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### **The Global Mobility of Palestinian Arab Students: Current Trends and Flows**

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## The Global Mobility of Palestinian Arab Students: Current Trends and Flows

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### Abstract

The article describes the flow of Palestinian students from Israel, identifying the reasons that a large proportion of students from the Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel (PAMI) (21%) currently study abroad. The article traces the development of PAMI students' studies outside Israel and the characteristics of this movement including the disciplines that the students choose to study and current trends and streams. Data are drawn from official statistics and documents, and research representing PAMI education abroad conducted mainly by the two authors. Conceptually, the authors indicate pull and push factors for this phenomenon of temporary migration to acquire higher education and receive an academic degree that will be recognized in Israel.

**Keywords:** Palestinian Arab in Israel, higher education, global mobility, studying abroad, medical professions, PAMI

### Introduction

In 1948, the Palestinian Arab majority in the British Mandate territories became the Palestinian Arab minority in the new Jewish State of Israel (Hereafter: the PAMI). The PAMI now number approximately 1.6 million persons or 17% of the population of Israel (not including East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights) (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The PAMI are a national and cultural minority, but follow various religions (Muslim, Christian, and Druze). They mostly live in separate locations including villages and towns and Bedouin encampments. They speak Arabic rather than the Hebrew of the Jewish majority and have their own cultural heritage (Ghanem, 2000; Ghanem & Mustafa, 2009; Haj-Yehia, 2022). The PAMI are considered a national, sociological and demographic indigenous minority and are an inseparable part of the Palestinian people and the Arab nation, although they are also citizens of the State of Israel. A large proportion of the PAMI subsist under the poverty line and experience discrimination in many areas of their life in Israel. They constitute a marginal minority, lacking economic resources and fully control by the new state. Consequently, the PAMI community aspires to attain higher education (HE) as a social value, seeing it as a tool for upward economic and social mobility (Al-Haj, 2003) and to improve their political and social status. In 2021 the number of PAMI students studying in academic institutions in Israel stood at 58,000 (out of 336,330 Israeli students), constituting 17% of all students in Israel's higher education institutions, quite similar to their representation in the general population. It should be noted that the percentage of female students among the PAMI students reached 72.2% (60.1% females among Jewish students) (Israel Council for Higher Education, 2021). However, parallel to this higher education pathway, which happen mainly in Israeli higher education institutions, PAMI students turned to pursue their higher education abroad, mainly in Europe and the Middle East (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020).

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Research has noted various obstacles and blocks acting as hindering factors facing PAMI students when they attempt to enter Israeli universities to study the socially desirable free professions such as medicine, pharmacy and para-medical professions (Al-Haj, 2003; Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2016a, 2018; Arar et al., 2015:). These obstacles include the inferior status of PAMI schools, low matriculation grades, and relatively low achievements in the psychometric tests required for entering higher education admission. Nevertheless, PAMI students tend to apply for prestigious faculties, which have very demanding admission requirements including an entrance exam and personal interview in Hebrew. Other challenges include the fact that studying in Israeli higher education institutions requires foreign language skills (Hebrew and English as instruction languages, which are PAMI students' second and third languages), high academic fees (most PAMI families are situated in the lowest socio-economic strata), and students need to assimilate to life in campuses with a foreign Jewish ethno-centric and 'Western' culture, , difficulties augmented by an environment wrought with political conflict (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020).

PAMI students face other difficulties in higher education that are less challenging for Jewish students: firstly, once accepted, PAMI students find it more difficult to graduate (Al-Haj, 2003). Secondly, other prestigious disciplines (e.g., economics, computer science, business administration) are less attractive to PAMI students (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2010) given that they have limited access to jobs related to these disciplines, which are mainly within the public sector or in private Jewish firms and corporations, while some of these firms requires former military experience (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014). Consequently, the pool of disciplines that PAMI students can consider is mainly constricted to the free professions, which offer independent employment (Al-Haj, 2003; Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2010). Thirdly, evidently Israeli universities tend to reject PAMI applicants more than Jewish applicants, which makes the search for alternatives, such as studying abroad, more urgent.

Consequently, many PAMI students, especially those seeking to study prestigious disciplines, such as medicine, engineering and other free professions find it worthwhile to travel for higher education to European countries or neighbouring Arab countries which have diplomatic relations with Israel (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014; Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2013, 2016a, 2016b).

This article describes the phenomenon of PAMI temporary migration to foreign states to acquire higher education. Specifically, it poses the following main research questions (1) What are the main trends of the PAMI students' global mobility (2) Which states constitute targets for PAMI students' migration. (3) What do PAMI students study abroad? (4) What are the characteristics of PAMI students studying abroad? The aim is to provide a broad picture of the current global mobility of these students and indicate what might be future trends for this phenomenon.

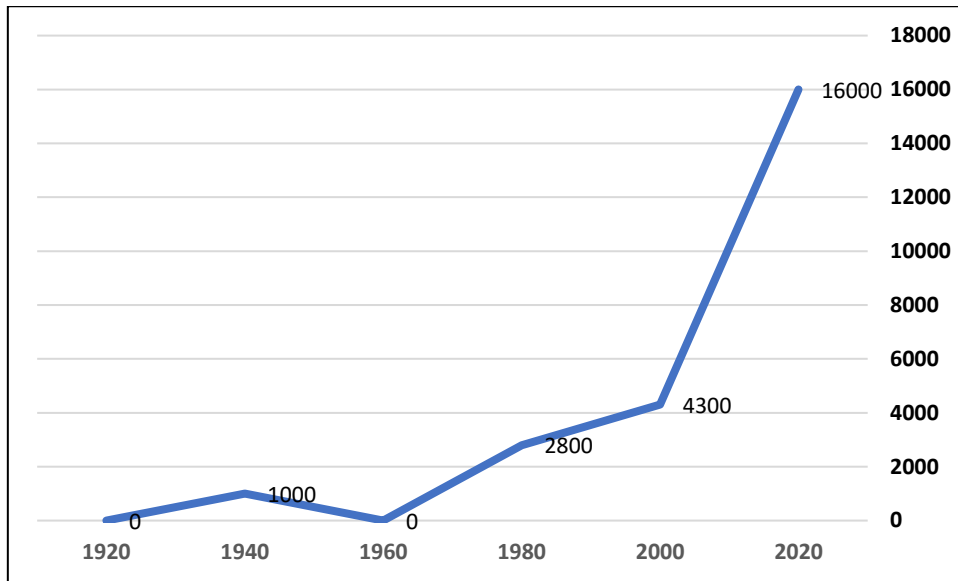
## **Literature Review**

### **A Timeline of the Development of PAMI Students' Higher Education Studies Abroad**

The phenomenon of the Palestinian students' higher education studies abroad is not a transient phenomenon, but rather it is considered a part of a phenomenon of International Students' Mobility (ISM) and is related to the topic of globalization of higher education. ISM has cultural, political and economic impacts on global higher education (Altbach, 2011; Brooks & Waters, 2011). This phenomenon is expanding in most countries throughout the world. Recent data indicate that the rise in the number of ISM over the past three decades has been much faster than the total increase in international migration. In 2020, nearly 6.3 million students were moving across the world in search of education (OECD, 2022).

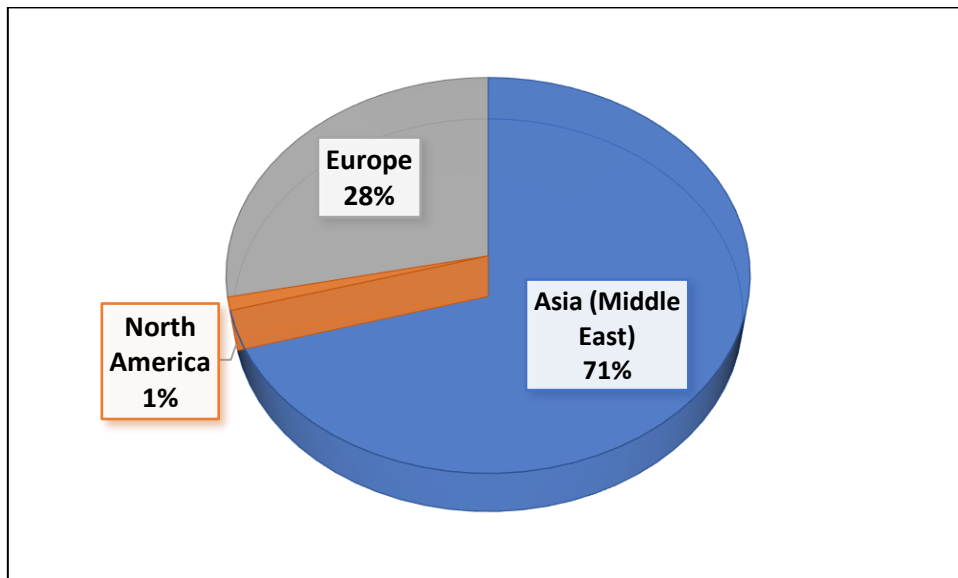
PAMI students' temporary migration to study abroad has expanded in a surprising and unexpected way in recent years, so that more than 22% of all PAMI students in higher education institutions for the years 2019-2020 studied in universities outside Israel (including Palestinian Authority territories' universities). This phenomenon of travelling for studies outside their home state began when Palestinian Arabs studied in foreign countries even before the establishment of the State of Israel, especially in neighbouring Arab states. This was a historical tradition in both Arab and Islamic cultures. However,

the phenomenon did not extend to include all sectors of Arab society and was restricted to select financially comfortable strata (Haj-Yehia, 2002; Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014)



**Figure 1.** Trends in Palestinian Arab students' application for higher education abroad between 1920-2020 (after 1948, statistics relate to Palestinian Arab students from Israel) (source: Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020)

Figure 1 shows the development of Palestinian Arab students' studies abroad along a timeline since the 1920s and especially the massive flood of PAMI students' to studies in foreign states after the dissolution of the military regime imposed on the PAMI population from 1948 till 1966 by the Israeli military of the new state.



**Figure 2.** Global distribution of PAMI students' higher education abroad, 2020 (source: Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020)

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of PAMI studies abroad over three continents. It can be seen that by 2020 the main target for PAMI studies has become Asia (especially the Middle East) rather than Europe. Historically, from the time that the State of Israel came into existence until the middle of the 1990s PAMI students were not allowed to study in Arab states due to Israel's political policies stemming from the Arab-Israel conflict. Thus, those PAMI students who were not accepted in Israel's higher education institutions turned to study in other non-Arab states, especially the USSR. A study by Al-Haj (1996) notes that the Israeli communist party awarded 50-60 annual scholarships for higher education in Eastern

Europe and the USSR. From 1986 until 1996, 1,096 PAMI students graduated from universities in these states: approximately 60% of them studied medicine, 20% studied engineering and the remainder studied political science, economics or law (Arar, 2022; Al-Haj, 1996; Haj-Yehia, 2002; Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014; Arar, Haj-Yehia, & Ibrahim, 2019).

After the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, attempts were made by the Egyptians to attract PAMI students to study in Egypt. The plan was to draw PAMI students to study religious disciplines such as Islamic sharia law, but the plan completely collapsed to the extent that today not one PAMI student is studying in Egypt (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014).

Universities in the former USSR were very popular with PAMI students during the communist regime in Eastern Europe, partially because of the scholarships received from the Israeli communist party (Arar, 2022; Haj-Yehia, 2002; Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014). However, the fall of the communist regime in Eastern Europe reduced the number of PAMI students seeking higher education in the former USSR and the universities in Western Europe (Germany, Italy, UK and Greece) led by Germany, became more popular venues for the PAMI, (Haj Yehia, 2002). In the 1980s and 1990s, many PAMI academics acquired their higher education and professional qualifications in Germany. In 2001, more than 1,000 PAMI students studied there, and many others applied to join them (Haj Yehia, 2002). According to statistics from the Federal German Ministry of Education, in 2006, 730 PAMI students studied in Germany, mainly in the medical and pharmacology faculties (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014) A survey identified several factors motivating PAMI students to study in Germany: (1) Relatively low academic fees; (2) prestige of German universities; (3) geographical vicinity to Israel; (4) opportunities to work while studying; (5) good relations between Germany and the Arab world. (Haj Yehia, 2002). Nevertheless, Germany's popularity waned slightly due to the rise of xenophobia in the state especially Islamophobia, and even more so when new employment regulations reduced opportunities for students' employment while academic fees were increased (Haj Yehia, 2002).

Following the reduction in Germany's popularity, Romania became the preferred location for PAMI higher education. According to the Romanian Education Ministry, 387 PAMI students studied in Romanian universities in 2005, 80 of them studied in the northern Cluj University, half of them in the Faculty of Medicine (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014).

Some PAMI academics travelled to the USA for doctoral studies, especially in social sciences, usually assisted by a scholarship. A doctorate from an American university is considered especially prestigious by graduates of the Arab education system in Israel (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2016a). Despite the inferior economic status of Arab society in Israel expressed in high unemployment and poverty rates, while the standard of living in Europe has increased, many young PAMI students still aspire to study in European states including Germany, Italy, Hungary, Romania, Moldavia, and the Ukraine and also in Russia. Recently PAMI students also began studying in Türkiye because Turkish university admission requirements for prestigious professions such as medicine, para-medical professions, pharmacy, computer science and engineering were easier to meet than those of Israeli universities. European universities are seen as symbols of prestige by PAMI students and their families, and their degrees are seen as promising a better socio-economic future both for the individual and for PAMI society as a whole. After their studies abroad, many PAMI graduates are proud of their European degrees, especially in scientific-technological disciplines such as medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, computer engineering, and electrical engineering. Many of them claim that the quality of their certificates is equivalent to Israeli certificates, and even superior in some disciplines, especially technological and computer sciences (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2016a; Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014).

Following the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan PAMI students began to stream into Jordanian universities. For many of them it was a dream fulfilled to study in the neighbouring Arab state, in their mother tongue and to have their certificates recognized by Israel. Undoubtedly, in recent years, Jordan has become the main target for PAMI students interested in studying prestigious degrees, such as medicine, para-medical studies and pharmacy. There has also been a recent stream of PAMI students to universities in the Palestinian Authority territories, especially the American Arab University situated in

Jenin. There too, they study medicine and para-medical disciplines, for which it is more difficult to gain acceptance in Israeli universities (Arar. & Haj Yehia, 2010; Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2011, 2013; Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2017). Various studies throughout the world discuss different motivations for higher education acquired outside the student's mother country, however the application of PAMI students to study abroad is clearly stimulated by the background of the constrictions detailed above and studying abroad is a product of a pushing reality. Studying abroad offers an alternative to studying higher education in Israel where entry to universities is often blocked for them.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted phenomenological methodology in analysing and understanding trends, turns and returns of international higher education pathways among PAMI students (See: Creswell & Clark, 2017). Creswell (2013) defines phenomenology as an approach to qualitative research that focuses on a lived experience within a particular group. Maxwell (2013) further clarified that a phenomenological study explores what people experience and focuses on their experience of a phenomenon. Therefore, the phenomenological approach aims to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena as they are perceived by the actors in a particular situation, and this approach can be applied to single cases or opportune or deliberately selected samples of different sizes (Van Manen, 2017, p. 776).

Phenomenological approaches rely on a paradigm of critical scholarly knowledge that has been collected about certain phenomena, and their use gives rise to deep insights and meaningful interpretation. As two inductive scholars who have over the last two decades explored higher education mobility among our people, we adopted this approach to analyse the knowledge we gained in researching Palestinian students' access pathways to higher education in different national and geographical contexts. In line with the theory of Van Manen (2017, p. 776), our generic inquiry on this phenomenon aims to analyse the different trends and experiences of Palestinian students in higher education. We therefore employed phenomenological methodology to uncover the phenomenon of Palestinian students' global mobility experiences as described by the students themselves (Crotty, 1998).

Therefore, the article relied on official statistics and data provided by local and international official sources such as the OECD (2020, 2021) and UNESCO (2021), and also statistics from the Israeli Council for Higher Education, the universities to which the PAMI students applied and other published statistics from official websites. Furthermore, the two indigenous Palestinian Arab researchers who composed this article also relied on information elicited directly from PAMI students studying abroad with whom they had made contact over two decades of different pioneering researches on the phenomenon of PAMI studies abroad. They were able to conduct a meta-analysis of the various qualitative and quantitative studies they had conducted in this context in the last two decades (Arar, 2022; Arar & Haj Yehia, 2010; Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2011, 2013, 2016a, 2016b, 2018; Haj-Yehia, 2002; Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014, 2020).

Although, different sources of data sometimes differ regarding the number of PAMI students studying abroad, because most of the official international and consulate data from the states and universities where the students study, relate to these students merely as Israelis and do not distinguish PAMIs. Thus too, the movement of PAMI students is not consistent, because a large proportion of PAMI students who travel to a specific state for further education, later relocate to another state for reasons relating to entry conditions, academic, financial, or social difficulties involved in life in exile.

### **Findings**

#### **Global Mobility of PAMI Students: Current Trends and Flows**

The academic journey of PAMI students for higher education far from Israel's academic institutions began to grow at the end of the 1970s and increased dramatically at the end of the last century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014). The newest trend began from 2007 with the flow of PAMI students to Palestinian universities, as a result of geopolitical changes following the Oslo pacts and a process of recognition for those universities by Israeli authorities (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2016b). It is also noted that in recent years many PAMI students travelled to Eastern Europe including Moldavia, the Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, Poland and most recently to Türkiye.

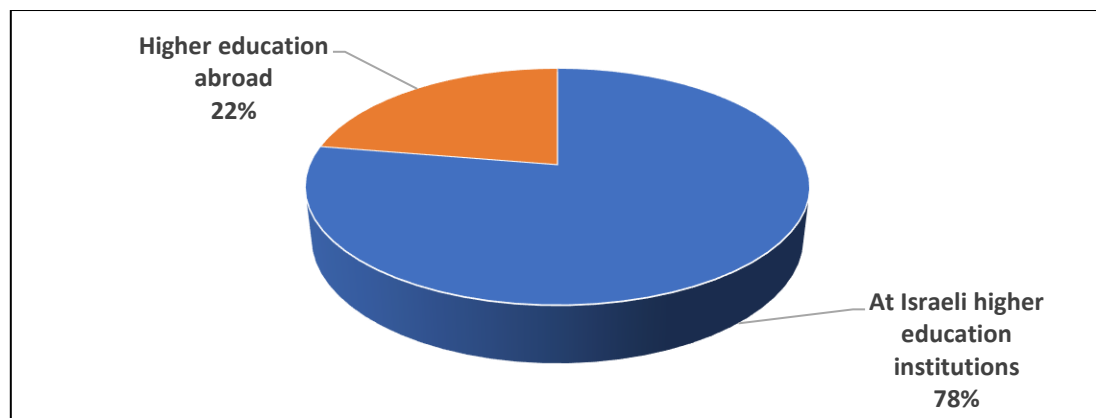
In our survey of these developments, we note that as blocks to PAMI students' applications to Israeli higher education institutions increased, in parallel, the pull factors for learning abroad were augmented (Haj Yehia & Arar, 2014). Each target state offers unique factors to attract those students. It seems that PAMI students also have strong motivation to overcome very difficult obstacles to realize their dream and study prestigious disciplines that are hardly accessible for them in Israel.

Relying on other international official data and testimony from the field from PAMI students studying in higher education institutions abroad, the researchers established that the number of PAMI students studying abroad in 2019-2020 amounted to 16,722. This means that between 2013-2020 the number of PAMI students studying abroad grew from 9,260 to 16,722, an increase of 44.6%. (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020). In 2020, those studying abroad constituted 22% of all 58,000 PAMI students studying either in Israel or abroad. Notably, the percentage of female PAMI students out of all PAMI students studying abroad constituted 30% (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020). This phenomenon deserves further and more specific and comprehensive research.

**Table 1.** Number of PAMI studying in higher education institutions in different countries: Comparison between 2012-2013 and 2019-2020 (Source: Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020)

Country	2012-2013		2019-2020	
	No. of students	% of all PAMI studying abroad	No. of students	% of all PAMI studying abroad
Jordan	3060	33%	1302	7.7%
Palestinian Authority	2500	27%	9320	55.7%
Moldova	1650	17.8%	1650	9.8%
Romania	600	6.5%	1050	6.2%
Germany	550	6%	750	4.4%
Italy	400	4.3%	500	2.9%
Ukraine	-	-	1450	8.6%
Other countries	500	5.4%	700	4.7%
Total studying abroad	9,260	100%	16,722	100%

Table 1 shows clearly that the PAMI students' mobility to attain higher education abroad mostly focused in recent years on higher education institutions in the Palestinian Authority territories. The data indicate an immense increase in the number of PAMI students studying in Palestinian universities. In the academic year 2011/2012 2,500 PAMI students attended Palestinian universities, by 2019/2020 this number had increased to 9,320 (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020) and they became the largest group of PAMI students studying outside Israel, constituting 55.7% of all PAMI studying abroad in that year. It can be seen that Moldavia has accepted 150 PAMI students and in recent years, PAMI students began studying in the Ukraine. In 2012-2013 in comparison to the large number of PAMI who studied in the USSR in the past, not many PAMI students studied in the Ukraine, however by the academic year 2019/2020 the number studying in the Ukraine rose to 1,450 students (before the outbreak of war with Russia) (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020).



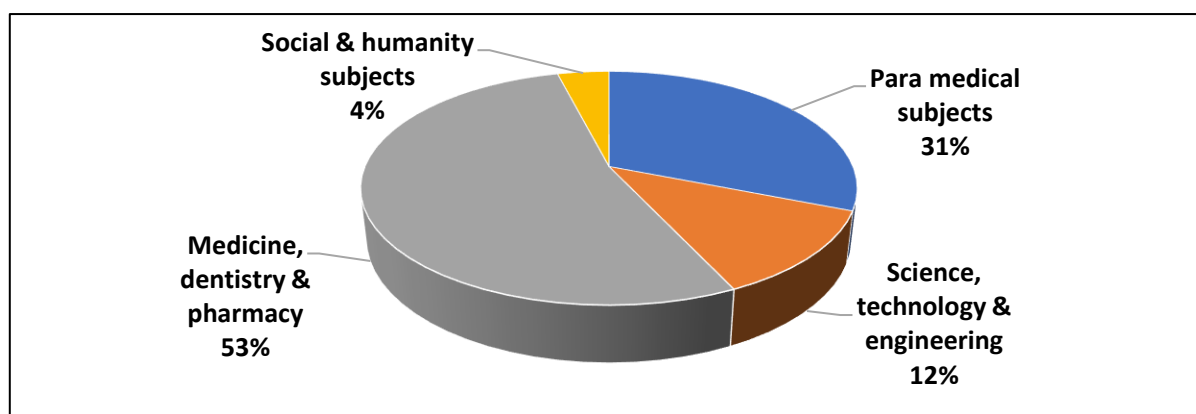
**Figure 3.** Percentage of PAMI students in higher education institutions abroad out of all PAMI students studying either in Israel or abroad (source: Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020)

**Table 2.** Distribution of PAMI students studying in Palestinian universities in 2019/2020 (source: Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020)

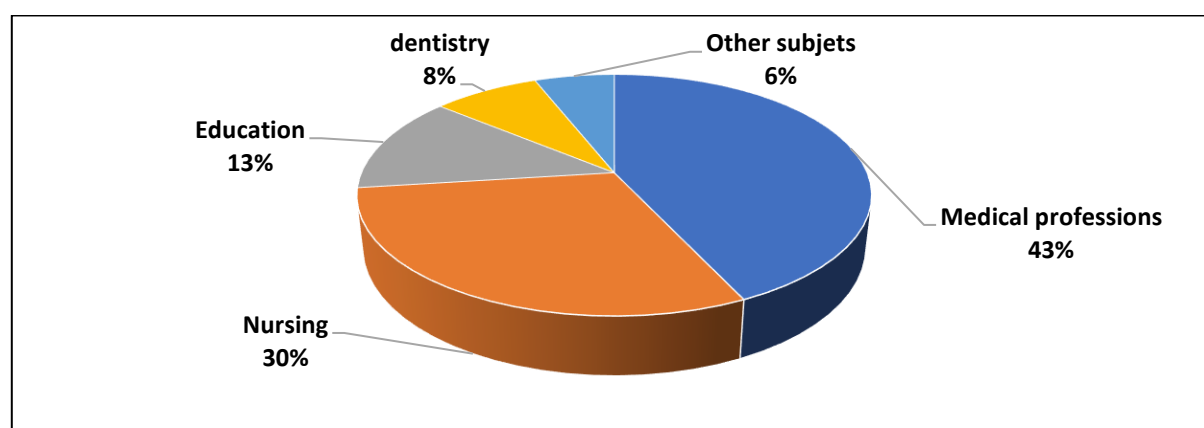
University	Number of PAMI students
Al-Najah – Nablus	1,806
Al-Quds – Abu Dis	610
Palestinian University Khaduri	14
Beit Lehem University	7
Beit Zeit University	35
Palestinian Engineering Polytechnic University	40
Hebron University	788
American University - Jenin	6,020
Total	9,320

Table 2 shows that the largest concentration of PAMI students in Palestinian higher education institutions can be found in the private American University, Jenin (a town in the north of the West Bank) and number 6,020 students. The second largest concentration of PAMI students (1,806 students) was found in the AlNajah University in Nablus (the largest Palestinian Authority public university, situated in the central West Bank). Another concentration of 610 students was found in the private Abu Dis University in Eastern Jerusalem (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2017).

The data indicate that most PAMI students studying abroad study medicine, dentistry and pharmacy (53%) (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014; Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020). Indeed, very high numbers of PAMIs study human medicine in AlNajah National University and Al Quds University in Abu Dis. Additionally many PAMIs study auxiliary medical professions abroad (31% of all disciplines), especially in the Palestinian universities (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2017).



**Figure 4.** Top four disciplines studied abroad by PAMI students 2019-2020 (Source: Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020)



**Figure 5.** Disciplines studied by PAMI students in the American University, Jenin, 2017-2018 (Source: Palestinian Higher Education Council, 2018)



**Table 3.** Disciplines studied by PAMI students in AlNajah University, Nablus, 2019-2020 (Source: Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020)

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
Exact Sciences	14
Life Sciences	20
Al Sharia (religion)	61
Education sciences and teacher training	143
Engineering and Technology	13
Medical sciences and Health	1,339
Economics and social science	117
Agriculture and veterinary science	54
Law	6
Arts	38
Advanced degrees	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1806</b>

**Table 4.** Distribution of PAMI students in universities in Palestinian Authority territories by discipline studied in the academic year 2018 (Source: Palestinian Higher Education Council, 2018)

<b>Discipline studied</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
Medicine	881
Dentistry	423
Para-medical professions and pharmacy	3676
Law, social sciences and humanities and education	2440
Engineering	338
Other	352
<b>Total</b>	<b>8110</b>

It is noted that PAMI students studying abroad are characterized by their relatively young age (ranging from 19-25 years). The percentage of PAMI studying abroad aged 19-22 exceeds the percentage of Jewish students in the same age range in Israel. 22% of Arab academics completed their academic studies abroad, compared to only 5% of Jewish academics who completed academic studies abroad. Most of the PAMI return to their homeland immediately after graduating. As already noted, almost 30% of PAMI students studying abroad are female, which is considered a new phenomenon in recent years as female mobility was spatial and somehow restricted. The students' families constitute their main economic support (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020). In contrast to other students who travel from their homeland to study and remain in the country where they studied, the PAMI travel abroad to study a promising profession that will enable them to be financially autonomous and gain respect when they return to their homeland (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014) therefore, their migration is temporarily and circular. They hope that this profession will improve their social status. This motivation differs from that of students who travel abroad to study in order to change their environment and experience a different culture and lifestyle (Brooks & Waters, 2011).

### **Concluding Remarks**

The aim of this article is to explore trends of PAMI students' mobility for higher education abroad, and to identify the reasons and motivations for this phenomenon. Statistics show that 22% of all PAMI students are currently studying outside Israel and the article lists the broad-ranging reasons for this and the main trends in their choice of location for their studies, especially in the last two decades. Additionally, the article aimed to answer the following questions: what do the PAMI students choose to study abroad? And what are the characteristics of PAMI students studying abroad?

There is a correlation between ethnic minority members' temporary migration for higher education and improvement of their subsequent career potential and socio-economic mobility (Arar et al., 2022; Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2010; Brooks & Waters, 2011). When PAMI students migrate for revenue benefits, like members of other ethnic minority groups, they primarily consider the availability of employment opportunities in local markets both during their studies in the destination country and following their studies on their return to their homeland (Brooks & Waters, 2009).

The temporary migration and geographical mobility of PAMI students appears somewhat different from the mobility of other international students, thus this phenomenon merits profound and comprehensive research to understand its characteristics and features as well as the motivations behind the phenomenon. In principle, this phenomenon seems to stem largely from 'push' factors in their country of origin and 'pull' factors in the countries chosen for their higher education. Their mobility for academic studies differs from the mobility of other students elsewhere in the world because the push factors that motivate them are mainly restricted future employment opportunities and limited educational and learning opportunities in their home country, especially obstacles in accessing higher education in the local national universities in Israel (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2016a; Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014, 2020). The factors which attract PAMI students to academic studies in particular countries, are pull factors, such as opening up availability of future employment opportunities, providing many opportunities for educational achievements, easier access to higher education, work and study opportunities, free tuitions, scholarship, and financial aids (Arar & Haj-Yehia, 2010, 2013, 2016a; Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014).

The above-detailed statistics indicate that more than half of the PAMI students studying abroad today acquire their higher education in Palestinian Authority universities (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2016, 2020). The disciplines that they chose were primarily medicine, dentistry, and all types of auxiliary medical professions and lastly pharmacy. It is concluded that there is a significant reduction in the number of PAMI choosing to study in Jordan today as a proportion of those studying abroad and the current flow of PAMI students is toward the Palestinian universities in the West Bank mainly followed by universities abroad.

Although it might be assumed that PAMI students would prefer to study in an Arab environment such as in the Palestinian Authority territories and Jordan for ideological and cultural reasons, in practice, throughout the world it has been demonstrated that utility, and practical considerations are the primary motives when students choose the venue for their higher education studies (Croll, 2009).

PAMI students, aged from 25-44, travel abroad to study far more than Jewish students of a similar age. In an analysis of survey data relating to adult and international skills, the PIAAC<sup>1</sup> (OECD, 2021), it can be seen that a fifth of the PAMI students completed their studies abroad in comparison to 5% of Jewish Israeli students (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020). It is clear that the increase in the number of PAMI travelling abroad to complete their higher education is due to their strong ambition and academic activity taking place in Arab society in Israel today, hindered by difficulties in gaining admission to Israeli universities in similar majors.

The latest figures on the phenomenon of PAMI studies in foreign universities still point up the large deficiencies of the Arab education system, discrimination in admission policies for Israeli universities, and other obstacles facing PAMI students wishing to study in academic institutions in Israel, especially when they would like to study medical professions, which are their preferred professions for study when they travel abroad (Arar et al., 2015). In fact, the main factor that explains the increase in the number of PAMI students studying abroad is the obvious disproportion between the large number of PAMI students wishing to study medicine and para-medical professions and the limited number of places available for such studies in Israeli universities. Thus, there is a large gap between the demand and supply of educational possibilities, especially obvious with regard to medical and paramedical studies, however as noted this is the most sought-after profession for most PAMI students. The latest statistics concerning PAMI students indicate that 53% of them study medical professions in foreign universities (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2020). This tendency towards medical professions, which is not supported by prior guidance and instruction, is typical of preferred studies sought by a minority, and reflects a desire for independence and attainment of high social status. These studies represent the realization of a dream both for the individual student and for their family and for this they are willing to make many sacrifices and to travel abroad in order to overcome the obstacles that stand in their way in their homeland (Haj-Yehia & Arar, 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies

The increase in the number of Israeli graduates from foreign universities, most of them from PAMI society, necessitates an alteration of government policies regarding the acceptance of male and female PAMI students to these professions. PAMI students, who do not study medical professions in Israeli universities, receive their license to work in medicine in Israel after they complete their studies abroad. The latest data from the Israeli Ministry of Health indicate that from 2010-2018 licenses to practice medicine were awarded to 57,000 medicine faculty graduates, 17,000 of which were awarded to graduates from foreign universities, 30% of them Jewish graduates and 70% Arab graduates (Israel Ministry of Health, 2018). This fact would appear to support the assertion that these graduates had the capability to study medicine in Israeli universities.

Further implications include the need to discuss and rethink policy design facilitating access pathways to higher education in current Israeli universities, including policies for future economic development planning to meet demands for the employment of PAMI graduates. In addition, on the basis of the above review of the statistics on PAMI students and given the increase in applications to higher education among the PAMI, the historical struggle of the PAMI to establish a Palestinian university/ies in Israel can be strongly argued and justified and should receive precedence in the public agenda and future planning of higher education.

To summarize, it is important to discuss the phenomenon of PAMI students' studying abroad in terms of planning higher education, economic and employment policies, and directing more students to higher education in 21<sup>st</sup> century disciplines; digital technology to address future subject and needs. In addition, it is important to consider how the status of minorities in the world should be considered in the design and shaping of international higher education policy.

Recent research concerning PAMI students' higher education has focused on the issue of those student's global mobility. Nevertheless, it is no less important to take into account the fact that global higher education institutions have also begun to focus on planning policies for the internationalization of higher education. These global higher education institutions have begun to play a significant role in developing their work with international students in Europe and even in Palestinian universities because they are the main beneficiaries of this expanding phenomenon.

Finally, future planning and aspirations for an innovative higher education orientation should be aware of and take into account current and future needs both domestically and globally. This becomes especially imperative due to the current globalized economy and development of knowledge technology.

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