INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SOCIETY, CULTURE & LANGUAGE

Exploring the Role of Academic Mobility in Developing Students' Ethnocultural Identity

Kalenova Arailym[1], Tazhitova Gulzhakhan[1*], Nurbayeva Aida[2], Aikinbayeva Gulden[1*], Kolumbaeva Zauresh[3], Raziya Assylgozhina[4]

[1]L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Kazakhstan, [2]Abai Kazakh Pedagogical University, Kazakhstan, [3]Turan-Astana University, Kazakhstan, [4]Institute of State History, Kazakhstan

Abstract This paper examines the impact of academic mobility the development of students' ethnocultural identity. Participation in academic mobility programmes provides students with significant opportunities for personal and academic growth including the development of academic, critical thinking, language and professional skills. Moreover, such experiences foster greater tolerance, adaptability and independence, while enhancing intercultural competence and awareness of ethnocultural identity. Drawing on interview data from Kazakhstani students who participated in academic mobility in different countries, the study explores changes in students' ethnocultural practices, cultural adaptation, and preservation of national traditions and perceptions of cultural identity during their period of stay abroad. The findings indicate that international academic experience contributes to increased cultural awareness, greater tolerance toward other cultures and more conscious understanding of their ethnocultural identity. Overall, the study highlights the role of academic mobility as a significant factor in shaping students' cultural openness and reinforcing their ethnocultural identity.

Keywords: *Academic mobility, Ethnocultural identity, Students, Interaction, Intercultural communication, Language*

[*]**Corresponding Author:**
Tazhitova Gulzhakhan
gulzhahan@mail.ru
Aikinbayeva Gulden
gulden_1975@mail.ru

Received: October 10, 2025
Revised: December 16, 2025
Accepted: December 29, 2025
First Published: January 12, 2026

© 2026 Arailym, Gulzhakhan, Aida, Gulden, Zauresh, and Assylgozhina.
This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY).

1. Introduction

Academic mobility plays a significant role in shaping students' intercultural communication skills and broadening their worldview in the context of globalization and the internationalization of higher education. Participation in international educational programmes enables students to immerse themselves in diverse cultural practices, which, in turn, influences their mindset, communication styles, and overall system of cultural values. Students who take part in academic programmes in other countries gain valuable experience, build international connections and extend their worldview. This opportunity promotes understanding between cultures, enriches their educational horizons and develops effective communication

https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2026.2083549.4355

and relationships among different nationalities (Mammadova, 2024). Nilemar and Brown (2017) noted that academic programme brings personal and cultural change to an international student increasing his cross-cultural communication skills and making him more tolerant for cultural diversity. Thus, academic mobility is not just an educational experience but also it is a transformational process contributing ethnocultural identity and practices.

It is evident that ethnoculture represents a complex set of spiritual, material, social, and behavioral characteristics that define a particular ethnic community. Ethnocultural features manifest in a distinctive worldview, value system, interaction norms, and traditional ways of life shaped throughout the historical development of the society. Ethnoculture is a historical and cultural identity of a nationality and it includes language, traditions, and experiences. It represents the social reality influenced by socio-historical evolution and is crucial for self-understanding (Akbarov, 2018; Marufbayev & Rakhimov, 2021). Molina (2025) maintains Marufbayev and Rakhimov's (2021) ideas and claims that ethnoculture refers to the incorporation of social and cultural components into educational, pedagogical, ethnological, and intercultural situations. It promotes transdisciplinary techniques for deeper intercultural dynamics and places an emphasis on comprehending cultural diversity and how it affects educational policies, identities, and practices. Ethnocultural identity is a person's self-concept shaped by their affiliation with a particular ethnic group, which is impacted by historical territory, ancestry, and sociocultural components including customs, traditions, and rituals that represent their cultural and historical background (Akhmetova et al., 2025; Zakiryanova, 2023). The development of ethnocultural identity represents a gradual and multifaceted process through which an individual forms a conscious awareness of belonging to a particular ethnic group and internalizes its cultural values, norms, and traditions. Participation in academic mobility programmes can significantly contribute to this process, as immersion in new educational and cultural environments not only broadens students' cultural horizons but also creates favourable conditions for the development of intercultural competence. Exposure to diverse cultural practices encourages students to reflect on, reassess, and sometimes reconstruct their own ethnocultural attitudes, thereby deepening their understanding of their cultural identity within a globalised context.

Although academic mobility has been widely examined in pedagogical research, its specific impact on the development of students' ethnocultural identity remains insufficiently explored. Investigating this relationship is a highly relevant and meaningful task for contemporary pedagogical science. In today's globalized educational space, students participating in academic mobility programmes engage with diverse cultures and ethnic communities. Such intercultural interaction not only expands their cultural horizons but also influences the formation of self-awareness and ethnocultural identity, enabling them to better understand their own values, traditions, and cultural norms. Despite the substantial body of research on academic mobility as a whole, its influence on students' ethnocultural identity has not been fully addressed. An empirical gap remains concerning how interaction with other cultures contribute to students' understanding of their own ethnocultural belonging and to the development of intercultural competence. Addressing this gap is essential for deepening theoretical insights into the transformative role of academic mobility and for informing effective educational practices in multicultural learning environments.

For Kazakhstan, academic mobility plays a particularly important role, given the country's ongoing integration into the global educational space and its inherently polycultural composition. Kazakhstani students studying abroad inevitably encounter new social norms, traditions, and behavioural models, which require them to adapt and negotiate between their native cultural frameworks and those of the host environment. Understanding how these transformations occur is essential for analysing the processes of intercultural adaptation and for ensuring the preservation of cultural identity within the conditions of global education. Such insights are especially relevant for Kazakhstan, where fostering intercultural competence while maintaining ethnocultural heritage remains a key priority in educational development. The aim of this research is to define how academic mobility influences students' ethnocultural identity.

2. Theoretical Framework

Academic mobility is one of the key strategies of the formation of competent, intercultural aware and socially responsible specialists in the context of rapidly developing globalization. Students moving to another country for the purpose of study create unique conditions for direct interaction with a different cultural environment, making mobility an important factor in personal, professional, and social growth. Universities should encourage students to participate in academic mobility. It is one way to internationalize the curriculum and support students' holistic development. Academic mobility helps to develop disciplinary competencies as well as technical and research abilities. Moreover, it encourages a shift in how students perceive the world (Chamorro et al., 2023). Batayev (2024) noted that universities can successfully use academic mobility to contribute to the globalization of higher education and improve the student experience by creating clear implementation strategies, concentrating on internationalizing educational programs, proactively addressing obstacles, and clearly communicating the benefits. By developing clear implementation strategies, focusing on internationalizing educational programs, proactively addressing challenges, and clearly communicating the advantages, institutions can effectively leverage academic mobility to contribute to the globalization of higher education and enhance the student experience.

In addition, recent studies demonstrate that academic mobility impacts universities innovation activity. For example, Ashirova et al. (2023) researched how academic mobility opens opportunities to strengthen the competitiveness in the economic sphere. Academic mobility requires regulations of mechanisms of organizing different activities such as interstate conventions or agreements between mobility countries in order to improve the quality of training. These examples of recent research studies make it possible to conclude that academic mobility should be recognized by universities as an essential element of academic internationalization.

In the contemporary world, the influence of academic mobility has been investigated in relation to a wide range of educational outcomes and practices. Academic mobility contributes the increase of quality of training of graduates expanding their professional horizons and skills of international interaction. Ilyichuk (2024) emphasized that academic mobility is a key indicator of the successful development of educational services, contributing to the enhancement of quality and competitiveness of higher education in the global education market. It fosters conditions for professional and personal self-realization and supports the formation of highly qualified specialists capable of effectively operating in a dynamic and rapidly changing world. Mahdiuk and Rogulska (2023) also raised a question of the benefits of academic mobility for training qualified specialists particularly in terms of acquiring new technologies, exploring emerging fields, and mastering strategies for practical application. These skills enable graduates to successfully navigate and realize their potential in contemporary society.

Academic mobility is a significant process for personal and professional development, allowing participants to encounter diverse life situations and interpret them through the perspectives of both their own and foreign cultures. Chistohvalov and Phillipov (2008) identifies the skills that are characteristic of academic mobility participants:

- skills to choose the ways of interaction with environment
- skills to think in the comparative aspect
- skills to behave in intercultural communication
- skills to change self-perception
- skills to consider his country in cross-cultural aspect
- skills to understand cultures of other countries and his own.

A special attention is paid to the fact how academic mobility influences the cultural identity, system of values and daily ethnocultural practices of students. Immersion in a different sociocultural reality frequently serves as motivation to reevaluate one's own cultural standards, broaden tolerance, and cultivate intercultural sensitivity. Researching these shifts is crucial for both comprehending the mechanics of cultural adaptation and creating successful teaching methods that enhance students' global competency.

Myhovych and Ovcharova (2024) theoretically conceptualized the ethnopsychological aspects of academic mobility, which serves both as a form of internationalization in higher education and encouragement of intercultural experiences for students. Their research outlined the interconnections between academic mobility, communicative competence and intercultural competence. The authors recommended minimizing the negative impact of factors such as stereotypes, cultural differences and adaptation difficulties. Reducing those factors might greatly improve academic mobility program participants' integration process and lessen the possibility of problems during cross-cultural conversation Chen (2017) considered academic mobility as the ethnocultural facets of transnational migration through social and cultural frameworks. It challenges conventional political and economic viewpoints, contending that comprehending mobility necessitates looking at how people manage their identities and social relationships in various cultural contexts. This method emphasizes the complexity of globalization and the interaction between academic mobility and ethnocultural identity, implying that mobility is a complicated process of cultural negotiation rather than just a question of brain drain or gain.

This viewpoint is further supported by Nilemar and Brown (2017) and Guryanchik and Makeeva (2024) that success of academic mobility is defined in the context of ethnocultural identity. Nilemar and Brown (2017) conclude that by improving cultural awareness and encouraging tolerance of cultural diversity among foreign students, academic mobility has a considerable impact on ethnocultural characteristics. Mobility improves cross-cultural communication by dispelling preconceptions and expectations influenced by one's cultural upbringing. During the academic mobility overseas, this process of adjustment frequently entails negotiating social interactions and emotional obstacles, which eventually contributes to personal and cultural development. Guryanchik and Makeeva (2024) emphasize how crucial it is to view academic mobility from the perspective of civic and ethnic identities. An ethno-cultural educational setting can influence students' academic mobility and shape their academic and personal development.

Studying the experience of participants of academic mobility programme makes it possible to comprehend the obstacles that occur while living in a different ethnocultural environment. Oliveira and Freitas (2017) described in their research the challenges that academic mobility participants face during the adaptation process related to ethnocultural aspects. For instance, for Brazilian students it was difficult to form friendships with local students abroad because the latter tended to be more reserved whereas Brazilians are open to interaction. Tran and Gomes (2017) presented a different point related to ethnocultural aspect. Their research identified both challenges and opportunities that academic mobility presents for shaping students' ethnocultural identity while they are in a foreign country. Academic mobility strengthens students' abilities to interact with people whose culture is different and opens opportunities to adapt a new culture and position themselves as a nation. Additionally, when students integrate with other cultures, they fill their consciousness with new viewpoints that contribute to the reformation of their ethnocultural identity.

Despite the growing interest in the theme of academic mobility, we could observe that there is a noticeable lack of studies related to how academic mobility enhances students' ethnocultural identity while they are in a different country. Majority of studies have focused on the benefits of academic mobility for students' academic achievements, innovation activities of universities, and the integration and collaboration between universities at supporting academic mobility students. There were insufficient studies addressing changes in ethnocultural practices, factors impacting cultural transformations, and the preservation and reconsideration of one's own ethnocultural identity.

3. Methodology

This research employed an interview for collecting the information about to what extent academic mobility contributes to the transformation of students' ethnocultural practices and how academic mobility influences the development of ethnocultural identity of its participants.

3.1. Participants

Fifty-one students who participated in academic mobility programmes took part in the study, including 39 female and 12 male respondents. Nine of them were enrolled in Master's programme and

42 of them studied at a Bachelor's degree. Regarding the age, 2 participants were over 26 years old, 18 were under 19, and 31 were between 20 and 23 years old. Figure 1 shows the information on the universities in which they were enrolled. Figure 2 shows the information on respondents' majors. Table 3 shows the information on the countries where respondents studied.

Figure 1
Information about Respondents' Enrolled Universities

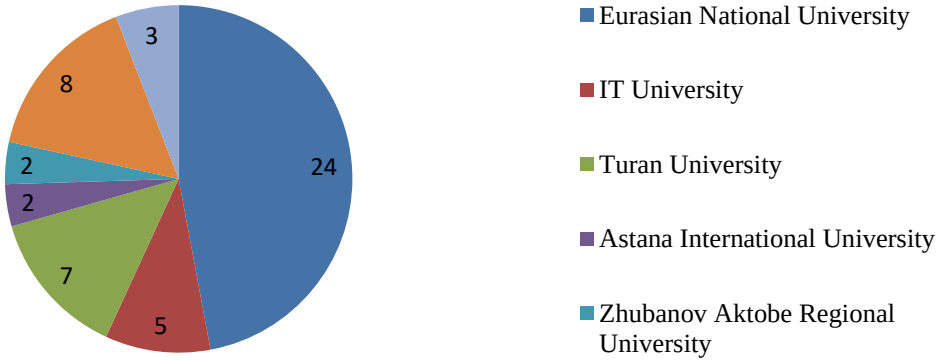


Figure 2
Information about Respondents' Majors in Local Universities

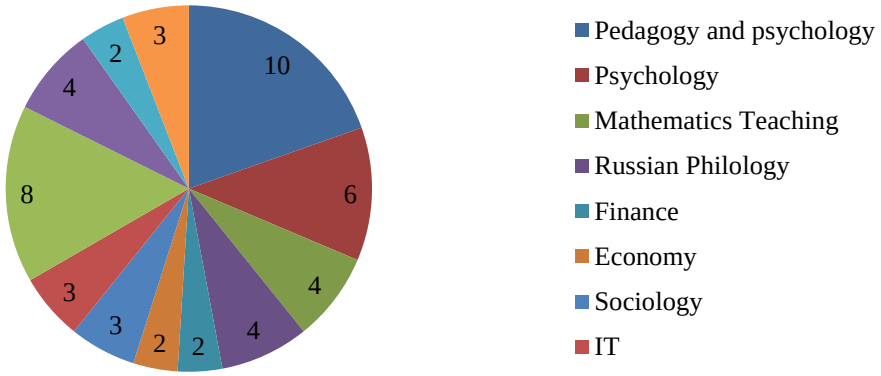
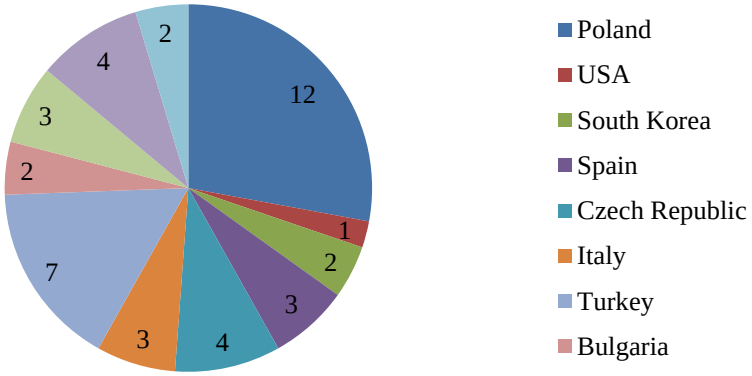


Figure 3
Information on the Countries Where Respondents Studied



3.2. Instruments

The interview collected data about the experiences of Kazakhstani students participating in academic mobility programs. It included questions about respondents' age and gender, university and country of study, and major. The interview consisted of six open-ended questions, designed to encourage participants to freely express their reflections and experiences. The questions focused on the personal, cultural, and identity-related impacts of academic mobility:

1. What personal changes have you noticed in yourself after returning from abroad, in terms of values, behavior, or worldview?
2. In what ways has academic mobility influenced your sense of national identity?
3. How has your perception of your national identity changed after academic mobility?
4. Has your attitude toward other nations changed following your time abroad?
5. How did your involvement in academic mobility assist you to understand your national culture and values?
6. What aspects of your ethnocultural identity strengthened or rethought after your stay in a foreign country?

3.3. Procedure

The interview was conducted individually, online and offline, depending on the time of the respondents. All respondents were informed beforehand, and signed the consent form about confidentiality and voluntary participation. Each interview lasted for 25-30 minutes.

Interview responses were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method involving a structured, multi-stage process. This process consisted of four key stages: (1) familiarizing with the data through repeated reading of transcripts; (2) generating initial codes to label features of the data; (3) searching for themes by collating codes into potential patterns; and (4) reviewing, defining, and naming themes to ensure they accurately represented the dataset. Initially, all close-ended questions were processed to compile general participant information. The subsequent thematic analysis of qualitative data enabled the identification of recurring patterns and the interpretation of underlying meanings. This integrated approach facilitated a comprehensive assessment of the impact of international academic mobility on students' cultural identity and intercultural competence, providing deeper insights into their personal and cultural development.

4. Results

The answers to the first open-ended question: "Which personal changes did you notice after returning from abroad (in values, behavior, worldview)?" are presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Thematic Analysis of the Answers to Question 1

Theme	Quotes
Extension of worldview	*- started taking a broader look, became more tolerant, rethought life priorities*
Social and communicative changes	*- a shift from isolation to social activity, improved communication skills, decrease of communication circle*
Personal growth and independence	*- growth of autonomy, ability to make decisions, to be responsible for them, to be confident in own possibilities*
Tolerance and intercultural sensitivity	*- interaction with other cultural representatives contributed to development of tolerance and respect to other values and viewpoints.*
Rethinking of national values	*- academic mobility strengthened my appreciation of own culture and patriotic feelings*
Transformation of values	*- a shift from material goals to spiritual values, inner balance and personal development*
Adaptation and readaptation	*- difficulties of returning to national system of education and need for readaptation*

The second open-ended question "In what ways has academic mobility influenced your sense of national identity?" revealed students' opinions about how the international programme influenced their understanding of their national identity. The responses were diverse. Table 2 presents some of these answers.

Table 2

Thematic Analysis of the Answers to Question 2

Themes	Quotes
Increased awareness and appreciation of national identity	*- After academic mobility, I became more conscious of my national identity. Being among people from other cultures, I began to appreciate the traditions, language and cultural characteristics of my country more.* *- After mobility, my national identity became more flexible. I retained my cultural foundation, but at the same time learned to accept and respect the values of other peoples*
Sense of belonging and cultural representation	*- Studying abroad helped me see my national identity in a new light. I began to better understand which values are truly important to me and distinguish my culture from others.*
Openness in national identity	*- After mobility, my national identity became more flexible. I retained my cultural foundation, but at the same time learned to accept and respect the values of other peoples.*
Development of mature identity	*- The experience of studying abroad contributed to the formation of a more mature national identity. I began to better understand not only my culture but also my place in a multinational world.* *- Academic mobility helped me realize that national identity is something dynamic. I feel like a representative of my nation, but at the same time open to intercultural interaction.*

The third question "How has your perception of your national identity changed after academic mobility?" elicited responses describing the ways in which students' perceptions of their national identity had evolved following their experience abroad. We divided the answers into thematic sections (Table 3).

Table 3

Thematic Analysis of the Answers to Question 3

Themes	Quotes
Strengthening of identity	*- After participating in the academic mobility program, I became more conscious of my national identity.* *- Being in a multicultural environment and interacting with people from other countries allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the values, traditions, and characteristics of my own culture.* *- Comparisons with other cultures helped me see my own national identity in a new light and strengthened my sense of pride in it.*
Rethinking and flexibility	*- Academic mobility helped me rethink my national identity. I began to perceive it not as something static, but as a flexible and evolving process.* *- My experience studying abroad showed that it is possible to maintain your national identity while simultaneously embracing and respecting the values of other cultures.*
Extension of identity	*- After my academic mobility, my perception of national identity became more complex.* *- I still feel a strong connection to my national culture, but now I also feel part of a broader international community.* *- This experience broadened my perspective and shaped my attitude toward cultural differences in a more open and tolerant way.*
Awareness through contrast	*- Living in another country allowed me to better understand the nuances of my national identity through cultural contrast.* *- I began to notice elements of culture and mentality that had previously seemed familiar and unconscious. As a result, my national identity became more meaningful and meaningful to me.*

Moderate changes	*- Overall, my national identity hasn't changed significantly, but I've become more conscious of it.* *- Academic mobility has helped me better understand my place among other cultures and taught me to respect both my own and other national identities.*

The fourth question "How has your attitude to other nations changed after the mobility?" received only positive answers. Respondents described the ways in which their attitudes toward other nationalities had become more open, tolerant and understanding (Table 4).

Table 4

Thematic Analysis of the Answers to Question 4

Themes	Quotes
Influence of academic mobility national identity	*- Academic mobility had a significant impact on the formation of my national identity, strengthening my awareness of my own cultural belonging.* *- After participating in the academic mobility program, my perception of national identity became more conscious and reflective.* *- As a result, my national identity became more stable while maintaining an openness to intercultural interaction.* *- My identity became more flexible and open* *- Being in a foreign language and cultural environment, I began to more clearly understand the values, traditions, and cultural norms of my country.*
Comparisons	*- The experience of studying abroad created conditions for comparing my home and host cultures, which contributed to a deeper understanding of national values and a stronger sense of cultural identity.* *- Comparisons with host cultures contributed to strengthening rather than losing my sense of belonging to my own national culture, while my identity became more flexible and open.*
Cultural diversity	*- Academic mobility significantly influenced the development of a more tolerant and respectful attitude toward representatives of other nations.* *- Direct interaction with students from different cultures allowed me to overcome stereotypical notions and fostered the development of intercultural sensitivity.* *- As a result, I became more open to cultural diversity and different worldviews.*

The fifth question "How did your involvement in academic mobility assist you to understand your national culture and values?" revealed interesting information. We quoted some of them in Table 5.

Table 5

Thematic Analysis of the Answers to Question 5

Themes	Quotes
Cultural comparison	*- Participation in academic mobility contributed to a deeper understanding of national culture and values through cultural comparison.* *- In a different educational and social environment, I needed to explain and present the characteristics of my own culture, which stimulated a rethinking of its significance.*
Learning national history	*- Sometimes I had to google some points of history because I forgot or didn't know.* *- I had to ask my father who is a history teacher about some historical points, so I had to learn my own history while studying in Poland.* *- A professor gave us an assignment about the history of Pedagogy of the country we are from.*
Pride in cultural norms	*- I felt proud when I was talking about the concept of respect in our culture, especially respect to old people,* *- My classmates were surprised when I said that it is socially accepted to give your seat to older people in a public transport.* *- Academic mobility in a foreign country deepened my knowledge about my country, comparing with other countries strengthened my sense of national belonging* *- This experience allowed me to better understand the enduring cultural values of my nation and their role in shaping personal and social identity.*
Broadening of worldview	*- Interaction with other nationalities' students broadened my worldview influencing positively my national features.*

The last question in our interview was "What aspects of your ethnocultural identity strengthened or rethought after your stay in a foreign country?" We grouped the revealed information into themes and quoted some of the data. The results are given Table 6.

Table 6

Thematic Analysis of the Answers to Question 6

Theme	Quotes
Language	*- I was alone in my university and those who studied from my country spoke Russian and I always wanted to speak Kazakh;* *- When I presented my country to others, I wanted to speak Kazakh and thought I would better demonstrate my country in my native language;* *- I taught my roommates my language, but it was to pronounce some sounds for them.*
National traditions and holidays	*- I felt sad when people in my country were celebrating our holidays, missed how my parents and I visited our relatives or they visited us;* *- It was interesting to tell about our traditions to my neighbours from Spain, France and China;* *- When we had a Day of Foreign Students, I could talk about different holiday celebrated in my country;* *It was interesting to celebrate Nauryz in my host university, I even cooked our national dishes.*
Historical self-awareness	*- My groupmates asked me, a lot of questions about history of Kazakhstan and sometimes I had to read about some facts myself;* *- History of Zhus (tribes) was interesting for one professor, and I could explain;* *- Some of my new friends did not know that Kazakhstan is an independent country, so I had to explain our history, for this I had to remember and sometimes ask questions to my father;* *- When I showed pictures of my country some of friends were interested in history of some places, but I did not know some of them, so I had to learn together with them*.
Intercultural tolerance	*- When we talked to other students about our traditions, I was proud to have my own traditions as a nation. This feeling made me happy.* *- I enjoyed long discussions about cultural differences with other students.*

5. Discussion

This research was devoted to study how participation in the academic mobility programme influences students' ethnocultural identity. The study aimed at defining through students' opinions how academic mobility impacted its participants' understanding and development of their ethnocultural identity. According to the data revealed through the interview, respondents noted that their worldview extended, their qualities such as tolerance and rethinking of life priorities grew and they started thinking more globally and reflexively after the mobility. Thanks to academic mobility they developed their communication skills, independent engagement, time management, and problem-solving skills. They became more responsible in their decision making and confident in their own opportunities. The main important thing is the development of intercultural feeling and strengthening national identity. At the same time, they observed the transformations of their values, after their mobility respondents appreciated more spiritual values more than material goals. Moreover, different education systems were a matter of concern for them, indicating a greater need for support from universities. These conclusions align with the findings of the research conducted by Valls-Figuera et al. (2023) that universities should support students in challenges they encounter about different educational systems.

The analysis of respondents' answers demonstrated that academic mobility influenced the formation and rethinking of their national identity. Respondents increased their awareness of their national traditions and customs during their integration with the representatives of other nationalities. Respondents felt their national identity in both ways: they preserved their cultural roots, but they were ready to understand and respect the values of other nations. Some respondents informed a heightened sense of pride in their national identity when comparing their traditions and mentality with those of

other nationalities. In this process, the recognition of one's own identity through cultural confrontation played an important role, which made it possible to observe previously unconscious mentalities and cultural practices.

An important aspect of this process was the understanding of one's own identity through cultural contrast, which allowed one to observe previously unknown elements of mentality and cultural practices. At the same time some respondents noted moderate changes, noting that academic mobility did not fundamentally change their national identity, but rather increased their level of awareness and contributed to a respectful attitude towards their national identity and others. Findings of our research are consistent with those of Nilemar and Brown (2017), who found that academic mobility, develops students' cultural knowledge and awareness of their national identity, it does not modify it. It strengthens their understanding of national identity through cultural diversity.

The analysis of the answers made it possible to conclude that study in another country contributes to a deeper and more conscious understanding of students' national culture and values. Respondents noted that exposure to a different educational and social environment creates conditions for comparative cultural analysis, encourages them to explain and present the features of their own country, which in turn leads to a reconsideration of the meaning of national culture. In this process, interaction with national history, including independent research and reflection on historical heritage, contributed to the strengthening of cultural awareness. Our finding that students started revising their national history differs slightly from that of Makrane et al. (2022) concluding that studying in another country fosters comparative cultural analysis without considering historical issues.

Academic mobility contributed activization of different components of national identity through everyday experience. First of all, respondents mentioned the language as the main component of national identity: desire to speak the native language in everyday life and to teach it at any possible case. This reflects their desire to present their culture authentically. Secondly, national holidays and traditions made a great contribution: celebrating holidays of a foreign culture made them feel homesick and nostalgia which stimulated cultural self-expression and pride in their own customs as well. Thirdly, historical self-awareness grew: the need to answer the questions of professors or students also encouraged them to develop a comprehensive understanding of their own history. Moreover, ordinary everyday intercultural discussions and comparisons of traditions strengthened respect to their own culture as well as to the culture of other nationalities.

These findings align with the findings of the research conducted by Sodatsayrova and Waljee (2017), which revealed that Tajikistani students' adaptation does not necessarily involve full assimilation into local culture; they maintain their cultural identity by developing their own cultural practices, speaking their native language and observing national holidays. This was also observed in the study by Uzbek researchers where most students maintain a close bond with their own country and how international programs impact the national identity (Rahmanova et al., 2025). In addition to this, considering the factors influencing cultural transformation, the analysis indicates that staying in a foreign country and students' attitude toward their own culture plays a great role in successful adaptation. Among the responses we could observe that respondents experienced a high level of nostalgia and homesickness; however, this should not be accepted as a negative factor. These experiences contribute to the reassessment of cultural values and enhancement of self-consciousness.

Based on an analysis of the revealed data, it can be concluded that academic mobility had a complex impact students' personal and ethnocultural development. The experience of studying abroad contributed to a broadening of their worldview, the development of independence, responsibility and self-confidence as well as the formation of a more flexible and reflective attitude toward their own identity. In the context of intercultural interaction respondents reconsidered their values, became more tolerant, open to diversity and aware in their social and communicative behavior. Moreover, the process of adaptation and subsequent readaptation was accompanied by the development of critical thinking and the ability to self-reflection. Academic mobility was particularly important for the formation and strengthening of students' ethnocultural and national identity. Being in a different cultural and linguistic environment allowed participants to gain a deeper understanding of the value of their native language, traditions, history, and national norms of behavior. Comparing their native and

host cultures did not lead to a loss of national identity; on the contrary, it contributed to its strengthening and understanding as a dynamic process that combines a stable cultural foundation with openness to intercultural dialogue. As a result, the students developed a more mature, stable, and at the same time tolerant ethnocultural identity, based on respect for both their own culture and the cultures of other peoples.

This research verified that academic mobility influences development of its participants' ethnocultural identity. The knowledge and experiences that they gained through the programme deepen their awareness of own cultural identity since they serve as a basis for shaping a more flexible ethnocultural identity. Studying in a host country alongside with representatives of other nationalities enhance their abilities to adapt to multicultural environment, which opens opportunities to rethink their own national values. The findings of the research indicate that academic mobility improves students' personal qualities such as tolerance, intercultural sensitivity and self–awareness. The research adds to the existing studies in this field that academic mobility not only develops students' professional skills but also contributes to develop themselves as representatives of their nation. The future research on this topic may focus on exploring the role of academic mobility from perspectives of graduates to identify how academic mobility background influences their career development. Despite this, longitudinal studies including before, while and post academic mobility could be beneficial to reveal more deeply understanding how academic mobility influence development of students' ethnocultural identity.

Disclosure Statement

The authors claim no conflict of interest.

Funding

This research has been funded by the Committee of Science of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Grant No. BR28713029).

References

Akbarov, A. (2018). Socio-cultural factors involved in the foreign language teaching policy: Case study of Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Bulletin of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Philology Series*, *124*(3), 8–16. https://doi.org/10.32523/2616-678X-2018-124-3-8-16

Akhmetova, M. K., Zhanzhigitov, S. K., Alpysbayeva, A. Y., Sarekenova, K. K., Bibekov, K., & Abitzhanova, Z. (2025). The representation of ethnocultural names in the linguistic consciousness of Kazakh youth. *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, *13*(2), 75-87. https://doi.org/10.22034/ijscl.2025.2056961.3990

Ashirova A., Muratbek B., & Berikkyzy N. (2023) The development of academic mobility is key factor in the innovation of universities. *Computer Linguistics Problems Solution Prospect*, *5*(1), 16-31. https://doi.org/10.52773/tsuull.uzlc.aphil.2023.1.5/rodw5308

Batayev, H. M., & Borisova, A. N. (2024). The role and importance of academic mobility of students in the process of globalization of higher education. *Economy and Entrepreneurship*, *2*(163), 1447–1450. https://doi.org/10.34925/eip.2024.163.2.289

Chamorro, M. I., Álvarez Ruiz, L., Mendivil Hernández, P. M., Restrepo Ruiz, M., & González Sánchez, E. (2023). Perception about the mobility experience of students in universities: A descriptive study. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, *23*(13), 155-164. https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v23i13.6324

Chen, Q. (2017). *Globalization and transnational academic mobility*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-886-1

Chistohvalov, V. N., & Phillipov, V. M. (2008). Conditions, tendencies and problems of academic mobility in European space of higher education. *Educational Textbook*, *162*, Article 2.

Guryanchik, V. N., & Makeeva, T. V. (2024). Ethno-cultural educational environment as a factor in the formation of social mobility of students. *Journal of Pedagogical Studies*, *9*(2), 30-40. https://doi.org/10.12737/2500-3305-2024-9-2-30-30

Ilyichuk, L. (2024). Academic mobility as a strategic vector of quality training of future specialists in the era of globalization and development of educational innovations. *Problems of Education*, *2*(101), 24-43. https://doi.org/10.52256/2710-3986.2-101.2024.02

Mahdiuk, O. V., & Rogulska, O. O. (2023). Characteristics of mobility as a professionally significant personal students quality. *Naukovì Zapiski*, *1*(207), 221-225. https://doi.org/10.36550/2415-7988-2022-1-207-221-225

Mammadova, T., & Allen, T. J. (2024). Reviving global mobility: Exploring traditional and virtual study abroad management. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, *19*(4), 395-401. https://doi.org/10.1177/17454999241297826

Marufbayev, B. S., & Rakhimov, M. B. (2021). The essence of the concept of ethnocultural thought. *Current Research Journal of History*, *2*(11), 09-12. https://doi.org/10.37547/history-crjh-02-11-03

Mokrane, H., & Halaç, H. H. (2022). Anadolu Üniversitesi uluslararası öğrencilerin ülkelerine yönelik kültürel miras farkındalık düzeyleri [Anadolu University international students' cultural heritage awareness levels of their countries]. *Journal of Social, Humanities and Administrative Sciences*, *51*, 512–521. https://doi.org/10.29228/joshas.61792

Molina, J. E. (2025). Ethnoculture: Educational, pedagogical, ethnological and intercultural research perspective. *Education Quarterly Reviews*, *8*(1), 101-116. https:/doi.org/10.31014/aior.1993.08.01.557

Myhovych, I., & Ovcharova, L. (2024). Ethnopsychological context of implementing international academic mobility as one of the forms of internationalization in higher education. *Osvìta Ta Pedagogìčnì Nauki*, *3*(187), 60–74. https://doi.org/10.12958/2227-2747-2024-3(187)-60-74

Nilemar, K., & Brown, L. (2017). Academic mobility and cultural change. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *43*(1), 89–100. https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2017.1356914

Oliveira, A. L. de, & Freitas, M. E. de. (2017). Relações interculturais na vida universitária: experiências de mobilidade internacional de docentes e discentes [Intercultural relations in university life: Experiences of international mobility of teachers and students]. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, *22*(70), 774–801. https://doi.org/10.1590/S1413-24782017227039

Pogorelskaya, A. M. (2022). Academic mobility for region-building and the creation of a Eurasian identity. *European Journal of Higher Education*, *13*, 161–178. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2022.2093240

Primorac, M., Begić, A., & Grbavac, I. (2025). Erasmus students' experience with intercultural communication. *Medijske Studije*, *16*(31), 187–201. https://doi.org/10.20901/ms.16.31.9

Rahmanova, G., Davlatova, K., Egamberdiyeva, N., Khusanova, K., Abduvaliyev, M., & Maksudova, H. (2025). Patriotism and national identity in Uzbek female students abroad. *Edelweiss Applied Science and Technology*, *9*(1), 737–748. https://doi.org/10.55214/25768484.v9i1.4238

Sodatsayrova, N., & Waljee, A. (2017). Re-interpreting cultural values: Tajikistani students abroad. *Cambridge Journal of Eurasian Studies*, *1*, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.22261/CJES.DKC8NT

Tran, L. T., & Gomes, C. (2017). *International student connectedness and Identity*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2601-0

Valls-Figuera, R. G., Torrado-Fonseca, M., & Borràs, J. (2023). The impact of international student mobility on multicultural competence and career development: The case of students from Latin America and the Caribbean in Barcelona. *Education Sciences*, *13*(9), Article 869. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13090869

Zakiryanova, I. A., & Redkina, L. (2023). Civilizational approach to the study of ethnocultural identity problem. *Bulletin of Nizhnevartovsky State University*, *4*, 38-54. https://doi.org/10.36906/2311-4444/23-4/04