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MOTIVATION TO STUDY ABROAD EFFECTS ON INTERCULTURAL ADAPTATION: A MIXED METHODS CASE STUDY WITH INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN ITALY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between motivation to study abroad (MSA) and intercultural adaptation (IA) of international students (IS) in Italy. To address this purpose, a sequential exploratory mixed methods research, which involved longitudinal quantitative research design was employed. This study conducted interviews with twenty-three IS leading to the development of a survey, 604 IS participated in the first phase (fall semester 2022) while 237 IS participated in the second phase (summer semester 2023). Findings revealed six pivotal motivational factors influencing study abroad decisions:pull of the host country (Italy); push of home country; Italian higher education institution and educational system; the program and applications; personal goals, beliefs, and values; and social support. IS reported mixed feelings about their study and life experiences in Italy, with many facing challenges related to cultural barriers; social network; living difficulties; academic research; personal emotional; institutional attachment. Additionally, motivations for studying in Italy which effects IA of IS included world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment. Notably, only world enlightenment demonstrated a significant positive correlation with overall IA. Notably, only world enlightenment demonstrated a significant positive correlation with overall IA. Finally, findings suggest that the interplay between MSA and IA significantly shapes overall IA, with mediating effects positively or negatively influencing this relationship. A dynamic integration model shedding light on this MSA-IA relationship could provide valuable insights. This study provides numerous implications for practice, theory, and research.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of a case study that conducts an exploratory sequential mixed methods design that explains international students (IS)' motivation to study abroad (MSA) and adaptation to an intercultural environment in Italian higher education institutions (HEIs). To achieve this goal, this chapter provides a background of the study, including the problem statement, purpose statement, research questions, theoretical frameworks, and an overview of design and methodology, and it emphasizes the significance of the study, definition of terms, assumptions, and limitations. Finally, this chapter summarizes the other chapters of this study.

Background

The internationalization of higher education has become the center of research interest in the past years (Buckner & Stein, 2020; Garwe & Thondhlana, 2022; Ghazarian, 2020). Internationalization of higher education in theory is "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight, 2003); in practice is "the process of commercializing research and postsecondary education, and international competition for the recruitment of foreign students from wealthy and privileged countries to generate revenue, secure national profile, and build international reputation" (Khorsandi, 2014). Research shows that internationalization of higher education involves a cross-cultural dimension (Altbach, 2005; Brown, 2008), for instance, student and faculty mobility (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Lee & Rice 2007), and international programs (Healey, 2008). Moreover, one of the main components of the internationalization of higher education is the recruitment of IS (Khorsandi, 2014). And the number of IS are growing relatively fast (Beine et al., 2014). There were only

238,000 IS worldwide in the 1960s, but by 1995, it already exceeded 1.5 million (Chen & Barnett, 2000), and went above 5.5 million in 2018 (UNESCO, 2020). Based on this historical trend, IS will continue to increase. It is predicted that more than seven million students will be involved in 2025 (Böhm et al., 2002; Perraton, 2004). A rapidly growing international student population from different countries with diverse cultural backgrounds presents new challenges for universities to become globally inclusive institutions of higher education. However, according to Spencer-Oatey (2018), universities worldwide are seeking to increase the cultural diversity of their staff and students, but research has shown that successful integration is difficult. In addition, previous research has indicated that while students might appreciate the resources, engagement opportunities, and other efforts institutions put in place to ensure a diverse and multicultural setting on campus, it can still be stressful adjusting to new academic, social, and cultural environments (Bastien et al., 2018; Mesidor & Sly, 2016). In fact, the lack of a diverse environment may lead IS to reject intercultural contact, which may lead to unequal opportunities for intercultural learning and personal growth. Therefore, HEIs need to develop a supportive environment that can meet the needs of IS with different characteristics and backgrounds (Yu & Moskal, 2019). What's more, the COVID-19 pandemic has quickly become the most pressing issue in the higher education sector, causing major short-term disruptions to universities and students worldwide—the intercultural learning experience of IS has been affected to a certain extent. Even before the pandemic, the global higher education landscape dynamics had changed significantly as student mobility and new markets emerged. It is urgent for HEIs to take responsibility and try to organize international programs that optimize the IS' intercultural learning experience, including improving their competitiveness,

providing valuable resources and services for IS, and helping IS better adapt to the new environment et cetera, to cope with the changing globalization trend in this particular period, to attract and maintain more IS.

International students in Italy

IS bring benefits to the university, they not only bring significant economic benefits to universities but also linguistic, social, and cultural diversity (Ecochard & Fotheringham, 2017; Forbes-Mewett, 2016; Phakiti et al. 2013; Wu et al. 2015). However, Jones (2013) highlighted HEIs' lack of awareness of the potential benefits of IS engaging in international and intercultural learning "at home". "I need your help. Can you hear me?" -- A deep voice from IS' heart, which trying express the extent of IS' desire and needs to their university in Italy. According to the records and firsthand experience with IS in Italian HEI, some IS suffer from intercultural experiences. For one, while talking to IS, it was observed that some feel alone, anxious, stressed, or unhappy. As a matter of fact, this phenomenon is also observed in the work of Chayinska and Mari (2014). Indeed, these are concrete proofs that some IS studying abroad at HEI in Italy suffer from culture disequilibrium. With this initial knowledge in mind, the researcher conducted initial interviews with some of the IS studying at Italian HEI. The researcher learned that a large part of this may be the language barrier and cultural differences. For instance,

Why are all the notification emails in Italian? (participant E)

We cannot understand each other completely. (participant J)

I do not fit in well with the local community. (participant A)

I feel excluded. (participant C)

Italian HEI is, to a certain extent, contrary to the needs of international students in the implementation and conduct of study abroad programs. However, a

significant limitation of the research on adaptation to university is that it is predominantly English-speaking based, with minimal comparative non-English speaking data available. Many studies focus only on English-speaking countries such as the US, UK, Canada, and Australia (Isabelli-García et al., 2018; Li & Zhu, 2013). Conversely, the majority of IS in actuality studying in other countries, and this number is on the rise (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2020). Although a growing body of research has sought to present more nuanced images of non-Anglophone/non-western students (Grimshaw, 2007; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006; Tian & Lowe, 2009), this literature acknowledges that the personality of an individual student consists of a complex and dynamic array of interconnected identities. Regardless, there is still a lack of study about IS studying in non-English speaking countries, and relatively little is known about IS' intercultural learning experiences at university in an Italian context. Therefore, in this context, this thesis seeks to identify the dynamic intercultural adaptation of IS studying at a HEI in Italy. And the motivational factors that drive or pull them to adapt to the new environment. The study argues that it is necessary to identify the dynamic intercultural adaptation among IS enrolled in the HEI in Italy. This dynamic intercultural adaptation (IA) refers to the ongoing process through which individuals or groups adjust, modify, and navigate their behaviors, attitudes, values, and communication styles when interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds. It involves the ability to adapt and respond effectively to diverse cultural contexts, continuously learning and evolving one's understanding and skills to interact and engage with others from different cultural backgrounds. Knowing and understanding their challenges and obstacles will enable the researcher to provide the best possible alternatives to address the issue. Indeed, only when we have performed some "diagnosis" will we be able to provide viable solutions to the problem. For IS

studying at HEI in Italy, identifying their dynamic intercultural adjustment is the first step in solving the problem.

Intercultural adaptation

Intercultural adaptation refers to "the process whereby individuals from one cultural context move to a different cultural context and strive to learn the societal norms, customs and language of the host culture in order to function in the new environment" (Jackson, 2014, p. 361). In addition, IA is the fact that when an individual enters a new culture, he or she may enter a state of "disequilibrium"; after a period, the individual will find a balance (Kim, 2001). Taylor (1994) points out that "cultural disequilibrium" is a "catalyst of the [intercultural] learning process" (p. 169). Cultural disequilibrium "consists of periods of incongruency" that "challenge the participants' meaning perspective, pushing them to learn new ways to bring balance back into their lives" (p. 169). According to Gudykunst (2003, p.244), the adaptation to a new culture is a "dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to an unfamiliar cultural environment, establish (or reestablish) and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the environment".

Considering IS are people in transition (Thomas & Althen, 1989), it is difficult for them to adapt to the new intercultural environment while studying abroad (Hyams-Ssekasi et al., 2014). Recent studies show that IS who come into contact with a new culture in their host countries often encounter problems with socio-cultural adaptation, such as adjustment to new social customs and norms (Schwarzer et al., 1994), or culture shock and adjustment (Campbell, 2010; Davis, 2020; Khaway & Stallman, 2011; Zhou et al., 2008). And psychological adaptation, such as a feeling of depression, anxiety, loneliness (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994; Yang & Clum, 1995), homesickness (Chalungsoth & Schneller, 2011; Davis, 2020), or issues of self-esteem

and self-identity (Gonzalez, 2004). As well as problems with academic adaptation, such as concerns about second language proficiency and academic performance (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Ying & Liese, 1994). These challenges often contribute to various problems, such as anxiety, depression, loneliness, and withdrawal (Arjanggi & Kusumaningsih, 2016; Laufer & Gorup 2019; Yu & Moskal 2019). However, coping with a new environment can be challenging for all students, and even more so for IS as they adapt to a new culture, and often to a language that is not their first (Andrade, 2006; Bista & Foster, 2016). Indeed, as described earlier, there is a language barrier for IS in Italy to adapt to study and life. Whether in or outside the university, most of the people around are used to communicate in Italian rather than English on a daily basis, and it is clear that there is still some space for improvement in the internationalization of the country and university. According to the previous research, there are some limitations exist. On the one hand, a significant limitation of the research on adaptation to university is that it is predominantly English-speaking based, with minimal comparative non-English speaking data available. And relatively little is known about IS' intercultural learning experiences at university in a Italian context. Many studies focus only on English-speaking countries such as US, UK, Canada and Australia (Isabelli-García et al., 2018; Li & Zhu, 2013). Although a growing body of research has sought to present more nuanced images of non-Anglophone/non-western students (Clark & Gieve, 2006; Grimshaw, 2007; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006; Kubota & Lin, 2006; Tian & Lowe, 2009). On the other hand, the measurement method of IA in many studies is single, and the long-term change process cannot be seen. Most of studies have cross-sectional design. Only a few recent studies of IS studying abroad in the United Kingdom (Chien, 2015; Gu et al., 2010; Wang, 2012), Southern California universities (Hamad & Lee, 2013) and

Hong Kong (Gao, 2008) universities have involved a longitudinal design and all of these studies have pointed to the evolving nature of adaptation.

What's more, there has been growing interest in exploring the factors and complexities that impact IS' adaptation during their studies (Andrade 2006; Gu et al. 2010; Wu et al. 2015). Motivations to study abroad are a crucial factor influencing students' social and cultural adaptation during the experience of studying abroad (Chirkov et al., 2007), the development of cross-cultural skills and global understanding (Kitsantas, 2004), and even behaviours impacting their health while abroad (Aresi et al., 2016a; Pedersen et al., 2014). Thus, it is essential to understand what matters to IS when choosing and making decisions by clarifying their MSA.

Motivation to study abroad

Motivation to study abroad is the motivating factor in choosing and making a decision to study overseas, including world enlightenment (learning about the world), personal growth, career development, and entertainment (Anderson & Lawton, 2015b). Making decisions is something that cannot be avoided in life. Many publications are available that explore the notions of HE choice and decision making, especially in the context of home students and IS in the developed world (Mazzarol et al., 2000; Foskett et al., 2004). Previous academic studies of IS have been carried out on choice of the study destination (Padlee et al., 2010; Michael et al., 2004), push and pull factors (Lam et al., 2011; Rohmi, 2010; Cardon et al., 2011), and study abroad preferences and attitudes (Cardon et al., 2011). Yet, much less is available which explores these ideas in the context of IS seeking to study abroad (Davey, 2005). Studying abroad as part of one's academic career is usually elective and motivated "to achieve a particular purpose" (Bochner, 2006, p. 182).

In some instances, the decision of where to study can be further dictated by

other issues e.g., social factors, climatic factors, cost factors, recommendations and location knowledge (Mazzarol et al., 1997). Other authors highlight reasons including to improve English (Kettle, 2011; Pietro & Page, 2008), improve career prospects (Teichler, 2004) and gain cultural experience (Kelly, 2010; OECD, 2008). The reputation of the institution (Maringe & Carter, 2007; Pietro & Page, 2008; Zhang & Hagedorn, 2011), the potential to enhance career prospects (Kelly, 2010; Teichler, 2004), and financial and personal reasons (Goldbart et al., 2005) are other determining factors. What's more, Gray et al. (2003) found that quality provision was the most important factor influencing the decision of the international student to study abroad. As Li et al. (2013) observed, "research on study abroad has primarily focused on the effects or outcomes of study abroad participation on the students involved in these programs…Very limited attention has been devoted to studying factors affecting students' intention and decision to study abroad" (p. 74).

Some studies analysis the factors influencing IS' decision regarding the country and HEIs. For instance, a study of Tyner (2019) aimed to comprehend the comprehensive motivations and decision-making experiences of international graduate students who deliberately chose to participate in higher education in the United States. While Lapina et al. (2016) analyzed and evaluated IS' learning experience and satisfaction with their choice to develop suggestions for improving different dimensions related to the quality and export of higher education. The decision to pursue overseas education can also be perceived as preparation for future plans (Fang & Wang, 2014). It is argued that institutions could best compete for IS if they understand significant study abroad factors among different groups of students (Ahmad & Hussain, 2017; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Nevertheless, to measure factors that underlie a student's decision to study abroad, a research of Anderson &

Lawton (2015b) shows there are four aspects, including world enlightenment (learning about the world), personal growth, career development, and entertainment. To date, student motivation for choosing and deciding to study abroad has not been incorporated into study abroad research as a potential factor influencing IA.

Based on the interview of IS in Italy, their MSA plays an important role on the IA, including both positive and negative effects. For instance, some IS explained that,

I always had a voice inside of me that I wanted to be stronger and better, and that is what drove me to study abroad in the first place. This is what kept me going in spite of the difficulties I encountered. (participant J)

I came to study abroad in Italy because of my boyfriend, and he helps me a lot to better adapt to the new environment. If without him, I don't know what I should do. (participant I)

I chose this university because of its academic research strength, but I was disappointed by the team's academic research capabilities and collaborative approach. I did not get a good experience and training. (participant E)

Boyle et al. (2007) reported that students while experiencing some apprehension and anxiety, recognize the positive outcomes of being challenged by an unfamiliar environment. Since entrance motivation plays important role on those IS' IA. It is important for Italian HEIs to know why IS make the decision to chose to studying abroad in Italy, the HEI, and the international programme. And what, specifically, how those entrance motivational dimensions affect their IA.

Study abroad motivation affects intercultural adaptation

Findings from reviewing the literature related to the relationship between motivation and adaptation of IS at universities show common themes in the existing literature. Certain existing literature directly related to this study provided

foundational basis for designing and implementing the study. First of all, number of empirical studies have reported that IS are strongly motivated to adapt and do make significant efforts to do so (Amiot et al., 2010; Sheridan, 2011; Tian & Lowe, 2009; Zhou & Todman, 2009). Even if cultural distance increases adaptation challenges (Suanet & Van deVijver, 2009), there is widespread empirical evidence that the majority of students adapt and achieve in spite of challenges (Chirkov et al., 2007; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006; Gu et al., 2010; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009). Second of all, there has been growing interest in exploring the factors that impact IS' adaptation (e.g., Gu et al. 2010; Wu et al. 2015). Despite limited research showing that motivational factors play a significant role in predicting psychological and sociocultural adaptation (e.g., Byrne & Flood, 2005; Gezentsvey & Ward, 2008), there is lack of attention in the literature to the significance of students' self-determination, goals, motivation, in dynamic interactions with the environment (Volet & Jones, 2012), and student motivation for electing to study abroad has not been incorporated into study abroad research as a potential factor influencing intercultural development (Anderson & Lawton, 2015a). Third, there are some research shows that MSA plays a certain role on IS' IA. For instance, Chirkov et al. (2007) used two questionnaires Self-regulation Questionnaire—Study Abroad and Goals for Study Abroad Scale, to test if and how the self-determination motivation and goals to study abroad influence Chinese IS' s adaptation in Belgium and Canada HEIs. And the result shows that both had an independent influence on Chinese IS' s cultural adaptation. Moreover, Chirkov et al. (2008) used longitudinal research to investigate how the self-determination motivation and goals to study abroad influence IS' s adaptation in three Canadian HEIs. The result is consistent with the research [Chirkov, V., Vansteenkiste, M., Tao, R., & Lynch, M. (2007). The role of self-determined

motivation and goals for study abroad in the adaptation of IS. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 31(2), 199-222.]. One study of Ganotice et al. (2022) used several questionnaires to test how study abroad motivation and goal content influence mainland Chinese students' adaptation in Hongkong HEI within the framework of self-determination theory (SDT). But it only had a cross-sectional design and couldn't explain the changes in the adapting process. Besides, A study have found a strong relationship between students' motivation and adaptation, different types of motivation had different impacts on learning experiences and learning outcomes (Sze-Yeung Lai & Chi-leung Hui, 2021). Some research focus on one aspect of IA, for instance, Wang et al. (2021) investigated the relationships between achievement goal orientations and freshmen academic adjustment as well as the mediating role of learning engagement by combining variable-and person-centered analyses.

Given the above discussion, there is clear evidence that IS studying at HEIs in Italy experience cultural disequilibrium. They are often compelled to "learn new ways to restore balance to their lives" (Taylor, 1994, p. 169). Moreover, as we can see, the MSA has both positive and negative influences on IS in Italy. However, a dearth of research explains the intercultural learning process of IS' motivation and adaptation to university. To the best of our knowledge, there have been no studies explain comprehensively on how study abroad motivational dimensions influences IS' adaptation in the context of Italian. It is for this reason that the researcher attempts to determine the intercultural learning experience of those IS in Italy who experience cultural disequilibrium. Based on this, this study analysis what motivated IS to study abroad with needs and expectations from the destination, what challenges they face to adapt to the new intercultural environment and see if and to what extent the different motivational dimensions have the negative or positive or both on IS' IA. As Chirkov

et al. (2007) concluded, a longitudinal research design to measure levels of adaptation would improve future studies about how motivation for living in another country affects adaptation, especially if combined with qualitative interview data. Thus, this study has a two-phase longitudinal mixed-method design, measures the IA of IS studying in Italian HEI at Time 1, and then assesses their IA at Time 2. To better understand the different extent of IA of IS in different phase of their study. Only within this type of design may one talk about the predictive validity of various adapt variables.

<div align="center">Problem Statement</div>

To sum up, the internationalization of higher education has driven the development of higher education in the whole world, and the university's culture has become diverse with the increase in the number and nationality of IS. The flow of IS has gradually become the focus of the world's attention. It is also the direction universities have been striving to develop towards a diversified and globalized education. An increased profile of IS on campus can enhance cross-cultural understanding and provide greater opportunities for IS to become involved in university and local community life (Lee & Rice, 2007; Sherry et al., 2009). What's more, as Kim (2000) mentioned, those who successfully transfer from one culture to another enrich the multicultural world with their experience.

However, the level of internationalization in Italian university still needs to improve. According to observations and interviews, IS in Italy suffer from cultural disequilibrium and encounter various difficulties and challenges in the process of IA. MSA is a positive and negative influence on IA. More specifically, studies have indicated that when studying in a new country, IS face a new environment, which makes it necessary for them to learn to function for themselves in the new

environment (Russell, 2005; Kingston & Forland, 2008; Bist et al., 2019; Paulino & Castaño, 2019). Most importantly, MSA plays a certain role on IS' IA (Valery Chirkov et al., 2007; Moreover, Chirkov et al., 2008). However, there is no previous research using a longitudinal approach to measure how the entrance MSA affects the comprehensive IA, including academic, socio-cultural, personal-emotion and environment, with IS in Italy.

Given these points, this study explores what motivates IS to choose and decide to study in Italian HEI — analyzing what and how IS prepare for their new life and better understanding IS' needs and expectations. Furthermore, this study examines what and how IS try to adapt to the new environment in different phases and see if their study abroad motivational dimensions have a negative or positive, or both, and to what extent.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study that conducted an exploratory sequential mixed methods design is to examine the relationship between MSA and IA of IS in Italy, from fall 2022 semester to spring 2023 semester.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The study focus on assessing the influence of IS' motivations for studying abroad on their IA. The main question is, "How do studying abroad motivational dimensions influence intercultural adaptation to the new intercultural environment of international students in Italy?" Therefore, the subquestions and hypotheses are the following.

Question 1: What motivated international students to choose and make decision to study abroad in Italian HEI?

Hypothesis 1: International students with different background characteristics

(age, gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship; financed by family) will have different motivations to study abroad.

Hypothesis 2: The choice of applied university number will be associated with the student's motivation for studying abroad.

Hypothesis 3: The first language and Italian skills of international students will be associated with the student's motivation for studying abroad.

Question 2: How international students' intercultural adaptation in Italian HEI changed over time?

Hypothesis 4: The post-SACQ scores will be higher than the pre-SACQ scores of international students.

Question 3: How do the four motivational dimensions (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) affect international students' intercultural adaptation (academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) in Italian HEI at time 1 and time 2?

Hypothesis 5: The stronger motivation (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) that international students have, the better intercultural adaptation (academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) they have at time 1 and time 2.

Hypothesis 6: Four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) positively predict four SACQ subscales (academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) at time 1 and time 2.

Question 4: Do background characteristics mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy?

Hypothesis 7: Age, gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship, applied university number, first language, financial support from family, Italian language skills, communication, stay and plan to stay in Italy, studying abroad experience, and curriculum setting mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy.

Theoretical Framework

In the present study, student involvement theory (SIT, Astin, 1984) and input-environment-outcome (I-E-O) model (Astin, 1993) were used as the theoretical framework to analyze better and explain the research questions.

According to Astin (1984), involvement implies a behavioral component. Student involvement refers to the quantity and quality of the physical and psychological energy students invest in the college experience. Such involvement takes many forms, such as absorption in academic work, participation in extracurricular activities, and interaction with faculty and other institutional personnel (Astin, 1984). The main advantage of the SIT is that it focuses on student motivation and behavior. It can help this study explain what the international student does: how motivated the international student is to adapt to the new environment and how they interact with the individuals and devote themselves to the intercultural learning process.

Moreover, based on the complexity of the university adaptation concept and the process of adapting, it is crucial to incorporate various levels of influence to gain a proper understanding of this process. An individual's characteristics are not static and continuously interact with the environment (Stoklosa, 2015). As the SIT helps to understand IS' interaction at the university, the I-E-O model helps analyze the

entrance motivation and adaptation process of IS' interaction in the new environment.

A growing body of research emphasizes students' engagement in the college environment, not just their efforts to achieve college success (Astin & Oseguera 2005; Comeaux & Harrison 2011; Kuh et al. 2005, 2008). Several studies have also found that student engagement play an important role in university success (Huang, 2011; Robbins et al., 2004). For instance, in a study on college adjustment, Flaga (2006) integrated components of the Astin model, arguing for the importance of participation in college life as a way to be a student integrated on campus. Taking this into consideration, this research adopts Astin's (1984) Input-Environment/Process-Output (I-E-O) model to better understand IS' intercultural learning factors and process. According to Astin's (1993) I-E-O model, three sets of elements directly impact the students' outcomes: Input, Environment, and Outcome. Input refers to the entrance motivation, as well as the demographic characteristics, family background, and academic and social experiences students bring to college. Environment refers to the student's actual experiences during the educational program (Astin, 1993, p. 18). The environment also refers to the full range of people (including friends, roommates, faculty, peers,..), programs, courses, curricula, extra-curricular, teaching styles, policies, and experiences that students encounter in college, whether on or off-campus (Astin, 1993). And outcomes "refer to the 'talents' we are trying to develop in our educational program" (Astin, 1993, p. 18). According to Astin, outcome refers to the students' characteristics after exposure to the environment (Astin, 1993, p.7) which would be the extent of adaptation in this study. The application of this theoretical framework is conducive to exploring the process of a dynamic impact of study abroad motivation on university IA.

Above all, this study draws on the student involvement theory and the I-E-O

model, which focuses on individuals' input (entrance motivation, past experiences and personal characteristics) before arriving in a new environment, and how those inputs influence individuals' interactions and engagement related to the university adaptation outcomes. Drawing on these two frameworks helps to lay the groundwork for the research questions that guided this study and provides a basis for grounding the findings of this study. Thus, the theoretical framework map is as follows.

Figure1

Combining SIT and I-E-O model: Theoretical framework map of the study
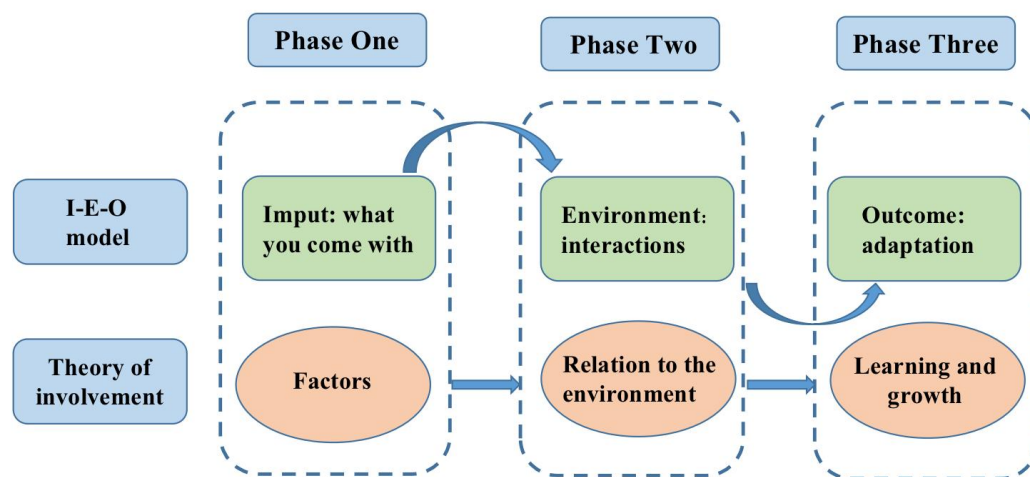
Overview of Design and Methodology

The primary purpose of this study is a case study consistent with that of the exploratory sequential mixed methods design in that it seeks to explore the relationship between MSA and IA of IS. More specifically, the exploratory sequential mixed methods design data collection allows for qualitative methods to explore this relationship, and the subsequent quantitative methods allow for further explanation of these findings to be obtained from a larger population, which also provides the opportunity to generalize the study's findings to a larger audience. In an exploratory design, qualitative data is first collected and analyzed, and themes are used to drive the development of a quantitative instrument to further explore the research problem

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Onwuegbuzie et al, 2010). According to Creswell (2015), the exploratory sequential design incorporated quantitative and qualitative approaches in three consecutive phases within one study. The qualitative approach using thematic analysis was conducted in the first phase, followed by the quantitative method (i.e., questionnaire survey). The questionnaire survey data was complemented under a two-phase analysis, including pre-test and post-test, to explore the changing phenomenon of IA further. The findings from the two phases of the study were then examined and combined to draw the conclusions.

Case study involves the investigation of one or more real-life cases to capture its complexity and details (Yin, 2014). Case study research has a long tradition of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data to gain a more complete understanding of the case (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). Mixed methods research combines qualitative and quantitative research in a study, or closely related series of studies, through the collection, analysis, and integration of qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2015). Additionally, mixed methods is the process of integrating quantitative and qualitative research to more completely address a study's purpose or research questions (Plano Clark & Ivankova, 2016). Therefore, mixed methods research is necessary because only qualitative research or quantitative research is challenging to clarify the complex situation of the impact and degree of IS' MSA on university adaptability in the short term. Furthermore, the data collected using these two research methods provide a complete picture of the research question.

A core characteristic of mixed methods research is the use of persuasive and rigorous quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Indeed, case study experts have suggested integrating qualitative and quantitative research in investigating the case (Yin, 2014), and mixed methods experts

have suggested mixed methods case study as a complex design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A mixed methods case study can "enable you to address broader or more complicated research questions than case studies alone" (Yin, 2014, p. 67). Thus, a mixed methods case study research (MMCSR) methodology is most appropriate for this study because understanding how the studying abroad motivational dimensions influence IA of IS are central to the study's purpose. This study combines qualitative and quantitative approaches within exploratory sequential research to be well suited for investigating how motivational dimensions influence IA phenomena that change over time. In conclusion, this study has a exploratory sequential mixed methods design to explore how motivational dimensions influence IS' IA in Italian HEI. The exploratory sequential mixed methods design involves a first phase of qualitative data collection that is used to inform a second phase of quantitative data collection.

In employing this design, the population consists of first-year, second-year, and third-year international bachelor, master, and doctoral students at the University of Padua (UNIPD). This study first explored what motivated IS to study abroad at UNIPD, examining their adaptation to the new university environment and how various motivational factors influence their IA within the university. This portion of the study employed a qualitative approach, involving interviews with a purposive sample comprising around twenty-three IS pursuing bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Employing a snowball sampling method, this study aimed to gather a comprehensive set of interviews representative of international bachelor's, master's, and doctoral students enrolled at UNIPD. Based on themes that emerge from the international student interviews, as well as current instruments that have been used and validated to explore IS' MSA (Anderson & Lawton, 2015b) and IA (Baker & Siryk, 1984), quantitative survey was developed and distributed to the IS in UNIPD

(N= 4864). Following the first phases of the interview and survey, there was an adaptation to college survey (Baker & Siryk, 1984) developed and distributed to the IS who took part in the first phase in UNIPD (N=604).

The present study used an exploratory sequential mixed methods design based on the criteria established by Creswell et al. (2003), in which qualitative data are collected first to understand the research topic. Then quantitative data are collected to expand the scope of the research population. This study explores and attempts to explain a research phenomenon consistent with the exploratory sequential mixed methods design. In addition, the rationalist–constructivist paradigm informed this mixed methods case study. According to Stake (1995), this paradigm contends that a reality exists independent of individuals; however, our understanding of this external reality is dependent upon our constructed interpretation of this reality. As Stake (1995) explains, "The understanding reached by each individual will, of course, be to some degree unique, but much will be held in common. Although the reality we seek is of our own making, it is a collective making" (p. 102). The constructivist understanding of constructed realities requires a case study researcher to provide a detailed description of the case to understand a particular interpretation of a social phenomenon. Providing descriptions and details allows for petite generalizations, ultimately leading to a collective understanding of the social phenomenon of interest (Stake, 1995). Furthermore, this study utilized a constructivist lens, aligning with both the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, to interpret its findings. Thus, there exists consistency among this study's conceptual and theoretical frameworks, purposes, and methodology, this design provides an opportunity to fulfill the purpose of this study.

Significance of the Study

Having an experience of studying abroad plays a vital role in a person's life.

Every international student has a wealth of life experience. Still, they have a common experience: being far away from their hometown and intercultural learning. IS study abroad with different motivations. However, IS face challenges when they study abroad. Cultural disequilibrium makes them have some difficulties adapting to the new intercultural environment. This study employs a longitudinal mixed-methods case study design, which provides valuable information and contribute to the limited quantitative or qualitative research on the studying abroad motivation and IA of IS in Italian context. This study contributes to the mixed methods literature by illustrating integration in the methodological dimension through a fully longitudinal mixed-methods case study. Moreover, the outcome of this study contributed to the knowledge of the relationship between MSA and IA. Identifying motivations that promote students to study abroad is essential for university international program development and tailoring programs to the unique needs of IS with various background characteristics.

Most importantly, helping IS to better adapt to the new intercultural environment. Specifically, results from this research provides valuable data to universities, administrators, faculty, and policymakers, which would be beneficial for them to understand and recognize IS' MSA and their IA from the individual perspective. Meanwhile, helping universities know what IS want and need, and what they can do to help them have a better intercultural life from the student's perspective. This study would help HEI to improve international higher education quality and absorb and retain more IS.

Definition of Terms

1.   **Internationalization** is a "concept which emphasizes relations between and among countries and cultures" (Knight, 2010, p. 205).

2. **Internationalization of higher education** in theory is "the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight, J., 2003); in practice is "the process of commercializing research and post-secondary education, and international competition for the recruitment of foreign students from wealthy and privileged countries in order to generate revenue, secure national profile, and build international reputation (Khorsandi, 2014)."

3. **International students** are those who received their prior education in another country and are not residents of their current country of study (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2023); they are different on different aspects, for instance, nationality, ethnicity, study degree, faculty, gender, et cetera. In this study, IS are those enrolled in the University of Padua in a full time and degree seeking status, who are not a Italian citizen, immigrant or refugee.

4. **Motivation to study abroad** In this study, motivation to study abroad including world enlightenment (learning about the world), personal growth, career development, and entertainment.

5. **Intercultural adaptation** refers to "the process whereby individuals from one cultural context move to a different cultural context and strive to learn the societal norms, customs and language of the host culture in order to function in the new environment" (Jackson, 2014, p. 361).

6. **Motivation to study abroad** is the motivating factor in choosing and making a decision to study overseas, including world enlightenment (learning about the world), personal growth, career development, and entertainment (Anderson & Lawton, 2015b).

7. **Case study** explores a "real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case)

or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). **Mixed methods case study** can "enable you to address broader or more complicated research questions than case studies alone" (Yin, 2014, p. 67).

8.   **Mixed methods research** is "the collection or analysis of both quantitative and/or qualitative data in a single study in which the data are collected concurrently or sequentially, are given a priority, and involve the integration of the data at one or more stages in the process of research" (Creswell et al., 2003, p. 212).

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions are embedded in this research:

1.   All IS review and understand the university's relevant promotional materials before choosing and making a decision about which destination country and university they want to go to.

2.   All the IS participated in pre-departure training organized by the destination university.

3.   All IS have different MSA.

4.   Students can identify and articulate their IA challenges and issues within interaction with individuals in the new intercultural environment.

5.   Students will be honest and accurate in sharing their perceptions of their MSA and IA challenges and issues they face.

6.   The researcher assumes that the variables under investigation are measurable and that the instrument used is valid and reliable to measure those variables. In qualitative studies, it is crucial that interview questions accurately capture the phenomenon under investigation. The formulated interview questions facilitated the acquisition of rich textual data, enabling the study to address the

research question comprehensively. The gathered documents contain essential information essential for drawing valid and reliable conclusions.

Limitations of the Study

Some of the potential limitations of this study include:

1.   The study used snowball sampling to select the qualitative samples, also depending on the voluntary participation of IS. Therefore, there may be a degree of selection bias.

2.   The intercultural learning process is dynamic, and every individual is unique, especially when we are talking about the IA at the university. Various factors influence the extent of the adaptation and also impact the adaptation process. The theories can help in analysis but cannot explain this dynamic phenomenon thoroughly. The theories can help in analysis but cannot explain this dynamic phenomenon thoroughly.

3.   While using a mixed-methods approach allows for greater generalizability to be achieved, limitations regarding generalizability still exist within this study. More specifically, these results cannot be considered generalizable due to the specific sample of the quantitative portion of this study. In addition, the qualitative portion of this study used an identified population of international bachelor's, master's, and doctoral students by snowball sampling. The qualitative data may not be generalizable to the larger population of all IS. At the same time, the qualitative portion of this study cannot be considered generalizable as this data is based on the meaning-making of the individual and cannot be assumed to reflect the perspectives of others. Furthermore, not all qualitative data were incorporated into the survey instrument. Consequently, certain qualitative data remain confined to the qualitative segment of the study, rendering them non-generalizable.

4.   The definition and measurement limit the study. The factors influencing IS' MSA in another country or university vary; they have different needs and expectations from the destination. All of this also influenced their adaptation to the destination. The study employed a specific definition and measurement that is considered too narrow to capture this complex phenomenon; furthermore, the varied tools utilized might influence the research outcomes.

Summary

This chapter provides an overview of this research study investigating the relationship between MSA and IA of IS studying at the University of Padua in Italy. In doing so, the background of the study was discussed along with the reference review, including the problem statement, purpose statement, research question, hypotheses, theoretical frameworks, and an overview of the design and methodology guiding this study. Along with a discussion of the study's significance and a list of definitions, assumptions, and limitations inherent in this research study. In the following chapter, Chapter Two, a detailed literature review was done on the subject of this study. Chapter Three described this study's research methodology and design and presents the research methodology. It was segmented into different sections: introduction, mixed-method research case study paradigm, research type, participants, strategies to ensure quality, data collection instruments, data analysis, credibility and trustworthiness, and summary. Chapter Four was followed by Chapter Three, presenting the study's qualitative research findings. And Chapter Five presented the study's quantitative research findings. Finally, this study was concluded with Chapter Six, providing an overall summary of this research, including the study's findings and a discussion of the implications.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an in-depth review of the literature to understand how motivational dimensions to study abroad affect IA to college, which is the research purpose. The focus of this investigation is to explore the array of conceptualizations, including international students, MSA, and IA to college, and appropriate theoretical underpinnings. In line with the purpose of the study, this chapter begins by providing a discussion of the current literature on understanding the experiences of IS, including intercultural education policy; mobility, contribution, and benefit of the international student; and the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on IS. A review of the literature on IA and MSA, which serves as the main context in this study, follows. This is then followed by the literature on the connections between the main concepts, which brings out the research gap in the literature, and reacts to the significance of doing the research. Accordingly, this study explains the conceptual and theoretical frameworks with supporting literature that grounds this investigation. This chapter then concludes with a summary of how this literature provides a foundation for this study.

International Student

Intercultural education policy in Italy

In the field of intercultural education, the policies adopted in Italy have often been particularly salient to the broader public, with very advanced adherence to democratic and progressive principles (Fiorucci, 2008, 2011; Santerini, 2010). So far, there are three momentous documents published in Italy. The first document is *The Italian Way for Intercultural School Integration of Foreign Students* which published by the Ministry of Education (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione [MPI]) in 2007, it

defines the intercultural approach in the educational context as a deliberate project to promote dialogue and cultural exchange for all—natives and foreigners alike. In this way, diversity (cultural, gender, social class, etc.) becomes an important point of reference in educational processes, providing an opportunity for all to develop from the current situation (MPI, 2007, pp. 8-9). In 2014, the Ministry of Education (Ministero dell' Istruzione, dell' Università e della Ricerca [MIUR]) published the second document, named the *Guidelines for the Reception and Integration of Foreign Students,* which distinguishes between various types of foreign-born students (non-Italian citizens; non-Italian-speaking families; unaccompanied minors; children of mixed couples; children arrived through international adoption; Sinti, Roma, and transitory students; university students with foreign citizenship). Moreover, the document offers operational guidelines concerning the distribution in schools of foreign students, their guidance, the involvement and participation of families, assessment, guidance, teaching Italian as a second language, continuing education for school staff, and lifelong learning (MIUR, 2014, pp. 5-7). The following year, MIUR published the third document—*Different From Whom?*— which proposes possible answers to the educational needs in multicultural school contexts. Moreover, it describes ten operational lines of the intercultural approach in the Italian school system (MIUR, 2015, pp. 1-5):

1. Immediately enroll newly arrived [immigrant] students in the school system.

2. Raise awareness of the importance of preschool.

3. Countering delayed graduation.

4. Guided progress; adapt the program and evaluation.

5. Organize effective student guidance to encourage continuation of studies.

6. Support learning Italian as a second language as the language of scholarship.

7. Valuing linguistic diversity.

8. Preventing school segregation.

9. Involve families in the educational plans of their children.

10. Promote intercultural education in schools for all.

However, as Catarci (2018) mentioned, these policies have not always led to a coherent system of educational practices. These documents provide basic guidelines for developing and implementing a college's international education and programs. Therefore, this study conducts a case study approach to gain insight into the response and implementation of intercultural education policies by the University of Padova (UNIPD) in Italy with international students (IS). According to the Global Engagement Office at UNIPD, IS at the ministerial level is that the qualification for the degree program in which he or she is enrolled is obtained abroad, regardless of citizenship or residence. The Italian version is as below:

la definizione di studente internazionale adottata a livello ministeriale è che il titolo di accesso al corso di laurea a cui è iscritto sia conseguito all'estero, indipendentemente dalla cittadinanza o dalla residenza. Questo per evitare di considerare internazionale chi, ad esempio, ha conservato la cittadinanza straniera, ma risiede in Italia da diverso tempo è ha conseguito la maturità o addirittura la triennale in Italia. Allo stesso modo diventa internazionale chi è italiano a tutti gli effetti ma è andato all'estero a studiare (scuola superiore o triennale) e poi torna qui.

This study has used this definition since it is conducted in UNIPD. Under this definition, there is a group of IS has Italian citizenship who gain a prior degree

outside Italy. However, the environment (degree program and education system) at UNIPD is new to all the IS. Based on the purpose of the study is to explore how motivational dimensions to study abroad affect IA to college. Therefore, the most fundamental channel is to understand the global market status of intercultural education, and MSA and adaptation to college of IS.

The mobility of international student

The mobility of international students (MIS) in the context of global education. Over the last decade, one of the most significant features of the global education market has been the phenomenal growth in demand for international education (Bohm et al., 2002). The number of internationally mobile students in higher education has grown dramatically from 0,3 million in 1963, to 2 million in 2000, and up to 6 million in 2019. However, this is just 2.6% of the total world student population (Sabzalieva et al., 2022). Moreover, the Global Student Mobility 2025 report (Böhm et al., 2002) predicts that the demand for international education will increase to 7.2 million in 2025.

According to the annual report from the MIUR, in 2019/2020, there were 876.801 students without Italian citizenship (10.3% of the total school-age population). Most importantly, in the 2010/2011-2019/2020 decade, foreign students increased overall by 23.4 percent (+166 thousand units) (MIUR, 2021, p. 8-9). However, according to *Education at a glance: Share of international students enrolled by field of education* (OECD, 2022) which was published by Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This indicator shows the number of international tertiary students enrolled as a proportion of the total tertiary students enrolled in the destination (host) country. In 2020, there were 2.9% of IS enrolled in Italy. While 8.2% of IS enrolled in Europe (OECD countries), and 10.1%

of IS enrolled in all the OECD countries. Therefore, there is still potential in the market for MIS, especially for non-English speaking countries - Italy.

As one of the European countries, the MIS is influenced by European policy conducts. Intercultural education in Italy includes a European dimension, involving content and methodological adjustments to promote the idea of European citizenship. A sense of belonging to the local and national community, as well as to Europe, is reflected. The trend of internal mobility in Italy is closely linked to international mobility ("The Education System in Italy", 2007). In Europe, the rate of student mobility is influenced by the Erasmus program and the Bologna process. For instance, the Bologna Process facilitates students and staff mobility among 48 countries to bring more coherence to Higher Education systems across Europe (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2020). However, staying competitive in this ever-changing international environment requires a solid understanding of the future global demand for international education and Italy's competitive position in this global context.

Contribution and benefit of international student

Bring out the contributions. Mobility may directly contribute to the acquisition of human capital by young people who migrate abroad and may contribute to the economic development of both destination and home countries (Agiomirgianakis & Asteriou, 2001; Agiomirgianakis et al., 2004; Agiomirgianakis, 2006). IS brings significant economic benefits to universities and linguistic, social, and cultural diversity (Ecochard & Fotheringham, 2017; Hegarty, 2014; Wu et al., 2015). On the one hand, IS contributes to the diversity and internationalization of their classrooms, campuses, and communities (Wu et al., 2015). For instance, they may promote the intercultural development of domestic students' (Volet & Ang, 1998) by increasing

the interest and curiosity of domestic students to learn about various cultures (Deardorff, 2009). Moreover, helping domestic students overcome prejudices and stereotypes, and increases domestic students' willingness to participate in study abroad programs (Pettigrew, 1998). On the other hand, it can enhance the college's international reputation and promote its inclusiveness and sustainability to a certain extent. As Hammer et al. (2003) mentioned, "as one's experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in intercultural relationship increases" (p. 423).

Bring in the benefits. ISM is frequently seen as a practical learning environment that fosters students' exploration of diverse cultural and international settings (Amit, 2010). Typically, students engaged in ISM tend to express a high degree of satisfaction with their overseas experience (Waibel et al., 2017). For instance, studying abroad enhances learning, creates global awareness, and increases intercultural skills in individuals (Kitsantas, 2004; Williams, 2005). Together with promotes personal growth and development (Adler, 1975; Anderson, 1994; Byrnes, 1965; Furnham, 2004), particularly in intercultural understanding and foreign language proficiency, as well as in their academic development (Kumpikaite & Duoba, 2011; Cosciug, 2013; Novak et al., 2013; Zimmermann & Neyer, 2013). In addition, mobility programs can help IS become internationally competent and prepare them to find jobs after college, facilitating early career development (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007; Gajderowicz et al., 2012; Bryla, 2015), and enhance their employability (Di Pietro, 2015) and earnings (Kratz & Netz, 2018). Accordingly, IS has contributed to the college while benefiting from it. However, IS suffers from cultural disequilibrium, the difficulties and challenges of the intercultural transition and adaptation process to the college in the new environment.

The influence of COVID-19 pandemic on international students

Teaching and learning during COVID-19 pandemic. Before discussing the IA of IS, it is essential to remember that one of the environmental factors that influence IS' adaptation to college is the COVID-19 pandemic, since the COVID-19 pandemic is a huge challenge to education systems (Daniel, 2020). Many governments have ordered higher education institutions (HEIs) to cease face-to-face instruction for most students during this challenging time, requiring a shift to virtual education. According to Pokhrel and Chhetri (2021), the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted teaching and learning at the HEIs. The COVID-19 pandemic has created the most significant disruption of education systems in human history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Closures of schools, institutions, and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94% of the world's student population. Most universities chose to lock down and have the course online, including the UNIPD. The university has two-year online courses and activities until 22ed June 2022; the Academic Senate at UNIPD pronounced the news Unipd returns to classrooms: in-person teaching for academic year 22/23 (*Unipd ritorna nelle aule: didattica in presenza per l'anno accademico 22/23*). The complete nationwide lockdown was implemented from August 2020 (Palden, 2020). That is to say, IS enrolled in the academic year 2020 who started their travel in a new environment at UNIPD suffered from COVID-19 for almost two years. Moreover, after a two-year pandemic, universities are still on the way to recovering a regular campus life.

International students during COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic, except for influence on the educational system at HEIs, campus lockdowns are more likely to throw IS into a severe state of anxiety as many of them will likely experience social and psychological distress, including (1) emotional distress, (2)

impaired sense of personal self-worth, (3) loss of interpersonal contacts, and (4) impaired task (academic) performance (Miller, 2011; Regehr, 2011). The lockdown during the pandemic may pose monetary and mental health challenges to IS, among other challenges (Sahu, 2020). During a pandemic, IS are more likely to be frustrated (Firang, 2020). For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic can exert unique additional pressures, adversely affecting students' mental health, with impacts including increased stress, anxiety, and depression (Odriozola-González et al., 2020; Naser et al., 2020).

However, a series of transitional difficulties can be from daily life to cultural adaption (Constantine et al., 2005; Yoon & Portman, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial to understand IS' intercultural experience from a holistic perspective.

Intercultural Adaptation to College

Cultural disequilibrium and transition of international student

The notion of cross-cultural experience inherently stresses boundary crossing, differences, and diversity; intercultural experience, on the other hand, 'encompasses both domestic and international contexts and implies cultures interacting' (Landreman, 2003). The experience of studying abroad is a challenge in itself, especially the adaptation to the host culture (Luo & Zhang, 2021). IS face difficulties and challenges as they pursue higher education abroad (Hull, 1978; Özturgut & Murphy, 2009). Notably, compared to domestic students, IS often encounter more significant adjustment difficulties and challenges during the initial transition to university (Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Wu & Hammond, 2011), which is "the capability to navigate change" (Gale & Parker, 2014, p. 4). From the literature about international transition, research suggests that IS have a tough time (Wu & Hammond, 2011). For instance, when IS arrive in the host country, they may need to find a place

to live, buy food and daily necessities, purchase health insurance, obtain a bank card and/or driver's license, obtain residence permission, register for program courses, and learn to use the transportation system et al. Moreover, IS may experience acculturative stress (i.e., stress resulting from life changes in the acculturation process; Berry, 2006) and adjustment problems (Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

The process of IA is difficult and complex. IS must adapt to the new challenges presented by an unfamiliar environment in order to make a successful transition to college (Parker et al., 2005).

Adaptation to college variables: Predictors and correlates

There are various factors and activities that affect students' adaptation to college (Friedlander et al., 2007). There are some common factors influence the IA. For instance, the demographic characteristics of students, such as gender, age, education, marital status, and whether they study abroad (Mahmood & Burke, 2018; Bulgan, 2017). Moreover, time and the pro-phase experience of studying abroad, whether to accept cross-cultural training, and the purpose of the study abroad (Sit et al., 2017). Last but not least, causes of adjustment problems for IS include differences in country of origin, race and ethnicity, English proficiency, and whether they come from a collectivist or individualist culture (Constantine et al., 2005) as well as family support like economic (Andrade, 2006).

Except the demographic characteristics and personal background, the needs and expectations are among the most critical factors influencing IS' choice of study abroad programs and institutions that cannot be ignored. According to Ecochard and Fotheringham(2017), language proficiency, academic expectations, and socio-cultural integration are being recognized as three key challenges or difficulties in the adaptation experienced by IS. Moreover, more factors are related to the individual's

physiology and psychology. Baker and Siryk (1989) created Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), which includes four dimensions considered essential for adaptation among students: academic, social, personal, and institutional. Although the SACQ appears to have become the gold standard for transition research in the US (Duchesne et al., 2007), it has seldom been used in Europe (Mohamed, 2012). Most of the studies conducted in Europe were in English-speaking countries, such as the UK (Adams, 2017; Mohamed, 2012). For instance, Mohamed (2012) conducted SACQ to investigate the course of adjustment over the UK's first two years of university. The result showed that personal-emotional adjustment and institutional attachment were relatively stable over time, and academic and social adjustment demonstrated decreasing and increasing trends, respectively. In order to fully understand the adaptation of IS in college, this study conducts SACQ, which has four main variables, including socio-cultural, academic, personal-emotional, and institutional.

Social-cultural variable. The socio-cultural dimension of IS adjustment relates to their general experience with the host society and population (Ecochard & Fotheringham, 2017). Upon arrival in the host country, IS leave the social network they established or acquired before studying abroad. In addition, it can be challenging for IS to build a new social network in a new environment. Especially difficult for IS whose native language is not English and who are studying in a non-English speaking country. For instance, Asian IS may have more difficulty interacting and making friends than Western students (Yeh & Inose, 2003). One of the main reasons is that Asian cultures are typically collectivistic. However, there are significant differences in the degree and type of collectivism (Triandis, 1999).

Interacting with compatriots in the main population will be detrimental to IA (Rui & Wang, 2015). A high-quality social network, especially interacting with the

host population, will reduce cognitive barriers and facilitate IA. The role of social support is vital for IS' adaptation (Ramsay et al., 2007), as well as contributing to their social integration. Research has found that the loss and lack of social support can lead to lower academic performance and negative psychological experiences, such as stress, confusion, and depression (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Hovey, 2000). The more friends from the primary group and the higher the quality of friendships, the higher the life satisfaction of IS and, to some extent, the lower the chances of homesickness (Hendrickson et al., 2011). Zhou and Zhang (2014) have found that IS have developed patterns of socialization to foster their integration into their institution. However, they focused only on the social integration of IS, and recommended that future inquiries explore academic integration.

Academic variable. Many researchers believe that academic and social integration is critical to post-secondary education persistence and degree attainment (Heyn, 2013). Academic variables should also be considered as an essential influence factor. According to some empirical research (e.g., Baker & Siryk, 1989; Krotseng, 1992; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000), students can successfully adjust to university life may affect their academic performance and whether they persist with their course of study.

The stresses associated with academic difficulties are not unique to IS and are experienced by all college students. However, academic stress for IS may be exacerbated by additional stressors such as second language anxiety and adjusting to a new educational system and environment (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). More specifically, they may encounter unique academic challenges such as language barriers, lack of knowledge of the host culture, poor relationships with teachers and professors, unfamiliarity with differences in instruction and curriculum, isolation, and anxiety (Andrade, 2006; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). The more IS have language

anxiety and lack confidence, the more significant adjustment difficulties and stress and anxiety in the academic environment they may have (Andrade, 2006). Some studies suggested that successful academic completion and adaptation to university life require more than English language skills for IS (Phakiti et al., 2013). Under those circumstances, IS, like their domestic counterparts, experience academic stress. However, IS usually do not have similar resources to combat this stress (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1998). These stresses, combined with a lack of resources, could lead to stress-related illnesses such as depression or anxiety (Hovey, 2000), which may influences the academic achievement.

Institutional variable. The existing literature suggests the relevance of several college activities that reduce achievement gaps of students, such as high-quality resources, positive college climate, after-college collaborations, and extra-curricular activities (Gabrielli et al., 2022). College's limited resources may prevent students from achieving resilient grades (Borman & Overman, 2004). That is, academic resilience is higher at colleges with high-quality resources. For example, in physical infrastructure (libraries, laboratories, gymnasiums), educational materials (books and personal computer equipment), and technological infrastructure (internet, heating/cooling systems, lighting, and acoustic systems) (Agasisti & Longobardi, 2017). Moreover, campus climate may play a role in integrating IS into the university campus (Jean-Francois, 2019). Positive college and classroom climates, such as supportive teacher-student interactions, good teacher-student relationships, and an orderly learning atmosphere with clear disciplinary rules, are positively associated with academic achievement (Cheema & Kitsantas, 2014). Moreover, there is evidence that after-college collaborations and extracurricular activities can help disadvantaged students. For example, the provision of study rooms is positively associated with the

impact on students' academic resilience (European Commission, 2018).

In addition, the quality and efficiency of educational institutions' services may not meet IS' expectations. Research from Khawaja and Dempsey (2008) has shown that unmet expectations of the university's educational services can lead to poorer college adaptation. What is more, the differences between the educational systems of Western and Eastern countries affect IS' adaptation to college. For instance, IS from countries focusing on rote memorization may have more difficulty adapting to Western universities focusing on critical thinking (Aubrey, 1991). Liberman (1994) examined the educational experience of Asian IS in the US through 682 informal qualitative interviews. Participants stated that adjusting to the interactive teaching style and critical thinking approach to learning was difficult. However, they felt that it was beneficial for their learning. Additionally, participants expressed concern about the informality and lack of respect shown by domestic students toward teaching staff. IS in two Australian qualitative studies also noted difficulties adjusting to teaching styles (Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007; Townsend & Poh, 2008).

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic is also an important environmental factor. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to pave the way for introducing digital learning (Dhawan, 2020) as well as bring benefits to physically challenged students (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020). However, the reality exists that some IS cannot experience the university and local life because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some even spent the whole academic year at the student's dormitory or home. This is even more difficult for IS who need lab classes. The COVID-19 pandemic no longer brings a different way of teaching but the tremendous psychological pressure that comes with it.

Personal-emotional variable. In general, IS has much personal emotional

stress regarding IA. The ongoing stress can affect academic performance and mental well-being (Dantzer, 2012). Ward and Kennedy (1993, p. 222) mentioned that psychological adjustment is one significant reaction to intercultural stress. For instance, psychological well-being or satisfaction is interwoven with stress and coping process (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

IS are likely to have negative emotions such as sadness, helplessness, and nervousness if they do not have the will to integrate into their new environment (Ward & Kennedy, 1994; Pan & Keung Wong, 2011). For many students, starting university is a challenging experience that involves significant life changes and adaptation to a variety of demands (e.g., Baker & Siryk, 1989; Rickinson & Rutherford, 1995). Emerging research suggests that personality variables of attachment style, trait-anxiety, and extroversion may impact IS' ability to form friendships, and in-turn sociocultural and psychological adaptation (Brisset et al., 2010). Psychological experiences include phenomena such as homesickness, disorientation, depressive reactions, and feelings of isolation, alienation, and powerlessness (Day & Hajj, 1986). Studies have shown that an extroverted personality is easier to adapt to the environment and is positively correlated with psychological well-being, while a neurotic personality is negatively correlated with mental health (Chen et al., 2008; Benet-Martínez & Karakitapoglu-Aygün, 2003).

As the previous literature explains, the COVID-19 pandemic causes significant psychological stress and mental health to IS (Daniel, 2020). The impact on students' adjustment to college during the COVID-19 pandemic is well worth exploring in depth. The adaptation process of students in college is complex and influenced by different factors.

The needs for future exploration in intercultural adaptation

Studies have found that cultural empathy, openness, and flexibility are positively correlated with IA (Ahadi & Puente-Díaz, 2011). Moreover, research on the needs of IS has identified specific needs in career planning, academic, and cultural adjustment, and less formal counseling interventions to address emotional and psychological issues (Leong & Sedlacek, 1989; Komiya & Eells, 2001). While there is research on this topic, the needs of IS should be investigated further (Olivas & Li, 2006).

Most research on individuals in cultural transition in higher education has been conducted under the lens of adaptation and has focused primarily on the ability to adapt. Thus, there is a strong need to explore the college adaptation experiences of IS. To further understand the concept of [unilateral] coping and adaptation to a new environment for newcomers, as well as the goal of successful acculturation (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). The literature shows that there is limited systematic research on the interaction between individuals and their environment in the context of IA. Few conceptualize individuals as actors who can regulate their participation in challenging social environments (Volet & Jones, 2012). However, Hviid and Zittoun (2008) suggest that 'every transition in which a person is engaged demands or provokes some responsiveness from the environment, which feeds further transitional processes' (p. 125). the unique capacity of individuals to reflect upon, feel about, and act on their experience as they participate in coregulated social activities' (Volet et al., 2009, p. 220). In addition, little research shows how 'multiple knowledge and linguistic power relations in global education systems operate at the micro level or in daily interactions' (Kim, 2012, p. 473).

The question of who takes responsibility for this diversity in terms of

experiences and needs remains unanswered: IS are often presented as deficit and failing, especially linguistically, and expected to change and improve to fit within the existing institutional culture (Taylor & Scurry, 2011). Especially in such a particular period of the COVID-19 pandemic, Italy is a non-English-speaking country. To some extent, the language barrier significantly impacts the study and life of IS. This reinforces the importance of this study. Thus, this study focuses on a more comprehensive understanding of the college adaptation process in IS from the perspective of institutional characteristics and student involvement in college. However, there is an urgent need to understand further the effects of university operations and practices on student adaptation.

Motivation to Study Abroad

To optimize the study abroad program, it is crucial to understand the various adaptation problems encountered by IS from HEI's perspective. It is also essential to understand why IS choose a particular study abroad program and institution. IS face adaptation problems unfamiliar to local students during their studies in a new environment (Andrade, 2006). MSA plays an essential role in a new environment (Borodina, 2022), which shows the tendency of the global market.

The clarification of motivation to study abroad

Decisions are made based on behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and control beliefs (Schnusenberg et al., 2012). Making a choice is not easy because once you make a choice, you are responsible for your decision. Moreover, this decision may affect your whole life. When choosing a different country and/or a different study abroad program, you may have a different life trajectory. You may get different achievements when you choose a different study plan and/or a different way of studying. Motivation is one of the most important psychological concepts in education

that motivates and guides behavior toward goals (Eggen & Kauchak, 1994) which can directly behavior in different types of activities (Reeve, 2009). According to the references, there are mainly two motivations for studying abroad, including learning motivation (Joe et al., 2017; Cho et al., 2021) and entrance motivation (Lauermann, 2012; Yan & Berliner, 2011).

Learning motivation is the factor that influences students' learning process, are the motivational beliefs related to learning (Andrade, 2006). For instance, Cho et al. (2021) investigated how IS adapt to new academic environments in the US universities by exploring the relationships between self-determined motivation, beliefs about classroom assessments, the use of self-regulatory learning strategies, and academic performance based on self-determination theory. The findings demonstrated that self-determined motivation in courses led to adaptive beliefs about classroom assessments, which promoted various self-regulatory learning strategies, including shallow and metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive learning strategies were significantly related to student's academic performance. In contrast, entrance motivation influences IS to choose the international program and the university. Moreover, Lauermann (2012) analyzed existing research on the decision-making process to study abroad systematically, to outline important distinctions in types of student mobility (e.g., short-term/nondegree vs. longterm/degree mobility) and associated motivational implications, and to outline ways in which motivation theory can contribute to a better understanding of this process. Motivation is defined as any mechanism underlying the decision to pursue higher education abroad, that is, why students may choose to study abroad. Moreover, the motivation constructs may include, for instance, goals, values, and expectations (Lauermann, 2012).

From the extant literature, most of the research assumed MSA as self-

determination motivation. To maintain consistency with the research objectives and research questions, the definition of entry motivation was used in this study. Studies related to general study abroad decisions report "financial constraints, educational and career aspirations, individual attitudes, societal values, and personal beliefs" all impact student decisions about study abroad participation (Salisbury et al., 2010). However, there is very little research on how multiple factors of a student's experience influence decision-making about study abroad participation (Hartkopf, S., 2020).

Motivational variables: Predictors and correlates

Motivational variables. The existing research on studying abroad, although there are many studies on the determinants of study abroad program participation, most studies only focus on the influence of student characteristics such as gender, academic ability, and family background (Di Pietro & Page, 2008; Messer & Wolter, 2007), as well as age, language acquisition and international experience (Born et al., 1987; Vande Berg et al., 2009), and rarely includes psychographic determinants such as the motivation to go abroad (Holtbrügge & Engelhard, 2016). IS' motivation is essential in predicting their behavior in a foreign country (Chirkov et al., 2007; Chirkov et al., 2008).

The research of Wintre et al. (2015) employed an exploratory approach aimed to identify IS' motivating factors for studying abroad through open-ended questions and compare these factors with the hallmarks of emerging adulthood. The results showed that the unique characteristics of that university primarily influence IS' decisions to study at a particular university (e.g., time of admission, first-time acceptance, and scholarships), as well as the quality of the education. Other motivating factors include the university and city's study and living environment,

financial affordability status, and having friends who have attended or currently attend the university of their choice. These findings echo the criteria listed by Cubillo et al. (2006) for institutional motivational factors, which include institutional image (and available facilities), city image, ethnocentrism, and personal reasons, such as advice from family members, friends, and teachers. However, The main motivational factors that influence the decision to apply for international mobility programmes are: the employment and residency opportunities, the quality of the student experience, including accommodation and social activities, and the costs associated with an international education (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007).

Most of the students participate in students' mobility programmes especially to gain international study and life experiences (Novak et al., 2013), to develop their international core competencies (Kumpikaite` & Duoba, 2011), and to improve foreign language and academic knowledge (Cosciug, 2013). Moreover, the MSA is strongly associated with personal growth, changing lifestyle, and enlarging job opportunities (Severino et al., 2014). Moreover, it is also closely related to students' medium and high socio-economic levels, measured by parents' social background (Iezzi et al., 2012). Another important feature that may attract IS is the quality of the university and the costs of living and education fees (Rachaniotis et al., 2013; Beine et al., 2014).

Measurement. There are three main motivation instruments. The first one is a situational (or state) measure of motivation, the Situational Motivation Scale (SIMS, Guay et al., 2000). The SIMS is designed to assess the constructs of intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, external regulation, and amotivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991) in field and laboratory settings. The results show that the SIMS is composed of 4 internally consistent factors. Moreover, SIMS represents a brief and

versatile self-report measure of intrinsic situational motivation, identified regulation, external regulation, and amotivation. SIMS is an excellent survey to test the various motivations. However, using this survey cannot help to understand the specific factors of choosing the program, the university, and the country.

The second is the Study Abroad Goals Scale (SAGS, Carlson et al., 1991). Kitsantas, A. (2004) explored the effect of students' goals for studying abroad on their cross-cultural skills. Based on Carlson's and his colleagues' research (Carlson et al., 1991; Opper, Teichler & Carlson, 1990), SAGS was developed to assess the role of goals in students' development of cross-cultural skills. Carlson et al. (1991) indicated that the most important reasons why IS report going abroad in order of importance are to improve their cultural understanding; to improve their career prospects, to study the subject matter not offered in their home institution; and to join friends also going. Scale items were formulated according to these motives for participation in study abroad programs. However, the SAGS was used to test IS' goals. Using this survey cannot understand the specific factors of choosing the program, the university, and the country.

Last but not least, Anderson and Lawton (2015b) developed an instrument, the Motivation to Study Abroad (MSA), to accurately measure the key factors that motivate IS to decide to study abroad. The survey aims to attract students to programs and to help HEIs organize programs to optimize the student experience. They look at various factors that may influence whether students participate in study abroad programs, what programs they choose, and what benefits they realize from their participation. Published research on students' motivations for participating in study abroad programs is currently sparse (Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Preston, 2012). Two studies had similar aims to Anderson & Lawton (2015b). For instance, Sanchez et al.

(2006) compared the motivations of U.S., French, and Chinese students to study abroad, while Nyaupane et al. (2010) measured the motivations of U.S. students who participated in study abroad programs in the South Pacific and Europe.

Above all, the motivational factors that influence IS' motivation to choose a study abroad program, are not only the background demographic and characteristics, needs and expectations, but also include other motivational factors. In this study, those factors are summarized in four dimensions: world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment in MSA instrument (Anderson & Lawton, 2015b).

Unexplored area in motivation to study abroad

MSA, on the one hand, the existing empirical literature on international education, and specifically on study abroad, mostly has focused on the skills and benefits students gain during international experiences. However, there has been limited research on IS motivation (Pawlak et al., 2020). The MSA, especially entrance motivation, still needs to be explored. On the other hand, according to the literature, there are plenty of studies focusing on "self-determination motivation" which is defined as the "motivation in the learning process" (Cho et al., 2021), which influence IS' adaptation to the university. However, there is little evidence-based literature about how IS' MSA contributes to their adaptation during the transition and integration into the university. Little is known about the factors that motivate students to study abroad. The extant literature focusing on students' decision-making to study abroad is typically descriptive without incorporating motivation theory, and available studies rely on relatively small samples. They are limited to short-term study abroad programs. (Lauermann, 2012). That is to say, most of the research focuses on the motivation to learn, not the entrance motivation, which shows why IS decide to

choose the specific program and the university.

Furthermore, some empirical findings confirm that positive educational expectations of immigrant-origin students are positively associated with overcoming adversity (European Commission, 2018). Motivations influence—sometimes positively and sometimes negatively—students' intention to study abroad (Sánchez et al., 2006). More importantly, some studies have neglected to measure motivation to discover which motivations play a more critical role in the decision-making process than others. Moreover, the extent to which structural or external factors influence the decision-making process (Yue & Lu, 2022). Thus, there is a gap in studying the entrance motivation of IS, what, why, and how they decide to study abroad in which program and university.

Connection of Main Concepts

The connection between decision-making, transition and adaptation

The decision to study abroad is the first step in a student's educational transition, an academic transition to an educational system. It is also a socio-cultural transition to a new and unfamiliar environment and a psychological transition to adjust to new challenges, expectations, and norms (Berno & Ward, 2003; Ward et al., 2001). Pre-departure expectations and experiences in foreign countries have been associated with adjustment problems, including depression and academic difficulties (Berno & Ward, 2003). There is a great need to understand better the decision-making process of IS studying abroad, not only for global marketing purposes, which is one of the main goals of existing research. It also provides better quality educational counseling, anticipates students' needs, and prevents psychological, sociocultural, and academic adjustment problems (Berno & Ward, 2003; Ward et al., 2001). The expectation gap has been shown to affect overall satisfaction with the study abroad

experience, which is related to psychological, sociocultural, and academic adjustment problems. Thus, knowing what, why, and how IS chose a specific study abroad program, university, and the country is essential.

Little research explains how MSA as expectations, goals, and needs effects IS' IA. As Laing et al. (2005) argued, higher education institutions need to understand students' needs, expectations, and perceptions before they can contribute to their integration. Similarly, Baklashova and Kazakov (2016) argued that such an understanding would enable post-secondary institutions to 'provide adequate support for foreign students' (p. 1821). Anderson & Lawton (2015a) conducted over two academic years, employed a pre-post assessment of students participating in American Institute for Foreign Study programs. The goal was to assess the relationship between why students chose to study abroad, their choice of a program, and their intercultural competence. Even though they observed no significant pre-post changes in cultural competence which was a great surprise to them, they believed MSA is an important dimension to consider in future research efforts. For instance, Chirkov et al. (2008) found that self-determined MSA is a powerful predictor of adjustment for IS. This bodes well for the students given that autonomous MSA has been linked to better cultural adaptation outcomes (Gong & Fan, 2006). According to Yang et al. (2018), motivational factors still have been seriously neglected in studies of cross-culture adjustment.

Research gaps in the literature review

According to the previous study, there is still room for improvement regarding the research methodology, subjects, and background.

First of all, in the literature on research methods, some studies were single cross-sectional studies (Shafaei et al., 2016; Mahmood & Burke, 2018; Marrero-

Quevedo et al., 2019), which might have limited the comprehension of the overall adaptation process. Cross-cultural adaptation is a process, and the degree of cultural adaptation of IS varies at different stages (Szabo et al., 2019). Moreover, some studies only have the quantitative method and cross-sectional design with a specific group of students. It is limited to further understanding the realities behind the quantitative data and examining the change of the adapting process. For instance, Chirkov et al (2007) used two questionnaires Self-regulation Questionnaire—Study Abroad and Goals for Study Abroad Scale, to test if and how the self-determination motivation and goals to study abroad influence Chinese IS' adaptation in Belgium and Canada HEIs. Moreover, the result shows that both had an independent influence on Chinese IS' s cultural adaptation. However, it is essential to study further how the motivational dimensions of studying abroad influence the IA of IS. Another similar research is conducted by Yang et al. (2018), based on self-determination theory, they tested the idea that self-determined MSA can prevent students from experiencing culture shock and support their subjective well-being, with 131 IS studying in the United States. The result showed that self-determined study abroad motivation was associated with lower culture shock and greater contextual subjective well-being.

Moreover, basic psychological needs satisfaction fully mediated these relationships. The self-determined study abroad motivation is the reason for choosing to study in the U.S., and was negatively associated with culture shock in IS. The study is cross-sectional with small sample size, and only self-reported measures. Last but not least, some research has a longitudinal approach but only conducted a quantitative method with a specific group of IS. For instance, Chirkov et al. (2008) used a longitudinal approach to investigate how the self-determination motivation and goals to study abroad influence Chinese IS' s adaptation in three Canadian HEIs. The result

is consistent with the research [Chirkov, V., Vansteenkiste, M., Tao, R., & Lynch, M. (2007). The role of self-determined motivation and goals for study abroad in the adaptation of international students. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 31(2), 199-222.], which they did before. It would be better if the authors consider having both quantitative and qualitative to understand further, explain the adjustment dynamics, and compare with the non-English speaking country.

Second of all, according to the literature, it is noted that most of the research focus on the IS with the specific nationality or citizenship (e.g. Chinese students) who studying at the HEIs in English speaking countries (e.g. the U.S.). The literature on the study abroad experiences with English or non-English speaking countries' students enrolled in non-English speaking countries is relatively limited. According to Mohamed (2012), it should also be noted that the vast majority of adjustment research has taken place in North American, Canadian, or Australian settings, and relatively little comparable UK data exist. Thus, he has enriched the sample from the UK. However, future studies are needed to investigate IS' learning behaviors based on their specific nationalities (Cho et al., 2021). Moreover, some of the research was only conducted with small sample size. Little is known about the driving forces behind the mobility streams and the characteristics of the mobile students (Lauermann, 2012). Although ethnic groups have been identified in some studies, the demographic heterogeneity of individuals has been ignored (Yue & Lu, 2022). Furthermore, most research on the intercultural integration of college students has focused on the first-year experience, as many scholars believe that students are most at risk for social and academic failure during this period (Skene et al., 2006; Baklashova & Kazakov, 2016).

Last but not least, most of the studies, while considering the influence of the environment as a context, have focused on the internal environment of the university

and neglected the external social environment. In particular, the social environment brings changes and challenges directly to the university education system. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we got the chance to take the course online. However, the experiences that students have are unsatisfied, especially for IS. COVID-19 pandemic is a huge challenge to education systems (Lai et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic impacts IS' stressors, mental health (Daniel, 2020), and IA(Constantine et al., 2005). COVID-19 has an important influence on IS' well-being. We will never know what will happen in the future, but with the development of technology, digital or online learning has become a sustainable way of higher education. Thus, knowing how and why IS feel about the program during/after the pandemic is essential.

Above all, given the concern for student well-being, further research is urgently needed to help improve IS' intercultural adaptability so that they can cope with transition and adapt to the challenges of higher education (Howell & Buro, 2015). While several studies explore the impact of demographic factors, little is known about the impact of psychographic determinants such as the motivation to go abroad Holtbrügge & Engelhard, 2016). Most importantly, no studies explain the role of COVID-19 — how it influences the educational system and directly or indirectly influences IS' adaptation to college. More specifically, how it indirectly or directly and to what extent affects the relationship between MSA and IA of IS. This study aims to measure how IS' MSA influences their IA in Italy. In order to fulfill the research gaps in the perspectives of methodology, research subjects, and research background, and to achieve the research purpose, this study conducts at UNIPD in a non-English speaking country, Italy, with a population of IS with different cultural backgrounds from all over the world. Moreover, this study uses a longitudinal research process and uses a mixed-method design.

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

Motivation and Adaptation process theory: I-E-O model

Overview of Input-Environment-Outcome model. As Astin (1993) noted, "change or growth in the student during college is determined by comparing outcome characteristics with input characteristics" (p. 37). To investigate how the educational environment affected student outcomes while controlling for student inputs (Astin, 1991), Astin (1993) proposed the input-environment-outcome (I-E-O) model, the I-E-O model has three elements considered: inputs, environment, and outcomes. According to Astin (1993), the basic purpose of the model is to assess the impact of various environmental experiences by determining whether students grow or change differently under varying environmental conditions (p. 7).

Inputs are what students bring with them to college (Astin, 1993). According to Astin & Antonio (2012), inputs are critical to assessment because they are always related to outcomes and are related to environments. There are two categories of inputs: fixed and flexible characteristics. Fixed inputs, or demographic inputs such as family backgrounds, demographic characteristics, academic experiences (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) as well as gender, race, immigrant status, and funds (Nearon, 2002), et al. However, flexible characteristic inputs are more likely to change over time. Flexible characteristics can be organized into six subcategories, self-reported by students: cognitive functioning (standardized test scores, grade point average), aspirations and expectations (career field of choice, degree aspirations), self-ratings (emotional health, leadership, various abilities, etc.), values and attitudes (ratings on social, religious and social, and educational issues), behavioral patterns (rating on how often students participate in various types of behaviors, including smoke cigarettes, feel overwhelmed, tutor their peers, or participate in religious services,

amongst others), and educational background characteristics (year of high school graduation, years taken of specific subjects, previous college courses taken, etc.) (Astin & Antonio, 2012). All in all, this study divides and includes three dimensions of inputs, including student characteristics (Lewis & Smith, 1994), needs and expectations (Mizikaci, 2006), and MSA (Yanto, 2012).

The environment refers to "the various programs, policies, faculty, peers and educational experiences to which the student is exposed" (Astin, 1993, p. 7; Kennedy & Wilson-Jones, 2019). There are two different environmental variables: between-college and within-college (Astin, 1993). These two classifications were also used in this study. Between-college characteristics are structural and include such variables as size, selectivity, and geographic region (Astin, 1993), as well as admissions criteria, enrollment numbers, control type (public or private), levels of degrees offered, and racial diversity of student population (Astin & Antonio, 2012; Mrozinske, 2016). While within-college variables are those "particular educational experiences within the institution" (Astin, 1993, p. 85). Within-institution environmental variables are factors that only impact the specific group of students exposed to them, such as attributes of the student's significant groups, including roommates and close friends, participation in specific programs at the institution like study abroad or honors programs, and participation in co-curricular activities (Astin & Antonio, 2012). They include subdivisions within a college; thus, not all students are exposed to the same environment at a given college. Specifically, it also includes staff, curricula, instructors, facilities, institutional climate, courses, teaching style, friends, roommates, extra-curricular activities, and organizational affiliation (Astin, 1993).

Educational experiences can impact outcomes (Astin & Antonio, 2012). Input combined with environment explains the learning or change in a specific outcome

(Gayles et al., 2012). Outcomes refer to "the student's characteristics after exposure to the environment" (Astin, 1993, p. 7), or the aspects of a student's experience the institution is attempting to influence (Astin, 1993; Astin & Antonio, 2012). Outcomes include students' characteristics, knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, behaviors, and beliefs (Kennedy& Wilson-Jones, 2019). Astin (1993) noted that outcome variables could accurately be identified as dependent variables. Moreover, Astin & Antonio (2012) mentioned that outcomes "reflect the desired aims and objectives of the educational program" (p. 41). This study aims to evaluate how and to what extent the motivational dimensions influence the adaptation to college. Therefore, this study conducts the outcomes of the extent of adaptation to college as dependent variables.

The application of Input-Environment-Outcome model. Astin (1993) described the I-E-O model as a "conceptual guide" for analyzing college student growth or development (p. 7). The I-E-O model provides an explanatory framework for student change that emphasizes student development, considering the origins and processes of change. The I-E-O framework has been used to investigate the impact of college on students (Campbell & Blakey, 1996; Mrozinske, 2016). Moreover, according to Hartkopf (2020), the I-E-O model considers individual traits and experiences. However, current study abroad literature presents participants' overall experiences without accounting for different demographics, traits, and experiences.

The I-E-O Model differs from other educational assessment models because it considers student inputs. Astin (1993) explains that the relationship between environment and student outcome can only be understood by considering student inputs. The research of Hsieh and Yu (2022) aimed to explore if there significant differences in achievement motivation, student engagement, and learning outcomes. Based on the literature, a study of the relationship between these three was sorted out.

Student inputs can affect both the environment and outputs, so inputs also impact the relationship between environments and outcomes (Astin & Antonio, 2012; Miner, 2021). In comparison, some studies explain how input and environment affect outcomes (Gui et al., 2021; Hartkopf, 2020). Moreover, student inputs directly impact outcomes as well as indirectly when they interface with the environment (Dahl et al., 2020, p. 2; Erbes et al., 2022; Mrozinske, 2016). Above all, inputs and environment significantly correlate (Miner, 2021). Moreover, the environment correlates significantly with output (Thurmond et al., 2002), and inputs were the most significant predictor of output (Norwani, 2005).

Auxiliary theory: Student involvement theory

Student involvement theory as auxiliary role. Astin's I-E-O model is widely accepted and utilized, including in the development of considerations for longitudinal assessment of student characteristics and experiences entering college, the environments that influence students after enrollment, and measurable outcomes. Astin' s model allows for a systematic approach to exploring higher education's micro, meso, and macro dimensions. Although a simple model, the model considers multiple dimensions. The complexity of interactions must be considered holistically to understand the intersection of dynamics and, in turn, the performance and success of students, institutions, and higher education (Mrozinske, 2016).

Moreover, Wickliffe (2020) provided descriptive information regarding student involvement in residential programs and examined the relationship that residential programs have with academic outcomes. Researchers can use the I-E-O model to measure the relationship between the institutional environment and institutional outcomes while controlling for incoming student characteristics. Moreover, conduct Astin's student involvement theory (SIT, Astin, 1984; Astin, 1993)

to explain the data on student involvement. He mentioned that "the quality, quantity, and type of involvement along with the amount of time and energy they spent on the involvement impacted the students' social and academic experiences." Stocksdale (2015) used SIT in conjunction with Astin's I-E-O model as the data analysis framework to measure what influence, if any, the college environment and student involvement variables have on academic self-concept during the first year of college.

   Overview of student involvement theory. The foundation for SIT was derived from Astin's findings, as reported in Four Critical Years (1977). It was further supported in his follow-up book, What Matters in College (1993). The main idea is that students learn by becoming involved (Astin, 1999).

   Astin (1984) described student involvement as "the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience" (p. 518). Student involvement includes both physical and psychological aspects. More specifically, student involvement is defined as the amount of energy a student commits to their education. The energy a student devotes to their studies, their level of participation in campus organizations, and the frequency of interactions among professors and other students (Astin, 1985). In contrast, an uninvolved student is apathetic towards his education, does not get involved in extracurricular activities, and infrequently interacts with professors and other students (Astin, 1999). Student involvement or student engagement could be an accurate proxy to measure the education process in higher education (Yanto, 2012). The SIT includes five basic postulates (Astin, 1999), including the investment of physical and psychological energy in various "objects"; regardless of its object, involvement occurs along a continuum; involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features; the amount of student learning and personal development associated with any educational program

is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of student involvement in that program; and the effectiveness of any educational policy or practice is directly related to the capacity of that policy or practice to increase student involvement.

Furthermore, Astin (2014) explained that different students manifest different degrees of involvement in a given object, and the same student manifests different degrees of involvement in different objects at different times. Astin's SIT recognizes that change is not simply a function of a student's interaction with the environment, but a result of the quality of involvement in these interactions (Mrozinske, 2016). When the student interfaces with his/her environment, Astin (1985) sees the role of this involvement as the interactive dynamic that explains the student's development. Astin believes that the student involvement theory "can be stated simply, students learn by becoming involved" (p. 133). Therefore, SIT can help understand and explain how IS interact and behave in new environments.

Theoretical intersection: I-E-O model and SIT

Above all, this study conducts the I-E-O model to control for input characteristics that may directly or indirectly influence students' MSA and adapt to college. Moreover, SIT is an assistive theory to help explain the complex process of college involvement. There is some research conducted on a similar framework. For instance, Stroud (2015) adopted Bailey Shea's Decision to Study Abroad Framework, Astin's (1984) Input-Environment-Outcome Model, Astin's Theory of Student Involvement, and Fishbein & Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action. He investigated and provided valuable information about how the myriad factors, including the university or institutional environment in a geographic location, neglected in prior studies, influence students' decisions to study abroad.

Astin's I-E-O model was created to provide a more accurate assessment of the

impact of any experience a student has in college (Hartkopf, 2020). However, college student learning and development paths are very complex (Hsieh & Yu, 2022). Quaye and Harper (2015) stated that "a dependency on sameness is no longer appropriate, as contemporary cohorts of students at colleges and universities are different; the ways they experience and respond to our campuses are varied" (p.1). Astin's I-E-O model cannot represent the complex interrelationships among input, environment, and outcome variables (Gonyea, 2006). Even though some studies conducted the I-E-O model to explain the single variable. For instance, the study of Hsieh and Yu (2022) chosen not to include all the variables of the I-E-O model, but chose three main variables to put in the refined model: achievement motivation as the input variable, student engagement behaviors as the environment (process) variable, and learning outcome as the output variable. Some studies on study abroad participation have included variables that capture involvement in extracurricular activities (Kasvari, 2009; Miller, 2004) and academic involvement (e.g., Booker, 2001; Hamir, 2011; Hembroff & Rusz, 1993). Those studies were related to students' decision to participate in study abroad. The fundamental difference between student motivation and student engagement is that student engagement emphasizes what the individual does and how she or he behaves (Astin, 1999). Regarding student motivation, SIT suggests that motivation plays a vital role in determining student engagement (Astin, 1999). Undoubtedly, there is a correlation between motivation and engagement.

Moreover, the I-E-O model states that inputs and environments can have independent and compounding effects on outputs (Strayhorn, 2012). Because of the integration of decision-making to study abroad on the changing adaptation to college, the I-E-O Model is a fit for the study. The I-E-O Model is used to frame findings from the data after it is collected to compare how motivational dimensions and on-campus

experiences impact the involvement and adaptation to college.

Above all, this study conducts self-determination theory and involvement theory in conjunction with Astin's I-E-O model as the theoretical framework (see chart 1). Combining the three theories above provides a full context of how IS decide to study abroad and their IA to college. Moreover, make it possible to organize the survey data into blocks to measure the influence of motivational dimensions to study abroad on the IA of IS in the new college environment. Furthermore, these theories consider how demographic characteristics can impact IS to make decisions and experience college life. In addition, these theories relate to the topics of the literature review, which can help present a complete understanding of the context of the study.

Chart 1

Theoretical Intersection of I-E-O model and SIT in this Study
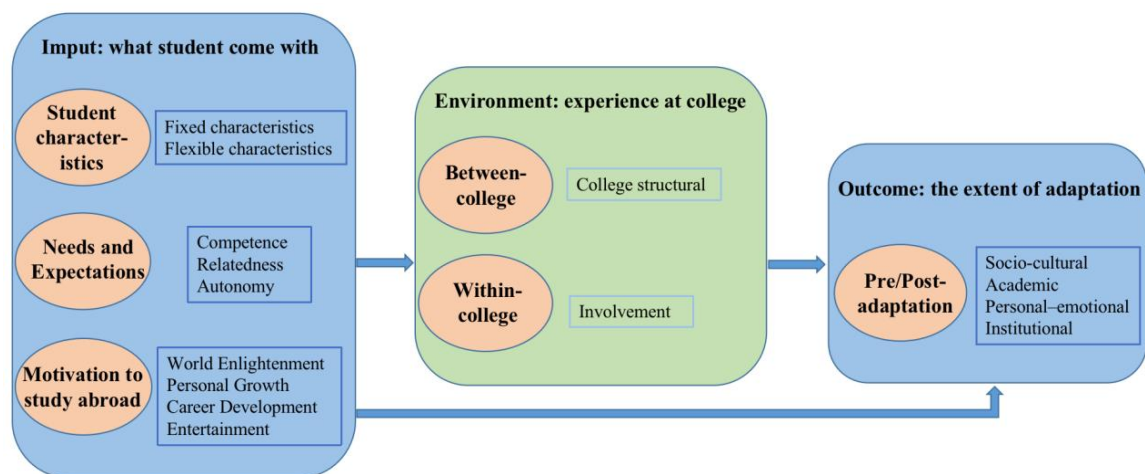
Summary

This literature review highlights recent works on IS, MSA, and IA. The literature review facilitates the foundation of this study on the relationship between MSA (factors of international program and institution choice) and college adaptation among IS studying in Italy in a non-English speaking country. Based on the review, little is known about the relationship between MSA and college adaptation in the

Italian context and under the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, exploring this relationship is crucial, especially in non-English-speaking countries like Italy. Research has shown that when in a new environment, IS as "foreigners" face particular intercultural difficulties and challenges that affect their college adaptation in various ways and varying degrees. Under the selection principle, the vital influence of MSA is downplayed. Based on these findings, the present study attempts to address this gap in the literature by exploring the extent to which motivational dimensions to study abroad in the context of COVID-19 influence their adaptation to a new intercultural environment.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of motivations for studying abroad on the IA of international students (IS) in Italy. The main question is, "How do studying abroad motivational dimensions influence intercultural adaptation to the new intercultural environment of international students in Italy at different periods?" As a purpose-guided approach, a mixed methods case study design was used in this study. In order to provide an appropriate rationale for the design chosen for this study, it is first necessary to define and discuss the mixed methods case study and the benefits that this approach brings. Therefore, this chapter began with a brief overview of mixed methods case study research methodology and clarified the rationale for integrating mixed methods case study methodology in international adult education. Then a discussion of the mixed methods case study research designs of this study was followed with the particular approaches chosen for this study. This chapter then follows with an explanation of the case and participant selection. Then provides an overview of participants, data collection, analysis, and integration employed within this study. It was concluded with a discussion regarding the verification strategies of the study and a chapter summary.

Mixed Methods Case Study Research

Case studies have a tradition of collecting multiple qualitative and quantitative data forms to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the case. Case studies are well integrated with mixed methods, which seek a more comprehensive understanding by integrating qualitative and quantitative research. Thus, this section begins by exploring the definition and conduction of case study and mixed method and is followed by the rationale for integrating mixed method and case study methodology in international adult education.

Case Study

To address the purpose and research questions guiding this study, a chosen design needed to generate extensive, in-depth information to elucidate the relationship between MSA and IA of IS in a non-English speaking Italian university. Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme, or system in a real-life context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence led. The primary purpose is to generate an in-depth understanding of a specific topic (Simons, 2009, p.10). According to Yin (2018), whatever your field of interest, the distinctive need for case studies arises from the desire to understand complex social phenomena. Case studies allow you to focus in-depth on a "case" and retain a holistic and real-world perspective— such as studying individual life cycles, small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries. Thus, the case study fits this need perfectly. It provided the best design to investigate the MSA and IA in a higher education institution (HEI) with a specific non-English speaking environment and the relationship between those dimensions. Choosing a specific case can help to explore and reach this goal.

There are five case study types: explanatory case study, exploratory case study, descriptive case study, instrumental case, and intrinsic case. An explanatory case study - explain a phenomenon or issue. These explanations may be context-specific. The researcher first acknowledges that a case is multifaceted; therefore, doing a case study allows the opportunity to relate one bit of information to the next. The explanation will then be based on the interrelationships between these bits of data (Thomas, 2011). Explanatory explains how and why some sequence of events

happened (Yin, 2014). Moreover, the exploratory case study, according to Yin (2014), "is to identify the research questions or procedures to be used in a subsequent research study, which might or might not be a case study" (p.238). Furthermore, descriptive case study aims to describe a phenomenon in its real-world context (Yin, 2014). However, the purpose of the instrumental case is that a case is a tool. The case is of secondary interest, plays a supportive role, and facilitates understanding of something else (Stake, 2005). Additionally, intrinsic case study is not a means to an end; instead, we study the case because we are interested in understanding the specific case. In other words, the case itself is of interest (Cook & Kamalodeen, 2019). This study starts with the reality and a small group of research subjects to understand the research theme and then further study the case depth based on the summarized research themes. Therefore, exploratory research is the most appropriate research method for this case.

The case study method "explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information… and reports a case description and case themes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Moreover, comparing with randomized controlled trials, case studies can explain "how" or "why" a given treatment or intervention necessarily worked (or not) (e.g., Shavelson & Towne, 2002, pp. 99-106). Alternatively, as succinctly captured by the subtitle of an excellent article on evaluating public programs, "not whether programs work, but how they work" (Rogers, 2000). In this sense, case study research does indeed offer its advantage. Generally, case studies may be valued "as adjuncts to experiments rather than as alternatives to them" (Cook & Payne, 2002).

A case study copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result, benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis, and as another result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion (Yin 1981a, 1981b). Case studies "are a design inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researchers develop an in-depth analysis of the case, often a programme, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time"(Creswell, 2014, p.14). Thus, this study conducted a mixed method within the case study to examine how motivational dimensions to study abroad influence the IA of IS in an Italian university at different periods.

Mixed Methods

Greene (2006) defines mixed methods concept as "mixed method inquiry is an approach to investigating the social world that ideally involves more than one methodological tradition and thus more than one way of knowing." Another more complete and exhaustive definition is given by Cresswell & Clark (2011) that state,

> Mixed methods research is a research design (or methodology) in which the researcher collects, analyzes, and mixes (integrates or connects) both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a multiphase program of inquiry.

Mixed methods inquire about a way to examine multiple dimensions in collecting and analyzing data on the investigated relationship. This study examines the relationship between MSA and IA of IS in a particular Italian university certainly requires this holistic approach. In addition, attempts to discover the role of exploring

MSA in IA in different periods add complexity and require a holistic approach to analysis consistent with the mixed methods described by Cresswell and Clark.

Avid interest in mixed methods research over the past decade or two has led to a large and still growing literature, and the formation of new and active professional groups in many social science fields (e.g., Hesse-Biber & Johnson, 2015). Mixed methods research is an attempt to legitimate the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions, rather than restricting or constraining researchers' choices (i.e., it rejects dogmatism). It is an expansive and creative form of research, not a limiting form of research. It is inclusive, pluralistic, and complementary, and it suggests that researchers take an eclectic approach to method selection and the thinking about and conduct of research (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed methods research is necessary and appropriate to achieve this study's purpose and answer the research questions. This study explores the impact of MSA on IA by understanding how and why "motivation to study abroad" and "intercultural communication" manifest themselves in the non-English speaking Italian context. It then explores the extent to which the relationship between the two changes over time.

A core characteristic of mixed methods research is the use of persuasive and rigorous quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Researchers have given increasing attention to mixed methods research—a "class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 17). Qualitative research methodologies explore why or how a phenomenon occurs, develop a theory, or describe the nature of an individual's experience. In contrast, quantitative methodologies address questions about causality, generalizability, or magnitude of

effect (Fetters et al., 2013). In this respect, qualitative research was first conducted to explore why and how the motivational dimensions of studying abroad influence the IA of IS in the Italian university. This qualitative phase aims to summarize the research themes regarding the descriptions of individual experiences. Then this study followed with quantitative research. Based on the results of the qualitative study, the quantitative study expanded the sample size to further achieve a deeper exploration of the research topic in a larger sample. Further visibility of the findings was achieved in a large sample to present the extent to which IS MSA influences IA.

Rationale for Integrating Mixed Method and Case Study Methodology

The mixed methods and case study integration design have at least two designs (see Figure 1). On the one hand, "mixed methods–case study designs" as mixed methods studies with a nested case study. On the other hand, "case study–mixed methods designs" as case studies with nested mixed methods (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018). This study conducted the integration design as case study with nested mixed methods. Stake (2005) has noted that a case study is not tied to particular methods but is determined by choice to explore a case. Case study research has a long tradition of collecting qualitative and quantitative data to fully understand the case (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

Mixed method case study research in international adult education and research methodology, along with other social sciences fields, recognize this methodology's advantages and affirmative its application. This study uses a mixed-methods design when conducting a case study using qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve meaningful integration of both forms of data to generate new inferences and a complete understanding.

Figure 1

The Two Integration Designs Of Mixed Methods and Case Study
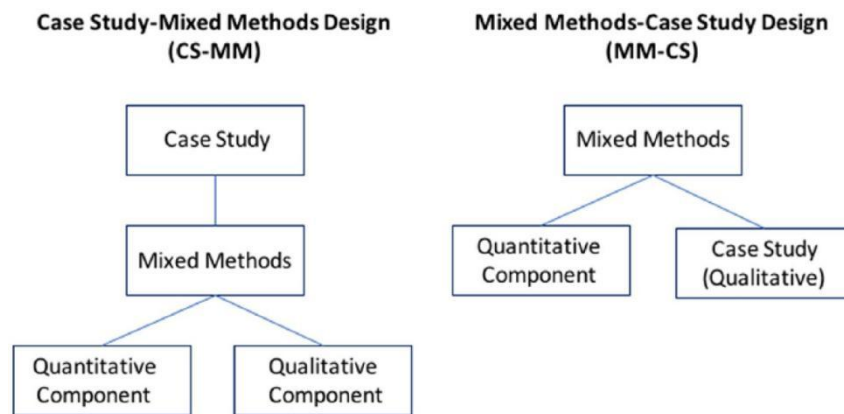
Note: The integration design of mixed methods and case study were summarized from "Two methodological approaches to the integration of mixed methods and case study designs: A systematic review", by Guetterman, T. C., & Fetters, M. D., 2018, *American Behavioral Scientist, 62*(7), 900-918.

Research combining mixed methods and case studies will benefit from rigorous and sophisticated qualitative and quantitative methods. This study used an exploratory mixed-methods single-case study design to examine the impact of IS' MSA on their IA at different periods at the university in a non-English speaking country Italy. The complexity of the impact relationship requires multiple types of data, so this study implemented an exploratory mixed methods approach in the case study. The first step is to collect qualitative data, which helps explore the research themes. More importantly, it helps to understand the experiences of IS at an Italian university. The second step is collecting the quantitative data in two phases to examine the relationship between MSA and IA. Applying a mixed-methods design provides greater clarity in the approach to case studies and how researchers can integrate data sources to gain a complete understanding.

Mixed Methods Case Study Research Designs

The study design was consistent with the research objectives, questions, and methods, and a sequential exploratory research design was used in this study. Moreover, this study conducted an extended longitudinal quantitative research design to explore how the different motivational dimensions to study abroad influence the IA of IS at different periods. This section first introduces the different mixed methods research designs. Then explains why and how the sequential exploratory design was conducted in this study. This followed with an explanation of why and how this study had extended the longitudinal quantitative research design.

Mixed Methods Research Designs

According to Yin (2018), a research design links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions of the study. "A mixed methods case study design is a type of mixed methods study in which the quantitative and qualitative data collection, results, and integration are used to provide in-depth evidence for a case(s) or develop cases for comparative analysis" (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2018, p.116). In fact, there are three core designs of mixed methods research (Clark & Ivankova, 2015), including convergent design (Figure 2), explanatory sequential design (Figure 3), and exploratory sequential design (Figure 4).

Figure 2

Convergent Design of Mixed Methods Research
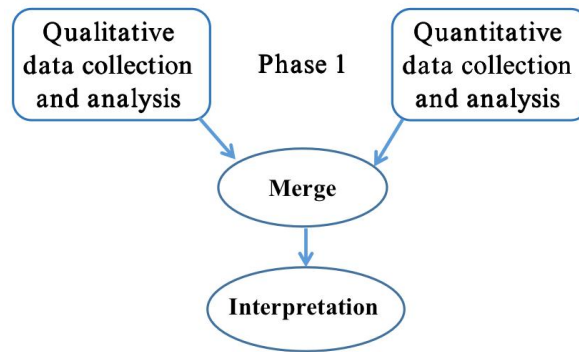
Note: The convergent design of mixed methods research were summarized from "*Mixed methods research: A guide to the field* (Vol. 3)", by Clark, V. L. P., & Ivankova, N. V., 2015. Sage publications.

Figure 3

Explanatory Sequential Design of Mixed Methods Research
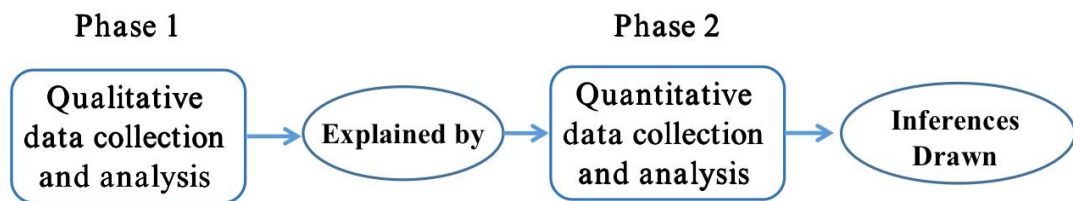
Note: The explanatory sequential design of mixed methods research were summarized from "*Mixed methods research: A guide to the field* (Vol. 3)", by Clark, V. L. P., & Ivankova, N. V., 2015. Sage publications.

Figure 4

Exploratory Sequential Design of Mixed Methods Research

Note: The exploratory sequential of mixed methods research were summarized from "Mixed methods research: A guide to the field (Vol. 3)", by Clark, V. L. P., & Ivankova, N. V., 2015. *Sage publications*.

Before stating the rationale for the choice, it is necessary first to revisit the

purpose of this study and the research questions. The purpose of this case study that conducts an exploratory sequential mixed methods design is to examine the relationship between MSA and IA of IS at Italian HEI in the fall 2022 semester and the spring 2023 semester. Furthermore, the research questions that support this purpose are as follows:

1．What motivated international students to choose and make decision to study abroad in Italian HEI?

2．How international students' intercultural adaptation in Italian HEI changed?

3．How the different motivational dimensions (world enlightenment/personal growth/career development/entertainment) have the influence on international students' intercultural adaptation (the results of pre-SACQ and post-SACQ scores) in Italian HEI at the two periods?

The reasons for the mixed methods design of this study are relevant and consistent with the purpose and research questions described above. According to Creswell (2003) the purpose of the research is:

Identifying factors that influence an outcome, the utility of an intervention, or understanding the best predictors of outcomes, then a quantitative approach is best. On the other hand, if a concept or phenomenon needs to be understood because little research has been done in it, then it merits a qualitative approach. A mixed methods design is useful to capture the best of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. (p. 21)

Above all, this study conducts the sequential exploratory design and the extended longitudinal quantitative research design, and the selecting rationale is followed.

Sequential Exploratory Design

A study's substantive purpose, and the questions that emerge from this purpose, provide the substantive heart of a mixed methods study (Greene, 2007). This case study utilized a sequential exploratory mixed methods research design (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Clark, 2017; see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Overview of Case Study Using Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design
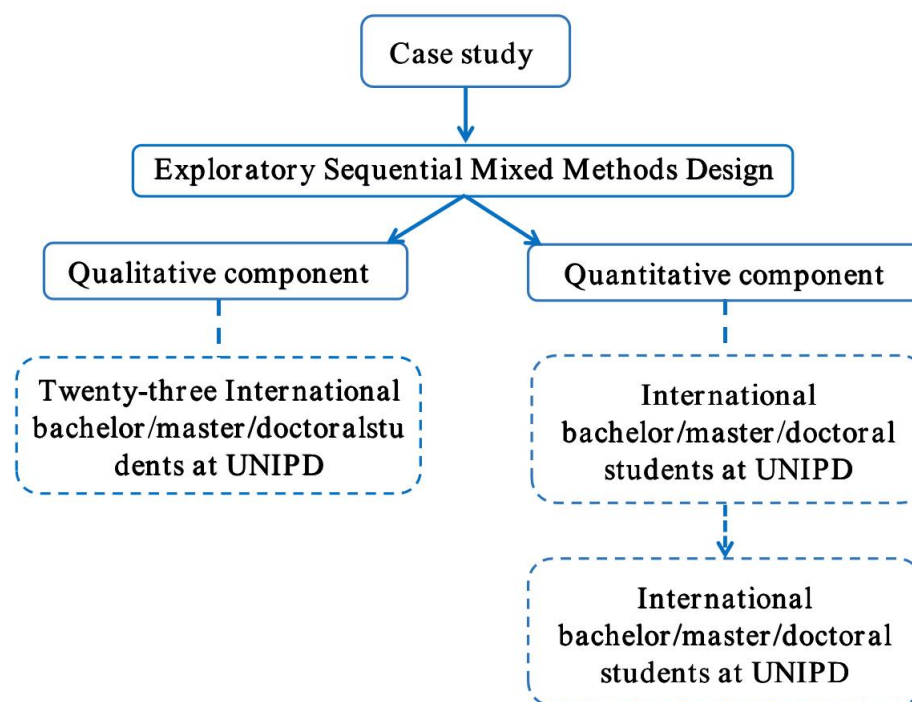
With the exploratory sequential mixed methods design, this study conducted qualitative research to gain a precise understanding of the research topic, what motivated IS to choose and decide to study abroad at Italian HEI, how the international adaptation changed, and if there is a correlation between the two. However, regarding this study's research purpose, it examined the relationship between MSA and IA of IS at Italian HEI in the fall 2022 semester and the spring 2023 semester. The relevant themes in qualitative research were summarized. Then the themes and contents of the study were subdivided to expand the study population

through quantitative research methods to achieve further in-depth analysis of the qualitative study results and to expand the amount of participation. Incorporating the qualitative method first and then the quantitative method into this study is the most appropriate for the research. Therefore, an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach was utilized in this study.

Moreover, to have an appropriate research design, this study considered the four criteria: the implementation, the priority, the integration, and the theoretical perspective, which could help researchers in determining which mixed methods research design most appropriately matches the purpose of their study as well as the resources and abilities of the researchers (Creswell et al., 2003).

First of all, consider the implementation of the study, or in other words, the sequence of the study. A study's substantive purpose, and the questions that emerge from this purpose, provide the substantive heart of a mixed methods study (Greene, 2007). This study aims to explore the role of MSA on the IA of IS at UNIPD. To achieve this goal, qualitative data must be collected first to understand the problem from a realistic point of view. Then further quantitative data was collected in a larger group through qualitative data findings. The qualitative data will be the priority, supporting the quantitative data collection. The next is the integration, Creswell et al. (2003) pointed out that the "researcher needs to design a study with a clear understanding of the stage or stages at which the data will be integrated and the form this integration will take" (p. 222). This study integrated data during the interpretation phase of the study. Last but not least, a transformative lens was not considered in this study, but a constructivist lens. As Creswell et al. (2003) suggested, "in a sequential exploratory design, with the lead taken by qualitative research, the paradigm may be more interpretive" (p. 232). Newman et al. (2003) advocated for the iterative

development of research questions in light of a study's purpose to better understand the complexities of the phenomenon under study. The iterative process is not exclusive to the development of mixed methods research questions, but it may be particularly valuable to mixed methods researchers because, as Newman et al. (2003) explain:

> The process entails first studying the research question and then refining the question at a deeper and more substantive and purposeful level, with a greater awareness of potential multiple purposes. The more complex the purposes, the more likely that mixed methods will be necessary (p. 186).

In an exploratory design, qualitative data is first collected and analyzed, and themes are used to develop a quantitative instrument to explore further the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2008). As a result of this design, three stages of analyses are conducted: after the primary qualitative phase, after the second quantitative phase, and at the integration phase that connects the two strands of data and extends the initial qualitative exploratory findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Therefore, the purpose, questions, and methodology of this study are consistent; this research design is capable of achieving the purpose of this study.

Extended Longitudinal Quantitative Research Design

Additionally, to reach the goal of exploring the changing of IA among the IS at UNIPD and the extent of motivational dimensions' effects on college adaptation dimensions, this study has the same single case at two different points in time. According to Guetterman and Fetters (2018), an innovative application is to mix multiple quantitative and qualitative sources. Researchers can leverage the value added by mixed methods to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the case in ways that only qualitative sources might not. Thus, this study has another phase of

quantitative research to understand the changing phenomenon of IA better. This study was conducted by distributing the survey at different periods (the fall 2022 semester and the spring 2023 semester) to explore the changing in IS' IA (the results of pre-SACQ and post-SACQ scores) in Italian HEI. Moreover, it would be possible to understand and explain the impact of different motivations for studying abroad on college adaptation.

Moreover, according to Yin (2018), the theory of interest would likely specify how certain conditions and their underlying processes change over time. The desired time intervals would presumably reflect the anticipated stages at which the changes would likely reveal themselves. Following a before-and-after logic, they may be prespecified time intervals, such as prior to and after some critical event. Alternatively, they might not deal with specific time intervals but cover trends over an elongated period of time, following a developmental course of interest (p. 87).

Above all, this case study conducted an exploratory sequential mixed methods design with an extended longitudinal quantitative research design was alignment with the research purpose and questions.

Implementation of the Mixed Methods Case Study Design

Since a single case study is integrated with mixed method research, this investigation aims to examine the relationship between MSA and IA of IS in an Italian university at two different periods. The case and participants need to be consistent and viable with the purpose of the study and the research questions. The selection and identification of cases and participants in cases are essential. Moreover, a mixed-method investigation is the type of research in which a researcher combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g., use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, and inference techniques) for

the purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration in designing a mixed-methods study (Johnson et al., 2007). Therefore, this section discusses the specification of the selection process for both. Then follows a detailed description of qualitative and quantitative methods, including data collection and analysis. Moreover, the combination of qualitative and quantitative data was followed.

Case and Participant Selection

Case Selection. As one researcher mentioned, if you use a single-case design, you should be prepared to make an extremely strong argument in justifying your choice for the case (Yin, 2018). The main reason why this study chooses the University of Padova (UNIPD) as a case study is that the research questions come from observations and interactions with the day-to-day realities of living and learning of IS at UNIPD in Italy. In that case, the research questions are rooted in reality. Regarding the case study, Patton (2002) stated that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding" (p. 46) through a focus on "information-rich cases" (p. 230). The specific sampling strategy used in this study in selecting the case was purposeful sampling.

UNIPD is a university in a non-English speaking country, which fits the research context. As one of the IS at the UNIPD in Veneto, Italy. I have been experiencing, observing, and understanding the transition and integration to the new intercultural environment of IS who were studying at UNIPD. What you see on the surface about the learning and living experience of IS was not what it exactly was. As an IS at UNIPD and a researcher of international adult education, I found that every feeling, every word, and every action of IS has many "secrets" people do not know. Moreover, each international student has different motivations for studying abroad, and different motivations affect their intercultural learning and living experiences to

some extent. In the process of IA, the daily learning and living experiences of IS reflect a series of difficulties and challenges. For instance, an international student chose to transfer to a university in northern Europe in the second year of his doctoral degree because he could not adapt to university life and study in a non-English speaking country Italy. It is worthwhile for non-English speaking universities to think deeply and find out the reasons for this.

However, there is no way for a university to help IS without knowing and understanding them well. It can do so by gaining a deeper understanding of the population of IS, including their MSA, university adaptation, and the relationship between those dimensions. In particular, further measures can be taken to optimize the university's international program, and help IS obtain a better transition and integration to a new environment.

Participant Selection. Within the case this study was conducted at UNIPD. An adequate sampling technique within a population represents an appropriate extraction of valuable data, which provides meaningful knowledge of the important aspects of the population (Garcia & Cortez, 2006). Al-Busaidi (2008) emphasizes that the sampling strategy is determined by the purpose of the research. Thus, to explore the relationship between MSA and IA of IS at UNIPD, this study used convenience and snowball strategies for the qualitative research step. Patton (2002) notes that sampling participants in qualitative research are purposive to generate rich information, so generalizing from the sample to a more significant population is not sought. This study selected qualitative participants covering five continents, including bachelor, master, and doctoral degree-seeking. This selection criterion was able to achieve the purpose of the study and also to cover the essential characteristics of the participants for the next step of the quantitative research approach.

For the quantitative step, this study expanded the sample size of the qualitative study to ensure the comprehensiveness and generalizability of the research results. Expanding the sample size helps to understand the broad picture of the entire case, especially compensating for the limitations of the sample size in qualitative research. Thus, this study sent out a survey to the IS studying at UNIPD.

Additionally, both participants in the qualitative and quantitative steps should be based on the following inclusion variables:

- The participant is 18 years old or older.

- The participant gains the enrollment qualification degree outside Italy.

- The participant is currently seeking a bachelor, master or doctoral degree at UNIPD in Italy.

- The gender of the participant can identify as male, female, non-binary, or other.

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative Participants. Since the goal of the qualitative portion of this study was to explore the research topic through a semi-structured interview with the research participants, the first sampling strategy used in this study was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is "selecting individuals who can provide the most information for the purpose of the study selecting individuals who can provide the most information for the purpose of the study" (Paisley & Reeves, 2001, p. 488). Within the purpose sampling, this study used convenience and snowball methods to find the participants and confirm the way of doing the interview.

As a result, twenty-three IS participated in the qualitative interviews, including bachelor, master, and doctoral students (see Figure 6). On the one hand, there were fifteen male participants (A, B, C, D, E, F, J, N, O, P, Q, C1, D1, A2, B2) and eight

female participants (G, H, I, K, L, M, A1, B1). The gender disparity can be attributed to the study's use of purposive sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling methods. These methods were employed to identify participants who could contribute valuable data and enhance the study's depth and richness. However, the challenge of recruiting volunteer participants without compensation led to the use of convenience and snowball sampling, which may have unintentionally favored certain gender groups. On the other hand, participants A to Q are doctoral students, A1 to D1 are master students, while participants A2 and B2 are bachelor students. The presence of a larger number of graduate students in the sample has contributed to the study by providing more valuable and relevant data. Graduate students are considered to be adult learners and thus tend to be more motivated and mature (Hofinger & Feldmann, 2001), goal-oriented (Hofinger & Feldmann, 2001), and often bring rich professional and personal experiences to the classroom (Knowles, 1980).

Figure 6

Participation of International Students in Qualitative Interviews Across Different Degree Levels
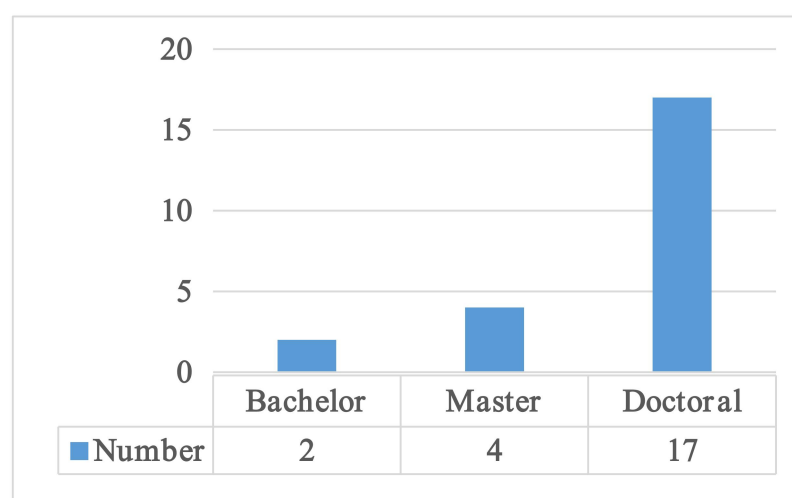
Qualitative Data Collection. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-three IS from different countries and departments, registered at the UNIPD in Italy.

The qualitative phase consisted of 18 open-ended semi-structured interview questions designed in the interview guideline (Appendix D) to obtain detailed information concerning factors that convinced IS to study abroad in Italy and their IA to the new environment. The interview questions were developed based on the purpose of the study, the current literature, and the theoretical framework. The duration of the individual interviews ranged from 45 minutes to three hours. Surprisingly, some interviews were too long. However, because the material was rich, the interviewees had many "stories" to share. This helped to provide insight into the reasons behind the content of the interviews. The twenty-three interviews took place between May 17, 2022, and September 13, 2022.

Qualitative Data Analysis. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Alvesson (2003, p. 13) defines qualitative interviews as "relatively loosely structured and open to what the interviewee feels is relevant and important to talk about, given the interest of the research project." The analysis and interpretation of data in qualitative studies aim to be achieved by "a process of successive approximations toward an accurate description and interpretation of the phenomenon" (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005, p. 206).

However, analytic generalization can be used whether the case study involves one or several cases, which shall be later referenced as single-case or multiple-case studies (Yin, 2018). According to Yin (2010), "with both the case study and the laboratory experiment, the objective for generalizing the findings is the same: The findings or results from the single study are to follow a process of analytic

generalization. Analytic generalization may be defined as a two-step process. The first involves a conceptual claim whereby investigators show how their case study findings bear upon a particular theory, theoretical construct, or theoretical (not just actual) sequence of events. The second involves applying the same theory to implicate other, similar situations where analogous events also might occur." The challenge of making analytic generalizations involves understanding that the generalization is not statistical (or numeric) and that you will make an argumentative claim. In so doing, you need to give explicit attention to the potential flaws in your claims and therefore discuss your analytic generalizations, not just state them. And to repeat an earlier point, remember that you are generalizing from your case study, not from your case(s) (Yin, 2018).

As Britten (1995) explained, semi-structured interviews lend themselves to focus on certain issues identified to gather more information about them through the interviewer's probing questions for further details. Thus, this study analyzed the data using by thematic analysis method. Thematic analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is a method for describing data but involves interpretation in selecting codes and constructing themes.

More specifically, qualitative data organization involves systematic arrangement through processes of transcription, labeling, and categorization for efficient analysis. This study conducted thematic analysis entails identifying patterns by meticulously reading through data, coding relevant segments, and forming overarching themes. For instance, this study originally had "factors convinced to study abroad in Italy", "intercultural adaptation", and "the relationship of motivation and adaptation" as the themes. Constant comparison further refines various themes by

continuously contrasting data within and across sources. Coding and categorization helped organize data based on similarities, differences, or relevance to the research question, evolving into a systematic coding scheme. For instance, for answering the first research question regarding to the MSA of IS, based on the qualitative data, this study had four main themes, including "the decision-making process of destination and program", "the consideration of countries that look for degree position", "convinced factors to study abroad in Italy", and "expectations of the university or program". Moreover, understanding the context of data collection is vital, considering nuances and subtleties that may affect interpretations. This study interpreted themes and report findings coherently, supplementing assertions with data excerpts or quotes. To improve the trustworthiness, this study incorporated member checking by returning the interview data or results to some interviewees.

Furthermore, this study analyzed and generalized research themes based on qualitative data. The themes that emerged from the qualitative data analysis were used to develop a quantitative survey instrument in conjunction with validated tools and current literature.

Quantitative Methods

As noticed, based on the qualitative study results, a survey was developed and then distributed to the IS at UNIPD. This section provides an overview of the development of the survey. It then describes the survey participants, discusses the quantitative data collection, and describes the main ways the data were analyzed.

Survey Development. According to Perez-Encinas and Ammigan (2016), institutions that actively surveyed their IS, using either in-house surveys or third-party instruments, found the feedback to be effective in improving customer service, student advising, programming, outreach, and educational training. A quantitative

methodology is appropriate for testing a hypothesis using numerical data to examine relationships among variables and using the results of statistical tests on a sample to draw inferences about the larger population (Creswell, 2014). The survey instrument was developed based on the results of the qualitative data from this study. Two instruments were used in this study. On the one hand, the assessment of students' motivations for studying abroad was done using the Motivation to Study Abroad (MSA) instrument developed by Anderson and Lawton (http://www.forumea.org/trainingevents/annual-conference/archive). The MSA is a set of 23 questions designed to measure factors that underlie a student's decision to study abroad. It has undergone extensive testing with students participating in study abroad programs. Factor analysis shows that it consistently measures four dimensions that impact a student's decision to study abroad. These are (1) world enlightenment (that is, learning about the world), (2) personal growth, (3) career development, and (4) entertainment. On the other hand, the SACQ is a 67-item questionnaire with acceptable internal consistency (Credé & Niehorster, 2012; Feldt et al., 2011; Soledad et al., 2012). It has been widely used and is considered a key and valid instrument for measuring adjustment to higher education and aiding the identification of students who could benefit from intervention (Feldt et al., 2011; Soledad et al., 2012). The SACQ contains four subscales: Academic Adjustment, Social Adjustment, Personal-Emotional Adjustment, and Institutional Attachment. Scores are rated on a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Applies very closely to me) to 9 (Doesn't apply to me at all).

Moreover, in addition to questions specific to these two instruments, twenty-three characteristic background questions and five open-ended questions were asked to extend the qualitative study results. How the qualitative findings and the theoretical

framework influence the development of specific instruments and questions will be discussed in detail in Chapter five. The themes that emerged from the qualitative research findings are discussed in detail in Chapter five.

Following the development of the survey instrument, two tests were conducted for this study. The first was piloted with ten IS regarding the construction, timing, and content of the survey. The second was piloted with two professors of education, four students studying in the United States, and four students studying in Europe. Finally, the feedback from the two pilots was used to develop the final survey instrument with 118 questions in total, which included four parts: demographic characteristics, the MSA, student adaptation to college questionnaire, and open questions (Appendix E).

Quantitative Data Collection. Quantitative data collection was divided into two phases, and the data were collected in the Fall 2022 semester and Spring 2023 semester using a longitudinal research design. In the first phase, the link to the survey for this study was emailed to 4,864 students already enrolled at UNIPD through the official UNIPD Limesurvey on November 23, 2022, with a total of 1,223 participants and a total of 604 completed surveys. For the second phase of the participant, this study sent the survey link to the 604 IS who took part in the first survey phase through the official UNIPD Limesurvey on June 6, 2023.

Quantitative Participants. The first and second phase demographic data of survey participants are shown in Table 1 and Table 2. For the first phase, as shown in Table 1, the majority of participants in the survey were: Masters, female, first-year, born between 1995 and 1999, School of Engineering, and stayed in Italy for less than six months. More specifically, 62.7% of participants were female, and 35.3% were male. To clarify, the year the participants were born, 9.1% (55) were under 1989, 17.9% (108) were between 1990 and 1994, 53.8% (325) were between 1995 and 1999,

and 19.2% (116) were over 2000. Moreover, 67.9% of the participants were Master's degree-seeking IS at UNIPD, 15.2% were Bachelor's degrees, and 15.2% were Doctoral degree students. Furthermore, most participants were first-year (47.5%) and second-year (38.2%) students at the university, 12.4% were third-year students, and 1.8% were more than three years at the university. Furthermore, there are eight schools at UNIPD, 12.3 participants from School of Economics and Political Science, 15.4% participants from School of Psychology, 16.6% participants from School of Human and Social Sciences and Cultural Heritage, 20% participants from School of Engineering, 19.7% participants from School of Science, 3.5% participants from School of Medicine, 12.3% participants from School of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine. Not surprisingly, due to the Italian language and curriculum setting at Law School, there was no participant. And only 0.3% of participants from some centers outside the eight schools. In addition, there were 3.1% of participants not in Italy yet, 41.2% had been in Italy for less than six months, 8.6% were between six months to one year, 32.8% were between one to two years, 10.4% were between two to three years, and 3.8% have been in Italy for more than three years.

In fact, in the first phase of the survey distribution, nearly 100 IS volunteers responded to the email or inquired about the information in the survey. They mainly expressed their interest in the research topic and indicated that the study was significant. Moreover, they shared their personal experiences and feelings about the research topic.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Phase One Survey Participants : Gender, Degree, Years at University, School, Years in Italy (N=604)

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	213	35.3
Female	379	62.7
Prefer not to answer	5	0.8
Other	7	1.2
Degree		
Bachelor's degree	92	15.2
Master's degree	410	67.9
Doctoral degree	92	15.2
Single-cycle degree (5 years)	2	0.3
Single-cycle degree (6 years)	8	1.3
Years at university		
First year	287	47.5
Second year	231	38.2
Third year	75	12.4
More than three years	11	1.8
School		
School of Economics and Political Science	74	12.3
School of Psychology	93	15.4
School of Human and Social Sciences and Cultural Heritage	100	16.6
School of Engineering	121	20
School of Science	119	19.7
School of Medicine	21	3.5

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
School of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine	74	12.3
Law School	0	0
Other	2	0.3
Years in Italy		
I'm not in Italy yet	19	3.1
Less than six months	249	41.2
Between six months to one year	52	8.6
Between one to two years	198	32.8
Between two to three years	63	10.4
More than three years	23	3.8

Table 2

Demographic Profile of Phase Two Survey Participants : Gender, Degree, Years at University, School, Years in Italy (N=237)

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	89	37.6
Female	143	60.3
Prefer not to answer	3	1.3
Other	2	0.8
Degree		
Bachelor's degree	38	16
Master's degree	151	63.7
Doctoral degree	46	19.4

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
Single-cycle degree (5 years)	0	0
Single-cycle degree (6 years)	2	0.8
Years at university		
First year	110	46.4
Second year	93	39.2
Third year	29	12.2
More than three years	5	2.1
School		
School of Economics and Political Science	24	10.1
School of Psychology	41	17.3
School of Human and Social Sciences and Cultural Heritage	45	19
School of Engineering	51	21.5
School of Science	47	19.8
School of Medicine	6	2.5
School of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine	23	9.7
Law School	0	0
Other	0	0
Years in Italy		
I'm not in Italy yet	4	1.7
Less than six months	101	42.6
Between six months to one year	19	8
Between one to two years	81	34.2
Between two to three years	24	10.1

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage
More than three years	8	3.4

Quantitative Data Analysis. This study conducted longitudinal research; the same subject received more than one treatment and/or more than one condition. Thus, a two-way repeated measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used as it was suitable for understanding if there is an interaction between two factors on the dependent variable. In conjunction with frequency counts and percentages, this study conducted ANOVA statistical tests to assess the impact of the MSA on the IA reported by IS at different times and the mediating role of the background characteristics of the respondents. The data from this survey were obtained using SPSS Statistics 28, and appropriate statistical tests were conducted. In Chapter five, after summarizing the findings of the qualitative part of this study, the uses and rationale for the specific tests used in this study are detailed. The tests used to analyze the quantitative data include general descriptive tests, ANOVA tests, linear regression, and multiple regression analyses. Moreover, this study used qualitative thematic coding schemata based on recurring themes/terms grouped in categories for the open-ended responses (Lofland & Lofland, 1995).

Data Integration

After collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data, integrating qualitative and quantitative findings helps to fully answer the research questions and provide an in-depth understanding of the case. Greene (2008) provided a succinct definition of integrated data analysis: "Integrated analyses involve the joint interactive analysis of data represented in different forms (for example, numbers and words) during the course of the study's data analysis" (p. 14). According to Creswell (2007), there are two options for integrating qualitative and quantitative data:

Researchers can merge the two data sets during the interpretation (by analyzing them separately in a results section and then merging the two sets of results together during the interpretation or discussion phase) or during the analysis of the data (by transforming one data type into the other type or consolidating the data into new variables).

Therefore, integration is a key and defining feature of mixed methods and may occur at many levels of the research process. Common approaches to methodological integration: merging, connecting, and building as outlined by Fetters et al. (2013). Merging is comparing or linking qualitative and quantitative results. In contrast, connecting is using the results of one type of study to inform a sample of another. The building uses the results of one type of study to inform another type of data collection procedure. Researchers can use more than one type of integration in multiple stages of the research process (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018).

The research purposes, research questions (Greene, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003), and research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) decide mixed methods data analysis. This study used a hybrid approach of the building to integrate data from qualitative and quantitative studies for interpretation and analysis. The integrated data analysis helped this study to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the changing phenomenon studied within the case.

Verification Strategies

Qualitative Verification Strategies

Lincoln and Guba's Evaluative Criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). They posit that the trustworthiness of a study is essential to evaluating its worth. The framework of trustworthiness involves:

- Credibility - confidence in the 'truth' of the findings;

● Transferability - showing that the findings have applicability in other contexts;

● Dependability - showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated;

● Confirmability - a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest.

However, Cypress (2017) recommended using the term "rigor" instead of trustworthiness and the reconceptualization and renewed use of reliability and validity in qualitative research. Strategies ensuring rigor must be built into the qualitative research process rather than evaluated only after the inquiry. Qualitative researchers and students must be proactive and take responsibility for ensuring the rigor of a research study. Thus, to improve trustworthiness, the interview outline was sent to participants who asked for it before the interview. During the interview, the participants were informed that the interview would be transcribed and analyzed. After the interview, member checking was employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the data. The participant was given the opportunity to review and make the necessary corrections to the contents of the interview after transcription. This study mainly conducted those approaches: doing and checking the coding with researchers from Italy, China, and the US; returning the interview data or results to the interviewees.

Quantitative Verification Strategies

The primary validation factors when using quantitative research methods include reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the degree to which the same data would be collected in a subsequent study (Babbie, 2004). Validity is "the extent to

which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration" (Babbie, 2004p. 143). Moreover, to promote the reliability and validity of quantitative data and to avoid bias that may affect the results of quantitative studies, this study was conducted primarily through a pilot study by IS at UNIPD before the distribution of the survey. Then this was followed by a second test that included students in education and non-education and professors in education. In addition, the survey included open-ended questions to complement the relevant themes/results in the qualitative study. Furthermore, using Cronbach's alpha test determined inter-question reliability, and using scales to measure constructs also contributed to the internal reliability. As mentioned earlier, the reliability and validity of both MSA and SACQ instruments have been widely used and approved in many studies.
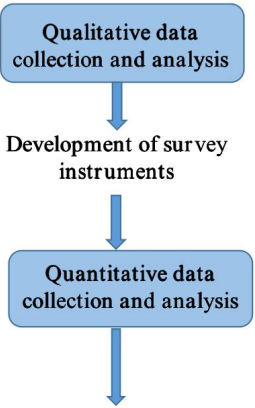
Summary

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this study to clarify the impact of motivation to study in non-English-speaking Italy on the IA of IS. Moreover, a visual model for a case study using exploratory sequential mixed methods design procedures is shown in Figure 7. In detail, the chapter begins with an overview of the case study, mixed methods research, and the rationality and superiority of their integration. Then the different mixed methods case study research designs are followed, and then explain the appropriate research design for this study. The chapter then discusses how to purposefully select the research case and subjects, participants in quantitative and qualitative research, and how to collect and analyze data. Qualitative and quantitative verification strategies in the research process are then addressed. The remaining chapters of this study discuss the results of qualitative and quantitative research and the implications of these results.

Figure 7

Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design: A Visual Model for Case Study

Procedures in this Study

Phase	Procedure	Product
Qualitative data collection and analysis	◆ **In-depth semi-structured interviews with 23 participants** ◆ **Coding and thematic analysis** ◆ **ATLAS.ti**	◆ **Voice and text data** ◆ **Codes and themes** ◆ **Analysis**
Development of survey instruments	◆ **Cronbach's alpha test**	◆ **Reliability**
Quantitative data collection and analysis	◆ **Pre-test:BC/MSA/SACQ/OQ surveys** ◆ **SPSS 28**	◆ **Descriptive statistic** ◆ **Regression statistic**
	◆ **Post-test:BC/MSA/SACQ/OQ surveys** ◆ **SPSS 28**	◆ **Descriptive statistic** ◆ **Regression statistic** ◆ **Analysis**
Integrating QUAL and QUAN result	◆ **Intepration and explanation of the results**	◆ **Discussion** ◆ **Implication** ◆ **Future research**

CHAPTER FOUR: QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of motivations for studying abroad (MSA) on the intercultural adaptation (IA) of international students (IS) in Italy. To support this purpose, a sequential exploratory mixed-methods research design was used in this study. Consistent with this methodology, this study began with a qualitative study that was conducted with face-to-face or online interviews with IS (participant A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, A1, B1, C1, D1, A2, B2) enrolled at the University of Padua (UNIPD) in Italy, including bachelor's , master's and doctoral degree. The results of these interviews provided the basis for the quantitative portion of this study, a survey of IS at UNIPD. The purpose of this chapter is to present and describe the qualitative results of this study, based on the thematic analysis.

In accordance with the purpose of this study, three main research questions guided the qualitative portion of the study, including:

1.   What motivated international students to choose and make decision to study abroad in Italy?

2.   How international students' intercultural adaptation in Italy changed?

3.   How motivation to study abroad effects intercultural adaptation of international students in Italy?

Based on the questions above, the findings of the qualitative portion of this study revolve around answering these questions. As the data display below shows, the results of the qualitative research are presented in this chapter in four main sections. The first section of the chapter describes the motivations to study abroad in Italy of IS. The second section describes IS' IA in Italy and their perceptions of changes in IA. The third section describes what and how motivations to study abroad influence IS'

perceptions of IA through a model. The final section of this chapter summarizes the qualitative findings and describes how these findings inform the quantitative research of this study. The results of the quantitative research are presented in Chapter five.

Data Display

Motivation to study abroad of international students

 The decision-making process of destination and program

 The consideration of countries that look for degree position

 Why Italy? Convinced factors to study abroad in Italy

 Expectations of the university or program

The intercultural adaptation of international students

 Feelings in general

 Difficulties and challenges

 Describe intercultural adaptation with a metaphor or image

The relationship between motivation to study abroad and intercultural adaptation

 The most influential motivation to study abroad on intercultural adaptation

 How motivation to study abroad effects intercultural adaptation?

Summary

Motivation to study abroad of international students

The first research question focused on understanding the decision-making process of the studying abroad destinations and programs of IS, their considerations of countries that look for degree position, their MSA in Italy, and their expectations of the university or program. The study results shown that the decision-making process of studying abroad destination and program is intricate and influenced by a multitude of factors. However, there were some motivated factors play a crucial role in the decision-making process of the study abroad destination and the program. These factors were summarized in six aspects: pull of the host country (Italy); push of home country; Italian higher education institution and educational system; the program and applications; personal goals, beliefs, and values; and social support. Each of the factors that arise was discussed in detail in this section. Moreover, the expectations of the destination and program were described next.

The decision-making process of destination and program

Decision-making about studying abroad is not a one-step thing but a process. Moreover, the process consists of different kinds of steps and aspects depending on the personal situation. There are some European Union education policies which contributing to IS mobility, for instance, Treaty of Maastricht, Sorbonne Declaration, Bologna Declaration, and Lisbon Strategy. European Union policies and practices have naturally attracted flows of IS (Żyłkiewicz, 2010). In fact, the educational migration of IS is a continuing worldwide trend (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Arambewela & Hall, 2009; Vickers & Bekhradnia, 2007). Moreover, the continued influx of IS has prompted universities in non-English speaking countries to increase courses in English as a second language. University administrators, faculty, and policymakers must develop and optimize international programs to meet students'

learning needs. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the impact of developing and optimizing international programs on IS' choice and decision-making of universities and programs in non-English speaking countries. The qualitative data with twenty-three IS in non-English speaking Italy showed that the decision-making process of studying abroad destination and the program was complex or sample, depending on many aspects. The complexity of student choice when deciding to enroll in a higher education institution is significant (Briggs, 2006; Szekeres, 2010), or instance, participant Q had considered a lot before he made the decision to come to Italy. As he mentioned,

> Um, oh, some of the factors that prepared me to study in Italy because they have to do with my expectation for good education, for a better life. In 2017 and 2018, I was in Germany as an Erasmus+ student at the University of Würzburg. Mhm, I was a Master's student then, and since that time and, of course, even before that time already had the idea that it would be better for me to do my PhD abroad. And when I said abroad, I was open to many countries, including the USA, Canada, Italy, Germany, or even China. But when I was in Germany, I got used to the system a bit. And I also met some persons from Italy. So when I went back to Nigeria and I finished my master's, I had the determination to do my PhD abroad, and I started applying to Germany, to the US, and also trying Australia and Canada. And, of course, Italy was one of the options. Um, personally I like Italy, for the arts, the culture, the history. Yes, I also believe it's a country of love. I also have these personal sentiments and like, "oh is a country where you find love." So personally I like Italy, even though I was aware that it was a country where do...... we are the English language. It's not an official language. Then lastly,

during the Covide-19 period, when I was already applying to the US, I had discovered that schools were opening the application for PhD in Italy, and the mood relief suited me and favored me at that point in time, because within two months or three months, everything was concluded. So it was not taking six months or one year like it was in the US. So I was doing the lockdown, a friend sent me some links and I saw a pattern that old about all schools recruiting PhD students and similar patterns. So I discovered that it was a kind of national system. So I applied to some schools, and Padua was one of them. Maybe I applied in May, and then by July or August, the admission process was already concluded. So I just started preparing for Italy. So many factors really influenced my decision to come to Italy. And I must also say that um, I already knew the person who is my supervisor now, I already knew her. Maybe she didn't know me too well, but we didn't knew her because she was part of the professors the facilitated winter school in 2008, at the University of Würzburg. So I already had an idea of who she was.

However, some IS were clear of what they wanted to go and what they wanted to do. Thus they applied to the study abroad destination and program preparedly and specifically. For instance, participant M has stated,

And at the end, when I was looking for a PhD, I had no doubt that I was going to have an educational background. Mhm, and I prepared a real thing, cute cover letter. Speaking about all these facts about this city that I was interested in staying and going on with my project that I started some years ago. And there was a position only for IS, so I applied for that specific. I think you have more opportunities if you apply to repeat the abroad than in your own city.

Compared with M, there were some IS didn't look for Italy as their study abroad destination, as participant O stated,

Actually, I did not look specifically to study in Italy, to be honest. Um, so I am a geologist, and I am working. So I wanted to study somewhere close to the working place, and it was secondary to me which country is, like I was also looking for positions in Switzerland, Austria, and southern Germany. But then I came across this project here, which was also in collaboration with some professors I knew about. I also spend some time in Switzerland and the lab. So I have a bit of a connection through the Switzerland researchers. Mhm, and my supervisor from my master's also like warmly recommended me this project and the supervisors that I am working with.

From the above selection process of IS' destination countries and programs, another important aspect of understanding the decision-making process turned out, that was the tendency of IS to choose their destination countries.

The consideration of countries that look for degree position

The perception of a country's image appears to have a significant impact on students' choices when it comes to pursuing international education (Lawley, 1998). At the macro level, according to the qualitative data, this study summarized the countries that IS have considered looking for studying abroad degree positions (see Table 4.1). Those countries included Italy, Switzerland, Austria, France, Spain, Germany, Australia, the UK, the U.S., Canada, and China. Moreover, IS were not only considered the countries themselves but also the continents where the countries were. For instance, participant C1 stated, "So I wasn't planning to go outside, and Italy was one of the options in Europe." In fact, some IS looked for positions openly everywhere worldwide. Participant C1, for example, stated,

Let's say that after my master's degree. Ok, I was looking for PhD everywhere in the world. Um, I did not choose Italy. Italy chooses me. Because I send a lot, and a lot, and a lot of CV and a letter of motivation everywhere. And the only love who replied to me was here in Italy.

Table 4.1

The countries that consider to look for degree position

Participants	Continent of background	Countries
A	Asia	The U.S., Northern Europe, Italy
B	Asia	The U.S.,other European countries, Italy
C	Asia	Italy
D	Asia	China, Italy
E	Asia	Italy, UNIPD
F	Asia	China, Italy
G	Asia	Italy (UNIPD. No consideration to apply for other universities)
H	Asia	Italy
I	Asia	Italy (Apply five universities, gain two offers in Italy)
J	Asia	The U.S., the UK, China, Italy
K	Oceania (Africa)	Italy
L	Europe	Everywhere (a lot)
M	Europe	Italy, Padua
N	Europe	Italy

O	Europe	Italy, Switzerland, Austria and southern Germany
P	America	Italy
Q	Africa	Germany, the US, the UK, Australia, Canada, Italy (Applying universities in Italy, not only UNIPD)
A1	Asia	Germany, Italy
B1	America	Germany, Italy
C1	Africa	Europe, Italy is one of the option in Europe
D1	Europe	Italy
A2	Asia	France, Germany, Italy
B2	America	Spain, France, Germany, the US, the UK, Italy

Interestingly, except for Italy, the main countries that IS looked for a position, the first country was another non-English-speaking Germany in Europe, and an English-speaking country, the U.S., was the next. More details are shown in Figure 4.1. Understanding the tendency of IS studying in Italy to choose their country could help to understand further and explain the motivation of IS to choose Italy as a destination country for their studies.

Figure 4.1

Ranking of countries that consider to look for degree position except Italy
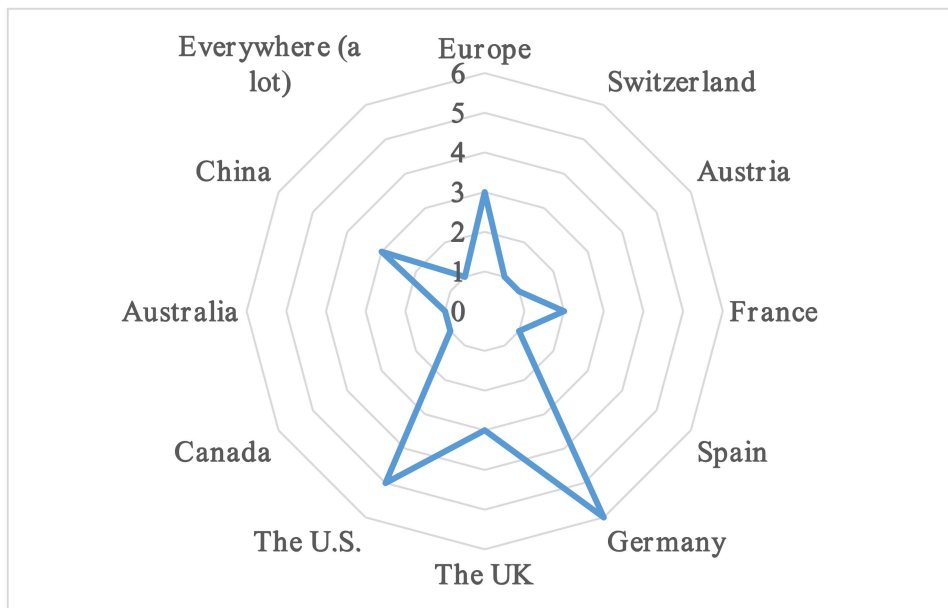
Why Italy? Convinced factors to study abroad in Italy

At the micro level, the destination and program decision-making was decided by weighing the personal situation, and it was the most complex and diverse choice process. According to the semi-structured interview data, six factors convinced IS to decide to study abroad in Italy, including the pull of the host country (Italy); the push of the home country; the Italian higher education institution and educational system; the program and applications; personal goals, beliefs, and values; social support (see Table 4.2). More details were explained below.

Pull of the host country (Italy). According to the qualitative data, the pull factors of the host country Italy were, mainly including five aspects, the natural environment, the city (Padua) where the university is located, Italian culture, a familiarity with Italy, and cost (financial) in Italy. The local environment influence the attractiveness of the host country (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), include safety (María Cubillo et al, 2006) and the weather in this study. For instance, participant A believed the natural environment is important to him, as he stated, "The natural environment here (Italy) is better, you see how cold Canada is, and then the U.S. is

still chaotic. Italy is the right place. I do notwant to go to a place that is too cold or whatever." While participant A2 stated, "I love this small city with a total population of 200,000." Moreover, the familiarity with Italy was also one of the motivating factors for IS to come to Italy, participant G and I both mentioned that they have had exchange experiences in Italy before. Additionally, the most motivating factor was the Italian culture. In fact, culture (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003), cultural links (McMahon, 1992), and social and cultural experiences (Li & Bray, 2007) have all been identified as influential factors in shaping student decision-making. For instance, as participant A stated,

> In the past, when I was in my home country, I was probably in a state of living, thinking that life should be like this, that's how we should live. But after you come out, you may be able to feel something different, a different culture, I think this is a very important point.

While participant N stated, "The motivation for sure is the cultural experience, I would say." Additionally, participant Q mentioned, "I like Italy for the arts, culture, the history."

Table 4.2

Mentioned themes, content and participants of the pull of the host country (Italy)

Themes	Mentioned content	Mentioned participants
Natural environment	The safety compared to the US; great climate compared to Canada	A
City where the university is located (Padua)	Small but good for studying (G) Like the city (A2)	G, A2
Italian culture	Living lifestyle; way of thinking; history;	A, Q, D, M,

	social structures (A)	N, K, B1
	History and art (Q)	
	Freedom of life (D)	
	Experience culture and history(M)	
	Experience culture (N)	
	Socialize culturally (K)	
	The relation between Italy and home country (language, stuffs, relatives in Italy) (B1)	
Familiarity	Having exchange experiences before	G, I
Cost (financial)	lower	B2

Push of the home country. IS mentioned the attractiveness of Italy as a destination country; they also mentioned several push factors related to the home country (see Table 4.3). One of the factors that IS take into account when deciding whether to study abroad is the evaluation of the distinctive features of their home environment and educational prospects (Ahmad & Buchanan 2016). The home country's first and most important push factor was the poor educational system. For instance, participant D believed that a foreign diploma is better recognized than from their home country, as he stated, "You see, various universities or research institutes, whether recruiting postdoctoral or lecturers, for overseas talents, with this foreign brand, obviously will be a grade higher." Then was the poor occupational environment in the home country. As participant A1 stated, "For women in the home country, the workplace environment is terrible." Next was the culture in the home country. As participant B1 stated,

So it has been very influenced as decision a lot also by the society and the culture. Why do I say this ?   Because Albania is not as developed as the country as Italy. And there are a lot of things that do notgo well with the university and school system here now. For example, there is corruption. The technology is not very developed. And there are not a lot of facilities for the students, and also the quality of...... kind of everything is not the best. So the first point is that here it's kind of sucks. And everyone notes this also the professors at high school and also in the university. When we are in high school, all the good students are very stimulated to go abroad like if you're a good student, you always get said by the society and the teachers in high school too. "But where are you going to go after this?" Um, like, if you get all and you stay here in Albania, you're like a failure. Because, like, you're an excellent student, how come you didn't go abroad? Since you're such a good student.

Furthermore, with the disadvantages of their home country, IS wanted to get out of it. For instance, participant B2 stated,

I mean I actually wanted to try something different from what else I used to. I wanted to get outside of my country, because in my country, first, my career was there. I was so tired with all the things in my country that I wanted something new. And basically, I mean, going to the United States is super expensive because it costs a lot. The same thing for the united kingdom. So, I mean South America, I didn't want to study in South America. I do not know why. So my three remaining options were like Spain, France, Germany, and Italy. I didn't want to go to Spain. I wanted to try and see something different apart from Spanish. So I do not know what I was thinking, and I didn't want to

go to Spain either. So I was between France, Germany, and Italy. And because I am doing my bachelor's, I need engineering. Most of these subjects, I thought, were in the language. So for me, between learning Italian or French or German, the easiest was to learn Italian. So also another important thing is that I have the challenge of citizenship, so that was also kind of, I think that was really comfortable for me. So there is also an extra factor that imposes me like I want to build cars, you know, raise cars. And Italy is a country where they build really nice and good cars, and we already have nice industry. So I think that was the deciding factor. The country tells me that they just know how to get rice cars. Yeah, so the other three main points, actually, cost, I want the Italian citizenship, I wanted something different and then cars.

Table 4.3

Mentioned themes, content and participants of the Push of the home country

Themes	Mentioned content	Mentioned participants
Poor Educational system	Lower recognition foreign diploma compared with host country	D
	Less chance to study abroad	E
	The lacking of facilities at university	B1
	Less chance to overtake the exam, more difficult to apply for Italy	B1
	Not well adapted to the Chinese educational system	A2
	No academic freedom	E
	Lack of academic resources	C

Poor occupational environment	Job opportunity: Difficult to find a job that fit the major in Civil Service Exam	D
	Occupational discrimination: Poor working environment for women in Chinese companies	A1
Home culture	Brainwashed and the reality: Pushing from the society	B1
	Simple culture	E
Want to get out of the home country	Escape from a place: Dislike the lifestyle at home	B1
	Want to get out of the home country	B2

Italian higher education institution and educational system. The third crucial motivating factor was the Italian higher education institution and educational system, which included four aspects (Table 4.4). The first motivated factor was the good education system in Italy. Participant D1 thought highly about the course in UNIPD, as participant D1 stated,

> Um, why I chose Padua, because when I looked at the courses, this one that I finished. And when I saw this course, I was mesmerized because of exactly what I was looking for or adapting myself to the market. Because I was kind of I was not updated on what was happening and I think to be able to turn it for way myself, to bear myself for job market, or and also dreams and achievement.

Several researchers have identified that the quality of education plays a role in influencing decision-making (Binsardi & Ekwulugo, 2003; Li & Bray, 2007; Shanka et al, 2006).

The second one was the reputation of the university or major. As participant B stated, "I also have the understanding that the psychology program, which is my major at this school, is ranked relatively high in the world, and then it also has a long history, which means that at this school, the discipline has some strength." While participant A2 stated,

I chose the University of Padua, and all the process was based on my intuition at the beginning. But I chose the University of Padua because the motto of the University of Padua, which is "To fight for the freedom of Padua, the universe and all mankind (Universa Universis Patavina Libertas)". This phrase appealed to me directly, because since I was a child I have always wanted to be free. And the second one was when I saw that the account of the Padua School on instagram, at one point, posted a quote that said, "When faced with social injustice and unfairness, you have to speak out." So I was drawn to those two things.

The third one was the good Italian learning atmosphere. Participant D stated, "I think the first reason for studying abroad is to experience the international and multicultural environment, so I think this is a very important and the first motivation for me to go abroad." Whilst participant E stated, "I think foreign countries may have created an impression in us also ...... A little bit of that ...... Anyway, the academic atmosphere abroad is the best, and then, the so-called free academic atmosphere comes to mind."

The last one was familiarity, the familiarity with Italian HEI or the education system, which three participants mentioned. For instance, as participant G stated,

I have considered my situation in general. If I apply for the University of Padua, it may be the most advantageous school for me, is because I have

exchanged here, and then I have taken many classes, one of my letters of recommendation is given by the teachers of this school, so I will have a relatively large advantage.

Table 4.4

Mentioned themes, content and participants of the Italian higher education institution and educational system

Themes	Mentioned content	Mentioned participants
Familiarity: familiar with Italian HEI or education system	Familiar with Italian education system: Having exchange experiences before, and taking courses before	G, I
	The cooperation between home university and Italian HEI	E
Good education system	Good education system	E
	Appreciate good education quality	I
	Italian educational system, national system	Q
	The advantage of discipline (major)	G
	The course in UNIPD	D1

	Course in English	K
Good learning atmosphere	To experience multicultural academic atmosphere	E
	Quiet: Good learning atmosphere	G
	Academic freedom	D
Reputation of the university or major	Famous and long history	B, F
	Higher QS ranking	F
	The famous of the department (best in the field)	C1
	The high ranking and long history of major	B
	UNIPD' s school motto (being attracted)	A2
	UNIPD' s school media account content (being attracted)	A2

The program and applications. Five participants mentioned the relation of the program as one of their motivations, including the studying time, studying major, or area (see Table 4.5). As participant C stated,

I studied XXX as a major, and then I did XXX research for my master's degree. So I am equivalent to I am going to the country of my research subject

to further study ...... I am going to collect their materials and do related research.

Moreover, most IS believed the Italian HEI program is easier to apply for. Participant A1 mentioned the effectiveness of the administration at the Italian university, which was shown in the timely response. Moreover, participant A1 pointed out the less challenges to apply for the program. As participant A1 stated,

At the beginning I didn't want to come to Italy, it was just a coincidence that I came to Italy. Yes, at the beginning my main goal to go out was Germany. Because the employment environment in Germany is still very good, and there are many Chinese people already there, that is, their case tells me that if you go to study, and then you graduate, you can also find a very good job, the chances of this is still particularly large. The choice of Italy is that when I applied to Germany, the time was late, so I only voted for three German and one Italian, Italy this is by chance from a student WeChat group inside the school sister learned. Finally, because of the time problem and my own match, because the German match is particularly harsh, and then my graduation that course design also did not do particularly well, the course match did not do particularly well. Italy gave me an offer, and then came to Italy.

In addition, the program's cooperation and scholarship (Collins, 2018; Tran, 2016) were another crucial motivating factor. There were seven participants thought highly about the cooperation of the program factor, while eight participants thought gaining the scholarship was the convincing factor. For instance, as participant K stated, "......Uh, you know, there's some scholarships offered." Moreover, as participant O stated,

But then I came across this project here um, out of our, which was in collaboration also with some professors that ii knew about I studied XXX as a major, and then I did XXX research for my master's degree. So I am equivalent to I am going to the country of my research subject to further study ...... I am going to collect their materials and do related research.

Table 4.5

Mentioned themes, content and participants of the program and applications

Themes	Mentioned content	Mentioned participants
Relation of the program	Related to the field	C1
	Related to the field	B2
	Similar with former degree major (content)	C
	Study area and major at UNIPD	A2
	Study years of the program: Only three years	F
Less challenges to apply	Have advantages, have work experiences	G
	German education system is more difficult	G
	Apply five universities, gain two offers in Italy	I
	Comparing to the U.S. universities and other universities in the North European universities	A
	No requirement for Italian or low	A

	language proficiency requirement	
	No or less quota compare with other countries (major/enrollment); less challenge of teaching evaluation	G
	The U.S. and the UK has high requirement of English	J
	Less challenges: Not difficult to learn Italian	N
	Longer application deadline	A1
	Low course match requirement	A1
	Pass the admission test(Learn Italian in school, learn the language autonomously)	B1
Effective of the administration: timely respond	Give the offer early	A1
	Take less time to know the result	O
	The attention and timely response from the admissions office	L
	Timely respond of UNIPD	Q
Cooperation	A (CSC) B (GU) C (CSC) D (GU) H (GU) J (CSC) O (collaboration project)	A, B, C, D, H, J,O
Scholarship	A (CSC)	A, C, J, G, I,

	C (CSC)	H, K,B1
	J (CSC)	
	G (HEI)	
	I (HEI)	
	H (GU)	
	K (some scholarship offered)	
	B1 (HEI)	

Personal goals, beliefs and values. Among the six motivated factors, the most important factor was personal goals, beliefs, and values. This factor there was summarized by nine themes: as a springboard for pursuing something; enlarge world view; entertainment; personal desire or expectation; geographically closer; career development; previous experience; improving language skills; random, luck, chance, opportunity (Table 4.6).

In particular, participant D assumed the program as a springboard for pursuing something, for instance, "postdoc in Canada" or "changing major". Some participants also considered studying abroad from their perspectives, such as hating how English is taught and learned at home, their previous experiences, personal desire, and defiant personalities. For instance, as participant A2 stated,

I think the main reason is, because there are many reasons...... how to say it. In my very short life experience, elementary school, junior high school and high school, then there are many things that made me feel as if it was not quite right to stay from home, so that many reasons in the end are pointing to this is not entirely adapted to the domestic system, so it came out. And I went to an international school, so most of my classmates came out (to study abroad), but most of them went to the United States, Canada, Australia, or the United

Kingdom. My choice, in general was, well, not a popular preference. Originally I chose France, Germany and Italy as the three countries......Machiavelli was here I came here......I think a little bit of English is enough. I think the time to learn English is long enough, and the domestic English education system makes me feel very uncomfortable, I think the language is to be used as a tool, not that I will specialize in learning this language every day to memorize words and the text, I think that is too boring, I can not stand, this is a reason. There are too many people learning English, I think, well, I am not a follower of the crowd, so I think I can change one. Well, two reasons, so the first one is because of the domestic system, the second one is because of the language problem.....The first is education system, and the second one is, well, the personality of the non-conformist.

Then, participant A2 mentioned about the Italian learning and improving process, as participant A2 stated,

I didn't want to enroll at the University of Padua initially. I came to Italy at the end of 2019 to learn the Italian language, and then I met a teacher who was quite a good teacher, and our whole language school was the best teacher, and then he taught me the language, and of course, he was very good to me, so the more I learned the language, the more I learned it, and I found that I learned it better and better. Then I thought I wanted to choose a university with a higher level. Then I looked it up, and coincidentally, I found Padua.

Moreover, some participants were looking forward to studying abroad and experiencing the difference in the world, while choosing courses that would match their future career market. This aligns with the research findings of Cubillo et al.

(2006), which asserted that employment prospects have a crucial impact on personal motivation. For instance, as participant D1 stated,

> Well, oh, basically, I was a long-term dream of taking part in master phases abroad and necessarily. I have been seeking this opportunity for a long time ago, but I think three years ago, before the landing here that there I finally have, you have the...... how should you say, I gave myself an opportunity to come here because I think was it possible. Because I never knew if I would be accepted. So I just saw the resignation was open. I sent an email to the international office. Um, so I was kind of adamant about my graves and everything because the registration system is very different from Italy. Um, why I chose Padua, is because when I looked at the courses, this one that I finished. And when I saw this course, I was mesmerized because of exactly what I was looking for or adapting myself to the market. Because I was kind of I was not updated on what was happening and I think to be able to turn it for way myself, to bear myself for the job market, or, and also dreams and achievement.

Additionally, geographically closer is another factor that IS take into account when making decisions about studying abroad. This finding was corroborated in the research of Cubillo et al. (2006). As participant O stated,

> But I was not specifically like, you know, I want to study in Italy, and then I was looking for projects, but I was more like I want to study close to the work place, and I am looking forward to working in the working place, and then I found this project.

Furthermore, there were some participants who wanted to get to know the world, experience new things more, and have new perceptions. As participant M stated, "I am really into moving to that new adventure." Whilst participant K stated,

I always wanted to immerse myself in a different country, and of course the courses in English. But it's nice to kind of socialize culturally and move around and learn the different things now. So that was key for me.

In fact, the selection process is also accompanied by uncertainties and random factors. This was mentioned by, for instance, participant E stated,

When you want to do something, you probably do not think too much about it; that is, I am worried about whether I can pass the language, whether I can integrate into the culture, so I do not think much about it. Because I may be a little bit of chance or a lot of luck in it, so I will ignore the language barrier, ignore the cultural aspects of a thing, so just come.

Some participants specifically mentioned the cooperation of the program. For instance, participant B stated, "If hypothetically such an opportunity offered to me by my mentor at that time was in the United States or another European country or even in another state, I think I would have gone straight to it." While some participants believed it was a chance, as participant K stated,

I have always wanted to study in Europe. This is my first time in Europe. Italy has always been one of those. My parents had visited Italy some years ago. So I've heard lots of stories about Italy in general. For the university part, it was just by chance. Actually, I had a conversation with somebody who had previously been doing a course at the University of Padua, and he mentioned the course and said, "uh, you know, there are some scholarships offered."

Moreover, some participants thought it was random, for instance, as participant L stated, "So it was really a random. I see random choice because I would have accepted kind of everywhere because I need to go further with my career, and the University of Padua gives me the opportunity."

Table 4.6

Mentioned themes, content and participants of the personal goals, beliefs and values

Themes	Mentioned content	Mentioned participants
As a springboard for pursuing something	Postdocs in Canada	D
	Changing major	D
Enlarge world view	Have a look of the big world. Get in touch with other cultures and experience another life.	J
	I have a long term dream of conducting Master phase abroad	D1
	See the world: Experience something different	K
	Experience intercultural multicultural environment	E
Entertainment	Experience something new	M, N, K
	Want something new	B2
	Meet another city	M
Personal desire or expectation	Enthusiasm for scientific research	D
	Desired to study abroad	E, Q
	Determined to go abroad	B1

	Learn a new language	M
	Possibility: I gave myself an opportunity to come here because I think it was possible.	D1
	Want to study in Europe, UNIPD is on options	K
	Good life, good education	Q
	Find relationship	Q
	In Pursuit of Star: Cristiano Ronaldo	J
	Personal characteristic: Ambitious, aggressive, hardworking	J
	Personality: Do not want to follow the crowd	A2
Geographically close	Close to the work place	O
	Geographically close	B1
Career development	For future consideration. It's hard to find a job after graduating with a master degree, Find a job	D
	career development	B2
	High salary, Easier to find a job	A
Previous experience	Previous study abroad experience	Q
	Special personal experience and reality factors: No motivation, gain the master degree from UNIPD	G

	Very short life experience	A2
	Education background: Similar study area with former degree major	M
Improving language skills	Have a basic knowledge and skills of Italian and are interested in learning Italian	A2
	Like English(G) Practice English(J)	G, J
Random, luck, chance, opportunity	Apply randomly(G) Knowing the program application information from a friend(Q, K) Italy choose me(L)	G, Q, K, L, A1
	Chance or opportunity	B, F, H, K
	Luck	B, C, E
	Not planed too much	N

Social support. There were three themes summarized within the motivated factor of social support, including influence by a lover; influence by an Italian supervisor or professor; and influence by home professors, colleagues, or friends (Table 4.7). Friendship, partnership, and romantic relationships, consist of individuals who have personal connections, can directly or indirectly influence the decision-making process when it comes to pursuing education abroad (Beech, 2015; Brooks & Waters, 2010). For instance, as participant P stated,

So uh, in my case, mhm, my motivation was my girlfriend at the moment. We were living in Italy during COVID-19. That is why I decided to do a PhD in Italy. Mhm, because we were already in Italy and it made sense for me to

study here. That's the main motivation to be very honest. Uh it's not academic. I mean, the academic part is also a factor, but yeah, it was really because of the relationship.

Moreover, some IS were encouraged and invited by Italian professors or mentors, for instance, as participant N stated,

It wasn't planned too much. I was living in Austria the last year, and I already studied there and was working for two years at the university. And I felt like I want to do something new. And I mean, since I left Germany, when I was 19 years old, then um, pretty much moving around. So for me, the motivation for sure is the cultural experience I would say. But in fact, I was more interested in finding a PhD in Canada, or it was not just that I was looking for PhD, I was also looking for other jobs in my field. And I couldn't find anything. And at the same time, I was working with some products from an Italian company. Oh, I also thought about okay, maybe I can apply at the company in Italy. This would also be pretty interesting because I already have know some people there. And then I was organizing a conference at my last university where invited my old professor who was Italian and he went back to Padua 2 or 3 years ago. And then we had a talk and he was like, "Would you be interested in coming to Padua?" And before that, I never really heard about Padua. From Italian cities, you know Parma, you know Bologna or Turin, Padua, never really heard about it. And then two weeks afterwards, after we met, he told me there's the possibility. He wrote "a project they accepted, it would be in your field also where you were researching before." Then I didn't think too much and decided" okay, let me sleep one night and I call you back tomorrow. If I come or not. "Then it was quite chaotic because it was already November and

they told us at the end of November, if it works or not, we get the the position. And um the start was already in January, which I think is also not normal, but they had some money left, So they gave the opportunity to also start to January. And yeah, this was pretty much the combination of those factors I ended up in Italy.

Furthermore, there were some IS Influenced by lover, home professors, colleagues or friends. For instance, as participant J stated,

Then from the beginning of my master's degree, for example, before I, my master's time, there is no such feeling of going abroad to study for a doctorate, then the words mainly met me in two ways, ah, I think the first is in meeting my ex-girlfriend, he is in my is the master's stage, then, a particularly big influence on me ...... Then my ex-girlfriend she is more excellent, she is really excellent, I am with her in the words, I think she is certainly better than me. In addition, the party branch secretary of our college is quite strong, he started to inspire me slowly in the early stage, in addition, I found that the whole atmosphere of our group, that is, my master's supervisor, he is a tenured professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, his whole person is also very influential to me, I think he is very modest, very humble ...... I think he is very humble and modest, but his humility and love for academics is very humble and polite, which influenced me a lot. Then our whole group, that is to say, there are some brothers and sisters, some have gone abroad, there are also precedents of going abroad, so that they will have an influence on me. I think going abroad seems to be a good thing, to go out and see things. Because, I think people are very influenced by the environment, what platform you are in, what environment, it will implicitly influence you.

Table 4.7

Mentioned themes, content and participants of the social support

Themes	Mentioned content	Mentioned participants
Influence by lover	Wife in China(C) Husband in Germany(G) Girlfriend in China (J) Boyfriend in Italy(I) Girlfriend in Italy(P)	C, G, J, I, P
Influence by Italian supervisor or professor	Focusing on Italian supervisor(E) Knowing the supervisor in Italy(D) Expecting to work with the supervisor who has similar research area (I) The interest from Italian supervisor (J) Recommend letter from the Italian teacher (G) Italian professor (N, A2) Knowing the Italian professor(Q)	E, D, I, J,G,N,Q, A2
Influence by home professors, colleagues or friends	Being encouraged: Influence by American professor (J) Recommendation by Master's supervisor (B, D, O) Influence by Master's subject group (J) The encourage from friends(D)	J, B, D, O, J, D

Expectations of the university or program

Through the previous data statement and description, this study has shown the selection process of universities and programs for IS to study in Italy and the primary motivations for studying abroad. In order to further answer the research questions and achieve the research purpose, this study summarizes the expectations of the university or program of IS, including education resources; education environment; improving academic ability; experiencing; improving personal view; learning and improving language skills; don't have much expectation; nothing to expect (see Table 4.8).

Not surprisingly, most of the IS expected the education resources and education environment in Italian HEI and program and improving their academic ability. For instance, as participant P stated,

I really have very high expectations. Yeah, I mean without knowing a lot about follow up like to be honest, I gotta accepted in the university before I ever visited the city. I didn't know the city. So I didn't know anything. I knew it was a big university, I know it was old, a very historical. But I know very little, very little. What I did know is that I thought it was gonna be very um um promising uh in terms of education, training. Um, mhm, now in terms of workshops and seminars and that's what I expected.

Similarly, cultural experiences motivates IS influences their intercultural competence (Aba, 2016). As another IS, participant Q stated,

So, I quickly discovered that Italy with a rich culture of university education...... So I knew that I would get um rich education mhm, I expected that I would get a doctoral patient and I will be very proud of my doctoral education and research in the most anywhere in the world.

Moreover, some IS expect to have the freedom to explore and do whatever they want to do, for instance, as participant K stated,

> So my expectations were that I would be able to have the freedom to explore, really explore some of those things that I didn't know how that would work because being in Italy and not in Africa. I think obviously, the main expectation for me is that the course is in English that I would be able to still navigate through because the research that I am doing, mhm, is important to me.

Participant A2 had the similar view, as participant A2 stated,

> Actually, I am looking forward to it, that is, all three of my favorite subjects are there. When I first chose this major, I looked at the name of this major in three words, political science, international relations, and human rights. All three of those words appealed to me, and they were all things that I wanted to study. So that's what I expected, I thought, uh, this major should be able to answer some of my doubts. Certain relevant knowledge is involved, which is not available in the domestic system. So I want to learn; I want to come here to learn. And then, my expectation is that I can learn what I want to learn from this site. That's my expectation.

Furthermore, there were some IS expected to improve their academic ability and language skills. Improving the English language ability is one of the expectations of IS (Peterson et al, 1999). For instance, as participant M stated,

> What I expect is to learn as much as I can, focusing on the project they gave me like they had some truth in me, and I wanna give answers to them......I also expect to improve my English.

Similarly, participant O mentioned, "I was happy to ...... and to speak a bit Italian, learn the language maybe a little bit.

Additionally, some IS didn't have much expectations because they had already learned something about Italy or the program, but only expected to have a good experience in Italy, and could learn the culture.Italian. For instance, as participant O stated,

> Um, so I didn't know much about the university system, and I've been studying abroad also for my Masters in Sweden, so I think I kind of thought, okay maybe in Europe, at least all universities are kind of working in a similar way. Mhm, so I was not expecting that kind of big surprise......Um, and also because, from my master supervisor, I've been talking with them about my supervisors and professor here, and he said, "Oh, there are nice people, and you will feel well." So I was actually kind of, um, I was not so scared to come here because I already knew a bit about the environment, and I knew some people that I was working with. And uh, yeah, I was happy to learn a bit about Italian culture ......Italian.

Similarly, another IS, participant N stated,

> I didn't have real expectations. And the good thing for me was that I already knew the professor, my supervisor now, I did my bachelor and master with him and then we stayed in contact and we are even still doing research together sometimes. And it was more that I okay, I know the person will be supervising me. Mhm, I know the topic I will be working on. Um, so I didn't have many expectations towards the universities.

Nevertheless, some participants didn't have expectations. For instance, participant B1 stated, "I didn't have so many expectations because I didn't know what

to expect. I had no idea. But for sure, I didn't expect it to be as difficult as it really was." Whilst participant C1 stated,

> I wasn't having that big expectation because for me everything is the first time. So I didn't travel a lot outside my country like the first time I came to Europe, the first time I go outside my country, the first time go abroad. So it was a mixed, there is not a clear expectation of what I will find.

Similar idea was stated by participant L,

> Not really, I didn't know. I didn't even know the town. I just learn about Padua when I arrived. And everyone told me, Padua is really a good institution in Italy. A lot of people want to go there. So I was kind of happy to be accepted here, but I didn't have any expectation at all.

> However, some expectations were met while some were not. For instance, as participant D1 stated,

> I expect like very high education. And the university didn't disappoint me at all, was even better than expected. No, I was even better than expected. Look, I learn a lot here.

On the contrary, another IS, participant B2 stated:

> I expect things too much more easier and smoother. Yeah, I knew Italian, but I had to pick a piece of the language. Yeah, I had the figure this is studying. And basically for a year I didn't do anything, and basically for, I almost 2 years I didn't do anything. Yeah, I have thought things are going to be smoother. I thought I was going to be able to cope with the change.

Table 4.8

Mentioned themes, content and participants of the expectations of the university or program

Themes	Contents	Mentioned Participants
Improving academic ability	Academic ability improvement	F, I
	Doing the research fast (publish the papers)	F
	Enhance academic ability	B
	Rich education in doing research	Q
Education resources	Curious about education system (teaching methods)	H
	Collecting data for the research	C
	Good research resources	F
	Education resources (research and teaching)	D
	Teaching resources	G, I
	Faculty resources	B, G
	Supervisor, the first foreigner I met, he takes responsibility of my study and life	A
	The course in English	K
	High expectation, promising in terms of education and training	P
	Rich education to gain degree	Q
	Supposed the lectures and everything would be in high level	D1
	Favorite subject, all things that I want to	A2

	study	
	The flexibility of the curriculum design	A1
Education environment	Academic freedom	E
	Have freedom to explore	K
	Good international academic atmosphere	E, B, H
	International exchange is better, international environment	E
Experiencing	Expect the life in the city	A
	Things would be much easier and smoother	B2
	Learning Italian culture	O
Improving personal view	Change the thoughts	E
	Thinking collision	E
	World view	H, E, J
	Understanding something new	E, J
	Gain knowledge	E, J
	Learning (learning as much as I can)	M
	Want to learn (can learn what I want to learn)	A2
	Learning from professors or supervisors	C
	Learning course	C
Learning and improving language skills	Learning language (Italian)	C
	Learning Italian language	O
	Improve my English	M

	Communication	C, H
	Improve professional and comprehensive ability	B
Don't have many expectation	Don't have great expectations.	A1
	Don't have so many expectations	B1
	Wasn't have big expectation because everything is the first time for me	C1
	Not a lot of expectation of the university	A
	Not expect that kind of big surprise	O
	I dare not look forward to it	E
Nothing to expect	Nothing much to expect	D
	Not really (I don't have any expectation at all)	L
	I didn't have real expectations (already know most of the things)	N

The intercultural adaptation of international students

Based on the previous data, IS' motivations and expectations for studying abroad were met or unmet to varying degrees. The second research question was mainly to understand IS study abroad experience and intercultural adaptability. This section had three aspects of data analysis to support the second research question, including feelings in general, difficulties and challenges, and describing IA with a metaphor or image. Specific content was discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

Feelings in general

During the interview, it was obviously that IS had different feelings in general when they described their intercultural experiences in Italy. Thus, it was essential to learn how they felt in general next. According to the data, the mentioned feelings by participants could be summarized into two parts, feeling bad and feeling well (see Table 4.9). There were some IS feeling well in general. For instance, as participant A2 stated, "I enjoy this very much, enjoy my study life, and enjoy my own learning results." Participant C1 felt the same way, as participant C1 stated, "I enjoyed the experience until now. I am enjoying the experience of being in the Italian part of a special." Similarly, participant A1 stated,

> In fact, when I first came to Italy, I thought that I would go to another country through the Italian program and then through the Erasmus Programme, and then I would spend another year in another country, so that I would have a better chance of getting an internship. Or at that time I was also thinking about coming to Italy for one semester and then moving up to another country, that's what I was thinking about. But now I've changed my mind because of the boyfriend I met and the experience I had in Italy was pretty good. I think it's okay to get a job here, so I do not think it's too much of a problem......The psychological pressure is relatively small, not so anxious, and I am happy every day.

However, there were several bad feelings that IS had, for instance, disappointment, not enjoying, unhappy, anxiety, culture shock. As participant E stated, "In terms of the research team, I do not enjoy it at all. Because the research team did not give you some project support at all, and gave you some special standardized training." Similarly, participant F stated, "I am unhappy because I can't always find

someone (a mentor) ...... Like what I am currently enrolled in is more or less unhappy. I talked to my teachers and classmates today and I found that they all have the same problem."

Additionally, there were some IS felt not well because of the culture shock and language barrier, for instance, as participant D1 stated,

But then the bigger culture shock for me was just the learning system here like the way that the exam organized. The second and most difficult for me is that the job market here. How to find gaps that could be included or any sources to sign this. So they move abroad, turns the conference they receive a lot of knowledge thing for me, hopefully they say goodbye from go back to countries. But this really sad if after you graduated and you say just goodbye to these countries.

Similarly, another participant B1 stated,

I can communicate perfectly. Now I didn't used to do that in the beginning, but now yes. but still mhm, still like um, when I want to think for you for difficult stuff, you know like difficult stuff, the subjects that we do in medicine, they are so difficult that doing the calculations on my mind, Italian takes me more time and I am slow. So maybe I am good, I am not a genius, I am not the best to like my grades are low sincerely, but I need time also so that makes me blow and makes me feel like I am not good enough.

Table 4.9

Mentioned feelings and participants in general

Mentioned Feelings	Mentioned Participants
Feeling bad in general	

Annoy	B
Disappointed	E, P
Do not enjoy	E, F
Lonely	E, D
Unhappy	G
Not feel lot of research atmosphere, not surprised of the research	C
Self- doubt on overcome difficulties and challenges	G
A discrepancy with the previous expectations	F, H
Anxiety in publication	C
Anxiety in research	Q
Culture shock of the learning system and the job market	D1
Feel bad for people who have low level of Italian	M
Not happy, because of poor Italian	N
Italian takes me more time and slow. I am good but not the best.	B1

Feeling well in general

The experience was pretty good (The psychological pressure is relatively small, not so anxious, and I am happy every day)	A1
Happy for the offer, satisfied	C
Relatively fair for the offer	A
Sense of belonging	B
Kind of enjoy life	O
Enjoy the experience	C1
Enjoy the study and life	A2
Self-reliance and independence. If I do not look for myself, no one	B2

will do it.	

Difficulties and challenges

Studying abroad in a new country may cause some difficulties, and challenges can also bring significant challenges for IS, as they leave their familiar world behind and try to adjust to a new environment (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Thus, knowing about the difficulties and challenges that IS were facing is crucial. According to the statements from the participants, there were difficulties and challenges of IS could be summarized into six aspects, including cultural barriers; social network; living difficulties; academic research; personal emotional; institutional attachment (see Table 4.10).

First of all, for the living aspect, some IS mentioned that it was difficult for them to find a place to live. For instance, as participant L stated, "For example, I had to deal with the fact that I am not Italian to find an apartment. When you are not Italian, it's half of the time, a 'sorry, but no.' And in addition, I have my dog, which is another problem."

Second, within the theme of cultural barrier, most IS mentioned about the difficulties and challenges of language barrier, for instance, as participant J stated, As a student, you have to take the initiative to talk, both the tutor and the student. And for us Chinese and their Italian, the language and cultural differences will be more difficult, so you have to be more proactive. For example, if my tutor talks, I do not understand much of what he says and I do not understand much of what he says. Because you have to talk about other aspects of the words will be difficult ...... There will be errors, there will be deviations.Moreover, IS often face challenges in effectively communicating with faculty and classmates, primarily stemming from

language barriers and an inadequate grasp of culturally appropriate interaction norms in the foreign environment (Wu et al, 2015). As participant N stated,

> I am trying to learn Italian, but after eight months, I am still not able to have a proper conversation and yeah, it's also hard when you're learning the whole day, you're learning new stuff, and your brain is pretty uh tired in the evening, and then you're supposed to learn some Italian.

Thirdly, language barriers lead to social development, for instance, as participant M stated,

> Because they have this already, the network, and you have to go. Yeah, you need to adapt to them, just try to find the condition to get reaching up. That's all. If you are watching in, you need, you should, like, you paid for giving knowledge to other people also. And this is the point that some people do not get it. And like you see that they aren't willing to share information with you.

Fourthly, IS face both cultural and academic obstacles (Caplan & Stevens, 2017; Lin & Scherz, 2014; Perry, 2016). In academic terms, some IS were not satisfied with the academic research or study at the university, for instance, as participant P stated,

> Now, I do feel a bit more part of the university because I have the possibility of going to the university if I want to, you know, and um but still like what I do is quite, um, isolated nowhere. It's not the student that is being supervised by, yeah, I am this one in the first year, so I am kind of doing my own thing.

Fifthly, some participant stated that it was difficult because of the institutional attachment. For instance, Participant L "have had received the emails from the university in Italian", which make it difficult to understand everything. And difficult

to "find the information of activities". Similarly, participant I "have had trouble to find a supervisor."

Last but not least, during a special period, COVID-19 pandemic, most of the IS were suffered from it, they felt lonely, anxious, struggling, painful et al. The conditions brought about by COVID-19 have posed challenges for IS in forming social connections (Doan & Russell, 2022). For instance, participant A2 were "feeling lonely, when COVID-19 is more serious, not socializing with others, being alone at home all the time, sometimes crying." Moreover, participant B2 "didn't know how to study, or have many anxieties, really have a hard time of focusing."

Table 4.10

Mentioned themes, contents and participants of difficulties and challenges

Themes	Contents of difficulties and challenges	Mentioned Participants
Cultural barriers	Cultural barrier	I
	Culture differences	J
	Environment, food	A
	Learning Italian while the brain is pretty tired in the evening	N
	All the stuff needs to be done in the new language and it's not easy	B1
	Have difficulties of understanding the language	C1
	Understanding Italian	E
	Italian language	Q
	Language barrier	J
	Learning Italian for research	D

Social network	Cannot integrate well with the locals	A
	Social network	M
	Hard to make contacts outside of university under COVID-19	O
	Interpersonal communication	E
	Misunderstood each other with supervisor	A, B
Living	Find an apartment (not Italian)	L
	Renting apartment	I
	Adapting to the life	D1
	Racism and xenophobia	C
Academic research	Not being supervised, doing my own thing	P
	Supervisor or colleagues don't have time to cooperate or discuss	E
	Have little interaction with supervisor and colleagues	G
	Cannot go ask everything to the supervisor	M
	The shortcoming university shortcoming educational system, have to work by your own	E
	Adapting to the evaluation system and exams	D1
Personal emotional	Didn't know how to study, or have many anxieties, really have a hard time of focusing.	B2
	Influence of original family	J
	Learning is painful	A1
	Struggling with the position where I am in the study area	K

	Feeling lonely, when COVID-19 is more serious, not socializing with others, being alone at home all the time, sometimes crying.	A2
	No sense of belongings or involvement	F
Institutional attachment	Obtain research resources	A
	Having trouble to find a supervisor	I
	Find the information of activities	L
	Receiving emails in Italian	L

Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure 4.2, it becomes more evident that participants most frequently mentioned the language barrier, followed by academic research, personal emotions, and social networks.

Figure 4.2

Mentioned by participants of difficulties and challenges
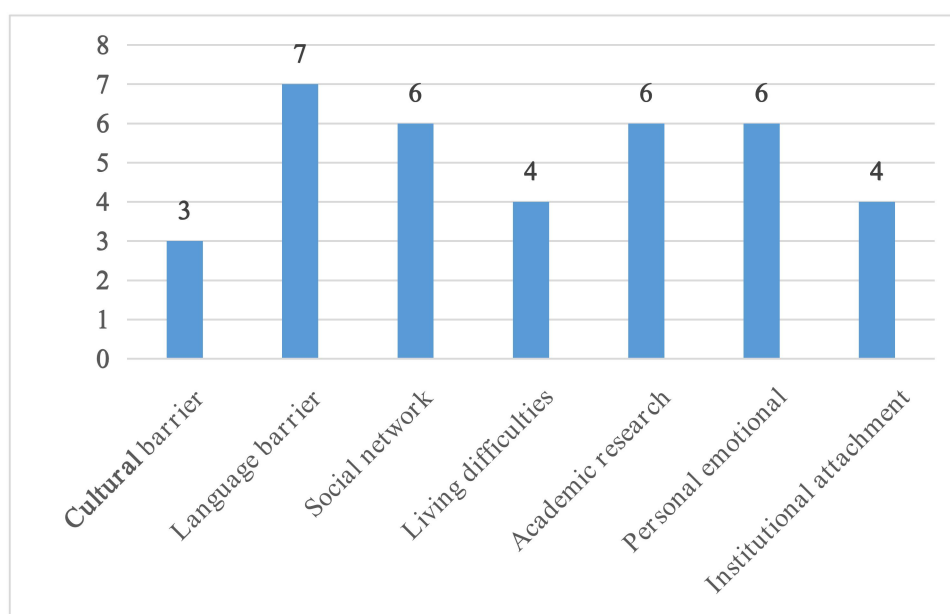
Describe intercultural adaptation with a metaphor or image

From the data above, it was clear that the general feelings of IS in Italy were both well and not well. Meanwhile, each IS encountered different difficulties and challenges. Table 4.11 shows how IS experienced the IA.

Firstly, studying abroad is living and learning in a new environment for IS, although with similar cultural backgrounds, IS still needed to explore and adapt to the new environment. For instance, when described the IA, as participant L stated,

I would say that I am a fish, used to being a in a sea, and just entering a huge, massive ocean. But it's still water. It's something that is I am feeling comfortable, but I just need to see the atmosphere, so I am still in my element, but it's just wider and bigger.

Secondly, the experiences in the host country satisfy IS' expectations in terms of personal goals being realized and appropriate acculturation taking place (Jiang et al., 2020). Some IS had specific and clear personal goal of what they want to do about their study and/or life. For instance, as participant Q stated,

Okay, let's say, uh, uh, a pen. So when you use such a pen and the ink is fading or even before the ink fades, you get more ink, and you are filling. So for me, I think it's about, um, filling. Um, that is as you use, you make sure that you are you keep uh improving. So, for instance, I am trying to say that, uh, in a way, I am using myself even to develop myself. And as I am using myself, I also make sure that I am adding back to myself mentally, physically, emotionally, and socially. So even within the internal system, I make sure that as I am knowing this society more as I am doing what I am doing here more. I am also making efforts to make sure that I get better so that I do not get

finished. (Laughing) Hey, you understand?I keep up something to write; I mean, the inks keep flowing.

However, participant A had a specific life goal, both now and in the future. However, it was also a concern about present and future uncertainty and instability. As he stated,

Probably what I imagine is the first one, blue sky, and white clouds, and I am standing on a grassy area next to the woods. Then I am standing there, um, looking at the landscape in the distance. It feels as if it is a vision of the future. The blue sky is just a feeling that you are a very prosperous, prosperous earth, a piece of a world. It feels like the horizon is more open. I feel I have a strong sense of purpose and goal. It is often best to have your aims for studying abroad. Because many IS are blind or purposeless, so without a purpose, they are sometimes really confused. Especially when there are times when they are wasting their time without even knowing it, it's like what we call "headless flies can't find the wall". Just keep hitting the wall and not find a way out. Maybe some people are younger, I am an older man; after all, some people do not look back. I think studying for a PhD is a gamble for me.

Another Participant B2 had different kinds of uncertainties, which confused him, and he couldn't know clearly which direction to choose. As he stated,

I mean, this won't be probably different to many, but I do not know. I will describe it like, you know, imagine that Domino. Imagine that you have buildings and then imagine some dominoes, like these buildings are falling like dominoes. And I do not know if they're gonna find an image where you want to put it. There's like a person that is trying to stop the dominance for falling. I am like, well, she's trying to live behind and trying to stop the Domino for them. So I mean I think that was my own patients who managed it

was really tough for the start. He was really without that direction of the start. I was like really, without a sense, was trying to follow something that I should have followed, and there were things that I should have done.

Thirdly, some IS were struggling with balancing social life and academic research. For instance, as participant D stated,

Because I was a fast serial in China, and in Italy, I learned to slow down. Just like in front of that bar, I was basking in the afternoon sun, slowly drinking Spritz, and slowly chatting with those people. It is not for any purpose, just purely chatting there, and not rushing to do anything, in order to chat and chat. Slowly sitting there, slowly chatting there. In fact, I really wanted to enjoy this feeling, but I was tied up in research.

Similarly, another IS, participant F stated,

My roommate has been painting lately. It's probably me sitting on the couch watching him, and then he's drawing there. Maybe my brain is thinking about what I am doing at my college department. On the one hand, I want to enjoy it; on the other hand, I am limited by the research.

Compared with the negative attitude of participant D and participant F, participant H chose a "Buddhist" attitude which is more positive to face life and academics, as participant H stated,

I think I am still not adjusting well to college. I am calm water, calm water is kinda pretty, but too quiet. Maybe a little rougher would be better. I expect the water to ripple. Flat calm water. The water is, first of all, quite beautiful, I feel I live a good life. The calmness is that I may not have made significant progress, including studying for a PhD. I just feel that I haven't entered the field very much. You can have a choice, you can be very relaxed, very calm to

go to this kind of life, but also can be very nervous. I prefer this relaxed and peaceful state.

Fourthly, for IS, everything is new to living in a new place and IS have to build up the social network from zero. IS often encounter challenges related to social adaptation (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). Moreover, IS have the right to choose if and how they want to build the network. However, some IS didn't want to or had difficulties starting. For instance, as participant B stated,

I am used to being in the comfort zone of my own life. So it was like a space of my own, and I didn't really want to go to some activities, including summer school and some other academic activities. Even now that the epidemic has gotten better, these events have become offline, but I do not really want to go to them. I know that I can exercise my ability to participate in these activities, but I just do not want to participate, I do not want to step out of this step. This space contains my own life. This space allows me to live quite comfortably. Then in terms of learning, it can meet my basic learning needs, that is, I can do the experiments I want to do, I can look up the information I want to look up. Even though I know there are more forums and conferences where I can learn more if I go to them, I may stop at this space I have now.

Similarly, as Wilczewski and Alon (2023) stated, "language is viewed as a form of social action", another IS, participant M who, suffered from language barriers, which influenced the social network that she tried to build. As she stated,

I do not know if you know it, but that's the TV series which was called Modern Family. Yeah, that the woman says "you could never know how I feel because I have to translate it everything in my mind and then speaking another language of mine." And that image always come to my mind. I have to look

for it and send it to you because I feel like that's me. And since I tell you I

speak Italian, but sometimes people forget that I am not Italian and it's like, I

am not Italian and I am here and please remember that because sometimes like

I do not have your voice that you do. So I feel like maybe we are arguing with

actually. Okay, you can go on with your Italian, but um, if I want, they can

switch to English, and you have to adopt it, and start speaking. And then the

metaphor is like maybe that I am just, um here in Barcelona I felt like as a

metaphor I am just a drop in the ocean. But going to Italy, people said "oh,

you Spanish." And I starting to be the Spanish girl, so everyone was interested

in me.

Moreover, other IS have difficulties communicating well with professors, which

influences the study process. Prior research has recorded the significance of cross-

cultural adaptation linked to communication factors (Kim, 2001; McKay-Semmler &

Kim, 2014; Ouarasse & Van de Vijver, 2005). For instance, as participant G stated,

I feel like a sea with a reef on the shore, and then the waves keep lapping at

this reef. I can be the sea, I can also be the beach, just looking at the ocean, I

am loving and longing for him. But it may be that the contact with me in the

process is not so well. I may take a lot of hits and even drown me. How, I am

sure it would hurt too, and I might not have a particularly good impression of

him. Because the sea is all changeable, that is, your mind is always changing.

The waves may bring me something different each time, for example, he will

leave something good or bad behind when he slaps me, such as garbage or

shells. Then every time he slaps me, I am actually fighting against him, but I

will also reconcile with him. Especially when the waves recede, I will actually

reconcile with him again. It's like the beach and the ocean. I look at the ocean,

and I think it's beautiful. However, it would slap me, and it would hurt. Sometimes it will not pass me, but it will also leave me a lot of things that make me feel very precious, and then reconciled with him. His impact is actually a break for me. Like, the sea, although it keeps washing over me, is a sharpening for me, a polishing of sorts. I am also grateful for some of the gifts that the sea has given me. Of course, I sometimes feel that it can be annoying and I want to escape. I can also not be on this beach. I can go somewhere else, but I just can not leave for the time being, but also not to go away, or want to face. It is very good when the wind and waves are calm, even if he is very windy to learn to reconcile with him. You and your research, in fact, many times also their confrontation with themselves. You find a way to solve it, the more you solve, the more problems you find, but in fact, slowly is a mutual polishing process. The more you polish the topic, the better you get, because the research itself will be polished better and better. It is a mutual polishing relationship. I think I will be more of a beach, but the beach and the sea will have a mutual polishing process, and then because the sea if to impact the sand, some of the sand in the sea will remain on the beach, it will be cleaner when the tide is out.

Fifthly, some IS were more positive about the adaptation in Italy, even though they went through certain difficulties and challenges. For instance, participant N even though always has work challenges that are stressing her, but she still described the IA as "pretty easy", like "go on vacation on the beach". She believed "in a new environment is always interesting". Moreover, participant E stated,

I think it's a bit like a little tree that just grows its tusks. In spring, and then the little tree is going to bud out. And then there's basically a lot of wind around

that bud and you shake that feeling. Because if you're on a good team, you're surrounded by little grasses, little trees or big trees that protect you from some harm or make you grow healthier and stronger. If we lack these protection, you have to break through some obstacles yourself, to overcome the risks and grow stronger. If you grow well, you will be free to grow into a small grass or a small tree in the academic soil (in this spring) and produce some splendid flowers. If you can't grow, you will wither away in the academic field. I think this is suitable for every doctoral student.

Afterwards, participant E stated,

After you grow well to grow healthy and happy, then blossom and contribute to society. Otherwise you will just wither away, and then you may choose another path, and then re-sprout from another piece of land and start growing. This academic atmosphere, the academic symbol of the pyramid of a thing, you do not do a good job you will fall down, or will not fall down but fell to other places, sprouting and fruit in other places.

Furthermore, participant B1 also described her IA as a "small tree" as the same as participant E, participant B1 stated,

When I went to Italy, I was a small tree. And in Italy, I have been through the whole seasons for the whole year. There were time I had flowers and that I was green and there was the time that I had red leaves. A little tired and I had time without leaves at all that I felt so long, then so cold, but then it was flowers again. So it's like to go to the game park, and it's like up and down. But I am a tree. Also as years passed by, and I go to this different process, I also get bigger. That's what I would say. Only now I enjoy a lot of my life. I really enjoy and I would do this again. It's like the thing that I want to do. But

there is also been a lot of suffering and stresses. Because in the beginning I felt not part of it, I felt such a stranger, and foreigner. That's such an ignorant and I felt is useless.

Similar to participant E, participant I stated,

For the overall adaptation to college, I think of the sea, with its ups and downs, but steady. And the sun, the waves. Because there are ups and downs, but you do not flip off somehow. I am on a boat, in my mind, is a yacht; although there may not live in real life, but it is on top of a yacht. I am on a boat, and the sun is shining, the weather is very nice, and the waves are slowly drifting and hitting, sometimes maybe a little bigger. But there will be a direction to go. The sunshine just feels like it's bright. It may fail, but it kind of won't flip. Not that I read the fair will not turn over, but I will not turn over this life. Because, like I said, even if you fail to read the blog, you are looking at your whole life, it is meaningful for a while. So overall, you won't flip because you're right. In fact, it is to expand on your whole life's pursuit, on the meaning of your life, to look at this one thing. The thing about studying for a PhD is that you feel that this choice is right, so you will try to move forward anyway. The overall tone is sunny, because there is a direction to move forward, and then will not fall off. Generally, it's okay.

Another IS had the similar statement, but more emotionally, as participant A1 stated,

That is at sea. On a big boat at sea, is dynamic, that is, sometimes there is rain, and sometimes love. The wind and waves are calm, ah, is a lonely boat, fishing, egrets, the sky, really idle clouds and wild cranes, probably this kind of poetry. Sometimes it is like this, and sometimes it is a clear sky, dark clouds, and heavy rain. Why? I can't get my homework done. Anxiety, exams, ah.

Assignments are due, and meetings are held every day. That must be the ship, if the canoe, you will first capsize, we just have to be stable, even if the great wind and waves, I must also be stable. Do you think you feel this way? You know what my boyfriend is? My life safer...... in fact, there should have all ah home feeling.

Sixthly, some IS enjoyed improving and growing through life and academic research, even though it was tough sometimes. For instance, as participant K stated,

I think maybe because of my construction background, mhm, when you set a picture, and I am thinking of something playful, uh, as a kid, I used to like lego, um, you know, the lego blocks. So I think of it as a, um, a puzzle piece, and I am plugging in little things into it every day, little even if it's a tough experience. I really see the value in what it's adding to be as a person. So I think as a picture in my mind, everything is making it richer, and I am growing by adding these little pieces, uh, to the puzzle board. Um, like I say, I think it's because of my construction background. So I am an artist, and I say so I am very interested in it, you know, building projects and watching things from nothing come to something, and you're watching things grow, and you're watching things built. Um. That is my favorite part of the work that I do. Um, and I think even the research, maybe that's actually what I think about it. I never thought about this before, but I think that's what I really enjoy.

Moreover, some IS were processing, for instance, participant P stated,

That's a good question. Um, I do not know why exactly，but I am picturing um, some kind of you know, the typical image of a leaf which is kind of going down slowly. Mhm, you know that one. Okay, that that's kind of how I feel

like I am kind of still landing, but kind of like softly and like kind of enjoying it in our way.

Similarly, participant C1 stated,

But about the pictures exactly for me, I describe it with the small tree that quarrel day after day. But it's sometimes it's not growing but doesn't mean that's not progressing. You know the progressing doesn't mean always at it could be you are not even going back down, it's also a kind of processing. I cannot say I am fully adapted, but I am mostly adapt with the culture that I can live in this country without any difficulties.

Furthermore, some IS were enjoy the new environment a lot. For instance, as participant J stated,

I am now very enjoyable. A very beautiful very blue sea, very blue blue sky, very white white clouds. I am on the beach, with a tent, a table. Then I I lay down on top of a lounger cross my legs, next to an Aperol Spritz with ice, with a straw. To my left was my partner, to my right was a light yellow golden, and next to the golden was a small round table with two small legs with drinks on it. My partner and I cross our legs. i pet my dog, wear my handsome sunglasses, then look at the water, watching the seagulls. Just want to lie for the rest of my life. I think I am becoming more and more of a foreigner, and I am starting to enjoy the conversation more and more. There are times when I think it's better to talk and sit down with a cup of coffee or a Spritz than to have a meal. But I didn't used to be like that, I was even at the master's level, and I didn't used to be very expressive, or maybe influenced by the whole environment. I didn't dare to say the wrong thing, so I was afraid to say it a lot of times. But abroad is different, you see my mentors argue with each other

without a problem. But in China, you know the Chinese atmosphere, you dare not say many things, can not say. In a foreign country, you can just release yourself and open your heart. You need an environment, the previous environment in China is too depressing. I have some friends in China, and I think they are also very depressed.

Another IS, participant A2 was enjoyed because of the freedom of doing things, as he stated,

Okay, let me show you the ready-made ones. These two pictures have a great influence on me. I think these two pictures should be able to represent me, um, to answer this question. Because these two pictures are my belief. The first is freedom, the second is knowledge, that is also freedom, freedom of knowledge. This is the relationship of inclusion... The previous figure represents knowledge, and this figure represents resources... My adaptability is mainly reflected in the fact that now the whole is your freedom to run towards you, a whole Process, towards freedom, pursuit of knowledge.

Last but not least, some IS assumed the study abroad experience was part of their life. For instance, participant O imagined his IA as "the picture of a person academia", who " moving around a lot that is like having different colleagues in different countries, that is, very like flexible". Moreover, he was "starting to feel really like kind of engaged in". Similarly, participant C assumed the study abroad experience was something that happen in life, as participant C stated,

My state is that "The Dream of the Red Chamber" at the end of the finale of that time, the protagonist Bao Yu joined the monastic order and pursued spiritual practice of that scene. The snow fell on a white blanket covering a large part of the world. A monk and a Taoist are in the middle of the sandwich

with Baoyu. Three people walked in the snow, and then slowly disappeared. Because "The Dream of the Red Chamber" is actually from a religious point of view, it is about a stone through a story, that is, the stone came to the earthly world to experience some things, and finally, the stone still has to go back, because it is a sacred stone. Because I am Chinese, I still identify with Chinese culture in my bones, especially this classical stuff, and I think that this is the current learning process, these are just an experience of life, and eventually we have to go to a farther stage.

Table 4.11

Mentioned participants of the intercultural adaptation

Participants	Main key words of the metaphor or image	Intercultural adaptation
A	Blue sky, white clouds, grassland, landscape	Having strong sense of purpose and goal: knowing what you are doing. "Headless flies can't find the wall."
B	Comfort zone: Own space to live and study	Enjoy the comfort zone: living in my own way
C	A sense of The Dream of the Red Chamber, A monk and a Taoist, Baoyu. Three people walked in the snow, and then slowly disappeared.	Experiencing the life, then go to a farther stage
D	Like a fast serial in home country, but slow down in Italy	Want to adapt to the new environment, slow down from daily lifestyle. In fact,

		I really want to enjoy this feeling, but I was tied up in research
E	A little tree that just grows its tusks	This academic atmosphere, is the academic symbol of the pyramid of a thing, if you do not do a good job you will fall down, or will not fall down, but will fall to other places, sprouting and fruit.
F	The roommate is painting, I laying on the sofa, watching but thinking the work in the department	Being limited by the academic research
G	Sea, reef, shore, being washed	Having difficulties in studying, need to find a way to solve or escape sometimes when it is annoying
H	Flatting calm water	Not adapting well. Exploring what and how to adapt or do well (academia)
I	Sea, sun, waves (up and down, but stable), boat	Pursuing life goal, pursuing meaningful life, knowing what you are doing
J	Beautiful and blue sea and sky, white clouds, on the beach, a partner, a dog, a tent, a small round table, an Aperol Spritz with ice, a straw, sunglasses, the	Changing the life style, having an enjoyable life style compared with in home country

	seagulls.	
K	Something playful: lego. Pulgging in little things into it every day, making it richer and growing.	Enjoying building project from nothing to something
L	Fish, used to being in the sea, just enter a massive ocean, but still water	Feeling comfortable, but need to see the atmosphere which is wider and bigger
M	The TV series Modern Family. The woman says "you could never know how I feel because I have to translate it everything in my mind and then speaking another language of mine."	Difficulties of communicating and understanding because of the language (Italian)
N	Going on vacation on the beach	Feeling stress because of the work challenges, but the new environment is interesting
O	Feel like a scientist, working around, having different colleagues	A lot of negative things connected to life and academia, but be passionate about it
P	A leaf going down slowly	Still landing, enjoy in a way
Q	A pen, ink is fading, filling ink. The ink keeps flowing.	Developing and using myself mentally, physically and emotionally
A1	Sky, sea, big boat, fishing, egrets, love, dynamic weather	A ship but not boat, more stable, having home feelings;

		Cannot get the work done, having anxiety exams and assignments, having meetings every day
B1	A small tree have been through the whole seasons, up and down	A little tired and feel so long and cold; Enjoy a lot of the life; Feel not part of it at the beginning, like a stranger or foreigner; Feel ignorant and useless
C1	The small tree that quarrel day after day, not growing sometimes but progressing	Always kind of progressing. I cannot say I am fully adapted, but I am mostly adapt with the culture that I can live in this country without any difficulties.
D1	Bamboo, storm	Kind of adapting
A2	《Sprung in die Freiheit》 《Scuola di Atene》	Having freedom and pursuit of knowledge
B2	Buildings, falling like Domino	A person trying to stop the dominance for falling. It was long, take me a lot to adapt.

The relationship between motivation to study abroad and intercultural adaptation

The third question was about how MSA effects IA of IS in Italian HEI. This section describes and answers the research question based on these two aspects, including the most influential MSA on IA, and how MSA effects IA.

The most influential motivation to study abroad on intercultural adaptation

Many factors motivated IS to study in Italy; among them, the main factors influencing the IA to the university included world enlightenment; personal growth; career development; and entertainment (see Table 4.12).

First of all, some participants believed that the world enlightenment was the most motivating factor that convinced them to adapt to the new intercultural environment. For instance, participant K mentioned that personal emotion, like being curious about learning and experiencing new things, was important. Participant K stated, "I think my motivation to study abroad, my mind just to too immerse myself in the cultural experience. Coming at everything from, uh, from among aspect of learning and experiencing because I was very, very keen to experience new things." Another participant N had the similar view, participant N stated,

> Um, I think the interest in the new culture is for sure. Because then you start to go out, experience the city, you get to know people, places. And once you are curious, I think then it's pretty easy to adopt......Mhm, about new things, yeah, which helps me the most to adapt to the new environment.

Moreover, some participants mentioned a more personal view perspective. For instance, as participant A2 stated,

> I think there is only one, universal value, on those I just said, freedom, democracy, should be the rule of law and fairness, is that these universal values for human society recognized by the common, gangsters gangsters can not deny, this is also the only most important factor to the adaptability.

Secondly, some participants mentioned that personal growth influenced most of their IA, mainly about academic adjustment. For instance, as participant Q stated,

I would say it was my determination to complete what I started, which is the PhD program. So um yeah, I want to have a doctorate education, and I am having that, and I know that it's a three-year program. And I am progressing where is in a blue way. Yeah, so I think that motivation keeps pushing me, and it keeps making me adapt to UNIPD.

Thirdly, some participants pointed out that career development was the motivational factor that influenced their IA. For instance, as participant A1 stated,

The motivation is to find a job, a job that is more equal in terms of gender, and then a job with more room for career development, so that my study abroad life can be more purposeful and planned.

Moreover, some participants had the immigrant attention to work and stay in Italy, which motivated and influenced them the most. The desire to migrate or work in the destination country after finishing a study program has been established as a significant influencing factor in the choice of host country (Beine et al, 2014; Pawar et al, 2020). For instance, as participant B1 stated,

The idea is to continue living in Italy and working there. It's, it feels like a great responsibility. And the first two years it was so pressure. Each second, I was like, because one day you will be a doctor, and you want to know how to say these words. So go and study because you want to be good at it, but lately I swear lately, I just wanted to have fun and I have not been thinking about why ambitions.

Similarly, as another participant B2 stated,

I mean, what I think was like, I am not coming back. Okay, I mean I know it's like okay, this is like I think that there was a point of no return, even though I at some stage I was about to go back home and leave everything. But I think,

like, what influenced me most was like, okay I am sure now I need to get melted, get inside. And actually, like okay, the first step is to learn the language well, like speak the language well, like...... so it was that, you know, and then to search. And you were on somebody of survival. Because, like my family told me like, "okay, you're going to study abroad, but we cannot pay you, you need to pay for your life, you need to pay for your studies, you need to pay for everything that you know." So like, so there was also a thing that helped me adopt the hard way because it was like, okay, if I do not look for myself, no one will do it. So now it's right. And sometimes, like, did you experience to maybe on certain occasions to know how to go towards them, you know.

Last but not least, some participants believed that entertainment like "enjoy life" influenced their IA the most. For instance, as participant O stated,

Uh, I guess that I feel well with my work, which is very important. Because it's anyways, it's a big part of my time; I am spending on my project. So I think if I would not happy with my project, I would maybe or somehow not be happy with my life in Padua. Then yeah, I appreciate the mood here at the department that I made some friends among my colleagues. And then it's very like, as I said, a very relaxing move here. And I also, I mean, I enjoy the life here; also I enjoy being close to the mountains and going out for my fieldwork. But also being flexible to move around, spend a week at home, and spend a week with my friends. I enjoy the life here, but I also enjoy getting out of Padua and seeing some other things, and going to other cities. And you know, spending out of my time in Switzerland, for example, to get some other

impressions. See some different cities, and then I can think about where I want to live and what I like.

Table 4.12

Mentioned participants of the most influential motivation on intercultural adaptation

The most influential motivation	Mentioned Participants
World enlightenment	
Learning and experiencing new things	K, N
A liberal and free international academic environment	E
Having the right of personal initiative	B
Universal Values	A2
QS university ranking	F
Personal growth	
Personal growth	H
Personal growth (be stronger)	J
Personal growth in academia	C
I don't know. Personal growth: achieving small aims	M
Determination to complete PhD program	Q
Career development	
From academic to employment	D
Finish the degree and find a job	D1
Career development	A1
Future career development planning	A
Future career development planning, having passion for academic	G

research	
Having the idea to continue living and working in Italy	B1
Not return back home	B2
Entertainment	
Feel well with my work (PhD project) and enjoy the life	O
Professors in the department: make life easier and happier	C1
I don't know. At the moment: kind people and dog	L
A relationship: partner in Italy	P, I

How motivation to study abroad effects intercultural adaptation?

Motivation energises, directs, and sustains behaviour, allowing students to engage, point themselves in a particular direction, and continue exploring (Fredricks et al., 2004; Maehr & Meyer, 1997). According to the participants, most were stuck between home culture and Italian cultural circles. The MSA plays a vital role in IA, a dynamic integration model of interaction between MSA and IA can help to understand the relationship (see figure 4.3). More details were described below.

Firstly, according to the participants, MSA had positive and negative effects on IA. Moreover, different types of motivation had different impacts on learning experiences, which was also proved in the study of Sze-Yeung Lai and Chi-leung Hui (2021). More specifically, IS, with personal goals, beliefs, and values, seemed to adapt to the university easier (positive effects and virtuous). They knew what they were doing and what they wanted after graduation. For instance, as participant M stated,

It was a combination of being in the right place at the right time. And I feel lucky for that. But, I think that the idea was like achieving small aims by the time, like not trying to go like in the beginning but going slowly. Yeah and

like feeling it's okay, you will go through it and of course some day there was like no, we can't. But at the end is like I always think that this sand comes out every day I guess. okay, you cannot see, maybe you cannot see, but every day is a new day and like at the beginning I started like this. "Every day is a new day." Maybe what didn't work yesterday is going to work today. And just going through the other states slowly basis step by step like quickly quick. And I think that would help me the beginning I just met one person at the beginning. Now I know more of them but as slowly.

In fact, there were some participants have a strong mind of personal growth, which motivated them to adapt to the new environment. For instance, as participant J stated,

"I want to be stronger" is the motivation that affects me the most. When you are in trouble, this motivation is, deep inside you, there is a voice telling you. Research is very tiring, and when I get stuck, this voice supports me to solve the problem, which is a very significant motivation. But at the moment I think it is relatively smooth, our subject group words or overall words cooperation is still relatively good. This is the most original motivation, it supports me to get up every day motivation, is also the only motivation. But to be honest, I feel that I still say that out of my original family influence, I am a person who is lack of love, absolutely lack of love. Influenced by the family of origin, the lack of love at the same time, I am also constantly making myself strong.

Similarly, another participant C stated,

The most fundamental motivation is because I want to do a really good research, I want to do really make something real. This is a fundamental goal, because I want to really make the kind of valuable, original kind of research. That is, research that cannot be done by foreigners, but is more unique. In fact,

the difficulty is very high. In order to achieve this goal, you have to improve your language, accumulate general knowledge, train your thinking, collect materials, and practice writing. It's a long battle line, but with this basic goal, there is a direction for the later study. It is more important to know what you want to do and not get lost.

However, IS were facing difficulties and challenges during the intercultural adapting process. They have high expectations from inside or outside that bring them pressures or anxiety (negative effects and vicious). For instance, as participant E stated,

What touches me a lot is the liberal and free environment abroad so that I can cooperate with others. This academic environment forced me to make some changes. For example, I have to take more initiative to undertake some things to strengthen myself. The shortcoming of the university is that its training system is not standardized, and the whole research thinking and many other aspects have to be figured out by myself.

Moreover, participant H believed MSA have both positive and negative effects on IA, and the negative effect was "a vicious circle", as participant H stated,

Personal growth has both positive and negative effects on university adaptation. The positive side is reflected in still being more proactive in finding ways to fit in and study in Italy. The negative impact is reflected in the negative effects based on the fact that you personally try to fit in too much and end up not fitting in. For example, the more I want to communicate with the teacher, the more I am afraid to communicate with him, and then I get into a deadly cycle, which is not good for my personal growth. Because you have no way to adapt well, that is, this is actually a vicious circle.

While the other participant believed the positive effect was virtuous, as participant B stated,

> Because it is my own initiative to choose, I will take the initiative to adapt, rather than a passive process. Although I came to Italy to study for a PhD because of some random factors, this path is my choice, and since I made this choice, I will actively adapt to it. That is, my own choice will prompt to make me work harder to adapt to this environment.

Secondly, some participants believed that the influence of MSA on IA was changed dynamic. For instance, as participant D stated,

> The focus of my motivation to study abroad is a dynamic change, and a change in my mindset. At the beginning this motivation was academic motivation, but later mixed with the reality of the situation, it became employment motivation." Needless to say, the academic motivation is that the basic science abroad is absolutely crushing for China. China is, to put it nicely, 30 years behind. "After that, this student explained from the point of view of professional and technical development and the government's investment orientation in research. Speaking of employment. I got my PhD degree in Italy, and I am looking for a job throughout Europe and the United States, and I am much stronger than students from Tsinghua University and Peking University in China, whether I am changing careers or doing a postdoc.

Thirdly, some IS mentioned that the process of the influence of MSA on IA was an integration process. For instance, as participant A stated,

> Among the motivations to study abroad, I think my future career plan has the biggest impact on college adaptation. Because I want to complete this I have to stick with it. That is, I have to use all the resources to help me achieve my

career plan, and then I have to adapt. Planning for my future career gave me

the belief that you have to accept everything. Even if it's not good, you have to

accept it, because you have to have this integration. But often in the

integration and acceptance of this aspect is difficult to do. For myself,

sometimes you know that the way of life and the way of teaching are different,

and when you start to integrate, there is really a process of adaptation.

Figure 4.3

A dynamic virtuous and vicious cycle model of interaction between MSA and IA
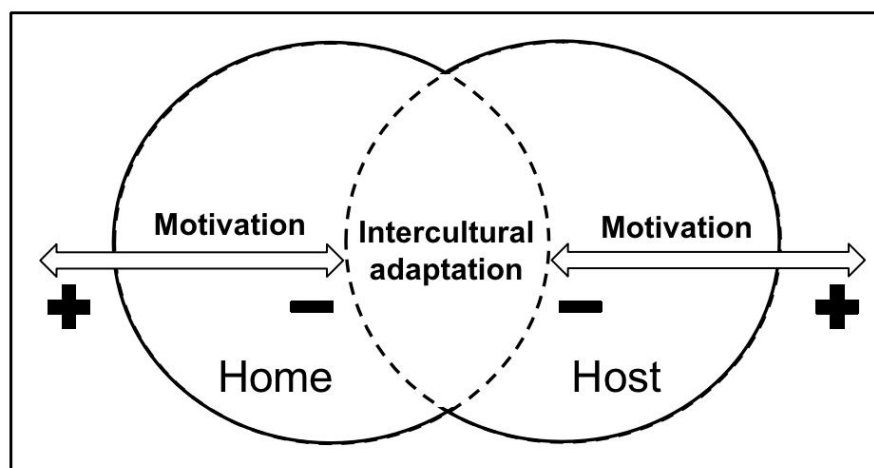
Summary

In summary, this chapter outlines the qualitative findings of this study. Based on

these findings, this study determined that IS' MSA includes the pull of the host

country (Italy); the push of the home country; Italian higher education institution and

educational system; the program and applications; personal goals, beliefs, and values;

and social support. Moreover, IS were stuck between two cultures, and they had

difficulties and challenges adapting to the new environment, including cultural

barriers; social networks; living difficulties; academic research; personal emotional;

and institutional attachment. Furthermore, MSA had both positive and negative

effects on IA. A dynamic integration model of interaction between MSA and IA can

help to understand the relationship. These findings informed the study's further development and the quantitative research results through the survey. The results of the quantitative research are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between motivations for studying abroad (MSA) and the intercultural adaptation (IA) of international students (IS) in Italy. To support this purpose, some research questions guided this study, including:

1. What motivated international students to choose and make decision to study abroad in Italian HEI?

2. How international students' intercultural adaptation in Italian HEI changed?

3. How motivation to study abroad effects intercultural adaptation of international students in Italian HEI?

4. Do background characteristics mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy?

Collecting and Reporting of Quantitative Data

Due to the adoption of a sequential exploratory mixed methods design in this study, it is crucial to outline the process by which the qualitative component informs the development of the quantitative survey. Therefore, this section provides a brief overview of the survey development and discusses the methods for interpreting and analyzing survey data. The section concludes by outlining the remaining parts of this chapter.

Survey Development

Consistent with a sequential exploratory mixed methods research design, the investigation in this study was based on findings from the qualitative portion of the study, consistent with Astin's Input-Environment-Output (I-E-O) model (1993) and student involvement theory (1984). The following subsections therefore outline how these contributed to the development of the survey.

Qualitative findings. By reviewing the findings of the qualitative component of this study, it is helpful to discuss how it informed the quantitative investigation. Through the qualitative study, the results suggest that: IS' MSA includes the pull of the host country (Italy); the push of the home country; Italian higher education institution and educational system; the program and applications; personal goals, beliefs, and values; and social support. Moreover, IS were caught between two cultures, and they faced difficulties and challenges in adapting to the new environment, including cultural barriers; social networks; living difficulties; academic research; personal emotional; and goal commitment-institutional attachment. Furthermore, MSA had both positive and negative effects on IA, and the most influential MSA could be summarized in four aspects, including world enlightenment; personal growth; career development; entertainment.

In this regard, the purpose of the survey was to explore and address these findings and to pose questions for each topic. Two well-established instruments used in this study to measure the MSA and IA, are the Motivation to Study Abroad (MSA, Anderson & Lawton, 2015b) and the Student Adjustment To College Questionnaire (SACQ, Baker & Siryk, 1989). Considering the variability among individuals, this study also set up the questions asked about demographic characteristics, to understand the overall situation of the participants. The number of survey items for each theme were: demographic characteristics (23); MSA instrument includes world enlightenment (7), personal growth (6), career development (5), and entertainment (5) in MSA instrument; SACQ instrument includes academic (24), social (20), personal (15), and institutional (15). The questionnaire was selected based on the content of the interviews with IS and the framework of IEO model and student involvement theory. The guidance of the theoretical framework for the survey is discussed below.

The construction of I-E-O model and student involvement theory. The development of the questionnaire in this study was based on the construction of the I-E-O model and student involvement theory, which is also consistent with the qualitative results of this study. Specifically, based on previous research and the conceptual framework of the I-E-O model and student involvement theory, this study proposes a set of hypotheses to address the research questions guiding this study. These research questions aim to investigate IS' motivations for choosing Italian higher education institution (HEI) and programs, their IA at the university, and the impact of their motivations on IA. Therefore, this study formulates four research questions and six hypotheses in accordance with the structure and concepts of the I-E-O model and student involvement theory. In summary, the research questions and hypotheses guiding the quantitative component of this study are as follows:

Question 1: What motivated international students to choose and make decision to study abroad in Italian HEI?

Hypothesis 1: International students with different background characteristics (age, gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship; financed by family) will have different motivations to study abroad.

Hypothesis 2: The choice of applied university number will be associated with the student's motivation for studying abroad.

Hypothesis 3: The first language and Italian skills of international students will be associated with the student's motivation for studying abroad.

Question 2: How international students' intercultural adaptation in Italian HEI changed over time?

Hypothesis 4: The post-SACQ scores will be higher than the pre-SACQ scores of international students.

Question 3: How do the four motivational dimensions (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) affect international students' intercultural adaptation (academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) in Italian HEI at time 1 and time 2?

Hypothesis 5: The stronger motivation (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) that international students have, the better intercultural adaptation (academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) they have at time 1 and time 2.

Hypothesis 6: Four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) positively predict four SACQ subscales (academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) at time 1 and time 2.

Question 4: Do background characteristics mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy?

Hypothesis 7: Age, gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship, applied university number, first language, financial support from family, Italian language skills, communication, stay and plan to stay in Italy, studying abroad experience, and curriculum setting mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy.

Analyzing and Reporting Data

A number of tests were conducted in this study to interpret, analyze, and report survey data and to test hypotheses. An important point to note is that there were three instruments in the survey, the first one is the demographic characteristics with different scoring system. The second one is MSA, a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 not at all important) to 5 (Absolutely essential). The third one is the SACQ, a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Applies very closely to me) to 9 (Doesn't apply to me at all). Therefore, in analyzing the personal data, this study conducted general Descriptive Statistics used SPSS 28 for some of the questions included in the survey and reported these results using response frequency percentages. Additionally, correlation analyses were conducted to identify the correlations among MSA subscales in the total sample of IS in Italian HEI. Pearson correlation and one-way ANOVA were conducted to test if IS with different background characteristics (age, gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship; financed by family) will have different motivations to study abroad.

The study used R for regression analysis to examine the effects of four

motivational dimensions (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) on IS' IA (overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) in Italian higher education institutions at time 1 and time 2. Furthermore, to evaluate the predictive ability between MSA subscales and overall SACQ and it's subscales through regression analyses, further analyses were conducted to investigate how different motivational dimensions may have impacted IS' adaptation(overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between motivational dimensions and IA among IS in Italian HEI. While the time difference did not affect this relationship, the study recognized the importance of understanding the influences of adaptation for each moderator variable. By considering the moderator variables, this study had a further research aimed to gain deeper insights into how various factors might influence the process of adaptation among IS in Italy. This allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between motivation and adaptation in the context of studying abroad in Italy.

Presentation of the Findings

The quantitative results being discussed in this chapter are presented in two sections. The first section focus on understanding the MSA of IS, demographic characteristics, and how those factors influenced their MSA in Italy. This is followed by the second section, which discusses and explores how the adaptation changed over time, how motivational dimensions. Based on the study above, motivational dimensions did not have much statistically significant with the adaptation interacted by time. The third section was a further study exploring the moderate effects on the

relationship of motivational dimensions and overall adaptation. The final section provides a summary of the findings.

<div align="center">**Motivation to Study Abroad**</div>

The primary objective of this study section is to address the initial research question: What motivated IS to choose and make decision to study abroad in Italy? Moreover, three research hypotheses were formulated to provide a specific and testable prediction or expectation regarding the relationship between variables in the first research question.

Overview of the Statistical Analyses

As can be seen in Figure 1, descriptive statistic for career development subscale reveal an overall mean score of 4.30 ($SD = 0.71$), which is the highest rated of the motivations for studying abroad. This shows the positive perception of career development among the IS. This followed with the personal growth subscale reveal an overall mean score of 3.89 ($SD = 0.88$), and world enlightenment subscale reveal an overall mean score of 3.82 ($SD = 0.79$). Moreover, there were no significant difference between world enlightenment and personal growth, but these means were both significantly different from career development and entertainment. The IS' motivations for entertainment subscale reveal an overall mean score of 1.60 ($SD = 0.65$), which means the entertainment subscale is significantly lower than the other three subscales. Thus, career development was the most influential factor to motivate IS to study abroad in the Italian HEI while entertainment is the lowest.

Figure 1

Result for the Four Factors of the MSA (N = 604)

Four factors	N	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
World enlightenment	604	1	5	3.82	0.79

Personal growth	604	1	5	3.89	0.88
Career development	604	1	5	4.30	0.71
Entertainment	604	1	4.6	1.66	0.65

Moreover, the Cronbach's alpha is reported as $\alpha = 0.714$, thus, all subscales had acceptable internal reliability with Cronbach's alpha higher than .70. Furthermore, the correlation between the four subscales of MSA, this study used the Pearson correlation coefficient which measures the strength and direction of the linear relationship between two continuous variables. A positive correlation indicates that two dimensions tend to increase together. For instance, there is a positive correlation between world enlightenment and personal growth, suggesting that as one of these motivations increases, the other tends to increase as well. The strengths of correlations can vary, with higher values indicating a stronger relationship between the dimensions. The correlations in the data are generally positive, suggesting that these motivations are positively related to each other to some extent. However, the strengths of these relationships differ. For instance, the correlation between world enlightenment and career development is weaker compared to the correlation between world enlightenment and personal growth. More specifically, world enlightenment was more strongly positively related to personal growth, $r (601) = 0.683$, $p < .001$, than to career development, $r (601) = 0.385$, $p < .001$, and to entertainment, $r (601) = 0.319$, $p < .001$.

Figure 2

Correlations among MSA Subscales in the Total Sample of IS in Italian HEI (N = 604)

Four factors	1	2	3	4
1. World enlightenment	1			
2. Personal growth	0.683	1		

3. Career development	0.385	0.412	1
4. Entertainment	0.319	0.288	0.143	1

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Research Question and Hypothesis Results

Research question 1: What motivated international students to choose and make decision to study abroad in Italian HEI?

Hypothesis 1: International students with different background characteristics (age, gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship; financed by family) will have different motivations to study abroad.

Age. Age appears to have varying degrees of correlation with different MSA among participants. Personal growth and entertainment motivations are statistically significant, indicating meaningful relationships with age, while world enlightenment and career development motivations do not show significant associations with age. The mean score of age groups was 27 ($SD = 4.58$). This indicates that, on average, the age of the individuals in this first phase of study is 27 years old. The ages of individuals in this first phase of study tend to vary or deviate from the mean age of 27 by approximately 4.58 years, on average. As illustrated in Figure 3, the correlation between world enlightenment and age ($r = -0.006$, $p = .887$) as well as career development and age ($r = 0.036$, $p = .375$) did not show significant differences across various age groups. Conversely, there were significant differences observed across different age groups in the correlations between personal growth and age ($r = -0.142$, $p < .001$) and between entertainment and age ($r = -0.096$, $p = .019$). Furthermore, the correlation coefficients between the age variable and the MSA subscales, which encompass world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment, suggest either no correlation or a very weak one.

Figure 3

Correlations among Age and MSA Subscales (N = 604)

MSA subscales	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Age	
World enlightenment	-0.006	0.887
Personal growth	-0.142	<.001
Career development	0.036	0.375
Entertainment	-0.096	0.019

Gender. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the differences in the MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment) among four groups based on the gender (males, females, prefer not to answer, and other). The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of gender on the personal growth subscale $F_{(3, 600)} = 1.15$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = 0.022$, and entertainment subscale $F_{(3, 600)} = 2.94$, $p = .033$, $\eta^2 = 0.014$. While the ANOVA revealed there is no evidence to support a significant difference in the two subscales of world enlightenment subscale $F_{(3, 600)} = 1.15$, $p = .33$, $\eta^2 = 0.006$ and career development $F_{(3, 600)} = 2.94$, $p = .59$, $\eta^2 = 0.003$ among the four gender groups being compared. Moreover, the values measured by Eta-squared (η^2) suggest small effects, indicating that roughly 2.2% of the variance in personal growth subscale scores, 1.4% of the variance in entertainment subscale scores, 0.6% of the variance in world enlightenment subscale scores, and 0.3% of the variance in career development subscale scores can be attributed to gender differences.

Degree. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the differences in the MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment) among five groups based on the degree-seeking type (bachelor's

degree; master's degree; doctoral degree; single-cycle degree (5 years); single-cycle degree (6 years)). The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of degree-seeking type on the career development subscale $F (4, 599) = 2.61$, $p = .035$, $\eta^2 = 0.017$. While the ANOVA revealed there is no evidence to support a significant difference in the other three subscales among the five degree-seeking type groups being compared : world enlightenment subscale $F (4, 599) = 0.678$, $p = .607$, $\eta^2 = 0.005$; personal growth subscale $F (4, 599) = 2.345$, $p = .796$, $\eta^2 = 0.015$; and entertainment subscale $F (4, 599) = 0.417$, $p = .035$, $\eta^2 = 0.003$. According to the effect sizes, as measured by Eta-squared (η^2), this indicated a small effect, suggesting that approximately 1.7% career development subscale scores, 0.5% world enlightenment subscale scores, 1.5% of the personal growth subscale scores, and 0.3% of entertainment subscale scores that can be explained by degree type differences.

University year. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the differences in the MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment) among four groups based on the university year (first year; second year; third year; more than three years). The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of different university year on the career development subscale $F (3, 600) = 2.949$, $p = .032$, $\eta^2 = 0.015$. While the ANOVA revealed there is no evidence to support a significant difference in the other three subscales among the different university year groups being compared: world enlightenment subscale $F (3, 600) = 1.537$, $p = .204$, $\eta^2 = 0.008$; personal growth subscale $F (3, 600) = 0.436$, $p = .727$, $\eta^2 = 0.002$; and entertainment subscale $F (3, 600) = 1.237$, $p = .295$, $\eta^2 = 0.006$. Based on the effect sizes measured by Eta-squared (η^2), this indicates a small effect, implying that around 1.5% of the variance in career development subscale scores, 0.8% of world enlightenment subscale scores, 0.2% of personal growth subscale scores, and

0.6% of entertainment subscale scores can be attributed to differences in university years.

School. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the differences in the MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment) among nine groups based on the school (school of economics and political science; school of psychology; school of human and social sciences and cultural heritage; school of engineering; school of science; school of medicine; school of agricultural sciences and veterinary medicine; law school; other). The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of schools on the career development subscale F (7, 596) = 5.928, p <.001, η^2 = 0.065. While the ANOVA revealed there is no evidence to support a significant difference in the other three subscales among the nine school groups being compared: world enlightenment subscale F (7, 596) = 0.571, p = .780, η^2 = 0.007; personal growth subscale F (7, 596) = 1.770, η^2 = 0.20, p = .091; and entertainment subscale F (7, 596) = 0.451, p = .870, η^2 = 0.005. According to the effect sizes, as measured by Eta-squared (η^2), this indicated a small effect, suggesting that approximately 6.5% career development subscale scores, 0.7% world enlightenment subscale scores, 9.1% of the personal growth subscale scores, and 0.5% of entertainment subscale scores that can be explained by school differences.

Scholarship. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the differences in the MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment) among four groups based on the scholarship (I did not receive any scholarship; home country; host country (Italy); other). The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of scholarship on the three subscales of MSA, including personal growth subscale F (3, 600) = 4.013, p = .008, η^2 = 0.02, career development subscale F (3, 600) = 3.576, p = .014, η^2 = 0.018, and entertainment subscale F (3, 600) = 4.619,

$p = .003$, $\eta^2 = 0.023$. However, the ANOVA revealed there is no evidence to support a significant difference in the world enlightenment subscale F (3, 600) = 1.158, $p = .325$, $\eta^2 = 0.006$ among the four scholarship groups being compared. According to the effect sizes, as measured by Eta-squared (η^2), this indicated a small effect, suggesting that approximately 2.0% of the personal growth subscale scores, 1.8% career development subscale scores, 2.3% of entertainment subscale scores, and 0.6% world enlightenment subscale scores that can be explained by scholarship differences.

Financed by family. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the differences in the MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment) among seven groups based on the financed by family (none; 10% or less; between 10% to 30%; between 30% to 50%; between 50% to 70%; between 70% to 90%; between 90% to 100%). The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of schools on the personal growth subscale F (6, 597) = 3.176, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = 0.031$. While the ANOVA revealed there is no evidence to support a significant difference in the other three subscales among the seven financed by family groups being compared : world enlightenment subscale F (6, 597) = 1.177, $p = .317$, $\eta^2 = 0.012$; career development subscale F (6, 597) = 0.698, $p = .651$, $\eta^2 = 0.007$; and entertainment subscale F (6, 597) = 1.251, $p = .278$, $\eta^2 = 0.012$. According to the effect sizes, as measured by Eta-squared (η^2), this indicated a small effect, suggesting that approximately 3.1% of the personal growth subscale scores, 0.7% career development subscale scores, 1.2% of entertainment subscale scores, and 1.2% world enlightenment subscale scores that can be explained by financed by family differences.

In conclusion, the statistical analysis supports hypothesis 1, which posits that IS with diverse background characteristics such as age, gender, degree, university

year, school, scholarship status, and family financing exhibit varying motivations for studying abroad.

Hypothesis 2: The choice of applied university number will be associated with the student's motivation for studying abroad.

Applied university number. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the differences in the MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment) among six groups based on the applied university number (one; two to three; four to five; six to seven; eight to nine; more than nine). The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of the applied university number on the career development subscale F (5, 598) = 2.240, p = .049, η^2 = 0.037. While the ANOVA revealed there is no evidence to support a significant difference in the other three subscales among the six applied university number groups being compared: world enlightenment subscale F (5, 598) = 1.198, p = .309, η^2 = 0.023; personal growth subscale F (5, 598) = 0.656, p = .657, η^2 = 0.013; and entertainment subscale F (5, 598) = 0.827, p = .531, η^2 = 0.017. According to the effect sizes, as measured by Eta-squared (η^2), this indicated a small effect, suggesting that approximately 3.7% career development subscale scores, 2.3% world enlightenment subscale scores, 1.3% of the personal growth subscale scores, and 1.7% of entertainment subscale scores that can be explained by the applied university number differences.

Moreover, according to Figure 4, it illustrated the distribution of university applications across different continents which provided information on the number of responses received for each continent and their respective percentages of the total cases. Europe received the highest number of responses, with 569 applications, North America accounting for 76.20% of the total cases or 94.20% when considering the percentages; Asia had 48 applications, representing 6.40% of the total cases or 7.90%

in terms of percentages; Africa received 7 applications, making up 0.90% of the total cases or 1.20% in percentages; North America had 85 applications, accounting for 11.40% of the total cases or 14.10% in percentages; South America had 20 applications, representing 2.70% of the total cases or 3.30% in percentages; Australia/Oceania received 17 applications, making up 2.30% of the total cases or 2.80% in percentages.; Antarctica had the lowest number of applications, with only 1, accounting for 0.10% of the total cases or 0.20% in percentages.

Figure 4

Responses and Percent of Continents with the Highest Number of University Applications (N = 604)

Continents	Responses		Percent of cases
Europe	569	76.20%	94.20%
Asia	48	6.40%	7.90%
Africa	7	0.90%	1.20%
North America	85	11.40%	14.10%
South America	20	2.70%	3.30%
Australia/Oceania	17	2.30%	2.80%
Antarctica	1	0.10%	0.20%
Total	747	100.00%	123.70%

Above all, there was a significant difference in the number of universities applied to by IS based on their motivation, with those seeking career development applying to a higher number of universities compared to those motivated by world enlightenment, personal growth, and entertainment goals.

Hypothesis 3: The first language and Italian skills of IS will be associated with the student's motivation for studying abroad.

First language. A t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment) between the English and non-English groups. Results revealed significant differences in the mean scores of personal growth between English

speakers and non-English speakers. Specifically, English speakers tend to have lower personal growth scores compared to their non-English-speaking counterparts (t = -3.627, p < .05). However, there was no significant difference in the world enlightenment (t = -1.589, p > .05), career development (t = 0.996, p > .05), and entertainment subscale (t = -2.223, p > .05).

Overall Italian language skills. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the differences in the MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment) among six groups based on the overall Italian language skills (poor; below average; average; above average; excellent; native speaker). The ANOVA revealed a significant effect of the overall Italian language skills on the career development subscale F (5, 598) = 3.199, p =.007, η² = 0.026. While the ANOVA revealed there is no evidence to support a significant difference in the other three subscales among the five degree-seeking type groups being compared: world enlightenment subscale F (5, 598) = 0.554, p = .735, η² = 0.005; personal growth subscale F (5, 598) = 2.009, p = .076, η² = 0.017; and entertainment subscale F (5, 598) = 0.448, p = .815, η² = 0.004. According to the effect sizes, as measured by Eta-squared (η²), this indicated a small effect, suggesting that approximately 2.6% career development subscale scores, 0.5% world enlightenment subscale scores, 1.7% of the personal growth subscale scores, and 0.4% of entertainment subscale scores that can be explained by school differences.

Above all, Hypothesis 3, the first language and Italian skills of IS will be associated with the IS' motivation for studying abroad was supported based on the statistical analysis.

Longitudinal Process of IA and the Impact of MSA

This section of the study focuses on examining the longitudinal process of IA

and the impact of MSA and the moderate effect. It mainly addresses three research questions and four hypotheses:

Question 2: How international students' intercultural adaptation in Italian HEI changed over time?

Hypothesis 4: The post-SACQ scores will be higher than the pre-SACQ scores of international students.

Question 3: How do the four motivational dimensions (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) affect international students' intercultural adaptation (academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) in Italian HEI at time 1 and time 2?

Hypothesis 5: The stronger the motivation (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) that international students have, the better their intercultural adaptation (academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) is at time 1 and time 2.

Hypothesis 6: Four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) positively predict four SACQ subscales (academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) at time 1 and time 2.

Question 4: Do background characteristics mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy?

Hypothesis 7: Age, gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship, applied university number, first language, financial support from family, Italian

language skills, communication, stay and plan to stay in Italy, studying abroad experience, and curriculum setting mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy.

Overview of the Statistical Analyses

There was a total of 604 questionnaires were distributed for the second phase study. As of July 14, 2023, 237 complete questionnaires were received, while 67 were incomplete. According to Cochran's (1977) correction formula, which used to calculate the final sample size, a sample size of 235 is needed from a population of 604. Therefore, this study ultimately obtained 237 sample size, which meet the minimum required sample size to achieve the desired level of confidence and margin of error for estimating proportions in the population. Moreover, the dataset is complete and does not contain any missing data.

Descriptive statistics indicated longitudinal patterns of adaptation by measuring the correlations between the overall and subscales of the SACQ instrument at Time 1 and Time 2. Moreover, this study conducted correlation analysis between moderator variables and the SACQ subscales at Time 1 and Time 2. Then, this study conducted five one-way ANOVAs for repeated measures (two time points) to measure the changes in the adaptation over time. Next, R was used for the appropriate models instead of SPSS 28. Regression analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between the four MSA subscales and the overall SACQ and the four SACQ subscales. Additionally, the moderating effect was assessed subsequently. For comparability, analyses employed SACQ subscale scores that had been re-scaled by dividing by the number of subscale items so that all scores ranged from 1 to 9 or 9 to 1. According to Baker and Siryk (1989), "there are 34 of the items (the negative keyed

items), these values run from 1 to 9, while for the other 33 items (the positively keyed items) the value run from 9 to 1(pp. 1-4)."

Preliminary Analyses

Intercorrelation between the overall and subscales of SACQ at Time 1 and Time 2. This study conducted intercorrelations between gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship, applied university number, first language, and the four SACQ subscales (academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, and goal commitment-institutional attachment) and overall SACQ at Time 1 and Time 2. The results were shown below(see Figure 5). According to Figure 5, for the IS who participated in both phases, this study compared the means of all measured SACQ variables. The score of overall SACQ was decreased from 5.75 (S.D.=1.21) at Time 1to 5.66 (S.D.=1.20) at Time 2. However, academic adaptation and goal commitment-institutional attachment were decreased from 5.85 (S.D.=1.29) at Time 1 to 5.72 (S.D.=1.28) at Time 2, and from 6.49 (S.D.=1.26) at Time 1to 6.36 (S.D.=1.37) at Time 2 respectively. While Social adaptation and Personal-emotional adaptation increased from 5.41 (S.D.=1.40) at Time 1to 5.47 (S.D.=1.39) at Time 2, and from 5.39 (S.D.=1.70) at Time 1to 5.23 (S.D.=1.71) at Time 2 respectively. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient were positive statistically significant, it indicated a strong positive relationship among the overall and the four subscales of SACQ. Moreover, the Cronbach's alphas value, a = .926 at Time 1while a = .920 at Time 2, thus, both indicated better internal consistency reliability.

Figure 5

Result of Correlation Coefficients, Means, SD between Unchanged moderator variables and SACQ at Time 1 and Time 2 (N=237)

Variables		Gender	Degree	University year	School	Scholarship	Applied university number	First language	SACQ-T	SACQ-A	SACQ-S	SACQ-P	SACQ-I
Gender	*r*	1	-.296**	-0.026	-.242**	-.177**	-.184**	-0.025	-0.095	-0.032	-0.092	-.147*	-0.004
	p		<.001	0.692	<.001	0.006	0.005	0.697	0.145	0.622	0.16	0.024	0.954
Degree	*r*	-.296**	1	.146*	.294**	.272**	0.008	0.004	0.111	0.066	0.097	.155*	-0.005
	p	<.001		0.025	<.001	<.001	0.904	0.949	0.088	0.308	0.137	0.017	0.937
University year	*r*	-0.026	.146*	1	-0.024	0.048	-0.037	0.1	0.101	0.031	0.116	.140*	0.046
	p	0.692	0.025		0.716	0.462	0.568	0.126	0.12	0.638	0.075	0.031	0.481
School	*r*	-.242**	.294**	-0.024	1	.230**	0.084	-0.08	0.064	0.037	0.074	0.05	0.067
	p	<.001	<.001	0.716		<.001	0.198	0.217	0.328	0.569	0.253	0.446	0.301
Scholarship	*r*	-.177**	.272**	0.048	.230**	1	.182**	0.093	0.022	0.051	0.012	0.014	-0.057
	p	0.006	<.001	0.462	<.001		0.005	0.154	0.739	0.435	0.859	0.826	0.381
Applied university number	*r*	-.184**	0.008	-0.037	0.084	.182**	1	-0.049	-0.025	-0.002	-0.023	-0.01	-0.051
	p	0.005	0.904	0.568	0.198	0.005		0.449	0.701	0.978	0.721	0.877	0.432
First language	*r*	-0.025	0.004	0.1	-0.08	0.093	-0.049	1	-0.033	-0.05	0.003	-0.03	-0.015
	p	0.697	0.949	0.126	0.217	0.154	0.449		0.611	0.445	0.958	0.651	0.819
SACQ-T	*r*	-.184**	.208**	0.098	0.094	0.091	0.03	-0.006	1	.889**	.794**	.858**	.848**
	p	0.004	0.001	0.134	0.149	0.162	0.648	0.932		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

SACQ-A	r	-0.119	.172**	0.032	0.095	0.114	-0.006	-0.044	.917**	1	.527**	.682**	.684*
	p	0.068	0.008	0.624	0.145	0.079	0.929	0.5	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
SACQ-S	r	-.139*	.151*	.160*	0.059	0.058	-0.009	0.017	.826**	.639**	1	.567**	.778*
	p	0.033	0.02	0.014	0.363	0.375	0.892	0.8	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
SACQ-P	r	-.251**	.253**	0.112	0.073	0.062	0.108	0.011	.846**	.695**	.564**	1	.592*
	p	<.001	<.001	0.085	0.261	0.341	0.099	0.867	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
SACQ-I	r	-0.108	0.1	0.019	0.115	0.034	0.004	0.016	.842**	.728**	.781**	.573**	1
	p	0.096	0.127	0.769	0.078	0.598	0.946	0.809	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
Time 1	M	1.65	2.06	1.70	3.70	2.34	2.25	1.92	5.75	5.85	5.41	5.39	6.49
	SD	0.55	0.66	0.76	1.70	0.96	1.24	0.28	1.21	1.29	1.40	1.70	1.26
Time 2	M	1.65	2.06	1.70	3.70	2.34	2.25	1.92	5.66	5.72	5.47	5.23	6.36
	SD	0.55	0.66	0.76	1.70	0.96	1.24	0.28	1.20	1.28	1.39	1.71	1.37

Notes: *p < .05 (2-tailed), **p < .01 (2-tailed). Statistics presented below the diagonal are correlation coefficients for time 1, and statistics presented above the diagonal are correlation coefficients for time 2. SACQ-T is Overall adaptation, SACQ-A is Academic adaptation, SACQ-S is Social adaptation, SACQ-P is Personal-emotional adaptation, SACQ-I is Goal commitment-institutional attachment.

Moreover, conducting correlation analysis between moderator variables and the SACQ subscales at Time 1 and Time 2 is a valuable approach to understand the relationships and potential influencing factors that might impact the IA. Thus, this study have two kinds of moderator variables, one was unchanged variable, including gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship, applied university number, and first language. Another one was changed variable, including financed by family, Italian language skills, communication, stay and plan to stay in Italy, study abroad experiences, and curriculum setting.

The role of unchanged moderator variables and SACQ at Time 1 and Time 2. As shown in Figure 5, first, gender exhibited a statistically significant negative association, whereas degree demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship with overall adaptation at Time 1. However, no statistically significant relationship was observed at Time 2. In detail, the gender has statistically significant negative correlation with degree ($r = -.296$, $p < .001$), school ($r = -.242$, $p < .001$), scholarship ($r = -.177$, $p = .006$), applied university number ($r = -184$, $p = .005$), overall adaptation ($r = -.184$, $p = .004$), social adaptation ($r = -.139$, $p = .033$), and personal emotional adaptation ($r = .251$, $p < .001$) at Time 1. Moreover, gender have statistically significant negative relationship with social adaptation and personal emotional adaptaion at Time 1, while have statistically significant negative relationship with personal emotional adaptaion at Time 2. There was no meaningful linear relationship between gender and university year ($r = -0.026$, $p = .692$), first language ($r = -0.025$, $p = .697$), academic adaptation ($r = -0.119$, $p = .068$), and goal commitment-institutional attachment ($r = -0.108$, $p = .096$) at time 1. Comparing to Time 1, the gender has no statistically significant correlation with overall adaptation ($r = -0.095$, $p = .145$) and social adaptation ($r = -0.092$, $p = .16$) at Time 2.

Additionally, there was a weaker relationship between gender and personal emotional adaptation (r = .147, p = .024) at Time 2.

Second, degree have statistically significant positive relationship with academic adaptation, social adaptation, and personal-emotional adaptation at Time 1, while have statistically significant positive relationship with personal-emotional adaptation at Time 2. In detail, the degree has the same statistically significant positive correlation with the university year (r = .146, p = .025) , school (r = .294, p < .001), and scholarship (r = .272, p < .001) at Time 1 and Time 2. Moreover, the degree has the statistically significant positive correlation with overall adaptation (r = .208, p = .001), academic adaptation (r = 0.172, p = .008), social adaptation (r = .151, p = .02), and personal emotional adaptation (r = .253, p < .001) at Time 1, while only has the statistically significant positive correlation with personal emotional adaptation (r = .155, p = .0017) at Time 2.

Third, university year have statistically significant positive relationship with social adaptation at Time 1, while have statistically significant positive relationship with personal-emotional adaptation at Time 2. the university year had the statistically significant positive correlation with social adaptation (r = .160, p = .014) at Time 1, while had the statistically significant positive correlation with personal-emotional adaptation (r = .140, p = .031) at Time 2. However, the university year did not show a statistically significant correlation with the overall SACQ score and its subscales at Time 1 and Time 2.

Fourth, The school had the same statistically significant positive correlation with scholarship (r = .230, p < .001) at Time 1 and Time 2. However, the school did not show a statistically significant correlation with the overall SACQ score and its subscales at Time 1 and Time 2.

Fifth, the scholarship had the same statistically significant positive correlation with applied university number ($r = .182$, $p = .005$) at Time 1 and Time 2. However, the scholarship did not show a statistically significant correlation with the overall SACQ score and its subscales at Time 1 and Time 2. Last, the language did not show a statistically significant correlation with the overall SACQ score and its subscales at Time 1 and Time 2.

The role of changed moderator variables and SACQ at Time 1 and Time 2. For the changed moderator variables, this study divided all the variables into six aspects, including financed by family, overall Italian language skills, communication (talk to people with the same nationality, talk to people of a different nationality, talk to professors). The length of stay and planning to stay in Italy (length of stay in Italy, length of planning to stay in Italy), study abroad experiences (times of studying abroad, duration of the longest stay abroad in a country), and curriculum setting (attended the program online or face to face, length of attending the course online, length of attending the course face to face). The role of changed moderator variables and SACQ at Time 1 and Time 2, helped to understand the relationships between these variables, test hypotheses, identify patterns, and gain insights into factors that may influence adaptation over time. Below was the specific explanation according to Figure 6.

Financed by family. Among all the variables, at Time 1, financed by family had statistically significant positive correlation with talk to people with the same nationality ($r = .151$, $p = .02$), and it had statistically significant negative correlation with talk to professors ($r = .149$, $p = .022$), times of studying abroad ($r = -.164$, $p = .011$). Moreover, it had statistically significant negative correlation with overall adaptation ($r = -.237$, $p < .001$), academic adaptation ($r = -.266$, $p < .001$), social

adaptation (r = -.131, p = .044), and personal emotional adaptation (r = -.227, p < .001). While at Time 2, financed by family had statistically significant positive correlation with overall Italian language skills (r =.151, p = .02) and talk to people with the same nationality (r =.128, p = .048), while it had statistically significant negative correlation with talk to professors (r = -.228, p < .001). Additionally, the financed by family did not show a statistically significant correlation with the overall SACQ score and its subscales at Time 2.

Overall Italian language skills. Among all the variables, overall Italian language skills had statistically significant negative correlation with talk to people with the same nationality at Time 1 (r = -.183, p = .005) and Time 2 (r = -.150, p = .021), the correlation was more weaker at Time 2. While had statistically significant positive correlation with length of stay in Italy, decreased from Time 1 (r = .422, p < .001) to Time 2 (r = .383, p < .001), length of planning to stay in Italy, increased from Time 1 (r = .208, p = .001) to Time 2 (r = .298, p < .001), and length of attending the course face to face, increased from Time 1 (r = .237, p < .001) to Time 2 (r = .260, p < .001). Moreover, overall Italian language skills had statistically significant positive correlation with with overall adaptation which decreased from Time 1 (r = .171, p = .008) to Time 2 (r = .138, p = .034), social adaptation which decreased from Time 1 (r = .176, p = .007) to Time 2 (r = .144, p = .026), and goal commitment-institutional attachment which increased from Time 1 (r = .139, p = .033) to Time 2 (r = .149, p = .021).

Communication. talk to people with the same nationality had statistically significant negative correlation with length of stay in Italy (r = -.156, p = .016), duration of the longest stay abroad in a country (r = -.133, p = .041), attended the program online or face to face (r = -.133, p = .041), length of attending the course

online ($r = -.178$, $p = .006$), and academic adaptation ($r = -.151$, $p = .02$) at Time 1. While it did not show a statistically significant correlation with the other variables, overall SACQ score and its subscales at Time 2. Moreover, talk to people of a different nationality had statistically significant positive correlation with talk to professors which decreased from Time 1 ($r = .315$, $p < .001$) to Time 2 ($r = .257$, $p < .001$), attended the program online or face to face which increased from Time 1 ($r = .190$, $p = .003$) to Time 2 ($r = .195$, $p = .003$), length of attending the course face to face which increased from Time 1 ($r = .131$, $p = .045$) to Time 2 ($r = .165$, $p = .011$), Overall adaptation which decreased from Time 1 ($r = .223$, $p < .001$) to Time 2 ($r = .155$, $p = .017$), Social adaptation which decreased from Time 1 ($r = .329$, $p < .001$) to Time 2 ($r = .234$, $p < .001$), goal commitment-institutional attachment which decreased from Time 1 ($r = .274$, $p < .001$) to Time 2 ($r = .168$, $p = .01$). However, it had statistically significant positive correlation with academic adaptation ($r = .169$, $p < .001$) at Time 1, while did not show a statistically significant correlation at Time 2. Furthermore, talk to professors had statistically significant positive correlation with attended the program online or face to face increased from Time 1 ($r = .144$, $p = .027$) to Time 2 ($r = .181$, $p = .005$), overall adaptation which decreased from Time 1 ($r = .278$, $p < .001$) to Time 2 ($r = .188$, $p = .004$), academic adaptation which decreased from Time 1 ($r = .284$, $p < .001$) to Time 2 ($r = .192$, $p = .003$), social adaptation which decreased from Time 1 ($r = .290$, $p < .001$) to Time 2 ($r = .164$, $p = .012$).

The length of stay and planning to stay in Italy. On the one hand, length of stay in Italy had statistically significant positive correlation with length of planning to stay in Italy which decreased from Time 1 ($r = .150$, $p = .021$) to Time 2 ($r = .179$, $p = .006$), duration of the longest stay abroad in a country which decreased from Time 1 ($r = .324$, $p < .001$) to Time 2 ($r = .249$, $p < .001$), length of attending the course face

to face which decreased from Time 1 ($r = .539$, p <.001) to Time 2 ($r = .447$, p <.001), personal emotional adaptation which decreased from Time 1 ($r = .143$, $p = .028$) to Time 2 ($r = .138$, $p = .034$). On the other hand, length of planning to stay in Italy had statistically significant positive correlation with social adaptation which increased from Time 1 ($r = .142$, $p = .029$) to Time 2 ($r = .146$, $p = .025$), and goal commitment-institutional attachment which decreased from Time 1 ($r = .194$, $p = .003$) to Time 2 ($r = .222$, $p < .001$).

Study abroad experiences. On the one hand, times of studying abroad had statistically significant positive correlation with duration of the longest stay abroad in a country which increased from Time 1 ($r = .227$, p <.001) to Time 2 ($r = .302$, p <.001). Moreover, it only had statistically significant positive correlation with length of attending the course face to face ($r = .202$, $p = .002$) at Time 1, and personal emotional adaptation ($r = .155$, $p = .017$) at Time 2. On the other hand, duration of the longest stay abroad in a country had statistically significant positive correlation with length of attending the course face to face which increased from Time1 ($r = .208$, $p = -0.001$) to Time 2 ($r = .258$, p <.001), and personal emotional adaptation which increased from Time1 ($r = .151$, $p = -0.02$) to Time 2 ($r = .181$, $p = .005$). Moreover, it only had statistically significant positive correlation with overall adaptation ($r = .150$, $p = .021$) at Time 2.

Curriculum setting. Attended the program online or face to face had statistically significant positive correlation with length of attending the course face to face ($r = .203$, $p = .002$) at Time 2. Moreover, length of attending the course online had statistically significant positive correlation with length of attending the course face to face ($r = .257$, p <.001) at Time 1. While it had statistically significant negative correlation with academic adaptation ($r = -.155$, $p = .017$), and goal

commitment-institutional attachment ($r = -.145$, $p = .025$) at Time 1. However, it did not show a statistically significant correlation with the overall SACQ score and its subscales at Time 2. Additionally, length of attending the course face to face had statistically significant positive correlation with social adaptation which increased from Time1 ($r = .155$, $p = .017$) to Time 2 ($r = .180$, $p = .005$). Moreover, it had statistically significant positive correlation with overall adaptation ($r = .165$, $p = .011$), and goal commitment-institutional attachment ($r = .141$, $p = .03$) at Time 2.

Above all, the analysis identifies that overall Italian language skills, talk to people of a different nationality, and talk to professors have statistically significant positive relationship with overall adaptation at both Time 1 and Time 2. Moreover, financed by family have statistically significant negative relationship with overall adaptation and length of stay in Italy have statistically significant positive relationship at Time 1, while there was no statistically significant relationship at Time 2. Furthermore, duration of the longest stay abroad in a country and length of attending the course face to face have statistically significant positive relationship with overall adaptation at Time 2, while there was no statistically significant relationship at Time 1. Last, talk to people with the same nationality, length of planning to stay in Italy, times of studying abroad, attended the program online or face to face, and length of attending the course online have no statistically significant relationship at both Time 1 and Time 2.

Figure 6

Result of Correlation Coefficients, P values, Means, SD between Changed moderator variables and SACQ at Time 1 and Time 2 (N=237)

Variables		FBF	OILS	TTPSN	TTPD N	TTP	LOSI	LOPSI	TSB	DOLS A	APOor FTF	LOA CO	LOAC FTF	SACQ- T	SACQ -A	SACQ -S	SACQ -P	SAC Q-I
FBF	r	1	.151*	.128*	-0.091	-.228**	0.071	-0.04	-0.015	0.05	-0.069	-0.019	0.109	-0.038	-0.083	0.011	-0.035	0.045
OILS	r	0.017	1	-.150*	0.119	-0.025	.383**	.298**	0.108	0.115	0.054	.157*	.260**	.138*	0.09	.144*	0.114	.149*
TTPS N	r	.151*	-.183**	1	-0.114	0.08	-0.073	-0.039	-0.124	-0.115	-0.101	-0.002	-0.126	-0.11	-0.12	-0.021	-0.107	-0.095
TTPD N	r	-0.042	0.031	-0.034	1	.257**	-0.029	0.127	0.068	0.019	.195**	-.146*	.165*	.155*	0.095	.234**	0.049	.168**
TTP	r	-.149*	0.02	0.038	.315**	1	-0.027	0.008	.155*	0.013	.181**	-0.099	0.023	.188**	.192**	.164*	0.127	0.121
LOSI	r	-0.066	.422**	-.156*	-0.016	0.021	1	.179**	0.081	.249**	0.029	.379**	.447**	0.116	0.064	0.107	.138*	0.091
LOPS I	r	-0.114	.208**	-0.033	0.007	0.03	.150*	1	0.056	-0.026	.158*	0.017	.152*	0.108	0.078	.146*	-0.006	.222**
TSB	r	-.164*	.140*	-0.074	0	0.091	.137*	0.065	1	.302**	-0.016	0.068	0.069	0.126	0.085	0.109	.155*	0.064
DOLS A	r	-0.09	0.125	-.133*	0.047	0.027	.324**	0.084	.227**	1	0.03	0.124	.258**	.150*	0.106	0.121	.181**	0.073
APOo rFTF	r	0.08	.135*	-.133*	.190**	.144*	-0.115	0.036	0.017	-0.041	1	-0.1	.203**	0.022	0.024	0.063	-0.016	0.005
LOA CO	r	-0.018	0.126	-0.015	-.208**	-0.113	.535**	0.023	0.019	0.103	-0.102	1	0.046	-0.019	-0.074	0.02	0.018	0.003
LOA CFTF	r	-0.007	.237**	-.178**	.131*	0.119	.539**	0.02	.202**	.208**	0.1	.257**	1	.165*	0.114	.180**	0.124	.141*
SACQ -T	r	-.237**	.171**	-0.119	.223**	.278**	.151*	0.119	0.038	0.108	0.077	-0.103	0.098	1	.883**	.779**	.855**	.843**
SACQ -A	r	-.266**	.148*	-.151*	.169**	.284**	0.113	0.075	0.013	0.086	0.064	-.155*	0.07	.917**	1	.494**	.682**	.671**
SACQ -S	r	-.131*	.176**	-0.025	.329**	.290**	.153*	.142*	0.075	0.054	0.073	-0.029	.155*	.826**	.639**	1	.541**	.767**
SACQ	r	-.227**	0.11	-0.105	0.081	.154*	.143*	0.047	0.054	.151*	0.048	-0.03	0.054	.846**	.695**	.564**	1	.583**

-P																	
SACQ-I	r	-0.098	.139*	-0.099	.274**	.215**	0.072	.194**	-0.035	0.025	0.088	-.145*	0.049	.842**	.728**	.781**	.573**	1

*Note: *p < .05, **p < .01.* Statistics presented below the diagonal are correlation coefficients for time 1, and statistics presented above the diagonal are correlation coefficients for time 2. SACQ-T is Overall adaptation, SACQ-A is Academic adaptation, SACQ-S is Social adaptation, SACQ-P is Personal-emotional adaptation, SACQ-I is Goal commitment-institutional attachment. FBF is financed by family, OILS is overall Italian language skills, TTPSN is talk to people with the same nationality, TTPDN is talk to people of a different nationality, TTP is talk to professors, LOSI is length of stay in Italy, LOPSI is length of planning to stay in Italy, TSB is times of studying abroad, DOLSA is duration of the longest stay abroad in a country, APOorFTF is attended the program online or face to face, LOACO is length of attending the course online, LOACFTF is length of attending the course face to face.

Research Questions and Hypothesis Results

Question 2: How international students' intercultural adaptation in Italian HEI changed over time?

Hypothesis 5: The post-SACQ scores will be higher than the pre-SACQ scores of international students.

To determine whether there were significant changes in adaptation scores over time, a series of five one-way ANOVAs for repeated measures (two time points) were conducted, with time as the within-subject variable, Means and standard deviations are presented in Figure 7. At the pre-test, the mean scores for the overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, and goal commitment-institutional attachment subscales were 378.25 (SD = 79.40), 140.33 (SD = 30.89), 101.38 (SD = 26.70), 80.82 (SD = 25.46) and 92.36 (SD = 17.98) respectively. At the post-test, the mean scores for the same subscales were 372.46 (SD = 78.72), 137.28 (SD = 30.67), 102.91 (SD = 26.73), 78.52 (SD = 25.58) and 90.76 (SD = 19.62) respectively. Moreover, there were no significant time trends for overall adaptation, $F(1, 472) = 0.64$, $p = .43$, academic adaptation, $F(1, 472) = 1.16$, $p = .28$, social adaptation, $F(1, 472) = .39$, $p = .54$. personal emotional adaptation, $F(1, 472) = .92$, $p = .33$, and goal commitment-institutional attachment, $F(1, 472) = .87$, $p = .35$.

All in all, the overall difference in SACQ subscale means between the pre-test and post-test approached, but did not reach, statistical significance. Additionally, the post-SACQ scores of overall adaptation, academic adaptation, personal emotional adaptation were lower than the pre-SACQ scores. However, the post-SACQ scores of social adaptation was higher than the pre-SACQ scores.

Figure 7

Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for Adjustment Variables(N = 237)

Variables	Time points	N	M	SD	Minimum	Maximum
SACQ-T	Time 1	237	378.25	79.40	183	555
	Time 2	237	372.46	78.72	162	567
SACQ-A	Time 1	237	140.33	30.89	51	216
	Time 2	237	137.28	30.67	57	216
SACQ-S	Time 1	237	101.38	26.70	31	159
	Time 2	237	102.91	26.73	30	169
SACQ-P	Time 1	237	80.82	25.46	15	135
	Time 2	237	78.52	25.58	20	135
SACQ-I	Time 1	237	92.36	17.98	41	133
	Time 2	237	90.76	19.62	31	134

Note: SACQ-T is Overall adaptation, SACQ-A is Academic adaptation, SACQ-S is Social adaptation, SACQ-P is Personal-emotional adaptation, SACQ-I is Goal commitment-institutional attachment.

Question 3: How do the four motivational dimensions (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) affect international students' intercultural adaptation (academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) in Italian HEI?

Hypothesis 5: The stronger motivation (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) that international students have, the better intercultural adaptation (overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) they have at time 1 and time 2.

For answering question 3, this study first hypothesized that the stronger the

motivation (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) that IS have, the better their IA (overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) at both time 1 and time 2. The results of testing these hypotheses were presented in Figure 8. The data presented the correlations between the MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the indicators of IA (overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) at Time 1 and Time 2. The correlations are measured using Pearson correlation coefficients, and the accompanying p-values (two-tailed) indicate the significance of these correlations.

World Enlightenment and adaptation. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between world enlightenment and Overall adaptation (r = 0.143, p < .05), academic adaptation (r = 0.148, p < .05), social adaptation (r = 0.19, p < .01), and goal commitment-institutional attachment (r = 0.158, p < .05) at Time 1. This suggested that IS with higher levels of world enlightenment tend to have higher scores in Overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, and goal commitment-institutional attachment. Indicating a potential positive association between world enlightenment for studying abroad and Overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, and goal commitment-institutional attachment. However, at Time 2, there are weak and non-significant correlations between world enlightenment and all indicators of overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment. This suggested that world enlightenment motivation did not show a consistent and significant association with overall adaptation (r = 0.033, *p* = .615), academic adaptation (r = -0.007, p = .916), social adaptation (r = 0.124, *p* = .057), personal-emotional adaptation (r = -

0.035, p = .588), goal commitment-institutional attachment (r = 0.077, p = .237) at this time point. MSA of world enlightenment influenced the overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, and goal commitment-institutional attachment of IS. To elaborate, higher levels of world enlightenment are associated with better overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, and goal commitment-institutional attachment.

Personal growth and and adaptation. According to Figure 8, there is no significant correlation between personal growth and overall adaptation (r = -0.028, p = .669), academic adaptation (r = -0.024, p = .717), social adaptation (r = 0.022, p = .735), personal-emotional adaptation (r = -0.098, p = .132), goal commitment-institutional attachment (r = 0.087, p = .183) at Time 1. While at Time 2, there is a statistically significant negative correlation between personal growth and personal-emotional adaptation (r = -0.149, $p < .05$). However, the correlation is weak and non-significant with other indicators of IA (overall adaptation, academic adaptation, personal emotional adaptation, and goal commitment-institutional attachment). This indicates that personal growth motivation may be negatively related to personal-emotional adaptation specifically, but not significantly associated with other aspects of IA at this time.

Career development and adaptation. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between career development and Overall adaptation (r = 0.140, $p < .05$), academic adaptation (r = 0.198, $p < .01$) and goal commitment-institutional attachment (r = 0.165, $p < .05$) at Time 1. This suggests that students with higher levels of career development motivation tend to have higher scores in Overall adaptation, academic adaptation, and goal commitment-institutional attachment. However, at Time 2, there are weak and non-significant correlations between career

development and all indicators of IA (overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment). This suggests that career development motivation did not show a consistent and significant association with IA at this time point. MSA of career development influenced the overall adaptation and academic adaptation of IS. To elaborate, higher levels of career development are associated with better overall adaptation and academic adaptation.

Entertainment and adaptation. At Time 1, there are weak and non-significant correlations between entertainment and all indicators of IA (overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment). This suggests that entertainment motivation did not show a consistent and significant association with IA at this time point. Additionally, at Time 2, there is a statistically significant negative correlation between entertainment and academic adaptation (r = -0.190, *p* < .01) and personal emotional adaptation (r = -0.153, *p* < .05). Additionally, there is a significant positive correlation between entertainment and social adaptation (r = 0.131, *p* < .05). However, the correlations with other indicators of IA (overall adaptation/goal commitment-institutional attachment) are weak and non-significant. This suggests that entertainment motivation may have both positive and negative relationships with specific aspects of IA at this time. MSA of entertainment influenced the goal commitment-institutional attachment of IS. To elaborate, higher levels of entertainment are associated with better goal commitment-institutional attachment.

Overall, the findings indicate that Hypothesis 5 was not supported by the data. However, it was observed that the stronger motivation for world enlightenment, career development and entertainment of IS was associated with better IA at time 1.

While the stronger motivation for personal growth and entertainment of IS was associated with worse IA (academic adaptation and personal-emotional adaptation) at time 2.

Figure 8

Correlations of Studying Abroad Motivational with the Indicators of Intercultural Adaptation at Time 1 and Time 2 (N = 237)

Variables		MSAWM	MSAPM	MSACM	MSAEM	SACQ-T	SACQ-A	SACQ-S	SACQ-P	SACQ-I
MSAWM	r	1	.673**	.356**	.319**	0.033	-0.007	0.124	-0.035	0.077
	p		<.001	<.001	<.001	0.615	0.916	0.057	0.588	0.237
MSAPM	r	.673**	1	.341**	.332**	-0.096	-0.108	-0.018	-.149*	0.021
	p	<.001		<.001	<.001	0.142	0.097	0.779	0.022	0.742
MSACM	r	.356**	.341**	1	.165*	0.062	0.114	0.033	-0.035	0.069
	p	<.001	<.001		0.011	0.338	0.08	0.614	0.588	0.288
MSAEM	r	.319**	.332**	.165*	1	-0.096	-.190**	.131*	-.153*	-0.02
	p	<.001	<.001	0.011		0.139	0.003	0.044	0.018	0.764
SACQ-T	r	.143*	-0.028	.140*	-0.057	1	.889**	.794**	.858**	.848**
	p	0.027	0.669	0.031	0.384		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001
SACQ-A	r	.148*	-0.024	.198**	-0.116	.917**	1	.527**	.682**	.684**
	p	0.022	0.717	0.002	0.075	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
SACQ-S	r	.190**	0.022	0.093	0.103	.826**	.639**	1	.567**	.778**
	p	0.003	0.735	0.152	0.114	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
SACQ-P	r	0.041	-0.098	0.02	-0.107	.846**	.695**	.564**	1	.592**
	p	0.529	0.132	0.765	0.1	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
SACQ-I	r	.158*	0.087	.165*	0.022	.842**	.728**	.781**	.573**	1
	p	0.015	0.183	0.011	0.733	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
Time 1	M	3.87	3.90	4.31	1.64	5.75	5.85	5.41	5.39	6.49
	SD	0.72	0.86	0.68	0.64	1.21	1.29	1.40	1.70	1.26

Time 2	M	3.87	3.90	4.31	1.64	5.66	5.72	5.47	5.23	6.36
	SD	0.72	0.86	0.68	0.64	1.20	1.28	1.39	1.71	1.37

*Note: *p* < .05, **p* < .01.* Statistics presented below the diagonal are correlation coefficients for time 1, and statistics presented above the diagonal are correlation coefficients for time 2. MSAWM is World enlightenment, MSAPM is Personal growth, MSACM is Career development, MSAEM is Entertainment. SACQ-T is Overall adaptation, SACQ-A is Academic adaptation, SACQ-S is Social adaptation, SACQ-P is Personal-emotional adaptation, SACQ-I is Goal commitment-institutional attachment.

Hypothesis 6: Four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) positively predict overall SACQ and four SACQ subscales (academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment) at time 1 and time 2.

While hypothesis 5 focused on the relationship between motivational factors and IA, Hypothesis 5 was more specific, stating that the motivational factors predict IA and its specific domains. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 contributes to explaining and supporting Hypothesis 5. For testing Hypothesis 6, this study used R to run a simply linear regression model with four predictor variables (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment), and the five dependent variables (overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, personal-emotional adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment), and with the Time 1 and Time 2 as the interaction. The result was depicted in Figure 9, and a more detailed breakdown was presented below.

Overall adaptation. First, there was a one-unit increase in world enlightenment is associated with a 0.24 increase in overall adaptation at Time 1 (p = .027). While a one-unit increase in world enlightenment is associated with a larger increase of 0.63 in overall adaptation at Time 2 (p = .05). The interaction between world enlightenment and Time shows a significant effect on overall adaptation at Time 1 (p = .022), but there is no interaction effect at Time 2. Second, personal growth does not significantly predict overall adaptation at Time 1 (p = .667) and Time 2 (p = .313). The interaction between personal growth and Time does not show a significant effect on overall adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2. Third, a one-unit increase in career development is associated with a 0.25 increase in overall adaptation at Time 1 (p = .031), however, with a larger increase of 0.5 in overall adaptation at

Time 2 (p = .182). The interaction between career development and Time does not show a significant effect on overall adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2. Fourth, entertainment does not significantly predict overall adaptation at Time 1 (p = .381) and Time 2 (p = .867). Moreover, the interaction between entertainment and Time does not show a significant effect on overall adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2.

Academic adaptation. First, the data shown that a one-unit increase in world enlightenment is associated with a 0.26 increase in academic adaptation at Time 1 (p = .022), and associated with a larger increase of 0.95 in academic adaptation at Time 2 (p = .01). The interaction between world enlightenment and Time shows a significant effect on academic adaptation at both Time 1 and Time 2 (p = .003). Second, personal growth does not significantly predict academic adaptation at Time 1 (p = .715) and Time 2 (p = .25). The interaction between personal growth and Time does not show a significant effect on academic adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2. Third, a one-unit increase in career development is associated with a 0.37 increase in academic adaptation at Time 1 (p = .002) and associated with a 0.56 increase in academic adaptation at Time 2 (p = .192). The interaction between career development and Time does not show a significant effect on academic adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2. Fourth, entertainment does not significantly predict academic adaptation at Time 1 (p = .072) and Time 2 (p = .553). The interaction between entertainment and Time does not show a significant effect on academic adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2.

Social adaptation. First, a one-unit increase in world enlightenment is associated with a 0.37 increase in social adaptation at Time 1 (p = .003) and associated with a 0.57 increase in social adaptation at Time 2, which is not statistically significant (p = .124). The interaction between world enlightenment and

Time does not show a significant effect on social adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2. Second, personal growth does not significantly predict social adaptation at Time 1 ($p = .734$) and Time 2 ($p = .307$). The interaction between personal growth and Time does not show a significant effect on social adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2. Third, a one-unit increase in career development is associated with a 0.19 increase in social adaptation at Time 1, which is not statistically significant ($p = .151$). While a one-unit increase in career development is associated with a larger increase of 0.60 in social adaptation at Time 2, which is not statistically significant ($p = .164$). The interaction between career development and Time does not show a significant effect on social adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2. Fourth, a one-unit increase in entertainment is associated with a 0.22 increase in social adaptation at Time 1, which is marginally significant ($p = .112$). While a one-unit increase in entertainment is associated with a small decrease of -0.03 in social adaptation at Time 2, which is not statistically significant ($p = .868$). The interaction between entertainment and Time does not show a significant effect on social adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2.

   Personal-emotional adaptation. First, world enlightenment does not significantly predict personal-emotional adaptation at Time 1 ($p = .529$). However, a one-unit increase in world enlightenment is associated with a 0.55 increase in personal-emotional adaptation at Time 2, which is not statistically significant ($p = .22$). The interaction between world enlightenment and Time does not show a significant effect on personal-emotional adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2. Second, personal growth does not significantly predict personal-emotional adaptation at Time 1 ($p = .131$). While a one-unit increase in personal growth is associated with a small increase of 0.25 in personal-emotional adaptation at Time 2, which is not statistically significant ($p = .52$). The interaction between personal growth and Time

does not show a significant effect on personal-emotional adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2. Third, career development does not significantly predict personal-emotional adaptation at Time 1 (p = .765). However, a one-unit increase in career development is associated with a 0.43 increase in personal-emotional adaptation at Time 2, which is not statistically significant (p = .404). The interaction between career development and Time does not show a significant effect on personal-emotional adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2. Fourth, a one-unit increase in entertainment is associated with a larger decrease of -0.28 in personal-emotional adaptation at Time 1, which is marginally significant (p = .099). However, a one-unit increase in entertainment is associated with a small increase of 0.05 in personal-emotional adaptation at Time 2, which is not statistically significant (p = .831). The interaction between entertainment and Time does not show a significant effect on personal-emotional adaptation at either Time 1 or Time 2.

Goal commitment-institutional attachment. First, a one-unit increase in world enlightenment is associated with a 0.27 increase in goal commitment-institutional attachment at Time 1, which is statistically significant (p = .021). While at Time 1, a one-unit increase in world enlightenment is associated with a 0.36 increase in goal commitment-institutional attachment at, which is not statistically significant (p = .373). The interaction between world enlightenment and Time does not show a significant effect on goal commitment-institutional attachment at either Time 1 or Time 2. Second, a one-unit increase in personal growth is associated with a small increase of 0.13 in goal commitment-institutional attachment at Time 1, which is not statistically significant (p = .204), while a one-unit increase in personal growth is associated with a small increase of 0.23 in goal commitment-institutional attachment at Time 2, which is not statistically significant (p = .51). The interaction between

personal growth and Time does not show a significant effect on goal commitment-institutional attachment at either Time 1 or Time 2. Third, a one-unit increase in career development is associated with a moderate increase of 0.3 in goal commitment-institutional attachment at Time 1, which is statistically significant ($p = .015$). However, a one-unit increase in career development is associated with a moderate increase of 0.57 in goal commitment-institutional attachment at Time 2, which is not statistically significant ($p = .224$). The interaction between career development and Time does not show a significant effect on goal commitment-institutional attachment at either Time 1 or Time 2. Fourth, entertainment does not significantly predict goal commitment-institutional attachment at Time 1 ($p = .744$) and goal commitment-institutional attachment at Time 2 ($p = .983$). The interaction between entertainment and Time does not show a significant effect on goal commitment-institutional attachment at either Time 1 or Time 2.

Above all, the results partially support Hypothesis 6. At Time 1, world enlightenment had statistic significant positively predict overall SACQ and academic adaptation, social adaptation, goal commitment-institutional attachment. Moreover, career development had statistic significant positively predict overall SACQ and academic adaptation and goal commitment-institutional attachment. However, at Time 2, only one of the world enlightenment statistic significant positively predict overall SACQ and academic adaptation, while the other MSA subscales do not significantly predict overall SACQ and any of the SACQ subscales.

Figure 9

Estimates and P-values of Studying Abroad Motivation with the Indicators of Overall SACQ and Four SACQ Subscales at Time 1 and Time 2 (N = 237)

	Predictors	SACQ-T		SACQ-A		SACQ-S		SACQ-P		SACQ-I	
		Estimates	p	Estimates	p	Estimates	p	Estimates	p	Estimates	p
MSAWM	Intercept	4.82	<0.001	4.82	<0.001	3.98	<0.001	5.01	<0.001	5.43	<0.001
	Time 1	0.24	**0.027**	0.26	**0.022**	0.37	**0.003**	0.1	0.529	0.27	**0.021**
	Time 2	0.63	**0.05**	0.95	**0.01**	0.57	0.124	0.55	0.22	0.36	0.373
	MSAWM × Time	-0.19	**0.022**	-0.28	**0.003**	-0.13	0.166	-0.18	0.111	-0.13	0.212
	Marginal R^2	0.012		0.013		0.026		0.003		0.017	
MSAPM	Intercept	5.91	**<0.001**	5.99	<0.001	5.27	**<0.001**	6.15	**<0.001**	6	**<0.001**
	Time 1	-0.04	0.667	-0.04	0.715	0.04	0.734	-0.19	0.131	0.13	0.204
	Time 2	0.28	0.313	0.36	0.25	0.32	0.307	0.25	0.52	0.23	0.51
	MSAPM × Time	-0.09	0.169	-0.13	0.112	-0.07	0.405	-0.1	0.284	-0.09	0.282
	Marginal R^2	0.006		0.008		0.001		0.018		0.006	
MSACM	Intercept	4.69	**<0.001**	4.24	<0.001	4.58	**<0.001**	5.18	<0.001	5.19	**<0.001**
	Time 1	0.25	**0.031**	0.37	**0.002**	0.19	0.151	0.05	0.765	0.3	**0.015**

		Estimate	p	Estimate	p	Estimate	p	Estimate	p	Estimate	p
	Time 2	0.5	0.182	0.56	0.192	0.6	0.164	0.43	0.404	0.57	0.224
	MSACM × Time	-0.14	0.11	-0.16	0.106	-0.12	0.209	-0.14	0.253	-0.16	0.127
	Marginal R^2	0.013		0.028		0.005		0.003		0.018	
	Intercept	5.93	<0.001	6.23	<0.001	5.04	<0.001	5.85	<0.001	6.42	<0.001
MSAEM	Time 1	-0.11	0.381	-0.23	0.072	0.22	0.112	-0.28	0.099	0.04	0.744
	Time 2	0.03	0.867	0.11	0.553	-0.03	0.868	0.05	0.831	0	0.983
	MSAEM × Time	-0.07	0.428	-0.14	0.17	0.06	0.577	-0.12	0.334	-0.09	0.457
	Marginal R^2	0.008		0.027		0.014		0.019		0.003	

Note: MSAWM is World enlightenment, MSAPM is Personal growth, MSACM is Career development, MSAEM is Entertainment. SACQ-T is Overall adaptation, SACQ-A is Academic adaptation, SACQ-S is Social adaptation, SACQ-P is Personal-emotional adaptation, SACQ-I is Institutional attachment.

Moderate Effect on the Relationship between MSA and Overall SACQ

This section was a further study based on the study above, motivational dimensions did not have much statistically significant with overall and subscales of SACQ changed over time. Thus, this study contained all the moderator variables within the linear mixed model to examined if and how those moderator variables influence the relationship between motivational dimensions (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation. Additionally, this section had one question and one hypothesis which shown below.

Question 4: Do background characteristics mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy?

Hypothesis 7: Age, gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship, applied university number, first language, financial support from family, Italian language skills, communication, stay and plan to stay in Italy, studying abroad experience, and curriculum setting mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy.

Specify moderator variables

The moderator variables specifically including age, gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship, applied university number, first language, financial support from family, Italian language skills, communication (talk to people with the same nationality, talk to people of a different nationality, talk to professors), stay and plan to stay in Italy (length of stay in Italy, length of planning to stay in Italy), studying abroad experience (times of studying abroad, duration of the longest stay abroad in a country), and curriculum setting (attended the program online or face to face, length of attending the course online, length of

attending the course face to face). In particular, this section mainly had two steps to achieve this goal.

Research Questions and Hypothesis Result

Question 4: Do background characteristics mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy?

Hypothesis 7: Age, gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship, applied university number, first language, financial support from family, Italian language skills, communication, stay and plan to stay in Italy, studying abroad experience, and curriculum setting mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy.

Multivariate Linear Regression Model without the moderator variables. The first step was to run a Multivariate Linear Regression Model without the moderator variables. By excluding the interaction effects from the model, it helped to identify the direct associations between each predictor variables and the overall adaptation outcome. This allowed to understand how the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) individually contributes to explaining the variation in overall adaptation among IS in Italy. Figure 10 presented the results of a multivariate linear regression analysis that examined the relationship between studying abroad motivations (specifically, world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment) and the indicators of overall Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) among a sample of 474 participants.

The analysis reveals the following findings: First, the predictor variable world enlightenment shows a statistically significant positive relationship with the indicators of

overall adaptation (β = 0.2, p = .008). For each one-unit increase in world enlightenment, the overall SACQ indicators are expected to increase by 0.2 units, while controlling for other predictors. World enlightenment explains about 17.3% of the unique variance in the overall SACQ indicators. Second, the predictor variable personal growth does not show a statistically significant relationship with the indicators of overall adaptation (β = -0.01, p = .915). There is no meaningful association between personal growth and the overall SACQ indicators. personal growth explains about 16% of the unique variance in the overall SACQ indicators, but this effect is not statistically significant. Third, he predictor variable career development also does not show a statistically significant relationship with the indicators of overall adaptation (β = 0.11, p = .191). There is no meaningful association between career development and the overall SACQ indicators. career development explains about 16.3% of the unique variance in the overall SACQ indicators, but this effect is not statistically significant. Fourth, the predictor variable entertainment does not show a statistically significant relationship with the indicators of overall adaptation (β = -0.1, p = .245). There is no meaningful association between entertainment and the overall SACQ indicators. Entertainment explains about 16.3% of the unique variance in the overall SACQ indicators, but this effect is not statistically significant.

Overall, the results indicate that among the four studying abroad motivation dimensions, only world enlightenment shows a significant positive relationship with the indicators of overall adaptation. The other dimensions, including personal growth, career development, and entertainment, did not exhibit significant associations with the overall SACQ indicators in this sample. Moreover, the explained variance by each predictor provides insights into their individual contributions to the overall SACQ indicators, regardless of statistical significance. The world enlightenment predictor explains approximately 17% of the variance in overall adaptation. While personal growth, career development, and entertainment

can explain 16% of the variance in overall adaptation.

Figure 10

Result of Multivariate Linear Regression Model of Studying Abroad Motivation with the Indicators of Overall SACQ (N = 474)

Predictors	Overall adaptation		
	Estimates	p	Marginal R^2
World enlightenment	0.2	0.008	0.173
Personal growth	-0.01	0.915	0.16
Career development	0.11	0.191	0.163
Entertainment	-0.1	0.245	0.163

Linear mixed model with the specific interaction effect. The second step was to run a Linear mixed model with all the moderator variables, and with the specific interaction effect, to further understand the complex relationships and interactions among these variables and their combined effects on the overall adaptation of IS in Italy. In fact, this study had 80 models at the end, the moderate effects what had statistically significant interaction were shown in Figure 11. Moreover, scholarship and length of attending the course face to face had statistically significant positive interaction between world enlightenment and the overall adaptation; school, scholarship, Italian language skills, and length of stay in Italy had statistically significant positive interaction between personal growth and the overall adaptation; age had statistically significant negative interaction while attended the program online or face to face had statistically significant positive interaction between career development and the overall adaptation; scholarship had statistically significant positive interaction while talk to people with the same nationality had statistically significant negative interaction between entertainment and overall adaptation. The detailed explanation was as follows.

World enlightenment and overall adaptation. When considering the interaction effect between world enlightenment and Scholarship, there is a statistically significant positive

relationship (β = 0.17, p = .026). This indicates that for students with higher levels of world enlightenment and who also receive scholarships, their overall adaptation tends to increase. Similarly, the interaction between world enlightenment and length of attending the course face to face also shows a statistically significant positive relationship (β = 0.15, p = .029). This suggests that students with higher levels of world enlightenment and who have longer face-to-face attendance in courses experience higher overall adaptation.

Personal growth and overall adaptation. There is a statistically significant positive interaction between personal growth and school (β = 0.08, p = .038). This indicates that students with higher levels of personal growth in specific schools tend to have higher overall adaptation scores. Moreover, the interaction between personal growth and Scholarship is also statistically significant (β = 0.28, p < .001). This suggests that students with higher levels of personal growth and who receive scholarships experience higher overall adaptation. Additionally, personal growth shows a statistically significant positive relationship with Italian language skills (β = 0.13, p = .005) and length of stay in Italy (β = 0.13, p = .024), indicating that higher levels of personal growth are associated with higher overall adaptation for students with better Italian language skills and longer stays in Italy.

Career development and overall adaptation. There is a statistically significant negative relationship between career development and Age (β = -0.04, p = .012). This suggests that as students' age increases, their overall adaptation tends to decrease, given their career development levels. Moreover, there is a statistically significant positive interaction between career development and attended the program online or face to face (β = 0.22, p = .011). This indicates that students with higher levels of career development and who attended the program either online or face to face experience higher overall adaptation compared with the IS who attended the course online or did not come to Italy yet.

Entertainment and overall adaptation. There is a statistically significant positive

relationship between entertainment and Scholarship (β = 0.35, p < .001). This suggests that students with higher levels of entertainment and who receive scholarships tend to have higher overall adaptation. Additionally, there is a statistically significant negative relationship between entertainment and talk to people with the same nationality (β = -0.11, p = .004). This indicates that students with higher levels of entertainment and who talk more to people with the same nationality tend to have lower overall adaptation.

Overall, the results show the significant interaction effects and relationships between the MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and various moderator variables (e.g., scholarship, length of attending the course face to face, school, age, Italian language skills, length of stay in Italy, attended the program online or face to face, and talk to people with the same nationality) in predicting the overall adaptation of IS in Italy.

Figure 11

Result of Linear Mixed Model of Studying Abroad Motivation with the Indicators of Overall SACQ Combined Moderate Effects (N = 474)

Predictors	Interaction effect	Overall adaptation	
		Estimates	*p*
World enlightenment	Scholarship	0.17	0.026
	Length of attending the course face to face	0.15	0.029
Personal growth	School	0.08	0.038
	Scholarship	0.28	<0.001
	Italian language skills	0.13	0.005
	Length of staying in Italy	0.13	0.024
Career development	Age	-0.04	0.012
	Attended the program online or face to face	0.22	0.011
Entertainment	Scholarship	0.35	<0.001
	Talk to people with the same nationality	-0.11	0.004

All in all, the findings suggested that some of the proposed moderator variables indeed play a role in the relationship between the MSA subscales and overall adaptation. However, not all of the proposed moderator variables demonstrated significant mediation effects, indicating that the data only partially support Hypothesis 7.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

In conclusion, this chapter presents the results of the quantitative investigative part of this study. This chapter presents that IS' motivations to study abroad based on various background characteristics. Demographic factors like age, gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship, and financing source influence MSA of IS. Specifically, first language and Italian skills were associated with students' motivation for studying abroad, as supported by statistical analysis. Additionally, unchanged moderator variables (gender, degree, university year) showed significant correlations with overall SACQ scores at Time 1 and Time 2. Changeable variables (Italian language skills, communication with people of different nationalities, professors) had stronger statistically significant positive correlations with overall adaptation and/or its subscales at Time 1 and Time 2. Financed by family had a stronger statistically significant negative correlation with overall adaptation and/or its subscales at Time 1, while length of stay in Italy had a stronger statistically significant positive correlation with overall adaptation and/or its subscales at Time 1. Attending the course face to face had a stronger statistically significant positive correlation with overall adaptation and/or its subscales at Time 2. Furthermore, the overall difference in SACQ subscale means between the pre-test and post-test did not reach statistical significance. The post-SACQ scores for overall adaptation, academic adaptation, and personal-emotional adaptation were lower than the pre-SACQ scores, while social adaptation scores were higher. Furthermore, the results demonstrate significant interaction effects and relationships between MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment)

and various moderator variables (e.g., scholarship, length of attending the course face to face, school, age, Italian language skills, length of stay in Italy, attended the program online or face to face, and communication with people of the same nationality) in predicting IS' overall adaptation in Italy.

These findings offer valuable insights for institutions and educators on how specific factors and their interactions influence IS' overall adaptation experiences. Furthermore, Chapter 6 will integrate the qualitative and quantitative results of the study and discuss the practical, theoretical, and research implications

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between motivations for studying abroad (MSA) and the intercultural adaptation (IA) of IS (IS) in Italy. To support this purpose, some research questions guided this study, including:

1.   What motivated international students to choose and make decision to study abroad in Italy?

2.   How international students' intercultural adaptation in Italy changed?

3.   How studying abroad motivations effects intercultural adaptation of international students in Italy?

4.   Do background characteristics mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy?

To explore and analyze the emerging themes within this study, this chapter commences by introducing an integration of the qualitative and quantitative discoveries. Subsequent to this, it offers an insightful interpretation of the findings, meticulously addressing the research questions and emphasizing the profound contribution of the MSA-IA relationship to the existing body of knowledge. The subsequent sections of this chapter candidly acknowledge the limitations within the study, encompassing the research's scope boundaries and theoretical constraints. Next, it extends practical recommendations for policymakers, institutions, faculty, and IS, while charting a course for future research in the field. Lastly, it succinctly summarizes the critical points discussed throughout the chapter.

Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

This section presents an integration of the qualitative and quantitative findings derived from this research study. In accomplishing this, the initial focus is on the following aspects: (a) MSA of IS, encompassing discussions about IS' motives and the influence of

diverse background characteristics on their decision-making process; (b) IA of IS, involving discussions regarding the correlations between background characteristics and IS' IA, along with how IA of IS in Italy changed over time; (c) The MSA-IA relationship, which includes discussions on how MSA impacts and predicts IS' IA, alongside its moderating effect on the MSA-IA relationship. Consistent with the methodology of this study, these discussions integrate and analyze both qualitative and quantitative findings in parallel.

Motivation to Study Abroad of IS

Several themes have arisen from both the qualitative and quantitative segments of this study, that help to understand and comprehensively dissecting the motivations that drive IS to pursue study abroad opportunities within Italian HEI. The primary objective of this subsection seeks to provide an overview of these themes, and includes discussions about IS' motives to choose Italy as their educational destination, key influential factors impacting IA of IS, and the background characteristics effect on MSA of IS.

IS' motives to choose Italy as their educational destination. In this study, the term "motivation for studying abroad" specifically pertains to entrance motivation, which encompasses the decision-making process associated with studying abroad. Choosing a study abroad destination involves a multifaceted and intricate process, influenced by numerous factors that impact the decision to pursue education abroad and determine the specific country, institution, and program to enroll in (Chen, 2007; Cubillo et al, 2006; Eder et al., 2010; Maringe & Carter, 2007). While IS look for entrance opportunities in different countries, including Italy, Switzerland, Austria, France, Spain, Germany, Australia, the UK, the US, Canada, and China. The geographical location of the HEI significantly shapes IS' decision. The qualitative and quantitative data both shown that Europe and North America are the most popular continents that IS would consider. More specifically, the main countries that IS looked for a position, the first country was another non-English-speaking Germany in

Europe as participant A1 stated, "at the beginning my main goal to go up was Germany", and the US, an English-speaking country in North America, was the next. In fact, from the first phase data (N = 604), Europe received the highest number of responses, with 569 applications, while North America accounting for 76.20% of the total cases or 94.20% when considering the percentages.

However, why end up with Italy? The participants had stated that six motivated factors play a crucial role in the decision-making process of the study abroad Italian destination and the program. First, pull of the host country (Italy), which including natural environment, city where the university is located (Padua), Italian culture, familiarity, cost (financial). Italian culture was a topic of discussion for most participants. As participant A stated, "after you come out, you may be able to feel something different, a different culture, I think this is a very important point." While participant N stated, "the motivation for sure is the cultural experience, I would say." Additionally, participant Q mentioned, "I like Italy for the arts, culture, the history."

Second, push of home country, including poor educational system, poor occupational environment, home culture, eager to get out of the home country. The primary and foremost push factor identified within the home country was the inadequacy of the educational system. For instance, participant D held the belief that a foreign diploma holds better recognition than one obtained from their home country.

Third, Italian higher education institution and educational system. Which including good education system, good learning atmosphere, reputation of the university or major, and familiarity: familiar with Italian HEI or education system. Within these four factors, the first motivated factor was the good education system in Italy. As participant D1 stated, "when I saw this course, I was mesmerized because of exactly what I was looking for or adapting myself to the market."

Fourth, the program and applications, which including relation of the program, less challenges to apply, effective of the administration: timely respond, cooperation, and scholarship. Numerous participants have highlighted these aspects, which serve as crucial reference points in terms of motivation, especially the less challenges to apply. As the research result of Song (2013), meeting the requirements to study abroad in Italy is much easier compared to those of other western countries (especially, English-speaking countries).

Fifth, personal goals, beliefs, and values, which was the most important factor that including nine themes: as a springboard for pursuing something; enlarge world view; entertainment; personal desire or expectation; geographically close; career development; previous experience; improving language skills; random, luck, chance, opportunity. Personal desires or expectations, along with elements of randomness, luck, chance, and opportunity, emerged as the two most frequently mentioned aspects by IS.

Sixth, social support, which including influence by a lover; influence by an Italian supervisor or professor; and influence by home professors, colleagues, or friends. For instance, participant P stated, "my motivation was my girlfriend at the moment." Moreover, participant N stated, "after we met, he (the old professor who was Italian) told me there's the possibility." While participant J stated, "my master's supervisor......I think he is very humble and modest, but his humility and love for academics is very humble and polite, which influenced me a lot."

The most motivational factors impacting IA of IS. The qualitative analysis identifies that among the six motivated factors to study abroad, there are four motivational factors influencing the IA of IS in Italy, including world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment. The exploratory quantitative data analysis identifies the career development was the most influential factor to motivate IS to study abroad in the Italian HEI while entertainment is the lowest. Moreover, world enlightenment and personal

growth hold comparable significance.

During the qualitative exploration into the world enlightenment dimension's motivational aspect, diverse participant viewpoints emerged. For instance, participant K emphasized the significance of acquiring knowledge and welcoming new experiences. Additionally, participant E emphasized the allure of a liberal and open international academic environment.

Moreover, in the qualitative analysis of the personal growth dimension's motivational aspect, several participants shared their perspectives. For instance, participant J expressed a focus on personal growth to become stronger, while participant C highlighted personal growth within an academic context. Moreover, participant M expressed uncertainty but associated personal growth with achieving small goals.

Furthermore, in the exploration of the career development dimension's motivational aspect through qualitative data, several participants (D, D1, A1, A, G, B1, and B2) discussed their most motivations for future career advancement. Notably, some participants expressed a strong desire to work and remain in Italy as immigrants, which emerged as a significant motivating factor for them. For instance, participant B1 emphasized this perspective by saying, "the idea is to continue living in Italy and working there. It's, it feels like a great responsibility."Additionally, participant B2 echoed this sentiment, stating, "I mean, what I think was like, I am not coming back." These insights highlight the role of career aspirations and immigration considerations in motivating IS.

Last, entertainment emerges as a motivational dimension for IS to study abroad in Italy due to its potential to enhance their overall experience. The prospect of enjoying life and engaging in recreational activities while pursuing education in a new country can create a well-rounded and fulfilling student experience. For instance, participant O emphasized the enjoyment of life, "being flexible to move around, spend a week at home, and spend a week

with my friends. "Entertainment emerges as a motivational dimension for IS to study abroad in Italy due to its potential to enhance their overall experience. The prospect of enjoying life and engaging in recreational activities while pursuing education in a new country can create a well-rounded and fulfilling student experience. For instance, participant O emphasized the enjoyment of life, "being flexible to move around, spend a week at home, and spend a week with my friends." Additionally, forming relationships and having a partner in Italy can contribute to a sense of belonging and happiness, further motivating IS to choose this destination for their studies. For instance, participants P and I emphasized the significance of relationships, particularly having a partner in Italy. This dimension underscores the importance of a holistic and enjoyable student life as a driving factor in their decision-making process.

Background characteristics had effect on studying abroad motivations of IS. Regarding to the qualitative participants, in fact, the decision-making process possesses a distinct complexity or sample. In another words, for some IS, their motivation for studying abroad encompasses a single aspect, while for others, it comprises multiple motivations. It is important to understand the background characteristics of IS in detail, which helps to understand what effects IS' adaptation process to the Italian HEI and programs.

The selection of qualitative interview participants was based on five criteria: age, gender, degree, university year, and school. These five aspects were also considered as significant background characteristics of IS for quantitative data collection. Among them, age and gender both had statistically significant relationships with personal growth ($p < 0.05$) and entertainment ($p < 0.05$) subscales, while no significant differences were observed in the world enlightenment and career development subscales ($p > 0.05$). Moreover, the ANOVA highlighted a significant impact of degree-seeking type ($p < 0.05$), university years ($p < 0.05$), and schools ($p < 0.001$) on the career development subscale. However, no substantial

differences were observed in the other three subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, and entertainment) across the compared groups in each factor ($p > 0.05$).

Moreover, understanding the influence of scholarships and family financing on the decision-making of IS to study abroad is crucial because these factors play a pivotal role in shaping IS' educational trajectories. Scholarships and family financial support can determine accessibility, affordability, and the pursuit of academic aspirations, ultimately impacting IS' opportunities, choices, and success in their study abroad endeavors, which indicated in the qualitative data. Notably, the ANOVA demonstrated that scholarships significantly influenced the personal growth ($p < 0.01$), career development ($p < 0.05$), and entertainment ($p < 0.01$) subscales of MSA. However, no substantial evidence was found to support a significant difference in the world enlightenment subscale ($p > 0.05$) among the compared scholarship groups. The ANOVA demonstrated a significant impact of family financing on the personal growth subscale ($p < 0.05$). However, the ANOVA revealed no significant differences in the other three subscales (world enlightenment, career development, and entertainment, $p > 0.05$) among the seven groups financed by family that were compared.

Furthermore, according to the previous summary and analysis of qualitative research data, the choice of applied university number was factor that affect the motivation of IS to study abroad. The ANOVA indicated a significant impact of the applied university number on the career development subscale ($p < 0.05$). However, the ANOVA did not reveal any significant differences in the other three subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, and entertainment, $p > 0.05$) among the six compared groups the choice of applied university number.

Last, this study focused on understanding whether the first language and Italian language skills influence IS' decisions to study abroad in Italy and select specific programs is crucial. The language factors can directly impact IS' academic performance, communication

abilities, cultural integration, and overall success during their study abroad experience. The study found notable disparities between the English and non-English groups on the MSA subscales. Specifically, English speakers exhibited significantly higher mean scores on the personal growth subscale (t = -3.627, p < 0.05) compared to non-English speakers. However, no significant differences were observed in the world enlightenment (t = -1.589, p > 0.05), career development (t = 0.996, p > 0.05), and entertainment subscale (t = -2.223, p > 0.05). Moreover, the ANOVA indicated a noteworthy influence of overall Italian language skills on the career development subscale (p < 0.01). However, no substantial evidence emerged to support a significant difference in the other three subscales among the compared degree-seeking type groups: world enlightenment subscale, personal growth subscale, and entertainment subscale (p > 0.05).

Above all, there were six factors (the pull of the host country; the push of the home country; the Italian higher education institution and educational system; the program and applications; personal goals, beliefs, and values; social support) that effects the decision-making process of IS, while four motivational factors (world enlightenment; personal growth; career development; and entertainment) that influence the IA of IS the most. Moreover, among the four motivations, career development and personal growth were two main motivational factors that influenced by the background characteristics of IS. These findings offer a comprehensive understanding of factors shaping IS' decisions to study abroad. This knowledge aids educational institutions, policymakers, and practitioners in creating a more inclusive and supportive environment, attracting a diverse range of IS. It also helps formulate effective strategies for IS' adaptation to new intercultural settings.

Intercultural Adaptation of international students

The qualitative and quantitative analysis unveils the nuanced dimensions of IS' IA in Italy, highlighting the dynamic nature of their adaptation journey over time and the pivotal

role that background characteristics play in shaping this process. This study gains a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors shaping their adaptation journey.

IA of IS in Italy. The qualitative data suggest that IS had different feelings in general when they described their intercultural experiences in Italy. On the one hand, feeling well in general, as participant A2 stated, "I enjoy this very much, enjoy my study life, and enjoy my own learning results. "On the other hand, the qualitative data shown that IS had experienced difficulties and challenges which made them feel bad, during the staying in Italy, for instance, disappointment, not enjoying, unhappy, anxiety, culture shock et al. The difficulties and challenges including six aspects: cultural barriers; social network; living difficulties; academic research; personal emotional; institutional attachment. Among them, the language barrier is mentioned by most of the participants, followed by academic research, personal emotional, and social network.

Moreover, the qualitative data which was the description of IA, suggest that some IS liken themselves to representative elements or individuals, such as a small tree growing steadily, calm water, playful Lego blocks, fish adapting to a new oceanic environment, a scientist surrounded by diverse colleagues, a falling leaf, a fading ink pen, bamboo, collapsing buildings resembling dominoes, a speed-changing serial, and more. Additionally, some IS found themselves within artistic concepts like the blue sky, white clouds, grassy landscapes, staying within their comfort zones, observing roommates' artwork while pondering their departmental work, seafront scenes, historical portrayals like "Sprung in die Freiheit" and "Scuola di Atene," a TV series moment from Modern Family, and echoes of "The Dream of the Red Chamber."

More specifically, the qualitative data identifies six aspects that describe the IA experiences of IS. Firstly, some participants exhibited specific and well-defined personal goals for their studies and lives. For instance, participant Q assumed himself as a "pen", and

as he stated, "so, even within the internal system, I make sure that as I am knowing this society more as I'm doing what I'm doing here more. I'm also making efforts to make sure that I get better so that I don't get finished." While some participants had different kinds of uncertainties, which confused him, and he couldn't know clearly which direction to choose. Secondly, some IS grappled with the challenge of balancing their academic research with their social lives. For instance, participant D and F had the eager to slow down and enjoy the life, however, participant D was " tied up in research" while participant F was "limited by the research". Thirdly, for some IS, the entire experience of living in a new country was entirely novel, necessitating the creation of social networks from scratch; the decision to form these networks was up to the individual IS, but some encountered difficulties or chose not to engage. For instance, as participant B stated, "I'm used to being in the comfort zone of my own life." Fourthly, several IS displayed a positive attitude toward their adaptation in Italy, even in the face of difficulties and challenges. For instance, participant N even though always has work challenges that are stressing her, but she still described the IA as "pretty easy", like "go on vacation on the beach". She believed "in a new environment is always interesting". Fifthly, some IS found satisfaction in personal growth and academic development, despite encountering occasional hardships. participant K assumed himself as "lego", and he was "plugging in little things into it every day, little even if it's a tough experience. "Lastly, for some IS, the study abroad experience became an integral part of their life journey. For instance, participant O imagined his IA as "the picture of a person academia", who " moving around a lot that is like having different colleagues in different countries, that is, very like flexible". Moreover, he was "starting to feel really like kind of engaged in".

IA of IS dynamic shifts over time. From the quantitative data (N = 237) collected both before and during the initial recovery phases of the post-COVID-19 pandemic, the analysis showed that the post-SACQ score was lower than the pre-SACQ score, indicating a

decrease in adaptation. The data suggest that the overall adaptability of IS studying in Italy exhibited a declining trajectory. In particular, academic adaptation, personal emotional adaptation, and goal commitment-institutional attachment were lower than during the subsequent phases of the pandemic. However, social adaptation demonstrated improvement. The analysis identifies the change of the adaptability of IS is related to its own adaptability in various aspects. Moreover, quantitative data not only corroborate the findings of qualitative data but also provide further validation across a larger participant sample.

As reported by some qualitative participants, IS did have initial expectations of the Italian HEI or program. However, due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic, their experiences led to challenges, suffering, and a sense of disappointment. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the structure and system of university education has experienced a substantial overhaul without precedence. Prevailing cultural distinctions have already posed barriers to the adaptation of IS, and the "temporary closure" of universities and social surroundings has compounded the difficulty of adaptation. This trend of diminishing adaptability warrants careful consideration. Post-pandemic, it becomes even more imperative to offer suitable assistance and support tailored to the evolving needs of IS' adaptation.

The effects of background characteristics on IS' IA. In addition to the hindering factor of COVID-19 pandemic, this study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative research data to identify additional background characteristics that influence the IA of IS. The IA of IS studying in Italy presents a complex phenomenon shaped by a myriad of factors. Over time, the dynamics of IA undergo shifts influenced by a range of situational, personal, and contextual variables. The background characteristics which summarized from qualitative data are mainly including gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship, applied university number, first language, financed by family, Italian language skills, communication, stay and plan to stay in Italy, study abroad experiences, and curriculum setting.

On the one hand, among the unchanged background characteristics, including gender, degree, university year, school, scholarship, applied university number, and first language, gender demonstrated a significant negative association with overall adaptation at Time 1, and degree showed a significant positive correlation with overall adaptation at Time 1, however, all of them with no significant relationship observed at Time 2.

On the other hand, among the changed background characteristics, including financed by family, Italian language skills, communication, stay and plan to stay in Italy, study abroad experiences, and curriculum setting, the analysis reveals noteworthy findings. Specifically, overall Italian language skills, talk to people of a different nationality, and talk to professors display statistically significant positive relationship with overall adaptation at both Time 1 and Time 2. Moreover, financed by family exhibits a statistically significant negative relationship with overall adaptation at Time 1, and the length of stay in Italy demonstrates a statistically significant positive association with overall adaptation at Time 1, while no significant relationship is observed for both variables at Time 2. Furthermore, both duration of the longest stay abroad in a country and length of attending the course face to face, demonstrate statistically significant positive relationships with overall adaptation at Time 2, whereas no significant relationship is observed at Time 1. Last, talk to people with the same nationality, length of planning to stay in Italy, times of studying abroad, attended the program online or face to face, and length of attending the course online show no statistically significant relationship at either Time 1 or Time 2.

Among these background characteristics, some reveal significant correlations with IA, offering insights into the interconnectedness of personal attributes and IA outcomes. While gender, degree, and language skills demonstrate varying associations with IA at different time points, certain factors like communication with individuals of diverse nationalities and interactions with professors consistently exhibit positive relationships with IA. On the other

hand, the financial source of support and the length of stay in Italy illuminate complex dynamics, with significant effects on IA at distinct time intervals. These findings underscore the need for a nuanced approach in designing interventions and support systems that address the evolving needs of IS throughout their academic journey in Italy. Moreover, understanding how background characteristics influence IS' IA in Italy is crucial for several reasons. These characteristics can significantly impact IS' experiences, challenges, and successes while studying abroad, affecting their academic, social, emotional, and institutional integration. By identifying these influences, educational institutions and policymakers can tailor support systems and interventions to enhance IS' overall well-being and successful adaptation, ultimately contributing to a more enriching and fulfilling study abroad experience.

Relationship between Motivation to Study Abroad and Intercultural Adaptation

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between MSA and IA of IS in Italy. This section synthesizes the qualitative and quantitative findings to delve into the dynamic integration model that elucidates the MSA-IA relationship. It further uncovers the underlying factors driving this relationship.

Significant correlations between MSA and IA. By employing both qualitative and quantitative data analysis, the findings indicate a different significant correlation between MSA and IA at Time 1 and Time 2.

The quantitative analysis indicates during Time 1, firstly, the MSA dimension of world enlightenment has a significant impact on various aspects of IS' adaptation. Specifically, higher levels of world enlightenment are linked to improved overall adaptation, academic adaptation, social adaptation, and goal commitment-institutional attachment among IS. In other words, when IS possess greater world enlightenment, they tend to experience more positive outcomes in terms of their overall adaptation and various dimensions of their university experience. Secondly, the MSA dimension related to career development

significantly impacts the overall adaptation and academic adaptation of IS at Time1. In other words, when IS exhibit higher levels of career development motivation, they tend to experience more positive outcomes in terms of their overall adaptation and their academic adjustment. This suggests that having strong career development motivations can contribute to a smoother transition and integration into the academic environment while studying abroad. Thirdly, the motivational dimension of entertainment, as assessed by the MSA, plays a role in shaping the goal commitment and institutional attachment of IS. Specifically, when IS express higher levels of motivation related to entertainment, they tend to exhibit stronger commitment to their academic goals and a greater sense of attachment to their educational institution. This suggests that finding enjoyment and satisfaction in their academic journey can contribute to a deeper sense of engagement and connection to their chosen educational path and institution. Fourthly, the motivational dimension of personal growth, as assessed by the MSA, did not demonstrate a significant influence on any of the aspects related to IA among IS at Time 1. Furthermore, the personal-emotional adaptation of IS was not found to be correlated with any of the four motivational variables at Time 1. This indicates that, in this study, the pursuit of personal growth does not seem to directly impact the specific dimensions of IA among IS. Additionally, the personal-emotional adaptation of IS was not found to be linked with any of the four motivational variables examined in the study. This implies that emotional adjustment among these IS does not appear to be influenced by the specific motivational factors being investigated.

In contrast to the findings at Time 1, the results at Time 2 indicate a distinct pattern: the MSA of personal growth at Time 2 affects the personal-emotional adaptation of IS. Surprisingly, a higher level of personal growth among these IS is associated with a decrease in their adaptability in terms of personal-emotional adjustment. This unexpected relationship suggests that personal growth motivations might have a complex impact on emotional

adaptation over time. Furthermore, the MSA of entertainment has an impact on multiple dimensions of adaptation for IS at Time 2. Interestingly, a higher level of entertainment motivation among IS is associated with increased adaptability in terms of social adaptation. However, it's worth noting that this heightened entertainment motivation corresponds to lower levels of academic adaptation and personal-emotional adaptation. This implies that while entertainment motivation may positively influence social interactions, it might negatively affect academic and personal-emotional aspects of adaptation.

Visualizing the dynamic integration model: Unveiling the relationship between MSA and IA. It is crucial to understand the direct associations between each predictor variables of MSA (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation outcome. The findings suggest that out of the four dimensions of studying abroad motivation, only world enlightenment demonstrates a significant positive correlation with the indicators of overall adaptation. The dimensions of personal growth, career development, and entertainment, on the other hand, do not exhibit noteworthy relationships with the overall SACQ indicators within the sample. Furthermore, the extent to which each predictor accounts for variance in the overall SACQ indicators offers insights into their respective contributions, irrespective of their statistical significance. Specifically, the world enlightenment predictor accounts for approximately 17% of the variance in overall adaptation, whereas personal growth, career development, and entertainment collectively explain around 16% of the variance in overall adaptation.

Notably, the interplay between MSA and IA holds significant importance in shaping the overall IA of IS. In other words, MSA is a key factor in influencing and predicting how IS adapt to the new intercultural environment. Moreover, there are some mediating effects that positively or negatively affect the MSA-IA relationship. A dynamic integration model that elucidates the interaction between MSA and IA can provide valuable insights into the

intricate MSA-IA relationship (see chart 1).

Firstly, the quantitative data suggests that IS with higher levels of world enlightenment, who also have scholarships, experience enhanced overall adaptation. Similarly, the data indicating that higher world enlightenment, combined with longer face-to-face course attendance, is linked to better overall adaptation.

Secondly, the quantitative data implying that IS with higher personal growth in some schools, for instance, School of Engineering, School of Science, School of Medicine and, School of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, tend to achieve better overall adaptation scores compared with IS from School of Economics and Political Science, School of Psychology, School of Human and Social Sciences and Cultural Heritage. Moreover, the data indicating that higher personal growth combined with scholarships leads to improved overall adaptation. Furthermore, the data highlighting that elevated personal growth is associated with higher overall adaptation for IS with better language skills and longer stays in Italy.

Thirdly, the quantitative data suggesting that as IS' age increases, their overall adaptation tends to decrease, considering their career development levels. Conversely, the data suggest that IS with higher career development, who also attend the course face to face or online and face to face, exhibit higher overall adaptation compared with the IS who attended the course online or did not come to Italy yet.

Last, the quantitative data indicating that IS with higher levels of entertainment and scholarships tend to achieve better overall adaptation. Research indicates that individuals who make efforts to adopt or integrate into the host culture or engage with local residents are often viewed as more tolerant by members of the host culture (Bastian, 2012; Lopez-Rogdriquez et al, 2014). Conversely, IS tend to exhibit lower levels of tolerance. The data suggesting that IS who engage more with people from their own nationality, despite higher entertainment

motivation, tend to experience lower overall adaptation.

Chart 1

Visualizing the dynamic integration modle
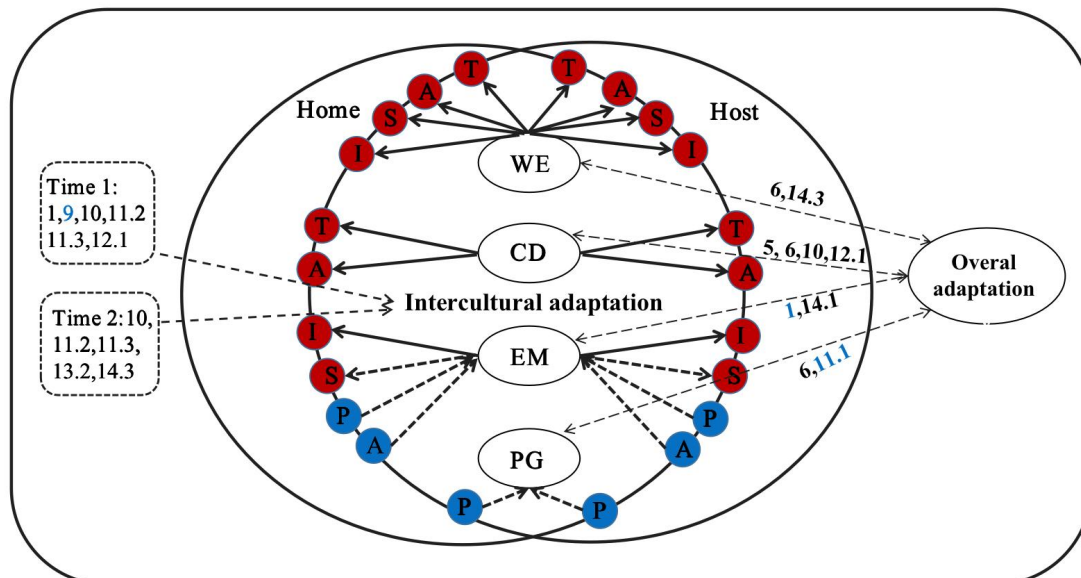
Note: Solid line = Time 1, Dotted line = Time 2, Red = positive correlation, Blue = negative correlation, WE = world enlightenment, CD = career development, EM = entertainment, PG = personal growth;T = overall adaptation, A = academic adaptation, S = social adaptation, I = goal commitment-institutional attachment, P = personal-emotional adaptation; 1 = Age, 2 = gender, 3 = degree, 4 = university year, 5 = school, 6 = scholarship, 7 = applied university number, 8 = first language, 9 = financial support from family, 10 = Italian language skills, 11.1 = talk to people with the same nationality, 11.2 = talk to people of a different nationality, 11.3 = talk to professors, 12 = stay and plan to stay in Italy, 12.1 = length of stay in Italy, 12.2 = length of planning to stay in Italy, 13 = studying abroad experience,13.1 = times of studying abroad, 13.2 = duration of the longest stay abroad in a country, 14.1 = attended the program online or face to face, 14.2 = length of attending the course online, 14.3 = length of attending the course face to face.

Interpret the Findings

Addressing Research Questions through Findings Analysis

The qualitative and quantitative results obtained in this study play a crucial role in addressing the research questions. Qualitative data provide depth and context, while quantitative data offer statistical rigor and broader generalizability, ultimately leading to a more complete and convincing set of answers to the research questions. Firstly, the qualitative data provide a deep and nuanced understanding of the phenomena being studied. They help answer the research questions by offering insights into the motivations, experiences, and perspectives of the participants. For instance, qualitative data can reveal why IS chosen to study in Italy and the specific HEI, what challenges they face, and how they perceive their IA. Secondly, quantitative data, on the other hand, provide statistical validation and corroboration of the findings derived from qualitative analysis. They help answer the research questions by confirming whether trends or patterns observed in the qualitative data are statistically significant and applicable to a broader population. For instance, qualitative data suggest that world enlightenment is a significant motivator for IS, quantitative data can confirm this by showing a strong correlation between world enlightenment motivation and their overall adaptation. Thirdly, quantitative data allow for comparisons and generalizations. By analyzing quantitative data, it can answer research questions by making comparisons across different groups or conditions. For instance, it helps to compare the adaptation levels of IS have different scholarships or those with different levels of language proficiency to answer questions related to the influence of background characteristics on adaptation. Fourthly, quantitative data also enable researchers to make predictions based on patterns and associations. They help answer research questions by indicating which factors are most likely to influence a particular IA outcome. For instance, the findings suggest that IS with higher levels of world enlightenment motivation are more likely to have better overall adaptation,

allowing the study to predict that this motivation dimension is a key factor in adaptation. Last, by integrating qualitative and quantitative findings, it provides a comprehensive answer to the research questions. This synthesis helps ensure that the research questions are addressed from multiple angles and with a higher degree of confidence.

In detail, the qualitative and quantitative results help answer the research questions as follows:

The first research question is "what motivated international students to choose and make decision to study abroad in Italy?" The qualitative data provide rich insights into the motivations of IS. Participants' narratives, such as their desire for personal growth, exposure to a new culture, or pursuit of specific academic goals, offer a detailed understanding of their motivations. While quantitative data can corroborate and quantify these motivations. For example, statistical analysis might reveal that a significant portion of IS chose Italy for career development.

The second research question is "how international students' intercultural adaptation in Italy changed?" On the one hand, qualitative data, collected through semi-structured interviews, can capture the evolving experiences and challenges faced by IS over time. participants' stories can highlight shifts in their adaptation processes. On the other hand, quantitative data collected at two time points allow for tracking changes in adaptation levels over time. Statistical analyses can show whether there are significant differences in adaptation scores between different time points, providing insights into adaptation trajectories.

The third research question is "how studying abroad motivations effects intercultural adaptation of international students in Italy?" Qualitative data can uncover the links between IS' motivations and their adaptation experiences. For instance, participants' narratives may reveal that those motivated by world enlightenment tend to have smoother adaptation journeys. Moreover, quantitative data allow for the assessment of correlations and

relationships between motivation dimensions and overall adaptation. Statistical analyses can determine whether certain motivations are positively or negatively associated with the adaptation.

The last research question is "do background characteristics mediate the relationship between the four MSA subscales (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, entertainment) and the overall adaptation for international students in Italy?" Qualitative data can provide insights into how background characteristics, such as degree type or language proficiency, may influence the relationship between motivation and adaptation. Participants' stories may reveal patterns or themes related to these mediating factors. While quantitative data allow for statistical testing of mediation effects. Mediation analysis can assess whether background characteristics mediate the relationship between motivation (e.g., career development) and adaptation. For example, it can determine whether a student's degree type moderates the impact of career development motivation on IA.

Above all, together, qualitative, and quantitative data facilitate a thorough understanding of why IS choose Italy, how their adaptation changes over time, the influence of motivations on adaptation, and the role of background characteristics in mediating these relationships.

Motivation to Study Abroad, Intercultural Adaptation, and MSA-IA relationship: Contributing to the Literature

This section directs its attention towards the contributions of this study to the existing literature concerning the interplay between the drive to study abroad and IA. To achieve this, the section will be structured into four distinct subsections, each devoted to one of the key themes that have surfaced from the comprehensive review of the literature (as elucidated in Chapter Two). These themes include IS, motivations for studying abroad, IA to college, and the MSA-IA relationship.

Contribution of IS to the literature. This study provides valuable support and insights to the existing literature that explores IS in various dimensions. Firstly, concerning intercultural education policy in Italy. On the one hand, the fact that intercultural education policies adopted in Italy related to multicultural integration and educational needs of IS. However, firstly, the policies do not, or barely, consider or address MSA is an important factor affecting the adaptation of IS. Consequently, there are also no relevant strategies for attracting and retaining IS in Italy based on the how the motivation effects the IA of IS. On the other hand, the finding suggests that, before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were few policies in Italy that addressed the integration of digital learning methods with multicultural or intercultural education. Therefore, IS in Italy suffered from the digital learning during the global pandemic. However, due to the pandemic, there is now a recognized need for policies that specifically focus on integrating digital learning with multicultural or intercultural education.

Secondly, regarding the mobility of IS. The findings underscored the market potential for IS mobility, particularly for countries where English is not the primary language, such as Italy. Specifically, it implies that Italy, despite not being an English-speaking country, has the potential to attract more IS. Additionally, the findings centered around MSA, IA, and MSA-IA relationship offer a fresh approach to maintaining competitiveness in the constantly evolving global landscape of international education demand. The research findings provide insights into how countries like Italy can stay competitive in the global demand for international education. This is crucial because there is a growing international market for education, and countries need to understand the motivations of IS and how well they adapt to different cultures to remain attractive destinations.

Thirdly, concerning the contribution and benefit of IS. Investigating the relationship between MSA and IA can provide insight into how IS' motivations contribute to their own

development and the host country's cultural enrichment, informing policies that promote mutually beneficial experiences for all IS. Based on the findings, IS can bring about several valuable contributions to the host country's educational institutions and society as a whole, including not only cultural diversity, global perspectives, economic impact, and cross-cultural understanding, but also global networking: hosting IS can lead to valuable global networking opportunities for both IS and institutions, which can be beneficial for future collaborations and partnerships; global alumni network: IS often become part of the institution's alumni network, which can extend the college's reach and influence worldwide, opening up possibilities for future collaborations and partnerships; and diplomatic and cultural relations: IS serve as informal ambassadors, fostering diplomatic and cultural relations between their home countries and the host country, which can lead to future collaborations and exchanges.

Last, the influence of COVID-19 pandemic on IS. The pandemic has introduced unique challenges for IS, such as remote learning, travel restrictions, and isolation. Investigating IA during this period can shed light on how these challenges have influenced IS' adaptation experiences. Moreover, the pandemic has placed a significant strain on the mental health and well-being of IS. Investigating how MSA relates to IA can provide insights into the emotional well-being of IS. For instance, IS motivated by world enlightenment may have sought solace in cultural exploration, while those motivated by career development may have experienced heightened stress due to uncertainties in the job market. These insights can guide mental health support services. Furthermore, understanding the MSA-IA relationship in the context of the pandemic can reveal how IS' motivations have influenced their resilience and coping mechanisms. For instance, IS motivated by personal growth may have demonstrated more adaptability and problem-solving skills in the face of adversity. This knowledge can inform the development of targeted support programs to bolster IS' resilience.

Contribution of motivations for studying abroad to the literature. Understanding

IS' MSA can shed light on their decision-making processes and entrance motivations for studying abroad. The decision-making process of studying abroad was rather complex or sample. On the one hand, the process was complex and cannot be summed up in a few words. For instance, participant Q had considered a lot before he made the decision to come to Italy. As he mentioned,

> Um, oh, some of the factors that prepared me to study in Italy because they have to do with my expectation for good education, for a better life ...... So many factors really influenced my decision to come to Italy......

On the other hand, the decision-making process to study abroad of some IS was rather simple. For instance, participant M has stated,

> And at the end, when I was looking for a Ph.D., I had no doubt that I was going to have an educational background. Mhm, and I prepared a real thing cute cover letter. Speaking about all these facts about this city that I was interested in staying and going on with my project that I started some years ago. And the fact that, um there was a position only for IS, so I applied for that specific.

Moreover, some of the participants mentioned the "chance" or "opportunity" to study abroad they have helps them to know and chose the Italian HEI and program. As participant K stated, "for the university part, it was just by chance. Actually, I had a conversation with somebody who had previously been doing a course at the University of Padua, and he mentioned the course and said, 'uh, you know, there are some scholarships offered'".

However, the findings indicated that there were four key entrance motivational dimensions influenced the IA of IS in Italy, including world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment. This research result is consistent with the research result of Anderson & Lawton (2015b). In fact, as the quantitative data suggested, there was a positive correlation indicates that two dimensions tend to increase together. First, world

enlightenment dimension, showcasing a multifaceted motivation that encompasses intellectual curiosity, a quest for universal knowledge, and a commitment to personal growth and contributing to the global community. For instance, as participant K stated, "I think my MSA, my mind just to too immerse myself in the cultural experience. Coming at everything from, uh, from among aspect of learning and experiencing because I was very, very keen to experience new things."

Second, personal growth as a motivational dimension encompasses various aspects of self-improvement, resilience, and academic development. It reflects a commitment to personal advancement, whether in terms of strength, academic achievement, goal attainment, or broader personal development objectives. For instance, as participant Q stated,

I would say it was my determination to complete what I started, which is the Ph.D. program. So, um yeah, I want to have a doctorate education, and I'm having that, and I know that it's a three-year program. And I am progressing where is in a blue way. Yeah, so I think that motivation keeps pushing me, and it keeps making me adapt to UNIPD.

Third, career development as a motivational dimension encompasses various aspects related to transitioning from academia to employment, planning for future careers, and establishing oneself professionally. It reflects a diverse range of motivations, from seeking employment to actively planning and shaping one's career path, including the possibility of remaining in the host country for career purposes. For instance, as participant A1 stated, "the motivation is to find a job, a job that is more equal in terms of gender, and then a job with more room for career development, so that my study abroad life can be more purposeful and planned."

Last, entertainment as a motivational dimension encompasses various elements related to the enjoyment, satisfaction, and well-being of IS during their stay abroad. It

includes an interest in local culture, the balance between work and leisure, positive interactions with professors or mentors, appreciation for kind individuals or pets, and the influence of romantic relationships in enhancing the overall experience. For instance, as participant O stated,

> Uh, I guess that I feel well with my work, which is very important. Because it's anyways, it's a big part of my time; I'm spending on my project. So, I think if I would not happy with my project, I would maybe or somehow not be happy with my life in Padua...... I enjoy the life here, but I also enjoy getting out of Padua and seeing some other things and going to other cities.

By examining the studying abroad motivations influence their IA experiences, researchers, policymakers can gain insights into the factors driving IS to study abroad. This knowledge informs the development of more effective recruitment strategies, tailored to align with IS' motivations, ultimately influencing the entrance motivation of IS, helping institutions attract and retain a diverse student body.

Contribution of IA to College to the literature. According to the literature, studying abroad itself is a challenge, especially adaptation to the host culture (Alred, 2002; Domville-Roach, 2007; Luo & Zhang, 2021), IS have tough time to transit to a new unfamiliar environment (Wu & Hammond, 2011). The findings in the Italian context supports this idea, IS in Italy may experience a range of negative emotions and challenges, including feeling annoyed, disappointed, lonely, and unhappy. They might struggle with a lack of research atmosphere, self-doubt in overcoming difficulties, and a mismatch between their expectations and reality. Anxiety about research and publication, culture shock in the learning system and job market, and frustration related to language barriers, particularly with Italian, can also contribute to their overall negative feelings. Moreover, the findings suggest that there were four IA dimensions, including social adaptation, academic adaptation, personal emotional

adaptation, and institutional attachment.

First, social adaptation challenges for IS in Italy encompass three main aspects, IS in Italy may struggle with cultural, social, and practical aspects of adaptation, including language barriers, social integration difficulties, and living-related challenges. These issues can contribute to a complex IA process. For instance, as participant L stated, "for example, I had to deal with the fact that I am not Italian to find an apartment. When you are not Italian, it's half of the time, a 'sorry, but no.'" While participant J stated, "as a student, you have to take the initiative to talk, both the tutor and the student. And for us Chinese and their Italian, the language and cultural differences will be more difficult, so you have to be more proactive."

Moreover, IS in Italy may face academic adaptation difficulties related to limited supervision and support, as well as the need to adapt to the Italian evaluation system and exams. for instance, as participant P stated,

Now, I do feel a bit more part of the university because I have the possibility of going to the university if I want to, you know, and um but still like what I do is quiet, um, isolated nowhere. It's not the student that is being supervised by, yeah, I am this one in the first year, so I'm kind of doing my own thing.

Furthermore, personal emotional adaptation challenges for IS in Italy include the following aspects: first, academic anxiety. Some IS experience anxiety related to their studies, including difficulties in studying, maintaining focus, and dealing with the demands of their academic program; second, influence of family. The influence and emotions related to their original family can impact IS' personal emotional adaptation; third, loneliness. Feelings of loneliness can arise, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when socializing is limited, and IS spend a lot of time alone at home; fourth, sense of belonging. Some IS may struggle with a lack of a sense of belonging or involvement within their academic or social

communities.

Fourth, institutional attachment challenges for IS in Italy can impact IS' sense of attachment to their academic institutions and their overall adaptation experiences, include the following aspects: first, access to research resources. Some IS face difficulties in obtaining necessary research resources for their academic work; second, supervisor. Finding a suitable research supervisor can be a challenge for some IS; third, information accessibility: accessing information about university activities and relevant resources can be problematic; last, language barrier. Some IS may struggle with receiving emails and other communications in Italian, which can hinder their understanding and engagement with institutional matters.

Notably, the findings of this study about the pre-/post- adaptation support for the U-curve hypothesis, which is often used to describe sojourners' cultural adjustment. It was first introduced by Lysgaard (1955) in his study of Norwegian Fulbright scholars in the US, Oberg (1960) used 'honeymoon,' 'crisis,' 'recovery,' and 'adjustment' to illustrate the four stages of this hypothesis. However, more recent and comprehensive research has indicated that support for the U-curve hypothesis is limited (Brown & Holloway, 2008) and the evidence for it is "weak, inconclusive and overgeneralized" (Church, 1982, p. 542). The research findings supported the result from the previous studies that IA is a dynamic process that can evolve over time (Hottola, 2004; Kim, 2001), moreover, it indicated a declining trend in the overall adaptability of IS from Time 1 to Time 2 of the study, which is crucial for understanding the dynamics of their IA in Italy. Overall, this outcome precisely aligns with the U-Curve Hypothesis, however, only the downward trend of the previous part.

Furthermore, of particular significance is the fact that from the late stage of the epidemic to the early stage of the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, IS remain situated within the preceding phase, which corresponds to the descending slope represented by the letter "U" in the U-Curve. It is noted that adapting to university life as an IS in Italy can indeed be a

complex process influenced by various factors. Adapting to a new culture can take time and effort. The global COVID-19 pandemic affects and hinders IS' adaptation to college to some extent. Investigating the relationship between MSA and IA during the COVID-19 pandemic provides insights into how IS' MSA influenced their IA in the face of unprecedented challenges. This research contributes to the literature by showing how the pandemic has affected IS' motivations and adaptation experiences. Policymakers and educators can use this knowledge to develop crisis response plans that cater to IS' diverse motivations and adaptation patterns, ensuring a smoother adaptation process even during global crises.

Contribution of MSA-IA relationship to the literature. Exploring the MSA-IA relationship contributes to the development of more effective educational policies, tailored support services, and holistic development opportunities for IS, ultimately enriching their educational experience and contributing to a more inclusive and adaptable international education system.

According to the literature focusing on MSA-IA relationship, motivational factors have a crucial impact on IA (Anderson & Lawton, 2015a; Yang et al, 2018). These ideas that MSA influences IA were confirmed in the present study; however, this study also provides new insights into these ideas. The findings of this study can help to explain how this relationship deepens the understanding of how IS' MSA influence their IA. By examining the motivations that drive IS to study abroad, the findings indicated that there were uncover patterns and dynamics that shape their adaptation trajectories. This contributes to a nuanced understanding of how motivations act as catalysts or barriers to successful IA. The literature benefits from insights into which specific motivational factors have the most significant impact on IA. The findings highlight the prominence of "world enlightenment" as a motivating factor that significantly influences IS' overall adaptation in the context of the study. The other motivations, while relevant to IS, do not appear to have as strong a direct

impact on their adaptation experiences. However, in detail, at Time 1, it becomes evident that the greater the world enlightenment motivation of IS, the better their overall adaptation, particularly in academic, social, and institutional domains. Similarly, higher levels of career development motivation are associated with improved overall adaptation, particularly in academic adaptation. Additionally, greater entertainment motivation is linked to enhanced overall adaptation. However, when examining Time 2, the findings reveal a shift in these dynamics. It appears that higher levels of entertainment motivation are now associated with improved social adaptation but poorer personal emotional and academic adaptation. Furthermore, increased personal growth motivation is linked to lower levels of personal emotional adaptation.

Another crucial aspect to consider in the context of the MSA-IA relationship above is the influence of certain background factors that have varying effects on this relationship at different time points. The findings shown that Italian language skills, talk to people of a different nationality, and talk to professors, have the influence on the MSA-IA relationship at Time 1 and Time 2. Moreover, age, financial support from family, and length of stay in Italy have the influence on the MSA-IA relationship at Time 1, while gender, duration of the longest stay abroad in a country, and length of attending the course face to face have the influence on the MSA-IA relationship at Time 2. By examining the motivations that drive IS to study abroad, the findings suggest that there were uncover patterns and dynamics that shape their adaptation trajectories. This contributes to a nuanced understanding of how motivations act as catalysts or barriers to successful IA.

All in all, this research underscores the significance of ongoing exploration and understanding of MSA, IA, and their intricate relationship. The dynamics between these factors continue to evolve, especially the learning in light of global pandemic. As international education remains a dynamic field, further research is essential for adapting

policies and practices to meet the evolving needs of IS and promote a more enriching educational experience.

Potential Factors Behind Divergent Results

Post-SACQ score is lower than the pre-SACQ score. There could be several potential factors behind divergent results, where the post-SACQ score is lower than the pre-SACQ score, contrary to what the study expected (higher post-scores). Here are some possible explanations:

First, one aspect to consider in understanding the divergent results is the internal factors. IA is a complex process, and individual experiences naturally vary. Some IS might have had smoother transitions than others due to personal factors, strong support networks, or unique circumstances. Furthermore, it's essential to consider the "adjustment period" that IS typically go through upon arrival. This phase could have impacted their post-SACQ scores, as they might have encountered various challenges, such as adapting to a new culture, academic system, or language barrier. These challenges could temporarily lower their adaptation scores. Additionally, unforeseen circumstances, such as personal or academic challenges, may have arisen during the study period, impacting IS' adaptation. These challenges might not have been anticipated when designing the study, adding complexity to the results.

Second, external factors could have contributed to the divergent results observed. These factors include changes in the local or global environment, such as shifts in economic conditions, political events, or the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic. These unexpected external factors could have influenced IS' adaptation experiences in unforeseen ways, contributing to the variations observed in the study's results. Understanding how these external factors interacted with IS' adaptation processes is crucial for a comprehensive analysis.

Third, the research conducting process represent another dimension that warrants exploration in understanding the divergent results. The timing of the pre-/post-SACQ assessment may have played a significant role. If this post-SACQ assessment occurred shortly after pre-SACQ, it might not have allowed IS enough time to fully adapt and integrate into their new environment, and IS might still in the "adjustment period". Additionally, measurement ISues need attention. Differences in how the pre-/post- SACQ assessments were conducted, including variations in question wording or survey administration, could have affected responses. Changes in timing or participant recruitment methods might have also introduced variation in the data.

Different relationships between MSA and IA at different time points. Several potential factors can explain divergent relationships between MSA and IA at different time points, which might differ from the study's expectations:

First, internal factors play a pivotal role in understanding the variations in the MSA-IA relationship. One critical aspect is the natural maturation and adaptation of IS over time. As IS spend more time in the host country, they embark on a journey of personal growth and adaptation. This maturation process is dynamic and complex, influencing the strength of the MSA-IA relationship. Intriguingly, this gradual transformation might elude even the most comprehensive longitudinal study. Additionally, IA trajectories are not always linear. Some IS may encounter initial challenges upon arrival, leading to a weak or strong MSA-IA relationship at Time 1 for some aspects. However, as they navigate through a multitude of difficulties and hurdles during their academic journey, this relationship might weaker or stronger at Time 2.

Second, the influence of external factors cannot be underestimated when deciphering the dynamics of the MSA-IA relationship. Unforeseen external circumstances, such as the disruptive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic or personal life changes, have the potential to

disrupt the delicate balance between motivation and adaptation. These external factors often operate beyond the control or anticipation of researchers and may not have been factored into the study's original design. Additionally, cultural distinctions in how motivation and adaptation are expressed or experienced contribute to the complexities of the relationship. These cultural nuances can result in varying MSA-IA relationships at different points in time, highlighting the need for a nuanced cross-cultural perspective.

Third, the process of conducting research itself introduces several elements that can contribute to divergent results. Firstly, unexplored variables or processes that influence adaptation, such as the presence of robust social support networks or the degree of exposure to the local culture, may act as mediators in the MSA-IA relationship. Importantly, these mediators may operate differently over time, adding layers of complexity to the analysis. Secondly, the variability in how MSA and IA were measured at different time points poses a significant challenge. Changes in survey instruments, modifications in administration methods, or fluctuations in participant recruitment strategies can introduce inconsistencies in data collection. These measurement-related intricacies can directly affect the observed relationships between motivation and adaptation, emphasizing the importance of meticulous research design and execution.

Potential biases regarding to the status of IS. Indeed, the status of IS when filling out surveys can have an impact on study data and results. Here are a few ways in which this can occur:

First, response bias. IS may have different experiences and perspectives depending on their individual circumstances. Factors such as language proficiency, cultural background, socioeconomic status, and academic performance can influence their perception of university life and their willingness to participate in the survey. This can introduce response bias, as the data collected may not fully represent the diverse experiences of all IS.

Second, emotional state. The emotional state of IS at the time of filling out a survey can affect their responses. For example, if a student is feeling homesick, stressed, or overwhelmed, their answers may reflect these emotions, potentially impacting the accuracy and reliability of the data.

Third, cultural differences in survey response style. Cultural variations in response style can also influence survey results. Some cultures may tend to give socially desirable responses, while others may be more direct or reserved in their feedback. These cultural differences can affect the interpretation of survey data and lead to potential misunderstandings.

Fourth, timing and context. The timing and context in which surveys are administered can impact the responses of IS. For instance, if a survey is conducted during exam periods or other stressful times, IS may provide different responses compared to when they are in a more relaxed or positive state. The specific events or situations happening at the time of the survey can shape their perceptions and affect the study's findings.

Contributions to the Field of Study

Validate the instruments. The findings of this study make a valuable contribution to the field of study by validating the instruments used to measure MSA and IA, including MSA (MSA, Anderson & Lawton, 2015b) and the Student Adjustment To College Questionnaire (SACQ, Baker & Siryk, 1989). Validation of these two instruments is crucial because it ensures that they are reliable and accurate in assessing the intended constructs among IS in Italy. By demonstrating that these instruments effectively measure the four dimensions of MSA (world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment) and various facets of IA (academic, social, personal-emotional, and institutional adaptation), this research provides confidence in their utility for future studies. This validation contributes to the broader field of international education research by offering researchers and educators

reliable tools to assess and understand the motivations and adaptation experiences of IS in Italian context.

Digital learning of international adult learners. The findings of this study make noteworthy contributions to the field of digital learning for international adult learners. On the one hand, the study sheds light on how different motivational dimensions, such as world enlightenment, personal growth, career development, and entertainment, influence the IA of international adult learners in the context of digital teaching and learning. This deeper understanding of MSA can inform the design of digital learning programs that resonate with the diverse motivations of international learners and educator. On the other hand, supporting IA: The study highlights the importance of considering IA in digital learning environments. Institutions can develop strategies and support services that help international adult learners adapt to new cultural and educational settings, even in online spaces. Moreover, the study's findings can guide the design of digital learning platforms that are more inclusive and effective for international adult learners. This includes considerations such as language support, cultural sensitivity, and fostering a sense of belonging in the virtual classroom. In conclusion, these contributions provide a framework for creating more tailored, supportive, and effective digital learning experiences that meet the diverse needs and studying abroad motivations of IS.

Teaching and learning among international adult learners. The research has deepened our understanding of the unique adaptation dynamics among international adult learners. It has shed light on how factors like cultural background, age, and communication influence their learning processes. Moreover, it has emphasized the importance of cross-cultural competence in teaching and learning contexts, and it highlights the benefits of incorporating intercultural sensitivity and awareness into pedagogical approaches. The findings have practical implications for educational policymakers. They can inform the

development of policies and programs that support the needs of international adult learners, ultimately promoting internationalization in education. In summary, the research in the field of "Teaching and Learning among International Adult Learners" has made substantial contributions by improving our understanding, guiding teaching practices, and influencing policy decisions. It enriches the field and promotes more effective and inclusive educational experiences for international adult learners.

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Limitations of the Study

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In this study, there were two main limitations, including research scope limitations and theoretical basis. Research scope limitations in this study pertain to the boundaries or restrictions that this study encountered during the investigation. While the limitation of the theoretical basis in a study refers to the constraints or shortcomings associated with the theoretical framework or foundation upon which the research is built. This limitation typically revolves around issues related to the theory itself and its application in the study. Acknowledging these limitations is essential for providing a clear and honest assessment of the study's findings and their applicability to broader contexts.

Research Scope Boundaries and Constraints

Limitation of sample size. Even though the sample size meets the required standard, the diversity of IS may need large sample size, to make it more full in different classification samples to make the data more convincing. Moreover, due to resource constraints or time limitations, on the one hand, this study could only study a limited number of participants, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. On the other hand, there was a limitation of the unbalance of the specific population, which can arise from the limitation of sample size subset.

Limitation of single setting and geographical scope. In fact, the exploratory case study investigates distinct phenomena characterized by a lack of detailed preliminary

research, especially formulated hypotheses that can be tested, and/or by a specific research environment that limits the choice of methodology (Yin, 2018). This study was conducted in an Italian institution. This restricts the study's findings to that particular environment and may not apply to different educational settings. Obviously, this study was limited in geographical scope, which only conducted in Italy.

Limitation of time frame. This study was limited by the time frame in which it was conducted. The qualitative data collection was during the global pandemic. However, the first and second phase of quantitative data collection was after the global pandemic. Thus, the external force effect was not used for the two measurements. Moreover, this study has a specific temporal focus, analyzing data from fall semester to summer semester, the time interval between two measurements can be longer. This limitation can impact the study's ability to assess changes over a longer time span.

Theoretical Basis

As emphasized from the outset of this study, the literature underscores the influence of studying abroad motivations on the IA of IS, as supported by the I-E-O model. However, while this framework serves as a valuable perspective for elucidating the previously observed simple relationship, this study specifically directed its attention toward exploring the interplay between motivations to study abroad and the IA of IS in Italy. Given that the existing literature surrounding the I-E-O model does not explicitly delve into the specific factors at play, it became imperative to adopt a framework capable of comprehensively explaining and comprehending the intricate relationships between studying abroad motivations and the IA of IS in Italy. Consequently, this research aptly employed the student involvement theory as a guiding theoretical framework. This integration of these two frameworks not only provided a solid foundation for this study but also offered a perceptual framework through which the findings could be interpreted.

The subsequent section, therefore, encapsulates the ways in which these frameworks collectively provided an interpretative lens for the findings. Moreover, this research extends and contributes to the literature related to these frameworks. As such, this section also engages in discussions regarding the manner in which this study enriches these frameworks and, by extension, outlines implications for future research endeavors.

Recommendations for Practice and Future Research

This exploration uncovers a range of recommendations pertinent to for practice and future research. These recommendations are intended to guide practitioners, policymakers, educators, or future researchers in making informed decisions and pursuing further investigation. Moreover, help IS to better adapt to the new intercultural environment. Thus, this section includes implication of the study and impact, and suggestions for future research in the field.

Implication of the Study and Impact

Strategies for policymaker in Italy. This study provides valuable insights for policymakers. It is crucial for policymaker to learn and understand the information of educational policies and practices to better support the needs and aspirations of IS.

First, scholarship plays an important positive role in the MSA-IA relationship by reducing financial stress, providing access to valuable resources, fostering a sense of belonging, motivating IS for success, and encouraging engagement with the academic community. These factors collectively contribute to IS' successful adaptation to their new cultural and educational environments. This study provides valuable insights for policymakers in Italian government, organizations, and institutions to provide the appropriate scholarship to support IS. Offering scholarships to IS not only enhances Italy's global reputation as a welcoming and inclusive destination for education but also has a range of tangible benefits. Firstly, it attracts top talent from around the world, bolstering Italy's

standing in the international education market. Secondly, IS contribute significantly to the local economy through tuition fees, accommodation, and other living expenses. By providing scholarships, Italy can attract more IS, thereby leading to substantial economic advantages for the host country. Moreover, these scholarships have the potential to foster valuable international partnerships between Italian institutions and foreign universities, facilitating collaborative efforts like joint research projects, exchanges projects, and other academic initiatives.

Second, the policymaker might try to create a more inclusive environment for IS. Since the results indicate that IS, despite having a stronger entertainment motivation, and for those who tend to engage more with people from their own nationality, which is associated with lower overall adaptation. To foster a more inclusive environment for IS across institutions, peer integration programs can be developed, pairing international and domestic IS or those from diverse cultural backgrounds. These programs may encompass collaborative projects, mentorship opportunities, or language exchange initiatives to encourage cross-cultural interactions. Additionally, promoting mixed-nationality housing options near campus facilitates daily interactions among IS from various backgrounds, enhancing their cross-cultural experiences. Supporting IS associations and clubs with resources enables them to organize inclusive events, workshops, and educational activities, further promoting inclusivity within the university and local community.

Third, Italy had minimal or insufficient policies in place to address the use of digital learning methods in the context of multicultural or intercultural education before COVID-19 pandemic. The global pandemic disrupted traditional education systems worldwide, necessitating a rapid shift towards digital or online learning methods. This sudden shift highlighted the importance of digital education tools and methods. Thus, as a result of the global pandemic, there is now a recognized and pressing need to develop policies that

specifically address the integration of digital learning tools and platforms with multicultural or intercultural education. This recognition stems from the challenges posed by the pandemic, including restrictions on in-person learning and the need to adapt to remote or hybrid learning environments. In essence, the findings are emphasizing that underscoring the importance of creating policies that bridge the gap between digital learning and multicultural or intercultural education in Italy. These policies are seen as necessary to ensure that education remains effective and inclusive, even in a digital or remote learning context.

Strategies for institutions: recruiting and supporting IS. On the one hand, for recruiting IS. Italian institutions should leverage their individual strengths in admissions campaigns and spotlight areas of disadvantage within the countries where they are predominantly recruiting IS. Italian institutions can capitalize on their unique strengths during admissions campaigns by showcasing distinctive academic programs, faculty expertise, state-of-the-art facilities, and vibrant campus life. Furthermore, they can strategically emphasize areas of disadvantage within the countries where they are primarily recruiting IS. This might involve addressing challenges such as limited educational opportunities, economic disparities, or cultural barriers. Italian institutions should try to understand individual drivers. MSA research helps uncover the diverse motivations that lead IS to pursue international education. This understanding is crucial because different IS have varying personal, academic, and career goals. Investigating these motivations allows institutions to tailor their programs and support services to align with IS' unique aspirations. By addressing these issues, institutions can demonstrate their commitment to inclusivity and attract a diverse pool of talented IS.

On the other hand, for supporting IS. Institutions may need to enhance their educational offerings, support services, and overall approach to provide IS with enriching and transformative international education experiences. To achieve this goal, institutions could follow the strategies as follows:

To enhance the support system for IS, a basic strategy should be implemented. This strategy encompasses several key components. Firstly, the creation of online resources and information portals accessible to IS before and during their stay can help address common questions and concerns, providing them with valuable guidance. Additionally, the development of comprehensive orientation programs is crucial. These programs should not only introduce IS to academic expectations but also familiarize them with available campus resources and local culture. Furthermore, establishing effective channels for IS to provide feedback about their experiences is essential. This feedback should be used proactively to make continuous improvements to support services. Lastly, conducting regular check-ins with IS to assess their well-being and promptly address any challenges they may face ensures a holistic approach to their support and integration into the academic community.

An integration and involvement strategy aimed at enhancing the experience of IS involves several key initiatives. First and foremost, organizing cultural events and activities specifically designed for IS can foster cross-cultural interactions and understanding. These events provide a platform for IS to connect, share experiences, and appreciate different cultures. Secondly, encouraging IS to engage with the local community is vital. This can be achieved through participation in volunteer opportunities, internships, or community service, allowing them to integrate into the broader community and contribute meaningfully. Lastly, forging partnerships with local organizations and businesses presents valuable opportunities for cultural immersion and networking. These collaborations enable IS to delve deeper into the local culture while establishing connections that may benefit them academically and professionally.

To enhance the education system strategy for IS, there are two critical components to consider. First, the establishment of mentorship programs is essential. These programs facilitate the pairing of IS with either domestic IS or experienced faculty members who can

offer guidance and support throughout their academic journey. This mentorship can prove invaluable in helping IS navigate the educational system effectively. Second, it is imperative to provide cultural competency training for faculty members. This training equips educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the distinctive needs of IS and to provide tailored support. By addressing these aspects, educational institutions can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for IS.

A comprehensive services strategy for IS should encompass several key elements. Firstly, providing culturally sensitive counseling services is essential, addressing the mental health and well-being of IS who might face stress or homesickness during their studies. Secondly, accessible health services should be available to assist IS in navigating the healthcare system of the host country, ensuring their physical and psychological well-being. Lastly, offering specialized career services tailored to the career development needs of IS, including internships and job placement support, is crucial in facilitating their successful transition into the workforce.

A well-rounded support strategy for IS includes multiple facets. Firstly, offering language support, including language labs and conversation partners, aids in improving their language skills. Secondly, academic support services like tutoring, writing centers, and language courses contribute to their academic success. Additionally, providing housing assistance, both in finding suitable accommodation and fostering a welcoming on-campus environment, is vital. Legal support ensures IS' compliance with visa and immigration regulations. Lastly, exploring scholarship opportunities and tailored financial aid options helps alleviate financial burdens for IS.

Strategies for faculty: training and professional development. To improve the teaching and learning in Italian institutions, it is important to enhance the effectiveness of teaching IS and create a more inclusive learning environment, faculty can employ the

following strategies for training and professional development:

First, participate in intercultural competence workshops to enhance sensitivity to cultural nuances and communication styles. These sessions foster a more inclusive teaching approach by helping teachers understand diverse student expectations. Additionally, attend cultural awareness training to recognize potential biases and adapt teaching methods accordingly. Encouraging involvement in cultural events and activities also promotes intercultural understanding, offering insights into IS' challenges and needs.

Second, attend diversity and inclusion workshops to create a more inclusive learning environment and curriculum: global learning integration: incorporate global perspectives into lessons to make them relatable for IS; diversity and inclusion workshops: learn strategies for promoting diversity and equity in the classroom, ensuring all IS feel valued; teaching strategies for diverse learners: explore pedagogical approaches suitable for diverse learning styles; culturally relevant curriculum: develop curriculum content that reflects the cultural backgrounds of IS, enhancing their engagement and learning experience.

Third, Italian faculties should enhance language and communication skills by attending workshops for language proficiency support strategies, engaging in training to improve language support techniques inside and outside the classroom, attending sessions to enhance cross-cultural communication skills vital for rapport-building and clear instruction with IS, and immersing themselves in language and cultural experiences to better understand IS challenges.

Fourth, promote faculty cooperation and the development of a professional learning community among teachers. This can be achieved through peer collaboration, where teachers share best practices, challenges, and successful strategies in teaching IS, and the establishment of professional learning communities within the institution, fostering a supportive environment for sharing insights and mutual support in effective IS teaching.

Additionally, organize regular reflection and feedback sessions where teachers can discuss their teaching experiences, challenges, and successes with IS to promote continuous improvement.

Fifth, enhance technology and online teaching skills. Develop proficiency in utilizing technology for online instruction, which is crucial in the global education landscape. This ensures a more effective online teaching approach and learning environment for IS.

Strategies for IS: enhancing adaptability. There are some effective ways for IS to enhance their adaptability in a new cultural and educational environment.

Firstly, having a clear life goal. Setting clear goals, both academically and personally, can provide IS with a sense of purpose and direction. These goals can serve as motivation and help IS stay focused on their studies and overall adaptation. Goals might include achieving specific academic milestones, acquiring new skills, or gaining cultural experiences.

Secondly, learning balanced life and study. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is crucial for well-being and adaptability. IS should allocate time not only for their academic commitments but also for leisure, social interactions, and self-care. Balancing study and relaxation helps reduce stress and fosters adaptability by allowing IS to recharge.

Thirdly, understanding the institutional and educational system well. A comprehensive understanding of the host institution's policies, academic requirements, and support services is crucial. Knowing who to approach for help and how to navigate academic processes can prevent challenges and facilitate a smoother adaptation process. IS should proactively seek information and orientation sessions provided by their universities. Furthermore, seeking support and counseling. For instance, UNIPD offer counseling services to assist IS with academic, emotional, and cultural challenges. Seeking professional support when needed can significantly enhance personal and emotional adaptation.

Fourthly, improve the cultural awareness and sensitivity to engage in the community.

To thrive in today's global landscape, students must cultivate essential skills related to global culture (Cant, 2004). Developing cultural awareness and an open attitude toward cultural differences can help IS avoid misunderstandings and conflicts. Cultural sensitivity fosters positive interactions with residents and other IS. Engaging with residents and experiencing the culture of the host country can enrich the IS' s experience. Volunteering, participating in community events, and exploring the local culture can promote a sense of belonging. There are some ways that IS could have, building a social network is essential for adaptation, as it provides support, friendship, and a sense of belonging. According to Nalbone et al. (2015), the utilization of social network sites was shown to aid students in experiencing a more seamless transition to university life. IS should be proactive in seeking social connections by participating in university events, clubs, and activities. Preparing to overcome potential difficulties, such as language barriers or cultural differences, by developing strong interpersonal skills can enhance social adaptation. Improving language skills, particularly the language of instruction in their host country, is fundamental. Moreover, language proficiency enhances academic success, communication with peers and professors, and overall adaptation.

Last, flexibility and resilience. Developing adaptability and resilience is crucial because unexpected challenges may arise. Being flexible and open to change can help IS navigate unexpected situations. Remember that adaptation is a process, and it's normal to face challenges along the way. By employing these strategies and seeking support when needed, IS can enhance their adaptability and make the most of their study abroad experience.

Above all, those top-down strategies for policymakers in Italy, Italian institutions, faculty, and IS can be significant: can lead to a win-win situation for all stakeholders. Policymakers and institutions benefit from increased enrollment and a positive global image, faculty enjoy professional growth, and IS experience academic success and personal well-being during their studies in Italy.

Suggestions for Future Research in the Field

    Research methodology. Three aspects of research methodology that can assist future research include: First, longitudinal studies. Conduct longitudinal studies to track IS' motivation and adaptation throughout their entire educational journey. This will provide insights into how these factors evolve over time and whether initial motivations align with long-term adaptation outcomes. Second, comparative research. Compare the adaptation experiences and motivations of IS in different host countries or regions. Investigate whether cultural, educational, or policy factors influence their adaptation and motivation. Future research might focus exclusively on multiple region or country, which may enlarge the applicability of the results to a broader global context. Third, interdisciplinary research: Collaborate across disciplines to gain a holistic understanding of IS' experiences. Combine psychological, sociological, and educational perspectives to provide a comprehensive analysis. Last, further analysis and exploration might involve conducting follow-up assessments at later time points to capture any improvements in adaptation or examining specific subgroups within the sample to identify patterns of change. Additionally, qualitative research at different time points could provide insights into the specific challenges and experiences that influenced IS' post-SACQ scores.

    Research content and context. Certain aspects of research methodology can provide valuable guidance for future research. First, institutional collaboration. Investigate the benefits of collaboration between educational institutions and external organizations, such as community groups or local businesses, in promoting IS' adaptation and motivation. Second, motivational shifts. Investigate if and how IS' motivations shift during their time abroad. For example, explore whether initial motivations for study evolve into career goals or social integration priorities. Third, language proficiency. Examine the role of language proficiency in IS' adaptation and motivation. Determine how language barriers or language acquisition

impact their experiences. Fourth, cultural factors: Explore the role of cultural factors in IS' adaptation and motivation. Investigate how cultural backgrounds, values, and beliefs impact their experiences and goals. Fifth, mental health and well-being: Study the mental health and well-being of IS, particularly how it relates to their motivations and adaptation. Explore the impact of stressors and coping mechanisms. Sixth, online and blended learning: Given the increased use of online and blended learning, research how these modalities affect IS' motivation and adaptation, especially in comparison to traditional in-person education. Last, policy analysis: Examine the impact of immigration and education policies in host countries on IS' experiences. Evaluate the role of policies in supporting or hindering motivation and adaptation.

Research design. Evaluate the effectiveness of various interventions and support programs implemented by educational institutions to aid IS in their adaptation and motivation. Identify best practices and areas for improvement.

In summary, this research has identified areas where further investigation is needed. These research gaps provide a roadmap for future studies, ensuring that the field continues to evolve and adapt to the changing needs of international adult learners.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter encompasses the integration of qualitative and quantitative findings, the interpretation of these findings, an acknowledgment of the study's limitations, and suggestions for practical applications and future research directions. Notably, this study draws to a close by offering a plethora of implications that extend to practice, theory, and research. It is our aspiration that these implications serve as an initial step towards delving deeper into the intricate relationship between MSA and IA among IS in Italy. Future research and a deeper comprehension of the MSA-IA relationship, coupled with the commitment of dedicated educators and institutions, hold the potential to bring about change in the realm of

international adult education. This change could lead to a shift in perspective, recognizing the entrance motivation and IA process as inherently relational. This viewpoint positions IS' studying abroad motivations, university intercultural adaptability, and their relationship at the forefront of enhancing and advancing international adult education. It fosters the collaborative development of improved adult and higher education systems. It is within this perspective that universities and IS can mutually benefit, creating a win-win scenario. Universities cultivate a more diverse and inclusive learning environment, while IS enjoy enriched intercultural experiences, and better adapt to the new environment. As evidenced by this study, achieving this objective is feasible, and the measures to attain it can range from straightforward to intricate, with progress which take shape within international adult education contexts.

APPENDIX A INTERVIEWEE RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Recruitment Email in English

Dear student,

My name is Ruoyi Qiu, a PhD student at The University of Padova. I am researching international students' motivation to study abroad and intercultural adaptation. Our university has fewer international students from XXX, and I just found you from the official website so far. I want to invite you to be one of the interviewees for my PhD thesis. I would be so grateful if you could do me a favor. The duration of the interview will be 30 minutes.
It would be so interesting and helpful to talk to you. If it is possible, please let me know when will be the available time for you, and I will send you a zoom link.
Hope to hear from you soon.

Best regards,
Ruoyi Qiu
--
PhD student
PhD Course in Pedagogical, Educational and Instructional Sciences
Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology (FISPPA)
University of Padua
Via Beato Pellegrino 28, 35139 Padua, Italy
Mobile: +39 3496675711

Recruitment Email in Chinese

同学，你好!
我是帕多瓦大学教育学院的博士生邱若宜。能不能请您帮个忙，做为我研究的访谈对象 (这个月下旬再跟你约时间，大概 20 分钟到 30 分钟左右)。
我在做一项关于国际学生的留学动机如何影响大学适应性的研究。我觉得还是比较有意义的，希望可以帮助到更多的留学生。
科研不易，如果您有空的话，希望您可以考虑帮帮忙!

祝好!
邱若宜

APPENDIX B SURVEY PARTICIPANT INVITATION EMAIL

Invitation Email (first survey phase)

Dear student,

My name is Ruoyi Qiu. I am an international doctoral student at the University of Padova. I would like to invite you to participate in my doctoral project to examine how motivational factors to study abroad influence the intercultural adaptation of international students in Italy. For detailed information, please read the Research Information Sheet attachment.

The survey will take about 25-30 minutes. Your responses to the survey will be confidential. Participating in the research will not in any way influence your grade in the program in which you are enrolled nor will it affect your relationship with the university where you are studying. There is no cost or compensation for your participation.

Please access the survey from the link below. Once you fill out and submit the survey, you agree that Ruoyi Qiu can only collect and analyze the data for research purposes.

LINK TO THE SURVEY:
https://websurvey.unipd.it/survey/index.php/154897?token=yFQyaglzKdnlSki&lang=en

Thank you for your time and consideration. Best wishes to you and good luck with your studies!

Ruoyi Qiu
PhD Candidate
PhD Course in Pedagogical, Educational and Instructional Sciences
Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology (FISPPA)
University of Padua
Via Beato Pellegrino 28, 35139 Padua, Italy

<div align="center">**Invitation Email (second survey phase)**</div>

Dear student,

My name is Ruoyi Qiu, and I am an international doctoral student at the University of Padova. Thank you again for taking the first survey of my doctoral project. I would now like to invite you to participate in the second survey to examine how motivational factors to study abroad influence the intercultural adaptation of international students in Italy. For detailed information, please read the attached Research Information Sheet.

The survey will take about 15-20 minutes. Your responses to the survey will be confidential. Participating in the research will not in any way influence your grade in the program in which you are enrolled nor will it affect your relationship with the university where you are studying. There is no cost or compensation for your participation.

Please access the survey from the link below. Once you fill out and submit the survey, you agree that Ruoyi Qiu can only collect and analyze the data for research purposes.

LINK TO THE SURVEY:
https://websurvey.unipd.it/survey/index.php/194396?token=zMuKjruOw7Qflf5&lang=en

Thank you for your time and consideration. Best wishes to you and good luck with your studies!

Ruoyi Qiu
PhD Candidate
PhD Course in Pedagogical, Educational and Instructional Sciences
Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Education and Applied Psychology (FISPPA)
University of Padua
Via Beato Pellegrino 28, 35139 Padua, Italy

APPENDIX C RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Research Information Sheet (first survey phase)

Title of Study: Motivation to Study Abroad Effects on Intercultural Adaptation: A Mixed Methods Case Study with International Students in Italy

Principal Investigator (PI): Ruoyi Qiu

Pedagogical, Educational and Training Sciences at the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Psychology (FISPPA)

Purpose

You are invited to participate in a research on how motivation to study abroad influences intercultural adaptation. This study is being conducted at the University of Padova.

Study Procedures

If you would like to participate, you will respond to a series of online questions and statements by selecting the most appropriate response from those listed or writing down the information that best describes you. The questions will pertain to your demographic characteristics, motivation to study abroad, and adaptation to college. You will have the option of not answering the open questions. The study will be in two phases, and this survey is the first phase which will take you approximately 25-30 minutes.

Benefits

As a participant in this research study, there will be no direct benefit for you; however, information from this study may help international students to better adapt to a new environment and optimize international program in the future.

Risks

There are no known risks at this time to participating in this study.

Costs

There will be no costs to you for the participation in this research study.

Compensation

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality

All the data will be confidential.

Voluntary Participation /Withdrawal

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Participating in the research will not in any way influence your grade in the program in which you are enrolled nor will it affect your relationship with the university where you are studying.

Questions

If you have any questions about the study or need any further information, please contact the researcher (Ms. Qiu) via email (ruoyi.qiu@studenti.unipd.it).

Participation

By completing the survey, you agree to participate in this study. Moreover, you agree that the

researcher (Ms. Qiu) can only collect and analyze the data for research purposes.

Research Information Sheet (second survey phase)

Title of Study: Motivation to Study Abroad Effects on Intercultural Adaptation: A Mixed Methods Case Study with International Students in Italy

Principal Investigator (PI): Ruoyi Qiu

Pedagogical, Educational and Training Sciences at the Department of Philosophy, Sociology, Pedagogy and Applied Psychology (FISPPA)

Purpose

You are invited to participate in a research on how motivation to study abroad influences intercultural adaptation. This study is being conducted at the University of Padova.

Study Procedures

If you would like to participate, you will respond to a series of online questions and statements by selecting the most appropriate response from those listed or writing down the information that best describes you. The questions will pertain to your demographic characteristics and adaptation to college. You will have the option of not answering the open questions. This survey is the second phase which will take you approximately 15-20 minutes.

Benefits

As a participant in this research study, there will be no direct benefit for you; however, information from this study may help international students to better adapt to a new environment and optimize international program in the future.

Risks

There are no known risks at this time to participating in this study.

Costs

There will be no costs to you for the participation in this research study.

Compensation

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality

All the data will be confidential.

Voluntary Participation /Withdrawal

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Participating in the research will not in any way influence your grade in the program in which you are enrolled nor will it affect your relationship with the university where you are studying.

Questions

If you have any questions about the study or need any further information, please contact the researcher (Ms. Qiu) via email (ruoyi.qiu@studenti.unipd.it).

Participation

By completing the survey, you agree to participate in this study. Moreover, you agree that the researcher (Ms. Qiu) can only collect and analyze the data for research purposes.

APPENDIX D INTERVIEW GUIDE

Semi-structure Interview Outlines

Aim of the interview: Understanding why Chinese doctoral students make a decision to study abroad in Italy HEI and program, and to what extent they adapt to the intercultural environment in Italian HEI.

1. What factors convinced you to study abroad in Italy?

2. What do you expect from the HEI and the program?

3. Before you study abroad in Italy, are you curious about the culture in the country you are studying now?

4. Before you study abroad in Italy, do you think an international social network is crucial for you?

5 Before you study abroad in Italy, what do you think studying abroad will bring you for your personal growth the most?

6. Do you want to stay in Italy after graduating (e.g.:find a job, further study)?

7. Do you think the local life in Italy now is the same as you expected before you came?

Intercultural adaptation:

1. Did you change your learning style or strategies (e.g., time management; study alone/co-working)?

2. Do you think you are doing well in your studying or enjoy studying at the university you are studying now?

3. In the country you are studying in, do you have more friends of the same nationality or more of different nationalities?

4. Do you prefer to make friends with international students from the same county as you are?

5. How is the relationship between you and your supervisor?

6. Are you feeling lonely or anxious?

7. Do you enjoy life at the university?

8. What do you think about the activities inside or outside organized by the university office or department?

9. Do you feel you are part of the university?

10. Which and how motivation dimension you mentioned before are most influential in the adaptation at the university?

11. If you have to describe your adaptation with a metaphor or with an image? How will you describe?

APPENDIX E SURVEY

Demographic Characteristics

Please mark or write down the response that best describes you:

1. What is your student number? (Optional: The data will be collected only to integrate the two phases of data of this research project.)
2. What is your year of birth? (Only numbers may be entered in this field.)
3. What gender do you identify as?
Male
Female
Prefer not to answer
Other:
4. What is the degree you are seeking now? (Choose one of the following answers)
Bachelor's degree
Master's degree
Doctoral degree
Single-cycle degree (5 years)
Single-cycle degree (6 years)
5. What year are you in at university? (Choose one of the following answers)
First year
Second year
Third year
More than three years
6. Which school do you belong to? (Choose one of the following answers)
School of Economics and Political Science
School of Psychology
School of Human and Social Sciences and Cultural Heritage
School of Engineering
School of Science
School of Medicine
School of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine
Law School
Other:
7. What is your nationality?
8. How many universities did you apply to before you made the decision to study at the University of Padova (including the University of Padova)? (Choose one of the following answers)
One
Two to three
Four to five
Six to seven
Eight to nine
More than nine
9. When applying to university, which continent(s) did you submit the most applications? (If the number of applications in multiple continents is the same, you can choose more than one.)
Europe
Asia
Africa

North America
South America
Australia/Oceania
Antarctica
10. How long are you planning to stay in Italy? (Choose one of the following answers)
Less than one year
Between one to two years
Between two to three years
Between three to four years
Between four to five years
Between five to six years
More than six years
Permanently
11. What is your first language?
12. How would you describe your overall Italian language skills? (Choose one of the following answers)
Poor
Below average
Average
Above average
Excellent
Native speaker
13. Where do you get your scholarship from? (Choose one of the following answers)
I did not receive any scholarship
Home country
Host country (Italy)
Other:
14. What percentage of the total cost of your study abroad is financed by your family? (Choose one of the following answers)
None
10% or less
Between 10% to 30%
Between 30% to 50%
Between 50% to 70%
Between 70% to 90%
Between 90% to 100%
15. How often did you talk to people with the same nationality as you who are living in Italy within the last seven days? (Choose one of the following answers)
None
1–2
3–4
5–6
7–8
9–10
More than 10
16. How often did you talk to people of a different nationality than you living in Italy within the last seven days? (Choose one of the following answers)
None
1–2
3–4

5–6
7–8
9–10
More than 10
17. How often did you talk to professors at the University of Padova within the last seven days? (Choose one of the following answers)
None
1-2
3-4
5-6
7-8
9-10
More than 10
18. How many study abroad experiences (including exchange and degree seeking) did you have before? (Choose one of the following answers)
None
1-2
3-4
5-6
7-8
9-10
More than 10
19. So far, what is the name of the country you stayed abroad the longest, and what was the duration of it? (Please type the name of the country in the comment space.) (Choose one of the following answers)
Less than one month
Between one month to six months
Between six months to one year
Between one to two years
Between two to three years
More than three years
Please enter your comment here:
20. How long have you been here in Italy? (Please specify in the comment space.) (Choose one of the following answers)
I'm not in Italy yet
Less than six months
Between six months to one year
Between one to two years
Between two to three years
More than three years
Please enter your comment here:
21. Within the last seven days, is the course in your program you attended online or face to face? (Please specify in the comment space if any.) (Choose one of the following answers)
I didn't start the course yet
Online (I was in Italy.)
Online (I was not in Italy.)
Face to face
Both online and face to face
Please enter your comment here:

22. So far, how long have you attended the course in your program online? (Please specify in the comment space.) (Choose one of the following answers)

I didn't start the course yet

I only took the course in my program face to face

Less than six months

Between six months to one year

Between one to two years

Between two to three years

More than three years

Please enter your comment here:

23. So far, how long have you attended the course in your program face to face? (Please specify in the comment space.) (Choose one of the following answers)

I didn't start the course yet

I only took the course in my program online

Less than six months

Between six months to one year

Between one to two years

Between two to three years

Between more than three years

Please enter your comment here:

The Motivation To Study Abroad

Please indicate how important each of the following motivates you to decide to participate in your study abroad program at the University of Padova in Italy.

Not at all important	Slightly important	Important	Very important	Absolutely essential
○	○	○	○	○

1. Gain maturity.
2. Experience the local nightlife (clubs,bars,etc.).
3. Prepare for my career.
4. Become acquainted with people (make friends) different from me.
5. Better understand myself.
6. Increase my self-confidence.
7. Enhance my employment prospects.
8. Increase my understanding of the world.
9. Gain career skills.
10. Have a romantic encounter (find a partner).
11. Expand my world view.
12. Go out drinking.
13. Make my friends a little envious of me.
14. Grow as a person (personal growth).
15. Enhance my understanding of global affairs and events.
16. Do some serious partying (e.g. enjoying the night life which may include the use of alcohol or other drugs).
17. Gain in-depth knowledge in my chosen field.
18. Interact with people from other countries.
19. Build my resume (CV).
20. Become more independent.
21. Better understand different cultures.

22. Learn to stand on my own two feet.
23. Learn about the world.

Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire

These 67 statements describe college experiences. It is a 9-point Likert scale ranging from "Applies very closely to me" to "Doesn't apply to me at all". For each statement, please read and select the one that best represents how well it applies to you at the present time (within the past few days).

1-Applies very closely to me	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9-Doesn't apply to me at all
○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

1. I feel that I fit in well as part of the college environment.
2. I have been feeling tense or nervous lately.
3. I have been keeping up to date on my academic work.
4. I am meeting as many people, and making as many friends as I would like at college.
5. I know why I am in college and what I want out of it. (I know my desired outcome of my college experience.)
6. I am finding academic work (e.g.:courses and research) at college difficult.
7. Lately, I have been feeling blue and moody (depressed mood and emotionally unstable) a lot.
8. I am very involved with social activities in college.
9. I am adjusting well to college.
10. I have not been functioning well during examinations (or alternatively assignments).
11. I have felt tired much of the time lately.
12. Being on my own, taking responsibility for myself, has not been easy.
13. I am satisfied with the level at which I am performing academically.
14. I have had informal, personal contacts with college professors.
15. I am pleased now about my decision to go to college.
16. I am pleased now about my decision to attend this college in particular.
17. I am not working as hard as I should at my course work.
18. I have several close social ties (social networks) at college.
19. My academic goals and purposes are well defined.
20. I have not been able to control my emotions very well lately.
21. I am not really smart enough for academic work I am expected to be doing now.
22. Lonesomeness for home (feeling homesick) is a source of difficulty for me now.
23. Getting a college degree is very important to me.
24. My appetite has been good lately. (I've been eating well.)
25. I have not been very efficient in the use of study time lately.
26. I enjoy living in a college dormitory. (Please omit if you do not live in a dormitory; any university housing should be regarded as a dormitory.)
27. I enjoy writing papers for courses.
28. I have been having a lot of headaches lately.
29. I really have not had much motivation for studying lately.
30. I am satisfied with the extracurricular activities available at college.
31. I have given a lot of thought lately to whether I should ask for help form the

Psychological/Counseling Services Center or from a psychotherapist outside of college.

32. Lately, I have been having doubts regarding the value of a college education.

33. I am getting along very well with my roommate(s) at college. (Please omit if you do not have a roommate.)

34. I wish I were at another college or university.

35. I have put on (or lost) too much weight recently.

36. I am satisfied with the number and variety of courses available at college.

37. I feel that I have enough social skills to get along well in the college setting.

38. I have been getting angry too easily lately.

39. Recently I have had trouble concentrating (focusing) when I try to study.

40. I have not been sleeping very well.

41. I am not doing well enough academically for the amount of work I put in.

42. I am having difficulty feeling at ease with other people at college.

43. I am satisfied with the quality or the caliber of courses available at college.

44. I am attending classes regularly.

45. Sometimes my thinking gets muddled up (confused) too easily.

46. I am satisfied with the extent to which I am participating in social activities at college.

47. I expect to stay at this college for a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree.

48. I have not been mixing (interacting) too well with the opposite sex (gender) lately.

49. I worry a lot about my college expenses.

50. I am enjoying my academic work at college.

51. I have been feeling lonely a lot at college lately.

52. I am having a lot trouble getting started on homework assignments.

53. I feel I have good control over my life situation at college.

54. I am satisfied with my program of courses for this semester/quarter.

55. I have been feeling in good health (physically and mentatlly) lately.

56. I feel I am very different from other students at college in ways that I do not like.

57. On balance, I would rather be home than here.

58. Most of the things I am interested in are not related to any of my course work at college.

59. Lately I have been giving a lot of thought to transferring to another college.

60. Lately I have been giving a lot thought to dropping out of college altogether and for good (quitting college forever).

61. I find myself giving considerable thought to taking time off from college and finishing later.

62. I am very satisfied with the professors I have now in my courses.

63. I have some good friends or acquaintans (person who you know well) at college with whom I can talk about any problems I may have.

64. I am experiencing a lot of difficulty coping with the stresses imposed upon me in college.

65. I am quite satisfied with my social life at college.

66. I am quite satisfied with my academic situation at college.

67. I feel confident that I will be able to deal in a satisfactory manner with future challenges (finding the right response to future challenges) here at college.

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