The Integration process of International Students in Groningen

A quantitative approach to the three dimensions that influence the integration process of international students in Groningen.

Abstract

This study will aim to give insights into the integration process of international students in Groningen. In specific, it will look at to what extent the various dimensions of a receiving society have influence on this process. To get better insights in the process of integration a quantitative method is chosen with a SPSS analysis. The three dimensions of the receiving society that are being studied are the socio-economic, cultural and political dimension. From these dimensions results show that both the socio-economic and the cultural dimension contribute most to the integration process of international students. For the socio-economic dimension the support from the university and having a job next to your study showed a significant result. The cultural dimension showed a significant result for the extend of similarity in cultures and the knowledge on Dutch holidays and traditions. Next to the significance also the strength of the relationships between the variables were measured with a Kendall's tau-c test. This showed that the relationships between the variables in the cultural dimension were stronger as opposed to the socio-economic dimension. This means that the cultural dimension has most influence on the integration process of international students in Groningen followed by the socio-economic dimension and political dimension respectively.

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Table of contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

"Our university is well known for its international community" it states on the website of the University of Groningen (RUG, 2020). This international community is important for universities since the number of international students around the world is growing rapidly. In 2017, 5.3 million students were enrolled in courses outside of their country of origin (UNESCO, 2017). This increase of international students is also reflected in the key figures of the University of Groningen. The number of international students grew with more than 10%. With this increase the total number of international students has more than doubled from 3.500 in 2015 to 7.700 in 2019 (RUG, 2020). To provide, and even more importantly for the university, attract these international students more than 180 educational programmes on the university are taught in English. These developments are both the result and cause of internationalisation of education. Internationalisation of education is defined as the process in which the growth of international students in a country is higher compared to the growth of students that are originally from that country. This is a relatively new phenomenon and has become a strategy embraced by most universities around the world (Healy, 2007).

Universities encourage the process of internationalisation because of the increasing size and diversity of global labour markets in the last decades (Chiswick, 2003). The increasing importance of this global labour market creates demand for highly trained staff with international and intercultural competences. This means that often times these jobs require international academic or international work experience (UvA, 2019). Attracting international students encourages diversity among students to generate this international and intercultural atmosphere. The University of Groningen and Hanze are already practicing this strategy for years with the intention to attract as many international students as possible. The result is that a lot of international students migrate to the city of Groningen each year. Whenever someone migrates to a new environment a process of integration starts. The different societal dimensions of a receiving country have influence on this integration process. According to Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016) these dimensions consist of the socio-economic, cultural and political dimension. This study will look into how these three dimensions of a receiving country influence the integration process of international students and which dimensions contribute most in this process.

1.2 Research problem

International students that go abroad to study in a different country are all faced with a process of integration. Internationalisation of education is a relatively new phenomenon that emerged in the last decades. Although the phenomenon is relatively new some studies have been done on the topic. For example a study by Rienties et al. (2011) found that non-Western students have significantly lower scores on academic and social integration in comparison to other students. Next to this, a study conducted by several international student organisations found that international students in the Netherlands don't feel at home and often times feel excluded (IamExpat, 2019). The same study found that over 75% of these international students feel that they lack contact with Dutch students. Previous conducted research suggests that international students are not integrating properly in the Dutch society. However, which factors or societal dimensions contribute most to this process of integration is still unclear. The results from this study will aim to gain answers about the societal dimensions influencing the feeling of integration of international students in Dutch society. The following research

question was set up: *Which of the three dimensions initiated by Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas have most influence on the integration process of international students in Groningen?*

1.3 Structure of thesis

This thesis will be structured according to 6 chapters. After this introduction a theoretical framework is presented in the 2nd chapter which will provide an academic base for this study. Added to the 2nd chapter is a conceptual model that describes the presented theoretical concepts from this chapter. In the 3rd chapter the methodology of the study is explained. Successive to the methodology are the results in the 4th chapter followed by the conclusions which will be presented in chapter five. In the last chapter the references are included together with an appendix containing the online survey that was distributed.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Theoretical framework for the integration process of international students

As explained in the introduction internationalisation of education is becoming an increasingly practiced strategy by universities around the world. Adding to this is the fact that in the 21st century mobility has increased causing people, especially those with higher education, to be able to live all around the world. The increased mobility and internationalisation of education causes international students to go abroad in search of educational opportunities that are better than those available to them in their home country (Shields, 2013). The incoming international students create an international atmosphere, or what is referred to in the literature as the knowledge economy (Güruz, 2008). This international knowledge is something that universities highly value and so does the University of Groningen (RUG, 2018). To attract these international students and to create this knowledge economy the University of Groningen hosts more than 180 English taught courses (RUG, 2020).

The central concept of this thesis is integration. Integration is a widely spoken subject in the social sciences and is therefore defined in multiple ways and for different research purposes. Although the concept is defined and studied in various ways the essence of the concept involves individuals that adjust to different social constructs after crossing the borders of a country (Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016). To become integrated in this new society an individual needs to adapt to these different constructs. This process of adaptation is called the integration process. The next paragraph will give historical context regarding the research on the integration process which will help to build an academic base for this study.

Research on the integration process has changed overtime. Different theories about how the integration process develops have been created moving from a traditional linear process to a three-way integration process. In the 20th century the dominating view on integration was the linear process of integration. This was a Chicago school of thought and is described best according to the concept of assimilation (Miller and Peguero, 2018). Assimilation conceptualizes integration in society as a process in which a minority group adjusts to the values and norms of the dominating group (Brown and Bean, 2006). Because it only involves two factors this is seen as a linear process going from an immigrant to eventually being fully integrated when the assimilation process is completed. This view on migration theory has received criticism from social scientists that support a more multiculturalist or trans-nationalistic approach to the integration process. According to these critics the assimilation theory lacks the recent processes of cultural pluralization and the emergence of transnational spaces (Bommes, 2012). The process of integration should not solely focus on the interrelation between immigrants and the receiving society (Schunck, 2014). Instead, Bommes (2012) conceptualizes integration as a three-way process which next to the immigrant and the receiving society also includes the sending society. This is an important addition because ties between country of origin and the migrant remain during the integration process. Since the publication of the book *Nations Unbound* by Basch et al. (1993) the focus on transnational contact and attachment a migrant remains with their country of origin has increased. According to Dunn (2005) transnationalism transcends the original integration concept of assimilation. Instead, the concept sheds light on the relationship between individuals, collectives and governments between the sending and receiving countries.

This thesis will look into the integration of international students enrolled to tertiary education programs in Groningen. According to Tinto (1998), international students are not only in the process of graduation (academic integration) but are also in a process of adjusting to the social life of the hosting country (social integration). Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016, p.11) argue that this process of social integration into a hosting country refers to the notion of "securing a place". In their

book *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe* they argue that this integration process is influenced by three different dimensions in society: the political, socio-economic and cultural dimension. The socio-economic dimension consists of the interaction between social and economic factors. According to Penninx Garcés-Mascarenas (2016) the socio-economic factors relate to the accessibility an individual experiences in their new environment. In the context of this study the social and economic factors regarding international students in Groningen refers to questions like: How hard is it to find suitable accommodation? Or: is it hard to survive financially in this new environment? The political dimension refers to legal aspects regarding the integration process. According to Penninx and Garcés-Mascarenas (2016) this involves the residence and political rights. It relates to questions whether or not the international students are able to vote for elections or if they need a visa to study in the country. The cultural dimension is mainly about the diversity in cultures between the receiving and sending country. This could for example be the difference in language, holidays or traditions. It is important to remember that during the process of integration these dimensions interrelate with each other. When studying the integration process of the international students in Groningen it is important to acknowledge these dimensions and the way they are intertwined.

2.2 Conceptual model

The conceptual model (figure 1) follows the process of integration as described in the theoretical framework. In the model it is expected that the incoming international student integrates according to the 'three-way' process of Bommes (2012). This three-way process of integration underlines the cultural pluralization and transnationalism of today's globalized world. Added to the receiving country are the three dimensions influencing the integration process according to Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016). These dimensions are interrelated with each other which is why the different sections overlap in the model.
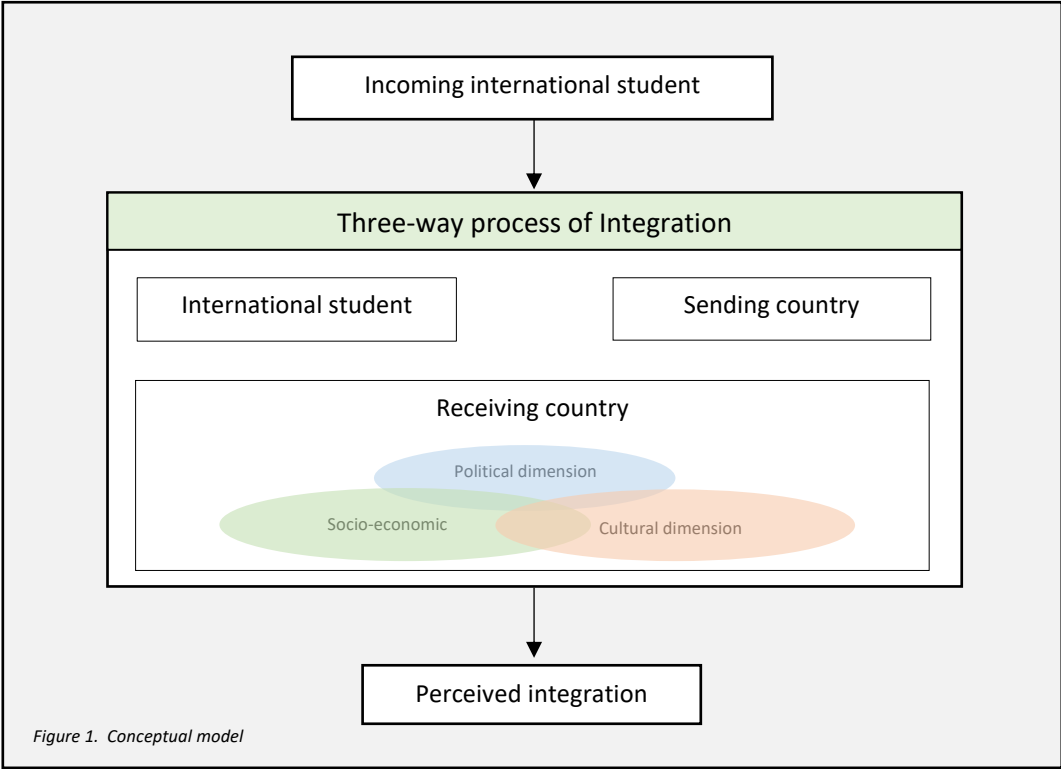

Figure 1. Conceptual model

3. Methodology

3.1 Research method

Research on integration of different social groups is highly complex. This is mainly because the process of integration is strongly depended on several economic, political and cultural differences. The complexity means that qualitative research is often times the preferred method. Although the subject of integration is studied qualitatively more often it is still relevant to take a quantitative approach, especially in the context of this study.

To elaborate further on this it is important to acknowledge that research about the integration process of international students is still lacking. The quantitative research paradigm used in this study will help to gain insights into the international student population and the dimensions that influence their integration process. Using a quantitative approach means that generalizations about the population will be more accurate and results will be less biased. Furthermore, because research about the integration process of international students is lacking, specific phenomena are still to be discovered. Studying the population as a whole will help us to find the expected underlying phenomena which can be the foundation for future qualitative research. Informative reports by the government and organisations like Centraal Plan Bureau that analyse integration already use quantitative designs like this to reveal or address certain phenomena in society. In depth qualitative approaches to immigrants' perspectives have proved to work for integration studies (Wessendorf and Phillimore, 2018) but to actually further study the perspectives of international students a quantitative approach should be conducted first to reveal possible phenomena of this immigrant group in society.
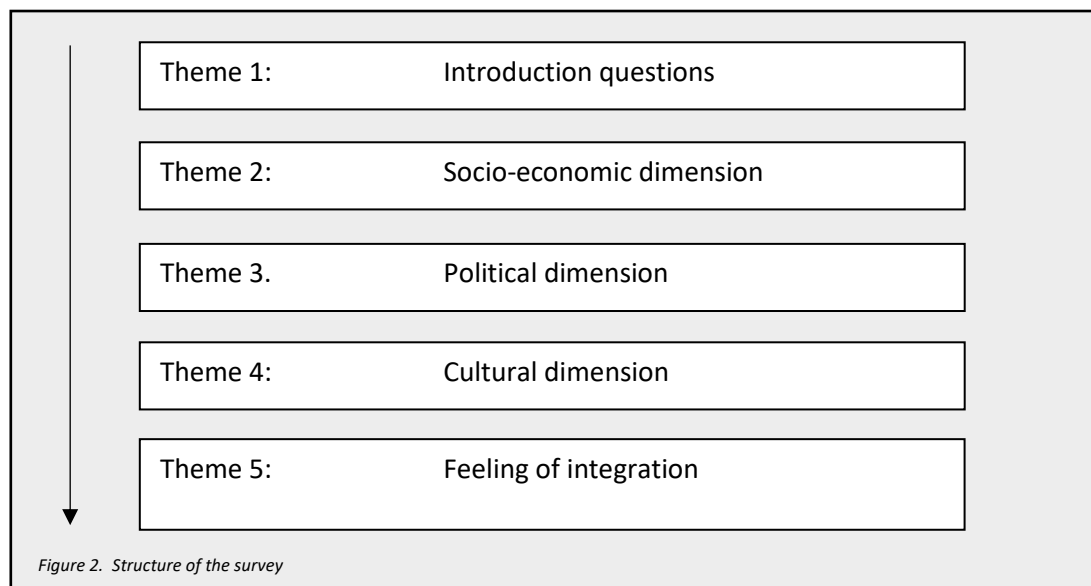
3.2 Collection of the data

The research population consists of international students that are enrolled to tertiary education in Groningen. Since both University and Hanze students need to integrate in society there was not made a distinction between the two institutions. The city of Groningen is chosen because both the University of Groningen and the Hanze have internationalisation of education included in their strategy. Next to this, Groningen is together with Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Maastricht among the cities that attract most international students in the Netherlands (IamExpat, 2017). Also, it is convenient to focus on Groningen because of the time frame this bachelor thesis is situated in. To get the most representable samples of international students in Groningen initially the surveys would have been taken in the field at the Zernike Campus and other University and Hanze institutions. Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 outbreak this was not a possibility anymore. Instead, a survey was made to be completed by international students online. The internet program Qualtrics was used to make the online survey. To distribute this survey to international students several international student organisations were contacted. These organisations distributed my survey among international Facebook and WhatsApp groups. Internet surveys are easy both for the researcher and the respondents, in fact without online surveying this study could not have been completed. However, it is important to realise that gaining data via an online survey also has negative aspects. One of the main issues regarding online surveys is that it raises sampling issues that are linked to the origin of the respondents (McLafferty, 2016). This is something that was kept in mind when analysing the collected data. An example of this was the number of Romanians that completed the survey. This was something that was recognized and reflected upon in the analysis. From the 51 received responses, 39 were fully completed.

3.3 Structure of the survey

To do quantitative research surveys have proved to be an important instrument for several decades. This is mainly because surveys have been used to explore people's perceptions, attitudes, experiences behaviours and spatial interactions in diverse geographical contexts (McLafferty, 2016). Because this study takes a quantitative approach the data was collected via the use of an online survey. The survey was structured according to the three dimensions of integration. Most of the questions where formulated in Likert scale statements. When surveys include Likert scale statements it is important to keep the number of themes limited. If too much themes are added to the survey respondents lose their ability to distinguish among the categories and thus the answers lose meaning (McLafferty, 2016). In total, five different themes were made (figure 2). The first theme included questions that were aimed to gain descriptive statistics on the research population. This theme was followed by three themes directed at the three dimensions of integration. Finally, the last theme was aimed to gain answers on the feeling of integration according to the international student. This last theme 'feeling of integration' is important because it will be used for the data analysis in the results. The questions and statements from the survey are added to the appendix in chapter 6.

Theme 1:	Introduction questions
Theme 2:	Socio-economic dimension
Theme 3.	Political dimension
Theme 4:	Cultural dimension
Theme 5:	Feeling of integration

Figure 2. Structure of the survey

3.4 Data analysis

The data that was gathered was firstly analysed by looking at the frequencies of the descriptive statistics. By analysing the descriptive statistics a better overview of the data was achieved. Combining the variables from the survey with statistical tests will provide for insights into the nature of the relationships among these variables. The survey mostly contained Likert scale variables with some exceptions of nominal and interval variables. The Likert scale data was linked to the different themes of the survey. With these Likert scales the level of agreement of the international student is measured with five options going from completely disagreeing with the statement to completely agreeing. Since each of the Likert scale statements is ordered from completely disagreeing to completely agreeing these variables are regarded as ordinal variables. To find out which factors out of the three dimensions showed a significant relationship with the feeling of integration the Chi-Square test was the best fit. However, the Chi-Square test requires 20% of the expected cell counts to be 5 or higher. This important requirement was not met with the data set retrieved out of the online surveys so an alternative data

analysis method was mandatory. Instead, the Spearman rho test was applied to measure for linear relationships between the ordinal Likert scale statements. The Spearman rho test is designed to measure the strength and significance of a monotonic relationship between two ordinal variables (Haug, 2019). The questions of the online survey that were answered with binary variables were analysed with a binary regression test. Just like the Spearman rho test this test is used to find out to what extend certain variables are related to each other. The hypothesis below will be rejected when a significance level below 0.05 is measured.

The null hypothesis of the conducted spearman rho tests: In the population there is no linear relationship between the Likert scale statements and the perceived integration of international students.

The null hypothesis of the conducted binary linear regression tests: In the population all regression coefficients are equal to 0.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Even though the study used a quantitative approach, and thus did not search for a deeper understanding of the individual respondents, still some ethical considerations were made. Behaving ethically means that the researcher and the rest of the world act in accordance with notions of right and wrong (Mitchell and Draper, 1982). This is important because it helps to protect those affected by our research (Hay, 2013). One of the ethical considerations was for example that although the researcher has done a semester abroad, he is still considered as an outsider. This is mainly because the researcher was only abroad for one semester and is not surrounded in an international atmosphere in Groningen. This missing involvement should be considered when analysing the data and drawing conclusions on the data that was collected. However, this should not be a problem when collecting the data. This is because the data that was collected is not necessarily sensitive and questions were formulated in an ethical way. Results and the conclusions drawn from the results might however be sensitive since it still contains generalized claims about the integration process of the respondents. It has to be considered that some respondents might not agree with the conclusions made from their individual responses. This is also why it was clearly stated on the starting page of the survey that generalized claims are going to be made from the answers gained from the online survey.

The starter page of the online survey was stated as follows:

"Because of the increasing internationalization of education this study will look into the integration process of international students in Groningen. The answers on the questions below will be used to conduct statistical tests and see which factors have influence on the integration process of international students. This means that generalized conclusions will be drawn from the responses. The aim is to gain insights in the integration process of international students in Groningen."

With agreeing below the respondent agrees on a serious and truthful response

○

4. Results

To get the best possible results the statistical analysis was divided in a descriptive and inferential section (Burt et al., 2009). This is why before the data is being analysed with inferential statistics several descriptive statistics will be summarized to get a better understanding of the dataset. This summary of the dataset can also be reflected upon in the final results and conclusions of the study. After the descriptive statistics are summarized each different dimension from the integration process will be analysed with inferential statistics. While analysing this data it is important to constantly keep an eye on the theoretical framework built earlier. This is important because the data that was collected will illustrate a result which is built on this theoretical framework.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

The following section will briefly summarize the descriptive findings of the respondents that fully completed the survey. The dataset consists of 53 respondents of which 38 were fully completed. These 38 completed surveys were used to answer the research question. From the completed surveys 25 of the respondents were female and 13 were male (figure 3).
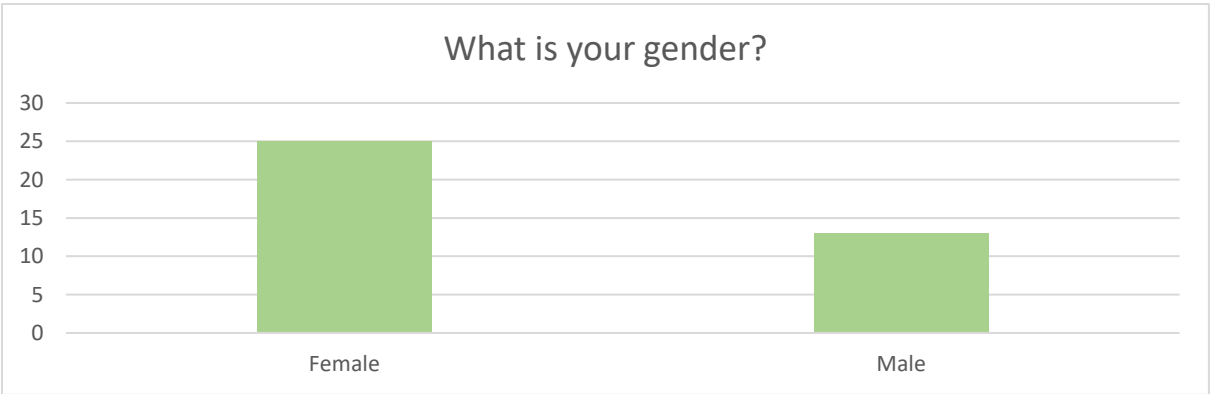

Figure 3. Gender

This study focusses on international students which are most likely to be a relatively young population group. When looking at the age distributions of the dataset this indication appears to be true with most participants being 19 years old with a total count of 17 (figure 4). The mean of the age is 21 with the youngest participant being 18 years old and the oldest one 30.
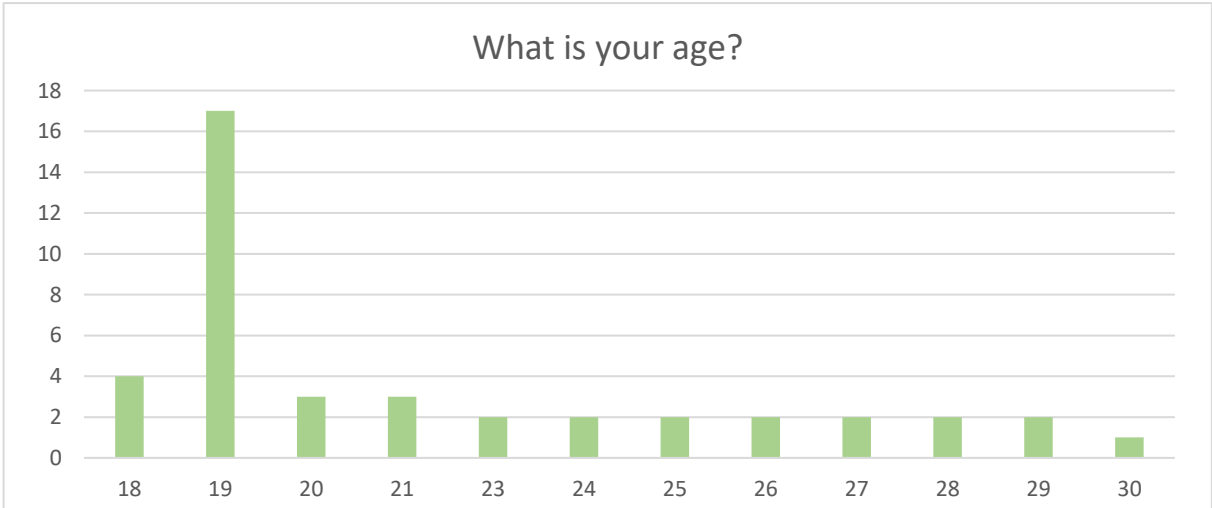

Figure 4. Age

Since all the respondents are international students it is interesting to see which countries they originate from. The country that had most responses was Romania with a total of 10 (figure 5). This is not something that can be traced back in the key figures of the University of Groningen. According to the RUG (2018) most students come from Germany. In this dataset Germany is second with 5 responses. The fact that so many Romanians replied to the survey could be explained because the survey was distributed online. This means that the dataset was possibly passed on between Romanians. It could be that Romanians integrate differently in Dutch society but this should not account for large biases regarding the dataset. Still it is important to reflect on these statistics so possible biases are touched upon for future research.
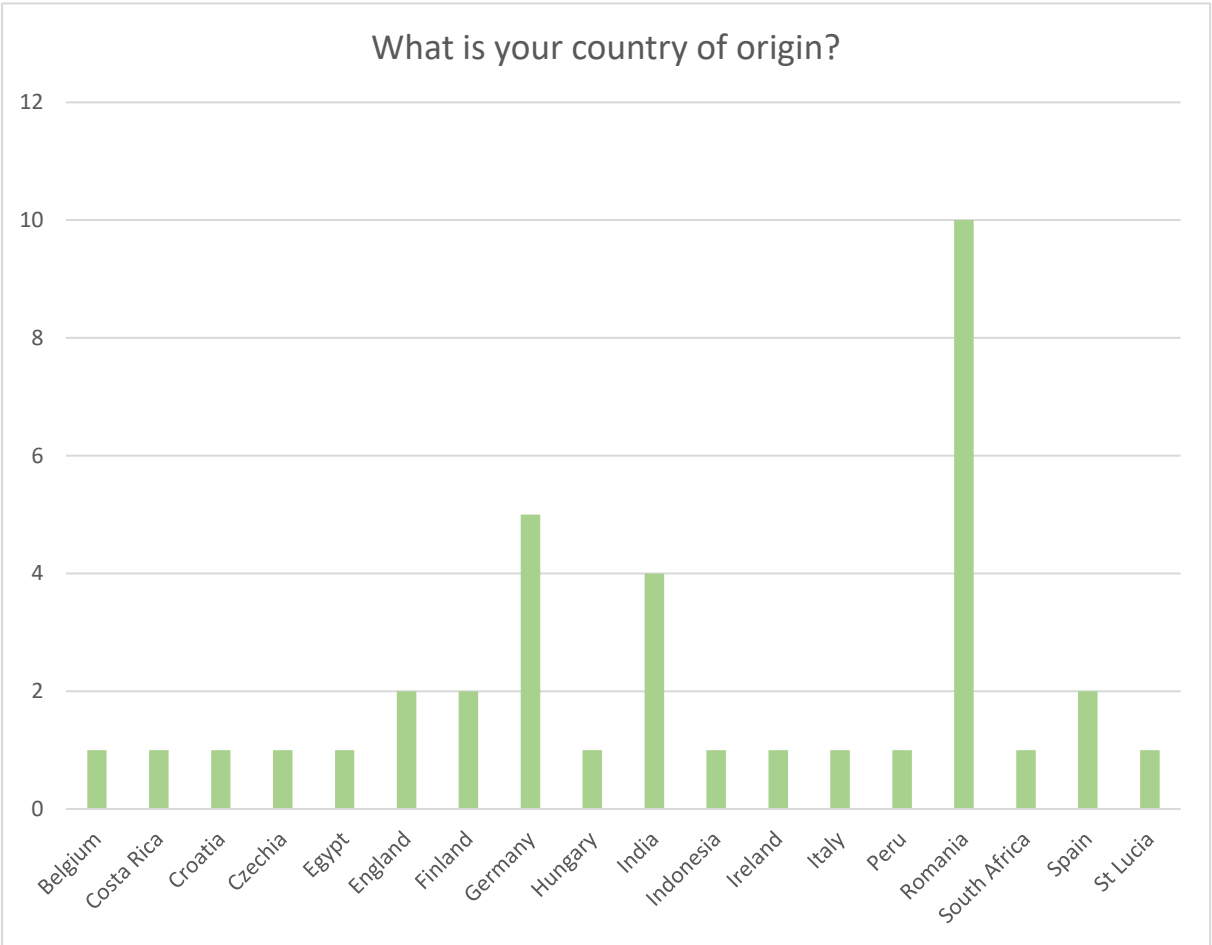

Figure 5. Country of origin

4.1.1 Motives to study abroad

The first section of the online survey included introduction questions on certain descriptive statistics of the research population. Included in this section is the question that asked for certain motives the student had to make the decision to follow education abroad. The possible answers to this question are inspired by the valuation surveys that were made by international student programs like Erasmus+. The question is multiple answer so multiple choices were allowed.

The most chosen motive to study abroad with a total count of 29 was the answer "To enhance my future employability abroad" (figure 6). This is something that is supported in the literature review with the theory of Shields (2013). In his theory he explains the motives behind internationalisation of education and concluded that most students move abroad in search for better opportunities than those available in their home country. The second most chosen motive is "To live abroad and meet new people" with 28 responses. The least chosen option was the answer "To learn/improve a foreign language" which is understandable since English is the main language spoken on most universities around the world. Also English is spoken by most Dutch people. This means that most students do not need to go abroad to improve their language and often times can integrate in society with the language skills they already obtain.
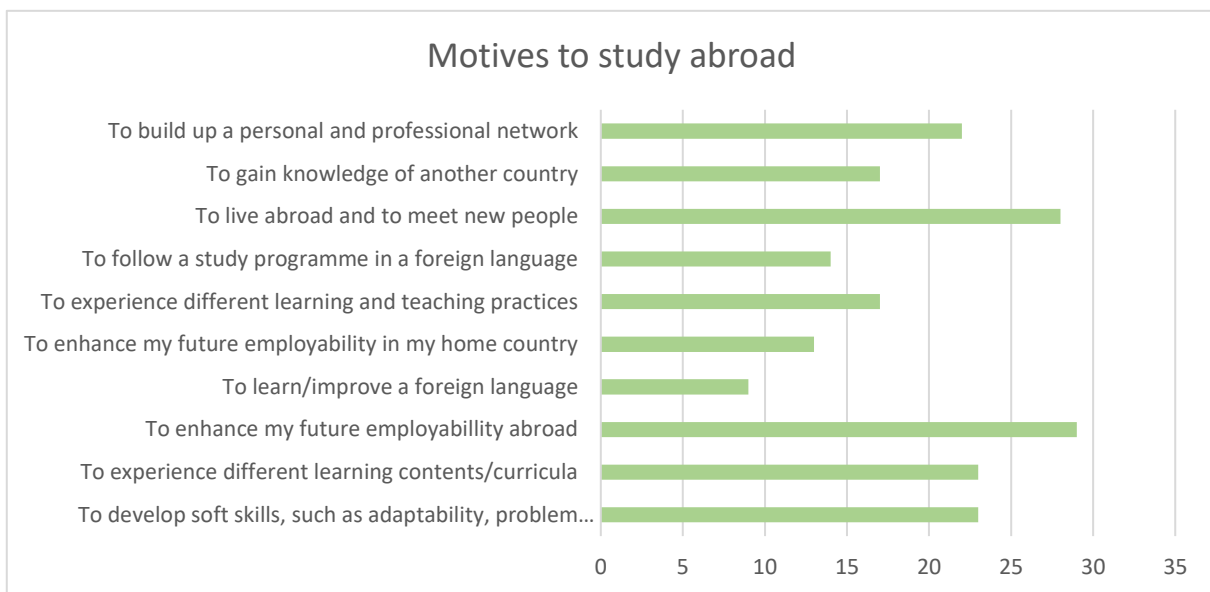

Figure 6. Motives to study abroad

4.1.2 Feeling of integration

The final section of the survey consisted of questions regarding the perceived feeling of integration by the international students. This theme of the survey consists of four questions and two Likert scale statements. The Likert scale statements are going to be used in the inferential data analysis and the other 4 questions were added to the survey to get a better understanding of the population in this descriptive analysis. The following question is about to what extent students keep contact with their home country.

Q21. How often do you have contact with family from your home country?

This question showed some interesting results. From the results of this question it is clearly shown that international students remain close ties with their family in their home country (figure 7). Most students (18) have contact with family in their home country every day. This shows that there is indeed a certain transnational connection among these student migrants during the integration process like Bommes et al. (2012) explained in their 'three-way' process of integration. Explanations of this could be the increased technological improvements making it technically easier to remain contact across borders between families.
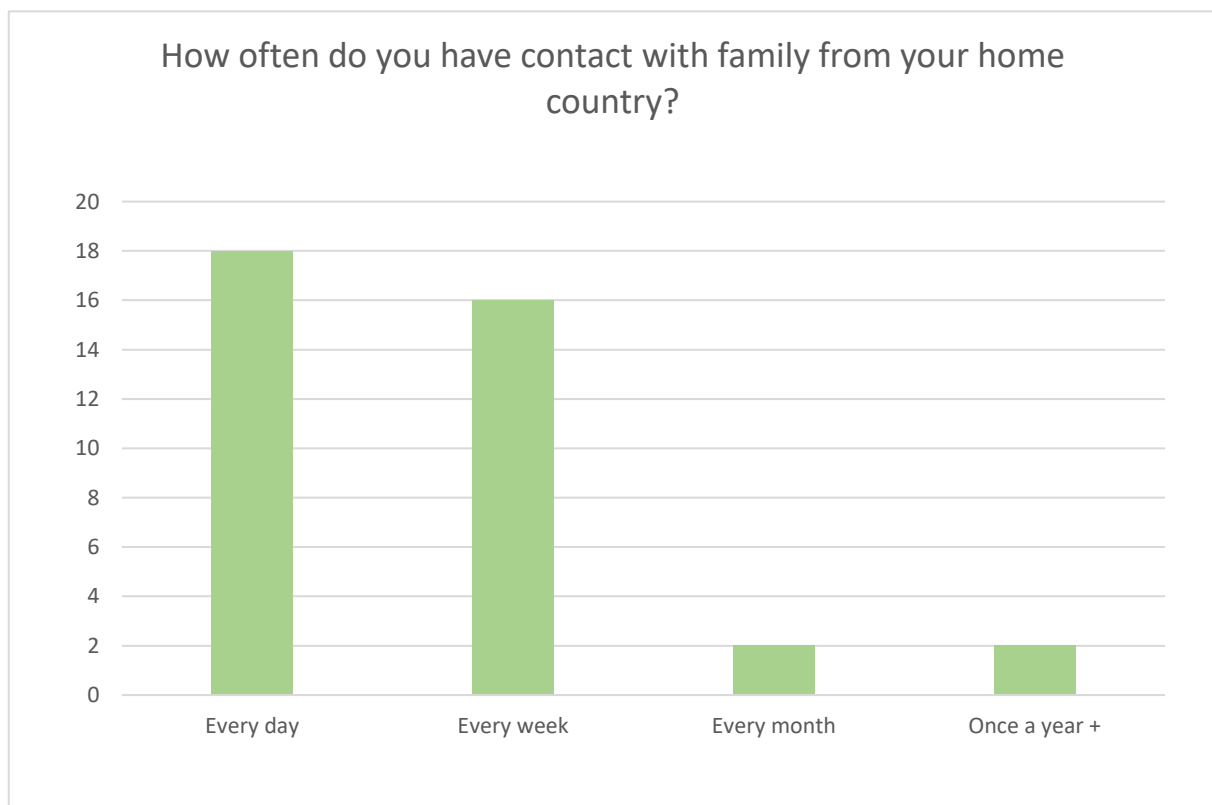

Figure 7. Contact with family

Q26. I feel integrated in Dutch society.

This Likert scale statement that was added to the last theme of the online survey is important for the inferential statistic data analysis of this study. It relates to the integration process and the perception of the international students. Results from this statement show that the respondents did not completely disagree or completely agree with the statement and tend to be either neutral or agreeing (figure 8). In the following subchapters each dimension will be tested against the responses to this statement to see if there were any existing linear relationships between the two.
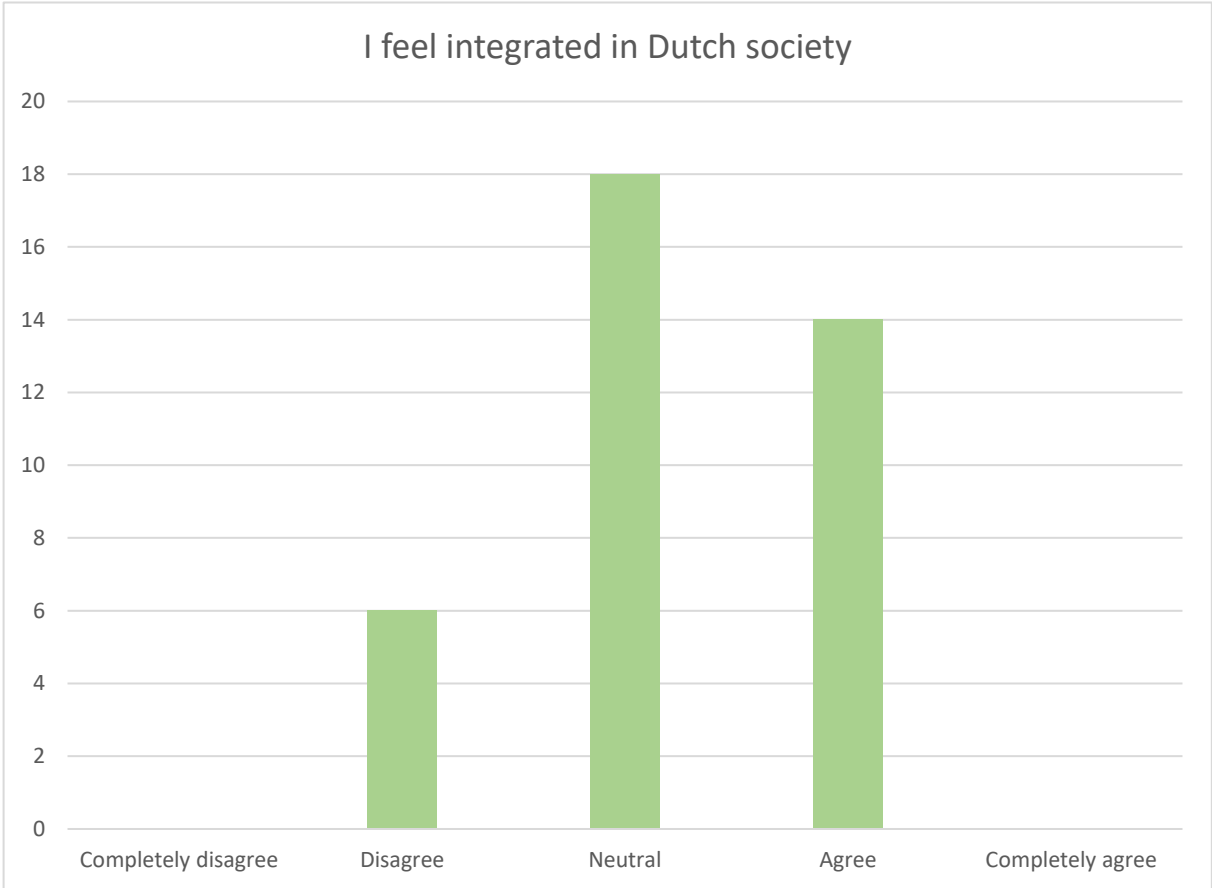

Figure 8. Feeling of integration

4.2 Socio-economic dimension

The first dimension that will be tested for any existing relationships with the feeling of integration is that of the socio-economic dimension. To test this, several Likert scale statements were added to the survey that relate to this dimension. As explained in the data analysis in chapter 3.4 the Likert scale statements are going to be measured for existing linear relationships with the Spearman rho test. The binary variables from the survey will be tested for a relationship with the binary logistic regression test.

Out of the four Likert scale statements the Spearman rho test shows one significant linear relationship with the feeling of integration. Below the results of the four Likert scale statements from the socio-economic dimension are presented (table 1). The only statement with a significant result is the one that states "The university supported me in the integration process". This means that the null hypothesis "there is no linear relationship between the amount of support the university provides and the feeling of integration" is rejected and the alternative hypothesis that implies an existing relationship can be accepted. The Kendall's tau-c is measured at 0.418 making it a moderately strong linear relationship (Venhorst, 2018). In other words: this result shows us that the offered support from the university works for the integration process of international students.

Spearman rho	I feel integrated in Dutch society		
	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Kendall's tau-c
Next to international students also contact with Dutch native students	-0.091	0.586	-0.077
Enrolled with both international as Dutch native students	-0.017	0.919	-0.015
Finding accommodation in Groningen was rather easy	0.176	0.190	0.158
University supported me in the integration process	0.493	0.002*	0.418

Table 1. Socio-economic dimension: Likert scale statements

The question "do you have a job next to your studies?" was tested for a relationship with the feeling of integration using a binary logistic regression test. The significant result in table 2 means that there is a relationship between having a job next to your study and the feeling of integration. In other words: people with a job next to their studies are more likely to feel integrated in Dutch society. An explanation for this result could be that international students with a job next to their studies have more interaction with the Dutch way of life. This interaction influences their feeling of integration and the process of integration that is connected to this. This is also supported by a study done by the OECD (2007) which found that integration into the labour market is a major step for immigrants to be able to function as autonomous citizens in the hosting country.

Binary logistic regression	I feel integrated in Dutch society		
	B	df	Sig.
Job next to your study?	-2.606	1	0.020*

Table 2. Socio-economic dimension: job next to study

With this last variable the socio-economic dimension has two significant results in total. The support of the university and having a job next to your study both showed a significant relationship with the feeling of integration.

4.3 Political dimension

The political dimension consisted of four Likert statements and two questions. The results are shown in the table below (table 3). The statement "I am interested in Dutch politics" shows an existing linear relationship with the feeling of integration at a significance level of 0.003*. The Kendall's tau-c measure of association is calculated at 0.418. This means that the relationship is moderately strong (Venhorst, 2018). Next to the significant results it is interesting to see that the not significant variables all have quite neutral levels. This could be explained because the opinions of international students on political statements tend to be more neutral. These neutral opinions result in a less extreme outcome as opposed to the other dimensions.

Spearman rho	I feel integrated in Dutch society		
	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Kendall's tau-c
I am interested in Dutch politics	0.464	0.003*	0.418
I know the main positions of Dutch political parties	0.190	0.252	0.160
I trust the Dutch political system	0.166	0.321	0.141
I want to vote for Dutch elections	0.250	0.129	0.208

Table 3. Political dimension: Likert scale statements

This neutral opinion of the international students is also reflected in the other questions that were asked in relation to this theme. To the question "Do you trust the Dutch political system?" most international students replied that they simply do not know (figure 9).
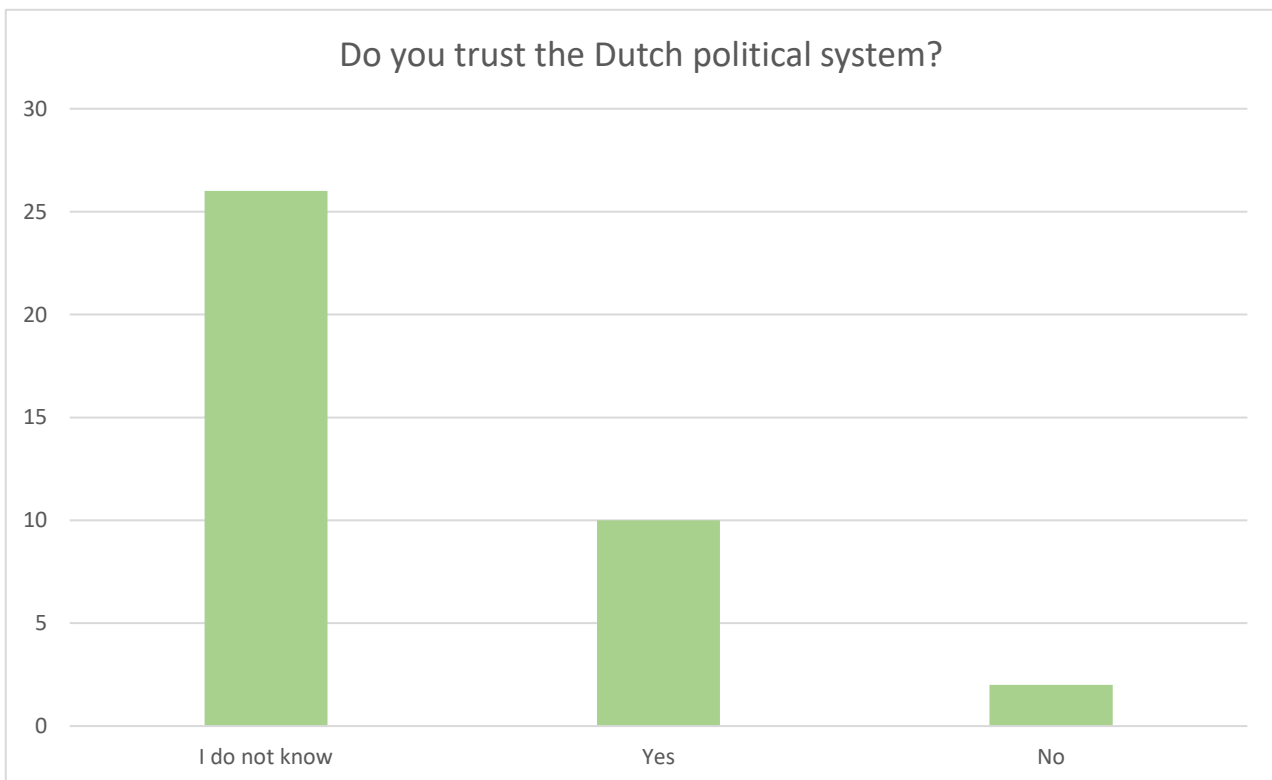

Figure 9. Political dimension: trust in Dutch political system

Another explanation of the neutral results on the Likert scale statements can be traced back in the question "Are you going to vote for the next municipal elections?". The results are shown in figure 10 below. Everyone that has the nationality of a country from the EU is allowed to vote for municipal elections in the Netherlands (Rijksoverheid, 2020). From the 17 people that claim they are not allowed to vote, 12 are originally from a country that is in the EU. This clearly shows that international students are not fully informed about politics and their voting rights in the Netherlands.
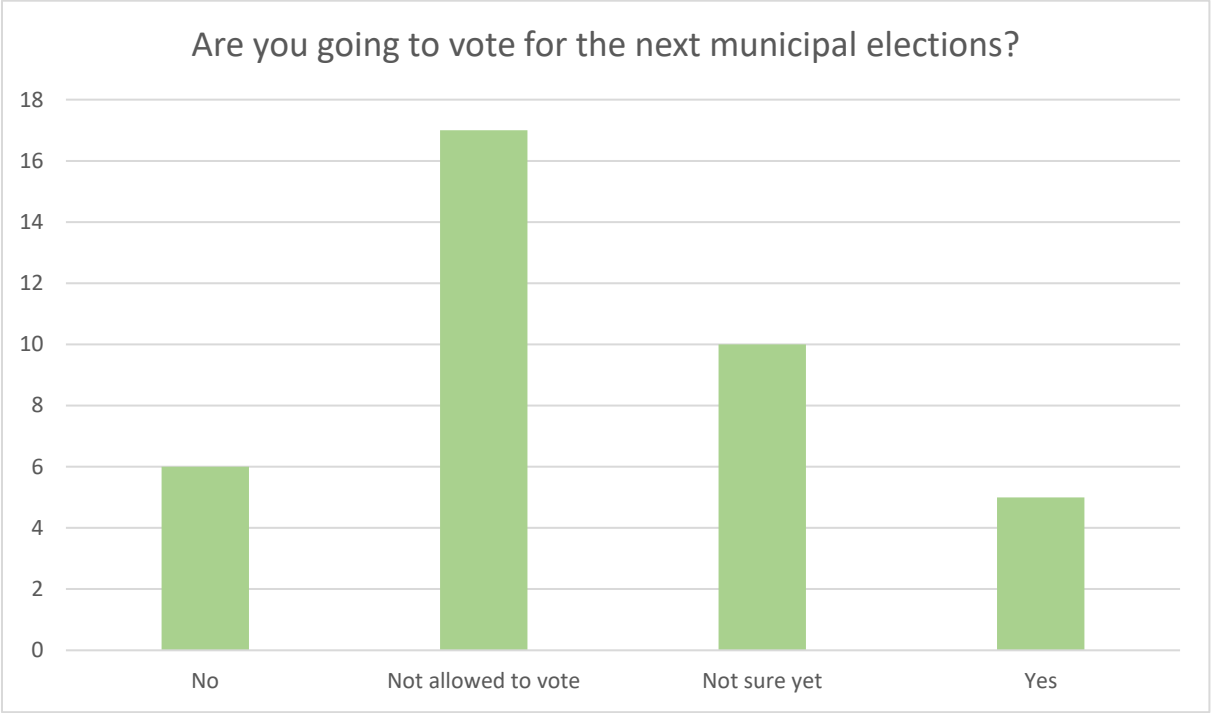

Figure 10. Political dimension: vote for the next municipal elections

Looking at this dimension from an international students' point of view this can be linked to the three-way process of integration. As explained in the theoretical framework both the receiving country and the immigrant need to show effort to be able to make progress in the process of integration. Yet according to these results it is the question whether both the receiving and the immigrant really shows effort. From these answers it appears that the international students are not properly informed about politics in the Netherlands resulting in them being less interested.

4.4 Cultural dimension

From the cultural theme in the survey two of the four Likert scale statements showed a significant result (table 4). These statements were about the knowledge of Dutch traditions and holidays and the way Dutch culture relates to the culture from the home country of the international students. This means that both of these variables have a linear relationship with the feeling of integration and that both the null hypothesises can be rejected. The knowledge of Dutch traditions and holidays showed a Kendall's tau-c of 0.314 indicating a moderate to weak relationship. The similarities in culture however measured a Kendall's tau-c of 0.719 which means the relationship between the two variables is strong to very strong (Venhorst, 2018). It may be straightforward that the extent of which different cultures relate have influence on the feeling of integration. However, the fact that the relationship is so strong gives us insights in how important this relationship actually is. This becomes even more evident when this result is compared to the less strong Kendall's tau-c measures of the other significant variables.

Next to the significant results, non-significant results can be interesting to look at too. For example, the fact that the understanding of Dutch language does not contribute to the feeling of integration is something that could be interpreted as a result. This non-significant result could be explained because most people in the Netherlands tend to speak English and therefore learning the Dutch language is not necessary. The relationship between language skills and the feeling of integration could for example be different in other countries or even different cities in the Netherlands. Also, increasing language skills is the least chosen option of international students in question that asked for the motives to go abroad.

Spearman rho	I feel integrated in Dutch society		
	Correlation Coefficient	Sig. (2-tailed)	Kendall's tau-c
I know the main Dutch traditions and holidays	0.365	0.024*	0.314
I can fully understand Dutch language	0.111	0.506	0.096
I experience negative reactions towards my origin	-0.035	0.835	-0.316
The Dutch culture is quite the same as the culture in my home country	0.787	0.000*	0.719

Table 4. Cultural dimension: Likert scale statements

4.5 Discussion and limitations

To move on to the conclusion in the next chapter firstly some points need to be addressed to create a discussion on the work process regarding this thesis. The outbreak of the COVID-19 virus resulted in some practicalities regarding the data collection and consequently also the statistical tests that were used to analyse this data. Since the data collection method shifted from in field sampling to conducting surveys online, some biases in the dataset were inevitable. Initially the number of samples needed for the study and the matching statistical tests was set at 60. With the online survey only 38 fully completed surveys were realised. This was mainly because of the time frame and the lack of international people in the social environment of the researcher. The countries that the international students originated from also caused for a limitation in this study. It appeared that most responses from the online survey were submitted by international students from western countries. Since non-western international students were almost not represented in this data set the conclusions should also be adapted to this consternation. This way the conclusions that were drawn are about the integration process of western international students.

Next to the problems with the collected data, a problem occurred when the survey was posted online. This was because the respondents tended to not fully complete the survey. As explained in the chapter on data collection in the methodology this could possibly be explained because the survey included too many questions and themes (McLafferty, 2016). Shortly after this trend of not fully completing the survey was recognized the online survey was adjusted and reuploaded. The result was positive with more respondents fully completing the survey but some questions were crossed out causing the data set to be less comprehensive as it was intended.

5. Conclusion

The practicalities experienced during the process of writing the thesis had major impacts on the way the results were achieved. Despite all this, still some relevant conclusions on each dimension of the receiving society can be drawn to answer the research question *"Which of the three dimensions initiated by Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas have most influence on the integration process of international students in Groningen?".*

The socio-economic and cultural dimension both showed two significant results making them the most influential dimensions regarding the integration process of international students in Groningen. Although the political dimension showed only one significant result, the questions resulted in a better understanding of the population of international students which was the main research aim of this thesis. Because the international students simply do not know that they can vote this dimension showed less significance with the feeling of integration. However, this is only if we look at numbers. When underlying processes would be analysed it could be that international students are not properly informed about their voting rights. If the international students would be better informed about their ability to vote this political dimension might have a more significant effect on the feeling of integration. To inform the international students the government could start by including an English translated version of the site explaining voting rights in the Netherlands. Further research on this dimension could help to get a better understanding of how the political dimension relates to the integration process of international students in Groningen.

Now that it is concluded that the socio-economic and cultural dimension have most influence on the integration process of international students the initial conceptual model can be adjusted. The adjusted model, in which the importance of the different dimensions is expressed, is presented below (figure 7). Since the socio-economic and cultural dimension are more important in the integration process of international students, integration policies could be adjusted and focussed more on these dimensions. For example, the socio-economic dimension which showed a significant result for having a job next to your studies. Recommending international students to get a job and also giving them the opportunity to work will help to make them feel more integrated. Also the role of the university could be increased since the study proved that the support the university gives, helps with the process of integration. Since there are still questions on to what extend the political dimension really influences the integration process of international students, a different approach in future research could help to answer these questions. Also it might be interesting to do research on non-western international students and see if there are any differences between the two groups in relation to the three dimensions of Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas.

Figure 7. Adjusted conceptual model

20
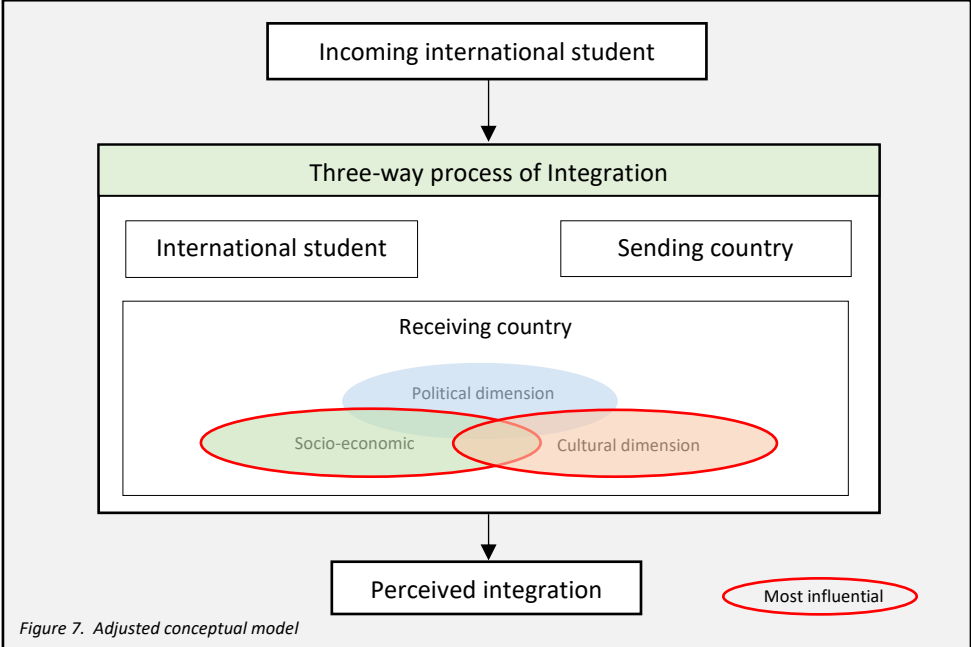
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6.1 Appendix

Because of the increasing internationalization of education this study will look into the integration process of international students in Groningen. The answers on the questions below will be used to conduct statistical tests and see which factors have influence on the integration process of international students. The aim is to obtain insights in this integration process of international students in Groningen.

With agreeing below the respondent agrees on a serious and truthful response

○

Theme 1: Background information

Q1. What is your age?

Q2. What is your country of origin?

Q3. What is your gender?

Male ○
Female ○
Transgender ○
Prefer not to answer ○

Q4. Are you planning to stay in the Netherlands after your studies?

Yes ○
No ○
I do not know yet ○

Q5. What were your main motivations to study abroad? (multiple answers possible)

To experience different learning contents/curricula ○

To learn/improve a foreign language ○

To develop soft skills, such as adaptability, problem solving, curiosity, etc. ○

To enhance my future employability in my home country ○

To enhance my future employability abroad ○

To experience different learning and teaching practices ○

To follow a study programme in a foreign language ○

To live abroad and to meet new people ○

To gain knowledge of another country ○

To built up a personal and professional network ○

Q6. How satisfied are you with the education programme you are currently enrolled in?

Completely satisfied ○
Satisfied ○
Neutral ○
Unsatisfied ○
Completely unsatisfied ○

Theme 2: Socio-economic dimension

Q7. Do you have a job next to your studies?

Yes_____◯
No_____◯

Q8. In my free time I have more contact with other international students as opposed to Dutch native students.

Completely agree_____◯
Agree_____◯
Neutral_____◯
Disagree_____◯
Completely disagree_____◯

Q9. Often times I am enrolled in group projects with both international students and Dutch native students.

Completely agree_____◯
Agree_____◯
Neutral_____◯
Disagree_____◯
Completely disagree_____◯

Q10. Finding accommodation for the time studying here in Groningen was rather easy.

Completely agree_____◯
Agree_____◯
Neutral_____◯
Disagree_____◯
Completely disagree_____◯

Q11. University supported me in the process of integrating in Dutch society.

Completely agree_____◯
Agree_____◯
Neutral_____◯
Disagree_____◯
Completely disagree_____◯

Theme 3: Political dimension

Q12. I am interested in Dutch politics.

Completely agree_____◯
Agree_____◯
Neutral_____◯
Disagree_____◯
Completely disagree_____◯

Q13. I am going to vote for Dutch municipal elections

Completely agree_____◯
Agree_____◯
Neutral_____◯
Disagree_____◯
Completely disagree_____◯

Q14. I trust the Dutch political system

Completely agree_____◯
Agree_____◯
Neutral_____◯
Disagree_____◯
Completely disagree_____◯

Q15. I want to vote for Dutch elections

Completely agree_____◯
Agree_____◯
Neutral_____◯
Disagree_____◯
Completely disagree_____◯

Theme 4: Cultural dimension

Q16. I can fully understand the Dutch language.

Completely agree_____ ◯
Agree_____ ◯
Neutral_____ ◯
Disagree_____ ◯
Completely disagree_____ ◯

Q17. I know the main Dutch traditions and holidays.

Completely agree_____ ◯
Agree_____ ◯
Neutral_____ ◯
Disagree_____ ◯
Completely disagree_____ ◯

Q18. I often times experience negative reactions from Dutch natives towards my origin.

Completely agree_____ ◯
Agree_____ ◯
Neutral_____ ◯
Disagree_____ ◯
Completely disagree_____ ◯

Q19. The Dutch culture is quite the same as opposed to the culture in my home country.

Completely agree_____ ◯
Agree_____ ◯
Neutral_____ ◯
Disagree_____ ◯
Completely disagree_____ ◯

Q20. Do you follow a religion?

Yes_____ ◯
No_____ ◯

Q21. Are you part of a Dutch society/association?

Yes_____ ◯
No_____ ◯

Theme 5: Feeling of integration

Q22. Would you like to live in your country of origin after your studies?

Yes_____○
No_____○

Q23. Do you feel at home in the Netherlands?

Yes_____○
Sometimes_____○
No_____○

Q24. How often do you have contact with your family from your country of origin?

Every day_____○
Every week_____○
Every month_____○
Once a year_____○
Never/less than once a year_____○

Q25. I feel integrated in Dutch society.

Completely agree_____○
Agree_____○
Neutral_____○
Disagree_____○
Completely disagree_____○