Thus, after returning, they could sustain this level of knowledge because it resulted from a significant life-changing experience.

To address how PBA moderates the sustainability of SCC, we found that 95.1% of the participants agreed that they perceived the benefits of study abroad. However, the findings confirmed that studying abroad contributes to developing SCC, and here the participants become more explicit about themselves, including who they are and what their values are. After their return, the shift and growth in themselves and their identity will be sustained

because they have recognised the benefits of their study-abroad experience and want to maintain them.

Self-discerning reflection (SDR)

The results indicated that the participants were able to sustain SDR regardless of their readjustment due to PBA. Believing that their experience abroad benefited them personally (95.1% of the participants) suggests that studying abroad influenced their SDR. Since the readjustment experience is similar to their adjustment experience abroad in terms of difficulty they experienced after returning and due to PBA, the SDR will not decrease and instead sustain them in the face of the readjustment difficulties requiring them to reflect and make decisions that represent their values and align them with who they are.

Creativity behaviour (Creativity)

The results concerning the sustainability of creativity confirmed hypothesis three findings that the participants could sustain creativity after returning. Although H3 confirmed that for those with readjustment difficulties their view of their creativity decreased compared to those who did not find difficulties, it was found that PBA was crucial to maintain creativity behaviour. The findings suggest that their study-abroad experience and the challenges they went through have paid off, resulting in many outcomes they recognised within themselves and when they do their work. The findings are aligned with Maddux and Galinsky (2009), indicating that the impact of living abroad on creativity stems from the crucial elements that incite the creativity processes (e.g., Finke, Ward and Smith, 1999) to learn about the impact of living abroad on creativity behaviour please return to H1 discussed earlier.

Conclusion:

This study has aimed to validate the proposed conceptual framework of the longer-term benefits of study abroad adapted from Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001). The intention of our research has been to investigate the impact of study-abroad experience on SARs and the corresponding impact of their readjustment experience on their accumulated outcomes (i.e., IC, SL, creativity, SCC and SDR). Moreover, the study has sought to discover the mechanisms associated with perceiving these outcomes. It also tested the significant differences between the Saudi academic who studied abroad and those who did not. Finally, the study examined the sustainability of the five outcomes over time and the impact of readjustment experience on maintaining these outcomes. Consequently, it extends our understanding in four ways, as given below.

First, the study presents longitudinal data statistically examining the impact of study abroad on SARs change and self-development. The data was gathered within a unique sample of 72 SARs freshly graduated from four western countries (the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia), and they were recruited to complete two-times questionnaires over six months in between. Furthermore, the 72 Saudi academics who have not been abroad were assigned as a control group. In all, our research has drawn attention to the importance of the study-abroad experience in helping to equip the SARs with the rightful skills that continuously differentiate them from those who have not been abroad. Based on the results, academic returnees are significantly different from those who have not been abroad regarding IC, SDR and creativity. They have thus become better qualified for cross-cultural interactions, decision-making, cultivating new ideas and bringing changes at work when needed. Consequently, the study supports the vision for Saudi scholarships to contribute and bring changes to the country by helping their nations develop cultural skills, leadership skills and creativity through a fundamental impact on their psychological cognition and reflection.

Second, the study has confirmed the important factors that support the development of each of the study abroad outcomes examined in this study. For example, in developing IC, the study found two complementary factors that contribute to IC development: the host country and socialisation. Choosing to live in a multicultural society with an open-minded and friendly culture is important because it helps boost socialisation skills. In addition, it is vital to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds and speak a different language to enhance their intercultural skills. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of having the internal motivation to study abroad for perceiving a higher level of IC, SL and SDR. Another finding was that the study confirmed the impact of the LSA on developing SDR. Academic returnees who stayed for a long time abroad were then found to have a higher level of SDR than those who have been for a shorter time and taking into consideration those mechanisms will help support the process for developing them while abroad. Moreover, fully acknowledging the possible outcomes of studying abroad and the mechanisms that allow or hinder them before going abroad goes a long way towards achieving them (Ward *et al.,* 1998).

Third, the new knowledge contributed with regard to the impact of home-country transition on the sustainability of the perceived outcomes of study abroad leads us to the finding that the SARs who faced readjustment difficulties showed significant decrees in their SDR. In addition, the study found a significant increase in IC from T1 to T2. It is thus suggested that other factors might have contributed to the increase of IC at T2, which may be related to the stress caused by reverse culture shock that affected T1's results because the participants were freshly graduated and returned home. However, we have not measured this type of effect in this study but post important questions for future research if we are to support returning students in realising the benefits of their time abroad and the financial investment required. Finally, providing the knowledge of the outcomes of study abroad to the students, community, workplaces and country is essential to encourage future students to study abroad

and to open their eyes to what to expect from their journey. This approach will help their government and their organisations realise that the investment has paid off and will now drive massive changes to the country by upgrading their cultural and industrial fields. As a consequence, studying abroad and wanting to gain these benefits should become part of the intrinsic motivation to do so. Indeed, the study has boldly highlighted the key role of internal motivation in acquiring and sustaining the outcomes of study abroad. Although some would argue that external motivation is also important for potential Saudi academic students - such as financial support, gaining a higher degree and position at work after returning - we have argued that the objectives of study abroad will not be met if the students only focus on external motivation. According to the findings, internal motivation is crucial to encounter more profound and targeted outcomes, including IC, SL and SCC. The recognition of the acquired skills abroad will also help with sustaining creative behaviour and SDR. Consequently, the outcomes acquired by studying abroad have become part of the SARs identity and how they function when dealing with the stress and challenges of their home country.

Chapter 8.

 General Discussion and Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

This chapter will present the main findings of our study and its theoretical, methodological and practical contributions and implications. Recommendations for future research will be highlighted alongside the limitations of this project.

8.2. General discussion

To fulfil the research, our investigation explored the long-term benefits of acculturation through a sample of Saudi Academic Returnees (SARs). Embarking from a systematic literature review (chapter 4), in chapter 2 we based a new conceptual framework (see figure 8.1) on the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) A mixed-method longitudinal research design was employed to meet the research objectives.

This doctoral study addressed 5 research questions across two points of measurements (see chapter 3):

RQ 1: Do returning academics perceive themselves differently from those who have not been abroad in terms of their affective, behaviour and cognitive processes?

RQ 2: What are the perceived benefits of studying abroad for returning academics, specifically in relation to changes in affective, behaviour and cognition processes?

RQ 3: What are the factors that determine the benefits of studying abroad for returning academics, and what are their facilitators and barriers in relation to changes in affective, behaviour and cognitive processes?

RQ 4: Are returning academics able to sustain the benefits of studying abroad?

RQ 5: How does their readjustment to their home country affect the ability of returnees to sustain the benefits of studying abroad?
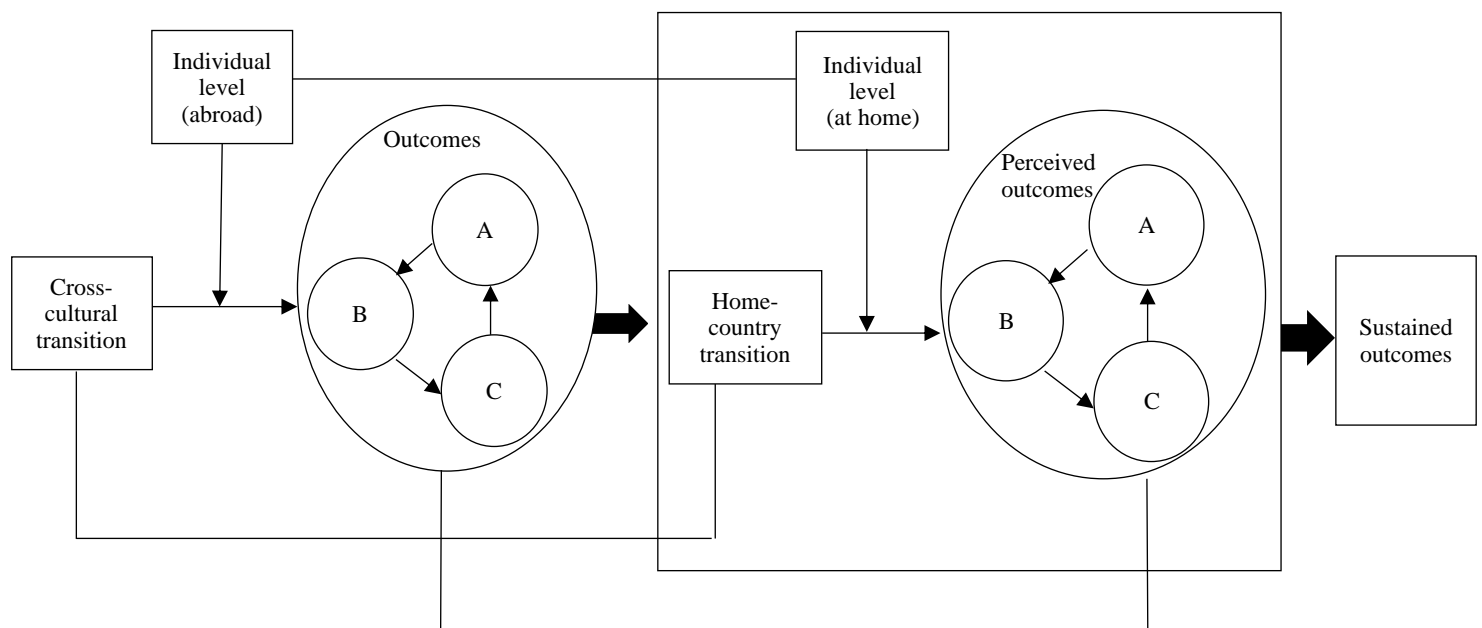
Figure 8.1. The conceptual framework (the long-term benefits of acculturation).
Note: A: Affective; B: Behavioural outcomes; C: Cognitive process

1st Key Finding: Studying abroad impacts change and self-development through affective, behavioural and cognitive mechanisms.

The first of five key finding was extracted from the qualitative study conducted in phase one (see chapter 5), contributing new knowledge about the change and self-development of SARs through their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes. The findings on affective outcomes indicated that SARs difficulties faced abroad may result in some negative, intense and challenging emotions and corresponding adjustment challenges leaving the students feeling unsettled and depressed. This process represents a learning experience helping SARs develop a new, more resilient and flexible mentality and new behavioural and cognitive skills, aligning with the findings of (Anderson, 1994; Kim, 2001) recognising that this short-term pain leads to significant change and positive long-term outcomes through behavioural and cognitive processes. The SARs experienced five key changes here by first developing intercultural competence (IC), self-leadership (SL) and creativity behaviour, and then in their cognitive processes expressed in self-concept clarity (SCC) and self-discerning reflection

(SDR). Other researchers have confirmed these findings regarding IC (e.g., Ramirez, 2016; Shaftel, Shaftel and Ahluwalia, 2007; Wolff and Borzikowsky, 2018), SCC and SDR (Adam *et al.,* 2018), although this study is the first to find SL and creativity behaviour occurring as study abroad outcomes.

A number of elements were found responsible for developing SL and creativity behaviour: the process of becoming an independent person abroad; recognition of the importance of time-management; and implementing some self-motivation strategies to achieve their goals. Our findings align with intercultural transformation theory (Kim, 1993) as far as the SARs passed through a process of personal growth, adjusting their behaviour to deal with day-to-day activities with an overall improvement in the quality of their life in their new setting. Both the level of education and the length and depth of the study-abroad experience play a key role in developing such skills and although the study found that most participants developed SL, those who studied for their PhDs abroad learnt better adaptation techniques than other overseas students.

Our findings also aligned with the wide research conclusion that international experiences improve creativity (e.g., Godart *et al.,* 2015; Leung and Chiu, 2010; Lu *et al.,* 2017; Maddux and Galinsky, 2009). According to Fee and Gray (2012), acquiring a flexible and creative mindset is one of the natural consequences of these psychological adjustment and self-reflexive processes. The experiential learning characteristic of studying abroad (Ng, Van Dyne and Ang, 2009), gave the SARs the skills, ambition and capability to conducting research and acquire new knowledge to transfer and apply to their work and society in their home country.

2nd Key Finding: Academics who studied abroad are different in a number of ways to this who studied domestically.

The second main finding focused on the differences between SARs and in-country academics regarding the five outcomes across results generated by the qualitative and quantitative studies conducted in phase two (see chapter 6 and 7).

In terms of IC, SDR and creativity behaviour, our findings validated previous research on IC with (Hanada, 2015) and SDR (e.g., Adam *et al.,* 2018), and added new knowledge concerning creativity behaviour within the novel context of Saudi Arabia, confirming that the characteristics of the SARs were significantly different to in-country academics. Our research was then the first to examine SL in the context of studying abroad, where we found no significant differences between the SARs and in-counter academics groups for both SL and SCC. These proved unexpected outcomes regarding the two groups and contradicted the claim of previous studies (e.g., Adam *et al.,* 2018).

Regarding SCC, prior research by Adam et al. (2018) found international students differ significantly between those who have not been abroad and those who have the intention to study abroad. As our research contradicted these findings that studying abroad itself has no impact on these two skills, we interpreted these outcomes to emphasise clear differences between the two groups of students regarding these SL and SCC outcomes. This individual finding is highly significant to wider research while supporting the objectives of Saudi Arabia's schemes for international scholarship to restore creativity and innovation (Ahmed, 2015). We might now conclude that SARs' study abroad does not have a significant impact on the SCC and SL, but it may also be the case that in-counter academics have developed these skills thanks to the professional position, the length of their tenure and multiple responsibilities, or that the participants demonstrated self-appraisal bias when filling out the self-completion questionnaires.

3rd Key Finding: The host country, socialisation preferences, length of study abroad, and motivation to study abroad influence the outcomes of studying abroad.

The findings from the phase one quantitative study confirm that the participants differ significantly in their IC based on the host country (see chapter 7). The phase one qualitative study (see chapter 5) then shows that regardless of cultural differences, certain characteristics distinguish each host-country to influence the SARs' adjustment abroad and their IC development. Rather than personal characteristics, the four situational mechanisms were found to be the sole driver of change (the nature of the host-country, their socialisation preferences, the length of study abroad (LSA), and their motivation to study abroad). Differences in openness, acceptance and ethnic and cultural diversity may contributed to the development of IC in some national groups rather than others, suggesting further research is required on IC in host countries investigating the different experiences of international students based on their nationality.

The findings from the qualitative study hence challenge the assumption that cultural differences play a vital role in the relationship between the host country, socialisation preferences and the development of IC, and so contradict cultural learning theory (Ward, 1996; Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001; Wilson, Ward and Fischer, 2013) insofar as the study participants experienced different readjustment difficulties irrespective of cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and their host country. According to cultural differences theory, when the differences between two cultures is small, international students will face less adjustment difficulties helping them to acquire IC.

It was anticipated that with significant cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and host countries (i.e., the USA, the UK, Canada and Australia) the SARs will face similar adjustment difficulties and level of IC, but our findings showed that the SARs differed significantly in their adjustment difficulties and IC, regardless of national cultural differences. In fact, cultural difference had minimal effect among our participants in stunting IC development suggesting that the research emphasis should not be placed on significant

cultural differences between country contexts. The quantitative findings also revealed a meaningful relationship between socialisation preferences and IC and SDR development, where according to the phase one qualitative study (chapter 5), the SARs will base their reflection on their experience of social interactions abroad to become more understanding of the values of their overseas counterparts and develop an open-minded mentality. As these two elements of open-mindedness and cultural understanding are the basis of IC, those with a lower level of IC reflect a lack of social interaction and less reflection (i.e., SDR).

These findings may also be explained in terms of Meleady, Seger and Vermue's (2020) study indicating that the socialisation preferences of overseas students narrow in reaction to previous experience of negative, unpleasant and unfriendly relations with host nationals and other foreigners during their stay abroad. These students have a lower IC than those who had positive, pleasant and friendly experiences, but our own results showed the SARs who only socialised with Saudis and Arabs had a lower IC score than those who socialised with mixed nationalities, leading us to hypothesise that the negative experiences encountered by the SARs abroad may be related to cultural differences, language difficulties or feeling unwelcomed by other nationalities. Further examination of these living difficulties could seek to understand between the relationship between students facing unpleasant experiences, their socialisation preferences and the development of their IC.

Regarding the relationship between the length of study abroad (LSA) and SDR, according to Adam et al. (2018) the longer that people live abroad, the more opportunities they will have to engage in SDR. Their corresponding reflection on their values, expectations and behaviour will contribute to better self-understanding, confirming that the development of SDR is a natural process when living in a different culture. Our own research determined that SARs with significant internal motivated enjoy higher IC than those who were externally motivated, in findings aligned with other research data (Ang, Van Dyne and Koh, 2006; Harrison, 2012; MacNab and Worthley, 2012; Holtbrügge and Engelhard, 2016) and the proposition (Chirkov

et al., 2007; 2008) that internal motivation and independence play a vital role in intercultural interests and competence.

Our findings established a significant relationship between SL and SARs motivation in recognition that internally motivated participants had higher SL than those who were externally motivated, so demonstrating the influence of intrinsic motivation theory on self-leadership strategies (e.g., Deci and Ryan, 1985). The findings of the qualitative study suggest that internally motivated participants might already have developed SL before their journey abroad by reflecting on their intentions to study abroad and work towards achieving their goals. Here, a profitable new avenue for future research would examine SL before, during and after study abroad in order to gauge the influence of studying abroad on developing SL overtime.

Overall, our study has made an original contributed to research by highlighting a significant relationship between SDR and motivation, particularly in those students externally motivated to study abroad, scoring higher in SDR than those who were internally motivated. The conclusion of our qualitative study is that externally motivated participants were more likely to have faced incidents causing self-doubt, leading them to be critical about the decisions they have made throughout their journey from start to finish. In contrast, internally motivated participants had acquired better knowledge of what they were to face before going abroad, which helped them adapt to the new culture easier and find fewer cultural conflicts. Our results also revealed there to be no discernible relationship between creativity behaviour and LSA, contradicting previous study findings (e.g., Godart *et al.,* 2015; Maddux and Galinsky, 2009) where SCC was found to be similar to SDR in a close relationship with the host-country, the students' motivation to study abroad and LSA (Adam *et al.,* 2018). As there might be other factors contributing to the development of these outcomes, further research might also seek explore other factors that contribute to developing these outcomes.

4th Key Finding: The context of the readjustment experience impacts the returning academics ability to sustain the outcomes of their study abroad experience.

We found in phase two of the qualitative study (see chapter 6) that the sustainability of study abroad outcomes is determined by the SARs home-country readjustment experience, with the two types of readjustment difficulties most prominent being social and cultural level difficulties, and organisational level difficulties. The study then revealed the SARs face these two difficulties were encountered because of reverse culture shock, as they found that the greater the SARs immersion in their new culture abroad, the more challenging their readjustment to the home country. These findings were aligned with Westwood *et al.*'s (1986) study indicating a link between the readjustment experience and the time spent abroad being vital to immersion, suggesting a relationship between the adjustment and readjustment experience which will affect the sustainability of the study abroad outcomes.

In examining the role of readjustment experience on the sustainability of the study abroad outcomes in quantitative study at phase two (see chapter 7), our study then highlighted that despite readjustment difficulties, SARs were able to sustain IC, SL and SCC. Based on the qualitative studies at phase one and two (see chapter 5 & 6), the sustainability of these three outcomes could be explained practically as they became useful in their home country, especially upon return to their work environments. Our study indicated that although the interaction with strangers from different countries or cultures was limited in the home country, the sustainability of IC could also be ensured practically in the ability of returnees to maintain an open-minded mentality and develop better communication skills. Our research participants sustained SL because it helped SARs to develop coping strategies when overwhelmed with work, applying skills such as goal setting, fulfilling commitments through prioritisation and controlling their behaviour when facing resistance or rejection at work. With SCC too, the respondents' aptitudes were visible in their ability to make better decisions

at work, becoming stronger and more confident when facing the opinions and judgments of others.

However, our study found those who had faced readjustment difficulties also experienced a decrease in creativity behaviour and an increase in SDR over time. The qualitative study at phase two (see chapter 6) explains that the decrease in creativity behaviour over time could be explained by their facing organisation level difficulties, such as facing an unsupportive environment at work leading to SARs feeling lost and not accepted by colleagues to the point where they started to give up on their valuable inputs. Our findings thus raised the importance of providing support for the SARs to ease their readjustment difficulties and support their creativity behaviour regarding the increase in SDRs and difficulties in readjustment so the cognitive processes of the SARs continue to be activated to deliberate on their own weaknesses and strengths, priorities and values, as well as their new identity back home. These findings supported the conclusions of Arthur (2003) indicating that the transition home involves more readjustment processes in the psychological than the physical sense.

5th Key Finding: Motivation and the perceived benefits of studying abroad influence post-return outcomes.

The fifth main finding of this research is revealed while adding to the existing body of knowledge. It was found in the quantitative study (see chapter 7) that the sustainability of IC, SL and SCC are based on the external motivation of those studying abroad in preference to those with internal motivation. In extending our understanding of the SARs motivation, these findings are consistent with the conclusion of previous studies suggesting a relationship between internal motivations and IC (e.g., Chirkov *et al.,* 2007; 2008), SL (e.g., Deci and Ryan, 1985; Manz, 1986; Maykrantz and Houghton, 2018), and with SCC (e.g., Adam *et al.,* 2018; Benet-Martínez and Haritatos, 2005; Saad *et al.,* 2013), but we also found that the

sustainability of SCC, SDR and creativity behaviour depends on the participants' awareness of the perceived benefits of studying abroad.

We enquired whether having knowledge of what they learnt abroad helped the returnees to maintain their new skills or outcomes over time upon, our findings supporting Martin's (1984) hypothesis that expectations, change and awareness of change express the key differences between adjustment and readjustment. We found the SARs internally motivated to live abroad took advantage of many opportunities to learn, reflect and to understand their identity and value (e.g., Adam *et al.,* 2018; Benet-Martínez and Haritatos, 2005; Saad *et al.,* 2013) and as returnees could sustain this change and knowledge in determining their new personality and how they operated in careers back home.

Lastly, although the results from the multistage and multi-methods studies involved a complicated sample, they yielded a number of theoretical, methodological, and practical implications. The benefits of using multiple studies with a variety of approaches will be covered in the next section.

8.3. Research contributions and implications for future research

8.3.1. Theoretical contributions and implications

Contributions

This thesis has made a key theoretical contribution to knowledge by confirming the applicability of the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) to studying abroad. Utilising the theory of acculturation enriches our understanding of the process of change and self-development encountered by international students studying abroad by responding to the three questions of *what*, *how* and *why* in relation to how international students perceive change and self-development. This explains the process of how the host country transition impacts upon SARs' affective, behavioural and cognitive processes by exploring the mechanisms that determine these changes.

This research has extended the theory of acculturation by examining the importance of post-experience transition and readjustment for SARs, suggesting that the process of sustaining study abroad outcomes echoes the process of encountering these outcomes abroad. Previous studies (e.g., Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Adler, 1981; Martin, 1984; Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall, 1992; Storti, 2011; Chamove and Soeterik, 2006) also suggested that returning home has a similar effect to going abroad in terms of returnees gaining valuable knowledge of how to maximise their acquisition. However, the difficulties of home country transition might eliminate all of these benefits unless certain strategies are put into place to help sustain them. It is our hope that this conceptual framework will add further insights to the theoretical field of acculturation, enabling rich opportunities for future exploration

Implications

This research presents two theoretical implications. First, the research findings suggest intertwined relationships between the three types of study-abroad outcomes expressed in affective, behavioural and cognitive outcomes in two associations: i) IC -> SDR -> SL; ii) host-country -> socialisation preference -> IC -> SL. However, this research has not examined the cause-and-effect association between the variables as these findings are principally based on the data from semi-structured interviews and their qualitative interpretation.

Furthermore, the hypothesis presented above is informed by the theory of behavioural applicability (Brown and Brown, 2009), holding that when there is a gap between the original culture norms and a new environment then behaviour must match the new context for the students to be culturally and socially involved and for stress and anxiety to ease. If this process has not occurred, then students will suffer uncertainty and normlessness until changes are made. Moreover, according to the research of Adam et al. (2018) any changes experienced by students abroad will have started from their cognitive functioning, with SCC

and SDR at the heart of their development. It would subsequently be advantageous to examine the cause-and-effect relationship between the study abroad outcomes to provide evidence of the processes of change and self-development among international students. Secondly, based on the participants' demographic information (such as gender, education level), the quantitative findings reveal no significant differences between their study abroad outcomes. However, it would be interesting for future research to re-examine this relationship as the qualitative findings showed some differences in gender differences between men and women where the male participants developed more IC than the females. The anticipated cause of the gender differences here is Saudi culture with specific and distinct gender differences, which may play a role in some other culture but not necessarily all. Certainly, international students will face difficulties abroad in terms of integrating into a new culture, experiencing many emotions and causes for reflection to adjust and perceive their study-abroad outcomes and their wider importance upon return. Future research might then take an interest in cross-gender and cross-cultural differences relating to study-abroad outcomes.

8.3.2. Methodological contributions and implications

Contributions

This thesis has made two methodological contributions to extend the findings of earlier studies, firstly by employing a longitudinal mixed-methods approach to enrich our understanding of the long-term benefits of acculturation. Previously, few studies had used this type of research design to analyse the impact of studying abroad on students' change and self-development based on the SLR (see chapter 4). Our use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods has produced in-depth results and unique insights, maximising the generalisability and transferability of findings.

The second contribution offered by our research methodology is a unique sample encompassing two types of sojourners, so expressing the complex nature of being an

international student abroad while remaining an academic member of a Saudi university. Very few studies have focused on this group of returnees within the available literature (e.g., Alandejani, 2013; Almuarik, 2019; Gama and Pedersen, 1977) entailing that this study advances our understanding of academic returnees. Although difficult initially to access, examining this sample is important first to the development of Saudi universities and second to the Saudi government itself which is currently leading the Kingdom through a huge transformation to lessen its dependency on oil production and invest in its population to broaden the national economic base. Examining this sample has given other researchers the opportunity to study whether the government is getting what they want from sending students abroad, while the Saudi government deserves to have knowledge of whether or not their investment has paid off and their scholarship objectives have been fulfilled.

Implications

The findings of this research would have been stronger and more accurate if the data were collected over four time points. Moreover, understanding human behavioural change required pre-study before the research conducted and at the end of research after the experience examinations to gather richer and more accurate observations. However, due to the inherent time constraints of a PhD thesis and the difficulties we encountered in recruiting and find the right candidates, it would have been impossible to gather and analyse the data within 4-5 years because Saudi students can spend around 6-12 years studying abroad to complete their Master and PhD degrees. We would suggest that future research benefit from following the typical life cycle of the SARs students i.e., pre-study, during the research period and at its end, and then post-return over a number of years. Such an approach would provide more knowledge of the differences between those who benefitted from studying abroad and those who did not perceive the benefits of their overseas study to their workplace and the government sponsoring them.

8.3.3. Practical contribution and implications

Contributions

This study has made clear practical contributions to knowledge by examining SL and creativity behaviour for the first time in the context of SARs' study abroad, complementing previous research through the hypothesis that the experience has an impact on students' growth and personal development by increasing employability and preparing them for a useful career (McMillan and Opem, 2002). While our study provides new findings on the cultural outcomes of studying abroad, such as developing IC, it also presents work-related outcomes in the form of SL and creativity behaviour.

Amongst other important processes, the development of SL and creativity behaviour in returning students can be translated into tangible work outcomes through implementing what SARs have learnt and practiced in their work. The significance of this contribution is also applicable to other cultures, particularly now that many governments are seeking greater creativity in developing their human resources and economy. The research findings have hence added new knowledge enriching our understanding about how studying abroad facilitates the process of acquiring such positive and creative outcomes.

Implications

This research has three main practical implications. Firstly, by contributing to the extant knowledge by exploring and examining the accumulated outcomes of the changes in the affective, behavioural and cognitive processes for the SARs, the study has highly positive implications for future research but remains a starting point for further investigations. How the present outcomes translate into objective and tangible business outcomes, such as creativity, performance and financial returns for organisations is deemed worthy of further investigation. To do so, any future research would benefit from the deployment of multidisciplinary teams including behavioural economists.

The second implication lies with the importance of cultural outcomes as a consequence of overcoming cultural differences and adjusting successfully to a new culture. Our research proposes that cultural outcomes such as IC could boost or hinder the achievements of academic outcomes in the form, for instance, of obtaining higher degrees, publishing papers and initiating partnerships with foreign companies or universities. Although our research suggests that cultural outcomes boost or hinder academic outcomes, the other problem we have identified is that the individuals, organisations and governments sponsoring international students abroad place more emphasis on achieving academic outcomes while ignoring the significant role of cultural outcomes and the techniques of adjustment crucial to the interaction of overseas students in their new settings. Based on our general findings, we would urge further research to provide evidence supporting this hypothesis of a key relationship between cultural outcomes and academic outcomes, so enabling policymakers and organisations to approach the sponsorship of international students in an effective way to guarantee that students will achieve both types of outcomes in their study abroad experience. Lastly, although the practical implications of this research are principally tailored towards supporting scholarship in Saudi Arabia's universities, our study can inform decisions on additional scholarships sponsored by other countries, organisations or individuals seeking to provide international students with the knowledge needed to maximise the benefits of their study abroad. In addressing Saudi Arabia's university scholarship, we have been divided this process into three stages for the overseas students: pre-departure, during the experience and post-experience. None of the implications involved in these three stages takes a higher priority than the others, as all go hand-in-hand to help maximise the benefits of studying abroad, before departure and during the study period, while helping to sustain them after the students' return. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that for government policymakers and/or organisations, sponsoring international students abroad has been proven to exert the most influence in the process of achieving the best experience. In this respect, the flow charts

presented below illustrates how the practical implications of this research fulfils the promise of this research by analysing the 3-stage process of maximising the potential benefits of SARs in their overseas study.

Pre-departure

Policymakers

- By changing policy, provides advice, tools and knowledge

Organisation (scholarship committee)

- Delivers, informs and trains potential international students.

Potential international students
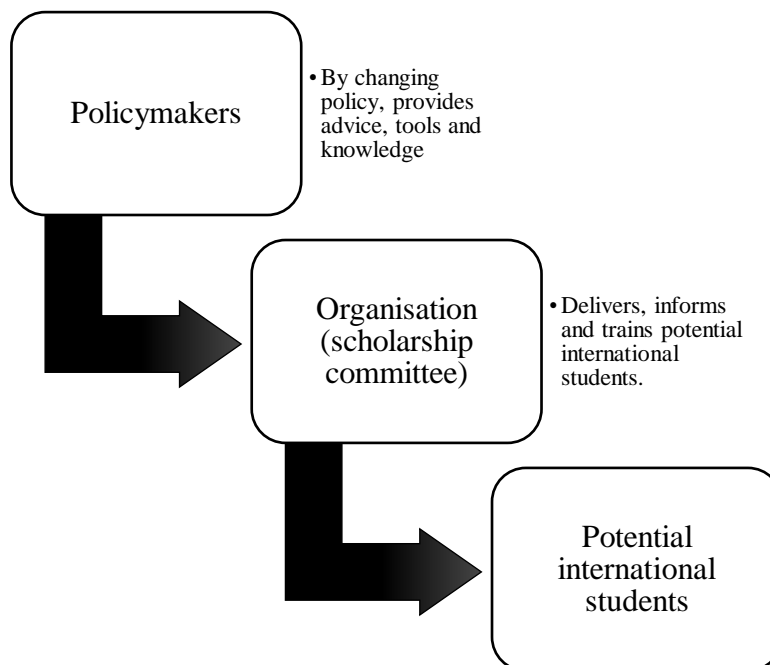
Governments and organisations tend to sponsor international students because they consider studying abroad to be a worthwhile investment for the whole community (Altbach and Engberg, 2014). Being aware of what to expect from study abroad experience will hence help policymakers focus attention on educating future students according to the anticipated outcomes of studying abroad, helping them to develop strategies to support the sustainability of these outcomes in the long run. In the case of Saudi Arabia scholarship, although their scholarship objectives are outlined in their website, there is no evidence of any measurable procedures being taken to assess whether these objectives have been met and translated into

tangible outcomes. In this sense, being vocal about their scholarship objectives and anticipations, besides gaining the degree, what to expect from the students after their return is highly significant because it will enable governments and other organisations to get the most of their investments and equip work-places with the best new human resources available. However, higher political authority is needed to translate these ideas into practice through policy change, and so provide recommendations, knowledge, and tools to the relevant scholarship committees.

We thus suggest that scholarship committees in Saudi Arabia universities use these research findings for awareness programmes, seminars and workshops to give potential expatriate employees the knowledge to convince them of how to make the best of their experience abroad. The importance of these programs has already been recognised by many public and private organisations in the West, entailing that importing such programs to prepare potential Saudi academics for their educational trip abroad presents clear benefits to them and their universities. Moreover, this type of coaching and training workshop can be designed internally by following some existed models and guidelines online (e.g., Mendenhall and Stahl, 2000), or externally by employing consultancy and coaching organisations that specialise in preparing expatriates before their assignments.

The significance of these programs thus lies in their value to Saudi academics in fostering their internal motivation to go abroad and confirming the essential role of personal motivation in developing the outcomes of living abroad. Examples from the literature and our own research illustrate the value of such programs regarding the recognised benefits of studying abroad, listed here as the benefits coming from IC, SL, creativity behaviour, SCC and SDR. In addition, the research participants have shared some real examples of returnees testifying to how the study abroad helped them, not only regarding their educational accomplishments but also in their self-development and leadership skills amongst other skills. Speaking as returnees, the SARs were also able to discuss the characteristics of the

best country or city in which to live abroad, and the importance and benefits of socialisation in having friends with people from different countries and cultures. Our study was thus able to highlight some of the cultural differences that might cause culture shock and influence their adjustment abroad, such as male employees having to deal with female colleagues and vice versa.

During the experience
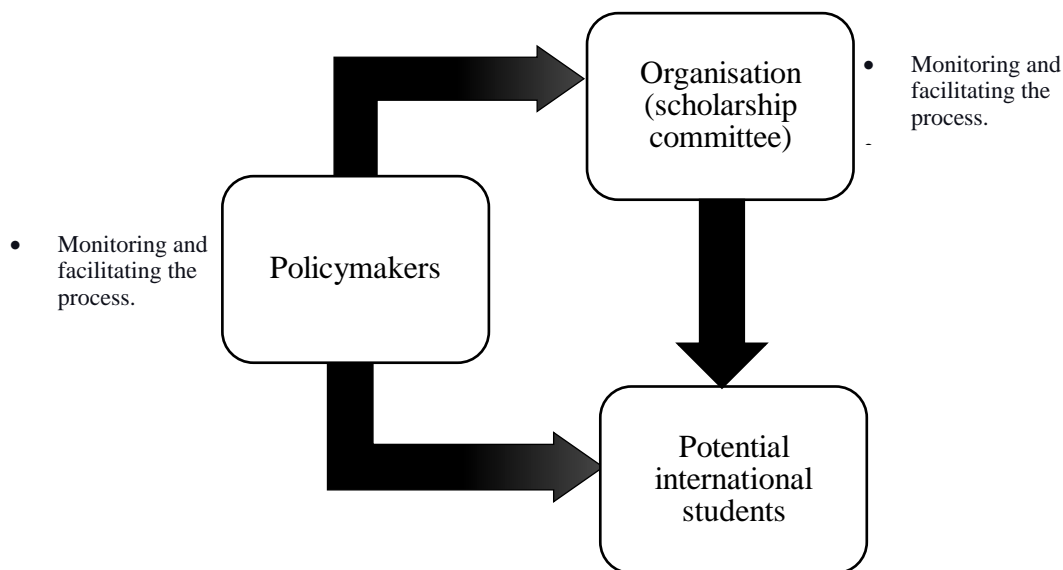
Again, policymakers play a vital role here monitoring the process by providing guidance and facilitators to help international students get the best from their experience. Policymakers can do this directly advising the students through official communication or by delegating this responsibility to the scholarship committee or third party. For example, giving the students some details about cultural differences between Saudi Arabia and the host country would be invaluable in advising them how best draw to these differences to enable their cognitive process while achieving further self-development by weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad in different countries. In addition, they might provide the SARs with a knowledgeable host who would serve as their local life coach in supporting their developmental outcomes. The committee would then evaluate the expected outcomes at the start of their overseas experience and every six months during their study period abroad.

Post-experience

Policymakers
- Monitoring and facilitating the process.

Organisation (scholarship committee)
- Changes to the organisation, ethical and behavioural guidelines.
- Lessens the impact of a high-power distance culture.
- Behavioural enhancment programs.

Potential international students
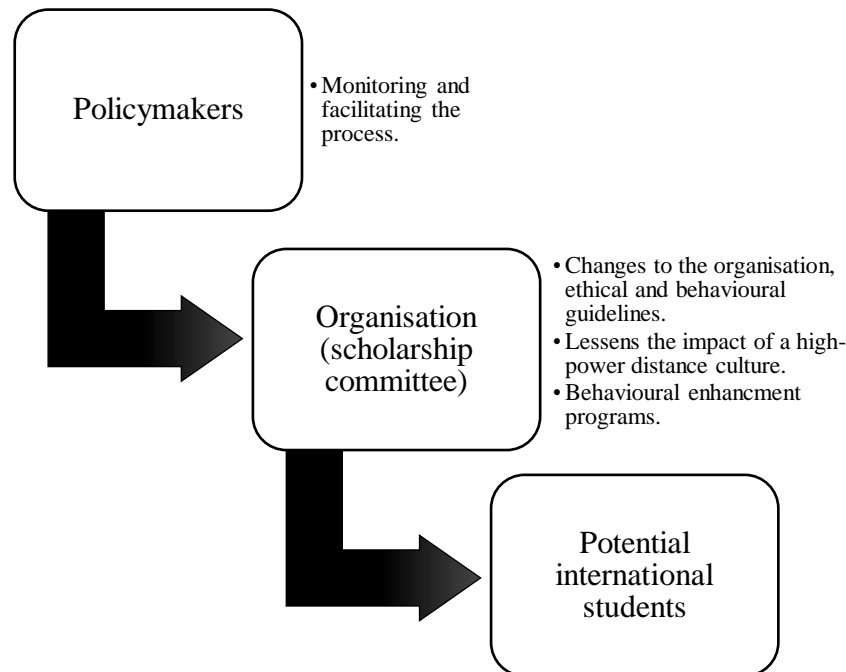
Based on the research outcomes, most of the readjustment difficulties experienced by the

SARs upon their return involved cultural differences at the workplace, affecting the

returnees' mental health. We would say in response that it is crucial to provide a work

environment able to support and enhance the beneficial new values that the returnees have

learnt from their study abroad journey and incorporate them into their organisational

behaviour through ethical and behavioural employee guidelines for which might include the

following elements: the importance of being open-minded and less judgmental; being

responsible and authentic about their work; appreciating and admiring creativity behaviour;

demonstrating leadership by delegating some authority to make them take responsibility;

supporting their ideas and putting them into practice; and insisting upon good communication

skills while supporting the individual's development.

Both the research findings and the literature review show that Saudi Arabia has a high-power

distance culture which suggests that managers have less of a tendency to exchange or share

information. This gap in shared information acts as a barrier to implementing change and will impact upon knowledge exchange among academic returnees. In response, the managers might think about supporting an information-sharing environment by dedicating time to supporting the returnees; for instance, arranging a workshop to reflect on their experience and explain their readjustment difficulties. The upshot is that these changes may help reduce power distance and restore returnees' level of satisfaction and well-being. Finally, behavioural enhancement programmes could be provided and even made compulsory for all employees.

Nonetheless, the application of these practical measures requires systemic change and advocacy from a higher authority and government support to drive change. These are important implications for any scholarship rewarding bodies to consider, while further research is needed to apply these principles to diverse cultures and not just to Saudi Arabia. As there are lots of generalisable outcomes that are worth further investigation, the next section will present a number of recommendations for future research.

8.4. Recommendations for future research

Based on these research findings and analysis, we can propose a number of suggestions for future research. First of all, we anticipate that the comprehensive conceptual framework and research design used in this research can be replicated in other studies by using a different sample, such as returning employees from other sectors in Saudi Arabia or GCC countries. Although this research informs a unique Saudi context, the dearth of existing research underlines a need to understand cross-cultural transitions in other countries. For example, future studies might think of adopting a longitudinal research approach designed to explore and examine the impact of cross-cultural transition on the change and self-development of expatriates during and after their assignment abroad (this including international students here). Furthermore, a mix-methods approach could also be employed to prove the

generalisability and transferability of overseas students and workers while obtaining a complete picture of the process of change, so understanding the mechanisms that influence the accumulation of these outcomes. The methodology utilised in this research can be used as a further guideline to assist future research investigating the long-term benefits of acculturation.

As discussed earlier in the chapter, this research has contributed to earlier studies indicating that the development of IC abroad depends on the host country. Here our findings explained that the process of developing IC stems from the role of host country in the students' socialisation preferences which affects their SDR and plays a key role in developing IC. We hence recommend that further investigation by researchers employ cross-cultural studies to examine the differences between one-nationality international students studying in different countries with regard to their IC and SDR.

Researchers might also think about exploring their socialisation preferences qualitatively and so determine how their bad or good experience of interaction with foreigner contribute to their SDR and IC. We suggest following-up on the participants continuously from the start to end of their journey to obtain a richer picture of the host country's impact on their socialisation preferences and their SDR and IC in turn. Our results have also underlined how future research should examine the association between the practical aspects of each of the study abroad outcomes (such as for IC, SL, SCC) and the corresponding consequences for their work-related outcomes, such as in matters of job performance and work satisfaction. Moreover, it would be beneficial to find out if the participants have different responses from those who have not been abroad regarding the practical aspects of study abroad outcomes and how this could influence job-related outcomes.

Although the issue of cultural differences and their impact on the sustainability of study abroad outcomes has generally been overlooked in the context of studying abroad, this research has explicitly used qualitative research to enrich our understanding of the theoretical

and practical role of cultural difference. Based on these findings, this topic requires more attention from researchers and new studies could contribute to the generalisability of the findings, perhaps utilising quantitative research to examine the role of cultural difference and using some well-known developed scales to measure it, such as Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1987).

In highlighting the importance of the readjustment experience in sustaining and prolonging the benefits of study abroad outcomes, our findings have added new knowledge by indicating that the readjustment experience depends on their experience of adjustment abroad. However, the most common theme in readjustment is the cultural disconnect and identity shifts with which the repatriates may struggle (e.g., Kohonen, 2008; Sussman, 2002). Therefore, it is important to understand that supporting sojourners in getting the best of their study-abroad experience goes hand-in-hand with supporting their re-entry in order to help them sustain and deliver what they have learn upon their return to their country (Kidd, 2010; Szkudlarek, 2010; Pitts, 2016).

In examining if the assumptions listed above are true in terms of study abroad outcomes (and so in terms of IC, SL and creativity behaviour) researchers could also study two groups of students in their pre- and post-experience with and without external support to determine whether or not external support is valuable in sustaining these outcomes upon return to their home countries and determine what other mechanisms might determine the sustainability of these outcomes. Further research might provide more in-depth examination to the context of both families and work colleagues to broaden the perspective of the research data. Other studies have suggested that readjustment difficulties at work might lead to dissatisfaction with the post-return experience of expatriates and overseas students (e.g., Tung and Andersen, 1997; Barham and Antal, 1995). Further research might hence examine the relationship between the experience of readjustment difficulties and the level of job satisfaction felt among the academic returnees.

Finally, regarding creativity behaviour, future research should seek to examining the antecedents that contribute to the development of this outcome. While our qualitative study revealed certain study-abroad factors associated with the development of creativity behaviour encountered by the SARs, the findings of the quantitative study did not reflect any relationship between study-abroad factors and creativity behaviour. Since such behaviour is primary in the context of studying abroad, further investigation would determine the mechanisms that enable the development of creativity behaviour in students and might consider examining the significant of the student's immersion in the host culture - for example, the time spent in the library, or visiting museums and architectural sights - alongside their experience of their chosen subject of study and the facilities offered at the host university.

Although this study has not been strictly tailored to those SARs with a successful experience abroad, the findings have not fully enriched our understanding of those who see their experience as a failure rather than more-or-less of a success story. This issue leaves us with a question of determining the outcomes of their unsuccessful experience abroad concerning affective, behavioural and cognitive process outcomes. Does their failed experience lead directly to job-related outcomes, such as being sacked, resigning, demotion or general job dissatisfaction? And what are the sources and mechanisms that contribute to such an experience?

Future studies might hence employ a qualitative research design here because examining this type of sample will provide insights and evidence to those who might consider going abroad. Such research might have practical implications informing policymakers about creating preventive guidelines for potential international students wishing to experience overseas study in the future.

8.5. Research limitations

This PhD thesis has not been without its limitations, the first clearly being the research sample of Saudi academic returnees SARs which was restricted to SARs who were newly graduated and had recently returned to their workplace (i.e., to Saudi universities) with no intention of continuing their studies abroad in coming year. In fact, the complexity of the sample criteria meant that the sample sizes for both qualitative and quantitative studies were comparatively small, where a larger one would have added more to research generalisability and transferability.

It is worth mentioning that attempts were made to increase the sample size, but it proved difficult to find the right participants matching the above criteria. Owing to issues around the students' confidentiality, the researcher's request was rejected when she contacted official channels such as the Higher Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia and the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia's Cultural Bureau. The researcher had then to use social media (such as Twitter and Facebook), personal connections and extended recruitment deadlines to find suitable candidates. She discovered that not everyone matching the participation criteria was willing to come forward and talk about their abroad experience. For example, some returnees refused to participate because of family restrictions on recording their voice, especially female candidates. Future studies should be aware of the challenges here, where multiple steps should be considered when choosing a similar sample; for example, securing the correct channel to participants first to facilitate recruitment processes, such as a government authority.

The quantitative data collection method used in this research was a self-report survey, which risked the participants' bias when answering the questions, under- or over-estimating their own behaviour and so producing unexpected findings. We then found no differences between SARs and in-country academics regarding their SCC which was misleading and contradicted earlier research (e.g., Adam *et al.,* 2018). Even though the quantitative results were an exciting part of this research, the issue of response bias might affect their accuracy and so

impact the study's validity. It would be advantageous to use ratings from other data sources, such as their managers or supervisors' ratings of the SARs and in-country academics. Researchers could then avoid the same source bias when drawing conclusions regarding the differences between the two groups (i.e., between SARs and in-country academics).

Another limitation concerned the qualitative study. As the researcher in question, I am also a Saudi academic studying in the UK for over eight years. In this sense, my thoughts and perspectives on my experience might affect my interviews with the participants and introduce some bias into the discussion. Nonetheless, we considered these issues carefully throughout the duration of the study and thus followed the suggestions of other researchers (Braun and Clarke, 2006) in using their thematic analysis steps, identifying initial themes, transcribing interview recordings, coding interview data, developing themes, and checking the validity and credibility of the data. Many steps were involved in this procedure and at each iteration, the themes were reviewed with the supervisory team. After carefully examining all the interview transcripts and developing themes, we then tested their objectivity and applicability further.

Another limitation of this research is that the quantitative study was limited to measuring behaviour and cognitive outcomes, appearing to overlook changes in the affective responses. Such an omission was not intentional as the researcher included questions asking the participants to rate their overall feelings about the experience and the education, but it turned out that they all rated the two questions 4-5 out of 5 (where 5 equals excellent and 4 equals good). The researcher hence decided to eliminate this part of the study, opting for a qualitative approach as the best way to understand the expression of emotions from participants involved in a quantitative study. Future researchers could include some questions about the participants' affective responses and feelings as they might obtain more honest or accurate answers.

8.6. Summary and Conclusion

This research has used a longitudinal mix-methods research design over two measurement points to explore the long-term impact of studying abroad on international students' change and self-development within a framework of changes in their affective, behavioural and cognitive processes. While this study has attempted to address the limitations of previous studies discussed in the SLR, this research is the first of its kind to extend the theory of acculturation (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001) to explore the impact of home-country transition on the accumulated outcomes of studying abroad by examining intercultural competence (IC), self-leadership (SL), creativity behaviour, self-concept clarity (SCC) and self-discerning reflection (SDR).

While previous research has focused on changes in personality traits and IC, this research has been the first to examine SL and creativity behaviour as outcomes of study abroad. In looking at Saudi academic returnees (SARs) that combine Saudi international students and academic employees working in Saudi universities, the chosen sample of this research is unique and complex to access.

The findings of this research hence confirm that the SARs developed IC, SL, creativity behaviour, SCC and SDR by studying abroad. The results also indicated that regarding IC, creativity behaviour and SDR, the SARs differed significantly from those who have not been abroad. The results then highlighted four mechanisms which indicated significant relationships with the outcomes: the host country, socialisation, motivation and length of study abroad.

After returning, the study results confirmed that the participants were able to sustain the study-abroad outcomes except for creativity behaviour which was negatively affected by their readjustment experience. Our study has hence examined readjustment-related factors, indicating that the motivation to study abroad moderates the sustainability of IC, SL and

SCC, while the awareness of perceived benefits abroad moderates the sustainability of creativity behaviour, SCC and SDR.

Furthermore, the research design, analysis and findings have provided new and different research perspectives to be replicated in education sectors, or a different sector in Saudi Arabia, or in a different country entirely. Our findings present clear and positive theoretical, methodological and practical contributions and implications in our exploration of how studying abroad has helped prepare the SARs with the skills needed for their work. In having a real impact upon how they experience work and transfer their ideas and new experiences back to work, this experience actually constitutes a significant practical contribution to the Saudi government who have spent millions and millions of dollars sponsoring them and can now confirm that their investment has paid off.

Lastly, the research findings have provided a strong basis for new guidelines for scholarship committees and human resources development within organisations to support and maximise the outcomes of studying abroad pre-, during and after their period overseas. These valuable findings are expected to be applicable to the scholarship committee and human resources departments in different organisations and sectors in Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries. Moreover, they can be extended to countries in more distant parts of the world taking into consideration the factor of potential influence of cultural difference.

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Appendixes

Appendix. A

1) Quality appraisal methods

The inclusion and exclusion criteria provide a minimum standard of quality for each included study. In addition, an overall quality score (ranging from one (*low overall quality*) to nine (*high overall quality*) for each paper was calculated, relating to the clarity of the stated study aim, and appropriateness of Method, Design, Sample, Results and Ethics, to meet the aim (on the criteria below). This follows guidance from Briner and Denyer (2012), Robertson et al. (2015) and Rojon et al. (2011).

Quality criteria

Study Aim	• Clearly stated – theoretical rationale may be included, but this is not a precursor (e.g. to accommodate grey literature)
Study Type	• Qualitative, quantitative or mixed method approach is clearly stated and relevant to the aim
Design	• The data collection methods are appropriate for the type of data required • The measures have been tested and validated to capture the complexity/diversity of experience and illuminate context in sufficient detail
Population	• Is reported and suitable for the purpose of the study
Sample	• The sample is sufficiently large to test for the desired impact • The sample is appropriate for the research question • There is an explanation as to why the participants selected were the most appropriate to provide access to the type of knowledge sought by the study
Analysis	• The methods used to analyse the results are appropriate given the data being analysed and the purpose of the analysis?
Key Results	• There is a clear exposition of how interpretation led to conclusions?
Missing Data	• This is reported and analysed where necessary?
Ethics	• Demonstration of sensitivity to ethical concerns

Questions adapted from Briner and Denyer (2012), Rojon et al. (2011), Walsh and Downe (2006), Snape et al. (2016).

	subjective or otherwise validated) • Key numerical results (including proportions experiencing relevant outcomes in each group, means and medians, standard deviations, ranges and effects sizes) • Inadequately reported or missing data

Adapted from Higgins and Green (2008) by Briner and Denyer (2012). Template adapted by the author.

2) Systematic Literature Review: Included Studies Quality Assessment

Study no.	Aim	Type	Design	Population	Sample	Analysis	Results	Missing data	Ethics	Agreed score	Notes
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8	no mention of ethics.
2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8	no mention of ethics.
3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	7	no mention of ethics.
4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8	no mention of ethics and some missing data.
5	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	6	use of t-tests to examine differences between mean scores before and after for numerous groups. Very long-winded and messy, could be better examined with Anova.
6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8	no mention of ethics
7	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	6	use of very basic stats and analysis methods - t-tests and descriptive stats, when could use ANOVA. Sample size is too small for inferential stats (N=26).
8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	8	no mention of ethics.
9	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	8	clustering of data in terms of 'types' of people, without clear identification of themes influencing change.
10	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	8	No clear identification of themes and how the analysis produced the results.

Interviews Recruitment Invitation

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral student at Kingston University London and in my research, I aim to understand the benefits of studying abroad to the workplace once an employee has returned from overseas study. In particular, I am interested in learning about your experience and what you have learnt about yourself and others as well as any personal development you have gained that might impact on your personal, social, life and work-related skills. As an initial part of this study I am seeking to conduct interviews with people whose experience would help in the gaining insights about this topic. I am approaching you because of your experience with your recent studying abroad experience.

We are looking to interview employees who:
- currently working at one of Saudi Arabia universities
- who have been abroad for several years to accomplish higher educational degrees and
- Who have just returned back home in the last 6 months.

This research study has received a favourable ethical opinion from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences at Kingston University London. In this study I am hoping to gather information about how people think and behave, and how they find returning to Saudi Arabia and to work following their studies abroad.

The individual interviews will take place either by telephone or by Skype (whichever is most suitable for you) and are expected to take approximately 60 minutes. The language of the Interview will be English Language.
Please read the attached Participant Information Sheet for further information.

If you are willing to participate please contact me, May Buhaymid, Research PhD student, at:
[Redacted]

In your email please include the following information:

- o Your telephone number:
- o Which times and days of the week would be most suitable for you to speak.

If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to ask me. Alternatively, you may wish to contact my supervisor at Kingston University London; Professor Joanna Yarker by email:
[Redacted]

If you wish to complain about any aspect of how you have been treated in this research, please contact Professor Jill Schofield who is the Dean of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences at Kingston University London. Professor Schofield's contact details are as follows:
[Redacted]

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

May Buhaymid

Appendix. C

Participant Information Sheet

Thank you for showing an interest in participating in the above study. This document provides a summary of the study, and answers commonly asked questions, to help you decide if you want to take part.

What is this study about?

We are interested to understand the benefits and the impact of studying abroad to the workplace once an employee has returned from overseas study.

We are looking to interview employees who:
- currently working at one of Saudi Arabia universities
- who have been abroad for several years to accomplish higher educational degrees and
- Who have just returned back home in the last 3 months

Why is this research needed?

While there is much information about how best to support students studying abroad, very little is known about what happens when students return home to their native countries. The research is needed in order to identify the benefits of international education for the expatriate employees to their personal development and skills and to their organizations in particular in higher education sector.

How can I take part?

We would like to conduct a face to face or conference call interview with you about your experience, now and in six months' time. The interview will take 30-60 minutes of your time.

Once I take part, can I change my mind?

Yes. After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have we will ask you to complete an Informed Consent Form. However, if at any time, before, during or after the sessions you wish to withdraw from the study please contact the main researcher. You can withdraw at any time, for any reason and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing. However, once your personal information is anonymised, you cannot request access to your information as it is no longer personal information.

What personal information will be required from me?

We will require some demographics, this includes your background, and other information such as where have you studied and when have you returned to your work. This information will be stored anonymously and is important to allow us to ensure we have a representative group.

What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

There are no clear risks or disadvantages of taking part in this study. This study is an exploratory study. If you do not want to answer a question, you have the right to skip the question, withdraw or postpone the study without giving any reason.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All of the information you give will be kept confidential including your name or your university name will not be included in any presentation or report. Your name, nor any other identifying details will ever be revealed in any publication of the results of this study. Also, all personal data, including your Informed Consent Form

(Appendix A) will be stored in accordance with GDPR (2018) regulations and guidelines. The interviews will be audio recorded during the interview and transcribed and stored anonymously on a password protected file. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form, which the researcher will keep. You will be free to withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason. As a participant in this study, you have the right to request access to your personal data as well as the correction and removal of such personal data. You also have the right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

What will happen to the results of the study?

Data will be stored securely in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act (1998). If you decide to take part, you will be given a pseudonym. Only the researcher will have access to the identity of the participants. Any potentially identifying information that you give, such as the names of people, institutions or organizations, will not appear in the final research report. The data will be analysed to discern patterns of common views and experiences. If we refer to you in the research report, we will use a pseudonym. The analysis will be combined with other information being collected and will be used in an academic thesis for obtaining a PhD degree and will be published in the form of a research paper.

I have some more questions, who should I contact?
If you have any further questions or queries regarding the study before or after, please do not hesitate to contact the main researcher: [Redacted]

If you wish to complain about any aspect of how you have been treated in this research, please contact

Professor Jill Schofield
The Dean of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences
Kingston University London.

Professor Schofield's contact details are as follows:
   [Redacted]

Post Participation Withdrawal Date If you wish to withdraw from the study and decide that you do not want your remarks included after participating in the interview, you may do so up until the post-participation withdrawal date of June 30, 2019.

Who has reviewed the project? This research study has received a favourable ethical opinion of the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences at Kingston University London.

Thank you for taking the time to read this Information Sheet.

Appendix. D

Informed Consent Form

- I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in a study investigating the impact of studying abroad on Saudi Academic returnees.

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the researcher of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.

- I understand that the interview will be audio recorded.

- I understand that the data generated through this interview will be transcribed and used in the research study and may also be used in publications after the study has ended.

- I understand that all personal data relating to participants is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with GDPR (2018) regulations and guidelines. I agree that I will not seek to restrict the use of the results of the study on the understanding that my confidentiality is preserved. I agree that the data I provide can be used for May Buhaymid PhD research and in any future related research or teaching projects.

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time up until June 30 2019 without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study.

Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS)   ………………………………..
Signed   ………………………………….
Date   …………………………………...
Name of researcher/person taking consent …………………………………..
(BLOCK CAPITALS)
Signed   …………………………………..
 Date   …………………………………..

Please indicate if a) you would like a copy of your interview transcript once it is available

(b) you are interested in information about the study results as a whole and/or

Check those that apply:

_____ I would like a copy of my interview transcript

_____ I would like information about the study results

Appendix. E

Interviews Form (Time One)

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research. Your views and experiences are really valuable and I'm very grateful for your time.

As you know, this research is part of my PhD. My aim is to explore the impact of studying abroad on the lives of Saudi students. I am interested in understanding how people think and behave, and how they find returning to Saudi Arabia and to work following their studies abroad.

We're going to spend the next 30-60 minutes discussing your views and experiences. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. However, anything you say will remain anonymous, and all identifying information about you will be removed. Only myself, my two PhD supervisors and a professional transcriber (if needed) will have access to your data. The data will be kept securely, and anonymised, on a password-protected university network file for 24 months and will only be used for my PhD and for scientific journal articles based on my PhD thesis. During this period, if you wish to do so you may withdraw your data at any time.

Do you have any questions about the research?

Just for the record, you have confirmed your consent to all the questions in the consent form you received prior to this interview.

Just to confirm: This interview is part of the time one interviews after the participant return back to work at home country.

Before moving into the main interview questions, I would like to gather some demographic information for the purpose to have a base for comprehensive text analysis.

Demographic information:

Interview date:
Time:
Code:
Gender:
Status:
Children:
Age:
Host country:
Education level:
Date of your return to your work:

Interview Questions
Part 1: Studying abroad. {Your experience abroad}
1- First of all, can you tell me a bit about why you chose to study abroad?
a. I would like to know about what the real motivations for you to study abroad?
2- Could you briefly describe your study-abroad experience for me?

a. How did you find it initially?
b. Were you able to meet people/ connect with people from different countries?
c. Who did you spend most of your social time with when you were studying abroad?
d. What did you think about the host country culture?
Part 2: Perceived change {about the impact of the experience on you}
3- Do you think you have changed while you were studying abroad? i.e., as a way to adjust yourself to the new environment
e. Did you start to think differently about certain things? {prompts: being independent and responsible, open to other ideas, better able to solve your problem, your communication skills}
f. Do you think you behaved any differently while you were studying aboard than now?
4- Did your perspective towards specific values or traditions in your home country change due to your experience abroad? {prompts: you used to accept certain behaviours from others and now you are rejecting it}
a. if your perspective has changed, what feelings do you have about any changes you have observed in yourself?
b. If not, why do you think you haven't changed?
5- Can you give me an example of when you had to deal with someone who comes from a different culture/religion/values system while you were studying aboard?
a. if yes, how did you respond to them?

b. What skills/benefits do you think such experiences provided you with?
6- How did you find the impact of living abroad on you, regarding:
a. understanding of who you are and what you believe about yourself
b. What you really need to achieve in this life in the short and long-term
c. Your personal-growth and focusing on learning new skills, healthy habits and well-being
d. Your behaviour and way of thinking towards yourself and others.
7- Did the experience lead you to think about how your personality is defined? Do you think it has influenced mostly by who you are? Or by your home country's values?
8- Did your study abroad experience has an influence on your values in life? Have you been able to determine which values are more important to you?
9- How does studying abroad affect the process in which you motivate yourself and direct your behaviour and performance in achieving your goals or completing desired tasks?   Do you use any skills or techniques that help you personally? Explain with examples {prompts: (self-rewarding, visualising, goal-setting}
10- Do you think your recent experience of studying abroad impacted your creativity? If so, how? If not, why not? {prompts: in terms of goal-setting, performing your tasks, problem solving, , helping others with new ideas}
Part 3: Returning home {after_your return}
11- How have you found your first few days/ weeks at home in Saudi?
a. Have people noticed a difference in you?

12- How do you feel about blending your overseas experiences back into your home life?
Part 4: Knowledge of the Saudi Arabia scholarship objectives
13- Are you aware of the objectives of Saudi Arabia scholarship in general? (T1) Share with them either to correct, advise or affirm
14- To what extend do you think a Saudi academic is   able to achieve these objectives abroad (T1)
Part 5: conclusion
15- Would you like to add anything more regarding what we already have discussed earlier?

This is the end of the interview. I would like to thank you so much for sharing your study-abroad experience with me and answering the interview questions. I hope this interview was convinced and comfortable for you. The second interview will be after six months from now. In meanwhile, I hope you will have a great time going back to work and gaining more experiences. So, we can learn more insights from you.

Appendix. F
Interviews Form (Time Two)

Introduction

First of all, I would like to thank you for your cooperation with me and agreeing to conduct the interview for Time 2.

As you know, this research is part of my PhD. My aim is to explore the impact of studying abroad on the lives of Saudi students. I am interested in understanding how people think and behave, and how they find returning to Saudi Arabia and to work following their studies abroad. In T2 I am interested to learn about your transition experience to your work and life in Saudi Arabia and how the changes you have perceived abroad affect your behaviour and way of thinking after the experience.

Similar to our previous interview, we're going to spend the next 30-60 minutes discussing your views and experiences. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed. However, anything you say will remain anonymous, and all identifying information about you will be removed. Only myself, my two PhD supervisors and a professional transcriber (if needed) will have access to your data. The data will be kept securely, and anonymised, on a password- protected university network file for 5 years months and will only be used for my PhD and for scientific journal articles based on my PhD thesis. During this period, if you wish to do so you may withdraw your data at any time.

Do you have any questions about the research?

Just for the record, you have confirmed your consent to all the questions in the consent form you received prior to the T1 interview.

Just to confirm: This interview is part of the time two interviews after the 6 months the participant return back to work in Saudi Arabia.

Before moving into the main interview questions, I would like to confirm some demographic information. This is to ensure that I have a base for a comprehensive text analysis and can explore whether there are differences in experiences.

Demographic information:

Interview date:
Time:
Code:
Gender:
Status:
Children:
Age:
Host country:
Education level:
Date of your return to your work:

Interview questions:

Questions
Part 1: transition back {readjustment experience}
1. Can you tell me about your transition back to your work including work regulations, roles, workloads and dealing with students? How do you find it?
Part 2: Perceived change {about the impact of readjustment experience on perceived change}
2. Do you think you have changed personally since returning back home? Have you changed your behaviour to adjust back to your country?   - If you have changed, do you think you are now the same person before going abroad or have you become a 'new you'? (a mixture of both)   - How do you describe yourself now in terms of your behaviour/ personality?   • Prompts: including feeling responsible and independent, kindness and feeling of others, extraverted and talkative, anxious and stress about small things, open to different cultures and ideas, organised, punctuality
3. How has your experience abroad impacted on what you would like to achieve now?   a. Has your time abroad made you consider different career priorities, goals, or plans?

b.	In terms of your ambitious to achieve more, do you think you are different to your colleagues who have not studied abroad?
4.	Has your experience abroad affected your pursuing to develop your skills? such as learning new skills, personal growth, or focusing on learning healthy habits and well-being? That you use or apply at your work • prompt you found that you are always trying to find something to work on it to develop yourself and use your time wisely.
5.	Since your returned home, do you use any skills or techniques that help motivate you and direct your behaviour and performance in achieving your goals or completing desired tasks? - If so, did you learn these skills when you were abroad?
6.	Since returning back home, can you give me an example of when you have had to deal with someone who (is different than you) in terms of their culture/religion/value system or knowledge? How did you behave? How was the interaction/ conversation different to the way you would have approached the conversation before your study abroad?
7.	Since returning home, how creative have you been at work? Do you think that your experience abroad has an impact on your creativity at work? e.g. your teaching style, outside lectures activities, sharing new ideas or implementing changes.
a.	Since last interview, did you become a part of or responsible about (an event/ celebrations) at work that you planed for and organised it. How creative you find yourself?

Part 3: cognitive

8.	After returning back to Saudi Arabia, do you feel you have a good understanding of yourself and what you believe about yourself? How self-aware you are? e.g. in terms of your like and dislike, your values or boundaries, your priorities.
9.	Since coming back home, do you start to think differently about certain things in your life? e.g. the time value, entertainments, family value, friendships? - How different you become (in your way of thinking) in comparison to you when you were abroad?
10.	What is the drive for your decisions? at your work, with your family and friends or in general? - Do you feel you always go along with the situation or does your decision is based on your own choice and evaluation?

Part 4: About perceiving themselves different from those who have not been abroad

11.	Can you think of someone who has a similar qualification as you, but from Saudi and did not study abroad? What differences have you noticed between you? (Anyone you can relate to) For example, In terms of: • Behaviour and attitudes towards others

- Creativity and skills at work
- Focusing on self-development and growth
- Leadership skills
- Decision making
- Personality including independence and responsibility

- Do you think all these benefits were due to your study abroad experience which made you different person than those who haven't been abroad?

Part 5: The sustainability of study abroad outcomes.

12. Have you experienced any changes to your personality/ behaviour/ why of thinking (you perceived abroad) since you came back home?

- Why do you think that happened? Any forces or feelings that affect the sustainability of these changes while you are in Saudi Arabia.

- Do you think you have changed any of your behaviour or way of thinking due to other people opinions?

- Is there anything that you or others could do to help sustain the benefits of studying abroad?

13. If one of your colleagues who have never been abroad before asked you for your advice in how he can get the most benefits of studying abroad similar to what you have gained, what would you advise him/ her? What is your recipe based on your experience?

For example, In terms of:
- Behaviour and attitudes towards others
- Creativity and skills at work
- Focusing on self-development and growth
- Leadership skills
- Decision making
- Personality including independence and responsibility

- What are the important factors that enrich your experience?

14. Would you like to add anything more regarding what we already have discussed earlier? Or anything you would like to raise in relation to studying abroad that we have not covered during this interview?

Appendix. G

Introduction and Demographic Information for SARs at Time One

Introduction

((THANK YOU FOR SHOWING YOUR INTEREST AND ENTERING MY SURVEY!))

Who is the target group to complete this survey?

This survey has been tailored to those who are working as academic faculty at one of the Saudi Arabia public/private universities and have returned back recently to their work after overseas study.

What Is the main objective of my study?

The study is interested in identifying the benefits of international education for the expatriate employees to their personal development skills and to their organizations in particular in the higher education sector.
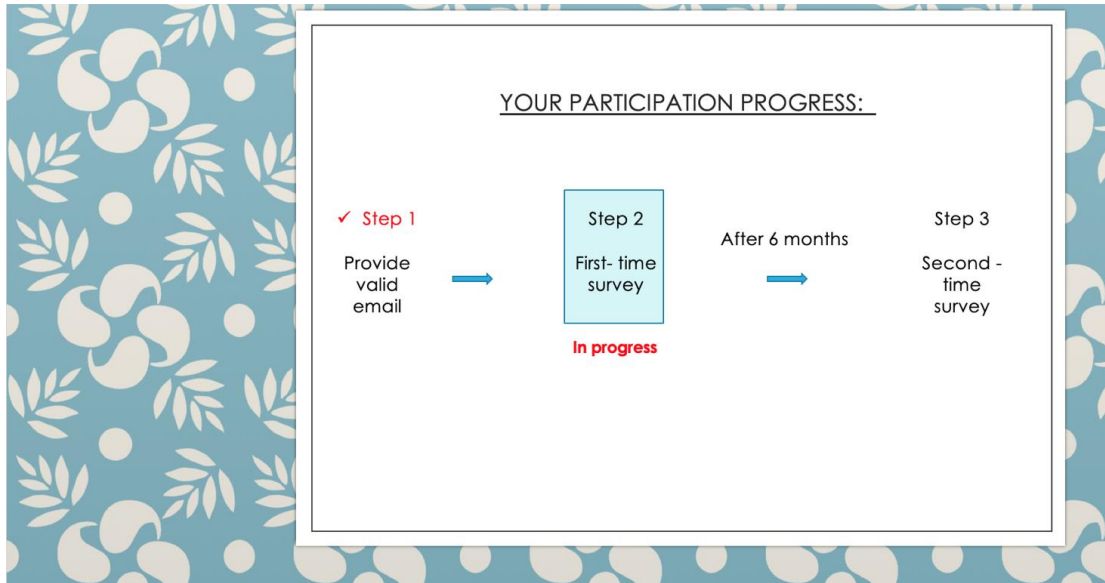
Email address (example: xxx@xxx.com)

[   ]

Date of birth (month/year; example 01/1980)

[   ]

Block 1 Demographic information

What date did you return to your work (Day/Month/Year; example: 20/10/2018)?

[   ]

What is your gender?

O Male

O Female

What is you age?

○ 25-29 years old

○ 30-34 years old

○ 35+

What is your educational level?

○ Master degree

○ PhD

○ Post Phd

Which degree/degrees you have obtained abroad? *you can choose more than
one degree

☐ Bachlore

☐ Master

☐ PhD

☐ Post phD

Where did you study abroad? * you can choose more than one answer if you have studied in different countries.

- ☐ USA
- ☐ The UK
- ☐ Canada
- ☐ Australia
- ☐ Other, [   ]

How many years you have been abroad?

[   ]

Block 2 General questions

Had you ever travelled to western countries before studying abroad?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

What was the length of your work experience prior to your recent moving abroad?

- ○ Less than one year
- ○ 1-2 years
- ○ 2-3 years
- ○ 3-4 years
- ○ over 5 years

Did you live with a host-country national at any point during your studies?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

For how long did it last?

[   ]

Please rate your experince with the host family

○ Very bad

○ Bad

○ It was OKey

○ Good

○ Excellent

Rate your education experience abroad

○ Very bad

○ Bad

○ It was okey

○ Good

○ Excellent

What was your motivation to study overseas? * you can choose more than one option.

☐ Your Job requirement

☐ Family encouragement

☐ Successful old experience

☐ Fulfil your dreams

☐ An opportunity to learn from different environment, culture and life style

☐ Ambition to achieve more

☐ Other [   ]

Who did you spend MOST of your social time with? * You can choose more than one answer

☐ Mainly Saudis
☐ People from Arab countries
☐ Mix nationalities including Saudis and Arabs
☐ Non Arabs, other nationalities
☐ Some native speaker

Please rate your overall experience abroad

○ Very bad
○ Bad
○ Not bad not good
○ Good
○ Great

Appendix. H

Introduction

Thank you for showing your interest and entering the survey!

This is a follow-up survey after your last participation 6 months ago.

The aim of this survey is to make a comparison between what you have perceived abroad about yourself and your working style, and now.

<u>Things to consider before starting:</u>

*Please use your laptop or bigger screen to complete the survey.
*In this survey, you can select the preferred language (English or Arabic) to complete the survey from the list above.
*The survey will not take more than 10-15mins of your time.

"May Buhaymid"

To start the survey, please provide your valid email address the same one you used to complete the previous survey.

*We will keep this information confidentially and will only use it to match your information over the two-time points.

Email address:

How would you like to rate your "education" experience abroad?

○ Very bad

○ Bad

○ It was okay

○ Good

○ Excellent

How would you like to rate your "overall" experience abroad?

○ Very bad

○ Bad

○ Not bad not good

○ Good

○ Great

Do you think your recent study abroad experience benefit you professionally and academically?

○ Yes

○ No

If yes, which of the following you think that have been influenced by your recent experience abroad? and how? (you are welcome to choose more than one answer)

☐ Your teaching style

☐ Dealing with students

☐ Implementing change to your workplace

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☐ Conducting research

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☐ Others

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If NO, Why do you think you have not benfited of the stuyd abraod expeirnce **professionally and academically?**

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Did you find it difficult or impossible to practice any of the benefits you have gained abroad such as the aspects mentioned earlier?

○ If YES, what are the difficulties you are facing?

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○ If NO, what helped you?

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Appendix. I

Introduction and Demographic Information for In-Country Academic (Control Group).

Thank you for showing your interest and entering my survey.

Before starting, please select the preferred language (English or Arabic) to complete the survey from the list above.

For your comfort, please do use your computer to answer the survey

The survey will not take more than 10-15mins of your time.

My name is May Buhaymid. I work as a lecturer at King Faisal university Business school in eastern Saudi Arabia. I am currently doing my PhD at Kingston University Business school in London at the Department of Business and Social Sciences.

The survey aims to learn about your working style and your personal skills you have developed at your work, and how you involve in the development and the enhancement of your workplace environment including your socialisation skills with different cultures

What is your gender?

○ Male
○ Female

What is you age?

○ 25-29 years old
○ 30-34 years old
○ 35+

Would you mind to tell us your status?

○ Married
○ Single
○ Divorced
○ Separated
○ Widow

Do you have children?

○ Yes
○ No

What is your educational level?

○ Bachelore degree

○ Master degree
○ Phd
○ Post Phd

Where did you gain your recent degree?

- ○ In same university/ city where you live normally
- ○ Different city/ province than where you live normally

What type of organization you were sponsored by and working with?

- ○ Eduaction sector - public universities
- ○ Education sector- ptivate universities
- ○ Other organization [   ]

What is the name of the university you are working with?

[   ]

What is your major or specialist subject? (For example: computer science, Managemnt, Information system)

[   ]

How many years you have been working as an academic?

- ○ Less than one year
- ○ 1-2 years
- ○ 2-3 years
- ○ 3-4 years
- ○ over 5 years [   ]

Have you ever travelled to western countries e.g. USA, Canada, The UK or any European countries ?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Appendix. J

Measurement Instruments for The Five Expected Outcomes Utilised in This Research
For Time-One, Time-Two and Control Group Questionnaires.

(1) Intercultural Competence

This section asks you about how you feel when you interact with people from different cultures.

Select the answer that best describes you as you really are

Please select one of the following for each statement

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree Nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
2. I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
3. I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
4. I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
5. I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
6. I know the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
7. I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
8. I know the marriage systems of other cultures.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
9. I know the arts and crafts of other cultures.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
10. I know the rules for expressing non-verbal behaviors in other cultures.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
11. I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
12. I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
13. I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
14. I enjoy living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
15. I am confident that I can get accustomed to the shopping conditions in a different culture.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
16. I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
17. I use pause and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
18. I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
19. I change my non-verbal behavior when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
20. I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

(2) Self-Leadership

This section asks you about how you direct and motivates yourself:

Read each of the following items carefully and try to decide how true the statement is in describing you.

	Please select one of the following for each statement				
	Not at all accurate	Somewhat accurate	A little accurate	Mostly accurate	Definitely accurate
1- I establish specific goals for my own performance.	O	O	O	O	O
2- I make a point to keep track of how well I'm doing at work (school)	O	O	O	O	O
3- I work towards specific goals I have set for myself.	O	O	O	O	O
4-I visualise myself successfully performing a task before I do it.	O	O	O	O	O
5- Sometimes I talk to myself (out loud or in my head) to work through difficult situations	O	O	O	O	O
6- When I have successfully completed a task, I often reward myself with something I like.	O	O	O	O	O
7- Sometimes I picture in my mind a successful performance before I actually do a task.	O	O	O	O	O
8- I try to mentally evaluate the accuracy of my own beliefs about situations I am having problems with.	O	O	O	O	O
9- I think about my own beliefs and assumptions whenever I encounter a difficult situation.	O	O	O	O	O

(3) Creativity Behaviour

This section asks you about how you feel at work:

Select one of the following answers that represent your opinion about yourself

A

	Please select one of the following for each statement				
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree Nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1- I use my imagination to picture myself performing well on important tasks.	O	O	O	O	O
2- I establish specific goals for my own performance.	O	O	O	O	O
3- Sometimes I find I am talking to myself (out loud or in my head) to help me deal with difficult problems I face.	O	O	O	O	O

Select one of the following answers that represent your opinion about yourself

B

	Please select one of the following for each statement				
	Strongly disagree	Disagaree	Neither agree Nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1- I often think about being creative	O	O	O	O	O
2- I do not have any clear concept of myself as creative employees	O	O	O	O	O
3- To be a creative employee is an important part of my identity.	O	O	O	O	O

Select one of the following answers that represent your opinion about yourself

C

	Please select one of the following for each statement						
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree Nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1- Always thinks of other ways to solve problems when he or she runs into obstacles.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
2- Would sooner create something than improve it.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
3- Has fresh perspectives on old problems.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
4- Prefers changes to occur gradually.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
5- Copes with several new ideas and problems at the same time.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
6- Helps other people develop new ideas.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
7- Has lots of new ideas.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
8- Needs the stimulation of frequent change.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

(4) Self-Concept Clarity

This section is about how you feel about yourself:

Select the answer that BEST describes you as you realy are

	Please select one of the following for each statement						
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
2. On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
3. I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
4. Sometimes I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
5. When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
6. I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
7. Sometimes I think I know other people better than I know myself.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
8. My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
9. If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day another	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
10. Even if I wanted to, I don't think I could tell someone what I'm really like.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
11. In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
12. It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

(5) Self-Discerning Reflection

This section asks you about your values:

Select the answer that BEST describes you as you realy are

	Please select one of the following for each statement						
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewaht disagree	Neither agree Nor disagree	Somewaht agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I have decided whether my personality is defined by who I truly am or by the culture I grew up in.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
2. I have figured out if my relationships with others are driven by my own values or follow the values of those around me.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
3. I do not know whether the way I play life roles (e.g., father, wife, employee) is influenced by what I believe or by societal expectations.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
4. I have figured out which values I really care about in life as opposed to taking these values for granted because I grew up with them.	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
5. I have come to understand which beliefs and assumptions about life define who I am and which ones are just the result of my cultural upbringing	O	O	O	O	O	O	O