

## 4. THE STUDY: METHODOLOGY

Most of the ISs in the university do not stay on campus. Thus, they need to be reached online. This study utilised the Google Form to ask open-ended questions to the ISs. The questions revolve around the elements that assist and hinder the positivity of international students' learning experiences. The respondents are to write short paragraphs to answer each question. Their demographic details are also collected. The Google Form was then e-mailed to the 650 e-mail addresses belonging to the active post-graduate students in 2016. The e-mail addresses were requested from Centre for Information Technology with a written permission from the Centre for Graduate Studies (CGS). The Google Form was sent three times to all the addresses – March 2016, May 2016 and August 2016. However, after the third round, there were only 40 responses.

Although the data collection for the study was done in a quantitative manner, the data collected were in 'words and expressions'. Thus, the most suitable data analysis is thematic analysis. The thematic analysis was managed by ATLAS.ti.

### 4.1. Demographic Details

Among the 40 respondents, 75% were doing Ph.D while 25% were completing their master's degree. Almost half of them were in their third and fourth semester. Others were already in the seventh semester and above. As for the fields of study, 62.5% were doing pure sciences while 37.5 % were in the social science fields. These 40 respondents came from 25 different countries with around 2 to 5 respondents from Bangladesh, Libya, Nigeria, Indonesia, Oman and Yemen. In the span of 6 months, 45% of them admitted that they are on campus only 1 to 2 months. Further, only 37.5% of the students have their family members with them here, and about 62.5% of them stay alone or with their friends. Most stay in homestays, hotels and apartments.

### 4.2. Findings and Discussion

This section is presented according to the research question and the discussion is done alongside. In tandem with the nature of the data analysis which is thematic analysis, the findings are seen in terms of themes and as evidence, extracts from the responses are included. Further, the network view, an output from ATLAS.ti for the themes for each research question is included.

#### 4.2.1. Research question 1: Who are the people who have been involved in the international students' learning experiences?

The data from the 40 respondents show that there are people who have contributed positively and also negatively to their learning experiences. As for the former, the data reveal that there are 4 groups of people who have been positively involved in the learning experiences of the international students. The diagram below has the summary of the groups.

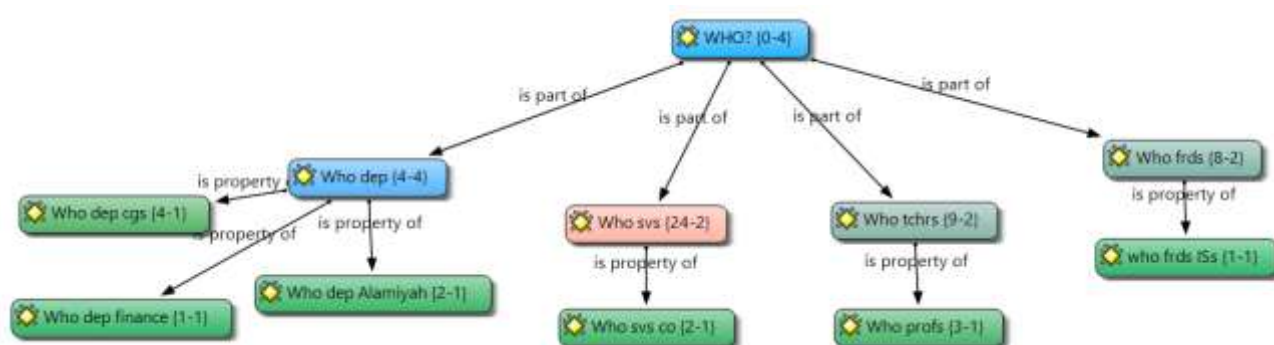


Figure 1: Network View from ATLAS.ti for Research Question 1 (positive)

From the figure above, the 4 groups of people who are involved in the international students' learning experiences are the administrators at the departments, the supervisors, the teachers/lecturers and the friends. In terms of frequency, it can be seen that the highest number of reported cases is the supervisors (26 reports), and then the teachers/lecturers (12 reports). It is followed by the administrators (11 reports) and friends (9 reports).

In other words, most of the respondents have named the supervisors to be the people who have played a

positive role in their learning endeavour. They have described the supervisors to be very supportive. Some of the positive adjectives associated with supervisors are:

*Helpful (line 9), berdedikasi [dedicated] (line 13), quite Good (line 19), cooperative (line 40), kind (line 51), supportive (line 54), experienced (line 66), helpful and responsive (line 69), kind, fatherly, and supportive (line 83), gentle, always updated (line 91), awesome (line 160), and cooperative & friendly (line 166).*

As for the international students' negative learning experience, they have named the same groups of people but the frequency differs greatly. The people involved and the number of frequency can be seen in the figure below.



Figure 2: Network View from ATLAS.ti for Research Question 1 (negative)

Figure 2 above shows the people involved negatively in the learning experiences of the international students. The highest number of complaints is made about the people in the department or administrators (11 reports). While for the supervisors, teachers and friends, each group is reported only once. They are described negatively as below:

*not functioning smoothly (line 44), slow (line 65), not friendly (lines 82, 108 & 139), not professional (line 143), very lazy (line 144), don't care (line 143), and don't follow the rules (line 143).*

The international students explicitly named the departments where the administrators were considered as not supporting their learning endeavour. The departments listed are the Centre for Post Graduate Studies, Finance Department and own faculty department/office. Almost all of the above descriptions are used to describe the administrators in the named departments.

Although the international students named the same 4 groups of people to be involved in both the positive and negative learning experiences, due to the big number of difference in the frequency and also the long list of positive adjectives given, it can be surmised that supervisors are the most important people in the international students' learning experiences. There are 24 reports favouring the supervisors, while there is only 1 report which says otherwise.

#### 4.2.2 Research question 2: How are the learning experiences positive and negative?

The preceding section discusses Research Question 1 which is regarding the groups of people who have positively and negatively involved in the international students' learning experiences (ISLEs). The findings for research question 2 will further detail the ways in which the people have assisted or hampered the ISLEs. The presentation of the findings begins with the themes of how people have assisted the ISLEs, and it is followed by the elucidation of the themes via the extracts from the respondents' answers. This is also done for the people who have hampered the ISLEs.

The data reveal that there are two ways in which the people in the host institution have assisted the ISLEs. Figure 3 below has the themes which emerge from the data collected via Google form.