

**THE SOCIAL SUPPORT ON THE INTERCULTURAL ADAPTATION
AMONG CHINESE STUDENTS AT INFRASTRUCTURE UNIVERSITY
KUALA LUMPUR (IUKL)**

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ABSTRACT

In the current environment, more and more Chinese students choose to study abroad. Many scholars have pointed out that in the context of globalization, the links between countries are increasingly close, and more and more students from different countries choose to study abroad. Chinese students from China studying in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, have changed a lot under this background. The focus of this study is the intercultural adaptation problems that foreign students will face when they study in a foreign country. This study takes social support as the starting point, takes Chinese students in Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur as an example, sends out questionnaires and collects 147 valid questionnaires, explores the situation of social support and intercultural adaptation of Chinese students in different social backgrounds, and the relationship between social support and intercultural adaptability. Quantitative research methods were used in the study. Supported by Cobb and Kasl's (1976) social support theory and Black & Mendenhall's (1991) intercultural U-shaped theory, this study draws relevant conclusions through SPSS data analysis. The results reveal that: students with different social backgrounds have different social support and intercultural adaptation. At the same time, the results show that: social support has a positive impact on intercultural adaptation. According to the above results, this study further studies the methods of strengthening social support to improve intercultural adaptability. This study suggests strengthening the interpersonal skills of foreign students, increasing the accumulation of social resources and the ability to deal with interpersonal relationships in social support. It advocates that society, schools and parents should form a joint force, pay attention to students who have no experience of studying abroad, and guide them to actively seek ways to exercise in social resources, social networks and related important others. To explore the influence of social support on intercultural adaptability.

Keywords: Social support; Chinese students; Studying abroad; Intercultural adaptation; Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur

Introduction

In the past studies, scholars have found that both Chinese students and foreign students in China will be more or less affected in their life and study in foreign countries. Kuang and Wu (2019) pointed out that under the current background of globalization, the problem of cultural adaptation caused by the communication and integration between countries and nations is particularly prominent. In addition, Zhang and Bai (2022) found in his research that foreign students need six months to one year to adapt to the new environment. In this context, Zeng and Li (2022) emphasized that in the special context of the global epidemic, gender, education, sojourn time, overseas experience, personality, support from relatives and friends and other factors have different degrees of influence on the results of intercultural adaptation and strategy choice of Chinese students. Foreign students come from different countries, and their cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, ideas and values are more or less different from those of their own countries, facing the problem of "cultural adaptation" (Zhou, 2021). With the development of "one belt and one road", more and more Chinese students choose to study in Southeast Asia. Malaysia is recognized by parents and students because of its own advantages. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was once again included in the list of "the world's most suitable cities for expatriates" published by Internationals, the world's largest website for expatriates. Wang (2021) elaborated that Malaysia is rich in language resources and has important external and internal values. Education Malaysia Global Services(EMGS) released data on international freshmen in Malaysia in the fourth quarter of 2022, with the overall number of international freshmen increasing by 17% compared with the same period in 2021. From January to September 2022, nearly 20,000 Chinese students went to Malaysia to study, an increase of about 3,000 students over 2021. Hu (2022) pointed out that the internationalization of higher education in Malaysia started after the 1990s, and now it has changed from an education importing country to an education exporting country, which is considered to be one of the important markets with important purchasing power. Besides, Wang et al.(2023) pointed out in the study that Malaysian private higher education institutions have been expanding their autonomy in running schools, actively meeting the needs of the international study market, and rapidly occupying a share in the international market of Asian higher education with the advantages of low fees, flexible courses and diverse forms, thus becoming an important transit station for studying abroad. Therefore, this study takes the Chinese students from China in IUUKL, a private university in Malaysia, as the research object to explore the impact of social support on intercultural adaptability. The conclusion can be deduced to understand the living and learning situation of Chinese students in Malaysia.

Foreign students expect to study and live in unfamiliar countries from their familiar living environment, and there will be various adaptation problems. Qiu et al. (2021) pointed out that many foreign students could not overcome the crisis period, had psychological barriers, could not adapt to the environment, affected their studies, and affected their physical and mental health. Chinese students living and studying in Kuala Lumpur will also face academic, physical and mental health problems. Hong (2021) and Qiu et al. (2021) has a similar view and found that many overseas students have the courage to go to a strange country to study with their dreams and ideals, but often many times they are not as perfect as their ideals, and even at the moment of arriving at school, they will find many facts different from their imagination. Philpott(2023) emphasized that the attitude of the residents in the place of immigration will affect the adaptation of the migrants. If the residents in the place of immigration treat the migrants with hostility or discrimination, it will increase their adaptation difficulties. On the contrary, if the residents in the place of immigration treat the migrants with a friendly attitude, it will strengthen their willingness to stay permanently (Wu,2020). These fully show that the life of Chinese students in Malaysia will be affected by various aspects. This study explores the impact of social support on intercultural adaptability of Chinese students in Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur from the perspective of social support.

Literature Review

Studies on Social Support

About the definition of social support and related research, scholars in the past have elaborated in the research. Zhang(2019) discussed the concept of social support in his research, which refers to the material and spiritual resources obtained by Indian and Thai students through establishing social networks through interpersonal communication after entering the new environment. These supports can make them feel safe, have a sense of belonging and get practical help, so as to reduce the pressure brought by the new environment and achieve a better state of intercultural adaptation. Furthermore, Tayebbeh (2019) stated that interpersonal interaction should have the ability to understand the intention of other people's communication, and use this ability to predict other people's behavior, showing the behavior of social ability. Consequently, Liang et al. (2020) postulated that school and family education should be organically integrated, focusing on the strength and ways of supporting students. Therefore, it is suggested that parents should give more care, support and help to Foreign students. The study by Ou (2022) and Liang et al. (2020) are parallel in terms of interpersonal communication. Ou (2022) found that social support is also an important concept of adaptability and stress balance. In addition, Yang(2022) elaborated that objective support is related to the level of support, and there are differences in the level of objective support and utilization among different parents, different grades and middle school students. In the same way, Jiao (2022) defined social support as various forms of assistance

provided by important others (such as parents, peers, teachers or others) that individuals understand and comprehend in the process of interaction with people, things and objects in the environment.

Similarly, Fang et al. (2023) indicated that social support is an activity achieved by conveying information between different individuals through social relations. Likewise, Li et al. (2023) found that in general, the spiritual and material support obtained by individuals from their social relations (such as family members, relatives and friends, colleagues, groups, organizations and communities) is called social support, which can alleviate individual psychological stress reaction, alleviate mental tension and improve social adaptability. The study by Li et al. (2023) and Wen et al. (2023) are parallel in terms of interpersonal communication. Wen et al. (2023) found that social support is a mixture of multiple dimensions, which includes both internal cognitive factors and external environmental factors. In the same way, Gallant (2023) pointed out in his research that social support includes a proxy for emotional and material comfort provided by family, colleagues, friends and colleagues. To sum up, this study argues that social support is the contact between individuals, through which individuals can maintain their social identity and obtain emotional support, material assistance and services, information and new social contacts.

Studies on intercultural adaptation

International interaction is a part of intercultural interaction, so for international power, intercultural competence is the core function of international people (Meleadt et al., 2020). In all kinds of intercultural contacts, indirect intercultural contacts, such as media, online information or various texts (literally work or travel magazines, etc.), produce fewer intercultural problems than direct face-to-face intercultural contacts due to the comparison of non-verbal, parallel language and other influencing factors without direct interaction (Birdie, 2020). Similarly, Jeremy (2021) showed that the process of intercultural adaptation is a process in which communicators face the pressure of unfamiliar cultural environment, constantly make self-adjustment, gradually adapt to the new way of life, and finally form intercultural identity. In the same way, Xue (2023) pointed out in his research that the intercultural adaptation of foreign students has become a key issue, which has attracted the full attention of scholars at home and abroad. The study by Xue (2023) and Zheng (2023) are parallel in terms of interpersonal communication. Zheng (2023) stated that intercultural awareness is an important way to improve the overall quality of college students. Cultivating students' intercultural awareness is helpful to overcome the language and cultural barriers caused by different cultural backgrounds and improve their interest in English learning. In the past, Wang (2022) found that the language acculturation of foreign students is positively correlated with their Chinese proficiency. Psychological adaptation is one of the most difficult aspects in the intercultural adaptation of

foreign students. Also moreover, Fang and Guo (2022) and Wang (2022) have similar views on language. Fang and Guo (2022) emphasized that a semester-long international student guidance program for first-year international students can provide special courses for students who have difficulties in intercultural psychological adaptation to help them get through the adaptation period smoothly, especially for freshmen who have difficulties in language.

Scholars have a variety of perspectives on intercultural research. Wang (2019) believed that intercultural life adaptation should include the adaptation of dress, diet, accommodation, transportation, climate and environment, campus life, seeing a doctor, inviting and visiting, giving and returning gifts, festival gap and celebration methods. The study by Kafoune (2021) and Wang (2019) are parallel in terms of what intercultural adaptation involves. Kafoune (2021) used the following definition in his paper: Intercultural adaptation refers to the process in which an individual gradually adapts to a different culture in terms of cultural patterns, such as diet and living habits, behavioral norms, and ways of thinking, and forms appropriate intercultural competence. At the same time, Wang (2021) postulated that intercultural adaptation research began in the United States. According to Constantine and Okazaki (2020), intercultural adaptation is a process in which individuals intentionally understand another culture from the original cultural context. In this study, intercultural adaptation is defined as the cultural adaptation of Chinese students from China in the process of studying in Malaysian universities, such as learning, living, interpersonal relationships and so on. Similarly, Some scholars have studied the relationship between social support and intercultural adaptation. Li and Feng (2021) found that the higher the degree of social support of foreign students, the more frequent the communication and interaction between members, not only can foreign students get psychological relief and comfort, but also the better intercultural psychological adaptability. At the same time, Xu et al. (2021) agreed with Li and Feng (2021) that intercultural adaptation is related to social support. Xu et al. (2021) claimed that a high level of social support improves the ability of individuals to cope with difficulties in life and work. These also illustrate the relationship between social support and intercultural adaptation. Through the data analysis of this study, it can be seen that social support has a positive correlation with intercultural adaptation. The higher the social support, the better the intercultural adaptation of Chinese students from China in IUKL. Additionally, Saul (2023) identified four stages of learning, (1)Concrete Experience (2) Reflective Observation of the New Experience (3) Abstract Conceptualization and (4)Active Experimentation. From this we can see that adaptation requires a process. At the result, Wang (2023) found that school management, teachers and foreign students can achieve intercultural adaptation more smoothly by defining learning motivation, paying attention to intercultural training, attaching importance to language learning, and seizing the critical period of intercultural adaptation. So this study uses general adaptation, work adaptation and interactive adaptation to measure the dimensions of acculturation of Chinese students from China at IUKL.

Research Objectives

Based on the literature review as stated above and the research gap in the studies, the first objective of the study is to identify the differences of social support and cross-cultural adaptation from the different background of research samples. The second objective is to explore the relationship between social support and intercultural adaptation. The third objective is to propose strategies to improve the intercultural adaptation ability of Chinese International students at IUKL.

Methodology

This study used quantitative research methods, citing social support and intercultural adaptation scales to complete the questionnaire. At the same time, this study takes the Chinese students from China in Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur as the research sample. Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur (IUKL) founded in 1981, it is a high-level and comprehensive research-oriented private university in Malaysia and the first architectural university in Malaysian history. It is located in the Multimedia Corridor (near Serdang/Kajang), about 22 km from Kuala Lumpur City Centre.

The university covers an area of about 600 mu. IUKL is ideally located within a 30-minute drive from Kuala Lumpur, the commercial capital of Malaysia, or Putrajaya, the administrative capital, and a 40-minute drive from Kuala Lumpur International Airport. IUKL originated from the Engineering Research Institute founded by the Ministry of Public Works of Malaysia. It is the first architectural university in Malaysia and a high-level, comprehensive and research-oriented private university. IUKL ranks first in Malaysia and second in ASEAN (Applied HE, 2023) in Applied HE private universities. In this study, through the Wechat group of IUKL undergraduates, masters and doctors, questionnaires were distributed online. After the questionnaires were collected, the data we resorted out and 147 valid questionnaires were collected. In this study, the Likert five-point scale was used to measure the variables, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", and the respondents were asked to check the views and agreement in the questionnaire. SPSS26 was used for data analysis. In the course of the study, the overall situation of the questionnaire was obtained through descriptive analysis. This study explored the different performance of different background variables in social support and intercultural adaptability. Then the method of difference analysis is used to verify the differences in different gender, grade, major, whether there is experience of studying abroad and other backgrounds. Finally, Pearson correlation analysis was used to find the relationship between social support and intercultural adaptation. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha reliability was used, and the Cronbach's alpha reliability was greater than the 0.7. The social support questionnaire cited is from Cai (2008), which has three dimensions, namely, social network,

social resources and important others, with a total of 16 items. The intercultural adaptation questionnaire is quoted from Wang (2019), with 20 items in three dimensions of general adaptation, learning adaptation and interactive adaptation. Through the research and verification of scholars, they all have good validity.

Results and Discussion

The convenience sampling method was used to distribute online questionnaires in the Wechat groups of IUKL Chinese students from China. A total of 156 questionnaires were collected, of which 147 were valid, and the effective recovery rate was 94%. Through the specific analysis, the relevant results are obtained.

Element 1 Students with different social backgrounds have different social support and intercultural adaptation.

As shown in table 1, among the subjects of this survey, the number of females is the largest, accounting for 57.1% of the total sample books; the main subjects of the survey are master's and doctoral students, of which master's students account for 39.5% of the sample, and doctoral students account for 57.8% of the sample. Majors are mainly concentrated in education students, accounting for 36.2% of the total sample, followed by finance students and civil engineering students, accounting for 32.6% and 17.6% of the total sample. 25.2.% of the respondents had ever studied abroad.

Table 1 Descriptive statistical analysis of population background

Variable	Dimension	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	63	42.9
	Female	84	57.1
Grade	Undergraduate	4	2.7
	Master	58	39.5
	Doctor	85	57.8
Major	Education	54	36.2
	Finance	48	32.6
	Civil engineering	26	17.6
	Other	19	12.9
Study abroad experience	Yes	37	25.2
	No	110	74.8
	Total	147	100.0

Element 1.1 Differences in Social Support

In this study, through data processing, Chinese students from China studying in IUKL have different performances in social support from the differences of gender, grade, major and whether they have studied abroad experience. Therefore, we will further explore the different results brought about by the existence of differences.

Element 1.1.1 Gender differences

As shown in table2, there was no significant difference in social resources ($t = -1.072, p > 0.05$), social network ($t = 0.914, p > 0.05$), significant others ($t = 1.123, p > 0.05$), social support ($t = -0.305, p > 0.05$) among different genders. Kuang and Wu (2019) and Duan (2020) pointed out in the study that parents generally attach importance to their children's education, regardless of gender, and give their children as much support as possible. From the social resources, social networks, important others and social support enjoyed by Chinese students from China, it is difficult to see that there is a big difference, which is in line with the current situation of China.

Table 2 Gender differences

Variable	Gender	Number of cases	Mean	Standard deviation	t	p
Social resources	Male	63	3.619	0.733	-1.072	0.285
	Female	84	3.742	0.661		
Social network	Male	63	3.698	0.736	0.914	0.362
	Female	84	3.592	0.657		
Significant others	Male	63	3.746	0.760	1.123	0.263
	Female	84	3.709	0.694		
Social support	Male	63	3.619	0.835	-0.305	0.761
	Female	84	3.657	0.678		

Element 1.1.2 Differences in study experience

As shown in table 3, college students with different study abroad experience have significant differences in social resources ($t=2.526, p<0.05$). By comparing the average values, it can be seen that college students with study abroad experience ($M= 3.701$) have significantly greater social resources than those without study abroad experience ($M=3.254$). College students with

different experience of studying abroad have significant differences in social networks ($t=3.121$, $p < 0.05$). The social network of college students with study abroad experience ($M=3.821$) was significantly larger than that of college students without study abroad experience ($M=3.643$). College students with different study abroad experience had significant differences in significant others ($t=3.321$, $p < 0.05$). By comparing the mean values, it can be seen that college students with study abroad experience ($M=3.933$) had significantly greater significant others than those without study abroad experience ($M=3.790$). There was a significant difference in social support ($t=5.792$, $p < 0.05$) among college students with different experience of studying abroad. By comparing the mean values, it can be seen that the social support of college students with experience of studying abroad ($M=3.716$) was significantly greater than that of college students without experience of studying abroad ($M=3.415$). The results of this study are similar to Wang (2022) that most foreign students believe that training is needed before going abroad. Students who have studied abroad in the past will have better performance in learning adaptation and emotional adaptation.

Table 3 Differences in study experience

Variable	Gender	Number of cases	Mean	Standard deviation	t	p
Social resources	Male	37	3.701	0.841	2.526	0.004
	Female	110	3.254	0.539		
Social network	Male	37	3.821	0.781	3.121	0.002
	Female	110	3.643	0.463		
Significant others	Male	37	3.933	0.805	3.321	0.001
	Female	110	3.790	0.654		
Social support	Male	37	3.716	0.733	5.792	0.000
	Female	110	3.415	0.553		

Element 1.1.3 Differences between grades

As shown in table 4, F value was 1.31, P value was $0.263 < 0.05$, and there was no significant difference. There was no significant difference in social support among students of different grades. The results of the study are different from Yang (2022), and the Chinese students

surveyed in IUKL are not affected by social support in different grades. From the perspective of IUKL Chinese students, the research object is college students, which has different manifestations. Among the tested students, there is no significant difference in social support among Chinese students from China in different grades.

Table 4 ANOVA

Social support	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	mean square	F	significance
between-group	3.620	5	.724	1.310	.263
within-group	77.915	141	.553		
total	81.535	146			

Element 1.1.4 Differences between different majors

According to the results of data analysis, as shown in table 5, the F value was 1.324, and the P value was $0.25 < 0.05$, and there was no significant difference. There was no significant difference in social support among students of different majors. The results are supported by Zeng and Li (2022). That is to say, under the special background of the global epidemic, factors such as gender, education, sojourn time, overseas experience, personality, support from relatives and friends have different degrees of influence on the results and strategy choices of Chinese students' intercultural adaptation. In this study, the results of the test showed that students of different majors did not feel the difference from social support in the process of learning and living in IUKL.

Table 5 ANOVA

Social Support	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	mean square	F	significance
between-group	4.379	6	.730	1.324	.250
within-group	77.156	140	.551		
total	81.535	146			

Element 1.2 Differences in Intercultural Adaptation

In this study, through data processing, Chinese students from China studying in IUKL have different performances in intercultural adaptation from the differences of gender, grade, major and whether they have experience of studying abroad. Therefore, we will further explore the different results brought about by the existence of differences. So as to trigger thinking, discuss and study the problems that can be solved and the suggestions that can be brought.

Element 1.2.1 Gender differences

As shown in table 6, there were no significant differences in general adaptation($t = -0.734, p > 0.05$) and intercultural adaptation ($t = -0.305, p > 0.05$) among different genders. There was a significant difference in learning adaptation by gender ($t = 3.214, p < 0.05$), and by comparing the mean values, males ($M = 3.231$) were significantly greater than females ($M = 3.014$) in interactive adaptation. The interactional adaptation was significantly different in gender ($t = 8.123, p < 0.05$), and by comparing the mean values, males ($M = 3.947$) were significantly more interactional than females ($M = 3.279$). This study concludes that males are better than females in terms of interaction, and males are better than females in terms of gender differences in social adaptation. This conclusion is supported by Zeng and Li (2022) and Huang (2023) that there are differences in intercultural adaptation between foreign students of different genders. In terms of intercultural adaptation, males' learning adaptation and communication adaptation are higher than females'. This is related to the safety awareness instilled in Chinese families. Foreign females pay more attention to their own safety and have less initiative.

Table 6 Gender differences

Variable	Gender	Number of cases	Mean	Standard deviation	t	p
General adaptation	Male	63	3.739	0.825	-0.734	0.464
	Female	84	3.828	0.643		
Learning adaptation	Male	63	3.231	0.860	3.214	0.043
	Female	84	3.014	0.643		
Interactive adaptation	Male	63	3.279	0.765	8.123	0.001
	Female	84	3.947	0.635		
Intercultural adaptation	Male	63	3.619	0.835	-0.305	0.761
	Female	84	3.657	0.678		

Element 1.2.2 Differences of different overseas study experiences

As shown in the table 7, there was no significant difference in general adaptation ($t=-0.696, p > 0.05$) among college students with different study abroad experiences. There was no significant difference in acculturation ($t = -0.491, p > 0.05$) among college students with different study abroad experiences. There is a significant difference in learning adaptation ($t = 8.146, p < 0.05$) among college students with different study abroad experience. By comparing the mean values, it can be seen that the social network of college students with study abroad experience ($M=3.691$) is significantly greater than that of college students without study abroad experience ($M = 3.112$). There was a significant difference in the interactional adaptation ($t = 7.174, p < 0.05$) among college students with different study abroad experience. By comparing the mean values, it can be seen that the important others of college students with study abroad experience ($M=3.887$) were significantly greater than those of college students without study abroad experience ($M=3.111$). The conclusion of this study is supported by Zhang (2022) that college students who have studied abroad have an advantage in intercultural adaptation. At the same time, Wang (2022) has a similar view and described that 87.25% of foreign students believed that they should take part in relevant training to improve their adaptability. Compared with the students who have not participated in the training, the students who have received intercultural training have better performance in learning adaptation and emotional adaptation. College students with experience in studying abroad may be faster in learning adaptation and more active in interactive adaptation because they have relevant experience before entering Kuala Lumpur to study at IUKL, so the overall effect will be better than that of inexperienced students.

Table 7 Difference analysis of different study abroad experience

Variable	Gender	Number Of cases	Mean	Standard deviation	t	p
General adaptation	Yes	37	3.718	0.891	-0.696	0.488
	No	110	3.814	0.664		
Learning adaptation	Yes	37	3.691	0.869	8.146	0.000
	No	110	3.112	0.708		
Adaptation Interactive	Yes	37	3.887	0.844	7.174	0.000
	No	110	3.111	0.660		
Adaptation Intercultural	Yes	37	3.309	0.661	-0.491	0.624
	No	110	3.357	0.495		

Element 1.2.3 Difference of different grades

As shown in table 8, the $F=0.615$ and the $P < 0.05$, and there was no significant difference. There was no significant difference in intercultural adjustment among students of different grades.

Table 8 ANOVA

Intercultural adaptation

	Sum of squares	degrees of freedom	mean square	F	significance
between-group	.829	5	.166	.615	.689
within-group	38.031	141	.270		
total	38.860	146			

Element 1.1.4 Differences between different majors

According to the results of data analysis, as shown in table 9, the F value was 0.895, and the P value was < 0.05 , and there was no significant difference. There was no significant difference in intercultural adjustment among students of different majors.

Table 9 ANOVA

Intercultural adaptation

	Sum of squares	degrees of freedom	mean square	F	significance
between-group	1.435	6	.239	.895	.501
within-group	37.425	140	.267		
total	38.860	146			

Element 2 Social support has a positive effect on inter cultural adaptation

Pearson correlation is to test the linear relationship between two variables. As shown in the table 10, social support has a significant positive correlation with intercultural adaptation ($R = 0.257$, $p < 0.05$). Shi (2019) has proposed that social support is a significant factor in predicting the intercultural psychological adaptation of foreign students. Wen et al. (2023) thought that social support mainly comes from psychological help or material support such as the care and respect of family members, teachers and classmates. Xue (2023) found that the choice of intercultural

adaptation strategies used by foreign students and their degree of adaptation are influenced by the attitudes and opinions of the local people.

Table 10 Correlation

		Social support	Intercultural adaptation
Social support	Pearson correlation	1	.257**
	Significance(two-tailed)		.002
	Number of cases	147	147
Intercultural adaptation	Pearson correlation	.257**	1
	Significance(two-tailed)	.002	
	Number of cases	147	147

** .Atthe0.01level(two-tailed),the correlation is significant

For the relationship between social support and intercultural adaptation, this study uses regression analysis, and the dependent variable is intercultural adaptation. According to the results of the data, as shown in table 11, social support provides explanatory power for intercultural adaptation, which shows that social support ($\beta = 0.257$, $p < 0.01$) has a significant positive impact on intercultural adaptation, which can explain that the stronger the social support of Chinese students from China is, the stronger the intercultural adaptability. Liang (2020) pointed out that school education and family education should be organically combined, focusing on the strength and ways of supporting students, and maximizing the potential of students in a supportive environment. Similarly, Li and Feng (2021) and Xu et al. (2021) also confirmed this conclusion that the higher the social support of foreign students, the better the intercultural psychological adaptability. High level of social support improves the ability of individuals to cope with difficulties in life and work. These also illustrate the relationship between social support and intercultural adaptation. Through the data analysis of this study, it can be seen that social support has a positive correlation with intercultural adaptation. The higher the social support, the better the intercultural adaptation of Chinese students in IUKL.

Table 11 Regression analysis of social support on intercultural adaptation

		Dependent variable: Intercultural adaptation			
Independent variable	social support			0.497***	1.072
	R ²	0.660		0.364	
	AdjustedR ²	0.600		0.353	
	F	2.769*		22.778***	

Note:*p<0.05;**p<0.01;***p<0.001

Table 12 Coefficient^a

Model		Unnormalized coefficient		Normalized coefficient	t	Significance
		B	Standard error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.700	.206		13.111	.000
	Social support	.177	.055	.257	3.202	.002

a. Independent variable; Intercultural adaptation

Summary of results

The above findings suggest that Chinese students from China with different social backgrounds have some differences in social support and intercultural adaptation of IUKL. Different grades and majors will receive attention and help from society and family in social support and intercultural adaptation. The conclusions of this study are supported by Kuang and Wu (2019), Duan (2020) and Kafoune (2021) that foreign students of different gender, age and professional background have different intercultural adaptation. From the perspective of gender data, the social support of Chinese students of different genders in IUKL does not reflect the gap, which is different from the research findings of Zeng and Li (2022), which highlights that after the epidemic process to the end of the epidemic, the social support of Chinese students from China of different genders in IUKL daily life and learning is generally similar. In terms of study abroad experience, students with study abroad experience have significant differences in social support and intercultural adaptation. Chinese students at IUKL are different in the context of different

study experiences. Students with overseas study experience are more likely to perceive the impact of social support. Past experience has enabled these students to get support from the outside world in a more timely manner. The results of this study are similar to Wang (2022) that most foreign students think that they should take part in training in time to get support and experience. He (2020), Jiao (2022) and Li (2022) support the results of this study that the differences in social support in their studies. It can be seen that the experience of studying abroad can play a role in promoting Chinese students from China in IUKL. Based on the results, this study has some implications for foreign students, their parents and schools. Zhu and Li (2021) pointed out that young people should learn to expand their growth space, accept their "incompatibility", not disguise themselves for "normal", and constantly pursue themselves and their true feelings. Foreign students should obtain maximum social support through different ways and methods to improve their intercultural adaptability. Parents and schools can give more encouragement and support to students. Huang (2023), Li et al. (2023) put forward suggestions for parents and schools in their research.

Through this study, it is found that social support has a positive impact on intercultural adaptation. Shi (2019), Wang (2021), Li and Feng (2021), Xu et al. (2021) have also reached this conclusion in their studies that the relationship between social support and intercultural adaptation. According to the social support theory of Cobb and Kasl (1976) thought that Chinese students from China living and studying in IUKL are far away from their families and familiar environment, and will be influenced by the outside world. The results of this study are supported by Zhang and Zhang (2023) that foreign students studying in China from foreign countries will inevitably have emotional or psychological fluctuations, the root cause of which is mainly due to the lack of intercultural adaptability. Black & Mendenhall's (1991) intercultural U-shaped theory points out that adaptation requires a process. Liang et al. (2020), Huang (2023) and Li et al. (2023) agreed with the application of this theory and pointed out that the key to improving adaptability lies in the common concern of individual students, parents and schools.

Conclusion

Based on the IUKL questionnaire survey of Chinese students, this study shows that there are some significant differences in social support and intercultural adaptation among students with different backgrounds, and that social support has a positive impact on intercultural adaptation. There are similarities and differences between this and the previous studies of scholars. The conclusion of the study has certain promotional significance for IUKL and students. Li (2020) emphasized that intercultural adaptation research needs to be based on the current environment and culture. Considering the current situation, as an element of social support, teachers, leaders and parents of IUKL need to pay attention to the life and study of Chinese students from China in Kuala Lumpur, provide more communication platforms for students, organize cultural and

academic exchange activities, especially mental health guidance, and relieve the anxiety of students living in Kuala Lumpur. Through activities and exchanges, Chinese students from China can learn about local customs and cultural habits and integrate into local life as soon as possible. From the perspective of foreign students themselves, strengthening their interpersonal skills, participating in community activities organized by IUKL, and communicating with other countries and local students can increase the accumulation of social resources and the ability to deal with interpersonal relationships in social support. Thereby improving the ability of intercultural adaptation. The results of this study can be used as a reference for Chinese students from China, parents, IUKL leaders and teachers to gather more forces to pay attention to the ideological trends of foreign students, so as to strengthen the exchanges between China and Malaysia and promote cultural integration and common development through the cultivation of foreign students. At the same time, it also provides a reference for future researchers to expand the scope of research, increase the research sample, understand the social support and intercultural adaptation of Chinese students from China in other universities in Malaysia and other countries, and provide a reference for individual and international education of Chinese students.

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