

## **The Effect of Jordanian Culture on “Study Abroad Students” at the Council on International Educational Exchange in Amman/Jordan**

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**ABSTRACT:** This research paper intended to show the effect of Jordanian culture on study abroad students at the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) in Amman/Jordan. To collect information, we developed and distributed an online questionnaire electronically on a sample of 179 students. The valid questionnaires were 65. A statistical analysis to find out the effect of Jordanian culture on “study abroad students” at CIEE Amman were made to find out whether the Jordanian culture has an effect on “study abroad students”.

**KEYWORDS:** Culture, Study Abroad Students, Food Habits, Homestay Family, Iceberg, Career Driven.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

According to the 2019 Open Doors report on international education the number of US students who study abroad has been increasing (IIE), as students recognize the great benefits of studying abroad. Besides gaining academic credit, students become more intercultural competent. In addition, students who study abroad can have better employment opportunities (Maharaja, 2018).

In this research, we are trying to explore to what degree US students who study abroad at CIEE Amman for a semester are influenced by the Jordanian culture; namely food habits and the Arabic language. Then, we will conduct a comparison between “study abroad students” who chose to live with a homestay family and those who chose to live in an apartment. The homestay experience gives students a chance to live with a host family for the purpose of cultural immersion.

Like other cultures, the Jordanian culture has so many traits and for the purpose of this research, we decided to consider only two factors: Food habits and Arabic language. However, the questionnaire included questions about smoking habits and perceptions of cleanliness.

#### **Research Problem:**

This research topic is of a personal interest to us. We work in the field of study abroad, and we are very much interested to find out the effect of Jordanian culture on “study abroad students” and the role housing choice play in that effect. Moreover, in the future look into the other aspects of the cultural iceberg, specifically those aspects that are under the surface. Then hopefully we can present these results in a study abroad conference. Study abroad students at CIEE Amman live the cultural immersion experience while in Jordan through Arabic classes, housing, cultural activities, excursions and the daily life. Therefore, the research will investigate the effect of Jordanian culture on “study abroad students” at CIEE Amman/ Jordan.

#### **Study Objectives:**

This research aims to:

- Determine the effect of the host culture; i.e. the Jordanian culture on “study abroad students” at CIEE Amman/Jordan.
- Investigate the effect of Jordanian food habits on “study abroad students” at CIEE Amman/ Jordan.
- Explore the effect of Jordanian Arabic language on “study abroad students” at CIEE Amman/Jordan.
- Find out the effect of housing choice (homestay family or apartment) on “study abroad students” at CIEE Amman/ Jordan.

**Significance:**

The research on the effect of Jordanian culture on study abroad students at CIEE Amman, Jordan can illustrate how the Jordanian culture affect these students in two main aspects: food habits and language use.

**Hypothesis:**

To investigate the effect of Jordanian culture on study abroad students at CIEE Amman, the following hypotheses were developed:

*Ho:* The Jordanian culture has no effect on “study abroad students” at CIEE Amman/Jordan at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

*Ho<sub>1</sub>:* The Jordanian food habits has no effect on “study abroad students” at CIEE Amman/ Jordan at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

*Ho<sub>2</sub>:* The Jordanian Arabic language has no effect on “study abroad students” at CIEE Amman/ Jordan at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

*Ho<sub>3</sub>:* The Jordanian Culture with its elements (food habits and language)has no effect on “study abroad students” whether they live with homestay family or in apartments at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

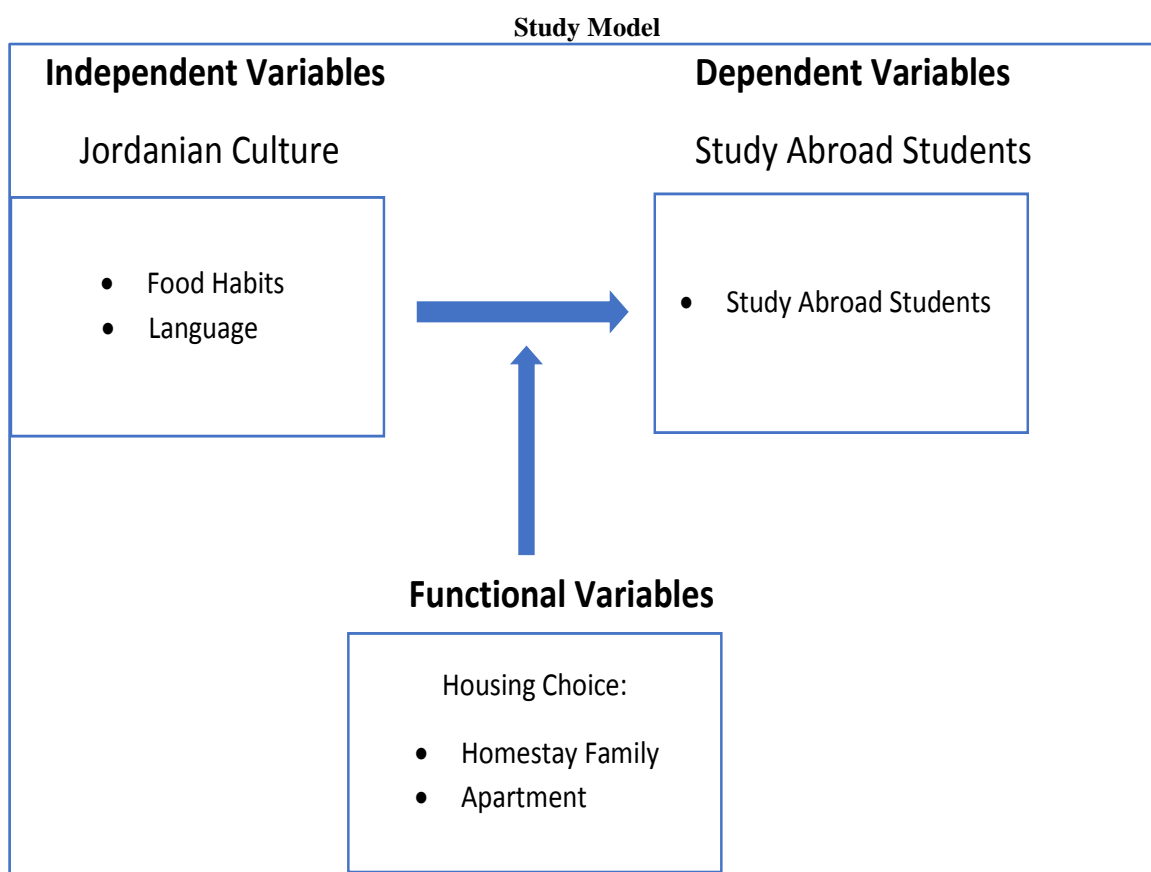


Figure 1: Research Model

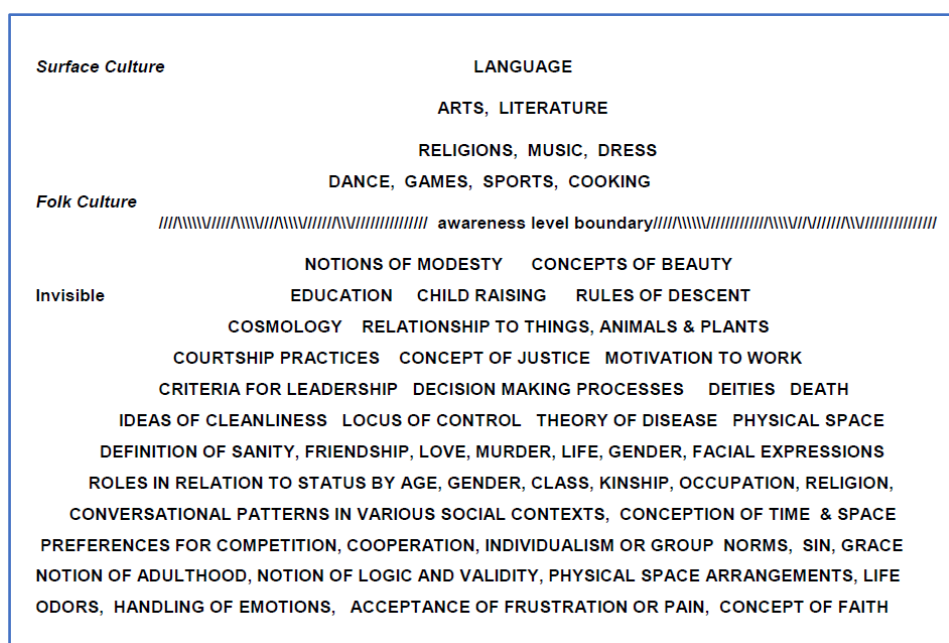
**Definitions of terms:**

- Culture: is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society" (UNESCO).
- Study Abroad Students: those students who decide to leave their own university campus to study in a different country for one or two semesters.
- Food Habits: the amount of bread consumed, olive oil and dates Jordanians eat. In addition, the number of meals offered and the amount of tea Jordanians drink.
- Language: the Jordanian Colloquial Arabic.
- Homestay Family: a Jordanian family that decides to host study abroad students while in Jordan and provide them with housing, meals and cultural immersion. In exchange the family get to learn about the students’ cultures and a small compensation is paid to the family by CIEE Amman.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW:

According to the UNESCO, culture is defined as "[Culture] is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [a human] as a member of society"(UNESCO). From this definition, we understand that culture is reflected in the way that a society behave, think, interact with each other and respond to events.

One of the most used analogies to understand culture is the “the Iceberg” that was illustrated by Gary Weaver based on the arguments of the anthropologist Edward T. Hall in the 1970s, in his book “Beyond Culture” (Hall,1976). Hall demonstrated that culture is not only the “obvious” such as food, art, music...etc, but rather“the nonverbal, unstated realm of culture”. To illustrate the multiple layers of culture that Halls presented



in his book Beyond Culture, Gary Weaver used the “iceberg” to explain the different layers of a culture.

**Figure 2: The Iceberg Model (Hanley 1999)**

Like an iceberg, this model demonstrates that what you see on the surface is a very small portion of what is underneath the water which can be referred to as “deep culture” (Hanley 1999) or “invisible culture” (Ford, et.al. 2005).The part that is beneath the surface is the biggest part and the foundation of any culture (Amorim 2001). Therefore, one can see the tip of the “iceberg”, but cannot immediately comprehend the foundations, which implies that it is difficult to understand people from different cultural backgrounds (Amorim 2001).

“Study abroad students” are those who decide to leave their own university campuses and go abroad. They are usually driven by their goals to accomplish better academic achievements and language learning as well as decision-making independence, intercultural growth, professional development, and enhance international understanding (Ingraham & Peterson 2004) and (Hadis 2005). A study by Kitsantas and Meyers (2001) found that study abroad programs enable students to function in a multicultural world and foster international understanding.

Studying abroad for U.S. university students is very popular and highly encouraged by faculty and universities administration. According to the 2019 Open Doors report, an increase of 2.7% of U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit in 2017/18 was reported (IIE 2019).

For the purpose of this research we will study the influence of Jordanian culture on “study abroad students” who chose to study at CIEE Amman/Jordan. These students live in Amman for 4 months, most of them live with Jordanian host families for the purpose of cultural and language immersion in addition to the opportunity of interacting with Jordanian peers. Students take classes at the CIEE center and with other CIEE students.

Students who decide to study in Jordan are usually career driven and decide to study in Amman for a semester or a year to learn or master the Arabic Language, gain a firsthand experience of the culture and get a better understanding of the Middle East politics. About half of them come from social sciences and 65% are female while 35% are male. To ensure the cultural immersion, about 60-70% of the students opt to live with Jordanian host families. All students are undergraduates of different American Universities.

The first component of the Jordanian culture that will be studied here is the food habits. Ciliotta-Rubery (2016) argues that there is a relationship between food and culture. Therefore, “study abroad students” can have a more comprehensive understanding of the host culture if they become familiar with its food identity (Ciliotta-Rubery, 2016). In another study conducted by Bawadi H. et.al in 2012 the authors concluded that culture in Jordan has a large impact on eating practices and food choices. They found that Olive Oil is widely used in the local diet and bread is consumed on daily basis.

As for language, Stebleton et.al (2013) indicates that there is a positive association between participation in study abroad and linguistic and cultural development in another language. That is one of the main reasons why students decide to participate in the CIEE Amman program. “Study abroad students” find themselves in daily situations where they have to implement what they have learned in the classroom into their daily interactions and conversations with people on the street. Therefore, language is considered an important tool for communication and understanding culture.

In this research we will survey the “study abroad students” at the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) located in Amman/Jordan. CIEE is a nonprofit nongovernmental organization with its headquarters in Portland, Maine in the USA. CIEE was established in 1947 and operates in about 40 countries around the world; CIEE Amman Study Center is one of these centers.

According to the CIEE website, “...we create opportunities that help bring people together. We foster the development of understanding and mutual respect between communities and nations by promoting the exchange of ideas and experiences. We help give students, teachers, and young professionals from across the world skills that make them active and responsible global citizens.” (CIEE). This is achieved through study abroad programs, work exchange programs, and professional development.

CIEE Amman was established in 2001 hosting 12 students. In the process of time and each semester the number increases. Now CIEE Amman hosts between 65-75 “study abroad students” from different American universities. At CIEE Amman, participants study Modern Standard Arabic and Colloquial Jordan Arabic, in addition to political science courses in English.

While in Jordan, students have the choice to live either with Jordanian homestay families or in apartments. The homestay families are selected in accordance to CIEE housing policy which requires treating the student as part of the family, speaking with them in Arabic and it must be a safe environment. As for the apartment, CIEE rents apartments in a safe neighborhood and according to CIEE housing standards.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Nature of Research

This research is classified as descriptive and analytical. It describes how “study abroad students” are advised and directed to find a place to live in, the courses they have to enroll in, and the kind of people they can deal with. It is analytical because it analyzes the independent, dependent and the functional variables. A statistical analysis is done between the variables to test the hypothesis.

#### Population of Study

CIEE Amman hosts around 185 students each year. The population of this study was the student of the year 2019, a total of 179 students. An online questionnaire was distributed either by email or a post on the program Facebook page.

#### Unit of Analysis

65 “Study abroad students” who studied and lived in Amman for at least one semester (4 months) filled up the questionnaire.

#### Cronbach Alpha

The Cronbach Alpha test was run to measure the reliability and consistency of the questionnaire. The Cronbach Alpha was 0.669 (Table 1), which is acceptable in the case of this research paper. Although a score of 0.7-1.0 is preferable.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.669	.671	27

*Table 1: Value of Cronbach's Alpha*

**Validity:** The questionnaire was checked and modified by experts in the field of management and by professors of universities.

#### Scope

The research was conducted in Amman between November and December 2019. The scope of my research was limited to the students of the following programs:

- Fall 2019: 67 students
- Summer 2019: 48 students
- Spring 2019: 63 students

The questionnaire was emailed to Fall 2019, Summer 2019 and Spring 2019. It was posted on the group Facebook page for each program. A reminder was sent to all students to take the survey. Those students who were not on the programs’ Facebook pages or were not active on Facebook did not get the chance to decide whether they would like to participate in the research or not.

### Limitations

The limitations of this research include: the difficulty to decide on the aspects of the Jordanian culture that we would like to study and then having to bring it down to only 2 aspects, food habits and language. Low response rate; 37.8%.

### Statistical Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to perform the statistical analysis. To determine whether the data set is modeled for normal distribution a normality test was performed and Skewness is 0.042 (between -0.5 and 0.5). This means that the data distribution is normal or nearly normal. A summary of the statistics is presented in table (2) below.

Statistics Summary		
Jordanian Culture		
N	Valid	65
	Missing	0
Mean		3.4570
Std. Error of Mean		.04481
Median		3.4444
Mode		3.15 <sup>a</sup>
Std. Deviation		.36131
Variance		.131
Skewness		.042
Std. Error of Skewness		.297
Range		1.67
Minimum		2.63
Maximum		4.30
Sum		224.70

Table 2: Statistical Analysis Summary

After that, and in order to examine the effect of Jordanian culture on “study abroad students” at CIEE Amman, the research hypotheses were tested.

**Ho:** The Jordanian culture has no effect on study abroad students at CIEE Amman, Jordan ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

To test the main hypothesis a multiple linear regression analysis was performed. From Table 3 below the p-value = 0.408, which is not significant ( $>0.05$ ). Therefore, we can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the Jordanian culture has an effect on “study abroad students” at CIEE Amman/ Jordan.

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig	$\beta$	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.104	0.011	-0.005	0.693	0.408	3.583	0.805	4.375	0.000
Jordanian Culture						0.196	0.212	0.832	0.408

Table 3: Ho Model Summary and Multiple Linear Regression analysis

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** The Jordanian food habits has no effect on study abroad students at CIEE Amman, Jordan ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

Another multiple linear regression analysis was performed to test Ho<sub>2</sub>, and the p-value was 0.815, which is insignificant ( $>0.05$ ). So, we can determine that Jordanian food habits has an effect on study abroad students at CIEE Amman/Jordan.

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig	β	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.030	0.001	-0.015	0.055	0.815	4.129	0.572	7.221	0.000
Food Habits						0.039	0.164	0.235	0.815

Table 4: Ho1 Model Summary and Multiple Linear Regression analysis

Ho2: The Jordanian Arabic language has no effect on study abroad students at CIEE Amman, Jordan ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

When the multiple linear regression analysis was conducted, the p-value = 0.569 (>0.05) and therefore, the model is insignificant. This means that the Jordanian Arabic language has an effect on study abroad students at CIEE Amman, Jordan.

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj R <sup>2</sup>	F	Sig	β	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.072	0.005	-0.011	0.328	0.569	3.926	0.592	6.631	0.000
Language						0.081	0.141	0.573	0.569

Table 5: Ho2 Model Summary and Multiple Linear Regression analysis

Ho3: There are no differences between Jordanian culture when it comes to functional variables (housing choice) ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )

The independent samples t-Test was conducted to test the differences between Jordanian culture when it comes to the students' housing choice. From the table below, we can confirm that there is no difference between Jordanian culture when it comes to the housing choice for students between homestay family (p-value = 0.009) and apartment (p-value = 0.008). Hence, the hypothesis is statistically significant.

Variable	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Lived with a Homestay Family	-2.676	63	0.009	-0.266	0.099
Lived in an Apartment	-2.829	28.192	0.008	-0.266	0.094

Table 6: Ho3 Model Summary and Multiple Linear Regression analysis

#### IV. CONCLUSION

According to the above analysis, we can conclude that:

- Jordanian culture has an effect on “study abroad students” when it comes to food habits and language
- There is no difference in the effect of Jordanian culture on “study abroad students” when it comes to their housing choice; homestay family or apartment.

#### Recommendations and Future Research:

After conducting this research, we recommend a further research that includes a larger sample size so we can have more students who chose to live in an apartment rather than a homestay. We also recommend modifying the questionnaire so it can reflect the extent to which Jordanian culture can influence their own culture after they return to the US.

In addition, having a bigger sample size will also allow us to study more components of the culture and the role gender, religion and age might play in the effect of Jordanian culture on “study abroad students” at CIEE Amman.

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### Research Questionnaire

We are writing a research paper on “The Effect of Jordanian Culture on “Study Abroad Students” at CIEE Amman, Jordan”.

Please fill up the statement of the questionnaire by selecting ...on the scale. All your answers will be dealt with high secrecy and it will be used for research purposes only.

Thank you for your cooperation and kindness.

Age:

Less than 21                      21-less than 24                      24-less than 27                      27 and above

Gender:

Female                      Male

Religion: -----

Program you were enrolled in:

Fall program                      Spring program                      Summer program One-year program

During your stay in Amman you lived in:

Homestay                      Apartment                      Other

After you finished your study abroad in Amman, Jordan and went back to the U.S.:

I am currently a student at CIEE Amman

Strongly Disagree                       Disagree                       Neutral                       Agree                       Strongly Agree

I get used to the Jordanian dishes

Strongly Disagree                       Disagree                       Neutral                       Agree                       Strongly Agree

I get used to Mansaf and Magloba

Strongly Disagree                       Disagree                       Neutral                       Agree                       Strongly Agree

I always eat with my right hand

Strongly Disagree                       Disagree                       Neutral                       Agree                       Strongly Agree

I eat more olive oil

Strongly Disagree                       Disagree                       Neutral                       Agree                       Strongly Agree

I eat more dates

Strongly Disagree                       Disagree                       Neutral                       Agree                       Strongly Agree

I have 3 meals (breakfast, lunch & dinner)

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I eat more bread

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I stopped being vegetarian while in Jordan

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I drink more coffee

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I don't use curse words as often as I used to

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I use the word Inshallah

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I started using the word Yalla *يالا*

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I use the word Ya'ni *يعني* more

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I use more hand gestures/body language

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I become more tolerate to smoking

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I started smoking cigarettes in Jordan

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I started smoking more cigarettes in Jordan

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I started smoking hubly bubbly/Shisha/Argila in Jordan

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I started smoking more Shisha/Argila in Jordan

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I stopped looking for smoke free restaurants and cafes

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I wash my hands before touching food

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I wash my hands after every meal

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I lick my figures while eating

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I clean my room more often

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I take off my shoes when I enter the house

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree



I used the Bidet/Shatafeh in the bathroom

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I have close Jordanian friends during my studies in Amman

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I was invited by some Jordanian families at their homes

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I felt the generosity of Jordanians

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

I lost weight in Jordan

Strongly Disagree     Disagree     Neutral     Agree     Strongly Agree

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