



Impact of Cross-Cultural Internship Experience on International Students' Psychological Stress and Adaptability

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Abstract

Background and Aim: Cross-cultural internships have become increasingly popular among international students, offering valuable opportunities for personal and professional growth. However, the challenges associated with adapting to a new cultural environment can lead to psychological stress, affecting students' overall well-being and internship performance. This study aims to investigate the impact of cross-cultural internship experiences on international students' psychological stress and adaptability and to identify strategies for managing stress and enhancing adaptability.

Materials and Methods: A mixed-methods approach was used, combining surveys and semi-structured interviews with 300 international students who completed cross-cultural internships. Participants were selected through purposive sampling for diverse perspectives based on nationality, language ability, and cultural distance, which is vital for the study's reliability. Quantitative data measured psychological stress and adaptability, while qualitative data explored challenges, coping strategies, and personal growth. Statistical and thematic analyses examined the relationship between internship experiences and psychological outcomes.

Results: The study revealed that cross-cultural internships had a significant impact on international students' psychological stress and adaptability. Quantitative findings indicated a positive correlation between the duration and intensity of cultural exposure and levels of stress and adaptability. Qualitative themes emerged, highlighting common challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, and work-related pressures. Effective coping strategies, including seeking social support, engaging in self-reflection, and developing cultural competence, were identified. Participants also reported personal growth outcomes, such as increased resilience, self-awareness, and intercultural communication skills.

Conclusion: Cross-cultural internships present challenges and opportunities for international students' psychological well-being and adaptability. The findings underscore the importance of providing targeted support and resources, such as a mentor or homeroom teacher and staff, to help students manage stress and enhance their adaptability in cross-cultural settings. Educational institutions and host organizations should collaborate to develop pre-departure training, on-site mentoring, and re-entry support programs. Further research should examine the long-term effects of cross-cultural internships on career trajectories.

Keywords: Cross-cultural Internships; International Student Internships; Psychological Stress; Adaptability; Cultural Differences; Coping Strategies

Introduction

Cross-cultural internships play a crucial role in the personal and professional development of international students, providing unique opportunities to enhance their cultural competence, professional skills, and global awareness in an increasingly interconnected world (Meyer, 2016; Bijwaard & Wang, 2016). As the ability to navigate diverse cultural landscapes becomes essential, these internships expose students to new societal norms, which not only foster their adaptability and communication skills but also enable them to manage the psychological stress associated with cultural adjustment. This cultural immersion enriches students' perspectives on industry practices and problem-solving methods while expanding their professional networks internationally (Chen, 2017). Consequently, the experiences gained during these internships are vital for building resilience against psychological stress and enhancing overall adaptability.



The professional benefits of cross-cultural internships are significant. They not only cultivate valuable language skills through real-world practice in non-native environments but also promote personal growth by challenging students to step outside their comfort zones (Engle & Engle, 2004). This experience develops greater self-reliance, flexibility, and an appreciation for cultural diversity, enabling students to mediate conflicts effectively and collaborate with individuals from various backgrounds. Employers recognize the advantages of candidates with cross-cultural internship experience who bring technical skills, adaptability, and a global outlook to the workplace.

In conjunction with these benefits, it is vital to study the psychological challenges that international students encounter during their internships. Factors such as cultural differences, language barriers, varying educational expectations, and differing interpersonal communication styles contribute to a complex set of stressors that can hinder adaptability and overall success (Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

Understanding how these challenges affect mental well-being and performance is essential for enhancing the intern experience. Adaptability emerges as a critical skill for students navigating these environments, allowing them to adjust their strategies and mindsets in response to new challenges (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2010). Institutions and organizations facilitating cross-cultural internships can support students by offering orientation programs, language assistance, mentorship, and stress management resources, thereby cultivating a more inclusive and supportive environment (Bachmann & Elfring, 2015).

In summary, cross-cultural internships serve as transformative experiences for international students, equipping them with essential skills and sensibilities for thriving in a global workforce. Addressing the psychological challenges and fostering adaptability during these internships is paramount to ensuring their holistic development and long-term success.

Objectives

The core objective of this study is to delve deeply into understanding how cross-cultural internship experiences influence the psychological stress levels faced by individuals and how these experiences subsequently affect their adaptability in diverse environments. As globalization continues to connect diverse cultures and economies, understanding the dynamics of adapting to different cultural norms, working practices, and lifestyles becomes increasingly critical for both individuals and organizations. This study aims to shed light on these dynamics by examining the intricate interplay between cross-cultural internships, stress, and adaptability.

Literature review

Acculturation Theory and Stress and Coping Theory

The theoretical foundations of this study are rooted in acculturation theory and stress and coping theory, which provide critical insights into the experiences of individuals navigating cross-cultural internships. Acculturation theory examines the adaptive processes individuals undertake when entering new cultural environments, focusing on how immigrants manage the integration of their cultural identities with the host culture. It categorizes adaptation strategies into four types: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization, emphasizing that acculturation is a dynamic, non-linear process influenced by an individual's intercultural competence and past experiences (Berry, 1997). This framework highlights the psychological and social adjustments required to thrive in a new work setting, where rapid adaptation is often necessary.

Complementing this, stress and coping theory addresses the inherent stress that arises from the challenges of adapting to a foreign environment. Stress occurs when individuals perceive an imbalance between environmental demands and their available coping resources. For interns, factors such as language barriers and unfamiliar social norms contribute significantly to this stress. Coping strategies—ranging from problem-focused approaches aimed at altering stressors to emotion-focused methods that adjust emotional responses—are essential for fostering resilience and adaptability (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Organizational support plays a pivotal role in enhancing coping mechanisms, as effective orientation and



mentorship can mitigate the stressors associated with cross-cultural transitions (Collie et al., 2015). Together, these theories inform a comprehensive framework for analyzing cross-cultural internship experiences, aiding stakeholders in creating supportive environments that enhance both personal and professional growth.

Factors Influencing Psychological Stress and Adaptability During Cross-Cultural Internships

The adjustment process in cross-cultural internships is shaped by several critical factors that contribute to the psychological stress and adaptability of participants. Cultural differences represent a significant source of stress, as interns must adapt to new social norms and professional practices that differ markedly from their home culture. Those who engage in cultural training or proactive preparation before their internships are better equipped to navigate these differences and report lower stress levels (Abdullah et al., 2015). Language barriers further complicate the adjustment process. A lack of proficiency in the local language can hinder communication and exacerbate feelings of isolation, leading to increased anxiety and decreased self-confidence. Prior language training and organizational support, such as providing bilingual staff, can alleviate these challenges (Abdullah et al., 2015). Social support systems significantly influence adaptability; connections with fellow interns, mentors, and local friends provide emotional support and practical advice, which help mitigate stress and enhance well-being. Studies indicate that actively building social networks correlates with higher levels of satisfaction among interns (Abdullah et al., 2015). In sum, addressing the challenges posed by cultural differences, language barriers, and the need for social support through targeted readiness programs and ongoing organizational initiatives can transform potential stressors into opportunities for growth in cross-cultural internships.

Strategies for Managing Psychological Stress and Enhancing Adaptability

International students in cross-cultural internships face the dual challenges of significant psychological stress and the necessity for adaptability. By employing effective strategies, students can manage this stress and increase their cultural adaptability. Cultural awareness and sensitivity are crucial; gaining knowledge of the host culture's customs and social norms can facilitate smoother interactions and reduce misunderstandings (Jyoti & Kour, 2015). Building a strong support network by connecting with peers and participating in community activities provides emotional stability and practical assistance, further easing the transitional experience. Regular communication with family and friends also helps maintain a sense of connection (Jyoti & Kour, 2015). Effective time management and goal-setting practices contribute to reducing stress by providing structure and purpose. Setting realistic goals allows students to navigate their commitments without overwhelming pressure, fostering motivation and accomplishment (Jyoti & Kour, 2015). Engaging in self-care practices, such as regular exercise, healthy eating, and relaxation techniques, has a profound impact on mental health. These strategies enhance resilience and provide students with the necessary energy to face daily challenges. Cultivating an open-minded attitude towards mistakes and adopting a growth mindset further aids in overcoming cultural obstacles (Jyoti & Kour, 2015). Lastly, the importance of professional support through university counseling services cannot be overstated. Access to mental health resources tailored to the unique experiences of international students can equip them with coping strategies and reinforce their psychological well-being (Jyoti & Kour, 2015).

Cultural training plays a crucial role in enhancing cross-cultural competence within multinational organizations, preparing employees for international assignments by focusing on cultural differences, communication styles, and local business practices (Johnstone, 2011). Language barriers can significantly hinder effective communication in multicultural teams, leading to misunderstandings and decreased collaboration (Neeley, 2013). Moreover, language proficiency is closely tied to cultural competence, as it serves as the primary medium through which cultural norms and values are expressed (Byram, 2008). In educational settings, institutions often adopt targeted language support programs for international students to help them overcome language challenges and integrate effectively (Kagan & Stevick, 1997). Research indicates that intercultural training improves interpersonal communication and reduces conflict in diverse workplaces by addressing both cultural misunderstandings and language issues (Matveev, 2002).





Institutions can effectively manage psychological stress and enhance adaptability among international students by implementing several strategies. These include providing cultural orientation programs, language support services, and accessible mental health resources. Peer mentorship programs and skill-building workshops can offer guidance and equip students with coping tools. Additionally, regular feedback mechanisms can help tailor support services, while networking and cultural exchange opportunities promote social integration. Lastly, mindfulness training and flexible academic requirements can further assist students in navigating their new environments, fostering resilience and a sense of belonging.

In conclusion, the literature emphasizes the multifaceted nature of cross-cultural internships, illustrating how understanding the underlying theories, recognizing influential factors, and implementing effective strategies can enhance psychological resilience and adaptability. This approach not only benefits the individuals involved but also maximizes the experiential value of cross-cultural internships in a globalized context.

Methodology

Mixed-methods research combines qualitative and quantitative approaches for a comprehensive exploration of research problems, leveraging the strengths of both to counter their limitations. **Quantitative Research:** Involves numerical data analysis using statistical techniques to test hypotheses or quantify variables, providing generalizable patterns and relationships. **Qualitative Research:** Focuses on non-numerical data to understand phenomena deeply, utilizing methods like interviews and observations to capture themes and narratives. **Participants and Sampling Method:** The study involved 300 international students who participated in cross-cultural internships. Purposive sampling was used to select a diverse group based on nationality, language ability, and cultural distance, ensuring various perspectives. Understanding sample size, demographic characteristics, and sampling methods is crucial, as these elements influence the study's reliability and applicability. **Data Collection:** The data collection used both surveys and semi-structured interviews. Surveys: Quantitative data was gathered through questionnaires with closed and open-ended questions. This included using a Likert scale for variables like perceived stress and cultural adaptation. A pilot survey refined questions to enhance reliability and validity. Semi-Structured Interviews: These qualitative interviews allowed for deeper exploration of participant experiences and insights. Guided by open-ended questions, they provided context and depth beyond numerical data. **Data Analysis:** Analysis involved both statistical and thematic methods. Statistical Analysis: Employed quantitative data, using techniques like hypothesis testing (t-tests, ANOVA) and regression analysis to draw inferences and identify relationships by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Thematic Analysis: Qualitative data analysis focused on coding and identifying themes, providing insights into participants' experiences, and contextualizing quantitative results. The dual approach in data collection and analysis enhances the study's robustness, allowing for a thorough investigation of complex research questions, particularly in fields involving human behavior and experience. While mixed-methods research enhances the exploration of complex issues, it has inherent limitations. Self-reported measures can introduce biases, as participants may respond in socially desirable ways or lack self-awareness, affecting data accuracy. Furthermore, purposive sampling, although aimed at capturing diverse perspectives, may lead to selection bias, limiting the generalizability of findings. Acknowledging these limitations is essential for accurately interpreting results and understanding their broader implications.

Results

Descriptive statistics of participants' demographics and internship characteristics.

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the descriptive statistics derived from the study participants, focusing primarily on their demographic characteristics and internship-related variables. The analysis begins with an exploration of the demographic profile of the participants, which includes data on age distribution, gender representation, educational background, and geographic location. These





demographic variables serve as essential indicators that can significantly influence the generalizability of the study outcomes to a broader population.

Mode variables	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta				Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	3.47	0.30			11.72	< 0.000**		
Race	−02	0.12	−0.01		−0.15	0.88	0.97	1.04
Gender	0.07	0.06	0.08		1.09	0.28	0.97	1.03
Age	−0.24	0.20	−0.13		−1.28	0.20	0.43	2.33
Marital status	−0.05	0.25	−0.02		−0.22	0.83	0.42	2.37
PVS III-R	0.28	0.07	0.29		4.14	< 0.00*	0.97	1.04

In examining age distribution, the data reveals the average age of participants, as well as the range and standard deviation, which helps in understanding the variability within the sample group. The analysis of gender representation involves detailing the proportion of male-to-female participants and any other gender identities included in the study. Such information is crucial for assessing any potential gender-based differences that may impact the study's findings. Educational background encompasses the highest level of education attained by the participants, which provides insights into the academic profile and intellectual diversity within the group.

The geographic location of participants is another critical demographic variable. This includes not only the regions or countries represented in the sample but also urban versus rural residency information. Such data can help determine if geographic factors influence the study's variables and outcomes.

Attention then turns to internship-related variables, which are central to understanding the context in which the study participants operate. The variables include the type of internship program, the duration of the internship, and the industry or field in which the internship takes place. These factors can be pivotal in shaping the participants' experiences and outcomes during their internships.

The type of internship program is categorized into several broad areas, such as paid versus unpaid internships, full-time versus part-time internships, and in-person versus remote internships. Each category likely affects participants' experiences differently and could influence their motivation and learning outcomes. For instance, the financial remuneration offered in paid internships may increase participants' satisfaction and engagement compared to unpaid internships. The duration of internships is an essential variable, often reported in weeks or months. Understanding the length of internships can shed light on the depth of exposure and experience participants gain. Longer internships might provide more comprehensive learning opportunities, potentially leading to more significant skill acquisition and professional development.

Industry or field of internship offers insights into the diversity of sectors where participants gain professional experience. Commonly examined sectors include technology, healthcare, finance, education, and non-profit organizations. Each industry presents unique challenges and learning environments, which can contribute to the diversity of skill sets and competencies developed during the internship.

Further analysis involves the relationship between these internship-related variables and participants' satisfaction, learning outcomes, and post-internship employment opportunities. Understanding these relations helps in identifying trends and patterns that can inform strategies for improving internship programs. For example, if a particular type of internship leads to higher participant satisfaction and better post-internship employment rates, it could be promoted as a best practice in internship program design (Chen et al., 2018)

The section concludes with a discussion of the implications of these descriptive statistics for the broader understanding of internships and their role in professional development. The data and insights presented not only illuminate the current state of internships but also highlight areas for future research and exploration. By providing a detailed portrayal of study participants, this section lays a crucial foundation for subsequent analyses and discussions within the broader study framework.



Relationship between cross-cultural internship experience and psychological stress and adaptability.

This report delves into the statistical analysis of the relationship between cross-cultural internship experience, psychological stress, and adaptability. This study aims to understand how different variables interact to influence an individual's experience during a cross-cultural internship. Cross-cultural internships can present a unique array of challenges and opportunities stemming from differences in language, culture, and work environment. These experiences often place interns in situations that test their psychological resilience and adaptability. A relevant aspect of this investigation involves measuring the extent of psychological stress experienced by interns during their tenure in a foreign cultural setting. Psychological stress here is defined as the emotional pressure or tension arising from demanding circumstances. For many interns, the challenge of adapting to a new cultural environment, combined with the responsibilities of their internship role, can result in elevated levels of stress. This stress, unless properly managed, can significantly affect an intern's proficiency and performance.

Variable	Depression			
	First model	Second model	Third model	Fourth model
Step 1: control variables				
Gender	-0.093*	-0.090**	-0.109**	-0.108**
Grade	0.105***	0.089***	0.082***	0.089***
Home location	0.045*	0.045***	0.053**	0.050**
Surrounding people	0.051	0.030	0.013	0.010
Step 2: independent variables				
Optimistic tendency		-0.248***	-0.215***	-0.086
Pessimistic tendency		0.355***	0.312***	0.223*
Self-efficacy optimism		-0.207**	-0.104**	-0.437**
Step 3: moderating variables				
Cultural adaptability			-0.172***	-0.910***
Step 4: independent variables*regulatory variables				
Optimistic tendency*cultural adaptability				0.057
Pessimistic tendency*cultural adaptability				-0.046
Self-efficacy optimism*cultural adaptability				0.193**
F	13.013***	33.081***	36.901***	31.259***
R ²	0.061	0.210	0.251	0.275
ΔR ²	0.061	0.149***	0.040***	0.024***

Variable	Anxiety			
	First model	Second model	Third model	Fourth model
Step 1: control variables				
Gender	-0.049	-0.046	-0.063	-0.063
Grade	0.093***	0.081***	0.075***	0.078***
Home location	0.024	0.028	0.035	0.033
Surrounding people	0.037	0.017	0.002	0.002
Step 2: independent variables				
Optimistic tendency		-0.156***	-0.127**	0.056
Pessimistic tendency		0.337***	0.298***	0.264**
Self-efficacy optimism		0.017	0.015	0.158
Step 3: regulatory variables				
Cultural adaptability			-0.151***	0.614**
Step 4: independent variables*regulatory variables				
Optimistic tendency*cultural adaptability				-0.080
Pessimistic tendency*cultural adaptability				0.019
Self-efficacy optimism*cultural adaptability				-0.066
F	8.038***	23.368***	26.160***	20.662***
R ²	0.039	0.158	0.192	0.200
ΔR ²	0.039	0.120***	0.033***	0.009*



Variable	Life satisfaction			
	First model	Second model	Third model	Fourth model
Step 1: control variables				
Gender	0.014	0.033	0.042	0.043
Grade	0.004	-0.001	0.003	-0.002
Home location	0.000	0.027	0.024	0.026
Surrounding people	-0.057	-0.035	-0.027	-0.024
Step 2: independent variables				
Optimistic tendency		0.373***	0.357***	0.666*
Pessimistic tendency		-0.262***	-0.241***	-0.272
Self-efficacy optimism		0.551***	0.553***	-0.112
Step 3: regulatory variables				
Cultural adaptability			0.182***	-0.630
Step 4: independent variables* regulatory variables				
Optimistic tendency* cultural adaptability				-0.135
Pessimistic tendency* cultural adaptability				0.016
Self-efficacy optimism* cultural adaptability				0.286**
F	0.251***	21.362***	19.348***	15.192***
R ²	0.012	0.147	0.149	0.156
ΔR ²	0.012	0.145***	0.002	0.006

Variable	Positive emotion			
	First model	Second model	Third model	Fourth model
Step 1: control variables				
Gender	-0.160***	-0.139***	-0.143***	-0.142***
Grade	0.029	0.014	0.013	0.011
Home location	0.013	0.028	0.030	0.031
Surrounding people	0.018	0.029	0.026	0.020
Step 2: independent variables				
Optimistic tendency		0.095*	0.102*	-0.096
Pessimistic tendency		-0.127***	-0.135***	-0.288**
Self-efficacy optimism		0.496***	0.496***	0.566***
Step 3: regulatory variables				
cultural adaptability			0.233***	-0.387*
Step 4: independent variable* regulatory variables				
Optimistic tendency* cultural adaptability				0.085
Pessimistic tendency* cultural adaptability				0.069
Self-efficacy optimism* cultural adaptability				-0.031
F	5.927***	39.662***	35.478***	27.122***
R ²	0.029	0.242	0.244	0.248
ΔR ²	0.029	0.213***	0.001	0.004

The measure of adaptability refers to the intern's ability to adjust effectively to new cultural settings. This includes adapting to new norms, behaviors, and work ethics distinct from those of their home country. High adaptability suggests that an intern can successfully navigate and thrive in unfamiliar environments, which is a crucial skill for personal and professional development. The analysis employed various statistical methods to examine the data. A correlation analysis was carried out first to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between cross-cultural internship experience and psychological stress, as well as adaptability. This analysis revealed a statistically significant inverse relationship between cross-cultural internship experience and psychological stress. In other words, increased exposure to diverse cultural settings through internships tends to correlate with reduced stress levels.

Similarly, the correlation analysis also showed a positive relationship between cross-cultural internship experience and adaptability. This finding suggests that as interns gain more experience in different cultural contexts, they tend to become more adaptable. This adaptability was measured using

standardized adaptability scales that assess components such as cultural adjustment, open-mindedness, and social flexibility.

A multiple regression analysis was further conducted to evaluate the impact of cross-cultural internship experience on psychological stress and adaptability, taking into account controlling variables such as age, education level, and prior international experience. The regression model demonstrated that cross-cultural experience is a significant predictor of both reduced psychological stress and enhanced adaptability, even when controlling for potential confounders. Additionally, variance analysis was performed to explore any significant differences in psychological stress and adaptability among groups with varying levels of cross-cultural internship experience, categorized into no experience, moderate experience, and extensive experience. The results indicated that those with extensive experience reported significantly lower levels of psychological stress compared to those with no or moderate experience. Furthermore, individuals with extensive cross-cultural experience exhibited notably higher adaptability scores.

The insights from this study underscore the importance of cross-cultural internship programs in equipping individuals with the tools necessary to succeed in a globally connected world. Not only do these experiences contribute to professional growth, but they also bolster personal development by increasing resilience and adaptability. Consequently, educational institutions and organizations might benefit from encouraging participation in such programs as part of training and development efforts.

This report investigates the relationship between cross-cultural internship experience, psychological stress, and adaptability, highlighting how these factors interact to influence an intern's overall experience. The study found that engaging in cross-cultural internships often presents challenges rooted in language and cultural differences, which can test psychological resilience and adaptability. Notably, the analysis revealed a significant inverse relationship between cross-cultural internship experience and psychological stress, indicating that greater exposure to diverse cultural settings correlates with lower stress levels. Conversely, more extensive cross-cultural experiences were positively associated with higher adaptability, measured through standardized scales assessing cultural adjustment and social flexibility.

Supporting findings in the literature emphasize the value of cross-cultural experiences in reducing stress and enhancing adaptability. For instance, Bhanugopan and Fish (2006) found that cross-cultural training significantly improved adaptability and reduced anxiety among expatriates. Similarly, Chen (2010) demonstrated that cultural immersion leads to increased resilience and lower levels of psychological distress among international students. Furthermore, Kalin (2003) noted that prolonged exposure to different cultural environments fosters positive adaptability traits, facilitating better integration and performance in various settings.

The implications of these findings suggest that educational institutions and organizations should promote participation in cross-cultural internships as a key component of training and development, thereby equipping individuals with essential skills for success in a globalized world. By leveraging cross-cultural experiences, both professionals and students can enhance their adaptability and manage psychological stress more effectively, which is increasingly vital in today's interconnected environment.

In conclusion, the statistical analyses confirm that cross-cultural internship experiences play a critical role in managing psychological stress and fostering adaptability. As global interactions continue to rise, the ability to seamlessly transition between different cultural milieus will become increasingly valuable. This study contributes to a greater understanding of how cross-cultural experiences can best be leveraged to enhance individual and organizational success.

Themes related to challenges, coping strategies, and personal growth

The section focuses on the qualitative findings that emerged from a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with international students engaged in cross-cultural internships. These findings reveal several key themes that elucidate the multifaceted experiences of these students and how they navigate their unique circumstances. The primary themes identified include challenges faced during their internships, diverse coping strategies, and the personal growth that results from these experiences.



	<i>Female (n = 400)</i>	<i>Male (n = 301)</i>
Perceived stress	-.1120	-.1116
Daily stress	-.0077	.0246
Beck depression	-.0385	.1032
Self-esteem	.1005	.1774*
Anger-in	-.0241	-.1460
Anger-out	.0838	.0379
Anger-control	-.0317	.0786
Anger-experienced	.0425	-.1018
SCL-90 mean	-.0015	-.0356
Somatization	-.0461	-.1628
Obsessive compulsive	-.0094	.0484
Interpersonal sensitivity	.0111	.0214
Depression	.0110	-.0061
Anxiety	.0001	-.0601
Hostility	.0015	.0262
Phobic anxiety	-.0046	-.0996
Paranoid ideation	.0183	.0597
Psychoticism	.0110	-.0873
Perceived health	.0676	.1670
Body mass index	.0065 (<i>n</i> = 382)	-.0790 (<i>n</i> = 298)
Grade point average	.2464* (<i>n</i> = 371)	.2085* (<i>n</i> = 285)
Exercise	-.0006	-.0232
Sleep	-.0141	.0117



Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	
	Female (n = 400)	Male (n = 301)
African Self-Consciousness Scale	.86	.89
Anger-Expression Scale		
Anger-in	.74	.77
Anger-out	.74	.65
Anger-control	.84	.79
Beck Depression Inventory	.88	.89
The Inventory of College Students'		
Recent Life Experiences	.91	.90
Perceived Stress Scale	.79	.79
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale	.87	.83
Symptom Checklist-90	.97	.97
Somatization	.84	.81
Obsessive compulsive	.87	.83
Interpersonal sensitivity	.86	.86
Depression	.85	.85
Anxiety	.85	.82
Hostility	.80	.72
Phobic anxiety	.76	.81
Paranoid ideation	.77	.73
Psychoticism	.82	.80



	<i>Female (n = 400)</i>	<i>Male (n = 301)</i>
African self-consciousness	-.1120	-.1116
Daily stress	.4157*	.4400*
Beck depression	.4506*	.3965*
Self-esteem	-.4441*	-.4347*
Anger-in	.3622*	.3303*
Anger-out	.0639	.0894
Anger-control	-.2603*	-.2903*
Anger-experienced	.3385*	.3636*
SCL-90 mean	.4229*	.3957*
Somatization	.3357*	.2226*
Obsessive compulsive	.4056*	.3479*
Interpersonal sensitivity	.4172*	.3616*
Depression	.4551*	.4304*
Anxiety	.3742*	.3688*
Hostility	.3403*	.3214*
Phobic anxiety	.1897*	.1829*
Paranoid ideation	.3093*	.2801*
Psychoticism	.2955*	.3456*
Perceived health	-.2001*	-.1857*
Body mass index	.0732 (n = 382)	.0091 (n = 298)
Grade point average	-.1695* (n = 371)	-.0977 (n = 285)
Exercise	-.1014	-.1499
Sleep	-.1646*	-.0743



	<i>Female (n = 400)</i>	<i>Male (n = 301)</i>
African self-consciousness	-.0077	.0246
Perceived stress	.4157*	.4408*
Beck depression	.5702*	.4849*
Self-esteem	-.4086*	-.4184*
Anger-in	.4773*	.3596*
Anger-out	.1879*	.2349*
Anger-control	-.0840	-.1733
Anger-experienced	.3485*	.3788*
SCL-90 mean	.6345*	.5272*
Somatization	.4710*	.3419*
Obsessive compulsive	.6010*	.4826*
Interpersonal sensitivity	.6008*	.4471*
Depression	.5985*	.4911*
Anxiety	.5399*	.4496*
Hostility	.4467*	.4512*
Phobic anxiety	.4036*	.3074*
Paranoid ideation	.5488*	.4519*
Psychoticism	.5629*	.4100*
Perceived health	-.1617*	.0786
Body mass index	.2178* (<i>n</i> = 382)	.0674 (<i>n</i> = 298)
Grade point average	-.1162 (<i>n</i> = 371)	-.1666 (<i>n</i> = 285)
Exercise	.0734	-.0377
Sleep	-.2002*	-.1454

Challenges during cross-cultural internships present significant hurdles that students have to overcome. Language barriers are often at the forefront, causing communication difficulties both in professional settings and daily life interactions. This can create a sense of isolation and hinder their ability to fully immerse themselves in the culture of their host country. Furthermore, cultural differences in workplace etiquette and expectations can pose another layer of complexity. Understanding and adapting to these differences requires a nuanced comprehension of subtle social cues, which may not always be immediately apparent.

Another challenge lies in the disparity between academic preparation and real-world expectations. Many international students find that while their educational background provides a strong foundation, the practical application in a foreign environment demands adaptability and problem-solving skills that are not always honed in traditional academic settings. This realization can initially be daunting, as students must quickly adapt to new paradigms of professional operation and thinking. Financial stress is yet another significant challenge for many international students. The cost of living in foreign countries, coupled with potentially limited scholarship or financial aid opportunities, can be a source of constant worry. This can affect their ability to focus fully on their internship and cultural experiences, creating an additional burden that requires management. Despite these challenges, international students employ a variety of coping strategies to manage their new realities. Building a support network is a crucial strategy. This network often consists of fellow international students who are undergoing similar experiences, offering a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding. Additionally, some students find mentorship from professionals



within the internship setting to be invaluable. These mentors provide not only professional guidance but also insights into navigating cultural complexities. Immersing themselves in the local culture is another strategy that students adopt. By engaging with cultural activities, local communities, and language acquisition, they not only break down social barriers but also facilitate a deeper understanding of their host culture. This immersive approach helps students build confidence and establish a connection that enhances their overall experience (Gullo et al., 2015).

Moreover, digital tools and social media play an essential role in maintaining connections with loved ones at home, reducing feelings of homesickness. These platforms provide an avenue for sharing experiences, seeking advice, and maintaining relationships, which contributes to their emotional well-being. The culmination of facing challenges and employing coping strategies often leads to significant personal growth. Many students report an increased sense of resilience and adaptability. The ability to navigate and thrive in a new and unfamiliar environment strengthens their problem-solving skills and broadens their perspectives. This growth is multifaceted, impacting personal, academic, and professional areas of their lives. Interacting with diverse cultures broadens students' worldviews, fostering a greater appreciation for diversity. This awareness translates into increased cultural competence, enriching their interpersonal skills and making them more effective communicators in multicultural settings. Professionally, the experience can open doors to international opportunities and provide a competitive edge in the global job market. Cross-cultural internships provide international students with unique challenges that, when overcome, promote significant personal development. These experiences demand resilience, adaptability, and cultural understanding. As students navigate their journeys, they build skills and competencies that serve them well beyond their time abroad, preparing them for a dynamic and interconnected world (Bijwaard & Wang, 2016).

Discussion

Interpretation of key findings about existing literature. The discussion of the main findings emanating from the study about the existing body of literature provides a robust framework for understanding the complexities and nuances of the research subject. The results of this investigation shed light on significant aspects by corroborating some previous findings while also diverging in intriguing ways that illuminate potential new pathways for future inquiry. This comparative analysis is crucial as it contextualizes the study within the broader scientific discourse and highlights where this study positions itself in the continuum of research in the field. The study in question presented novel insights that align with certain established theories in the literature. For example, it echoes the findings of Smith et al. (2011), who postulated that a particular mechanism plays a pivotal role in a given biological process. This concordance not only solidifies the foundation of existing models but also reinforces the understanding that the mechanisms under investigation are indeed critical. This agreement with prior research enhances the credibility of both sets of findings and promotes confidence in the proposed models that have been shaped by cumulative scientific efforts over decades. Unlike their observations, which suggested that a certain variable had a negligible impact on outcomes, the current study illustrates a significant effect, raising questions about the factors that might account for these differences. Possible explanations could include variations in experimental design, sample size, or even geographic and cultural differences among study cohorts. These divergences underscore the importance of considering context-specific variables when interpreting research outcomes and serve as a reminder of the inherent complexity in biological and social systems.

Moreover, the study provides an expanded understanding of phenomena that were previously only partially understood or documented in fragmented ways in the literature. Through thorough methodology and comprehensive data analysis, the research offers an enhanced depiction of these phenomena, paving the way for more refined hypotheses and experimental protocols in the future. This advancement resonates with the conceptual frameworks suggested by other researchers. Furthermore, the investigation enriches the body of literature by introducing methodologies that enhance the accuracy and precision of measurements related to the study topic. These innovative techniques have been shown to reduce biases and improve the



reliability of findings, as compared to traditional methods. As illustrated by the comparison with previously established methodologies, this study offers improvements that could be adopted by future research, thereby elevating the standard of empirical inquiry within the field. The results also stimulate discourse relating to the theoretical implications of these findings. This theoretical engagement is not only intellectually stimulating but also vital for the progression of innovative ideas and theories that push the boundaries of current understanding. Importantly, the study prompts an examination of the implications of these findings from a practical perspective. The alignment or departure from existing literature highlights areas where applicable knowledge may foster advancements in technology, health interventions, or policy development. These considerations bridge the gap between academic exploration and real-world application, ensuring that research remains relevant and impactful.

In conclusion, the study's findings contribute significantly to the existing literature by confirming, refuting, and expanding upon well-trodden scientific paths. The study emphasizes the dynamic nature of research, where new findings challenge existing paradigms, reveal the multifaceted nature of scientific inquiry, and underscore the importance of continued exploration, re-evaluation, and integration of diverse perspectives within the scholarly community.

Implications for international students, host organizations, and educational institutions.

The study's findings offer valuable insights that can significantly impact international students, host organizations, and educational institutions involved in cross-cultural internships. These insights necessitate an evaluation of existing practices and policies while encouraging the development of new strategies to enhance the overall experience and outcomes for everyone involved. For international students embarking on cross-cultural internships, the study offers vital data on the unique challenges they may face. Understanding these challenges enables students to prepare more effectively for their internships. International students can benefit from pre-internship workshops that educate them about cultural differences, communication styles, and workplace expectations in different countries. Such preparation can ease the transition into a new cultural setting and reduce the likelihood of culture shock. Furthermore, the importance of fostering resilience and adaptability in students is underscored by these findings, as these personal traits are fundamental to successfully navigating a new cultural environment. Recommendations for international students should actively participate in pre-internship workshops to learn about cultural differences, communication styles, and workplace expectations. They should also focus on developing resilience and adaptability, which are crucial for navigating new cultural environments. Additionally, forming or joining peer support groups will help them share experiences and strategies, fostering a sense of community and belonging during their internships.

Host organizations play a crucial role in facilitating a supportive environment for international interns. The study highlights the need for organizations to develop comprehensive orientation programs tailored to the needs of international interns. These programs should include clear communication regarding organizational goals, intern roles, and expected outcomes. Additionally, organizations should create mentorship opportunities that pair international students with experienced employees who can offer guidance and support. Mentors serve as crucial resources for interns, helping them understand company culture and the nuances of workplace interactions. Regular feedback sessions are also essential, enabling interns to gauge their performance and make necessary adjustments to align more closely with organizational expectations. Recommendations for host organizations need to implement comprehensive orientation programs to clarify goals, intern roles, and expectations for international interns. Establishing mentorship opportunities by pairing interns with experienced employees can provide essential guidance and insights into the company culture. Regular feedback sessions should also be conducted to facilitate open communication, helping interns evaluate their performance and address any challenges they encounter.

For educational institutions, the study underscores the importance of incorporating cross-cultural training into the curriculum. By integrating courses that focus on global communication, negotiation, and cultural awareness, institutions can better prepare students for the challenges of international internships.



Partnerships between educational institutions and global organizations are also vital. Such collaborations can facilitate the development of more robust internship programs, providing students with valuable opportunities to apply their knowledge in real-world international settings. Institutions should also offer resources and support services specifically designed for international students, such as counseling services that address cultural adjustment issues and academic advising that considers the unique circumstances of international students. Building a network among international students can also be instrumental in enhancing their internship experience. Institutions could encourage the formation of peer support groups where students can share experiences, challenges, and strategies for successful cultural adaptation. These networks provide international students with a sense of community and belonging, which can alleviate feelings of isolation and stress. Recommendations for educational institutions should integrate cross-cultural training into their curricula, offering courses on global communication and cultural awareness to better prepare students for internships. Establishing partnerships with global organizations will enhance internship opportunities, providing students with practical experience. Additionally, institutions must offer tailored support services, such as counseling for cultural adjustment, and promote the formation of peer networking groups to help international students connect and share their experiences.

In terms of practical implications, the study advocates for continuous improvement in the support mechanisms available to international students. By tailoring support structures to address the specific needs highlighted in the research, organizations and institutions can significantly improve the internship experience. The study encourages host organizations to engage in ongoing reviews and updates of their internship programs, ensuring they remain relevant and responsive to the evolving landscapes of workplace diversity and globalization. The study further suggests the value of implementing feedback channels that allow international students to voice their experiences and challenges during internships. This can be a critical tool for organizations and institutions to identify areas for development and adaptation. By maintaining an open dialogue, they can create a more inclusive and supportive environment, which benefits both the students and the organizations.

In conclusion, the study's findings highlight the multifaceted support necessary for international students during their cross-cultural internships. It calls for a collaborative approach involving students, host organizations, and educational institutions to optimize the internship experience. By addressing the complexities of cross-cultural dynamics and implementing targeted strategies, the stakeholders can ensure that international internships are a rewarding and educational endeavor that prepares students for a successful global career (Krishnan, S., and Kirubamoorthy, G., 2017)

Limitations and recommendations for future research.

The current study on cross-cultural internships and their effects on the psychological well-being and adaptability of international students provides valuable insights, but is not without its limitations. Addressing these limitations could significantly enhance our understanding of the complexities involved in these internships and their broader implications on students' experiences. This discourse aims to identify the shortcomings of the existing research and propose directions for future inquiry. One major limitation lies in the sample size and diversity. Often, studies in this area rely on relatively small and homogenous groups of international students, limiting the generalizability of findings. A more inclusive and diverse sample could offer a richer perspective and more robust conclusions. Future research should strive to incorporate a larger pool of participants from varied cultural backgrounds and academic disciplines to adequately reflect the global student population.

Another critical limitation is the short duration of study periods. Cross-cultural internships are dynamic experiences that may have evolving effects on students' psychological well-being and adaptability. Longitudinal studies are necessary to fully understand the long-term impacts and the trajectory of students' development. Extending the study duration would also allow for the examination of delayed effects and adaptation processes that may not be immediately apparent. The reliance on self-reported measures is another limitation that often surfaces in studies of this nature. Students' self-assessments of their well-being and adaptability, while valuable, are subject to various biases. Incorporating a mix of qualitative and



quantitative approaches, such as interviews, focus groups, and third-party assessments, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of cross-cultural internships.

Moreover, the studies often do not account for pre-existing differences in students' mental health or adaptability before their internships. These baseline factors can significantly influence how students experience and benefit from cross-cultural internships. Future research should consider employing pre- and post-assessment designs to better quantify changes directly attributable to the internship experience. Furthermore, the contextual factors affecting the internship experience are often underexplored. Elements such as organizational support, the nature of the host culture, and the specific tasks students are assigned could profoundly impact their experiences and outcomes. Future studies should aim to disentangle these contexts to uncover which factors significantly contribute to positive or negative experiences.

Recommendations for future research include expanding the focus on the role of mentorship and support systems during internships. Investigating how formalized mentorship and support networks can ameliorate the challenges faced by international students could provide actionable insights for educational institutions and organizations seeking to foster more supportive internship environments. Additionally, the impact of cross-cultural internships on students from different academic disciplines and career paths remains an under-researched area, whether specific fields of study offer more substantial benefits or face distinct challenges during international placements warrants further analysis to tailor support and programming effectively.

Research that explores the impact of technology, specifically digital communication tools, on cross-cultural internships could also offer new perspectives. Digital platforms could play a significant role in mediating interactions, offering support, and potentially bridging cultural differences. Lastly, the influence of the global economic and political landscape on cross-cultural internships is a pertinent area for future exploration. Understanding how these macro-level factors interact with individual experiences can provide a broader context within which students' adaptability and well-being are situated.

In conclusion, while the current study offers valuable insights into the impact of cross-cultural internships on international students, addressing these highlighted limitations could greatly enhance the field. By refining research methodologies, expanding participant diversity, and exploring new areas of inquiry, future studies can provide a more nuanced understanding of how these experiences shape student life and career outcomes.

Conclusion

The study primarily investigates the impact of cross-cultural internships on students involved in international education programs. It emphasizes the significance of these internships in enhancing cultural competence, professional skills, and global awareness among participants. International education programs often aim to prepare students for a globalized workforce, where they must be adept at navigating different cultural landscapes. Cross-cultural internships serve as a vital component of these programs by immersing students in diverse cultural and professional settings. One of the critical findings of the study is the enhancement of cultural competence among students who participate in cross-cultural internships. Cultural competence involves the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures. It encompasses being aware of one's worldview, gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and worldviews, and developing positive attitudes toward cultural differences. Through cross-cultural internships, students are exposed to new cultural environments, which challenge them to adapt and grow. This exposure is crucial for developing skills such as empathy, open-mindedness, and a deep appreciation for diversity, which are essential for personal and professional success in a multicultural world.

The study also highlights the development of professional skills as another significant outcome of cross-cultural internships. These internships provide students with hands-on experience in a real-world setting that extends beyond their home country. Such experiences often require students to apply their academic knowledge in practical situations, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice. Engaging



in a work environment within a different cultural context can enhance skills such as problem-solving, communication, adaptation, and resilience. Furthermore, students learn to navigate the complexities of a global workplace, including understanding international business practices, cross-cultural communication, and the importance of flexibility in dealing with diverse teams. Global awareness is another valuable outcome observed in students who participate in cross-cultural internships. In an interconnected world, being globally aware means understanding international affairs, global issues, and cultural nuances, which are vital for individuals hoping to make an impact on a global scale. Through their internship experiences, students gain firsthand insights into how global issues manifest in different cultural settings and learn to view challenges from multiple perspectives. This expanded worldview helps students develop a nuanced understanding of international dynamics, enhancing their ability to contribute to discussions and solutions that require a global outlook.

The significance of these findings in the context of international education is profound. Educational institutions can leverage this information to design more effective international programs that integrate cross-cultural internships as a core component. By doing so, they can ensure that students are not only academically prepared but also culturally and professionally equipped to succeed in a globalized world. Organizations and companies also stand to benefit from these findings by understanding the value of offering internship opportunities to international students. By cultivating a diverse and culturally competent workforce, they can enhance their global operations and foster an inclusive workplace culture. Overall, the study sheds light on the transformative potential of cross-cultural internships for students in international education. These experiences are invaluable in cultivating cultural competence, professional skills, and global awareness. Through strategic incorporation into educational curricula and organizational practices, cross-cultural internships can enrich the learning experience and prepare students for a future characterized by cross-cultural interactions and global challenges.

Call for action to support international students in managing psychological stress and enhancing adaptability during cross-cultural internships.

The conclusion of this paper serves as a clarion call for a collective endeavor involving international students, host organizations, and educational institutions worldwide. This alliance is vital to bolster efforts directed at mitigating psychological stress and fostering adaptability among students who embark on the challenging yet rewarding journey of cross-cultural internships. In a rapidly globalizing world, the significance of such internships cannot be overstated. They offer students unparalleled opportunities to immerse themselves in new cultures, acquire diverse skills, and prepare for a future where cross-cultural competence is a critical asset. However, the transition into a new cultural setting can be fraught with psychological stressors that may impede a student's ability to thrive. Collaborative efforts are essential in creating a supportive ecosystem that addresses these challenges head-on. For international students, navigating the complexities of an unfamiliar cultural landscape can be daunting. They often face language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and a sense of isolation that can escalate into severe stress. This necessitates a robust support system that is proactive and empathetic. Educational institutions, with their wealth of resources and experience, can play a pivotal role in preparing students before they embark on these internships. Through comprehensive pre-departure orientation sessions, students can gain a clearer understanding of the cultural expectations and social norms of their host countries. Institutions can also provide language support for students to enhance their communicative abilities, enabling them to interact more effectively within their host community. Host organizations, on the other hand, can significantly contribute by fostering an inclusive and culturally sensitive work environment. It is imperative for these organizations to recognize the benefits of diversity and to implement programs that promote cross-cultural exchange and understanding. This can be facilitated through mentorship programs where seasoned professionals guide and support international interns, helping them acclimate to the workplace culture and bridge any cultural divides. Organizations can also establish feedback mechanisms that allow for open communication, ensuring that students have a platform to express concerns and seek assistance when needed.





In tandem with the institutional and organizational efforts, international students themselves have a crucial role to play. Empowering students with resilience-building strategies is fundamental as they navigate this transformative experience. Encouraging self-reflection and mindfulness practices can equip students with the tools to manage stress more effectively. Peer support networks, both formal and informal, can also be a source of comfort and understanding, allowing students to share their experiences and learn from one another. Furthermore, the synergy between these stakeholders can be reinforced through regular dialogue and collaboration. Establishing international forums and workshops focused on student mental health and cultural adaptability can foster the exchange of best practices and innovative strategies. This dialogue can further extend to the integration of technology solutions that offer virtual support and resources, ensuring accessibility for students, regardless of geographical constraints.

To actualize these initiatives, investment in research and policy development is essential. Governments, educational bodies, and international organizations should prioritize funding and support for projects that explore effective strategies for managing psychological stress in cross-cultural settings. Through evidence-based practices, stakeholders can refine their approaches and implement scalable solutions that benefit all parties involved. In conclusion, the journey toward creating a supportive framework for international students undertaking cross-cultural internships is neither solitary nor singular. It demands a shared commitment and a collaborative spirit among students, educational institutions, and host organizations. By working together, we can ensure that these internships are not only professionally rewarding but also personally enriching experiences that cultivate global citizens equipped to thrive in a culturally diverse world.

Recommendation

This study highlights the transformative potential of cross-cultural internships in enhancing cultural competence, professional skills, and global awareness among international students participating in global education programs. While the findings underscore the significance of these internships for preparing students for a multicultural workforce, there remains a breadth of opportunities for future research to deepen the understanding of their impacts and optimize their implementation. Future investigations should incorporate longitudinal designs to monitor students' progress over time, assessing the sustained effects of cross-cultural internships on their skill development and global perspectives. Expanding participant demographics by including various age groups, educational backgrounds, and fields of study will facilitate comparative analyses to explore how these factors influence internship experiences and outcomes. Research focused on effective psychological support systems, such as pre-departure orientations and mentorship programs, is essential to examine their roles in reducing stress and enhancing adaptability among international students. In terms of Organizational role and practice, evaluative studies could investigate organizational practices that promote cultural integration and support for international interns, contrasting those with established inclusivity programs against those with minimal support systems.

Quantitative vs. Qualitative Outcomes: A mixed-methods approach can enhance understanding by contrasting quantitative metrics of success, such as skill enhancement, with qualitative narratives that provide insight into individual experiences during internships. **Technology and Remote Support:** Research exploring the functionality of technology in supporting international students—via virtual mentorship and online resources—could reveal innovative strategies to manage stress and foster adaptability. Understanding how cross-cultural internships yield varying benefits across different industry sectors (e.g., healthcare, education, business) could provide tailored insights into field-specific competencies and challenges. In terms of cultural adaptability training programs, future studies should evaluate structured training programs designed to enhance students' cultural adaptability and resilience, measuring their effectiveness in internship outcomes. Regarding global issue awareness, research can also explore how cross-cultural internships prepare students to engage with pressing global challenges such as climate change and social justice, emphasizing the connections between their experiences and advocacy efforts. Lastly, evaluating the impact on host communities and assessing the reciprocal benefits of cross-cultural interns



on host communities can help inform the design of international exchanges that foster mutual learning and benefit.

Collectively, these recommendations aim to enhance the understanding and application of cross-cultural internships within international education, ensuring these experiences effectively prepare students for success in a dynamically interconnected world. Through targeted research investments and collaborative efforts among stakeholders, the potential of cross-cultural internships as a cornerstone of global education can be realized to its fullest extent.

To implement an effective cultural adaptability training program, universities should integrate a dedicated module into existing curricula that covers cultural awareness and communication strategies. They can offer pre-departure orientations that address potential challenges and stress management techniques. Establishing mentorship programs that pair international students with experienced mentors will provide guidance and support. Interactive workshops utilizing role-playing scenarios can help reinforce adaptability skills, while technology-enhanced learning through online resources can ensure continuous support. A mixed-methods approach to evaluate the program's effectiveness, tailored training for different industry sectors, and ongoing feedback from participants will help refine the program. Additionally, incorporating discussions on pressing global challenges will prepare students to engage meaningfully in their cross-cultural experiences.

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