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**THE ADAPTATION PROCESS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT
MALAYSIA'S RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES: AN ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES
AND THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION**

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The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education has recently unveiled a Strategic Plan aimed at increasing international student enrolment by 25% by the year 2025, with the goal of positioning Malaysia as a global education hub. However, as the number of international students rises, it is essential to ensure that local communities and host universities are adequately prepared to support these students' adaptation and integration into the new environment. This study applies Kim Young Yun's Cross-Cultural Adaptation Model to explore the factors influencing the adaptation process of international students within the Malaysian context. It specifically investigates the challenges faced by current international postgraduate students in Malaysia, as well as the roles played by university staff in supporting their adaptation. To ensure comprehensive coverage, this research focuses on the challenges faced by current international postgraduate students in Malaysia, as well as the contributions of host university staff in facilitating their adaptation process. The study employed quota sampling to select 24 informants, comprising 12 international postgraduate students and 12 staff members, from four renowned research universities in Malaysia: UPM, UKM, UM, and USM. A qualitative approach was adopted using an inductive method, with data collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis was conducted with the aid of a colour-coding technique using ATLAS.ti software to identify emerging patterns and themes. The research findings indicate that international students in Malaysia experience five major

forms of challenges throughout their adaptation journey, encompassing physical, psychological, social, cultural, and academic dimensions. Concurrently, the contributions of staff members involve student management, support systems, facilitation of local adjustment, and effective communication. These results carry significant implications for prospective international students enrolling in universities across Asia, as well as for their respective host institutions. This study recommends that host universities prioritise the needs of postgraduate students by strengthening institutional support and implementing targeted strategies to promote their well-being and successful adaptation.

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**PROSES ADAPTASI PELAJAR ANTARABANGSA DI UNIVERSITI
PENYELIDIKAN DI MALAYSIA: ANALISIS CABARAN DAN PERANAN
PIHAK PENTADBIRAN**

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Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia telah mengumumkan satu Rancangan Strategik yang bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kadar pendaftaran pelajar antarabangsa sebanyak 25% menjelang tahun 2025, dengan matlamat untuk menjadikan Malaysia sebagai sebuah hab pendidikan bertaraf antarabangsa. Namun, penting untuk diakui bahawa peningkatan jumlah pelajar antarabangsa menuntut kesediaan masyarakat tempatan dan universiti sebagai institusi tuan rumah untuk membantu pelajar ini dalam menghadapi proses adaptasi dan penyesuaian terhadap persekitaran baharu. Dalam kajian ini, Model Adaptasi Antarabudaya oleh Kim Young Yun digunakan untuk meneroka faktor-faktor yang mungkin mempengaruhi proses adaptasi pelajar antarabangsa dalam konteks tempatan. Bagi tujuan tersebut, kajian ini menumpukan kepada dua aspek utama iaitu cabaran yang dihadapi oleh pelajar pascasiswazah antarabangsa di Malaysia dan peranan kakitangan universiti dalam menyokong proses penyesuaian mereka. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah pensampelan kuota melibatkan 24 responden, terdiri daripada 12 pelajar antarabangsa dan 12 kakitangan dari empat universiti penyelidikan utama di Malaysia iaitu di UPM, UKM, UM, dan USM. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berasaskan teknik induktif, dengan data dikumpulkan melalui temu bual separa berstruktur dan mendalam. Data yang dikumpulkan dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan kaedah kod warna dengan

bantuan perisian ATLAS.ti. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar antarabangsa di Malaysia menghadapi lima cabaran dalam proses penyesuaian mereka iaitu aspek fizikal, psikologi, sosial, budaya, dan akademik. Sumbangan kakitangan universiti merangkumi aspek pengurusan pelajar, sistem sokongan, penyesuaian dalam konteks tempatan, komunikasi berkesan, serta menunjukkan komitmen institusi dalam memastikan kelangsungan adaptasi pelajar antarabangsa secara holistik. Dapatan ini memberi implikasi penting terhadap pelajar antarabangsa pada masa hadapan yang mendaftar di universiti-universiti di Asia. Kajian ini menyarankan agar universiti-universiti memberikan penekanan yang lebih terhadap keperluan pelajar pascasiswazah antarabangsa dengan memperkukuh peranan sokongan institusi serta melaksanakan pendekatan yang bersasar demi kesejahteraan dan kejayaan proses adaptasi mereka.