

Degree Project

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Employment in Sweden from the international students' perspective

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Abstract: Every 30th person on earth is living outside her/his home country. People migrate for different reasons, one of them being studies. Those who leave their home countries to pursue studies abroad are referred as international students. International students might be valuable for their host country if they decide to stay there after their studies. Their skills, international experience and experience of the host country might result very useful in filling the gaps in the host country's labour market. Therefore, this study aims to understand international student's perspectives on post-graduation employment to Sweden. To fulfil the aim, qualitative inductive approach was followed so the interviewees were not influenced by predetermined questions. Ten in-depth, unstructured interviews with international students at a Swedish university were conducted. Interviews were analysed using the method of qualitative content analysis, following three research questions which lead to five themes – career advancement, enhanced life quality, employers' rejections, lack of social interactions and family role. Based on the findings, a conceptual framework was developed. The conceptual framework consists of the push and pull model, national culture, and cognitive dissonance which were found to be useful for the analysis and interpretation of the findings. Using findings from the interviews and conceptual framework, the analysis was conducted which was followed by the discussion, where the authors of this thesis interpreted and discussed the findings from different perspectives. This thesis revealed that international students are attracted to work in Sweden for different reasons. However, finding a job in Sweden is a difficult task for them. It has emerged that international students are facing troubles when looking for employment as well as with communicating with locals. Those troubles were discussed with the goal to understand why do they come out. Family topic has also emerged suggesting that it plays an important role when deciding whether to seek employment in Sweden after the studies or not. As this thesis provides insights into the experiences of international students, it is beneficial for the companies who are interested in hiring them. Moreover, companies who have never considered hiring international students could be encouraged to try a new practice. The stories provided in the thesis might be useful for the university, when providing assistance for international students as well as for the students themselves to form a realistic picture of what they might experience in Sweden.

Keywords: international students in Sweden, students' perspectives on employment, study-to-work transition, post-graduation employment to Sweden, employment opportunities in Sweden.

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1. Introduction

In this chapter, the background, the research problem and the literature related with the topic are presented.

1.1 Background

As of 2015, 244 million people (out of 7.3 billion) - every 30th person on earth, lived outside their home country (International Organization for Migration, 2017). The vast majority of people are migrating internationally due to “work, family and study” (International Organization for Migration, 2017, p. 13). More than five million of migrating people are international students (ICEF, 2015 in Wu & Wilkes, 2017). Due to globalization, the number of people studying abroad is growing, as well as, the need for companies to hire international students (Lapina, Roga, & Mürsepp, 2016). People who leave their home countries to seek higher education are called international students (Knight 2006: 19–30 in Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015). International students can be students participating in an exchange program and students organizing their studies in the host country on their own, so-called “free-movers” (Statistics Sweden, 2017). Moreover, their study destination country is referred as the host country.

Studies abroad bring a lot of benefits for international students such as experience a new culture and another style of education. Moreover, it can provide with more job opportunities and contribute to the personal development (International Student, 2018). International students are very important due to several reasons. For instance, they can help to fill the open job positions when there is a lack of local manpower (Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015). Furthermore, they provide diversity and internalization to their communities, as well as different perspectives and point of views and it allows to see the differences in the world (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). They also contribute to the “academic prestige, cultural exchange and financial revenue” (Wu et al., 2015, p. 1). International students bring experience from home and host countries, therefore, they contribute to the labour market with their skills (Arthur & Flynn, 2013). Le & LaCost stated that international education is giving students a chance to get experience that they could later use in their home countries and contribute to their development. Furthermore, international students can “improve the host country’s competitive advantage in the global economy” (Le & LaCost, 2017, p. 449). Morris-Lange and Brands (2015) point out, that international students have

already experienced the host country because during their time while studying, international students are supposed to already be passed the problems that people first face when arrive to a foreign country. Therefore, their local experience makes them more attractive than graduates who received their education in other countries (Arthur & Flynn, 2011). Furthermore, international students usually do not have family obligations which produces savings for host country companies in comparison to other workers from abroad who could bring their families with them (Evan, Pucik & Barsoux 2002; Peltokorpi & Froese 2009 in Bozionelos, Bozionelos, Kostopoulos, Shyong, Baruch, & Zhou, 2015). Consequently, if an international student remains in the host country after her/his studies, the host country and the country's organizations can take advantage of it.

Due to the previously mentioned benefits that international students provide to host communities, countries are submerged in a competition to attract them (Le & LaCost, 2017). There is a number of studies that have focused on international students and more specifically, international students in the USA (Gebhard, 2012; Han, Stocking, Gebbie, & Appelbaum, 2015; Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015; Alfattal, 2016; Baruch, Buddhwar, & Khatri, 2007; Le & LaCost, 2017), due to the fact that the USA is the preferred country for the university students in the world (OECD, 2013 in Han, Stocking, Gebbie, & Appelbaum, 2015). On the other hand, the amount of studies about international students in Europe are significantly lower. One of the most attractive countries for international students in Europe is Sweden which is among the five most popular countries for international students (Study.EU, 2018). Despite the tuition fee for non-EU incoming students introduced in 2011, the number of free moving students in Sweden is still increasing, in 2012/13 academic year there were 19,005 free movers while in 2016/17 the number increased till 21,969 (Statistics Sweden, 2017).

1.2 Research problem

As the presented background states, international students are important for a country as well as for companies and institutions. In accordance with Study.EU (2018), in the coming years a lot of changes in the student's decision about where undertake their international studies might occur. For example, it could happen that more students decide to study in Europe rather than the USA and the UK due to the new Trump government and the Brexit (Study.EU, 2018). Moreover, Han, Stocking, Gebbie, and Appelbaum (2015), indicate that European students have an opportunity

to study in different countries in EU Member States due to favourable immigration policies. It is also pointed out that for Asian students, EU could be more attractive destination due to the cost (Han et al., 2015). Both immigration policies and far-distance could be important factors when choosing destination country of studies as Europe rather than the U.S. For this reason, further contemporary research in Europe is needed. Since there is scarcity of research about Sweden and it is one of the most attractive European countries for international students, it was found important to conduct a study in this country.

The Almega report predicts that Sweden is approaching a situation where more employers will be needed due to the decreasing number of working age people (The Local, 2018). However, the Local (2018) announced that international students as well as professionals are concerned that it is difficult to meet the conditions that are needed for working in Sweden. Given the need of additional labour and difficulties international employees face, it is important to understand their concerns regarding working in Sweden.

Moreover, the international survey “Value Migration”, indicates that 75.7 % of Master’s students in Sweden intent to stay in the country after their graduation (SVR Research Unit/MPG 2012 in Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015). Thus, it is relevant to understand what attracts international students to stay in Sweden after their studies. At the same time, study-to-work transition of international students reveals that only 17% of international students stay in Sweden after their studies (BCG 2013: 59 in Morris-Lange & Brands, 2015). Even though a high percentage of international students is interested in staying in Sweden after their graduation, it is not known why the number of staying students decreases significantly. Therefore, it is important to understand what happens during the time while international students are in the host country that makes them change their minds and pursue employment in other countries.

Given that Sweden is an attractive country for international students, that international employees have concerns about working in Sweden, and that it is not clear why there is such a big difference between those who intend to stay and those who finally stay, it is important to understand how international students see post-graduation employment to Sweden.

Therefore, the aim of this study is: *to understand international students’ perspectives on post-graduation employment to Sweden.*

Research questions are the following:

- Why are international students motivated to pursue employment in Sweden?

- How do international students see employment opportunities in Sweden?
- What are the challenges international students are facing in Sweden?

Next, early research is presented in order to define the gap in the literature.

1.3 Early research

1.3.1 Research on international students

Recently the number of students who decide to study abroad has expanded (Lee J. S., 2017). Thus, a number of research focusing on international students could be found. Variety of topics are considered in terms of international students. For instance, international students' adjustment and challenges (Gebhard, 2012; Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015; Le & LaCost, 2017; Lee J.S., 2017), motivation to study abroad (Beech, 2015; Alfattal, 2016), post-graduation migration plans (Baruch, Budhwar, & Khatri, 2007; Soon, 2013; Han, Stocking, Gebbie, & Appelbaum, 2015; Wu & Wilkes, 2017; Arthur & Flynn, 2011; Mosneaga & Winther, 2013).

Some researchers focused on adjustment and challenges of international students. For example, Gebhard (2012) conducted interviews with 85 international students in the USA and found out that students experience challenges related to their studies, communication with others and with their emotions. It has also been presented how students deal with the challenges they face. Two types of behaviours have been indicated – behaviours that make adaptation smoother as well as behaviours that impede adaptation (Gebhard, 2012). Wu, Garza, and Guzman (2015), who also researched international students in a USA college using semi-structured interviews, discovered that there are different challenges students encounter. They have created several groups of challenges (academic, social, cultural, adjustment), each of the group following subcategories (Wu, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). Furthermore, Le and LaCost (2017) did a unique qualitative study analysing Vietnamese students' readjustment to their home country after completing their studies in the USA. It has been found that it was difficult for people to readjust into their country even though they have spent a great deal of their lives there. Since the study was inductive, several themes, such as – lost career chances, relationships, reverse cultural shock, re-adjustment, and gender differences, emerged (Le & LaCost, 2017). As the USA is the most popular destination for international students, a great number of literature focused on this particular country. Therefore, it has been pointed out that “research on the challenges of international students in non-English speaking countries is still in its infancy and should receive

more attention” (Ikeguchi, 2012; Jou & Fukada, 1996; Murphy- Shigematsu & Lee, 1999; Murphy-Shigematsu & Shiratsuchi, 2001; Murphy-Shigematsu, 2002; Tamaoka et al., 2003 cited in Lee J.S., 2017, p. 74). In order to contribute to the literature, Lee J. S. (2017) focused on challenges of international students in Japan. Using ethnographic approach, four major challenges were identified “personal psychological issues, general living issues, sociocultural issues, Japanese language issues” (Lee J.S., 2017, p. 73).

Studies, investigating reasons how students decide to pursue international degree could also be found. For instance, Beech (2015), while conducting semi-structured interviews and focus groups at the UK universities, found out that social networks play a critical role when deciding to study abroad. Meanwhile, Alfattal (2016), conducting semi-structured interviews with international students in the USA intended to understand international students’ college needs. The findings enlarged marketing mix framework and suggested the model of international students’ needs which consists of eight dimensions: “Program, Place, Price, Promotion, Process, People, Physical Facility, and Peace” (Alfattal, 2016, p. 920).

It is important to note that the above studies focused on study experiences, providing implications for university staff only, excluding students’ plans after their studies. Next, literature considering post-graduation migration plans is reviewed.

1.3.2 Post-graduation migration plans

Baruch, Budhwar, and Khatri (2007) researched the concept of “brain drain”. They chose students since “one major case of the brain drain happens when students from developing countries studying in the developed countries decide not to return home after their studies” (Baruch, Budhwar, & Khatri, 2007, p. 99). Through a quantitative survey of 949 students in the UK and the USA they have found that several factors such as “student’s perceptions of ethnic and labour markets, their adjustment process to the host country, and their family ties in host and home countries” (Baruch, Budhwar, & Khatri, 2007, p. 99), affect student’s intentions to stay in the host country.

Soon (2013) studied what makes students stay in the host country after completion of the studies. 623 international students in New Zealand were surveyed. The results show that those who have positive attitudes on the life in the home country have a higher probability to return home after completion of the studies (Soon, 2013).

Yet another study by Han, Stocking, Gebbie, and Appelbaum (2015) about brain drain, aimed to explain students decision-making process after their graduation in the USA. Using survey and follow up questions they found that immigration policies impede students staying in the host country even though larger part would choose to remain.

Wu and Wilkes (2017) took a different approach and in order to find out post-graduation migration plans, they created a conceptual post-graduate migration model. 232 international students in Canada were interviewed during a period of seven years. It was found that students see home “as host, as ancestral, as cosmopolitan, and as nebulous” (Wu & Wilkes, 2017, p. 123). Accordingly, students who see home as a host have plans to stay in the host country, those with the ancestral view plan to go back to the home country after their studies and those with cosmopolitan and nebulous view towards home “have more open migration plans” (Wu & Wilkes, 2017, p. 123).

Even though the above-mentioned studies were interested in post-graduation migration plans of international students with the goal to understand what influence international students’ decision to stay or to leave their host country, they were not trying to understand what are students’ perspectives on employment in their host country. Moreover, the majority of these studies were striving for generalisation lacking understanding international students’ perspectives towards employment in the host country that are shaped by their experiences. Next, literature on post-graduation employment in reviewed.

1.3.3 Post-graduation employment in the host country

The transition from studies to work is not an explored area of international students mobility, therefore, qualitative studies are not common (Geddie, 2010; 2013; Robertson, 2011; Brooks and Waters, 2011 in Mosneaga & Winther, 2013). Mosneaga and Winther (2013) conducted semi-structured interviews with international students and graduates in Denmark contributing to this topic while examining "connections between international students’ decisions to study abroad, and their perspectives on continuing their career in the host country after graduation” (Mosneaga & Winther, 2013, p. 184). They focused on finding the factors that create international students’ decisions when moving abroad to study, how do they choose study destination and if international students see their career in the host country. They have proposed a framework “that sees foreign students’ attraction and retention as an interconnected continuum” (Mosneaga & Winther, 2013, p. 191) their findings confirmed the proposed framework.

Another study by Arthur and Flynn (2011) also conducted semi-structured interviews with international students in Canada. They were aiming to find out factors that support international students when pursuing employment in the host country and what eases and limits their chances of employment in the host country. In their study, they find four core themes that cover facilitators and barriers for career decision-making. The results of the study suggest that students are interested in staying in Canada because they see better employment chances than in their own country as well as they are attracted by a higher standard of living. It has been also indicated that students are afraid of not finding employment, of different culture and language issues (Arthur & Flynn, 2011).

Inspired by existing literature this thesis is seeking an in-depth understanding of international students' perspectives on post-graduation employment to Sweden. This study is different from Arthur and Flynn, (2011) since the goal is not to focus on the career decision-making of international students but rather to find out perspectives of international students towards employment in the host country. We seek to understand how their experiences shape the perspectives that they have on employment to the host country. To be more specific, to explore if international students are motivated to pursue employment in their host country and why, how do they see employment opportunities in the host country and what are the challenges international students are facing in the host country.

It is also different from Mosneaga and Winther (2013) because we will not focus on finding a connection between international students' decisions to study abroad and their perspectives on continuing their career in the host country. We will explore in-depth students' perspectives on employment in the host country. Moreover, no model will be introduced to the interviewed students, so they are not influenced to tell their stories in a leading way.

This thesis is structured as follows: next, research design is presented. Later, the interview findings are provided which are followed by conceptual framework, analysis of the findings and discussion. Finally, implications, limitations, future research and conclusions of the thesis are given.

2. Research design

In this part of the thesis, research design is presented that is composed of the parts of research philosophy, research strategy, data collection method, sampling, data analysis, data quality, and research ethics.

2.1 Research philosophy

The research philosophy of this thesis is Interpretivism. Interpretivism accentuate that humans are the ones who create meanings, they are different from physical phenomena. Thus, people and their social worlds should be studied differently than physical phenomena (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). Interpretivists argue that each and every person is different. The difference lays down in culture, different circumstances, different times create different meaning, consequently, interpretivists oppose to the positivist endeavours to find exact, common findings that could apply to everyone. Interpretivist believe that “rich insights into humanity are lost if such complexity is reduced entirely to a series of law-like generalisations” (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 140). Consequently, since this thesis is aiming to understand each student in-depth, interpretivism was found to be the most suitable philosophy. Therefore, ontological assumptions of this thesis are: nature is seen as rich and complex, it is socially constructed, meaning that it is created from individuals’ experiences. Thus, a number of possible meanings, interpretations and realities exist. Whereas epistemology is that of the focus on stories, perceptions, and interpretations. Contribution is that rich understanding of international students’ perspectives on post-graduation employment to Sweden will be presented (Saunders et al., 2016). Their perspectives are formed by their experiences that they gained by living and studying in Sweden. It is important to note that different people will have different perspectives. Thus, the goal is not to provide a picture of the employment situation in Sweden but rather to understand each student’s experience in-depth.

2.2 Research strategy

Consistently with the aim and the research questions, this study follows a qualitative research which is used to study “how phenomena is “experienced”” (Silverman, 2013, p. 201). The goal is to understand international students and interpret their stories, rather than test hypothesis or

generalize (Belgrave, Zablotzky, & Guadagno, 2002). Inductive approach was followed so the themes emerged from the data. One of the major strengths of inductive approach to research is its flexibility. Instead of theory, researchers are following the data collected (Belgrave, Zablotzky, & Guadagno, 2002) so participants are not guided by predetermined themes. When using inductive approach, researchers analyse the text “with an open mind in order to identify meaningful subjects answering the research question” (Bengtsson, 2016, p. 10). Besides, inductive approach is the most common way to conduct a qualitative study (Silverman, 2013; Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). The nature of the study is exploratory because it is aiming to understand international students’ perspectives on employment to Sweden since little is known about that.

2.3 Data collection method

In order to fulfil the aim of the thesis, primary data was collected. Face-to-face interviews were the method used for the data collection because it “enables the researcher to stumble upon and further explore complex phenomena that may be hidden or unseen” (Tracy, 2013, p. 132). Body language and non-verbal communication can be revealed during face-to-face interviews which helps better capture human experiences (McGehee, 2012) and which is important in the case of this thesis. In order to answer research questions, it is important to capture experiences of people in their own words since they are “often marginalized in traditional, survey-based quantitative studies” (McGehee, 2012, p. 365-366). Therefore, in-depth, unstructured interviews were conducted, in order “to get inside the heads” of particular groups of people and to tell things from their “point of view” (Silverman, 2013, p. 201). Since the goal was to explore international students’ perspectives, no prearranged questions were used. However, even with the unstructured interviews, it is important to have a precise idea of what has to be explored (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016), for this reason, the research questions were always in the minds of the researchers, so only information that is valuable for the aim of this thesis could be obtained.

2.4 Sampling

The requisite for the selection of the participants was international students in Sweden who are about to finish their studies. As it was indicated, international students can be students participating in an exchange program and students organizing their studies in the host country on

their own, so-called “free-movers” (Statistics Sweden, 2017). In this thesis, international students are considered those who are free-movers and not exchange students who would not have enough experiences to provide for this thesis. Master’s students were chosen for this thesis due to the fact that half of Master’s degrees in Sweden are given to overseas students (Statistics Sweden, 2014). What is more, there are over 1000 of English taught Master’s programs in Sweden while only 67 Bachelor programs are English taught (Swedish Council for Higher Education, n.d.). Moreover, according to Baruch, Budhwar, and Khatri (2007), Master’s students are the ones who might be most willing to start their professional career compared with Bachelor students who could have more possibilities to continue with their studies. The intention was to choose as diverse sample as possible (considering the given time and resources), trying to reach students from different nationalities, however the aim of the study is not to represent all international students in Sweden but rather to understand each individual in-depth. As Seidman (2006) states, qualitative research is not concerned about generalization of the findings to a more extensive population. Thus, “the job of an in-depth interviewer is to go to such depth in the interviews that surface considerations of representativeness and generalizability are replaced by a compelling evocation of an individual's experience” (Seidman, 2006, p. 51). Therefore, the findings of this thesis do not aim to be representative of all international students in Sweden. Instead, it is intended to present the respondent’s experiences in detail in order that the reader connects to the experiences, learns about how the experiences are constructed and understands the topic in-depth (Seidman, 2006).

Convenience sampling was used since for the researchers it is “convenient, easy, and relatively inexpensive to access” (Tracy, 2013, p. 135). Since researchers are students of Dalarna University, which is one of the universities in Sweden that is attracted by international students (Swedish Council for Higher Education, 2018), the sample was chosen from this particular university.

As Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, and Braun (2017) point out, sample size is a debated topic in qualitative research (Terry et al., 2017) however, for Master’s thesis 6-15 interviews are suggested (Terry et al., 2017). Following this suggestion, initially it was aimed to interview 6 participants. Interviews were conducted during the period 22nd - 30th of March, 2018. After each interview, transcriptions and initial analysis were made in order to understand different perspectives towards employment to Sweden. After six interviews, it became evident that each

student had different stories even though some were similar. In order to get a better picture, four additional students were interviewed. After 10 interviews, it could be seen that new themes were not emerging, therefore, it was presumed that saturation was reached, for this reason, the interview process was ended as Tracy (2013) suggests. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the willingness of the student to share her/his thoughts. Table 1 below presents the participants. Their pseudonym, country of origin, time spent in Sweden and background are presented.

Table 1. Presentation of the participants. Own source.

Pseudonym	Country	Time spent in Sweden	Background
Leila	Iran	1 year 7 months	-Bachelor of Chemical Engineering from Iran -More than 4 years of experience working as an engineer in her country
Krishna	India	7 months	-Bachelor of Engineering from India -Master's in Marketing from India -Experience working for almost 4 years as a sales executor in an IT company in India
Ali	Syria	3 years 7 months	-Bachelor of Tourism from Sweden -Student jobs in Sweden
Nasha	Ghana	7 months	-Bachelor of Business Administration from Ghana -Experience as a supervisor in administration department in Ghana
Chayna	Namibia	4 years 7 months	-Bachelor of Business Studies from Namibia -Experience working in the finance department of the ministry in her country -Experience working in the embassy of Namibia in Stockholm for 4 years
Naz	Iran	7 months	-Bachelor in Architecture from Iran -Experience working for 7 years in architecture and designing, commercial and business in Iran
Luis	Cuba/Spain	2 years 6 months	-Bachelor in Civil Engineering from UK, Spain -Experience as entrepreneur working with sustainable and efficient systems in Sweden

Rishat	Bangladesh	7 months	-Bachelor in Computer Science from Bangladesh -Experience for 2 years as a project manager in Bangladesh
Solomon	Ethiopia	1 year 7 months	- Bachelor degree in Electronics from Ethiopia - 6 years of work experience in different areas (researcher, production manager, maintenance engineer) in Ethiopia
Mikaela	Greece	7 months	-Bachelor in Marketing from Greece -2 years of working as a sales assistant in Greece

2.5 Data analysis

Out of several methods for qualitative research analysis, qualitative content analysis was used in this thesis. “The purpose of content analysis is to organize and elicit meaning from the data collected and to draw realistic conclusions” (Polit & Beck, 2016 cited in Bengtsson, 2016 p.10). Qualitative content analysis method for data analysis was useful because it helps reducing the material, differently from other qualitative methods, due to the fact that while looking for meanings, researchers should focus on features related to research questions (Schreier, 2014). Moreover, data are presented in themes and this allows to interpret the results (Bengtsson, 2016). Among many types of text, content analysis can be used for in-depth interviews (Wann-Hansson, Hallberg, Klevsgård & Andersson, 2005 in Bengtsson, 2016).

The analysis process started when transcribing each interview after it has been conducted. This allowed to conduct interviews better each time in a sense that research questions could be answered. In order to have the data well organised each transcript was saved in a different file. Following the method of qualitative content analysis, researchers familiarised with transcribed data while reading it over and over again. Two researchers analysed interviews separately to increase the credibility of the findings. After familiarising with the data, the data was broken into meaning units as Bengtsson (2016) suggests. A meaning unit contains observations a researcher needs to answer research questions (Catanzaro, 1988; Graneheim & Lundman, 2004 in Bengtsson 2016). For instance, the statement “it is very tough, you just give up because if someone ask you for a work permit before you start working, then it is tough, because I have student permit, I have qualification, if I start working then I will get a work permit” was considered as a meaning unit (see Table 2). Each meaning unit was tagged with a code so the concepts could be easier identified. The tag code for the previously given example was “work

permit impedes finding a job”. Having a list of meaning units, each meaning unit belonging to the same code was coloured in the same colour which helped to see the recurrent codes. The codes were changing as more data became available and the codes which were seen as irrelevant to the research questions were eliminated during the discussion of the researchers. Following Bengtsson (2016), categorization was used in order to identify themes. Therefore, the code “work permit impedes finding a job” was attributed to the category “work permit” which later led to the theme “employer’s rejections”. Initially, 35 categories were found under common agreement (see Table 3). Then, research questions were used in order to reduce the categories and concentrate on those that would be related to the research questions and connecting categories that were the same but expressed in different words. Finally, 5 themes were created each of them containing categories that forms that particular theme. Please find emerged themes and their categories presented in Figure 1. Appendix (see Table 3) show how analysis was conducted.

Having themes established, the findings have been presented grouping them into those themes. Theories that are related with the findings were searched and conceptual framework was elaborated which is presented as a separate part in the thesis. Later, conceptual framework was used for the analysis of finding proceeding with the discussion.

Table 2. Example of conducted analysis. Adapted from Bengtsson (2016).

Meaning unit	Code	Category	Theme
“it is very tough, you just give up because if someone asks you for a work permit before you start working, then it is tough, because I have student permit, I have qualification, if I start working then I will get a work permit”	Work permit impedes finding a job	Work permit	Employer’s rejections

2.6 Data quality

This part of the thesis explains how the study was carried out in order to ensure trustworthiness. The term trustworthiness is the one used to assure the quality of this thesis instead of referring to validity and reliability that are common in quantitative research (Golafshani, 2003) and are not the terms used for the qualitative one (Mason, 1996 in Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Firstly, a pilot test of four interviews was conducted with participants that were also international students, to test if the students have stories to share that would answer the research questions and that there were no problems with the technology recording the data. Moreover, the pilot test helped to have an idea of the type of data that was going to be collected as well as the time that would be needed for each interview. From the pilot test, it was learnt that we should not be afraid of silence, letting the respondents think without interrupting them and listen carefully so the follow-up questions and clarifications could be made. When each interview was coming to an end, a brief summary was made by the interviewer, highlighting the main ideas, to obtain the consent of the interviewee and allowing students to correct errors if any, caused by misunderstandings.

The two researchers conducting the study were analysing the data collected independently to identify codes. The codes obtained for each one were compared and discussed. As Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2012) suggest, when a disagreement occurred, the data was revisited and discussed again in order to achieve consensus. In addition, once an agreement about the codes was reached, the themes were established and reviewed several times to guarantee that no more themes were coming up.

Lastly, as Roulston (2010) suggests, research process and methods used were made as transparent as possible. A table presenting the conducted analysis (Table 3), a table presenting the participants (Table 1), and quotations were used in the findings in order to support arguments.

2.7 Research ethics

Research ethics was also taken into account. There are some standards of behaviour that have to be accomplished regarding the rights of the participants (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2016). To avoid any problems, the following steps were followed:

Firstly, every participant was contacted explaining her/him what were the intentions with the interview and what will be required from them in order to avoid any misunderstandings, as well as the approximate time, it would take. They were also informed about being recorded and consent was requested. They had the voluntary chance to agree to do the interview or not. Moreover, the anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed using pseudonyms and the study program they are currently involved was not mentioned.

Following with Saunders et al. (2016) suggestions, the findings were disclosed accurately. Furthermore, the analysis and interpretations were reviewed to be sure that they were providing accuracy.

3. Findings

In this part of the thesis, findings are presented. Direct quotations from the interviews are used to better illustrate student's perspectives and experiences. As it has already been indicated, five themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews (see Figure 1). These are career advancement, enhanced life quality, employer rejections, lack of social interactions and family role. Further in the paper, the findings regarding each theme will be presented.

3.1 Career advancement

This theme appeared from reasons why international students would like to stay in Sweden after graduation and to obtain a job in the country.

The main reasons for career advancement provided by the respondents were to gain international experience, more job opportunities, career progression, advanced technology and the environmental plans.

Respondents such as Krishna, Ali, Nasha, and Mikaela think that finding a job in Sweden would help them in the future because international experience can bring them many opportunities. Even though, in the case of Krishna and Nasha, they would like to go back to their countries they would first prefer to gain work experience in Sweden.

I have always had in mind to go back home. But, I would really appreciate having an international exposure. (Nasha)

It can be noticed that almost every participant sees more opportunities in Sweden than in her/ his own country. Solomon stated that “opportunities are tremendous here”. Talking about job opportunities, Mikaela noted that these are much better than in Greece where the unemployment rate is very high and it is very difficult to find a job related to her studies. Naz agrees with Mikaela when it comes to job opportunities. Moreover, she did her research before coming.

When I was in Iran and I just read different websites and it is said that in Scandinavian countries there are lots of jobs offers. (Naz)

Luis who is interested in entrepreneurship, stated that there are more opportunities for that in Sweden than in his country where autonomous workers have to pay a lot of taxes and are not supported by the state.

Here you can think out with your ideas and working hard on your own, Sweden is extremely good in that sense. (Luis)

Leila, who is from Iran, also mentioned that in Sweden there are a lot of job opportunities and she is better considered in terms of job in Sweden than in her country where men and women are unequally treated.

In Sweden, I have more chances to find a job as a woman than in my country. (Leila)

Other reasons about career advancement provided by Luis and Leila who both are engineers, are that Sweden is advanced in technology and the environmental plans that they have as these two aspects are very important for their careers in order to progress.

Career progression was mentioned by Naz and Solomon who want to improve themselves.

Naz believes that there are more opportunities for Iranian people to grow and achieve higher careers than in their own country. She admits having met Iranians in Sweden who in several years achieved careers that according to her, they would not have been able to achieve in Iran.

It is really nice to improving here. (Naz)

To sum up, international experience, job opportunities in Sweden, advanced technology, Sweden's environmental plans, and the possibility to improve and grow are all seen by participants as important aspects for their career advancement.

Further, the theme of enhanced life quality is presented.

3.2 Enhanced life quality

Other theme that emerged from the interviews is enhanced life quality which international students are looking for in Sweden. This comprise better salaries, work-life balance, more advanced education and better health care system than in the home countries, job security, and help for their home countries.

In some cases, the situation in their countries is not stable and they are looking for a better future. One way that the interviewees see how to improve the quality of life is to look for a country where the salaries are higher. It is demonstrated by the fact that some interviewees give importance to financial reasons. As Chayna stated,

They pay too much better money compared with the salary that I may get in Namibia. (Chayna)

This is the reason why she might consider to stay in Sweden after graduation.

Another participant, Mikaela, noted that the salary in her country is low and it does not allow her to have economic independence.

You cannot live on your own it is much better to go abroad and work there and have some money and live on your own. (Mikaela)

Naz pointed out that she decided to come to Sweden because in her country the salary is very low and it is difficult to earn money for leisure such as traveling. Leila, from the same country, indicated that the salaries in Sweden are higher and earning more she could enhance her life quality.

Solomon also sees the salaries as a way to enhance his quality of life because it was not enough with the salary that he was receiving in his country taking into account that he has to help his family. As it can be noted in the following statement:

Life was very tough for me because whatever I earn, it is still not enough salary and I just spend it with my family and it was very tough to improve my life. (Solomon)

Another aspect to consider regarding enhanced life quality is the work-life balance. It was important for Rishat, due to the fact that in her country she was working more than 50 hours per week and she does not expect the same in Sweden. It motivates her because it would enable her to spend more time with her family and to have more time for herself.

The quality of some systems in Sweden such as the educational system and the health care system is perceived as better by some respondents, therefore, these are other reasons why the interviewees want to work in Sweden and enhance their quality of life and that of their family. In terms of educational system, Rishat mentioned that the Swedish citizen can get a free education while in Bangladesh the education is very expensive and not everybody can attend the university, as well as, she perceives the education a good opportunity for her future children.

I want my next generation to get this education that I am getting because I feel like if I had got this education in my Bachelor, maybe I could do some better. (Rishat)

She also expressed her satisfaction regarding the health care system and it encourages her to bring her family to Sweden:

Everybody can have good facilities from toddler to adult, everyone. This is another thing which is missing in my country even if people pay a good amount of money they still don't get a good service from the medical centre. (Rishat)

She is not the only one who is attracted by the health care system. Solomon had a daughter while studying in Sweden and his experience with the system is being very satisfactory, it is better than it would be in his country.

Treatment support that they have for families is just amazing, I mean, you don't have to be a good father for your kid to have a good life, the system would protect her so that is something that impressed me so I am really happy. (Solomon)

It is very different than in his country. Even for those who are employed in his country, he assured that it would have been very hard to find good quality. Moreover, the health care system in his country is very expensive.

Maybe I would recommend for couples to have a kid here [laughing]. (Solomon)

This is not his only experience with the health care system in Sweden. Solomon had health problems himself and he got a pleasant treatment. Therefore, the health care system is one of the things that pushes him to stay and do whatever he can to find a job in Sweden.

Moreover, Nasha perceives the systems to be very organised and she likes the fact that in Sweden everybody keeps the queue and respect that those who arrived first have the priority.

This is really new for me and it's good because in Ghana doesn't matter if you have arrived before because another person can come and just pass by, if for example, he is older than you. People usually jump the queue in my country. So, this is something that I found interesting. (Nasha)

In addition, she likes how the system of visiting the doctor works. She noticed differences from her country where booking an appointment is not needed and the process of visiting the doctor is not that well organised.

Job security was mentioned by Mikaela, who sees the future unclear in her country and it is something that she was unhappy with while in Greece. She indicated that in Greece you never know when you are going to be fired.

You work one day and the other day you do not know your future. (Mikaela)

She thinks that the situation is much better in Sweden where if one has a job, he/she can focus on it instead of worrying about the security.

Finally, helping their home countries is also among the thoughts of some participants. Solomon indicated that getting a job in Sweden could help his family financially. Additionally, he has in

mind that he can contribute much better in the future to his country if he gains experience in Sweden.

I would get a lot of experience here because here there are a lot of international companies, a lot of research centres, educational institutions so if I work here for 10 years or more than that, then I can do much better back in my country because most of the time in Africa we need an improvement in policies and structures so I can do a lot of contribution through these areas so I am thinking not only about temporary personal comfort just for the future also because many organizations even in Sweden, in Europe are trying to help Africa spending their money and their time. (Solomon)

He really hopes to contribute to his country with the knowledge that he can acquire in Sweden.

The same thought as Solomon had Nasha, who believes that her knowledge and expertise would be needed back home.

These examples show how Sweden would enhance international students' life quality in different ways if they would stay and find a job there.

Before starting with the next theme, student's experiences when looking for a job in Sweden are important to be presented.

Experiences when looking for a job. Expectations vs reality.

It has emerged from the interviews that students' expectations towards employment in Sweden are different from the reality they are facing.

Rishat, before coming to Sweden knew that some of her friends could not find employment after their studies and had to leave the country.

I have seen so many students, so many of my friends actually did Master's from here and at some of the good universities which are known to pretty much all over the world but after finishing their studies they had to leave the country because they didn't manage to get a job here and I don't know why there is a problem. I have seen people with good results, good backgrounds, they are leaving the country. (Rishat)

However, she thought it would be different for her because she has faith in her experiences, she has done two internships abroad before and worked as a project manager for 2 years so she did not expect to face any problems when finding a job or internship. Nonetheless, after six months of the job search her opinion has changed.

I am sceptical, I don't know... these days my confidence is getting low after getting rejections from so many different companies, so many different positions ...in terms of my career opportunities in Sweden I feel like little shallow I mean like in dark. (Rishat)

Therefore, she does not understand why she is not succeeding.

Is it a problem with my CV or my career choice? What is the problem? I am not getting the problem. (Rishat)

Solomon shares similar expectations as those of Rishat since his partner has studied in Sweden and after a year of looking for a job came back to her country due to the failure to find one. Yet, he was confident in his experiences and qualifications. It has been a year he is applying for jobs related with his studies and experiences, so far, he is not succeeding. It was something that he was not expecting since he has always been one the best students, moreover, he was among 9 people out of 900 who got a scholarship for studying in Sweden. He is frustrated since he cannot land a job even in those positions where he sees himself as overqualified.

...and I get a rejection but that was a training program, even fresh graduated from Master's could get it, you can imagine with my experience, I thought it would be very easy but I didn't.... (Solomon)

He also adds that he feels that Swedish companies are not really interested in hiring international professionals, he believes so based on that he is being rejected and that university does not have connections with the companies.

Another international student, Ali, admits that before coming to Sweden he thought that there are endless opportunities for professional career growth there. After almost 4 years he does not think in the same way anymore. He experienced that finding employment is difficult and *takes too much effort*.

Nasha has also experienced difficulties when looking for employment in Sweden.

It's not being very hopeful; I'm just applying but I am not expecting to get the job. But just applying in case someone is willing to give me a chance. So, the situation is sad. (Nasha)

Even though her goal before coming was to spend some time working in Sweden in order to gain international experience.

Luis describes his job search in Sweden as “complicated” and this is something that he was not expecting before coming because of his qualifications and experiences. Therefore, his experience is making him frustrated, he admits thinking:

what are these people, why they do not want me here? (Luis)

Another student, Krishna has lost hope to find a job since after more than 70 applications he could not be accepted anywhere, as a consequence, he will be going back home after his studies where he is sure he will gain a good job since European education is well recognised in his country.

It has also emerged that interviewed international students who have already applied for jobs in Sweden are qualified and experienced individuals. However, landing a job is difficult. While ones will continue trying others are not willing to waste their time when they can easily obtain employment in their home countries and to contribute to their welfare after having Swedish education.

Having introduced student’s experiences when looking for a job in Sweden, further in the paper different rejection reasons that emerged are presented.

3.3 Employers’ rejections

Thank you for your application, unfortunately we will not proceed any further

After conducting and analysing interviews, the theme of rejection when applying for jobs in Sweden emerged. Each student provided reasons why do they think they are being rejected. Further in this paper, those reasons are presented.

3.3.1 Swedish personal identity number

When a person has moved to Sweden and is planning to live there for at least one year, it is required to be registered in the register of Swedish population. When the registration is made, the personal identity number is provided (Skatteverket, 2018). Students, who study for a program that is longer than one year are entitled to receive a personal identity number (Study in Sweden, 2018). However, there are Master’s programs at Dalarna University that take one year to finish (Dalarna University, 2018). From the perspectives of those one-year Master’s program students, not having Swedish personal identity number is one of the main barriers for them to find a job.

I think that the most problems that I have it is because of personal number because at first time they say that I am accepted but then when I need to fill forms and they see that I do not have personal number, I just lose it [opportunity to be hired]. (Naz)

Naz has been looking for a job in Sweden from the very beginning when she arrived. She has 7 years of professional working experience in the field of architecture, therefore she thought that getting a job will not be a problem for her. She has made around 100 applications up till now and she thinks that one of the main reasons of her being rejected is the fact that she is enrolled in one year Master's program which does not give her the right to apply for the personal identity number.

Luis, who has a background in architecture and engineering is also enrolled in a one-year Master's program. He arrived to Sweden to work for a start-up working on sustainable and efficient systems. Even though he has been in Sweden more than 2 years now, he could not get personal identity number because of this status (first – entrepreneur (since the company was not generating profit); later – as a one year Masters' student). He is not involved with the start-up anymore, therefore he has been actively looking for a job in Sweden. He thinks that bureaucratic procedures impede his job search.

They do not explain you straightforward, you have to go five times to get an answer. You go for a job - they ask you for a personal number which is also ridiculous because they should know that if they write a contract for you they give the personal number so you are like chasing your tail all the time like going to Skatteverket and then going for a job, the job tells you that you need a personal number to get a job and Skatteverket tell you that you need a job to get a personal number and they play you around for months in this way and I don't know why they do that..... I feel like I need a number just to get language and to get a job and they do not provide you that easily. (Luis)

Besides difficulties when looking for a job, international one-year Master's students indicate that not having personal number they are not able to get discount at grocery stores, gym memberships, and medical care. Naz shared her story of her getting ill and not being able to see a doctor without paying 1800 Swedish crowns which she was not able to pay at that moment. Therefore, she feels that not having a personal number is making her life very difficult in Sweden. Important factor to note is that she was not aware about this law before and if she would have known, she would not have chosen one-year Master's in the first place.

When you want to breath here in Sweden, you need to have a personal number because in other case you will make problems. (Naz)

Nasha shares similar experience to the one of Naz since she reveals that she found it impossible to book appointment with the doctor.

You just lose a lot of things compare with those who have the personal number. (Nasha)

Luis, who is already well familiar with Swedish systems identifies that:

You do not exist in Swedish society if you do not have that number. (Luis)

It is important to note that students who have a personal identification number, mentioned other matters that they believe causes them being rejected by Swedish employers. Further in this paper they are presented.

3.3.2 Work permit

International students who are enrolled in a study program that last more than a year, do not have problems with personal identification number however it has been noticed that they believe other obstacles hinder them from finding employment in Sweden. Therefore, their perspectives why they are being rejected, differ from those previously mentioned.

Solomon explained that he faces problems due to the work permit. In order to receive a work permit, a person must be offered a job. A work permit cannot be obtained without having a job (Migrationsverket, 2018). Students from EU/EEA do not need a work permit while those who are not from EU/EEA should apply for an extension for their student residence permit, with this extension they are allowed to stay in Sweden for 6 more months so they could look for a job. Students must be able to support themselves financially and to be successfully completed at least one semester of post-graduation studies so the requirements of student visa extension can be met (Work in Sweden, 2018). International student Rishat is worried, if she will not be able to find an internship or job by the end of her studies, she will have to leave Sweden because her scholarship will expire at the moment she finishes her studies meaning that she would not be able to support herself in those 6 months when she could look for a job. Therefore, she started applying for jobs at the very beginning but she could not find anything yet.

Solomon, who has been looking for job opportunities for a year now, is not much hopeful either. He indicates that *6 months to find a job is nothing*. Moreover, he believes that not having a work permit prevents him to find a job.

I want to work to get a work permit and if they ask me for work permit before I even start working which is sometimes I feel like ... it is very tough, you just give up because if someone asks you for a work permit before you start working then it is tough, because I have student permit, I have qualification, if I start working then I will get a work permit...” (Solomon)

Chayna shares her thoughts that companies are not willing to hire someone who is outside EU so they do not have to struggle with work permits. Nasha seems to agree with that since she mentioned that she was actively looking for employment opportunities since she arrived to Sweden. She thinks that the search was unsuccessful due to her immigration status.

While Luis, who is EU citizen and does not need a work permit, does not think that his citizenship facilitates his employment search. On the contrary, he feels that refugees are more welcome in Sweden than those who would like to work there.

European people that come here suffer indirectly because Swedish people are not happy with us coming here because they have resentment towards what other people are doing in the country to bring more immigrants and their resentment is not directed to us but it is us who pay for it. (Luis)

While some students believe that personal identification number prevents them to find a job, others find work permit to be the biggest obstacle but there is something that came up in almost all of the cases. It is presented next.

3.3.3 Language

International students agree that it is very important to know the Swedish language in order to find employment in Sweden.

I do not know the language so this is the main problem. (Mikaela)

You have to speak Swedish to find a job and I cannot. (Leila)

I have heard other people saying...I cannot get a job because I don't speak Swedish...so... (Chayna)

If you do not speak Swedish, you do not get the opportunity. No Swedish - no job. (Luis)

Having worked in the start-up in Sweden, Luis does not understand the need of him speaking Swedish since as he indicated he dominates the software language, and knowing Swedish is not necessary for him. However, he experienced that knowing the local language is necessary.

If you do not speak Swedish, you do not get the opportunity. They do not care if you are learning Swedish or not, they just do not consider you after like I do not know, 100 applications ... you must speak English and Swedish, if you say that you are learning Swedish they do not care about that. You need to speak Swedish or you do not get the job at least in the areas that I apply which I am overqualified to apply for the Swedish language. (Luis)

He shares a specific experience when we felt like a perfect candidate but in the end, was rejected. He asked for the reason and the one provided was because he cannot speak Swedish.

I asked for feedback to him afterwards and he told me that the interview was very good, I was overqualified and it was good that I brought my computer and I showed them my skills and the only thing was Swedish and this is something that is not logical for me because there was a contract for at least 6 years, so I mean you could start working and how long would it take you to learn Swedish, 2,3,4 months? (Luis)

Ali shared different experiences, after 4 interviews for one job he got a rejection and the reason for not hiring him was said to be the fact that he does not speak Swedish, however he did speak Swedish at that time already but nobody during the interviews asked him. In this case he feels that something else was wrong and the language factor was used only as excuse not to hire him. Next, another reason related with rejections when applying for jobs emerged.

3.3.4 Importance of personal contacts

It became evident that international students who participated in this study face difficulties when looking for an employment in Sweden. The importance of having contacts in order to find a job emerged. Krishna, who has experienced seeking employment in Sweden, believes that if one does not have someone who could refer him/her to the job it is very difficult to find a job. While Ali who has been in Sweden for almost 4 years and had several jobs, shares his experience:

It is more about to have a personal contact. It is more about whether they know you or not than your knowledge about the job position. So, whatever job I got so far in Sweden it's by contacts that I have. (Ali)

What is more, he believes that some companies do not announce open positions online, making those positions impossible to discover if you do not have contacts. Solomon also believes that contacts are very important, therefore, he is trying hard to establish them but so far it did not help

him to find a job. Meanwhile, Naz admits that she does not believe that her husband who came to Sweden together with her, would have found a job without personal contacts:

And you know my husband's job is just because of our friends. If we didn't have any friends just to get him a job, I don't know what would have happened to us I think in this case we should just go back to our own country. (Naz)

Having presented international students' experiences when looking for employment in Sweden, in the following section another theme that emerged from the interviews is presented.

3.4 Lack of social interactions

Just one "hey" to everyone?

Another theme that emerged from the interviews is social interactions with Swedish people. International student who has been working part-time jobs while studying express sorrow when talking about his work experience.

In Sweden, the first year you come super active, you have power, motivation, then you plan, you applied for studies, you meet people...but the job environment is... no personal involvement, no social life, in all the jobs. They don't talk with you, don't care about you. (Ali)

Naz shares her experience in the company where she is working on her Master thesis. On the first day, she expected that she would be introduced to the team and that everybody would personally greet and talk with her as it is done in her country. She did not feel welcome in the way she was introduced, therefore it made her feel sad.

I cannot deal with something like this, why they behave like this, why didn't they accept me? (Naz)

Rishat mentions that sometimes she does not feel very welcome in Sweden:

....it is not like they are saying in front of your face that I don't like you, what a hell are you doing here but you can feel that, that person might not like you, that person might not be comfortable around you. (Rishat)

Krishna shares similar experience, he admits that sometimes when he is asking for help, he receives no response which he perceives as an unfriendly gesture. Moreover, he sees Swedes as close and tough to gain a contact with which makes him feel isolated from them. Meanwhile, Nasha does not feel very comfortable in her class:

Swedish students don't talk with you...everybody is quiet. (Nasha)

Solomon, who is willing to pursue employment in Sweden is interested in exploring the culture but admits that he does not have much opportunities to do that:

There is no chance for me even to meet Swedish people or someone who have been here for many years because of interaction, it could be my problem but as I can see people here are really more quiet and not much interactive. (Solomon)

He also reveals that he is lacking community interaction while Luis admits that he misses connection between people.

Some students say that they feel that locals are not willing to talk in English with them even though they might know the language well, which make students feel excluded and uncomfortable.

I do not know [if] they are not really familiar with English or they just do not want to show that they understand, they just try to answer you in Swedish they know that you do not understand but they answer you in Swedish. (Naz)

Every single Swedish talk English but they refuse to speak English, they want to talk Swedish so you have to be Swedish to be in Sweden. (Luis)

Luis believes that there are people in the society who do not accept international people. From Ali's perspective, getting a job and "surviving" in Sweden would be easier if he would have Swedish name. He thinks that, Swedish citizens would always be considered before internationals no matter the qualifications. Chayna has the same opinion:

I think there is a lot of differences if you are not local, most of the things are more difficult to get, such as to get a job. It is more difficult if you are not a local. (Chayna)

Ali also claims having experienced racism in his job. According to him, he is being payed lower just because of his nationality. He cannot handle this and after finishing his studies he is eager to move to UK. He also admits being afraid to lose his social skills, his family is worried about his condition because of changes in his behaviours. He has become quieter, he cannot bear hearing noises and everything is disturbing him. Nasha also admits that her behaviour changed in a way. She says that when she is surrounded by local people she becomes more reserved which is different from who she really is. Chayna also thinks that her behaviour changed while in Sweden.

Sweden has changed me because I don't speak so much now. I'm more quiet than before. Even when I meet with people I don't speak with them so much which it is rude in my country. Silent here became part of me. But this was not like that before. (Chayna)

It became evident that it does not come without a challenge for international students to make connections with locals. While some struggle more and cannot deal with that, others are trying to adapt themselves and learn the culture rather than expecting it to be the other way around.

I think that sometimes maybe we are wrongly judging the Swedish because we are not managing to penetrate to the network but if you manage to do that I think they are amazing people. (Solomon)

Imagine that you are an onion - in Cuba people do not have many layers to get to know them, you just get to know them immediately you just do a small talk, you do not need to be naked to be naked, here you need to have many layers to put yourself and you need to brake all these layers they create to separate them. (Luis)

I think "it is a Swedish rule, I do not like it" but I should and I try to become more familiar with Swedish behaviour. (Naz)

It is noticed that those who have their own motivations to stay and pursue employment in Sweden are more willing to learn and adapt to the culture which is different to the one of their own. Further, another theme is presented.

3.5 Family role

It has also been found that the family has an important role in the decisions of the interviewees. The respondents talked about their families. They assured that they keep in touch with their family and that their families support them. In some cases, the reasons for pursuing employment in Sweden, as well as the reasons for going back to their countries, are influenced by their family. Moreover, some participants are living in Sweden with their partner which also has a lot of effect on them.

Leila is living in Sweden with her husband, both came together to study the same Master's and her husband supports her a lot, in fact, it was her decision to come to study in Sweden. She expressed a concern and it is that they are two and they always have to look for the good of the couple.

Luis, who has a Swedish partner, would like to bring his family with him to spend some time together but it has not been possible so far. Furthermore, he wants to get married but as he can not bring his family he has postponed it. The fact that he has Swedish girlfriend influences him to set himself in Sweden even though he is facing difficulties.

Mikaela also came to Sweden with her partner and the fact that they came together is an important factor for her because they have each other.

I have bad days but I have my boyfriend, he is very supportive and he is the reason that we are here, he is the reason why I am positive because I know - I have him and everything will be better. (Mikaela)

She thinks that it would have been different without the support of her partner as he is always encouraging her. She feels that without him, she could not stay in Sweden. In addition, for Mikaela it is the first time living without her family and they are in contact almost every day because she feels that they need to talk to her as well as she needs to talk with them. Moreover, she is worried about them.

I want to feel that they are secure and that they are ok because I am stressful sometimes and I do not know if they are ok and I am panicking. (Mikaela)

Even though, she has no intentions to return to Greece and the fact that she needs her family it is not a problem.

I am attached with my family, but I feel like I want to do this for myself and they support me with that "go and do that, this is for your own good" even if my mother calls me every day, she just wants to know if I am ok. (Mikaela)

Nasha wants to acquire international experience but after a while, her intention is to go back to her country. She stated that there are some people who want her to go back home, though there are some family members who do not understand why she wants to go back as they think that her life in Sweden would be better than back in her country.

Sometimes we believe that because is abroad, everything is better, everything is good. Why come back home? They don't understand it. (Nasha)

On the other hand, the Chayna's family do not really want her to stay in Sweden. They are supporting her, even though, they do not want her to stay in Sweden forever. Her family has a big influence on her decision to be employed in her country.

For me staying here is staying away from my family so, it is also an emotional thing that I cannot really cope with for a very long time. So, that's why I'm not really considering staying here even if I could get a job because my whole family is not here. (Chayna)

When asked Rishat what encourages her to stay in Sweden, she thinks first of all about her family. As mentioned before, in the theme of enhanced life quality, she wants her next generation to have the chance to get the advanced, free of cost education, that she is getting now in Sweden. Moreover, she wants to give a good support to her parents in terms of health care which she cannot do in her country. If Rishat could manage to get a job in Sweden it would be very great for her future career and also for her family just as she ensures.

Solomon had a daughter while studying in Sweden and she is his biggest motivation to stay because he can provide her with a better quality of life. For that reason, he will do his best to find a job and settle down in Sweden. In addition, having a job in Sweden, he can better help his family financially. His wife, who is also in Sweden with him, experiences a lot of pressure from her family and it encourages them to stay and pursue employment in Sweden. Solomon's wife had a previous experience in Sweden before that they came together. She was studying for three years, then for a year she was looking for a job but she could not find it. Therefore, she decided to go back to her country and there was a big pressure on her because her family was not expecting that. They were expecting her to be in Sweden because they think that she would have a better life there. Solomon does not want that this would happen to him.

When she went back everybody was hating her, they thought that she just abandoned a better quality of life, it was pretty much bad for her and I think it is something I learned from her I don't want to do it again and that is also another reason [why staying in Sweden]. (Solomon)

After a while in her country, Solomon got a scholarship and both decided to come together to Sweden. Solomon, assures that his wife could not understand if he would consider going back.

If my wife hears that I am considering going back she would hate me because she had a really bad experience when she went back to her country. (Solomon)

So far, it is good for his wife, but he stated that one of them needs to manage to find a job as they need to help her family financially.

It would be very interesting if one of us would manage to get a job and reply back to what her family is requesting. Luckily, my family, they don't care because her family wants

money and my family they want a life so we will try just to make them happy in the way they want so one thing we pray, especially for my wife. (Solomon)

Solomon also expressed that he perceives less connection among parents and children in Sweden than in his country which he misses here and he does not like it. In his country, they help more each other according to his words.

I saw people who do not have a connection with their children and that is strange for me because for me for example, I am responsible for my mother, brothers, sisters, nephews, and anyone so we have this kind of helping each other so the help we get might not be enough but still we care about each other which makes us happy. (Solomon)

It can be concluded from this theme that regarding family role, international students are very in close contact with their families, they receive support from the partner (the ones who have), the need to provide for their families has a big influence on them, sometimes the family motivates them to stay in Sweden and in another cases, motivates them to return home.

All in all, this part of the paper presented findings that emerged from the interviews with international students. Findings have been grouped into 5 themes – career advancement, enhanced life quality, rejections when looking for employment, lack of social interactions, and family role (Figure 1).

Further, conceptual framework is presented. The framework consists of three theories that were found to be relevant to analyse and interpret the findings.

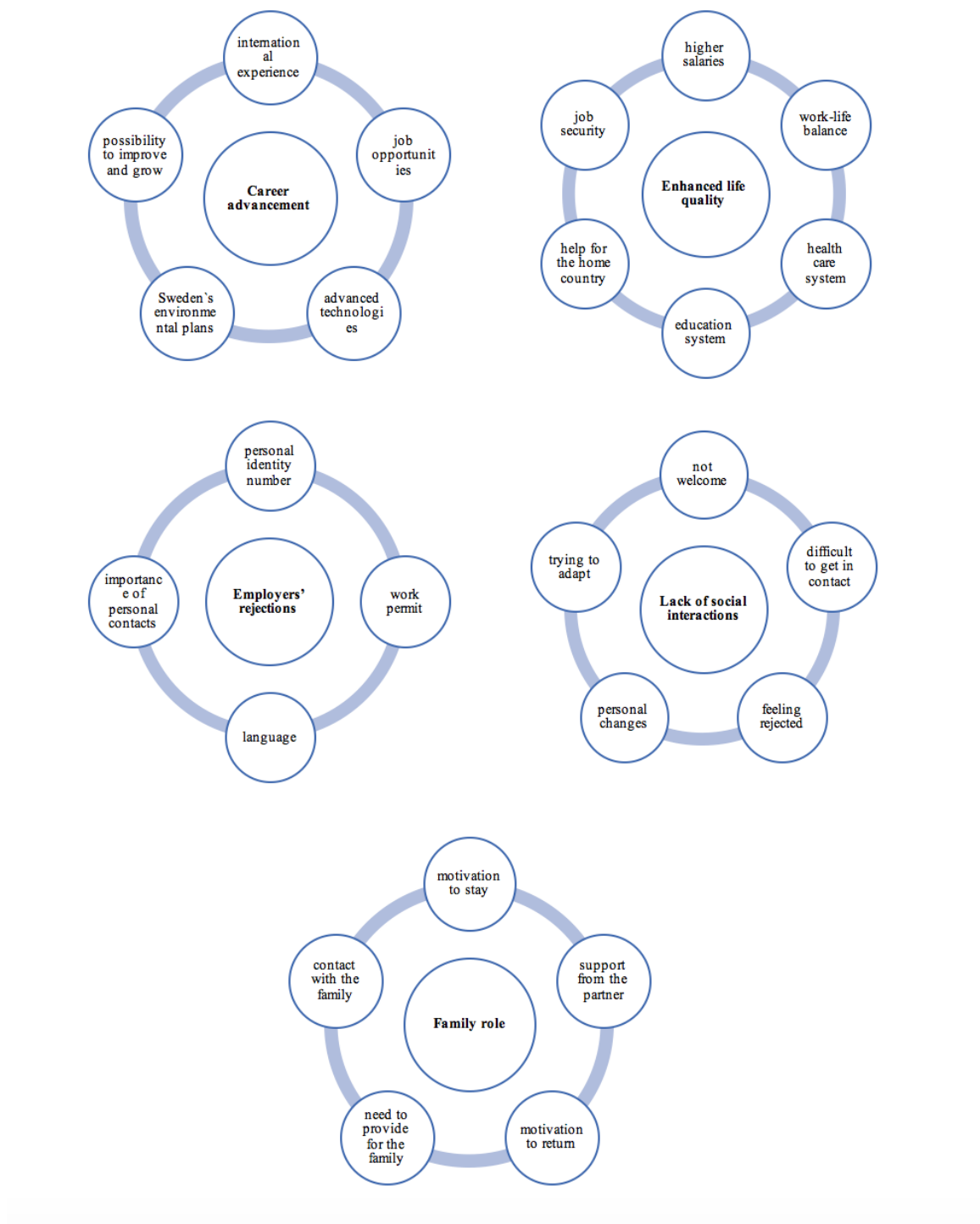


Figure 1. Findings - the themes and their respective categories. Own source.

4. Conceptual framework

In this part of the thesis, conceptual framework is presented. The framework consists of three theories that were found relevant to the interview findings. Conceptual framework will serve to analyse and interpret findings of the study.

4.1 Push and pull model

The first part of this conceptual framework is the push and pull model. This model is considered useful to understand why international students are motivated to pursue employment in Sweden. It has been noticed that the first part of the findings of this thesis is very related to this model. The reasons why international students want to pursue employment in Sweden are associated with the pull factors that attracted them to Sweden as well as the ones that push them from their countries.

In 1966 Everett S. Lee created a model of migration that has been widely used since that time by geographers and education researchers (Lee S. W., 2017). According to Lee E. S. (1966), migration includes an origin, a destination, and intervening obstacles (See Figure 2). Lee divided factors into four influencing on the decision and the process to migrate, which are “factors associated with the area of origin, factors associated with the area of destination, intervening obstacles and personal factors” (Lee, E. S., 1966, p. 50). In every area, there are factors which retain people to stay or attract people to the area and factors that drive them away. As it shows the following figure created by Lee E. S. (1966), where the positive factors are represented by the (+) sign and the negative with (-). The factors shown in the figure as 0 represent that people are indifferent to them.

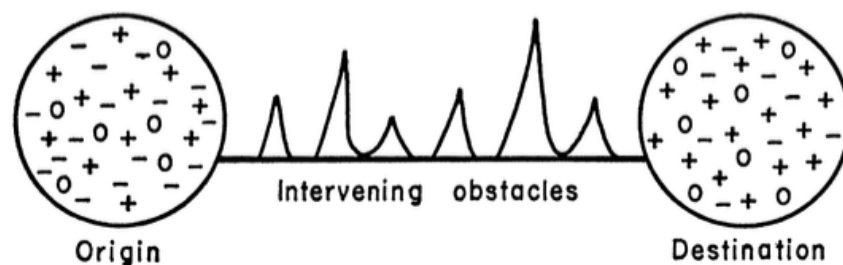


Figure 2. “Origin and destination factors and intervening obstacles in migration” (Lee E. S., 1966, p. 50).

As Lee E. S. (1966) pointed out, there is a difference between the factors related to the area of origin and the ones related with the area of destination, due to the fact that people already have a knowledge about the area of origin but not about the area of destination where exist some ignorance because some factors just can be noted when living there. Therefore, the emigrant usually creates expectations about the area of destination. For an emigrant in order to take the decision to migrate, the perceived factors in the area of destination might be greater than those in the area of origin. Even though it is not just a comparison between origin and destination factors, regarding Lee E. S. (1966), the intervening obstacles also play a key role. Those factors may have different effects on people. An example of an important intervening obstacle is the distance between the two points. Although, other factors that also need to be overcome exist. King (2012), explaining Lee's model, provides more examples such as the cost of the journey, the language in the host country, different ways of life, and immigration restrictions. Regarding the personal factors, Lee E. S. (1966) mentioned that not everything is about the factors at the origin and destination but the perception that people have of these factors. Accordingly, when talking about the reasons for migration, it is not possible to generalize because every person might have a different perception about the migration and "different people will react differently to various combinations of pushes and pulls, according to their economic status, life-stage and personality" (King, 2012 p.13). For instance, some people might migrate because of the job opportunities and others because of the opportunities regarding the education system for their children (King, 2012). The fact that a person has family or friends that live or have lived in the destination country also can influence in the decision of migration (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002).

To evaluate the situation of origin, some factors are relevant such as "personal sensitivities, intelligence, and awareness of conditions elsewhere" (Lee E. S., 1966, p. 50), and the knowledge about the situation in the destination is formed through personal contacts or sources of information (Lee E. S., 1966). Consequently, the factors that drive people to leave their home countries, are perceived more accurately than the factors that attract people to the host countries (Lee E. S., 1966).

Much of the literature, have used this model created by Lee E. S. (1966) to understand the international student's decisions when migrating (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Nilsson, 2015; Lee S. W., 2017). Those factors influencing the decisions are recognized as push and pull factors. The conditions and perceptions that carry an individual to leave her/his area are termed push

factors, whereas, the circumstances that attract an individual to an area, are referred as pull factors (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; King, 2012; Nilsson, 2015). King (2012) states some push and pull factors which are introduced next. The push factors can be due to “poverty, unemployment, landlessness, rapid population growth, political repression, low social status, poor marriage prospects” (King, 2012, p.13) and the pull factors because of “better income and job prospects, better education and welfare systems, land to settle and farm, good environmental and living conditions, political freedom” (King, 2012 p.13).

To sum up, there are a set of factors that push people from their home countries and a set of factors that pull them to host countries. Moreover, there are as well some intervening factors and the personal factors that also have an influence on their decision. It cannot be said that this model has a series of specific factors, that push and pull people, each area has positive, negative and neutral factors. “Students from different countries often report different push-pull factors” (Lee S. W., 2017).

As stated previously, emigrants usually create expectations about the area of destination because some factors that pull them to a country just can be noted when living there. Regarding international students, these expectations can vary depending on the time they want to spend studying abroad (Nilsson, 2015). The cultural differences can create disparities between what is expected and what is really experienced (Vromans, Van Engen, & Mol, 2013). Hence, this can affect the international student adjustment to the host culture.

Creating unrealistic expectations can have several consequences in the case that they cannot be met, provoking problems of adaptation and anguish (Xi & Hwang, 2012). It could damage the mental health (Xi & Hwang, 2012). Leading to “low quality of life after migration” (Zhang et al., 2009 cited in Xi & Hwang, 2012, p. 248). A predictor of mental distress is the failure to achieve career ambitions which were expected to be achieved (Carr 1997 in Xi & Hwang, 2012). According to Furnham & Bochner (1990), “people who migrate for financial reasons usually have high expectations” (Furnham & Bochner, 1990, p. 174). On the other hand, people that create realistic expectations are better prepared for changes and it facilitates the adaptation (Porter and Steers 1973 in Xi & Hwang, 2012). Nevertheless, “apart from refugees, few people would voluntarily migrate if their expectations were too low” (Furnham & Bochner, 1990, p. 175).

As Vromans, Van Engen, and Mol (2013) mentioned, it is not the same what an international student, is expecting about the host country than what is actually experienced. Cultural differences lead to discrepancies (Vromans, et al., 2013). Therefore, in order to better understand the international student's reality, in the subsequent part, national culture theory is introduced.

4.2 National culture

During the analysis of the interviews findings, it has been noticed that culture plays an important role in shaping international's students perspectives towards employment in Sweden. Therefore, in order to analyse and interpret interview findings, culture theory, has been chosen.

Differences between the cultures have been categorized into dimensions in several studies but one of the most recognized is Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which has been widely used to explain differences between societies (Williamson, 2002; Lee, Lin, & Lin, 2017). The essential strength of this Hofstede's work is that it has been progressing throughout the years, adding new dimensions and striving for adaptability (Minkov & Hofstede, 2011). Professor Geert Hofstede defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 6). Hofstede et al. (2010) states, that it is important to understand and respect different cultures. In order to understand components of Hofstede's 6 dimensions of national culture model, they are further presented. Those dimensions will be used to understand Swedish culture and interpret interview findings.

The national culture model by Hofstede consists of six dimensions (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). The dimensions are the following:

Power distance index (PDI). It indicates how society manages inequalities between people. In countries that score high in this index, people accept hierarchical orders, while in the countries with a low score, society is seeking to balance the distribution of power, moreover, explanations of power inequalities are required. Sweden, having a low score in this dimension (31) indicates that hierarchy is not common, managers are reachable, management assists in the progress and authorise employees. Since the power is decentralized, managers rely on the experience of the employees while employees demand to be given advice if necessary. Control is found to be distasteful, management is approached by the first name, and communication is direct.

Individualism versus collectivism (IDV). It is all about whether people define themselves “I” or “we”. Countries that score high on this dimension are called individualist where people take care only of themselves and their closest family members. Countries scoring low on this dimension are considered to be collectivist where individuals are expected to take care of their relatives and/or of people who belong to the same group as they do. In the exchange, absolute loyalty is expected. Sweden scoring 71 in this dimension is considered to be individualist meaning that people are only expected to take care of themselves and their closest family members. Employment is based on employers and employees mutual advantage signing an employment contract. People are expected to be hired and promoted only because of their talent.

Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS). Societies that score high are regarded as Masculine and they are competitive, striving for achievement. Success is understood while being the best and wanting to be the best motivates people. In countries that are Masculine, people are living so they could work, while Feminine societies are working so they could live. In Masculine countries conflicts are solved by fighting. On the contrary, Feminine society promotes the attitude of liking what you do. At the core is to care for the others and to have a high life quality. People are considered successful when they have a good life quality. Attracting others attention to yourself is not held in a great respect. In the Feminine societies, managers are supportive, employees are involved in the decision-making process. Sweden score low (5) meaning that it is a Feminine society. Equality, consensus and working life quality. Long discussions are common so the mutual decision could be achieved. “Lagom” is a Swedish word meaning that something is not too much and not too little. Swedish culture could be described by this word since everything should be in moderation, it is important that everybody has enough and no one is left without anything.

Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI). This defines how society deals with “uncertainty and ambiguity” if society threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and what society has done to avoid that (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). In other words, how society deals with the unknown future. Countries that score high in Uncertainty Avoidance preserve strict codes what one should believe or behave, does not tolerate eccentric behaviours and believes. Societies with a low uncertainty avoidance index do not consider principles to be so important, as practise is more important and departure from the norm is easier tolerated than in those countries that have a high score. Sweden scores low in this index (29) which indicates that people think only rules that are

necessary should exist and if they do not work well, they should be discarded or changed, therefore, innovation is not seen as menacing.

Long term orientation versus short term normative orientation (LTO). Deals with how societies manage to link its own past with its present and future. Societies that score low preserve traditions and norms and mistrust changes. Societies that score high are more practical, are willing to invest in modernizing education system in order to get ready for the future. Sweden's score is 53 meaning that society does not have a clear choice for this dimension.

Indulgence versus restraint (IND). Defines “the extent to which people try to control their desires and impulses, based on the way they were raised” (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). Indulgence is when the control is weak while restraint is when the control is high. In the indulgent societies, people are able to satisfy basic human drives associated with enjoying their life. People in the societies that score high in indulgence are positive, optimistic, leisure time is very important. In the restraint societies, satisfaction of needs is restrained by introducing strict social norms. Sweden, scoring 78 has an Indulgence culture.

Besides considering the culture factor, it was found to be important to find a theory that could be used to analyse how international students are dealing with the rejections. Thus, the theory of cognitive dissonance is further presented.

4.3 The theory of cognitive dissonance

After the analysis of interviews with international students, the need to understand how people deal with rejections emerged. How the behaviours when dealing with challenges could be explained? Cognitive dissonance theory was found to be useful. Further, the theory is presented so it could be later used for the analysis and discussion.

The concept of cognitive dissonance was found in 1957 by Leon Festinger while he was researching what is that stimulates people to decrease inconsistencies that they experience throughout the life (Brickson, 2013). A research of more than 50 years has shown that people's thoughts are motivated by cognitive dissonance, therefore this theory is considered to be the most important and provocative in social psychology (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2010).

Cognitive dissonance is defined as “a feeling of discomfort caused by performing an action that runs counter to one's customary (typically positive) conception of oneself” (Aronson et al., 2010, p. 150). Thus, cognitive dissonance is a phenomenon that occurs when brains receive

information that is contradicting to the information that a person already had. Eliot Aronson, a student of Leon Festinger throughout the years of research, has found that dissonance is the most powerful and depressing when self-esteem of the person is being intimidated. Since cognitive dissonance creates discomfort, naturally people are eager to lower it (Aronson et al., 2010; Brickson, 2013). Aronson et al. (2010), identifies three methods to reduce cognitive dissonance:

- to change behaviour so it matches dissonant cognition;
- to justify one's behaviour while altering dissonant cognitions;
- to justify one's behaviour by incorporating new cognitions.

In order to understand these methods better, Brickson (2013) provides an example of a manager who had to lay off an employee whom he highly appreciated. The manager faces psychological discomfort because his attitude (that employee was appreciated) and his actual behaviour (laying employee off) are incompatible. To reduce the dissonance, the manager could rehire the employee. However, the manager might not have a possibility to do that, thus, he/she could change attitudes towards the laid off employee in order to justify his behaviour. The manager could start thinking negatively about the employee by remembering situations when the employee was late for work or made mistakes. Another way as presented by Aronson et al. (2010) is to add a new cognition. In the example of the manager, he/she could add the cognition that the employee is now enjoying time with her/his family or that he/she would have quit the job anyway (Brickson 2013).

“The process of reducing dissonance is largely unconscious” (Aronson et al., 2010, p.152) and it is considered that it works better this way since people feel better when they find someone else to blame for their own lack of success (Bem & McConnell, 1970; Goethals & Reckman, 1973 in Aronson et al., 2010, p. 152). People who are in the process of decreasing their dissonance are working hard on convincing themselves that they are right which eventually makes their behaviour irrational and maladaptive (Aronson et al., 2010). Justification of beliefs and/or behaviours allows people to keep affirmative self-perception. Brickson (2013) provides the following example to understand the concept better – a person, who identifies himself/herself as being loyal to one employer, agrees to do an interview with another competing firm. Dissonance most likely will occur since the person is loyal, he/she will look for a way how to justify behaviour. In order to find a relief, the person might convince herself/himself that a new job would provide with a higher salary which would help to pay for children's education.

The theory of cognitive dissonance become significant not only for scholars, but also for managers. Understanding psychological discomfort that individuals face, helps to explain different phenomena such as for example attitude changes when making decisions or organizational identification. In terms of decision-making, Brickson (2013) provides an example of a recent graduate who received two job offers. Both offers are equally attractive, however, a decision should be made. Inevitably discomfort is experienced since one offer should be rejected. The person will likely either depreciate the job that he/she rejected or exaggerate the job that was chosen. In this case, attitude changes could be explained with a cognitive dissonance theory. Another example how cognitive dissonance could be applied is organizational identification. Individuals are more prone to select organizations that coincide with their self-perception. Brickson (2013), presents an example of a doctor who identifies himself as a top surgeon, therefore he chooses to work for a prestigious medical institution. However, hospital decides to change its identity from being prestigious to concentrating on patient satisfaction. Because of this change of identity, the doctor will not identify herself/himself with that hospital anymore. Thus, he/she will have to either change her/his self-perception or to find another institution to work for. Having the findings from the interviews with international students in Sweden in mind, the theory of cognitive dissonance was found useful for the analysis and discussion.

5. Analysis

In this part of the thesis, interview findings are analysed. To interpret the findings, conceptual framework is used.

5.1 Career advancement and enhanced life quality

In order to interpret the first two themes (career advancement and enhanced life quality) that emerged in the findings, the push and pull model created by Lee E. S. (1966) as well as Hofstede's cultural dimensions were used. These two themes are presented together in the analysis part because they are related.

It was noted that the reasons that attracted the international students to Sweden are the same that the reasons why they would like to stay in Sweden after graduation and to obtain a job in the country. Therefore, the possibility to gain international experience, more job opportunities, the possibility to improve and grow, the advanced technology, the environmental plans, higher salaries, work-life balance, more advanced education, better health care system, job security, and the possibility to provide help for their home countries are considered pull factors. Consequently, instability, insecurity about the job market due to high unemployment rates, low salaries, few job opportunities, poor work conditions, gender inequality and poor health care system are the push factors.

It has been found that in some cases, reasons that pull international students to seek employment in Sweden are also related to the Swedish culture. According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Sweden is an Individualist country. One of the features of Individualist countries is that people are expected to be hired only because of their talents (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). One of the interviewees – Leila, mentioned that in Sweden she has more opportunities to find a job because of her gender. According to her, women in Iran do not have the same chances as men to find employment. Iran is a Collectivist country (Hofstede Insights, n.d.) where other aspects rather than talent could be more important when hiring, which could help to understand Leila's hope to find a job in Sweden without her gender complicating her chances. Another participant from the same country, Naz mentions that in Sweden she sees a lot of opportunities for her country nationals to improve professionally. The fact that Sweden is Individualist and Iran Collectivist country, could help to understand that.

Another reason that was mentioned as a pull factor for international students to seek employment in Sweden was work-life balance. According to Hofstede's masculinity versus femininity dimensions, Swedish society is Feminine where life quality is very important (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). Therefore, it is seen attractive for the students who are coming from Masculine societies. For instance, Rishat, who is from Bangladesh indicated that she was working more than 50 hours per week, she did not want to live for work which according to Hofstede is the case in Masculine societies (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). Solomon, coming from Ethiopia, who is also a Masculine country (Hofstede Insights, n.d.) admitted that job in Sweden would definitely improve his life quality. Thus, Sweden, being Feminist society is a good choice for him. Interestingly, participants from countries that are Feminine (same as Sweden) – Iran, Ghana, Namibia, Spain (Hofstede Insights, n.d.) did not mention work-life balance as a motivator to find employment in Sweden.

Another pull factor that is related to Swedish culture is importance of being able to enjoy one's life and have a sufficient amount of leisure time. This is what Indulgent societies can provide. As it has been indicated, Sweden scores high in Indulgence (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). The findings suggest that Naz from Iran that is a Restraint culture (Hofstede Insights, n.d.) acknowledged that she, as well as many other people she knows, are not able to have leisure time which she did not like and this was one of the reasons why she decided to come to Sweden. Rishat, coming from Bangladesh that is also a culture of Restraint was not satisfied with not being able to spend time with her family as well as find time for herself, thus, she was looking for a place where she could find that. Sweden was a good choice following Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

Advanced technologies in Sweden was indicated as another pull factor to work there. Uncertainty avoidance index indicates that Sweden's score is low (Hofstede Insights, n.d.) one of the consequences of this is that innovations are encouraged. For someone like Luis, coming from a country that scores high in uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede Insights, n.d.), Sweden is a good match where he feels there are more opportunities for innovation which is important to him.

Better health care system, and higher education, as mentioned before, are pull factors to pursue employment in Sweden. This is explained by the fact that Sweden is a country that is more advanced compared to the international students' home countries. Therefore, the health care system, as well as the education system, are attractive for some international students because in Sweden they can have more than they would have in their home countries.

It is important to highlight, that some of their desires such as the possibility to improve and grow or the work-life balance, are considered expectations that the international students created before moving to Sweden. Although the students inform themselves about the host country before moving, some aspects just can be noted when living there (Lee E. S., 1966). Moreover, depending on the time that the international students want to spend abroad, they create different expectations (Nilsson, 2015). For example, Nasha who wants to stay abroad for a limited period of time, is expecting to finish her studies and if possible to gain international experience. Whereas Rishat, who would like to settle down in Sweden, is thinking about the education that she would bring to her children and the health care that she would provide to her parents. In addition, some of the respondents such as Chayna, Mikaela or Solomon, want to pursue employment in Sweden because of the possibility to have higher salaries than in their home countries and the possibility to help financially to their families. Furnham & Bochner (1990), consider financial reasons as a high expectation. Creating unrealistic expectations can affect the mental health having symptoms of frustration, anguish or stress (Xi & Hwang, 2012), it is noticed in the behaviour of some students. For example, Ali, who expected to have more job opportunities, due to his failure in achieving a job related to his studies, seems to be very upset.

5.2 Employers' rejections

Another theme that emerged from the findings was employers' rejections. It was found that each student had their own explanation why they are being rejected. In some cases, explanations were the same, in the others, they were different. Theory of cognitive dissonance was used to interpret the findings of this theme.

Naz mentioned that she has professional work experience in her field of work and she thought she will find a job in Sweden easily. After many rejections, she believes that the only reason why she is not successful is because she does not have a Swedish personal identity number. Krishna, having a lot of confidence in his previous experiences also believed that he will easily find a job in Sweden. After 7 months of search, he is eager to go back to his country since he cannot find anything. Even though he is trying to remain positive, during the interview it was noticed that he feels sad because of this fruitless experience. He believes that he is not successful because he does not have a work permit as well as does not speak the language. Another student Nasha, was looking forward to getting international work experience, she was confident of her experiences

and believed that finding an internship will not be difficult. However, she was not able to find anything, during the interview it was noticed that she feels sad about that. Nasha believes that she is unsuccessful because she is an immigrant. Solomon who also has a number of years of experience working in his country believed that he will not face any problems when finding a job in Sweden. However, after a year of unsuccessful search he is not so positive anymore. Moreover, he believes that the fact that he does not have a work permit is the main obstacle. Leila, a student from Iran thinks that she has more chances in Sweden than in Iran to find a job because she is a woman. However, after spending almost two years in the country she noticed that finding a job is not an easy task because she cannot speak the language. Therefore, she does not feel so optimistic as she was before. Luis who is also very confident about his background indicated that the language is the main problem why he cannot find a job in Sweden. Several students (Ali, Luis, Naz, Solomon) mentioned that it is crucial to have personal contacts in order to find employment in Sweden. According to those students, without having contacts it is hardly possible to find anything.

Findings from the interviews with international students indicate that most of the international students experienced cognitive dissonance when looking for a job in Sweden. As theory suggests, they feel discomfort which is caused by an action that contradicts how they perceive themselves (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2010). To be more specific, students were hopeful to find employment in Sweden after their studies because they see themselves as educated, experienced professionals, however they experienced discomfort when they faced rejections when looking for a job. According to Aronson et al. (2010), dissonance is the most powerful when persons' self-esteem is affected. It is seen in the findings of the interviews, that indeed self-esteem was affected due to the rejections that students' face. Moreover, to lower the dissonance they found different ways to justify their situations (Aronson et al., 2010). It was found that students who do not have a personal identity number believe that this is the reason why they cannot find a job. Those who have a personal number mentioned other reasons, for instance - work permit. However, those who have both personal number and work permit mentioned language as the main issue when looking for a job. Although, one student who speaks Swedish pointed out that personal contacts are extremely important.

5.3 Lack of social interactions

One more theme that emerged from the findings was lack of social interactions. It was found that some students do not feel welcome, it is difficult for them to get in contact with Swedes, some feel rejected. Moreover, several noticed changes in their behaviour and some are trying to adapt to the different culture. These findings were interpreted using theory of national culture.

Naz shared her experience of not feeling comfortable around her Swedish colleagues who did not welcome her on her first day at work as she expected. Her expectations most likely are related to her culture. Iran is a collectivistic country, where it is common to take care of everyone in the group (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). Another similar situation could be seen in Rishta's, Nasha's, and Solomon's cases. They all indicated that they have problems with Swedes such as, feeling that Swedes do not like them, or that Swedes do not want to talk with them. Bangladesh, Ghana, and Ethiopia are all Collectivist countries (Hofstede Insights, n.d.) where people communicate differently from the countries that are Individualist such as Sweden is. People who are coming from Collectivist societies might see people from Individualist societies to be less talkative and more closed. Some students from the Collectivist countries indicated that it is more difficult to establish contacts with people in Sweden than in their countries which results in them experiencing lack of social interaction with the locals. For instance, Luis and Nasha indicated that they are lacking community interaction while living in Sweden. They both are coming from Collectivist cultures, which explains why they are feeling so in Sweden that is very Individualist. Furthermore, student from Syria, Ali, admitted feeling bad at work since he cannot find personal involvement. He believes that people do not care about him because they are not talking. Moreover, he assumes that if he would have Swedish name it would be easier to find a job. Having in mind that Sweden is an Individualist country while Syria is a Collectivist one (Hofstede Insights, n.d.) explains why is he feeling rejected. He also stated that his behaviour changed while in Sweden. He expected to find more job opportunities and Swedish people to be more open but he is facing a lot of problems and some negative experiences. Nasha and Chayna also find themselves more introvert in Sweden. Chayna, who is from Namibia, that is a Collectivist country (Hofstede Insights, n.d.), specified that it is rude in her country do not speak with people, however, she believes that in Sweden her behaviour changed and she does not like that. While in Sweden, not talking much with strangers is considered normal since it is an Individualist society.

It was found that some students, especially those who are interested in staying in Sweden, have noticed that their cultures are very different than the Swedish culture, consequently, they are trying to adapt while learning those differences.

5.4 Family role

The last theme that was created from the findings was family role. Push-pull model and Hofstede's cultural dimensions were used to interpret this theme.

As Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) mentioned, the fact to have family or friends that have lived or are living in the destination country can influence the international student's decisions. In the findings, Solomon mentioned that his partner had a previous experience in Sweden, Luis' partner is from Sweden, and Naz and Rishat have friends who also live in Sweden. Moreover, all the respondents had support from their families to migrate and they have also support while staying in Sweden. In the case of Nasha and Chayna, one of the main reasons that make them desire to return home after the studies is that they feel the need of their families whereas, Solomon and Rishat would like to remain in Sweden after the studies because of their families and the possibility to provide help for them. Therefore, family plays a key role for all the respondents and this coincides with the fact that some of them come from Collectivist countries where the family is very important (Hofstede Insights, n.d.), especially countries such as Ghana, Ethiopia, Namibia or Bangladesh. Hence, the great support from the partner, the close contact with the family, the influence by the family to stay as well as the influence to return and the need to provide for the family, would be explained by the fact that they come from Collectivist countries, and this is the reason why family emerged as important in the findings.

Some respondents such as Solomon, Luis, and Nasha consider that Swedish people are not so close to their families as people in their home countries are. However, it is because Sweden has an Individualist culture and people do not depend so much on their families as Collectivist cultures do.

6. Discussion

In this part of the thesis, the discussion is presented.

Following research questions, analysis of the interviews led to five major themes: career advancement, enhanced life quality, rejections when looking for employment, lack of social interactions, and family role (Figure 1). Following the themes, findings were presented. Based on the findings, theories that were found to be the most beneficial, were used for the conceptual framework. In the part of the analysis, findings were analysed using the conceptual framework. However, the findings should be discussed in order to get greater understanding of international student's perspectives on post-graduation employment to Sweden.

Even though not all the students who contributed to this thesis with their interviews will remain in Sweden after their studies and find a job there, they all had perspectives on employment in Sweden. Each story is unique and every interview turned out differently, however, the view that everybody shared was that getting work experience (internship, traineeship, temporary or permanent job) is a difficult task and in some cases different from what they had expected. What is it that makes it so difficult for international students to find a job placement related to their studies in Sweden? Was it possible to avoid those difficulties before arriving?

Most students had a plausible explanation of why do they think they are being rejected. The authors of this thesis noticed that international students are facing dissonance since they experienced the recruitment process not like they had imagined. As it was pointed out, some students indicated that the main issue why they are not finding a job is because they do not have a personal identity number. Indeed, those who are not entitled to a personal identity number in Sweden, but are willing to stay there after their studies, might face many difficulties. As one of the students indicated, without that number, a person does not exist in Sweden, he/she cannot open bank account nor attend Swedish for immigrants courses that are free of charge for those who have the identity number. Moreover, it is complicated to seek for help at Swedish public employment service, visit a doctor or in any other place where person's identity should be recognized. Some participants of this research who admitted not having the personal identity number, revealed that they believe that it is unfair that they are not eligible to receive it. Moreover, some students complained that refugees are receiving the personal identity number easily even though they are not interested in working in Sweden as students are. On the one

hand, their frustration could be easily understood. If they have left their home countries eager to find a better life in Sweden after their studies and faced that the system works differently than they have experienced or expected, naturally they feel let down. However, they are justifying their situation blaming the university for not informing them well prior the arrival, or expressing dissatisfaction with such system in general. Blaming the system and the university is helping them to reduce the dissonance which is a natural reaction of human being. Could they have avoided that doing a more thorough research themselves? Could it be a cultural misunderstanding? Considering power distance index by Hofstede, countries that score high on this dimension are hierarchical, thus people who grew up there might be used to getting clear orders and guidance throughout their life. This could be one of the explanations of experienced miscommunication between university and international students. It could be that the person/people responsible for communication with potential international students, did not feel the need to explain issues such as the one with the personal number while a student coming from a hierarchical society might expect a very straightforward explanation. To avoid possible misunderstandings, the university could create realistic expectations about the situation in Sweden while informing students what they could expect. There is also a possibility that the goal of the university is to attract international students, and by informing them about difficulties and tough labor market situation for emigrants, might discourage students to choose Sweden. However, by not doing that, students can create unrealistic expectations that later might cause negative consequences. As it was indicated by one of the respondents, problems that were faced because of not being able to receive Swedish personal identity number became more important and redirecting attention from the studies, which were supposed to be the main activity. Nevertheless, students should inform themselves better before the departure in order to create expectations that would be as realistic as possible. This could be done by contacting current students, and doing a more exhaustive search about the host country's regulations and culture. Different people named different reasons why they think they are being rejected by potential employers. Other reasons mentioned why international students think they are being rejected were absence of work permit and inability to speak Swedish. It was also found out that having personal contacts is very important in the job search. Is it possible that reasons such as not having a personal identity number, work permit, not knowing the language and lacking contacts are the reasons made up by students so they could feel better about themselves? Or could it be

that Swedish employers are simply not willing to hire international students? Isn't it easier to say that they are looking for someone who is speaking Swedish than that they do not see a person as a good fit for the organization? On the other hand, could it be that international students think too well of themselves and are applying for positions that are beyond their reach? There could be many possible scenarios, and there is no one single truth. It could be that the hiring manager has noticed that despite all the qualifications and experiences the person has, he/she is used to a hierarchical structure where clear guidance is always present, and the person simply needs to follow it. Therefore, such person would not adapt easily because the organization might have a totally different approach, that values independence and initiative. Yet, providing a concrete reason of rejection, such as, for instance work permit, might be easier for the employer than telling to the candidate that he/she will not fit to the company's culture. Cognitive dissonance could also be applied in this case. As Brickson (2013) explained, people tend to choose companies or organizations that would match with their self-perception. It could be that recruiters see that students will not adapt to the organization because they see that organization identity is totally different from a student's identity while students themselves might not realise it. If that would be the case, it is again easier for the employers to give reasons such as international students identified. Furthermore, it could just simply be that there are no international people in the company, therefore integrating someone who does not speak the language might be a difficult task that would require time and effort from a number of people. Isn't it more convenient to hire someone who would not bring this additional work to the company? Having this in mind, it is important to mention that it could also be that the reasons international students mentioned when justifying their rejections are exactly like they have indicated. If a person does not have a personal identity number, work permit, does not speak the language, additional effort should be put when hiring her/him. As long as there is someone that meets the requirements of the job and have all the documents required as well as speaks the language, why should an international student who does not have the previously mentioned traits be hired?

Overall, there might be a wide variety of reasons why international students might not find a job in Sweden. The fact is that finding a job does not come easily. It could be seen as one of the challenges they are facing. What are the others and how are they caused?

The findings of this thesis suggest that international students who participated in this study lack social interaction with locals. Feelings of being unwelcome and rejected as well as difficulties getting in contact with the locals, were identified. Could it be that international students are not trying hard enough to understand Swedish culture that in most cases is very different from their own? Is it possible that Swedes are not willing to communicate with foreigners?

One student expressed his disappointment with the colleagues at work by saying that nobody cares about him and he feels discriminated. As it was pointed out, he is coming from a collectivistic country where strong relations between members of society exists, where even employment relations are similar to the one of the family. He is expecting that in Sweden, that is an Individualist country and very different from where he is coming from, people should act in a way that he is used to. However, he does not seem to take that into account, he is rather judging and blaming Swedes. On the other hand, every single person is different and maybe the student is really experiencing discrimination. Maybe there are people in the society who do not really like foreigners coming to their country? A slightly different story of another student was presented in the part of the analysis. Student, also coming from a collectivist country told feeling uncomfortable when she was not welcomed on the first day at work in the way she expected. Affected by her culture, she created false expectations how members of the other culture should treat her. Even though she admitted trying to understand Swedish culture by observing people behaviour, asking questions and reading books, it does not help her to avoid a feeling of rejection all the time and it could be because she grew up, and all her life before coming to Sweden, lived in a society that is completely different to the one that she found in Sweden. In the analysis part of this thesis it has also been indicated that students from collectivist countries found problems such as feeling unwelcome or rejected. It seems that some students are not taking into account that Swedish society is different and maybe they should familiarise themselves with it better. Understanding Swedish culture might help them to understand local people better, adapt and do not feel discriminated, rejected or unwelcome. Is there any chance that international students are really discriminated, rejected or unwelcome? If it is, could it be that they themselves caused this? A self-fulfilling prophecy suggests that it could. When people have a certain belief about what a person is like, that belief will impact the behavior of those people, consequently, the person will act exactly how people expected (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2010). In this case, it could be that international students created expectations of Swedes being unfriendly, they might have behaved

in a way that would approve the expectation, for instance, students might not even try themselves to initiate the conversation. This could cause another person – Swede, in this case, acting in the same way. In the end, this is exactly what international students expected – Swedes are not willing to communicate, but if he/she would have tried maybe it would have been different. One of the students, admitted having been thinking that maybe sometimes he and other international students are wrongly judging Swedes of being closed and unwilling to communicate without even trying to get to know them. Moreover, the lack of social interaction could also be felt because students might not see much point to establish relationship with locals because some came to Sweden just for a temporary time. Therefore, it could be that they tend to establish minimal relationships with Swedes in order to avoid discomfort that can be caused because of ignorance of their mother tongue as well as some cultural differences that they may find odd.

Hence, the findings of this thesis suggest that international students face problems when looking for a job in Sweden as well as with social interactions with locals. Despite the difficulties, some are still motivated to stay and pursue employment in Sweden, what are the reasons behind that?

Push as well as pull factors were identified in the part of analysis and it was interpreted that the pull factors that attracted students to Sweden coincide with their reasons to pursue employment because they want to enhance their life quality through the work-life balance, the health care system, the more advanced education and the job security that Sweden provides, the higher salaries that Sweden companies offer as well as the help for the home country that they can give if they would find a job. Moreover, the possibility of career advancement is also relevant for them to pursue employment in Sweden and this, according to the international students interviewed, can be achieved through gaining international experience, more job opportunities than in their countries, advanced technologies, the environmental plans that Sweden has and the possibility to improve and grow. As Lee E. S., (1966) stated in his model, the pull factors cannot be completely known until the person arrives in the host country, therefore, the international students created expectations about Sweden prior coming. It is perceived that some expectations were very high and they are causing frustration and anguish for the students. Aren't high salaries a very high expectation? Until this can happen, many factors must occur such as finding a job first. Those with lower expectations seem to adapt better than those with higher. For example, an international student who wants to gain international experience will easily meet her/his expectations and might have fewer problems, feel better and more adapted than an international

student who intends to provide help to her/his home country which is more difficult to achieve, it will take more time and effort, probably causing frustration that could lead to adaptation problems.

Moreover, positive behaviour of some international students might help them to adapt, whereas in other cases, their behaviour makes adaptation more complicated. It is noticed that some of the international students' expectations have not been met till now. But they are still studying which means that they still have time to achieve their goals. In addition, the international students who want to help their families will try harder because they have an extra motivation. Family was also found to be very important when taking the decision to stay or leave after the studies. Some students (Nasha and Chayna) indicated that one of the main reasons why they are returning home is because of their families. These particular students are coming from collectivist society, they grew up surrounded by extended families, therefore, the relationship is very close. Naturally, they are feeling lonely in the individualist society, if earlier discussed self-fulfilling prophecy would also be the case, the need to go home could increase even more. Interestingly, for some other students (Solomon and Rishat) who are also coming from collectivist societies, family is the factor that motivates them to stay. Moreover, both of them have spouses which might make their life easier in Sweden than it is for Nasha and Chayna who came to Sweden by themselves. Solomon is the provider for his family (mothers, brothers, sisters, cousins) back home, while he has also created a family of his own in Sweden. As he mentioned, no matter how much he would earn in his country, it is never enough, but if he would find a job in Sweden, he would be able to meet everyone's needs. Family is also motivating Rishat, she wants to be able to provide her family with a good health care, and that what she thinks she could get in Sweden. However, it is different as in the case of Solomon, as she does not feel so much pressure to find a job, if she will not succeed, her family will warmly welcome her back.

It was also noticed that those students who came with their partners are more willing to stay in Sweden than those who came alone. People who came to Sweden by themselves, such as Krishna, Nasha, and Chayna will leave when they finish their studies because they do not see much possibilities to find job in Sweden, which could mean that the support of the partner plays a key role on the decision to pursue employment in Sweden. Support from the partner can be crucial when a student experiences difficulties. In addition, the fact that none of the previously mentioned students tried to learn Swedish and all of them justified their behavior by thinking that

it is very difficult and that they did not have time for it, might indicate that they have never really been motivated to stay in Sweden after their studies.

As can be noticed, the future for most of the international students who participated in this research is not clear yet. Some may stay in the host country – Sweden, others might go to their home countries or other countries where they could find more opportunities than they see in Sweden.

Interview findings suggest that finding a job placement in Sweden for international students is a challenging task. Some will probably manage to find a job in the end, those who will not, will probably leave soon. Could it be that Sweden is losing motivated, talented and skilled individuals? Could it be that people who came to the foreign country under their own initiative to pursue their Master's degree might be an indicator for autonomous and motivated employees? Could it be that the cultural experience they gained during their studies helped them to familiarize themselves with the Swedish culture?

The findings of this thesis suggest that previous experience in the home countries and study experience in Sweden, does not really matter for Swedish employers. However, as some students mentioned, the education that they have obtained in Sweden will be valued by companies/ organizations in their home countries. Some feel that they have improved a lot and with their knowledge they now will be able to contribute to the development of their home countries. Students who would remain in Sweden could also contribute by filling the positions where there is a lack of manpower. However, the findings of this thesis suggest that even if there are gaps in Swedish labor market that should be filled, it does not mean that education alone will help international students to find employment there. Moreover, it is very important to take language into consideration. It takes time to learn a foreign language and studies occupy a great amount of it. Some might not have an option to stay after their studies and learn the language due to financial reasons or visa issues. Thus, for those who are moving to Sweden with the intention to find employment, it is crucial to start learning the language as soon as possible. Nevertheless, Swedish employers could consider hiring international students because they are motivated, and have already familiarized themselves with the Swedish culture, differently from people who come to Sweden directly to find employment. Those, who will not find employment will leave to other countries, meaning that Sweden would lose the talent that is already there. It is assumed that international students who will stay after their studies would provide benefits for Sweden.

Whereas, the ones who will go back to their countries, would provide benefits for their home countries. Apparently, international students would have more chances to find a job either in the host country and in the home country because they could result more attractive to companies and institutions than students who have not studied abroad. Even so, none of the interviewees have yet found a job related to their studies in Sweden, instead, the ones who want to return have managed to get job offers, as they ensured.

7. Implications

This thesis aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of international students' perspectives on post-graduation employment to Sweden. Consequently, this thesis might be helpful for companies or institutions that are interested in hiring international employees so they could understand what kind of problems they might face. Examples of international students feeling unwelcome or rejected were provided, it might be useful for Swedish employees to take into consideration that certain things, that they as Swedes are taking for granted, might be a challenge for international employees. It is important because those problems could affect international employees' job performance. Furthermore, this thesis could be useful for companies that have never considered hiring international students to realise that they might contribute to the company or organization with their international experience and skills. Thus, the thesis could encourage companies to try a new practice. Some of the interviewed international students were found to be really motivated and eager to work in Sweden. Their motivation could result in them being productive and loyal employees.

In addition, this thesis might help upcoming students and international students' recruiters at the university. It became evident, that cultural differences play an important role in daily as well as work life of international students. Thus, people who are planning to study in Sweden and later find employment there should not take culture for granted and educate themselves prior coming. Moreover, as this thesis suggests, it is important for the students not to set unrealistic expectations such as the idea that they could easily find employment once they finish their studies. Knowing the Swedish language is extremely important and should also be considered. Furthermore, universities should help to create realistic expectations since as it was found out in this thesis, it was not always the case. Thus, the problems that were discovered in this thesis could help the university to understand what kind of information could be useful for future international students, as well as what is expected from the international students while studying. Likewise, this thesis can be interesting for current students, who could feel reflected in the experiences of other international students and feel support and motivation to not give up and keep trying to achieve their goals.

Finally, even being a small project of Master thesis, this paper might be valuable for the state to understand international students' perspectives towards employment in order to facilitate the

study-to-work transition, taking into account that international students can contribute to the country's economy with their skills and experiences.

8. Limitations and future research

When considering the findings of this thesis, certain things should be taken into consideration which could be seen as limitations.

Firstly, all the participants were students of Dalarna University which is a small university and might have less contacts with companies than other universities in Sweden. Moreover, all the participants study at Borlänge campus which is a small town and international students might have more difficulties to interact with locals and establish contacts than in bigger cities. Thus, the findings might be influenced by the perceptions that international students have because of living in Borlänge while in other places of Sweden it might be different. Secondly, this particular university provides Master's programs that last one academic year, meaning that those students enrolled in a one-year program have less time and opportunities to develop connections and knowledge about companies as well as familiarize themselves with the situation of Swedish labour market, comparing to the students who are enrolled in two-year Master's programs. Lastly, the interviews were conducted during the phase when most of the interviewed students were still in the process of looking for a job. Even though they could provide their perspectives, it might have been relevant to include students who have already finished their studies to see how they have experienced the job search process and consequently if they were able to find a job. Moreover, this study could be expanded by interviewing the same students after some time to see how their search has ended and if their perspectives have changed. Few recommendations for future research could also be given.

As it was indicated, a number of studies about international students could be found. However, qualitative studies that focus on study-to-work transition are not common. Considering that Trump government could motivate more international students to choose Europe instead of United States and the possibility that Brexit might worsen the situation for students in the United Kingdom, (Study.EU, 2018) more students might choose other countries in Europe, Sweden being among the most attractive possibilities. Thus, continuing research in Sweden could result being very useful. Future research could also follow qualitative inductive approach, focusing only on those students who are actively looking for employment in Sweden. A sample like that

would provide more perspectives about employment in Sweden. Furthermore, future research could include students from different universities that are located in different parts of Sweden, so larger picture could be provided. A quantitative study, following the findings of this thesis, could be done as well in order to see if the results of this thesis are applicable for a higher number of students.

9. Conclusions

This thesis aimed to understand international students' perspectives on post-graduation employment to Sweden. In order to fulfil the aim, ten international students at a Swedish university were interviewed. Following the method of qualitative content analysis, the five following themes emerged: career advancement, enhanced life quality, employers' rejections, lack of social interactions and family role (Figure 1). Themes were built following the research questions:

- Why are international students motivated to pursue employment in Sweden?
- How do international students see employment opportunities in Sweden?
- What are the challenges international students are facing in Sweden?

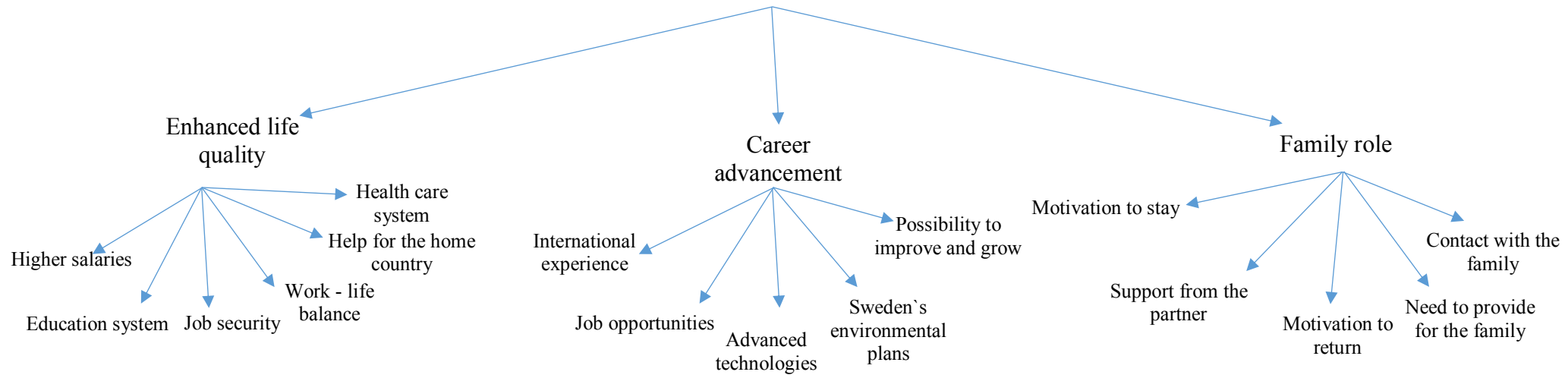
It was found that international students are motivated to pursue employment in Sweden due to higher salaries, more advanced education for future generations, job security, work-life balance, opportunity to help to the home country, and health care system. These categories were merged to the theme enhanced life quality. Students are also motivated by career advancement, which includes – willingness to gain international experience, more job opportunities than in their home countries, advanced technology in Sweden, Sweden's environmental plans, and the possibility to improve and grow. Finally, students are motivated to find employment in Sweden after their studies because they wish to support their families financially, and in some cases, families are motivating them to stay in Sweden.

In terms of the second research question, it was found that students are not positive about employment opportunities in Sweden. The theme of employers' rejections emerged. The reasons of rejection were divided into four categories: personal identity number, work permit, language, importance of personal contacts.

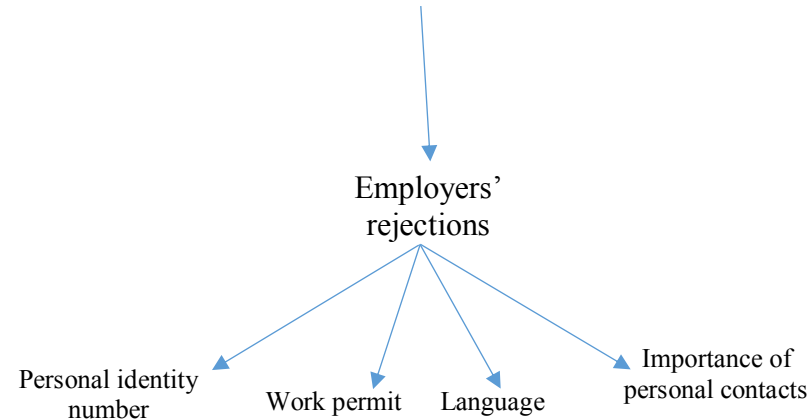
The third research question was answered by the two emerged themes, the already mentioned employers' rejections and lack of social interaction. International students are facing challenges when looking for employment in Sweden as well as with interacting with locals. Students indicated that it is difficult to establish contacts with local people, this makes some of them feeling rejected and not welcome. It was also found that some students are experiencing personal changes, while other are trying to adapt.

The findings were analysed with the help of the conceptual framework which was formed of three theories – push and pull model, theory of national culture and theory of cognitive dissonance. The interpretation of the findings was presented on the part of the analysis while in the discussion, researchers considered the findings critically. This thesis provided some insights into the lives of international students in Sweden. Each international student who participated in this thesis have her/his own perspective on post-graduation employment to Sweden, every single story is unique, due to different backgrounds and circumstances. Therefore, the findings were not meant to be representative of the entire population of international students in Sweden. Figure 3 illustrates international students' perspectives on post-graduation employment to Sweden.

Why are international students motivated to pursue employment in Sweden?



How do international students see employment opportunities in Sweden?



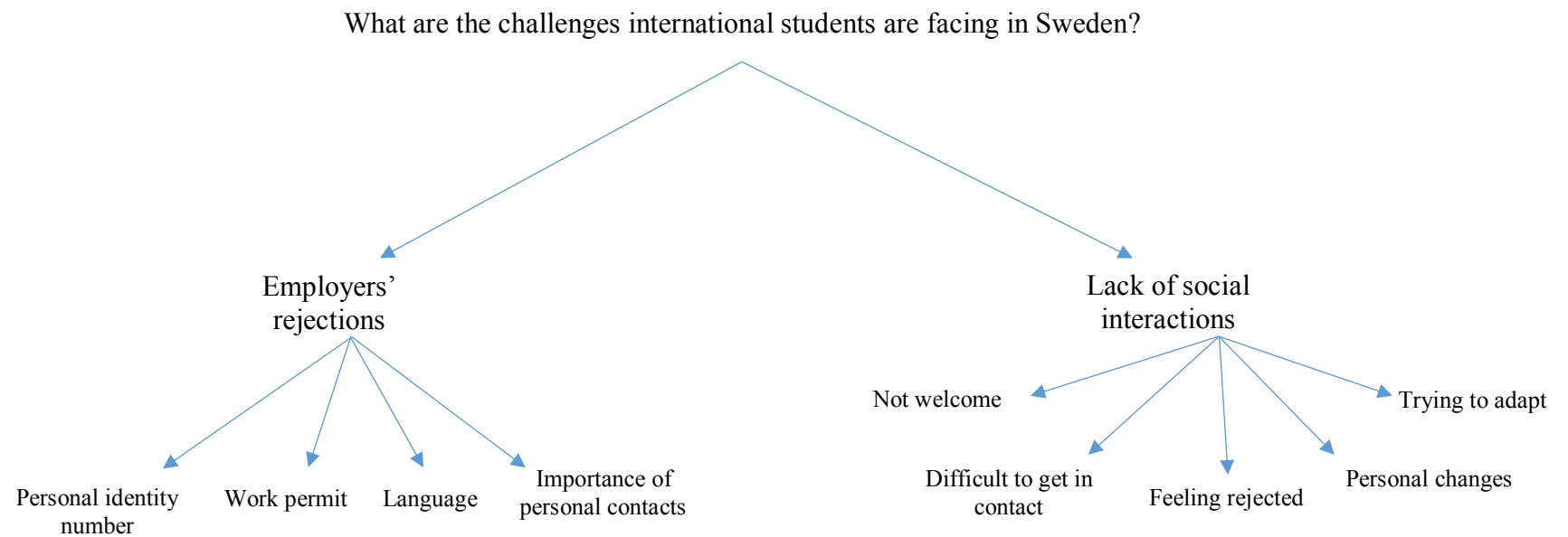


Figure 3. International students' perspectives on post-graduation employment to Sweden (based on findings of this thesis). Own source

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Appendix

Table 3. Meaning units to themes. Table of conducted analysis. Own source.

Meaning unit	Code	Initial category	Final category	Theme
"I have always had in mind to go back home. But, I would really appreciate having an international exposure."	Interest to gain international work experience	International experience	International experience	Career advancement
"When I was in Iran and I just read different websites and it is said that in Scandinavian countries there are lots of jobs offers."	More job opportunities than in the home country	More job opportunities	Job opportunities	Career advancement
"Here you can think out with your ideas and working hard on your own, Sweden is extremely good in that sense."	More entrepreneurship opportunities than in the home country	More job opportunities	Job opportunities	Career advancement
"In Sweden, I have more chances to find a job as a woman than in my country."	More job opportunities than in the home country	More opportunities for woman	Job opportunities	Career advancement
"It is really nice to improving here."	More opportunities to improve and grow than in the home country	Career progression	Possibility to improve and grow	Career advancement
"I was researcher for 3 years then production manager then after I was also working as maintenance engineer then I wanted to upgrade myself then I found Sweden was very interesting I found also a scholarship which covered my expenses"	Attracted by the possibility to improve	Willingness to improve oneself	Possibility to improve and grow	Career advancement
"...they are very much environmentally conscious and they are in the forefront of technology..."	Attracted by technology advancement	Advanced technologies	Advanced technologies	Career advancement

“Maybe their special environmental plans and that they have a lot of job opportunities; better life”	Attracted by environment plans	Environmental concern	Sweden’s environmental plans	Career advancement
“They pay too much better money compared with the salary that I may get in Namibia.”	Higher salaries than in the home country	Financial reasons	Higher salaries	Enhanced life quality
“You cannot live on your own it is much better to go abroad and work there and have some money and live on your own.”	Higher salaries than in the home country	Financial reasons	Higher salaries	Enhanced life quality
“Life was very tough for me because whatever I earn, it is still not enough salary and I just spend it with my family and it was very tough to improve my life.”	Higher salaries than in the home country	Financial reasons	Higher salaries	Enhanced life quality
“I want my next generation to get this education that I am getting because I feel like if I had got this education in my Bachelor, maybe I could do some better.”	Better education system than in the home country	Education system	Education system	Enhanced life quality
“First of all, tuition is free, so it is very important for me”	Importance of free education	Free education	-	-
“If somebody from India wants to study here I can definitely recommend this to them because the opportunity studying here is completely different. The education system is kind of higher than in India, also they can gain more practical experience”.	Better education system than in the home country	More advanced education system	-	-
“Everybody can have good facilities from toddler to adult, everyone. This is another thing which is missing in my country even if people pay a good amount of money they still don’t get a good	Better health care system than in the home country	Health care system	Health care system	Enhanced life quality

service from the medical centre.”				
“Treatment support that they have for families is just amazing, I mean, you don’t have to be a good father for your kid to have a good life, the system would protect her so that is something that impressed me so I am really happy.”	Better health care system than in the home country	Health care system	Health care system	Enhanced life quality
“This is really new for me and it’s good because in Ghana doesn’t matter if you have arrived before because another person can come and just pass by, if for example, he is older than you. People usually jump the queue in my country. So, this is something that I found interesting.”	Waiting in the queue	Organised system	-	-
“You work one day and the other day you do not know your future.”	Job insecurity in home country	Job security	Job security	Enhanced life quality
“I would get a lot of experience here because here there are a lot of international companies, a lot of research centres, educational institutions so if I work here for 10 years or more than that, then I can do much better back in my country because most of the time in Africa we need an improvement in policies and structures so I can do a lot of contribution through these areas so I am thinking not only about temporary personal comfort just for the future also because many organizations even in Sweden, in Europe are trying to help Africa spending their money and their time”.	Hope to contribute to the home country	Help for the home country	Help for the home country	Enhanced life quality
“The thing that I heard about that part of the world that in Sweden the work culture is really	Attracted by better life quality	Quality of life	Work-life balance	Enhanced life quality

good like I heard that they have 6-hour work culture, family and work-life balance which is pretty much missing from my first job so these things also addressed me a lot that after post-graduation if I could manage to get a job here it would be very great for my future career.”				
“I have seen so many students, so many of my friends actually did Masters from here and at some of the good universities which are known to pretty much all over the world but after finishing their studies they had to leave the country because they didn’t manage to get a job here and I don’t know why there is a problem. I have seen people with good results, good backgrounds, they are leaving the country.”	More difficult than expected	Expectations versus reality	-	-
“...and I get a rejection but that was a training program, even fresh graduated from Masters could get it, you can imagine with my experience, I thought it would be very easy but I didn’t...”	More difficult than expected	Expectations versus reality	-	-
“It’s not being very hopeful; I’m just applying but I am not expecting to get the job. But just applying in case someone is willing to give me a chance. So, the situation is sad.”	Difficulties when looking for employment in Sweden	Complicated and difficult to find employment	-	-
“what are these people, why they do not want me here?”	Difficulties when looking for employment in Sweden	Complicated and difficult to find employment	-	-
“I think that the most problems that I have it is because of personal number because at first time they say that I am	Personal identity number is a barrier to find a job	Personal identity number	Personal identity number	Employers’ rejections

accepted but then when I need to fill forms and they see that I do not have personal number, I just lose it.”				
“They do not explain you straightforward, you have to go five times to get an answer. You go for a job - they ask you for a personal number which is also ridiculous because they should know that if they write a contract for you they give the personal number so you are like chasing your tail all the time like going to Skatteverket and then going for a job, the job tells you that you need a personal number to get a job and Skatteverket tell you that you need a job to get a personal number and they play you around for months in this way and I don't know why they do that..... I feel like a need a number just to get language and to get a job and they do not provide you that easily.”	Personal identity number is a barrier to find a job	Personal identity number	Personal identity number	Employers' rejections
“When you want to breath here in Sweden, you need to have a personal number because in other case you will make problems.”	Importance of personal identity number	Personal identity number	Personal identity number	-
“You just lose a lot of things compare with those who have the personal number.”	Importance of personal identity number	Personal identity number	Personal identity number	-
“You do not exist in Swedish society if you do not have that number.”	Importance of personal identity number	Personal identity number	Personal identity number	-
“I want to work to get a work permit and if they ask me for work permit before I even start working which is sometimes I feel like ... it is very tough, you just give up because if someone asks you for a	Not having a work permit impedes finding a job	Work permit	Work permit	Employers' rejections

work permit before you start working then it is tough, because I have student permit, I have qualification, if I start working then I will get a work permit.”				
“I do not know the language so this is the main problem.”	Not knowing Swedish impedes finding a job	Language	Language	Employers’ rejections
“You have to speak Swedish to find a job and I cannot.”	Not knowing Swedish impedes finding a job	Language	Language	Employers’ rejections
“I have heard other people saying...I cannot get a job because I don’t speak Swedish...so...”	Not knowing Swedish impedes finding a job	Language	Language	Employers’ rejections
“If you do not speak Swedish, you do not get the opportunity. No Swedish - no job.”	Not knowing Swedish impedes finding a job	Language	Language	Employers’ rejections
“It is more about to have a personal contact. It is more about whether they know you or not than your knowledge about the job position. So, whatever job I got so far in Sweden it’s by contacts that I have.”	Having personal contacts helps to find employment	Importance of personal contacts	Importance of personal contacts	Employers’ rejections
“And you know my husband's job is just because of our friends. If we didn't have any friends just to get him a job, I don't know what would have happened to us I think in this case we should just go back to our own country.”	Having personal contacts helps to find employment	Importance of personal contacts	Importance of personal contacts	Employers’ rejections
“For example, some companies are not announced on Internet. They have internships but you cannot find it on their website. That makes it difficult. So, you always need to know someone who will tell you that, otherwise you will never know about that job position. How should I know it?”	Necessity of having contacts in order to find a job	Necessity of having contacts in order to find a job	Importance of personal contacts	Employers’ rejections
“In Sweden, the first year	Difficult to get in	Difficult to get in	Difficult to get in	Lack of social

you come super active, you have power, motivation, then you plan, you applied for studies, you meet people...but the job environment is... no personal involvement, no social life, in all the jobs. They don't talk with you, don't care about you. "	contact with Swedish people	contact	contact	interactions
"I cannot deal with something like this, why they behave like this, why didn't they accept me?"	Difficult to get in contact with Swedish people	Feeling rejected	Feeling rejected	Lack of social interactions
"....it is not like they are saying in front of your face that I don't like you, what a hell are you doing here but you can feel that, that person might not like you, that person might not be comfortable around you."	Difficult to get in contact with Swedish people	Not welcome	Not welcome	Lack of social interactions
"Swedish students don't talk with you...everybody is quiet."	Difficult to get in contact with Swedish people	Difficult to get in contact	Difficult to get in contact	Lack of social interactions
"There is no chance for me even to meet Swedish people or someone who have been here for many years because of interaction, it could be my problem but as I can see people here are really more quiet and not much interactive."	Difficult to get in contact with Swedish people	Difficult to get in contact	Difficult to get in contact	Lack of social interactions
"I do not know [if] they are not really familiar with English or they just do not want to show that they understand, they just try to answer you in Swedish they know that you do not understand but they answer you in Swedish."	Difficult to get in contact with Swedish people	Feeling rejected	Feeling rejected	Lack of social interactions
"Every single Swedish talk English but they refuse to speak English, they want to talk Swedish so you have to be Swedish to be in Sweden"	Difficult to get in contact with Swedish people	Feeling rejected	Feeling rejected	Lack of social interactions

I think there is a lot of differences if you are not local, most of the things are more difficult to get, such as to get a job. It is more difficult if you are not a local.	Difficulties if you are not local	First Swedish, later the others	Feeling rejected	Lack of social interactions
“Sweden has changed me because I don’t speak so much now. I’m more quiet than before. Even when I meet with people I don’t speak with them so much which it is rude in my country. Silent here became part of me. But this was not like that before.”	Changes in behaviour	Personal changes	Personal changes	Lack of social interactions
“I think that sometimes maybe we are wrongly judging the Swedish because we are not managing to penetrate to the network but if you manage to do that I think they are amazing people.”	Trying to adapt and learn the culture	Trying to adapt	Trying to adapt	Lack of social interactions
“Imagine that you are an onion - in Cuba people do not have many layers to get to know them, you just get to know them immediately you just do a small talk, you do not need to be naked to be naked, here you need to have many layers to put yourself and you need to brake all these layers they create to separate them.”	Trying to adapt and learn the culture	Trying to adapt	Trying to adapt	Lack of social interactions
“I think “it is a Swedish rule, I do not like it” but I should and I try to become more familiar with Swedish behaviour”	Trying to adapt and learn the culture	Trying to adapt	Trying to adapt	Lack of social interactions
“I have bad days but I have my boyfriend, he is very supportive and he is the reason that we are here, he is the reason why I am positive because I know - I have him and everything will be better.”	Importance of support	Support from the partner	Support from the partner	Family role

“I want to feel that they are secure and that they are ok because I am stressful sometimes and I do not know if they are ok and I am panicking.”	Close contact with the family	Contact with the family	Contact with the family	Family role
“I am attached with my family, but I feel like I want to do this for myself and they support me with that “go and do that, this is for your own good” even if my mother calls me every day, she just wants to know if I am ok.”	Close contact with the family	Contact with the family	Contact with the family	Family role
“For me staying here is staying away from my family so, it is also an emotional thing that I cannot really cope with for a very long time. So, that’s why I’m not really considering staying here even if I could get a job because my whole family is not here.”	Close contact with the family motivates to go back	Motivation to return	Motivation to return	Family role
“When she went back everybody was hating her, they thought that she just abandoned a better quality of life, it was pretty much bad for her and I think it is something I learned from her I don’t want to do it again and that is also another reason [why staying in Sweden].”	Family motivates to stay	Motivation to stay	Motivation to stay	Family role
“after post-graduation if I could manage to get a job here it would be very great for my future career and also for my family.”	Attracted by the need to provide for the family	Need to provide for the family	Need to provide for the family	Family role
“I was working I had responsibility of my family because if you have poor family than of course, it is up to you to help them so life was very tough for me because whatever I earn, it is still not enough salary and I just spend it for my family. I can tell	Attracted by the need to provide for the family	Need to provide for the family	Need to provide for the family	Family role

you, the salary difference between my country and here... because if I get a job – it is a big difference.”				
“I saw people who do not have a connection with their children and that is strange for me because for me for example, I am responsible for my mother, brothers, sisters, nephews, and anyone so we have this kind of helping each other so the help we get might not be enough but still we care about each other which makes us happy”	Swedes have less connection with their families	Importance of family	Contact with the family	Family role