



## Cross-Cultural Adjustment: The Role of Cultural Intelligence and Pre-Departure Training

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**Abstract:** Every student pursuing studies in a foreign country is highly likely to encounter challenges related to cultural shock, as they must adapt to an environment and regulations that differ from those of their home country. The process of adapting to a cross-cultural environment is critically important for students participating in international exchange programs. This process becomes significantly easier when individuals possess a high level of cultural intelligence and are supported by pre-departure training activities that provide comprehensive information on all necessary preparations for studying abroad. This study employs a quantitative approach, measured through multiple linear regression analysis, by sampling 105 students from Universitas Padjadjaran who participated in the IISMA and IISMAVO programs in 2022. The results of this study indicate that cultural intelligence and pre-departure training have a positive influence on cross-cultural adjustment. This research provides new insights and perspectives in the field of human resource management, particularly in organizational behavior, regarding the relationship between cultural intelligence and pre-departure training on cross-cultural adjustment. It serves as a reference for conducting more in-depth future studies.

**Keywords:** cross-cultural adjustment; cultural intelligence; iisma & iismavo; pre-departure training; universitas padjadjaran

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### INTRODUCTION

Entering the 21st century, globalization has progressively evolved into a defining and transformative phenomenon, actively fostering an increasing level of interconnectedness among business organizations, economies, industries, and the movement of human resources across diverse national borders (Wang, 2016). Rapid developments in contemporary communication and technology have significantly increased the flow of labor, culture, and knowledge between nations and regions, thereby profoundly reshaping the social, economic, and educational landscapes, while simultaneously presenting unique challenges (Clark & Polesello, 2017). Among the various far-reaching and complex consequences of globalization, one of the most impactful has been the expansion and development of international education, which has facilitated cross-border student mobility for academic and cultural enrichment purposes (Nasir, 2015). International education programs play a vital role in providing students with opportunities to gain broader perspectives, develop intercultural competencies, and enhance their career prospects (Lustre, 2024). Higher education institutions worldwide actively promote academic mobility through scholarships, exchange programs, and dual degree collaborations. In today's increasingly connected global society, international student exchange programs are becoming essential to enable students to gain experience in living and collaborating with individuals from different countries (Cutting et al., 2022; Kurpis & Hunter, 2017). By offering students the opportunity to study in culturally diverse environments, such programs foster the development of global awareness, introduce new perspectives, enhance adaptability, and strengthen students' cultural competence (Davies & Moyo, 2017; Kosman et al., 2023; Potts, 2016). However, despite the numerous benefits associated with studying abroad, international students often face a variety of challenges, with cultural adjustment and adaptation being among the most significant obstacles requiring substantial effort to overcome. One of the most common and prominent difficulties encountered by international students is culture shock. Students studying abroad inevitably confront various cultural challenges as they adapt to new and unfamiliar environments and regulations, which can disrupt their academic lives (Hong et al., 2021). As a result of culture shock, many international students experience cultural and social stress, including confusion, depression, homesickness, anxiety, and academic difficulties while studying abroad (Hartini et al., 2017).

The psychological pressure experienced by international students can be heavily influenced by the nature and extent of the cultural challenges they face. The adjustment process varies from one individual to another, depending on the situation and the strategies adopted—some adapt more easily, while others struggle significantly in adjusting to their new environments (Taylor et al., 2021). Another common challenge faced by students studying abroad is difficulty in interacting with local students in the host country (Jackson & Oguro, 2017; Mahon & Cushner, 2020). This can also be influenced by the natural tendency of individuals to interact

more comfortably with those from similar backgrounds, ultimately posing a barrier to building social relationships across cultures (Alifuddin & Widodo, 2022). Nevertheless, these challenges can be more effectively managed and mitigated if individuals possess a high level of cultural intelligence (Thompson, 2018). Cultural intelligence has become a crucial and essential element in assessing a person's ability to adapt to unfamiliar cultural settings. It also plays a key strategic role in facilitating successful social interactions with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds (Afsar et al., 2019; Alifuddin & Widodo, 2022; Jurásek & Wawrosz, 2024). Cultural intelligence refers to a combination of key skills, mental capabilities, and personal attributes that enable individuals to operate successfully in diverse cultural environments. It progressively cultivates a mindset of empathy toward the cultural values and behaviors of others, thereby improving individuals' capacity to engage effectively in unfamiliar environments (Livermore et al., 2022; Ott & Michailova, 2018; Thomas, 2018). Cultural intelligence supports international students in developing self-confidence, openness to different perspectives, and resilience, enabling them to engage in meaningful cultural exchange, build strong social networks, act more effectively, and improve their ability to behave appropriately within the cultural context of the host country (Hartini et al., 2017; Taras, 2020; Thompson, 2018). People with elevated cultural intelligence are generally more adaptable to change and less likely to form judgments without fully understanding the cultural context (Ott & Michailova, 2018), and are more likely to feel comfortable and satisfied in new environments, viewing unfamiliar situations as challenges rather than sources of stress (Jurásek & Wawrosz, 2024; Sternberg et al., 2022; Zhang & Oczkowski, 2016).

To facilitate a smooth and successful adaptation process while living and studying abroad, individuals must continually enhance their cultural adaptability skills. This improvement should be supported by structured initiatives that provide comprehensive information and an in-depth understanding of the norms and behaviors expected in the host country, typically through pre-departure training (Livermore et al., 2022; Jumini et al., 2024). Such training is essential and generally includes modules on cultural norms, effective communication styles, problem-solving strategies, and psychological preparedness. All of these components help students anticipate and manage challenges they are likely to face in foreign academic and cultural settings (Cutting et al., 2022; Wang & Tran, 2015). Pre-departure training comprises a series of structured preparatory activities designed to familiarize students with the cultural context of the communities they will join, increase their self-awareness of cultural differences, enhance their responses to unfamiliar situations, and improve their capacity to develop behaviorally appropriate competencies in the host culture (Kosman et al., 2023).

These training sessions often employ interactive methodologies, including role-playing exercises and experiential learning opportunities, which enable participants to develop the practical skills necessary for real-world intercultural interactions (Hartman et al., 2018; Venkataiah, 2022). Such training prepares students to face challenges during their time abroad, with well-prepared students showing higher levels of engagement and satisfaction, and being more likely to achieve their planned learning goals (Winchester-Seeto, 2019). Conversely, insufficient pre-departure preparation can negatively affect students' study abroad experiences, particularly in interactions with individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Bessette & Camden, 2017). By participating in these training programs, individuals can acquire the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and enhance their ability to communicate effectively within the host nation's cultural context (Jackson & Oguro, 2017; Rehg et al., 2016). Participation in these programs allows students to enter their host countries with greater confidence and cultural adaptability (Lee et al., 2018; Schutte, 2016).

Recognizing the importance of global exposure and cross-cultural learning, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia has launched programs that enable Indonesian students to engage in exchange and study abroad at partner universities for one semester. These programs are known as the Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA) for undergraduate students and the Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards Vocational Edition (IISMAVO) for applied diploma students (Kasih, 2021; Maninggarjati et al., 2022). Through these programs, participants gain first-hand academic experience in foreign settings, expand their worldviews, and engage in intercultural communication exchanges (Direktorat Pendidikan Tinggi, 2021). At Universitas Padjadjaran specifically, 119 students participated in these programs, including 99 undergraduate and 20 applied undergraduate students.

Previous research on cross-cultural training, especially pre-departure training, has yielded mixed findings. For example, Wang and Tran (2015) found that pre-departure training had a positive impact on job adaptation. However, Selmer (2015) argued that while pre-departure training does influence expatriate adaptation, its effect is relatively weak and less significant. These conflicting findings suggest that additional factors, such as individual personality traits, prior international experience, and existing social support networks, play a key role in determining the effectiveness of pre-departure training (Jurásek & Wawrosz, 2024). To successfully adapt to foreign cultural contexts, expatriates working overseas must be able to engage and connect with people from diverse cultural backgrounds while continually improving their cultural intelligence (Nolan & Liang, 2022). Thus, pre-departure training is crucial for accelerating the adaptation process, facilitating effective socialization, and preparing individuals for challenges in international work and academic environments. On the

other hand, another factor that contributes to students' successful adaptation to culturally diverse environments is cultural intelligence. This finding is supported by prior research, such as [Khan et al. \(2020\)](#), who studied international students in India and found that cultural intelligence has a significant and positive influence on their cross-cultural adjustment. This finding is echoed by [Wang \(2016\)](#), who noted that individuals with higher adaptability tend to adjust more easily when living in culturally unfamiliar environments.

What distinguishes this study from previous research is its focus on the correlation between two variables—cultural intelligence and pre-departure training—and their combined effect on cross-cultural adjustment, which has not been previously examined. While similar studies have often addressed these variables separately—for instance, the role of cultural intelligence and social support in international student adjustment ([Bai & Wang, 2022](#)), or focused on how pre-departure training affects expatriate performance ([Okpara et al., 2021](#)), which centers on workers rather than students—this study integrates both variables within a specific academic context. Another distinction lies in the population used: this study focuses specifically on students from Universitas Padjadjaran who participated in the government-sponsored IISMA and IISMAVO student exchange programs. In contrast, similar studies have focused on populations from other countries, such as the impact of cultural intelligence on the performance of international students in Australia ([Iskhakova, 2018](#)) or the effect of emotional and cultural intelligence on academic performance in India ([Khan et al., 2020](#)). This study's more focused scope provides a contextualized and relevant perspective on the dynamics of the IISMA and IISMAVO programs at Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia.

Given the importance of pre-departure training and cultural intelligence in facilitating international student adaptation, this study aims to examine in depth the extent to which both factors influence cross-cultural adjustment among Universitas Padjadjaran students participating in the IISMA and IISMAVO programs. This study aims to provide meaningful insights into the effectiveness of current pre-departure training programs and the role of cultural intelligence in facilitating successful academic and cultural adaptation by examining participants' personal experiences and adjustment journeys. This study's findings will contribute significantly to human resource management by underscoring the vital connection between students' cross-cultural adjustment, pre-departure training, and cultural intelligence. Educational institutions, policymakers, and students preparing for international academic experiences can all utilize this paper as a reference and a basis for more in-depth future research in related subjects. By continuously improving pre-departure training programs and promoting the development of cultural intelligence, higher education institutions can enhance the success of international education initiatives and foster a more inclusive, globally competent, and culturally adaptive student community.

## **METHODS**

This study examines the relationship between students' cross-cultural adjustment, pre-departure training, and cultural intelligence, employing a verification approach in conjunction with descriptive analysis. A quantitative research design is utilized, incorporating hypothesis testing through both the T-test (to assess partial effects) and the F-test (to evaluate simultaneous effects). These statistical methods are employed to assess the significance of the relationships between variables and to examine both the separate and joint effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable ([Gomez & Mouselli, 2018](#)). The primary data for this research were collected through a survey using questionnaires distributed to Universitas Padjadjaran students who participated in the IISMA and IISMAVO programs in 2022. The respondents in this research were 105 students from a total population of 119 students who participated in the IISMA & IISMAVO Program at Universitas Padjadjaran, comprising 99 undergraduate students and 20 applied undergraduate students.

Cultural intelligence, the first independent variable in this study, is assessed through 11 questionnaire items, which are categorized into four dimensions: knowledge, strategy, drive, and action ([Livermore, 2014](#)). The knowledge dimensions assess a person's understanding of cultural values, norms, and communication styles across various cultural contexts. The strategy dimension evaluates the extent to which an individual prepares and plans for interactions in a new cultural environment. The drive dimension evaluates a person's motivation and self-assurance in adjusting to diverse cultural environments, while the action dimension focuses on their capability to adapt behaviors appropriately across different cultural settings. Responses are measured using a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher total scores indicating a higher degree of cultural intelligence.

The second independent variable, pre-departure training, is measured by assessing the effectiveness of the training program and its impact on participants' lives during their overseas studies. This is done using 14 questionnaire items, categorized into four dimensions: reaction, learning, behavior, and results ([Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016](#)). The reaction dimension aims to measure the impressions or feelings of the participants towards the pre-departure training program. The learning dimension is designed to assess participants' understanding of the knowledge, skills, or values acquired during the training process. The behavioral dimension assesses participants' ability to apply the knowledge and skills acquired from the training in real-world settings. Lastly, the results dimension seeks to measure the outcomes or impact of the training on individuals. All items

are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). A higher total score across all items indicates a higher level of effectiveness in pre-departure training. The dependent variable, cross-cultural adjustment, is measured using 10 questionnaire items, categorized into three dimensions: general, educational environment, and interaction (Black et al., 2015). All items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very bad, 5 = very good). A higher total score across all items indicates better cross-cultural adjustment.

This study employs multiple linear regression analysis to investigate the relationship between these variables. To determine if two or more independent variables have a substantial impact on a single dependent variable, this statistical method is used. The application of multiple linear regression analysis allows researchers to determine the extent to which cultural intelligence and pre-departure training contribute to cross-cultural adjustment among students. By conducting hypothesis testing, this study aims to determine whether the independent variables have a significant effect on the dependent variable, providing insight into the key factors that shape students' adaptation to unfamiliar cultural settings. The findings from this research can be valuable for institutions and policymakers in designing more effective pre-departure training programs and support systems to enhance students' international experiences.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this study, questionnaires were distributed to all participants of the 2022 IISMA (Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards) & IISMAVO (Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards for Vocational Students) program at Universitas Padjadjaran. The total population consisted of 119 students, out of which 105 individuals participated in this research, representing an overall response rate of approximately 88%. Among the respondents, 85 individuals (81%) were participants in the IISMA program, while the remaining 20 individuals (19%) were participants in the IISMAVO program. When categorized based on gender, the respondents comprised 29 males (28%) and 76 females (72%), indicating a significant female majority in the study sample. Furthermore, regarding the respondents' prior international experiences before participating in this program, it was found that 61 individuals (58%) reported having been abroad previously, while 44 individuals (42%) indicated that they had not traveled abroad before participating in the IISMA/IISMAVO program. The respondents' study destinations were spread across several countries, with a significant number pursuing studies in Hungary and England (13 individuals, 12%), Australia (11 individuals, 10%), and the United Kingdom (8 individuals, 8%).

To ensure the accuracy and consistency of the research instruments, a validity assessment was conducted. The results showed that the critical t-value at a 0.05 significance level was 0.198. This value indicates that calculations were deemed valid when they produced positive scores above 0.198. The value of 0.198 serves as the minimum threshold for the correlation coefficient between each item and the total score of its respective variable. Thus, items with a correlation coefficient higher than this value are considered to have a statistically significant contribution to the construct being measured, thereby ensuring the instrument's accuracy. Additionally, the reliability test for each variable in the research questionnaire was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, with values exceeding > 0.6 for all variables, confirming the reliability of the instruments used in this study. This indicates that each set of items within the variables consistently measures the intended construct, and the instrument demonstrates internal consistency suitable for research purposes. The results of the validity and reliability tests for the instruments used in this study are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Results for Validity and Reliability of the scale

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Validity Test</b>	<b>Cronbach's</b>
CI	0.47	0.62
PDT	0.62	0.86
CCA	0.51	0.67

**Notes:**

- CI : Cultural Intelligence,
- PDT : Pre Departure Training
- CCA : Cross Cultural Adjustment

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that all the questionnaires employed in this study met the criteria for validity and reliability, allowing for accurate data collection and analysis. To further analyze the relationships between the variables, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. The regression analysis results are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Multiple Regression Coefficient Model

Model	Regression Coefficient	T Value	
		Value	sig
(Constant)	1.673	3.993	.000
Cultural Intelligence	.463	4.532	.000
Pre-Departure Training	.148	2.091	.039

The multiple linear regression analysis reveals that both cultural intelligence and pre-departure training have a positive influence on cross-cultural adjustment. The constant value of 1.673 suggests that in the absence of any contribution from the independent variables, the baseline level of cross-cultural adjustment is 1.673. The regression coefficient of 0.463 for cultural intelligence indicates that a one-unit increase in cultural intelligence will result in a 0.463-unit increase in cross-cultural adjustment, assuming pre-departure training remains constant. Meanwhile, the coefficient of 0.148 for pre-departure training suggests that a one-unit increase in pre-departure training will result in a 0.148-unit increase in cross-cultural adjustment, assuming cultural intelligence remains unchanged. Therefore, it can be concluded that both independent variables have a positive influence on cross-cultural adjustment, although the influence of cultural intelligence is stronger than that of pre-departure training. The results of the correlation coefficient analysis, as performed using SPSS software, are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Calculation of Correlation Between Variables

Correlations		X1	X2	Y
X1	Pearson Correlation	1	.332**	.473**
	N	105	105	105
X2	Pearson Correlation	.332**	1	.326**
	N	105	105	105
Y	Pearson Correlation	.473**	.326**	1
	N	105	105	105

The correlation coefficient analysis reveals a moderate relationship between cultural intelligence and cross-cultural adjustment, indicated by a correlation coefficient of 0.473. Meanwhile, the relationship between pre-departure training and cross-cultural adjustment is categorized as weak, with a correlation coefficient of 0.326. However, when cultural intelligence and pre-departure training are combined, the correlation with cross-cultural adjustment increases to 0.506, indicating a moderate relationship. The terms "moderate" and "weak" refer to specific ranges of correlation coefficient values: a correlation coefficient value of 0.40–0.59 indicates a moderate relationship, while a value of 0.20–0.39 reflects a weak one. These ranges show that the strength of the relationship between variables increases as the correlation coefficient rises. The findings suggest that both variables play a role in cross-cultural adjustment, with cultural intelligence exerting a more substantial individual effect, while their combined influence results in a more substantial overall correlation.

The F-test for simultaneous analysis and the T-test for partial analysis were both used in this study's hypothesis testing. According to the T-test results, the cultural intelligence t-value was 4.532 with a significance level of 0.000. The null hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) is rejected, as the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that cross-cultural adjustment is significantly influenced by cultural intelligence. Similarly, the t-value for pre-departure training was 2.091, with a significance level of 0.039. As this value is also below 0.05, H<sub>0</sub> is again rejected, suggesting that pre-departure training has a significant influence on cross-cultural adjustment. In the simultaneous analysis, the F-test produced a value of 17.539 with a significance level of 0.000. Given that the p-value is less than 0.05, H<sub>0</sub> is rejected, confirming that cultural intelligence and pre-departure training together have a significant combined effect on cross-cultural adjustment.

The primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between pre-departure training, cultural intelligence, and the cross-cultural adjustment of international students. The findings indicate that students' cultural intelligence, encompassing dimensions of knowledge, strategy, drive, and action, has a positive influence and facilitates smoother cross-cultural adjustment in a foreign environment. These results align with and reinforce prior research by [Khan et al. \(2020\)](#), who explicitly emphasized that cultural intelligence significantly and positively contributes to the cross-cultural adjustment process experienced by international students. This assertion is further supported by [Wang \(2016\)](#), who demonstrates that individuals exhibiting high levels of cultural intelligence are substantially more capable of navigating and managing adaptation processes effectively when immersed in novel, distinct, and unfamiliar cultures. Furthermore, the study revealed that pre-departure training, assessed through indicators such as students' reactions and impressions, comprehension of the training material, application of acquired knowledge, and resulting outcomes, also has a positive impact on cross-cultural adjustment. However, the correlation observed was relatively weak. The results of this study are

consistent with and reinforce the research conducted by Selmer (2015), who concluded that while pre-departure training does contribute to expatriate adjustment, its overall effect tends to be limited, minimal, and not strongly significant. In particular, this study examines the relationship between cultural intelligence and pre-departure preparation, and how both enhance students' cross-cultural adjustment when enrolled in international exchange programs—a topic that remains underexplored in the literature. The findings offer new perspectives and valuable insights for the field of human resource management, particularly within the realm of organizational behavior.

## CONCLUSION

The study reveals that individuals with high cultural intelligence are notably better at adapting to new and unfamiliar cultural settings. On the other hand, individuals preparing to travel abroad must equip themselves with extensive information, essential knowledge, and a diverse set of skills that can effectively support their adaptation to a foreign setting. The results of this study offer empirical evidence that cultural intelligence has a positive impact, demonstrating a moderate correlation with cross-cultural adjustment, while pre-departure training shows a weaker yet still positive correlation. These findings are based on data from international exchange students at Universitas Padjadjaran. These findings provide a valuable contribution to the existing literature on cross-cultural adjustment by deepening the understanding of how individuals' levels of cultural intelligence impact the effectiveness of pre-departure training programs. Additionally, the knowledge gathered from this study can serve as a helpful guide for future IISMA and IISMAVO program organizers, assisting them in creating pre-departure training that is more applicable, relevant, and better suited to the unique needs of participants during their study abroad experiences.

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