



**The Perception of Master's Students Towards Evening Classes: Academic and Professional
Development**

Mrzabay Madi

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Thesis Advisor:

Associate Professor, PhD Kymbat Smakova

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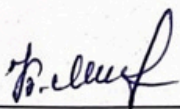
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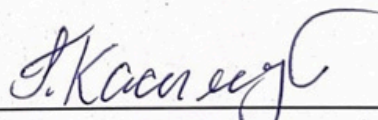
SDU University

Kaskelen, 2025

Approved by:



PhD Kymbat Smakova
Professor, Thesis supervisor



Phd., Doctor Gulzhaina
KASSYMOVA
Committee Chair



Phd, Associate Professor, Akmarzhan Nogaibayeva
Head of the Language Department

PhD., associate professor Zhaiitagul DUISEBEKOVA
Dean, Faculty of Education and Humanities



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Mrzabay Madi

Name

Mf

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The Perception of Master's Students Towards Evening Classes: Academic and Professional

Abstract

Evening classes are an essential part of higher education, assisting Master's students in balancing their professional and academic development. The lack of qualitative studies upon this topic brings knowledge gaps about perceptions of Master's students. This study provides insights into the perceptions of students by analyzing interviews taken from Master's students in Kazakhstan. Findings show that there are benefits such as flexibility and simultaneous professional and academic development. However, the challenges, such as fatigue, transportation, and time management, might influence the perceptions of students. In conclusion, this research paper will be beneficial for the stakeholders, as it tries to show the perception of students in order to optimize their experiences during graduate programs with evening classes.

Keywords: Master's students, evening classes, higher education, perceptions.

**Магистранттардың Кешкі Сабақтарға Деген Көзқарасы: Академиялық Және Кәсіби
Даму
Андатпа**

Кешкі сабақтар Магистранттарға кәсіби және академиялық дамуын теңестіруге көмектесетін жоғары білімнің ажырамас бөлігі болып табылады. Бұл тақырып бойынша сапалы зерттеулердің болмауы Магистранттардың қабылдауы туралы білімдегі олқылықтарды тудырады. Бұл зерттеу Қазақстандағы Магистранттардан алынған сұхбаттарды талдау арқылы студенттердің қабылдауы туралы түсінік береді. Нәтижелер икемділік және бір уақытта кәсіби және академиялық даму сияқты артықшылықтардың бар екенін көрсетеді. Дегенмен, шаршау, көлік және уақытты басқару сияқты мәселелер студенттердің қабылдауына әсер етуі мүмкін. Қорытындылай келе, бұл зерттеу жұмысы мүдделі тараптар үшін пайдалы болады, өйткені ол кешкі сабақтарда магистратура бағдарламалары кезінде олардың тәжірибесін оңтайландыру мақсатында студенттердің қабылдауын көрсетуге тырысады.

Кілт сөздер: Магистранттар, кешкі сабақтар, жоғары білім, қабылдау.

Отношение магистрантов к вечерним занятиям: академическое и профессиональное развитие

Аннотация

Вечерние курсы являются неотъемлемой частью высшего образования, помогая студентам магистратуры сбалансировать свое профессиональное и академическое развитие.

Отсутствие качественных исследований по этой теме приводит к пробелам в знаниях о восприятии студентами магистратуры. Данное исследование дает представление о восприятии студентами на основе анализа интервью, взятых у студентов магистратуры в Казахстане. Полученные результаты показывают, что существуют такие преимущества, как гибкость и одновременное профессиональное и академическое развитие. Однако проблемы, такие как усталость, транспортировка и управление временем, могут повлиять на восприятие студентами. В заключение, эта исследовательская работа будет полезна заинтересованным сторонам, поскольку в ней делается попытка показать восприятие студентами, чтобы оптимизировать их опыт во время обучения в аспирантуре с вечерними занятиями.

Ключевые слова: магистранты, вечерние курсы, высшее образование, восприятие.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Evening classes.

In the modern world of education, Master's students might face difficulties in the learning environment, especially with the timetable. There is a big probability that the majority of the Master's students are working in order to meet their various needs. The evening class experience has seen a change in recent years due to the global shift towards digital and blended learning. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the tendency of applying online and blended learning formats by many universities throughout the world, including those in Kazakhstan, in an effort to preserve educational continuity. Working students now have more ways to participate in academic programs without physically being on campus. Still, they also present some difficulties like digital fatigue, a decline in student-teacher interaction, and disparities in students' levels of digital literacy (Paudel, 2021). The shift to online or blended evening classes made it more difficult for evening Master's students to manage their already difficult employment, study, and personal lives. However, not every university can offer online evening programmes, so students will have to attend lessons on campus. Nonetheless, evening classes offer an opportunity to manage time for those students who are trying to progress both academically and professionally, for example, working as a teacher. Therefore, it is important to uncover insights of those who are attending such flexible classes. However, while most papers (Akimbek, 2024; Li & Tin, 2013) explore daytime experiences, there are not enough studies of the perception of Master's students towards evening classes, particularly in the Kazakhstani context, where economic pressure can result in the urge to combine study and work (Kalyuzhnova & Kambhampati, 2007).

1.2 Problem statement.

There is a lack of qualitative inquiry studies about Master's students' perceptions towards their learning experiences. Although there are no updated official statistics about working Master's students, Master's students likely balance multiple roles; they have families, jobs, and other personal responsibilities. These responsibilities might influence their academic development. That can be a reason why evening classes are great opportunities for students. They are flexible for those students who can not attend classes during the daytime. In addition to the challenges that working Master's students face in balancing their academics with their professional and personal responsibilities, there is a need to consider the unique dynamics of the evening class environment (Hoyt et al., 2009). Unlike day classes, evening classes might have different opportunities and challenges for students, which have not been properly explored. For instance, fatigue after work or lack of sleep, communication, and accessibility to campus resources. Moreover, evening classes are an essential means of obtaining higher education in Kazakhstan, as financial obligations frequently force students to work (Jonbekova, 2020). This is consistent with global trends showing that non-traditional students who are older, employed, or have family responsibilities are dependent on more flexible timetables (Van Doorn & Van Doorn, 2014).

1.3 Research questions.

This paper focuses on the perception of Master's students towards evening classes. This study uses a qualitative approach to investigate Master's students' perceptions in order to provide an in-depth knowledge of the academic and professional role of evening classes in higher education. Qualitative inquiry helps to unveil variables such as motivation, peer relationship and

sense of belonging in addition to difficulties such as transportation or time management, which can be overlooked in quantitative study.

The significance of understanding Master's students' perceptions towards evening is to provide insights aimed at enhancing and improving the educational experience and outcomes for Master's students. By gaining insights into students' experiences, challenges, and preferences related to evening classes, university stakeholders and policymakers might have a better understanding of how to meet the needs of modern Master's students. In conclusion, this research aims to provide information for institutional practices and policies that are intended to improve Master's students' educational outcomes and experience. To deeply understand Master's students' perceptions, the following research questions arise:

What are the academic and professional benefits of evening classes for Master's students?

What challenges do Master's students face in managing their professional (lessons, work) and personal commitments with evening classes?

These questions build on prior work examining evening-class dynamics, however, the following literature review tries to identify perceptions deeply.

CHAPTER 2

2.1 Literature Review

Existing literature primarily focused on quantitative analyses of enrollment statistics and academic performance in evening classes, with limited attention given to the qualitative studies of students' experiences and perceptions. This literature review aims to address this gap by synthesizing and critically evaluating existing research, theoretical frameworks, and methodological approaches related to Master's students' perceptions of evening classes.

Studying at evening time might be challenging in terms of light exposure. Students may feel sleepy and if so, they perform poorly. Teixeira et al (2013) conducted a study in which they investigated the effect of bright light exposure during evening hours among college students, focusing on whether bright light exposure during evening hours results in reducing sleepiness, as observed in experimental laboratory studies where social constraints have been controlled. As a result of the study, it was concluded that exposure to bright light increases alertness among working students in evening classes.

Master's students who balance work, school, and personal obligations may feel stressed out by conflicting demands; this is made worse by evening schedules that prolong the "workday" into the evening. For example, exhaustion from working throughout the day might affect cognitive participation in evening classes (Teixeira et al., 2013), and academic assistance may be insufficient due to limited access to university facilities (such as libraries) not in regular working hours (Lee et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is important to examine the pedagogical dynamics of evening classes. According to research, students report weaker social ties as a result of their fragmented attendance, and peer interactions and instructor engagement vary during evening classes (Maranhão & Veras, 2017).

The latest survey about the needs of students in evening classes was conducted back in 1984, nevertheless, statistics are still relevant. According to Kitabchi & Kathleen (1984), out of 1118 students surveyed, more than half work full-time. Furthermore, Harper (as cited in Hoyt, 2009), utilized descriptive statistics and ANOVA to find common educational needs of students. Evening students in the study were mostly degree-seeking, older than 25, and had children in the home. Harper (1987) reported that “adults in degree programs are often too busy to engage in social events ...it is likely to work full-time and have children living at home”.

Postgraduate demographics are provided by these official figures (Kazakhstan Ministry of Education, 2024), which empirically support qualitative information on evening class experiences. According to Higher Education Statistics, Kazakhstan (2024), 78% of Master’s students are between the ages of 21 and 29, which indicates that they are probably working. The 8-12% enrollment of students over 30 (peaking at 3,291 in 2023-2024) further illustrates the value of evening classes for professionals in their mid-career. These numbers support Jonbekova's (2020) conclusions regarding the economic factors influencing the enrollment of working students (Table 1).

Table 1

Official Statistics of Enrollment according to the Ministry of Education of Kazakhstan.

	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Total (Master’s students)	35,690	34,619	36,483	35,660	36,491
Up to 21 years	131	218	270	380	472

21 years	3,220	3,748	3,440	4,080	4,466
22 years	7,549	8,245	8,446	8,302	8,016
23 years	7,640	7,118	7,104	6,446	6,258
24 years	3,550	3,746	2,955	2,740	2,710
25-29 years	6,860	5,633	6,133	5,424	5,522
30-34 years	3,183	1,867	2,283	1,857	1,959
35-39 years	1,101	1,256	1,065	1,026	1,110
40-49 years	1,409	1,505	1,598	1,879	1,838
50-59 years	306	334	314	261	326
60 years and older	10	13	13	14	10

Note. Table 5.46 from Education in Republic of Kazakhstan (2024) Bureau of National statistics, <https://stat.gov.kz>

As was mentioned before, there is a lack of qualitative inquiry into perceptions of Master's students. On the other hand, there are quantitative studies that can be a good ground for our study. For example, the Higher School of Economy (HSE) conducted an analysis of first-year Master's students' portraits in 2010. In this report, HSE counted the average age of 764 first-year Master's students, - 22 years. Only 5% of the students are older than 25. Surprisingly, in 2010, only 10% of the students had a marital status, therefore, they have a lower amount of responsibilities. It is important to mention that more than half of the surveyed students worked part-time or full-time with the help of their parents. The current research is not going to have

statistical data and analysis, therefore, it is important to know approximate data about students' age. Evening programs often attract a mix of students from various backgrounds, enriching classroom discussions and networking opportunities (Eterovic et al., 2013).

For example, Carnevale et al. (2015) analyzed the work life balance among U.S undergraduate students, highlighting the impact of work on academic outcomes. However, these challenges with work life balance are more prevalent in higher education within those who pursue Master's degree. The emotional pressure connected with balancing multiple roles can be seen in the performance of Master's students. For instance, Cheng and McCarthy (2013) noted that working students report higher levels of anxiety, poor sleep, and less academic satisfaction, particularly in higher levels of education. These findings suggest that educational institutions within higher education should consider students' emotional holistic well-being when designing class format, especially if it is evening classes.

A qualitative study by Andrade and Matias (2017), for example, examined the experiences of Portuguese working women who are doing their Master's degree and found that they faced difficulties like work-life balance, and academic advancement. Andrade and Matias (2017) by analyzing 22 Portuguese married women found that university and family are in a conflict phase. Participants frequently prioritized work and family over academic obligations, resulting in time pressures, emotional strain, and decreased productivity. Furthermore, using a life course approach, Andrade and Matias' study also shows how conflicts in balancing change as a person progresses through different stages of their career and family life. Early career mothers report higher levels of conflict because of their younger children. This viewpoint could enhance the examination of TEFL Master's students' experiences, as factors like age, stable

career, and family obligations may also influence the type and degree of role conflicts in the evening classes context.

The study conducted by Nagai-Manelli et al (2012) assesses the factors associated with the time spent in class among working college students, particularly those who are studying in evening classes. This research addresses a critical gap in understanding the complexities of student life, especially concerning the connection of work, education, and health. The impact of sleep duration and quality on student performance and well-being was extensively documented in this study. Sleep plays a crucial role in cognitive functioning, memory, and overall health. However, working students may experience gaps in their sleep patterns due to their busy schedules, potentially leading to sleep deprivation and excessive sleepiness (Nagai-Manelli et al ,2012). The results of the study showed a link between less time spent in classes and being male, longer sleep length, alcoholic beverage consumption and longer work hours. In addition, it was discovered that students who work more hours are more likely to skip classes. Additionally, the results of analysis show that those students who are sleeping less, are more likely to spend more time in class, also they sleep longer on Saturdays. Trockel et al. (2000) and Kelly et al. (2001) found that students with shorter sleep duration tended to achieve lower grades. They suggested that sleep-deprived students may struggle with concentration, leading to poorer academic performance. According to Teixeira et al., (2007), people have a free cycle of sleeping as they do not have to work and wake up early. It is a well-established fact in the literature that there is a connection between low psychosocial functioning and sleep problems. For instance, a substantial correlation has been shown between reduced stress levels and less sleep issues (Galambos et al., 2009). Evening classes enable students to maintain full-time jobs while pursuing advanced degrees, which is crucial for those with multiple responsibilities (Sanga & Shirima, 2023).

Numerous behavioral and socioeconomic factors affect how physically active students who attend evening classes are. According to a survey conducted in Brazil, just 36.1% of students engaged in the necessary 300 minutes of physical activity every week. Being younger males from lower socioeconomic origins, going to private schools, not using tobacco or alcohol, and not working for pay were all important characteristics linked to increased activity levels (Ceschini et al., 2015). Furthermore, encouraging physical activity among these students is greatly aided by the format of evening classes and the availability of physical education programs (Lucas & Cunha, 2022).

Numerous studies have been conducted related to Master's students mental health. The limited research available on stress among graduate and professional students indicates that they commonly experience stress due to role conflict, time constraints, financial pressures, and a lack of support from their families (Hudd et al., 2000). Similar pressures caused by managing several roles are experienced by non-traditional students (Dill & Henley, 1998). Graduate students who are dealing with these constraints frequently experience internal conflicts as a result of which they may question their choices and experience physical and mental exhaustion, burnout, melancholy, and guilt (Offstein et al., 2004). Ross et al., (1999) found that regardless of classification, students are feeling stressed about getting good grades and earning their degrees. Big amount of homework, time pressure, financial difficulties, and personal problems were issues that also caused stress. Jung, (2019) provided a survey among Master's students in Hong Kong about their academic development and experiences. According to the survey, Hong Kong master's students create their own communities and make sense of belonging for everyone. Meeting other Master's students with related academic interests makes them feel excited and connected.

However, these students frequently establish connections that are loose. This is mostly because master's programs are short and there are a lot of part-time students who might not interact with their peers to the fullest extent possible (Jung, 2019).

Oswalt et al (2007), explored the factors behind graduate students' stress, they concluded that universities should consider students' need in managing stress on campus by providing psychological help. It has also been mentioned that the majority of Master's students feel stressed because they are overwhelmed by internal pressure about their financial status and time management.

Additionally, the COVID-19 epidemic has brought some changes into education worldwide, including evening classes. For Master's students, the move to online education can have both benefits and difficulties. Online platforms are convenient and flexible, but they also demand a high level of self-control and time management abilities. According to a study by Bozkurt et al. (2020), a lot of students had trouble adjusting to online learning, expressing feelings of loneliness and elevated stress. This emphasizes how important it is for students to have strong support, such as online engagement activities and mental health resources, in order to help evening program students feel more connected to one another.

The implementation of hybrid learning can facilitate the flexibility of evening classes. Moreover, asynchronous lessons can help students to have the ability to learn at their own pace (Bozkurt et al., 2020).

In conclusion, this literature review showed that there is indeed a lack of qualitative studies about students' perceptions of evening classes. The current literature review gathered information about students' overall perceptions regarding evening classes in terms of stress and physiological conditions. The literature review indicated that most studies (Cherry et al., 2011;

Kyndt et al., 2014) focused on quantitative analyses of academic achievement and enrollment statistics, leaving barely any qualitative research on the perspectives of Master's students. However, quantitative research has shown how variables including sleep length, work hours, and alcohol use affect students' attendance and academic performance in nighttime sessions (Teixeira et al., 2013; Nagai-Manelli et al., 2012). This literature review highlights the significance of evaluating these issues in-depth, taking into account students' perspectives, experiences, and it offers insightful information about the challenges faced by Master's students who attend the evening classes. Universities should provide supportive environments that promote the success and well-being of Master's students by recognizing challenges and attempting to meet the needs.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1 Research design

In order to investigate how Master's students perceive their academic and professional development in evening classes, this study uses a qualitative research approach. Qualitative approaches give in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and opinions towards the issue. (Glense, 2016). In order to understand the perceptions of Master's students of their academic and professional development, this study uses a *phenomenological qualitative approach* to investigate their lived experiences of evening classes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative method is especially appropriate for this study because it captures complex emotional and cognitive reactions by emphasizing depth (Merriam & Tisdell, 2025). Moreover, this approach addresses the research gap identified in Chapter 2 regarding limited qualitative studies on evening class experiences. This study is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, which states that reality is subjective and constructed from individuals' experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2025). By taking into account individual experiences, this study tries to capture the emotional and cognitive perspectives of participants which may be overlooked in quantitative data.

3.2 Pilot study

Before conducting a large-scale interview, a small pilot study was conducted with 5 volunteer participants. It includes 5 interviews and serves a purpose of checking the questions. Pilot study served a dual purpose: to test the relevance and sequence of interview questions, and to check whether questions lead to open and reflective responses from participants. In order to get better insights into the depth of the questions, preset questions were changed so they fit

future interviews better. Logical flow and the sequence of some questions have faced minor changes.

The main data collection was conducted after polishing the interview questions. Even though there are predetermined questions, mostly the interview went out of structure, which correlates with a semi-structured interview framework. Participants shared valuable data, and emerging themes were identified which became useful in creating questionnaires for the main interview.

3.3 Participants

The participants in this study consist of Master's students enrolled in evening classes at the local university in Kazakhstan. All of them attended at least one semester of evening classes. All participants are enrolled in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) programme. Purposive sampling approach (Cambell et al., 2020) used to select participants who have experience with evening classes and can provide some insights into their perceptions. Participants are invited to participate in an interview via email or on campus. Total number of participants interviewees is 18, which was enough to reach saturations with no new themes emerging.

Sample Size Justification:

18 Master's students were selected through purposive maximum variation sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015) from University with evening classes, ensuring representation across:

- Age groups (22-35 years)
- Employment status (full-time/part-time/unemployed)
- Marital status (married/single)
- Program years (1st & 2nd year students)

- Gender (14 female, 4 male)

This sampling method ensured that the interview captured the various experiences from different social and professional context, enabling more comprehensive analysis of the perception of students' towards evening classes in TEFL context.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent is sent to every participant prior to the interview. Participants choose available time and voluntarily come to the scheduled interview. Consent letters were obtained from all of the participants. Audio files were stored on a password protected phone and cloud storage, and transcripts were anonymized using participant codes (P1–P18). Data will be securely archived for 12 months post-study before deletion. Participation in the study is voluntary, and participants will have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Additionally, participants are able to check their transcribed interviews upon request.

3.5 Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews were conducted in order to gather qualitative data from participants. On average the interview lasted from 20 to 30 minutes. Semi-structured interviews offer a balance between guided interview and open, free conversation. This allows participants to freely express their personal opinions beyond predefined topics. Focus groups avoided ensuring the clear expression without judging from peers (Adeoye-Olatunde, 2021).

The interview questions are designed in order to open the conversation to emergence of new ideas. Main topic is underlined and then coded into data. Interview explores various opinions and perceptions of participants, including challenges, benefits and motivations.

Data collection will continue until no new themes or thoughts emerge. Interviews are recorded to the dictaphone and will preserve confidentiality.

Before the interview, demographic information such as age and marital status is asked. Interviews start with broad questions (e.g Describe your experiences attending evening classes?) followed by targeted questions (e.g How does it affect your career?). Probing questions are usually prevalent in the interview. Follow up questions are asked after each answer in order to reach saturation. Closing reflections are used in order to summarize the interview and make points which can help in coding and emerging themes. Quotes will be selected to represent some themes.

As a researcher with personal experience with evening classes, reflexivity was maintained throughout the sessions to acknowledge potential social bias. Peer feedback helped validate results and avoid subjectivity.

3.6 Data Analysis

The interviews are transcribed into text. The qualitative data obtained from the interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis. (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This involves identifying patterns, themes, and categories within the data to understand common themes and differences in participants' perceptions.

The data is coded systematically, with codes organized into overarching themes and sub-themes. This process involves multiple rounds of coding and discussion among researchers to ensure reliability in the analysis. Initial coding involved reading through transcripts multiple times to identify repetitive themes and meaningful sentences.

The themes and patterns identified through thematic analysis will be interpreted in relation to the research questions and objectives, providing insights into the academic and professional role of evening classes from the perspective of Master's students (Schmidt, 2004).

The analyzed data will be synthesized into a narrative format, presenting the key findings, interpretations, and implications of the study in a coherent and meaningful way.

3.7 Reliability

To ensure the reliability and trustworthiness of this study, several methods were used. Concepts like credibility, dependability, and confirmability are closely related to qualitative studies (Anney, 2014). Qualitative data is a collection of subjective experiences and interpretations, therefore it is important to grant the data objectivity, and ensure that collected data reflect participants' true perspectives accurately. The data should be consistent throughout the study.

One of the ways of making study more reliable is peer review, which was used during the research process. The peers were invited to review the coding framework and data interpretations. Peer review ensures that data actually rises from gathered information rather than researchers' subjective assumptions, adding to a potential bias. By combining multiple perspectives, peer review helps to achieve dependability and credibility of the research.

Additionally, the post checking of the transcript was used to ensure capturing the real opinions of the participants. This allows them to confirm that the gathered information is interpreted correctly, and their intended ideas are preserved in transcript. If participants wanted to make some changes in their interpretations, it was allowed to make changes into final data that had been collected. Member checking strengthens the study's credibility by reducing the chance of misinterpretation and ensuring that the findings genuinely reflect participants' experiences.

By combining peer review, members checking, reflexivity this research tries to hold the highest level of trustworthiness and reliability. These methods enhance the rigor of the research, ensuring real conclusions based on participants' experiences.

CHAPTER 4

Results

As a result of thematic analysis, several themes emerged: (4.2) Benefits of studying in evening classes; (4.3) Challenges faced by students because of evening classes; (4.4) Implications for the future implications for evening classes. The codes (P1-P18) were assigned to participants in a semi-structured interview to insure anonymous participation.

4.1 Demographics information

The sample consisted of 18 Masters students both first and second year. All of them are enrolled in evening classes. Majority of the sample are females (14, 78%). Two older participants (29, 45) represent non-traditional and mid-career profiles.

Table 2

Demographic Information Of Participants (N =18)

Age	Male	Female	Total
23	3	9	12
24	1	3	4
29	0	1	1
45	0	1	1
Total	4	14	18

The presence of a mid-career participant (29) and an older participant (age 45) offers data on how life stage affects evening class experiences, such as challenges with family responsibilities

and exhaustion in contrast to the younger participants' emphasis on academic and professional balance. The absence of older male participants could indicate that societal pressure is present for those who do not prioritize full-time work. The disbalance in gender can reveal some data about societal expectations, safety concerns during evening commutes.

4.2 Benefits

As for benefits of studying in evening classes, Master's students provided several answers which can be emerged into subthemes: (4.2.1) Flexibility and convenience; (4.2.2) Academic and career advancement; (4.2.3) Networking; (4.2.4) Financial Accessibility

4.2.1 Flexibility and Convenience

All participants mentioned that it is convenient to have lectures at evening time as it gives time to finish their jobs and arrive at university. Students reported that usually they work till 4 o'clock, then they go to the University. Married participant shared that her children stay with their siblings during the study and relatives help from time to time.

"I work near the campus, so it is very convenient for me to study at university and work simultaneously." (P1)

"For me, it is convenient because I work at the university itself, so I can finish my work and then study at one place." (P2)

Non-working students shared that evening classes are flexible in terms of self paced study, they have access to libraries and can study during the day, dedicating their spare time to research.

"I'm not morning person, I can study late at night and during the day on campus, whereas my classmates have to work, I think it's advantage" (P6)

It was also mentioned that fewer people on campus is also an advantage because it is not crowded.

4.2.2 Academic and Career advancement.

According to the answers of participants, evening classes give the opportunity to study and work at the same time, so it has a relation with their career and academic advancement. Networking was mentioned as every student is working or worked as a teacher before, and, since this TEFL program gathers young and experienced instructors, it is possible to exchange knowledge. Peer connection is seen as new opportunities to get a better job.

“I like my classmates because I think good students pursue Master’s degree and almost everyone works as a teacher and I can ask them if their workplace, school has any positions I can apply for or I ask about where to work to get good salary.” (P14)

“Some universities don’t offer evening or online classes and it is really important for me because I would like to to earn money for my degree, otherwise without evening classes I won’t be able to pay tuition.” (P12)

“We can study and work at the same time, so I get degree, and with that degree I can advance in my workplace.” (P2)

“I work and I will be a Master, so my salary will be higher.” (P3)

“Even Though it’s hard, long term results are going to be great, they pay you better when you have MA” (P7)

“I think employers think that if you have MA you are better at teaching, but I understand that MA is for academics, like...I’m going to be a researcher?” (P10)

These quotes show that participants want to develop both their academic and professional parts of life. It was mentioned several times that employers value a Master's degree, offering

better salary and position, but the experience of teaching language is also important, thus students work and study at the same time, advancing both professionally and academically.

Key findings suggest that working and studying simultaneously is the biggest advantage of evening classes, especially for young teachers as they can combine work and study.

4.2.3 Personal Growth

In addition to academic and professional development several participants expressed that they have accomplished internal satisfaction of their perseverance. Three female and two male students reported that they feel more confident because they can balance work and study. They mentioned “adult life” in their responses. Although this theme is not as prevalent as other themes, 6 out of 18 participants mentioned that successfully balancing work, study, and personal life gave them a sense of accomplishment and pride.

“I feel proud of myself, because I work, I study and I live my life.” (P18)

“I am not afraid of multitasking and tight schedules because of this lessons, at first it was scary, but it surprised me how good I am at working, studying and hanging out” (P17)

This suggests that, despite the pressure and fatigue, evening study contributes positively to students’ self-image and personal development, adding a non-academic dimension to the program’s value.

4.3 Challenges

As for negative sides of evening classes, Master’s students shared several themes: Transportation issues (4.3.1); Fatigue and Tiring experience (4.3.2); Workload and Time Management (4.3.3); Social life (4.3.4). It was clear from the answers that challenges are mostly connected to the location of work and campus, so future researchers should consider selecting participants from various universities.

4.3.1 Transportation issues was a common theme among all students, as traffic congestion is a major problem in their area, especially for those participants, who travel to university from work. This adds to a stress and fatigue level of students, which may affect their performance. Some of students have to leave work early or come to classes late, which is also contributing to bad performance both at work and study.

“I live very far from university, so it takes me about 2-3 hours to get to the university.”

(P6)

“Lessons start at 6 p.m, so it is time when there is a big traffic jam towards Kaskelen [campus location] ... and I sometimes do my work in a car.” (P3)

Three female students mentioned that it is inconvenient to drive home late after classes due to concerns about safety. Male students did not raise this theme.

“It is unsafe to return home at night, especially if you are female.” (P6)

Some of them wished they had lived somewhere near the campus. On the other hand, some participants reported that they live near the university, and, therefore transportation is not an issue for them. Contrary to this, two students mention that living in the same area of campus can be boring sometimes, they want to spend more time with their friends and family who are living in the city.

“I work online and that is why I walk to my university, so evening classes are convenient for me.” (P4)

4.3.2 Fatigue and Health problems

After a long day of work, a number of participants expressed feeling mentally and physically exhausted, which made it difficult to concentrate and pay attention in evening lessons. Feelings of fatigue and decreased focus were made worse by the long drives and the shift from

work to university mentality. In order to meet the demands of evening programs, participants underlined the value of time management techniques and self-care. Moreover, it sometimes affect their performance regarding their job, as three participants mentioned that they are too tired to prepare for their lessons (as a teacher).

“Sometimes it is hard to focus and I often want to sleep on the first lessons.” (P15)

“If I had a lot of work, then I would get really tired during the lessons.” (P1)

“I am trying to manage my time properly to leave some energy for evening classes.”

“No sunlight makes me sleepy.” (P2)

Though fatigue was a major theme, several participants also described more serious health-related consequences of managing work, family, and study.

“I often have headaches and back pain after sitting all day at work and then in class It’s really affecting my health I can feel it” (P8)

“I’ve gained weight since starting evening classes because I don’t have time to exercise or eat properly.” (P13)

At least six students reported sleep deprivation and poor diet habits due to their tight schedules. These issues suggest that evening classes have a real effect on participants' lifestyles, not in a good way.

4.3.3 Workload and Time management is another sub theme that was mentioned by the majority of participants. They mention that they have to do a lot of duties in order to meet their professional and academic obligations. In order to meet the demands, participants manage their time.

“Sometimes there are deadlines on my workplace and some assignments due. I am trying to finish my deadlines for the workplace first, then I will neglect my study assignments.” (P13)

Some students suggested that instructors should not give too much work, as the majority of students have personal obligations.

“I have to work and study, too many deadlines and they affect my work, I think if there was a little bit less homework, it would be easier to balance.” (P9)

“I have a baby and I have nanny to babysit sometimes when I have to take care of my lessons” (P15)

4.3.4 Family responsibilities.

While time management and workload was mentioned by the majority of students, several participants elaborated on domestic (household) responsibilities. This was particularly emphasized by older participants and participants who have to take care of family members with disabilities.

“After work I cook dinner for my family and sometimes I just leave work for 1-2 hours in order to check upon my mom.” (P3)

“I have a big family and I’m the oldest sister so I help them with homework, look after them and then I cook for them.” (P7)

From the responses it is notable that In contrast to male participants, female participants have more house duties, especially those who have big families. This can be seen as traditional Kazakhstani household duty distribution, which can be researched more.

4.3.5 Social life is another issue that is less common, but still is mentioned by participants. Many of the participants are young adults (22-25) and they neglect social life at university because of evening classes.

“I come to university very late and nobody wants to hangout during the daytime because they have to work.” (P10)

Some participants reported anxiety and stress because of guilt. Male participant (22) reported that he feels guilty when he is not studying properly, moreover he reported that there is a sense of loneliness that can be a burden for young Master's degree students.

"I feel like I am going to give up, too much stress." (P1)

"I am afraid of losing my scholarship money and disappointing my family." (P2)

These responses show the importance of psychological support for working students with family responsibilities.

4.4.4 Campus accessibility.

Inability to be at campus during the day because of work was mentioned several times. Therefore Some participants mentioned that they would like to have a meeting room after evening classes, which are not provided because university closes.

"I don't have time for group projects during the day and I like to study with people offline to discuss it in real life, but we can't stay at campus at night time." (P8)

4.4.1 Future implications were proposed by participants as the answer for the question about what would participants change in their programme. Several themes emerged as suggestions for improvement. The most common themes were: 4.4.2 Teachers' competence; 4.4.3 Online lessons; 4.4.4

4.4.2 Teachers. Students expect their lectures to be engaging and not boring. Some participants mentioned that some teachers are boring and their teaching methods are outdated. Moreover, participants shared that sometimes instructors are not willing to change their assignments' due dates.

"Sometimes I don't listen to the teacher because she explains the topic very quietly."

"I wish lessons were more engaging." (P17)

“Sometime there are three deadlines in one week and also a quiz or something and we have to squeeze into this deadlines with our work and family, it is really difficult and stressful”

(P2)

Additionally, two participants mentioned that the courses themselves are boring because they are repetitive.

“Some courses are irrelevant because majority of the class have already learnt content on their bachelor degree.” (P4)

4.4.3 Online lessons at least once or twice a week are suggested by some participants. They believe that it can help them to manage their time better, and they will have more time on completing assignments.

“I think some lessons can be conducted online, it will be convenient for both teacher and us.” (P16)

“I would study online at least once or twice a week, it will motivate me to go to university.” (P16)

“We had some lectures that didn’t need attendance in class, I think it is better to have such lectures online as sometimes we just learned everything from the presentations.” (P18)

These responses upon online classes show that some participants emphasise the need for blended learning for special lectures.

4.4.4 Campus accessibility.

The next themes are less frequently mentioned, but not less significant in terms of improvements of comfort. Five students complained about the university services such as library, canteen and student studying rooms. They reported that these services are sometimes inaccessible or closed by the time evening classes start.

“I wanted to eat something good, but the food in the canteen is not fresh and there is no choice.” (P3)

“I like sitting in the libraries, but they are crowded during the day, and not open after evening classes.” (P1)

This points to the institutional oversight in designing services that accommodate evening learners and suggests room for improvement in creating a more supportive campus environment.

4.5 Patterns and Contrasts in participants responses

Responses show the difference based on age and employment status where younger and unmarried participants (age 21-23) prefer academic advancement with networking opportunities to have better job opportunities in a long term progression. On the contrary, older participants (25-29 age) focus on job promotions, family responsibilities, and health challenges. Female participants expressed opinions about safety, family obligations and health more than male students.

These differences show that perceptions of students towards evening classes are not only shaped by academic demands but also complex social contexts.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The main aim of this study was to explore TEFL Master's students' perceptions towards evening classes. By analyzing the themes, and conducting thematic analysis valuable insights into perceptions of Master's students were acquired. With the help of thematic analysis of participants' responses, benefits, challenges, and suggestions for improving students' experiences in evening classes setting. The findings from this study not only support but also expand existing literature regarding the academic, professional, and personal implications in evening Master's degree classes.

Firstly, one of the benefits mentioned was flexibility and convenience of evening classes. Working students can balance their academic schedules and work. Students repeatedly mentioned how balancing between work and study is crucial in maintaining their goal of achievement in both professional and academic development. This flexibility allows students to maintain a good and healthy work-life balance which is important in the modern world. This aligns with Jonbekova's (2020) study where flexible schedules and convenient educational formats are essential for the Central Asian region, where economic pressure makes students work while studying. With the convenient schedules of evening classes, students are able to maintain employment, contribute to their families, and progress academically. This confirms Van Doorn's (2014) finding where the importance of flexible options for non-traditional students.

Secondly, it was discovered that academic life actually helps Master's students to advance in their career in the future. Several participants highlighted that Master's degree obtained in evening classes not only help them to progress academically, but also can offer higher salaries and job stability. This can be seen in Andrade and Matias' (2017) study where

working postgraduate students emphasize academic qualification improvement as essential for long-term career.

There were positive perceptions about evening classes, however, there are several challenges that students face; Some students mentioned the fatigue and loss of focus during evening classes, which is in line with the Teixeira's et al, (2013) findings where evening classes coincide with physical and mental exhaustion.. Additionally, the need of balancing life and study responsibilities referred to the challenge of managing time effectively. This was discussed in Kyndt's, et al (2014) study about workload and students' stress level.

One of the main notable challenges was transportation issues due to location of the campus. However, it might be because of the limitations that this study has. The campus is located outside of the big city, where the majority of the respondents presumably live. While previous literature has discussed scheduling inconveniences and commuting problems (Maranhão & Veras, 2017), the extent of transportation issues identified in this study highlights the importance of considering geographic and infrastructural factors in higher education planning, especially in urban and rural areas like Kaskelen in Kazakhstan.

Additionally, students mentioned that social life sometimes is neglected due to workload and evening classes. Students shared that evening classes have reduced the ability to have informal peer interactions outside of the classroom. Extracurricular activities are also reported as rare occasions, which contribute to the feeling of loneliness and social isolation for Master's students. This aligns with Jung's (2019) work, where it was found that postgraduate students form loose peer relationships and do not establish networking goals due to professional obligations.

Although the study's sample size is limited to 18 participants and is focused on one university, the findings have important implications for future research. Larger scale, several educational institutions with comparative analysis between daytime and evening classes may offer deeper insights into understanding how this kind of scheduling can affect the well-being and career goals of Master's students. It might be also valuable to investigate how online or hybrid evening classes impact Master's students' perceptions, especially in modern education, where flexibility and accessibility of education is valued (Bozkurt, 2020).

In summary, Master's students' perceptions towards evening classes include both advantages and disadvantages. Students face challenges in balancing work, study and personal obligations. Despite having the advantages such as flexibility, there are some aspects to improve. Evening classes are still important for Master's students' professional and academic development and coping with the challenges should be addressed to policymakers and stakeholders in order to improve academic development of young researchers.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that evening classes play an important role in the modern educational landscape, especially in the Kazakhstani context. As universities tend to normalize meeting various needs of modern day students, evening classes emerged as an important component of educational setting for those who have to balance their life with education and work.

The study revealed that evening classes can offer benefits such as flexibility in schedule, better job opportunities, and advanced networking in professional TEFL circles. Participants see evening classes as a way to acquire essential qualifications that can help them with job perspectives while maintaining financial stability. Evening classes contribute to educational

equity by allowing those students who might have been excluded due to daytime work obligations.

At the same time, research has shown that there are challenges faced by TEFL Master's students, such as fatigue, transportation issues, time management stress, and reduced social engagement. These findings show that a student centered approach in designing evening classes needs to be considered by educational institutions. Universities might adjust their course delivery format, integrating hybrid or online classes, providing targeted psychological support, and providing more amenities on campus for evening students.

In conclusion, while evening classes remain important for promoting academic and professional development among working TEFL Master's students, some points can be improved in how these programs are structured and supported. By acknowledging the challenges students face and implementing responsive, flexible, and inclusive policies, universities in Kazakhstan and similar educational systems can better serve the evolving needs of their Master's degree students. Future studies with larger, multi-university samples and comparative investigations between day and evening programs are recommended to deepen understanding and further give insights into improvement of higher education practices.

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Appendix A.

Consent form



SDU University Research Ethics Committee

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled **The Perception of Master's Students Towards Evening Classes: Academic and Professional Development**

Research Purpose and Procedures.

This interview should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Possible risks and discomfort related to participation in this research
There are no known risks associated with this research.

Possible advantages of participation

While there are no direct financial or academic benefits for participating, your involvement may contribute to improving the experience of future Master's students in evening classes by helping universities understand the needs, challenges, and preferences of students like yourself.

Confidentiality & Privacy. Within reason, any personal information obtained as a result of participation will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. However, total confidentiality cannot be assured.

Contacts for additional information mrmadi2812@gmail.com

Voluntary Nature of the Study. It is strictly voluntary as to whether to participate in this study or not. You have a right to withdraw your agreement to participate at any time.

Estimated duration of the research 3 month

Statement of Consent.

I, _____, agree to participate in this study voluntarily. I have been made aware of the research purpose and objectives and clearly understand what is expected from me.

I know that it is voluntary to participate in this study and I have complete freedom to withdraw my consent at any time without providing any reasons and in this case there will be no negative consequences to me.

I understand that any personal information obtained in this study will be kept confidential.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher: Mrzabay Madi

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Interview questions

Section 1: Background Information

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself — your current job, family responsibilities, and why you chose to pursue your Master's degree?
2. How long have you been attending evening classes?

Section 2: Benefits of Attending Evening Classes

1. In your experience, what advantages do evening classes offer to Master's students like you?
2. How do evening classes help you balance your job, personal life, and academic responsibilities?
3. Do you feel that evening classes support your professional development? If so, how?
4. Are there any personal or academic achievements you've gained as a result of attending evening classes?
5. Would you recommend evening classes to other working professionals? Why or why not?

Section 3: Challenges of Attending Evening Classes

1. What difficulties do you face while attending evening classes?
2. How does fatigue or tiredness affect your learning experience in evening sessions?
3. Is transportation or commuting an issue when attending evening classes? Can you elaborate?
4. How do you manage your time between work, study, family, and personal life?

5. Are there any academic challenges specific to evening classes that daytime students might not experience?
 6. What kind of support (academic, administrative, or personal) do you wish the university provided for evening Master's students?
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