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Brain Drain in Lebanon

A Case Study

International Business
2024

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Maailmanlaajuista korkeasti koulutettujen ihmisten muuttamista maasta toiseen kutsutaan aivovienniksi (englanniksi "brain drain"). Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli tutkia libanonilaisten korkeasti koulutettujen maastamuuttoa kriisien sävyttämällä 2000-luvulla. Tässä tutkimuksessa selvitetään syitä, miksi aivovientiä Libanonista tapahtuu, mitkä ovat sen mahdolliset esteet sekä ovatko maastamuuton syyt pysyneet samoina 2000-luvun Libanonissa.

Tutkimuksen teoreettisessa viitekehyksessä hyödynnetään eksplanatorista eli selittävää teoriaa, jossa tarkastellaan aivovientiä käsitteenä, perehdytään Libanoniin maana sekä tutkitaan muuttoliikettä Libanonissa. Teoreettisessa viitekehyksessä esitelty sekundäärinen tutkimusaineisto koostuu Libanonin PESTEL- ja SWOT-analyyseista. Tutkimusmenetelmäksi valikoitui monimenetelmällinen tutkimus, joka yhdistää määrällisiä (kvantitatiivisia) ja laadullisia (kvalitatiivisia) tutkimusmenetelmiä. Primääriaineisto kerättiin internetissä teetetyn, Libanonissa asuville korkeasti koulutetuille ja yliopistossa opiskeleville suunnatun kyselyn kautta sekä laadullisten, puolistrukturoitujen haastattelujen muodossa jotka toteutettiin yhdessä 2000-luvulla Libanonista muuttaneiden korkeasti koulutettujen kanssa.

Tutkimustulosten perusteella selvisi, että huonot työmahdollisuudet, valtion heikko tilanne ja epävakaus, sekä Libanonin epävarma tulevaisuus ovat pääsyitä jo tapahtuneelle korkeasti koulutettujen maastamuutolle, sekä korkeasti koulutettujen maastamuuttosuunnitelmille. Voidaankin todeta, että juurisyyt maastamuutolle ovat pysyneet samanlaisina 2000-luvulla. Tutkimustulosten mukaan libanonilainen perhekeskeinen kulttuuri toimii usein esteenä maastamuuttosuunnitelmille. Perhekeskeisen ja sosiaalisen kulttuurin kaipuu tuli ilmi myös jo maastamuuttaneiden haastatteluissa vahvistaen sen tärkeyttä korkeasti koulutetuille libanonilaisille.

Avainsanat	libanonilaiset, maastamuutto, aivovienti, diaspora

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ABSTRACT

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Global migration of highly educated individuals from one country to another is called brain drain. The purpose of this thesis was to study the emigration of the highly educated Lebanese in the crises-stricken 21st century. This study examines the reasons why brain drain from Lebanon occurs, what are its possible hindrances, and whether the causes of emigration have remained the same in 21st-century Lebanon.

The theoretical framework of the study utilizes explanatory theory, which examines brain drain as a concept, explores Lebanon as a country, and studies migration in Lebanon. The secondary research data presented in the theoretical framework consists of PESTEL and SWOT analyses of Lebanon. The research method applied was a mixed method approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The primary research data was collected through an online survey aimed for highly educated and university students living in Lebanon, and in the form of qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted with highly educated people who emigrated from Lebanon in the 21st century.

The results of the study indicated that poor job opportunities, fragile state of the country and instability as well as the uncertain future of Lebanon were the main reasons for the migration of the highly educated, also impacting the emigration plans of the highly educated. It can be stated that the root causes of Lebanese emigration have remained the same in the 21st century. According to the research results, the family-centered culture in Lebanon often formed a hindrance to emigration plans. The longing for a family-centered and social culture was also evident in interviews with emigrants, reaffirming its importance to highly educated Lebanese individuals.

Keywords	Lebanese, emigration, brain drain, diaspora

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1. INTRODUCTION

Brain drain, also known as human capital flight, is a term to describe the migration of professional or educated people to a country providing advanced opportunities.

For decades, brain drain has been a major problem for developing countries. Regional conflicts, political instability, low quality of life, health risks, insufficient infrastructure, and limited economic opportunities have influenced highly educated and high-skilled individuals to emigrate from developing to developed countries. (The World Bank 2020)

Lebanon, a country that was once known as the Switzerland of the Middle East mainly due to its economic liberalism and booming banking industry, but also because of the country´s political neutrality, and peaceful coexistence of various religious and ethnic groups, has suffered from multiple crises in the last decade, including the influence of the 2006 Lebanon war, Syrian civil war, Covid-19 pandemic, and global energy crisis. (Britannica, 2024) The 2019 economic collapse, which has been described as one of the worst global crises since 1850, has further spawned new crises in Lebanon in the past four years. (Dagher & Altug 2023)

The country´s capital, Beirut, once enjoyed the reputation of being the Paris of the Middle East, as the city was famous of being a French-influenced melting pot of cultures, religions, and ethnicities, fostering a vibrant and diverse cultural scene and beautiful architecture. (Salman 2019)

In August 2020, Beirut´s landscape and history was changed forever. The Beirut port explosion, also known as the Beirut Blast, was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in recent history, extinguishing the lives of over 200 people and injuring another 6,000. (HRW 2023)

Crises and instability are proven to promote the brain drain. Lebanon has been dubbed to be in terminal brain drain, reaching dangerous levels of depletion of human capital. (The World Bank 2020)

1.1 Research objectives

The aim of the research study is to identify the reasons behind the continuous growth of brain drain in Lebanon, a country that has suffered major crises during the last decades. The research will conjointly examine the motives for emigration of the highly educated Lebanese individuals in the 21st century. Furthermore, the research will investigate the different push and pull factors that have an impact on the Lebanese people´s decisions to emigrate from Lebanon.

1.2 Research questions

The three research questions that the research project sets out to answer are the following:

"What are the key drivers of highly educated Lebanese individuals to emigrate from Lebanon?"

"What are the hindrances of emigration of the highly educated Lebanese individuals?"

"Have the reasons for emigration changed in the last two decades?"

1.2 Limitations

Utilizing surveys as data collection methods can lead to survey errors creating discrepancies in survey findings and undermining the validity of the result. These include sampling and response bias, and measurement errors during the data collection process. (Voxco 2024)

Moreover, implementing qualitative interviews does not always constitute good research. Interview is a social interaction that consists of many elements. These include the language, individual levels, understandings and emotions of both interviewer and interviewee, which can easily be misinterpreted. (Edwards & Holland 2013)

Futrthermore, the impact of language should not be underestimated. Given the fact that language being a limitation in itself might also have an impact on the research findings. (Welch & Piekkari 2006 pp. 417 – 437)

1.4   Structure

The first chapter introduced the topic and the aim of the research, including the objectives.

On the theoretical framework, which utilizes the explanatory theory method, the term brain drain is presented, along with an overview of Lebanon and followed by investigating the migration trends in Lebanon. Thereafter, the PESTEL analysis, complemented by the SWOT analysis of Lebanon as a country are used as a secondary data to understand the primary data findings.

Subsequently, the research methodology of mixed methods approach is introduced, followed by the data collection methods. The primary data was collected from a survey aimed for the highly educated Lebanese and university students, and from the interviews conducted with highly educated Lebanese emigrants, who had migrated from Lebanon in the 21st century.

Finally, the conclusion chapter will provide a complete summary of the findings, including reliability and validity of the research as well as suggestions for future research.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

On the theoretical framework explanatory theory is applied. Examining the definition of brain drain, country data, migration trends of Lebanon followed by the PESTEL and SWOT analyses will assist to describe and identify why the problem of brain drain in Lebanon exists. Explanatory research can also be described as a "cause and effect" model, explaining why a particular phenomenon, such as brain drain, is occurring, and further predict the possible future occurrences. (George & Merkus 2023)

2.1 Brain drain

The Oxford English Dictionary defines brain drain as

"The emigration of highly trained or qualified people, regarded as detrimental to a country´s economy or society." (OED 2024)

Brain drain, also known as human capital flight, is a term to describe the migration of professional or educated people to a country providing advanced opportunities.

For decades, brain drain has been a major problem for developing countries. The emigration of skilled professionals leads to a shortage of qualified personnel in crucial sectors including healthcare, education, engineering, and Information Technology. Moreover, brain drain reduces economic growth and may alter the demographic structure leading to further problems. (Young 2024)

Regional conflicts, political instability, low quality of life, health risks, insufficient infrastructure, and limited economic opportunities, also known as the push factors, have influenced highly educated and high-skilled individuals to emigrate from developing to developed countries. The pull factors include aspects such as better remuneration, work opportunities, stability, advanced living conditions and better future prospects. (Kaempf & Swaran 1987)

2.2 Lebanon

Lebanon, officially known as the Republic of Lebanon, is a Mediterranean country situated in Western Asia, bordered by Syria to the north and east, Israel to the south, and the Mediterranean Sea to the west, covering an area of approximately 10,452 square kilometers (4,036 square miles). Despite to its relatively small size, Lebanon has a diverse flora and fauna and versatile terrain. The country has a Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers and cool, wet winters. The capital of Lebanon is Beirut.

Figure 1. Map of Lebanon (Britannica)

Lebanon is home to one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world, Byblos (Jbeil). Lebanon was part of various ancient civilizations including the Phoenicians, who were known for their seafaring and trading. In the modern history era, Lebanon was under the French mandate between the years 1920-1943. The country has experienced numerous conflicts, notably the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990).

Lebanon has an estimated population of 7,447,000, including a significant number of refugees, mainly originating from Syria. The diverse population consists of many religions, largest religious groups compromising Shiite and Sunni Muslims, followed by the Maronite Christians, Greek Orthodox and Druze. Lebanon has a unique sectarian political system, where political power is distributed among religious communities. The official language of Lebanon is Arabic (Levantine dialect), French and English are widely spoken.

Currently the main industries of Lebanon are manufacturing and agriculture, prior to the economic crisis main industries included also banking and tourism. The national currency of Lebanon is the Lebanese Pound (LBP), also called the Lebanese Lira, but American Dollars are also accepted and used in the country. (Britannica 2024)

2.3 Migration in Lebanon

A Lebanese author, poet, and painter Gibran Kahlil Gibran emigrated from Lebanon to United States in the 19th century. After spending 12 years in exile, he wrote a poem "You Have Your Lebanon and I Have Mine" which, even though written over hundred years ago, is still very accurate and timely for the Lebanese emigrants around the globe. (Zgheib 2017)

"You have your Lebanon and I have mine.

You have your Lebanon with her problems, and I have my Lebanon with her beauty.

You have your Lebanon with all her prejudices and struggles, and I have my Lebanon with all her dreams and securities.

Your Lebanon is a political knot, a national dilemma, a place of conflict and deception. My Lebanon is a place of beauty and dreams of enchanting valleys and splendid mountains.

Your Lebanon is inhabited by functionaries, officers, politicians, committees, and factions. My Lebanon is for peasants, shepherds, young boys and girls, parents, and poets.

Your Lebanon is empty and fleeting, whereas My Lebanon will endure forever."

Gibran Kahlil Gibran, "The Eye of the Prophet" 1920.

Lebanon has a long history of migration, dating back to the mentioned 19th century when the several waves of migration commenced. The troubles experienced during the Ottoman era, such as the severe famine and alleged persecution of Christians provoked the first wave of emigration. During the 1860 massacres many Christians found a safe haven in Egypt. The second wave occur after the establishment of the French Mandate on the 20th century. (Verdeil & Dewailly 2019)

In addition, the collapse of the silk economy, which accounted for 60 per cent of GDP at the beginning of the 20th century Lebanon, made people leave to seek for better opportunities in the Americas. (Pukas 2018)

During the first half of the 20th century, the Lebanese emigrants mainly settled in Americas, including United States, Brazil, and Argentina.

The Lebanese Civil War between the years 1975 and 1990 resulted in a third wave of migration, Canada becoming the top destination for the emigrating Lebanese individuals. Australia also served as a major destination for the Lebanese diaspora. There was also a growing number of Lebanese emigrating to work in the Gulf countries, where they mainly secured managerial and technical positions. The emigration wave also arrived in Western Europe and, to a lesser extent, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Today, these four regions are homes for more than 70 per cent of the Lebanese individuals living abroad (See Figure 2). (Verdeil & Dewailly 2019)
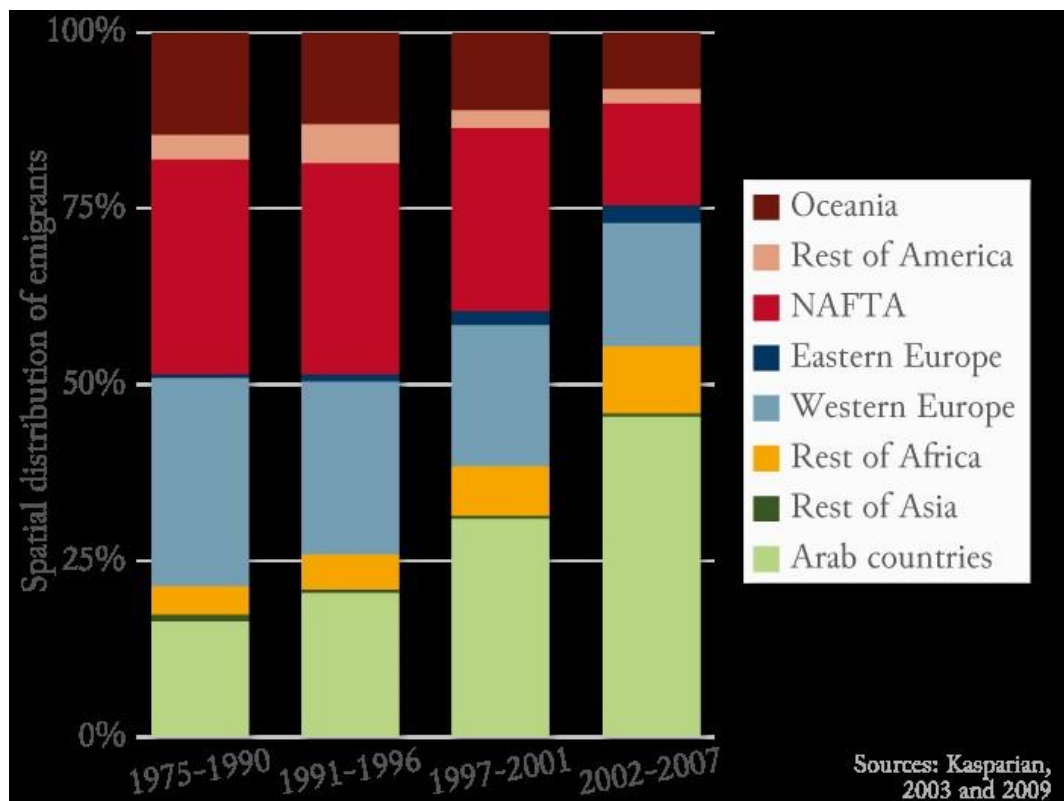
Figure 2. Spatial distribution of Lebanese emigrants (Atlas of Lebanon)

The current estimates of the Lebanese diaspora vary, but the Lebanese government has estimated the figure at 15.4 million. Half of the diaspora is counted to

live in South America. United States, Canada and Australia also have a remarkable Lebanese diaspora, followed by Europe, MENA region and West and Central Africa. (Pukas 2018)

In Europe, most of the Lebanese emigrants have settled in France and United Kingdom. These two countries have also attracted highly educated individuals (See Figure 3).
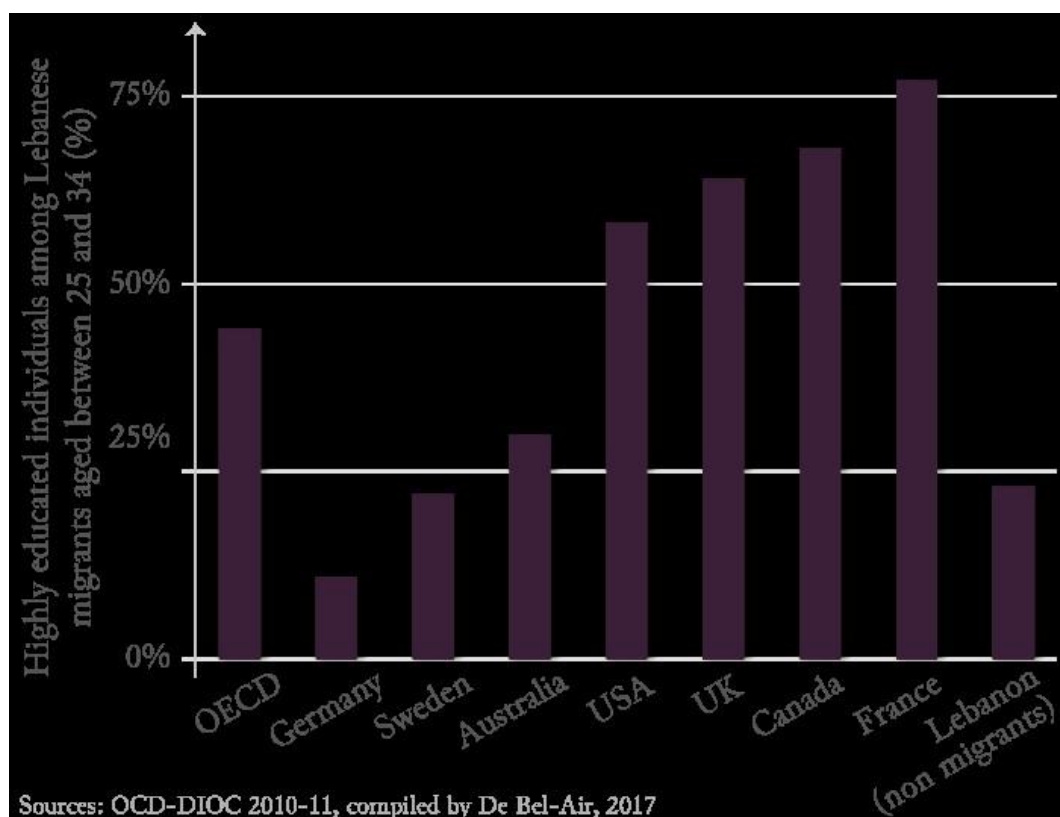
Figure 3. Highly educated individuals among Lebanese migrants aged between 25 and 34 (%) (Atlas of Lebanon)

2.4 PESTEL analysis of Lebanon

PESTEL is an abbreviation for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal. It is a tool for analysis compromising the six factors. It provides

a comprehensive framework for understanding the macro-environmental factors that impact a country. (Cascade 2022)

The PESTEL analysis was applied to investigate the current political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal factors of Lebanon.

2.4.1 Political factors

Lebanon has been characterized by significant political instability, corruption, and inefficiencies in government operations in the past decades. Lebanon has a controversial sectarian division where the president must be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of parliament a Shiite Muslim. At the moment, Lebanon does not have a president or a functioning government which hampers effective governance and policy implementation. (Politico 2024). The country also faces challenges related to regional conflicts and geopolitical tensions, impacting its political stability and international relations. (Yacoubian 2024)

2.4.2 Economic factors

Lebanon's economy is on a brink of collapse, characterized by hyperinflation (See Figure 4), a high public debt-to-GDP ratio, and a negative current account balance. The Lebanese pound has lost over 90 % of its value. The banking sector remains insolvent following the sovereign default in 2020, which has restricted the citizens from accessing their savings. Lebanon faces severe foreign currency shortages, impacting its ability to import essential goods such as medicines. Unemployment rates are high, especially among the youth, and the informal sector dominates the labor market. (The World Bank 2020)

Inflation rate by January 2023
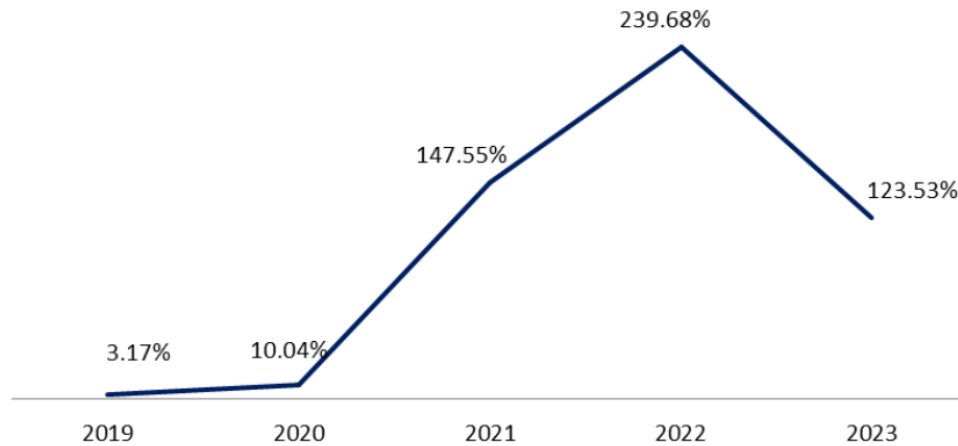
Source: CAS, BLOMINVEST

Figure 4. Inflation rate in Lebanon from 2019 to January 2023 (CAS, BlomInvest)

2.4.3 Social factors

Lebanon is a collectivist country possessing strong family values. According to the Hofstede 5 Dimension Lebanon, Lebanon, with a score of 43 is considered to be a collectivist society. "This is manifest in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group', be that a family, extended family, or extended relationships. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount and overrides most other societal rules and regulations. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group." (Hofstede 2024)

Lebanon is also known for its cultural diversity, as it is home to more than 20 different religions, marking it the most diverse country in the Middle East religiously. However, only 18 religious groups are recognized officially, representing sects of Muslims (Sunni, Shia, Druze, Alawite, and Ismaili) and Christians (Maronite, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Melkite, Armenian Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syriac Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Assyrian Church of the East, Chaldean Catholic, Coptic

Orthodox, and evangelical Protestant). However, most Druze do not consider themselves as Muslims, as Druze and Muslims have very different beliefs. Other religions such as Hindus, Buddhists, Bahai's and Jews are represented by a very small number of population and hence are not recognized officially in Lebanon. Moreover, atheists and agnostics are also excluded, as non-religious people are not counted in the census of Lebanon, since the religion should be stated at birth. It is also impossible for the atheists to marry in Lebanon, as the marriage must be completed in a Mosque or in a Church to be official. Blasphemy in public is punishable by imprisonment, however the enforcement is vague. Religious sectarianism affects the everyday life of the citizens in Lebanon extending from the areas of living to education. (The US Department of State 2019)

Discrimination, especially in employment and gender equality, is prevalent in Lebanon. (Human Rights Watch 2023)

2.4.4   Technological factors

Lebanon has a relatively high internet penetration rate (86.6 % as of 2023), but its technological infrastructure is underdeveloped, mainly due to the lack of proper funding. Moreover, the problems with the infrastructure will slow down the connections and the frequent power cuts also have an effect on the technology sector. The adoption of advanced technologies such as 5G is halted due to economic constraints and infrastructure challenges. Despite these challenges, there is potential for growth in the tech sector if the political and economic environments stabilize, as Lebanon has expertise in the field of technology. (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2023)

2.4.5 Environmental factors

Environmental issues have notably been a low priority in Lebanon, but recent efforts by activists and local communities have brought more attention to sustainable practices. The country relies heavily on imported fossil fuels, but there is a growing trend towards renewable energy installations, particularly solar, as citizens seek stable power solutions due to the frequent power outages and limited supply of hot water. Environmental issues in Lebanon include pollution, poor waste management, limited supply of safely managed water and deforestation. Wildfires are a common occurrence in the country. The country's coastal location makes it vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as rising sea levels and extreme weather events. (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2023)

2.4.6 Legal factors

The legal environment in Lebanon is weak, with a low level of judicial independence and high levels of perceived corruption. (Transparency International 2023)

Legal reforms are needed to improve the due process of law, but these are currently stalled by political deadlock. Regulatory frameworks are often outdated or poorly implemented, leading to discrimination. (Britannica 2024)

The complexity of the legal system, bureaucracy and slow judicial processes pose additional challenges for foreign businesses operating in the country. (IMF 2023)

2.5 SWOT analysis of Lebanon

A SWOT analysis is an acronym for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. This in-depth analysis provides a structured way to evaluate a country's internal and external factors affecting its development and strategic position utilizing the four components of the analysis. (EDA 2024)

The SWOT analysis was conducted to explicate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Lebanon as a country.

2.5.1 Strengths

Lebanon has remarkable gold reserves. In 2023, the gold reserves of the country were valued at 19.165 billion USD. With its 286.83 tons of gold reserves, out of which 54.45% were marked as central bank reserves, Lebanon ranked globally 19th and 2nd in the MENA region in terms of gold reserves. (Choueiri et al. 2024)

Regarding to the location of the country, Lebanon is strategically located at the crossroads of continents, providing the country a good geopolitical location. (Coface 2024)

Due to its location on the East Mediterranean territory, Lebanon has potential hydrocarbon riches. Natural gas deposits discovered offshore of both Israel and Lebanon lead the countries to sign a historical agreement to demarcate the controversial maritime border and to allow the offshore development to commence in 2022. The "Qana" field on the Lebanese side was first proposed in 2017. It has been estimated that the gas deposits located on the Qana field could produce up to 3 billion USD to the Lebanese economy. Moreover, due to the Russia´s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the demand for alternative sources for natural gas has risen in Europe. These events have proposed an even stronger importance for the development of the area where the natural gas deposits have been discovered and as a result, a French energy company TotalEnergies has already begun the development. (Markind 2024)

Moreover, Lebanon´s unique nature in the Middle East region, rich history, pilgrimage sites, historical venues, old towns, museums, culture, wineries, vibrant night life and its world-famous cuisine, proves that the country has an advantage for being able to cater for most of the needs of tourists. Lebanon has a pleasant

Mediterranean, subtropical climate which is characterized by hot, dry summers and mild, rainy winters. Due to its unique geography, Lebanon offers both high-class beach resorts as well as world-class ski resorts. Moreover, ecotourism has gained popularity in Lebanon as its distinctive nature and eccentric landscape offer perfect surroundings for outdoor activities. The tourism industry in Lebanon has a long history and it has been an important source of revenue for the country. In 2003, tourism marked a whopping 33.77% of the Gross National Product. In 2021, Lebanon recorded 890,00.00 tourists. On the same year the tourism sector generated approximately 3.16 billion US Dollars corresponding to 13.67 % of Lebanon´s Gross National Product. (WorldData 2024)

In addition to the country´s strengths, Lebanon provides high-quality education. According to the World Economic forum, in the last decade Lebanon has ranked globally as the fourth best country for math and science education and reached tenth best overall for quality of education. The importance of languages is also highlighted, as in addition to the Arabic language, 43% of schools use French as the foreign language, 34% use English and 23% use both languages, resulting students to become skilled in foreign languages. The educational system in Lebanon is administered in two sectors: private schools and universities, which possess tuition fees, and government operated public schools and universities that are fundamentally free of charge. Lebanon has a vast network of over 40 licensed universities and higher-education institutions, which can be seen as a substantial number for a population of six million, providing versatile opportunities for higher education. (MEHE 2024)

The literacy rate in Lebanon in 2018 was 95.07% according to the World Bank, which is higher than the global average. (International Trade Administration 2022)

2.5.2 Weaknesses

Lebanon´s most substantial weakness is its ongoing financial crisis, which is a result of practicing reckless, deliberate fiscal and monetary policy in the last three decades. The crisis has led to a rapid devaluation of the local currency which, in addition to problems with supply chains and fuel shortages, has caused the price for basic commodities, such as food, to increase substantially. As a result, the devaluation has let the majority of households fall into poverty, marking the crisis as a socio-economic crisis. Moreover, Lebanon being an import-depended country the crisis has turned some imported basic amenities into luxury products, and out of reach for many citizens. (Human Rights Watch 2023)

During troubled times, countries need a strong leader and a united government. However, after the former president Michel Aoun officially ended his 6-year term in 2022, Lebanon´s divided parliament has failed to elect a successor to the former president. Consequently, the government operates under a caretaker government status, which limits its powers significantly. (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2024) This political paralysis has also put the planned economic reformations on hold. Weak governance is also one of the main reasons, why Lebanon has not been able to secure an IMF program. (Dagher & Altug 2023)

According to the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, the key attributes of good governance include transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation, and responsiveness to the needs of people. (OHCHR 2024)

The lack of transparency, accountability, and participation in Lebanese governance has produced a substantial problem of corruption. According to Transparency International´s Corruption Perceptions Index, Lebanon scored 24 out of 100 on a scale where 0 means highly corrupt and 100 means very clean. Lebanon was

ranked at 149 out of the 180 countries, marking the country as highly corrupted. Corruption has increased since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2019. (Trading Economics 2023)

Corruption, alongside with mismanagement have weakened the already poor electricity sector in Lebanon. Producing limited electricity has also impacts on the infrastructure, causing disruptions on other services such as the water distribution, waste collection and internet connections. In 2023, the state was able to provide two to three hours of electricity per day, forcing households to acquire private generators. In 2023, the generator bills for an average household accounted for 44 percent of monthly income, further exacerbating the inequality in Lebanon. (Human Rights Watch 2023)

2.5.3 Opportunities

According to worldwide credit insurer Compagnie Française d'Assurance pour le Commerce Extérieur, Lebanon possesses a possibility to obtain international aid if the Lebanese government commits to the reforms proposed. (Coface 2024)

Even though Lebanon is currently suffering from the economic crisis, the aid programs initiated by the World Bank, United Nations and European Union can offer investment opportunities for the foreign investors. Key areas for the aid programs in Lebanon are related to clean technology and circular economy, waste disposal and water supply, health sector, digitalization, and education. Moreover, the rebuilding of Beirut port and the Team Europe Initiative projects regarding the educational sector might offer project opportunities for foreign companies. (Meskanen 2024)

Moreover, Lebanon possesses a geographical advantage. Between the years 1950 and 1976, the port of Sidon in Lebanon was the end point of the Trans-Arabian Pipeline, known as the Tapline, which was located in Saudi Arabia. During the

1950s, Tapline was the world´s largest oil pipeline system, bringing oil in aid to reconstruct the post-Second World War Europe and helping the economic development of Lebanon. (Norman 2021)

Lebanon has the access to Europe through its Mediterranean ports, and it can be reached by land from the majority of the Asian countries. Lebanon´s geographical location could be utilized when considering facilitating the movement of goods from Asia and Middle East to Europe. Even though Lebanon was left out of the India - Middle East – Europe Economic Corridor in 2023 (Barazy 2023), the opportunities of the geographical location of Lebanon should not be undervalued for the future projects related to the sustainable transportation of goods to Europe from the Asian continent.

Although Lebanon has struggled due to the depreciation of their national currency, some sectors such as farming, fertilizer and plastic industries of Lebanese economy have been able to benefit from the depreciation of the LBP, as it has enabled them to reduce their prices which has resulted in increased sales abroad and opened new markets globally. Moreover, the price increase on imported medicine has had a positive impact on developing and consuming of the locally produced medication. (Gemayel 2023)

2.5.4 Threats

The possibility of the spillover of Israel-Hamas war is one of the major threats to Lebanon. The cross-border conflicts between Hezbollah and Israel have been ongoing since October 2023, causing tensions on both sides. The hostilities have resulted in civilian casualties. Moreover, tens of thousands of civilians have been displaced on both sides of the border due to the heavy exchanges of fire. (Yacoubian 2024) According to the Center for Strategic & International Studies, there is a serious risk of war between Israel and Hezbollah. (CSIS 2024)

As a result, the increasing power of the Iran-supported Hezbollah has also been seen as a threat to Lebanon. (International Crisis Group 2022) Considered to be an Iranian proxy force, the group is renowned for its extremism and attacks on foreign targets. European Union classifies Hezbollah's military wing as a terrorist group, but many countries, such as the United States, Canada, and Israel designate Hezbollah as a terrorist organization in its entirety. (Office of the Director of National Intelligence 2022) Hezbollah possesses a reputation of being one of the most powerful, heavily armed non-state groups in the world. Lebanese political parties opposed to Hezbollah have stated, that the group has undermined the country and is "unilaterally dragging Lebanon into armed conflicts." (Drummond 2023) The leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, has justified and commenced the attacks on Israel in support of Hamas, and has vowed to continue the strikes to Israel until the country will end "its aggression on Gaza". (Yacoubian 2024)

According to the Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati, "Lebanon´s caretaker government has no power to influence the course of events." (Politico 2024)

The security situation in Lebanon poses a threat to the country as it is fragile and can deteriorate rapidly. Common dissatisfaction and exacerbation of inequality amongst the citizens have produced violent demonstrations and increased the criminal networks operating in the country. In addition, according to the government of United Kingdom, terrorism poses a severe threat to Lebanon´s national security. (Gov.uk 2024)

The threats related to the out-of-control refugee crisis in Lebanon should not be underestimated. According to the UN Refugee Agency (2024), Lebanon is currently hosting the largest number of refugees in the world. The Lebanese government estimates attained by the UNHCR reveal, that Lebanon has 1.5 million Syrian refugees and over 11 000 refugees of other nationalities residing in the country. The displacement crisis has placed a further strain on Lebanon´s decreased resources

and damaged society. 90% of Syrian refugees in Lebanon are currently living in extreme poverty creating severe socio-economic problems. (UNHCR 2024)

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a process to systematically solve research problems. The two basic approaches, quantitative method, and the qualitative method, are most commonly used methods for research. (Kothari 2004)

The quantitative method analyzes numerical data through statistical techniques and is expressed in numbers and graphs. The quantitative method will systematically measure variables and test hypotheses.

The qualitative method focuses on understanding concepts, meanings, thoughts, and experiences through non-numerical data and is expressed in words. The qualitative method explores concepts and experiences in a more comprehensive matter. (Streefkerk 2019)

This research project utilizes a mixed methods research approach, which combines both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Since both quantitative and qualitative research methods possess disadvantages, the application of mixed methodology combined with multiple data sources can lead to more valid and reliable research findings. In addition, the disadvantages of one method can be mitigated by the advantages of the other method. The findings from quantitative and qualitative research methods are combined in the research to profoundly understand the nature of the research. (Abro et al. 2015, pp. 1-8)

For the research objectives, a solely quantitative approach would not sufficiently describe the personal experiences of the participants, while a merely qualitative approach would be inadequately generalizable. (McCombes 2019)

For the research question "What are the key drivers of highly educated Lebanese individuals to emigrate from Lebanon?" the qualitative method was used to describe the key drivers, and the quantitative approach was further applied to study

the repetition of the key drivers mentioned amongst the participants. Quantitative data was also gathered from the close-end survey questions.

The research question "What are the hindrances of emigration of the highly educated Lebanese individuals?" was described with words, hence forming a qualitative research approach. However, as certain variables were mentioned frequently, it also provided data for a quantitative approach.

For the research question "Have the reasons for emigration changed in the last two decades?" the data was based on concepts and experiences, utilizing the qualitative research method. Nevertheless, the frequency of certain variables was approached with quantitative research method.

4. RESEARCH METHOD - SURVEY

The research method applied to collect primary research data was an anonymous online survey. The survey was executed online on Google Forms, in April 2024. The link to the survey was distributed amongst the Lebanese individuals residing in Lebanon who were considered as target respondents. The link was shared via WhatsApp, email, and word-of-mouth. The survey gathered 21 respondents, which was less than the anticipated sample size. However, the survey reached different age groups, both genders, graduates, and students from many universities possessing different views of emigrating abroad, hence the 21 respondents can be considered to form an adequate structure of the sample. Moreover, the further examination of the data on question number 7 was more accessible due to the small sample size.

4.1 Research design

The survey consisted of 10 questions, of which questions 1 and 2 and questions 4 to 7 were multiple-choice questions utilizing the closed question method and question 3 was a single-answer question. Questions 8, 9 and 10 had an open-ended question approach.

In questions 1 to 7, quantitative data was gathered regarding the general and educational background information of the respondents. According to SmartSurvey, providing limited options for the respondents to answer ensures that the respondents are not overthinking the responses they submit. Moreover, the simple terms provided in the close-end questions are more comprehensible to the respondents and the data gathered from the close-ended questions leads to effortless comparison and categorization of the data, which assists with the analysis of the data collected. (SmartSurvey)

Questions 1 to 7 were classified as mandatory questions, hence required fields were marked with an asterisk. The respondents were required to answer questions 1 to 7 before they were able to submit their survey answers.

The final three questions, questions 8, 9 and 10 were open-ended questions which were not mandatory questions to the respondents, i.e. there was a possibility to leave these fields blank when submitting the survey answers. The aim for the open-ended questions was to collect qualitative data from the survey responses regarding the countries or areas where the respondents would like to immigrate, reasons for emigration plans, and possible hindrances for their emigration.
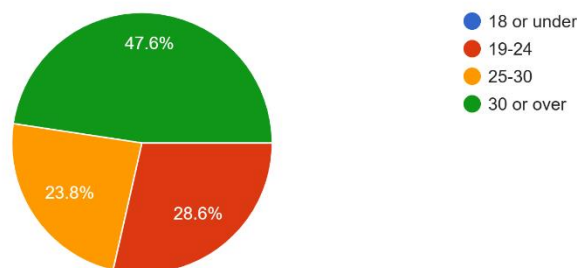
4.2. Findings

The findings of the research data collection method are narratively presented in the following subchapters. The graphics are presented to illustrate results.

### 4.2.1 Age of the respondents

Figure 5. Survey question 1: Age

The closed question method was used to gather quantitative data and to present the age brackets in the online survey. The multiple-choice survey question 1 had 4 choices, and the respondents were requested to select their age from a range of age group categories which were presented as follows: 18 or under, 19-24, 25-30, and 30 or over. There were respondents belonging to 3 of the age group categories provided. Out of the 21 respondents, 0 answered 18 or under (0 %), 6 respondents belonged to the age group category 19-24 (28.6 %), the age group 25-30 was represented by 5 (23.8 %) and the remaining 10 respondents identified themselves as 30 or over (47.6 %), which was the majority of the age groups represented in this survey. The lack of respondents belonging to the age group 18 or under can be attributed to the fact that the university students in Lebanon normally commence their university studies at the age of 18 or 19.

4.2.2 Gender of the respondents
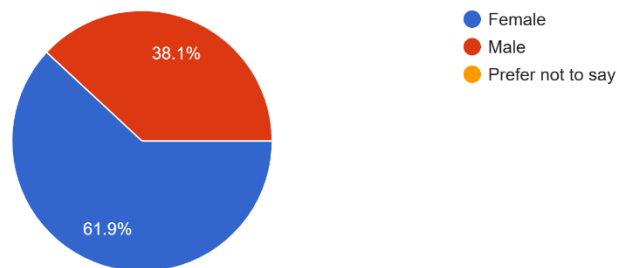
Figure 6. Survey question 2: Gender

The multiple-choice question 2 regarding gender was presented to collect quantitative data from the respondents. It represents the closed question approach as the respondents were given three different options to choose from: female, male and prefer not to say. 21 respondents answered to the question out of which 13 of the respondents were female (61.9 %) and 8 were male (38.1 %). None of the respondents disclosed the answer "prefer not to say". Due to the dominant unambiguous approach regarding the gender identity in Lebanon, the gender is solely categorized as female or male which can explain the lack of "prefer not to say" answers. However, this option was provided as the response can be used for several purposes regarding gender. This question version is also preferable in countries where gender is a sensitive question and the gender expression of trans is criminalized (Marlar 2023), such as in Lebanon.

4.2.3 University background of the respondents

Question 3: Which university did you attend to or are currently attending?
21 responses
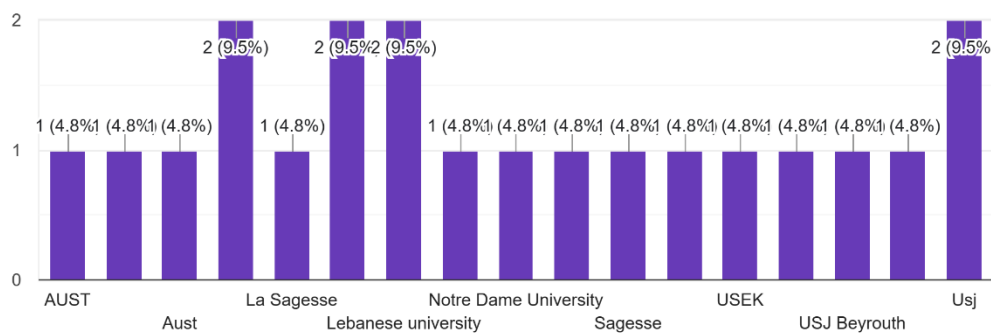
Figure 7. Survey question 3: Which university did you attend to or are currently attending?

Survey question 3 was a single-answer question regarding the name of the respondent's university, where the respondent studied or is currently studying.

Since there are over 40 universities in Lebanon (MEHE 2024), the data was collected by allowing the respondents to write the name of the university, instead of creating a multiple-choice question including a comprehensive list of the universities. The respondents were instructed to write "Your answer" on the blank line provided. Respondents used abbreviations, as well as both English and French names of the universities which resulted in slight distortion and formation of a misleading graph. Out of the 21 respondents, 5 attended or are currently attending to USJ (Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth/Saint Joseph University of Beirut), 3 respondents disclosed NDU (Notre Dame University-Louaize) as their university, 2 respondents were the students or graduates of USEK (Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik/Holy Spirit University of Kaslik), ULS (Université La Sagesse/Sagesse University) was named by 2 of the respondents, 2 respondents graduated or are currently studying in AUST American University of Science and Technology and LAU (Lebanese American University) was the university of 4 respondents. LU (Lebanese University/Université Libanaise) was named as the university of 2 respondents and AUL (Abbreviation of Arts, Sciences and Technology University in Lebanon) was the answer of 1 respondent.

4.2.4 Language of the education of the respondents

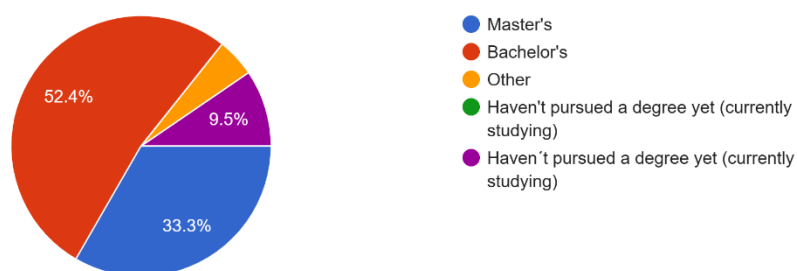Question 4: What was/is the language of your education?
21 responses
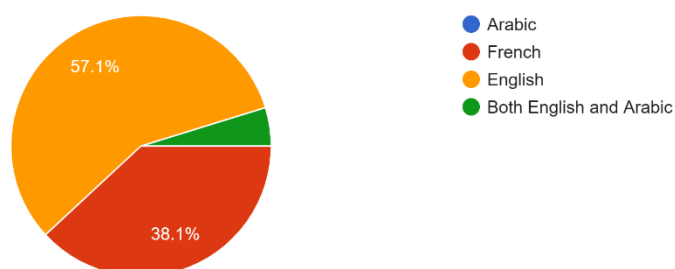
Figure 8. Survey question 4: What was/is the language of your education?

Quantitative data related to the language of education was collected in multiple-choice question 4. The question had four different options: Arabic, French, English, and Other, which the respondents were given an opportunity to further specify. 21 respondents answered the question. 12 of the respondents (57.1 %) were educated in English and 8 respondents (38.1 %) had received their education in French. Only 1 (4.8 %) respondent disclosed the answer "Other" with further clarification "English and Arabic". According to the Lebanese Republic Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE 2024), majority of the public and private universities in Lebanon operate in English or French. Arabic is customarily used for the studies related to Arabic literature or religious Islamic studies, which explains the dominancy of English and French as languages of education amongst the survey respondents.

4.2.5 Highest degree pursued of the respondents

Question 5: What is your highest degree pursued?
21 responses

- Master's
- Bachelor's
- Other
- Haven't pursued a degree yet (currently studying)
- Haven´t pursued a degree yet (currently studying)

52.4%
33.3%
9.5%

Figure 9. Survey question 5: What is your highest degree pursued?

A close-end, multiple-choice question was presented to the respondents to gather quantitative data regarding the level of the respondents´ education. The question

5 of the survey had four options available: Master´s, Bachelor´s, Other, and Haven´t pursued a degree yet (currently studying). Out of the 21 respondents, 7 (33.3 %) were granted a Master´s degree, Bachelor´s degree was obtained by 11 respondents (52.4 %), 2 respondents did not have pursued a degree yet (9.5 %) and only 1 respondent (4.8 %) disclosed the answer Other. Majority of the respondents had already been awarded a university degree, and the Bachelor´s degree was the most common degree obtained amongst the respondents.

4.2.6 Employment status of the respondents

Question 6: Are you currently employed or studying?
21 responses
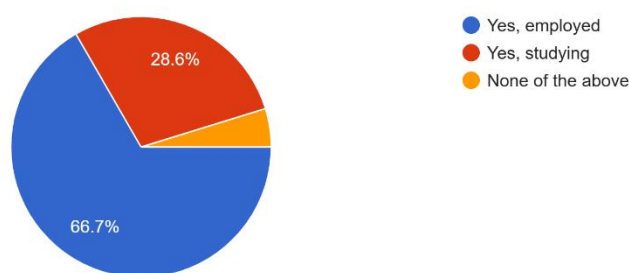
Figure 10. Survey question 6: Are you currently employed or studying?

The aim of survey question 6 was to collect data regarding the employment status of the respondents. The close-end, multiple-choice question provided three options to choose from: "Yes, employed", "Yes, studying" and "None of the above". The question gathered 21 responses stating that the majority of the respondents, 14, were currently employed (66.7 %), 6 respondents (28.6 %) were studying and only 1 respondent (4.8 %) was not currently employed or studying.

4.2.7 Considerations for emigration of the respondents

Question 7: Have you been considering emigrating abroad?
21 responses
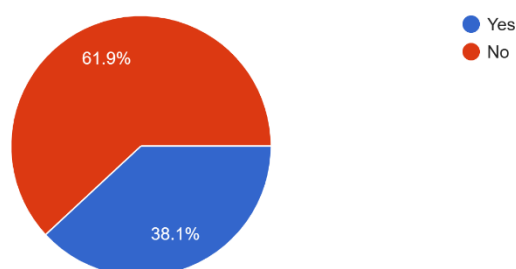
Figure 11. Survey question 7: Have you been considering emigrating abroad?

The final close-end question, question 7, of the survey was dichotomous, providing only "yes" and "no" options. Out of the 21 respondents, 8 (38.1%) answered "yes" and 13 answered "no" (61.9 %).

A closer inspection of the survey question revealed that the respondents who answered "yes" were from age groups 30 or over (3 respondents), 25-30 (3 respondents) and 19-24 (2 respondents). Regarding to the gender, 5 females and 3 males had been considering emigrating. 5 of the respondents considering emigration were educated in English and 3 were French educated, 3 of the participants naming their university as NDU, 2 attended to USJ, 1 respondent was studying in USEK, 1 was a student in ULS and 1 had graduated from LU. Out of the 8 respondents 5 possessed a master´s degree and 3 were awarded a bachelor´s degree. 2 of the respondents who answered "yes" to question number 7 were still studying and 6 were employed.

4.2.8 Questions 8, 9 and 10

The survey consisted of three additional open-ended questions, which were aimed at respondents, whose answer to survey question 7 (Have you been considering emigrating abroad?) was "yes":

Survey question 8: Please specify which country, continent, or area interests you the most and why?

Survey question 9: Please specify the aspects which have made you consider emigration (why do you want to move from Lebanon?)

Survey question 10: What are the factors that hinder your emigration from Lebanon?

The respondents were instructed as follows: "*Please answer to the following questions only if your answer to the previous question ("Have you been considering emigrating abroad?") was ´yes´.*"

4.2.9 Preferable locations for emigration of the respondents

9 survey respondents answered survey question 8, "Please specify which country, continent, or area interests you the most and why?". Out of the 9 responses to the question, "Europe" was submitted in 3 open-ended answers, without further specification regarding the country. 1 respondent named France as a place of interest with a further explanation "we speak the language, and kids can fit in easier". 1 survey participant responded, "UAE or Europe, in a search of higher paid opportunities", followed by the answer "Europe or Saudi Arabia" (1 response) "MENA region" (one response), "Arab countries" (1 response) and USA (1 response).

4.2.10 Reasons behind emigration plans of the respondents

Question 9, "Please specify the aspects which have made you consider emigration (why do you want to move from Lebanon)?" was answered by 9 respondents. 2 survey respondents mentioned "Better future" as an aspect for emigration. Lack of good job positions was stated by 2 respondents and financial reasons were an aspect in 2 responses collected. 1 respondent specified "More suitable opportunities, better pay, and better chances of growth" as an aspect for the considered emigration. "Economic crisis and instability" were mentioned in 1 response, "Safety" was the concern for 1 respondent for the emigration plans.

4.2.11 Hindrances regarding the emigration of the respondents

The final question, question 10 "What are the factors that hinder your emigration from Lebanon" gathered 9 responses. Majority of the respondents stated "family" as a factor hindering their emigration from Lebanon (6 responses). "Work prospects" was mentioned by 1 respondent, as well as "Documents" (1 response). 1 respondent stated, "It is hard for Lebanese to obtain a legal work visa abroad".

5 RESEARCH METHOD - QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Lebanese diaspora is estimated to be one of the largest diasporas in the world, comprising approximately 14 million people globally living in all inhabited continents. (Guignon & Domat 2023)

The world is divided into seven continents. From largest to smallest, the continents are Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Antarctica, Europe, and Australia. (Britannica 2024)

The aim for the qualitative interview research was to outreach at the minimum one participant for the interview from each continent, which was proven to be a successful achievement. Moreover, the research interview mastered to gather participants representing different regional parts of Europe, including Northern, Western and Southern regions of Europe.

Out of the seven continents, only Antarctica was not represented amongst the interviewees since Antarctica is the only continent in the world that does not have permanent human habitation. (Boudreau et al. 2024)

5.1 Research design

There are basically two types of sample designs: non-probability sampling and probability sampling. (Kothari 2004)

Due to the nature of the research, the non-probability sampling type called snowball sampling was applied to the research method.

Also known as chain sampling or network sampling, snowball sampling process commences with one or more study participants. It subsequently continues on the basis of referrals from the initial participants. This process continues until the researcher reaches the desired sample number, or a saturation point. This method

has been proven to be advantageous when conducting research about individuals possessing specific traits and when studying geographically dispersed populations. The type of snowball sampling applied to this research was exponential discriminative snowball sampling. In this method, initial participants give multiple referrals, but the researcher monitors the referrals, selecting only individuals who meet the specific criteria to participate in the sample. This type of snowball sampling is most used when evaluating participants according to specific criteria is essential to the research goals. (Nikolopoulou 2022)

Although the exponential discriminative snowball sampling might have high chances of research bias and sampling bias (Nikolopoulou 2022), this sampling method was vital as the aim for the research was to reach participants from multiple countries.

The participants were contacted prior to the interviewing process to inquire about their willingness to comply with the research project. The participants were further informed about the nature of the interview questions and the questions regarding the data collection of the basic info used to form a table of participants (See Appendix 3).

The interviews were conducted on the phone, by email, and utilizing video calls due to the distance. However, 1 participant (Participant 4) was interviewed in-person, which explains the longer transcriptions of the participant´s interview answers as more time was scheduled for the face-to-face interview.

All of the participants, regardless of their language of education, were able to participate in English.

5.2 Participants

The research managed to gather 10 participants for the interview utilizing the snowball sampling method. Numbers are used to identify the participants instead of names to ensure anonymity. Demographic data was collected prior to the semi-structured interview questions regarding gender, age, highest educational level accomplished, country of residence, and year of emigration. The data is presented in a tabular format.

Participant	Gender	Age	Highest educational level accomplished	Country of residence	Year of emigration
1	Female	26	Bachelor's degree in Psychology	United Arab Emirates	2023
2	Female	33	Bachelor's degree in Graphic Design	Brazil	2022
3	Male	35	Master's degree in Civil Engineering	Ivory Coast	2020
4	Male	37	Bachelor's degree in Accounting	Finland	2019
5	Male	33	Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering	Australia	2014
6	Male	38	Bachelor's degree in Science	France	2008
7	Male	45	MBA in Marketing	Greece	2006
8	Male	46	Master of Laws	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	2006
9	Female	35	MBA in Human Resources	United States of America	2005
10	Female	49	Bachelor's degree in Journalism	United Kingdom	2004

Table 1. Table of the participants

Out of the 10 participants 6 participants were male (60%) and 4 were female (40%), forming a gender ratio of 60:40. The age range of the participants ranged from 26 to 49. The average age of the participants was 37.7, and the median age was 36. All the participants attended university and hence received tertiary education. 5 of the participants had obtained a bachelor´s degree (50%) and 5 participants were awarded a master´s degree (50%). All the participants were residing in different countries and the year of emigration of the participants ranged from 2004 to 2023. 3 of the participants (30%) had left Lebanon after the economic crisis in 2019, and 7 participants (70%) had emigrated prior to the crisis.

The participants were consequently asked three semi-structured questions related to reasons behind their emigration, differences between Lebanon and the current country of residence and if the participants had plans to return to Lebanon.

5.3 Findings

The findings are solely based on the personal views of the participants and hence are presented as quotations in the following subchapters.

5.3.1 Motives for emigration

For the first question, related to the reason why the participants left Lebanon, seven of the participants named better future or work prospects as their reasons leading to emigration.

"I emigrated Lebanon in 2023 after finishing my university degree in Lebanon. My Lebanese husband had already relocated to work in the United Arab Emirates, so moving to the UAE was relatively effortless for me. The simple reason for my emigration was to build a better future with my husband." Participant 1

"The bad economic situation and the inflation made it hard for me to work in Lebanon." Participant 2

"The reason for my emigration was the bad economic situation which led to the devaluation of the national currency and hyperinflation. I had to leave my country looking for a better income." Participant 3

"I moved out in 2019, since the overall situation in Lebanon was getting worse, leading the economic crisis in Lebanon commence later in the year. In Lebanon, I was working in a business heavily related to luxury tourism which was blooming between the years 2009 and 2012 mainly because of the wealthy tourists arriving

to Lebanon from the Gulf countries. When the crisis in Syria escalated into a war, the wealthy Gulf States such as United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar ordered their citizens to leave Lebanon and imposed travel warnings for Lebanon. The demand for prestigious services declined drastically and forced me to seek new business ventures. However, the war in Syria affected Lebanon many ways, including increasing political instability, damaging the economy, causing a refugee crisis, and threatening the overall security. All these factors combined contributed my decision to emigrate from Lebanon, to secure a better future.” Participant 4

“Lebanon didn't have job opportunities, didn't have human rights, and didn't have peace. Those are the basic items to build a future, family, and plans for retirement.” Participant 5

“I received a work opportunity abroad.” Participant 6

“I secured a work vacancy in the Gulf Countries, the unstable situation in home country Lebanon made me emigrate.” Participant 8

In addition, family reasons were a sole reason for three participants to emigrate from Lebanon.

“I moved from Lebanon on marriage.” Participant 4

“I fell in love with a Greek girl, got married and moved to live in Greece with her.” Participant 7

“Due to my father´s work commitments we were granted the Green Card to the United States of America and hence emigrated from Lebanon.” Participant 9

5.3.2 Differences between Lebanon and the host country

The second question proposed to the participants was to specify the differences between the country where they were currently residing in relation to Lebanon. The participants were asked further to name the possible aspects of what they were longing for outside of their home country.

"In United Arab Emirates everything is available for everyone, this meaning 24/7 water supply and electricity, medications, insurance, security. The basic human rights to live normally. However, UAE is very expensive and needs a lot of money for everything. I miss many things from Lebanon, and I prefer to live my future years there. Personally, I can´t wait to go back because I want to live in our culture, in our beliefs and around my family, because my family supply all my important needs such as love, help and support." Participant 1

"The government of Brazil gives basic living conditions to its population including medical care, elderly retirement, public transportation…nothing of these are available in Lebanon. Brazil is very rich in cultures, as it has lots of influence from other immigrants that came from China, Japan, Germany, Italy, and Lebanon. What I miss in Lebanon is the food. Brazilian food isn't that good. Even Brazilians love Arabic food! Furthermore, Lebanon is still safe (to a certain extent) when it comes to going out at night or living alone. Brazil is more dangerous in that regard." Participant 2

"I miss Lebanon a lot and I wish to go back as soon as possible but I know that it is not feasible this year due to the bad situation in the region and the construction sector where I should be looking for opportunities is still struggling. The opportunities regarding the projects on my field in the Ivory Coast are better at the moment compared to Lebanon." Participant 3

"Although I am not employed in a same managerial position, I was working back in Lebanon, the comfortable, middle-class lifestyle I enjoy here in Finland with my

average wage would require substantially higher disposal income in Lebanon. Basic utilities in Finland such as uninterrupted availability of electricity, sufficient hot water supply, reliable internet connection and heating during the winter months are available 24/7 for everyone. Those utilities are also significantly cheaper and hence improve the overall quality of life when you are left with more disposable income. Moreover, the infrastructure of Finland is good, and it is a safe country to live in. Current problems in Lebanon have led more and more people to fall into poverty, and as a result, the crime rates in Lebanon are increasing. In Finland, the basic needs of the individuals are covered which reduces crimes. In addition, people in Finland are treated with respect regardless of their status or background, and everyone has opportunities for self-improvement. Although the income tax in Finland is high, you can see where your tax money is used. In Lebanon, the majority of the so-called taxes collected end up in the pockets of those in power through corruption. However, I do miss the family life in Lebanon, as we have a very close-knit family culture. The Finnish concept of a family is a lot narrower compared to the one in Lebanon; In Lebanon, the extended family members are just as much family, as the members of the so-called nuclear family and we spend a lot of time together. I also miss the friends left behind, and the vivid social life in Lebanon." Participant 4

"Lebanon and Australia differ significantly in terms of living standards, finances, and economies. Australia generally offers higher living standards, with a stronger economy and more job opportunities. However, living costs in Australia can be higher compared to Lebanon. Lebanon has faced economic challenges, including high inflation and unemployment rates, impacting its citizens' financial stability. Additionally, political instability in Lebanon has contributed to economic uncertainty, contrasting with Australia's political stability." Participant 5

"Compared to Lebanon, in France we have peace of mind, no stress about what will happen next. Living in a country where there is a crisis year in year out, whether

it is due to the garbage, forest fires, economic problems or war takes its toll. Being able to live with stability in the present and proper planning for the future and retirement is the biggest thing that must change in Lebanon." Participant 6

"In Greece you can actually make plans regarding to your future. There are pension schemes and reliable options for saving. Everyday life is easy since you do not have to bribe your way to get services. The country is stable and there are no extremist political parties threatening the safety of citizens. To be quite honest, there is nothing that I miss from Lebanon." Participant 7

"In Saudi Arabia, the country and the system are stable, and everything seems to be easy and simple from governmental work to private business work. The difference is in the infrastructure of the country where I feel that my residence country is years ahead of my home country. Secondly, the stability that I have in KSA provides me with a lot of opportunities in my field something which is very difficult to find in Lebanon. What I miss in Lebanon is the family spirit and the familial connections in addition to spend time with childhood friends. My biggest missing from Lebanon is the social life." Participant 8

"The United States have provided almost every need, and, if it wasn't for the opportunities such as the education, well-paid job, safety, and medicals I received here I wouldn't be the person I am today. So, my appreciation for this country can't be expressed. But I still see a downside living here because there is no social life. You live in the United States to work, pay bills, taxes and it could get very unpleasant. Cultural differences as well. There is a big difference between both cultures. Lebanon on the other hand, people are very social, social life is different, neighbors are very close to one another, even the business of it does not bother. But it can be a little bit difficult, and it gets intense to live in Lebanon because there is not much to no aide in any way. No job opportunities, and low wages - one must work at least 2 to 3 jobs to live decently. Safety wise it isn't that safe. So, every country has

its downside and upside. I call both my home because both countries have some-thing to be appreciated for. However, I do miss Lebanon a lot. At the end of the day Lebanon is where I am from, and my Middle Eastern heritage and culture will al-ways live in me.” Participant 9

“Britain is organized, and everybody abides by the law no matter how powerful or influential they are. You also have your rights as a citizen. If you work hard and pay your taxes, you get long-term security. Very little of this is provided in Lebanon because of the systematic corruption we have. People in power are greedy and this pushed normal people to buy their way to get basic things done, and unfortunately this has become natural to them. This is causing job market stagnation and brain drain in the country as educated people don't get adequate job opportunities. I do, however, miss the beauty of the country and the warmth of the people. I love how you can meet people and you can become best mates within minutes of meeting them. I love the climate, the history, the food, to ´live every day as if it's last´ attitude and how people go above and beyond to help and support you.” Partici-pant 10

5.3.3 Plans for remigration

The third question was presented to the participants to discover whether they had plans to move back to Lebanon.

Two of the participants were certain about their return to Lebanon, which was strongly linked to the willingness of raising future children in Lebanon:

“The plan for me and my husband is to work in the United Arab Emirates for the next three to four years and then return back to Lebanon. We want to earn and save money while working in the UAE in order to build a nest egg, so that we can enjoy a comfortable, fresh start in Lebanon. We are also planning to have a family,

and I want my children to enjoy the same kind of childhood I had, surrounded by the family members." Participant 1

"Why I want to go back? It is because on a personal level I feel like it is the place to be, next to my family and friends, something I miss here. Moreover, it is the place where I would like to raise my kids in the future." Participant 3

One participant was optimistic about spending time in both the current country of residence and in Lebanon later in life:

"No plans to return for the moment as we have school and job commitments. Maybe when we retire, we can split our time between the two countries." Participant 10

Two of the participants would possibly immigrate back to Lebanon, if the country would have some reformations:

"As a Christian I have no plans to move back to Lebanon due to the domination of Hezbollah over the Lebanese government and the effect of this domination over the life of each civilian. Also, the presence of the unmanageable number of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is another reason for me to be hesitant of moving back to Lebanon as with their ungovernable presence it is not safe socially, economically, and demographically. Being honest when these two reasons disappear from Lebanon I would consider moving back." Participant 8

"Lebanon is my home country, I have no plans to go back at the moment but if things get better over there, from safety to laws, rules, regulations and job opportunities to live comfortably, I would consider moving back. But in the meantime, the country does not provide the least necessities to its people." Participant 9

Half of the participants did not have plans to immigrate back to Lebanon. One participant had successfully integrated into his new home country and hence did not

contemplate to remigrate. Other participants provided reasons varying from lack of change, opportunities, and improvement to poor security situation as aspects which were preventing them of becoming returnees:

"No, at least not for the time being. Lebanon is a small country, not a lot of things to do, to discover… and doesn't have lots of opportunities to grow, whether in my career path or on a personal level." Participant 2

"Although I miss my family, friends, easier business opportunities, food, and climate in Lebanon, I do not have plans to go back. As a father to a young girl, it is important for me that my daughter can grow up in a country that is safe and provides opportunities for her. Moreover, I do not want her gender to determine her future. Even though Lebanon is a relatively modern Middle Eastern state, where the women are well-educated, the gender gap is still very prevalent in the country. Women in positions of power are basically non-existent and they are also often overlooked for leadership roles. My daughter is currently my number one priority in life, and I want to provide her a good, secured future which is more achievable in Europe than in Lebanon at the moment." Participant 4

"No, I don't have plans to go back to Lebanon because in the 10 years I spent overseas, we haven't seen any signs of improvement on the financial and economical sides." Participant 5

"No, due to lack of the following: security, economic stability, public services, and retirement plan." Participant 6

"No, because I have settled in Greece in the past 17 years. I have everything, meaning my family, friends, and work, right here and that is all I need." Participant 7

6 CONCLUSION

Research data gathered from the survey and interviews indicates that the main motives for emigration of the Lebanese individuals have remained the same in the past decades. However, the economic crisis and its consequences have further increased willingness for emigration since late 2019. The main causes for the brain drain in the 21st century Lebanon are instability, safety, hyperinflation, economic crisis, and poor economic opportunities, which were examined further on the PESTEL and SWOT analyses in the theoretical framework, providing support for the brain drain as a phenomenon in Lebanon. These forementioned variables are seen as the push factors for brain drain in Lebanon. Particularly the political, economic, environmental and legal parts of the PESTEL analysis and the weaknesses and threats presented in the SWOT analysis formulated a theory to explain and understand the phenomena and interpret the findings.

The pull factors that were named by the survey respondents and the interview participants included better future prospects, stability, and infrastructure. The absence of these matters in Lebanon was furthermore addressed on the secondary data findings.

As indicated on the theoretical framework, Lebanon offers high-quality, accredited university education in English and French. Most of the highly educated people in Lebanon are fluent in three languages; Arabic, French, and English which eases the emigration process. Moreover, considering that the majority of the university degrees are conducted and awarded in French or English, as presented in the primary data findings, will advance the work opportunities abroad. A large Lebanese diaspora around the world which was presented on the theoretical part of the research has also set an example and a trend of emigrating abroad.

As stated on the theoretical part of the thesis, on the PESTEL analysis´ social factors, Lebanon represents decisive aspects of a collectivist country, and the Lebanese culture is strongly characterized by the family life. This element was further confirmed on the data collected from the survey answers along with the data gathered from the interviews conducted. Strong family ties are hindering emigration as well as accelerating the return migration of the Lebanese individuals residing abroad.

Addressing brain drain in Lebanon requires a multifaceted approach involving economic reform, political stability, security, and improved infrastructure to create a sustainable environment that encourages skilled professionals to remain, or possibly to return, and contribute to Lebanon's development on its way to recovery from the multiple crises the country has confronted.

6.1 Reliability and validity

Reliability and validity evaluate the quality of research. Reliability as a concept refers to how consistently a research method performs measuring whereas validity refers to how accurate the research method is on measuring. (Middleton 2019)

Some amount of error occurs in any set of data collected, including random error and measurement error. Random error occurs in all research and it is primarily caused by the sampling techniques, hence opting for an adequate sample size and sample structure is important to lower the chance of random error. Besides determining the reliability, which is the consistency of measure, it is also necessary to assess the validity of the research, as it is the accuracy of the measure. (Litwin 1995 pp. 5, 33-36)

As mentioned on the subchapter 2.1 regarding the limitations of the research, the use of survey as a data collection method can lead to discrepancies in survey findings and undermining the validity of the result. Although the sample size of the survey was relatively small, it provided an adequate sample structure.

The possible misinterpretation and the language formed the primary concerns regarding the limitations of the research regarding the qualitative interviews that were utilized as a second data collection method. However, the participants as well as the researcher were able to fluently communicate in English. Moreover, the structure of the interview enabled the researcher to clarify the questions as well as the participants to further elaborate their answers.

6.2 Suggestions for future research

Brain drain has been a popular topic for research in the past decade, and the brain drain of Lebanon has also been widely studied. However, since Lebanon is the most religiously diverse country in the Middle East, and acknowledged for its sectarianism, the future research suggestion would be to study, how the brain drain occurs amongst the 18 different sects in Lebanon.

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APPENDIX 1

List of abbreviations

AUL	Arts, Sciences and Technology University in Lebanon
AUST	American University of Science and Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LAU	Lebanese American University
LBP	Lebanese Pound
LU	Université Libanaise/Lebanese University
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NDU	Notre Dame University-Louaize
PESTEL	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, Legal
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UAE	United Arab Emirates
ULS	Université La Sagesse/Sagesse University
UN	The United Nations
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for

Refugees

UNHRC	The United Nations Human Rights Council
USD	United States Dollar
USEK	Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik/Holy Spirit University of Kaslik
USJ	Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth/Saint Joseph University of Beirut
WHO	World Health Organization

APPENDIX 2

Online survey design

APPENDIX 3

Cover letter and semi-structured questions sent to the interviewees prior participating in the interviews

Dear respondent,

My name is Tiia Saab, and I am currently conducting a Bachelor´s thesis at Vaasa University of Applied Sciences (VAMK). The title of my thesis is "Brain Drain in Lebanon", and my aim is to research the emigration of the highly educated Lebanese individuals and hence I am contacting you.

I am collecting qualitative research data for my research project, and I would highly value your contribution to participate in a qualitative interview related to the research.

Due to the distance, the interviews will be conducted by phone, by mail or by video call, whichever method you find most suitable for you. The interviews are voluntary and completely anonymous. The data collected will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. If you have any questions regarding the interview or thesis, please do not hesitate to contact me by email tiia.saab@edu.vamk.fi or by WhatsApp [phone number of the researcher].

Please find enclosed the questions regarding your background info in addition to the three semi-structured questions.

For creating a table of participants, I would like you to provide me your gender, age, highest educational level accomplished, country of residence, and year of emigration.

The three semi-structured questions I would like to pose to you are as follows:

1. What were/was the reason behind your emigration?
2. What are the differences between Lebanon and your current country of residence? Is there something that you miss in Lebanon?
3. Do you have plans regarding moving back to Lebanon?

Thank you in advance for your time and contribution!

Best regards,

Tiia Saab