UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

ANTECEDENTS OF INTENTION TO RETURN HOME AND MODERATING EFFECTS OF INITIAL RETURN INTENTION AMONG IRANIAN STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA

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IPSS 2012 3

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By

NAJMOSSADAT RAHNAMAFARD

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Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2012

DEDICATION

To my Parents who gave me the strength to persevere.

This study is dedicated to my husband,

Mohammad Bagher,

For his support and patience during my doctoral studies;

And for my children,

Shima and Mohammad Saleh,

For sharing their mother and understanding why she was not always available;

I love you all so much.

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chairperson: Jamilah Othman, PhD

Faculty: Institute of Social Science Studies

With the recent development of globalization, the population of international students has reached 2.7 million globally in 2004 (Hughes, 2008). Advantage of study abroad is to improve students' abilities and skills toward international competence. However, disadvantage of study abroad is to reduce the possibility of returning to home after graduation (Chen & Su, 1995). In the context of Iran, Fekrazad, (2010), confirmed that the determinants of emigration (initial non-return intention) overlap the determinants of studying abroad (initial return intention). Therefore, this study was designed to predict intention to return home after graduation and to determine moderating effect of initial return intention among Iranian students in Malaysia.

The present study focused on the theory of planned behavior model by considering psychological characteristics; attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioral control in intention to return home. This study also

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designed to increase the predictive validity of the theory of planned behavior by applying initial return intention before leaving home that might moderate the relationship between two components of planned behavioral theory and return intention. In order to achieve to these goals, a cross sectional survey was utilized. The data were gathered by using a set of questionnaire through face to face contact with 346 Iranian students who were a stratified random sample selected from fourteen public and private Malaysian universities during May-July, 2011. Descriptive statistics was used to provide a better understanding of socio demographic characteristics of students, level of attitude toward return home, subjective norm to return home and perceived behavioral control over return home. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to examine construct validity and reliability of the model. Structural Equation Model was a statistical model used to predict the return intention to home and finally Multigroup SEM was selected to test the moderating effects of 'initial return intention between two predictors (attitude, subjective norms) and return intention. The findings of study showed that on average, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control explained 70% of the variance of return intention. The level of return intention, attitude toward return home and subjective norm was relatively moderate while the level of perceived behavioral control was low. The relationship between three predictors and return intention was positive, moderate and significant at the 0.01 level. Further, initial return intention moderated the effects of attitude and subjective norm on return intention. Therefore, the conceptual model developed for this study was able to predict return intention among Iranian students from their attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control. In addition, the present study demonstrated that initial return

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intention has moderating effect on attitude–intention and subjective norm – intention relations.

This study recommends attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control is appropriate to predict return intention to home; however, to understand the underling determinants of these predictors, behavioral, normative, and control beliefs should be assessed. Moreover some recommendations for policy and practice were suggested to facilitate returning to home by making more opportunities for young people in Iran. This study also highlighted the need for future research on return intention from study abroad by considering other factors among other international students.

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Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

ANTECEDEN BAGI NIAT UNTUK KEMBALI KE NEGARA ASAL DAN KESAN PENYEDERHANA NIAT KEMBALI AWAL DALAM KALANGAN PELAJAR IRAN DI MALAYSIA

Oleh

NAJMOSSADAT RAHNAMAFARD

Jun 2012

Pengerusi: Jamilah Othman, PhD

Fakulti: Institut Pengajian Sains Sosial

Disebabkan globalisasi, populasi pelajar antarabangsa telah mencecah 2.7 juta di seluruh pada tahun 2004 (Hughes, 2008). Kelebihan belajar di luar negara adalah untuk mempertingkat kebolehan dan kemahiran pelajar terhadap kompetensi antarabangsa. Walau bagaimanapun, kelemahan belajar di luar negara adalah mengurangkan kemungkinan kembali ke negara asal selepas tamat pengajian (Chen dan Su, 1995). Dalam konteks Iran, Fekrazad, (2010), mengesahkan bahawa penentu penghijrahan (niat tidak kembali awal) bertindih dengan penentu belajar di luar negara (niat kembali awal). Oleh itu, kajian ini telah direka untuk meramalkan niat untuk kembali ke negara asal selepas tamat pengajian dan untuk menentukan kesan penyederhana niat kembali awal dalam kalangan pelajar Iran di Malaysia.

Kajian ini memberi tumpuan kepada teori tingkah laku dirancang dengan mengambil kira ciri-ciri psikologi, sikap, norma subjektif dan tanggapan tingkah laku kawalan kepada niat untuk kembali ke negara asal. Kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk

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meningkatkan kesahan ramalan teori tingkah laku dirancang dengan menggunakan niat kembali awal sebelum meninggalkan negara asal yang mungkin sederhana hubungan antara dua komponen teori tingkah laku dirancang dan niat kembali. Bagi mencapai matlamat ini, kajian keratan rentas telah digunakan.

Data dikumpulkan secara bersemuka dengan menggunakan set soal selidik dengan 346 pelajar Iran yang disampel secara rawak berstrata daripada 14 universiti di Malaysia pada bulan Mei-Julai, 2011. Statistik deskriptif telah digunakan untuk memberi lebih kefahaman tentang ciri-ciri sosio demografi pelajar, tahap sikap terhadap kembali ke negara asal, norma subjektif kembali ke negara asal dan kawalan tingkah laku terhadap kembali ke negara asal. Analisis faktor pengesahan (CFA) telah digunakan untuk memeriksa kesahihan konstruk dan kebolehpercayaan model. Model persamaan struktur adalah satu model statistik yang digunakan untuk meramalkan niat kembali ke negara asal dan akhirnya Multigroup SEM telah dipilih untuk menguji kesan penyederhana niat kembali awal antara dua peramal (sikap, norma subjektif) dan niat untuk kembali. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa secara purata, sikap, norma subjektif, dan kawalan anggapan tingkah laku menjelaskan 70% daripada varians niat untuk kembali. Tahap niat untuk kembali, sikap terhadap kembali ke negara asal dan norma subjektif adalah agak sederhana manakala tahap kawalan tanggapan tingkahlaku adalah rendah. Hubungan di antara tiga peramal dan niat untuk kembali adalah positif, sederhana dan signifikan di peringkat 0.01. Di samping itu, tujuan kembali awal mempuyai kesan penyederhana ke atas pengaruh sikap dan norma subjektif terhadap niat untuk kembali. Oleh itu, model konseptual yang dibangunkan untuk kajian ini dapat meramalkan niat untuk kembali dalam kalangan pelajar Iran dari aspek sikap, norma subjektif dan kawalan tanggapan

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tingkah lakunya. Di samping itu, kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa niat kembali awal merupakan penyederhana hubungan sikap-niat dan norma subjektif -niat.

Kajian ini mencadangkan sikap, norma subjektif dan kawalan tanggapan tingkah laku yang sesuai untuk meramalkan niat kembali ke negara asal, namun untuk memahami penentu asas peramal ini, tingkah laku, normatif dan kawalan kepercayaan perlu dinilai. Selain itu beberapa cadangan bagi polisi dan amalan telah dicadangkan untuk memudahkan kembali ke negara asal dengan membuat lebih banyak peluang kepada golongan muda di Iran. Kajian ini juga menekankan keperluan untuk kajian akan datang tentang niat kembali ke negara asal selepas tamat pengajian di luar negara untuk mengambil kira faktor-faktor lain dalam kalangan pelajar antarabangsa yang lain.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and for most, I give thanks to God, the source of my strength and knowledge throughout this endeavor.

Writing a dissertation is not a singular undertaking. It requires input and assistance from many people. I would like to thank the following people for their help:

My special thanks to my kind supervisor, Dr. Jamilah Othman for her valuable advice and support on this project. I would like to acknowledge my committee members, Associate Professor Dr. Bahaman and Associate Professor Dr. Nobaya Ahmad who have patiently guided me through the process.

I would like to thank the Head of Institute for Social Science Studies, deputy of Institute and all staffs of IPSAS, especially Mrs. Hilyana secretary of IPSAS, for their kindness and cooperation.

I would like to express my appreciation to Professor Azhari Smail, Professor Rahim Sail, Professor Aminah Ahmad, Associate Professors, Dr. Bahaman, Associate Professors Dr. Jegak Uli, Associate Professors, Dr. Abdul Latif, my lecturers during my PhD study in UPM.

I would like to thank all Iranian students in Malaysia who set aside their precious time to participate my research.

A special thank to my best friends forever Mrs. Zeinab H.A. Mohammadi, Mrs. Somaye Sahraie and Mrs. Ensieh H.A. Mohammadi because of their sincere help during my study in Malaysia. For all of their emotional supports, I am eternally grateful.

Finally, I am deeply indebted to my family for their unconditional support to me every step along the way.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 08 June 2012 to conduct the final examination of Najmossadat Rahnamafard on her thesis entitled "Antecedent of Intention to Return Home and Moderating Effect of Initial Return Intention among Iranian Students in Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U. (A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently, submitted for any other degree at University Putra Malaysia or at any other institution.

_____

NAJMOSSADAT RAHNAMAFARD

DATE: 8 June 2012

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