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THE INFLUENCE OF SELF-EFFICACY AND CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE ON THE OVERSEAS INTERNSHIP CONSTRAINTS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS: MOTIVATION AS A MODERATING VARIABLE

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ABSTRACT

Overseas internships are important learning experiences for university students. This study analyzed self-efficacy and cultural intelligence with motivation as a moderating variable to elucidate the impact of overseas internship constraints on university students. The findings of this study indicated that both self-efficacy and cultural intelligence have a negative impact on overseas internship constraints, suggesting that university students with higher self-efficacy and greater acceptance of different cultures are better able to overcome overseas internship constraints. The findings also showed that motivation is not a significant moderator of the interaction between self-efficacy and overseas internship constraints. However, motivation negatively moderates the interaction between cultural intelligence and overseas internship constraints. In other words, the negative impact of cultural intelligence on overseas internship constraints is more pronounced in university students with stronger participatory motivations. This observation was attributed to individuals with higher cultural intelligence being more capable of adjusting their mindset to avoid emotional exhaustions.

KEYWORDS: Self-Efficacy, Cultural Intelligence, Motivation, Overseas Internship Constraints

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of a global village has blurred the boundaries between nations. Countries utilize a plethora of communication tools to showcase local features rapidly and extensively. These efforts have significantly elevated international communication and interaction and prompted governments and schools to promote exchange opportunities beyond national borders actively.



In Taiwan, the Ministry of Education (2023) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2023) have proposed overseas internship programs to help students expand their worldview and strengthen international mobility.

For university students studying hospitality, internships are the most direct way to engage with the industry. Off-campus internship programs typically run between two and twelve months, in which companies train interns to acquire the desired professional skills and attitudes, and students gain short-term work experience that impacts their future career development to varying degrees. Chen and Shen (2012) found a significant correlation between students' internship commitment and overall satisfaction with off-campus internships and discovered that successful internship experiences strengthened students' willingness to continue working in the hospitality industry. However, negative internship experiences may lead to self-doubt and create blind spots in subsequent career plans (Tsai et al., 2017).

University students who choose overseas internships conceptually believe that domestic internship experiences are inadequate to prepare them for future work. These students and their parents are aware that several months of overseas work arrangements allow the intern to not only build work experience but also learn the local culture. This awareness is a motivational factor. With incentives provided by various organizations and governments, overseas internships or exchange programs have become more affordable, contributing to an increased willingness among students to pursue overseas internships (Toncar & Cudmore, 2000).

University students who join overseas internship programs can expand their worldviews while contributing to their professional skills, building self-confidence, experiencing a foreign culture, and learning a new language. However, not all university students aspire to travel overseas for internship opportunities. Their hesitation involves a variety of complex factors. In this study, we refer to these factors as overseas internship constraints. To gain a better understanding of the causes of overseas internship constraints, we first selected self-efficacy and cultural intelligence as antecedent factors and explored their impact on overseas internship constraints. Then, we observed the moderating effect of motivation on these relationships.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Impact of overseas internships on students

In Taiwan, most students majoring in hospitality-related disciplines at the university level are required to partake in internships for at least two months. The internship can take place either domestically or internationally. Students may decide to pursue overseas internships for programs running longer than six months. Internships allow students to step out of the classroom and into the workplace. They also



allow students to exercise their theoretical knowledge, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and familiarize themselves with industry requirements (Brophy, 2008). Overseas internships are also the quickest and most direct way for students to learn about local cultures (Kim, 2015). Wikle and Fagin (2015) highlighted social relationship mobility (i.e., teamwork and public speaking) as an important aspect of overseas internships. Some internships even allow students to apply artificial intelligence to consolidate information and technologies. Partaking in overseas internships fulfills students' overseas travel aspirations and, more importantly, exposes them to non-native language environments, prompting them to develop various life skills associated with being in an unfamiliar environment. The experiences gained from overseas internships help students professionally and psychologically prepare themselves before graduation, consequently enhancing their employability.

However, overseas internships are not without their drawbacks. The financial burden of overseas internships is much higher than that of domestic internships. Although overseas opportunities may offer higher remuneration, accommodation and cost of living may be disproportionately higher. Language barriers are another reason behind students' hesitation to pursue overseas internship opportunities. Hackett and Betz (1981) argued that individuals with low self-efficacy are less likely to make satisfying career choices when facing career decisions. In such cases, students are unlikely to persevere when encountering career dilemmas or obstacles. Another factor of hesitancy is the lack of communication and support from familiar environments, such as schools, families, and peers. Busby (2005) asserted that a positive channel of communication between teachers and students is necessary to encourage students to pursue overseas internship opportunities. Effective communication and counseling minimize the confusion and withdrawal associated with the lack of support. Overseas internships are not just about experiencing the workplace; they can also enhance students' worldviews and adaptability. Planning career development and engaging in diverse learning during students' academic years can significantly benefit their future career arrangements and choices.

2.2 Impact of self-efficacy on overseas internship constraints

According to Bandura (1977), individual behaviors are not simply driven by extrinsic motivation, as behaviorists believe, nor are they solely generated by intrinsic needs. Instead, they are influenced by a sense of control that arises from the interaction between the individual, the environment, and the behavior. Therefore, self-efficacy is the belief that individuals have in themselves to accomplish specific tasks. Specifically, individuals use their internal cognitive system to interpret and evaluate matters; form ideas, beliefs, and perspectives; and reflect them in their actions to achieve their goals. Bandura (2004) viewed self-efficacy from three dimensions: cognition, motivation, and mood or effect. Bandura further suggested that individuals with higher self-efficacy have a stronger belief in their organizational and executive abilities and can adjust their beliefs according to environmental changes to achieve specific accomplishments, thereby enhancing their quality of life and



organizational competitiveness. In other words, individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to adjust their expectations, motivations, and attitudes in response to the changing environment, and the high adaptability associated with self-efficacy enhances their organizational competitiveness.

Lent et al. (2000) argued that perceived career barriers are correlated to career self-efficacy. Career barriers lead individuals to make different choices based on the time proximity of employment opportunities. In long-term career planning, individuals tend to focus on contextual support conditions, such as opportunities for professional skill development, available roles, and whether they can receive psychological or financial support during engagement and socialization. These factors influence career learning experiences and shape individuals' sense of self-efficacy. In short-term career planning, individuals typically emphasize networking, discrimination encountered during job searches, and other factors. The perceived ability to overcome career barriers is an essential factor when making career choices, while academic performance is a less significant factor of consideration in career planning (Ruiz & Fandos, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative that we understand the barriers that students face in their career development. Although career barriers may limit students' career development, they also prompt students to discover opportunities in other environments, leading to alternative career considerations.

Bandura (1997; 2004) distinguished the cognitive impact of self-efficacy on employees into outcome expectations and efficacy expectations. The former focuses on external influencing factors, while the latter emphasizes the impact of subjective self-awareness. Outcome expectations and efficacy expectations are distinct. If an individual believes that a specific behavior leads to certain outcomes (outcome expectations) but doubts their own ability to perform the behavior, the specific behavior is less likely to be influenced by the individual's outcome expectations. For example, a student is unlikely to pursue internships abroad when they doubt their ability to meet the internship requirements, even if they believe that participation contributes to their personal learning motivation and sense of achievement. Self-efficacy is having the confidence and perseverance to face challenging tasks and being open-minded to overcome these challenges. Therefore, students' self-efficacy expectations are one of the primary factors that lead to expected behaviors.

Self-efficacy is neither static nor passive. Rather, it is a dynamic perspective within the self-system (Newman, 2008). Self-efficacy evolves as individuals grow and accumulate experiences. Therefore, it can be defined as the belief in one's ability to predict success and assess confidence in a given job or task.

Based on the aforementioned discussion on the impact of self-efficacy on overseas internships, we formulated the following hypothesis:



H1: Self-efficacy negatively impacts overseas internship constraints.

2.3 Impact of cultural intelligence on overseas internship constraints

Globalization has given rise to multinational corporations, blurring national boundaries and accelerating international talent exchange. It is now commonplace to interact with people from different races, nationalities, cultures, and languages in one workplace (Gilleard & Gilleard, 2002). However, cultural differences can often lead to unnecessary friction and conflicts. Employees who possess the ability to handle or manage cross-cultural situations within an organization tend to perform well (Jenifer & Raman, 2015).

Earley and Ang (2003) defined cultural intelligence as the ability to adapt effectively to different cultures. In the workplace, some employees can adapt well to different cultures, while others struggle to do so. Cultural intelligence significantly impacts team performance. Barrett et al. (2014) argued that the attitudinal aspects of cross-cultural competence include embracing cultural diversity, respecting individuals with different cultural backgrounds, maintaining an open attitude towards different cultures, being curious and willing to learn about foreign cultures, showing empathy towards people from different cultures, challenging one's own perception of "normal," being tolerant of ambiguity and uncertainty, and being willing to communicate and collaborate with individuals from different cultures.

An individual's cultural intelligence manifests in their cross-cultural interactions (Kistyanto et al., 2022). While individuals demonstrate varying levels of acceptance and sensitivity towards cultures, understanding how cultures and cultural transitions work and maintaining situational awareness and sensitivity to one's environment can help overcome cultural barriers in any context.

Bodenhorn et al. (2005) emphasized that employees working in multinational companies, whether in their home country or abroad, need to show cultural awareness in their work. Engaging in overseas internships exposes students to cross-cultural work environments early. Bairaktarova and Woodcock (2017) affirmed that overseas placements help students learn to accept and deal with considerations and sensitivities and develop critical and ethical behavior. Therefore, students with high cultural intelligence are better able to overcome obstacles in overseas internships.

Based on the aforementioned discussion on the impact of cultural intelligence on overseas internships, we formulated the following hypothesis:

H2: Cultural intelligence negatively impacts overseas internship constraints.



2.4 The moderating effect of motivation

Motivation refers to the original driving force behind a certain activity (Vallerand, 2012). Due to individual uniqueness, motivating factors vary depending on the individual. Motivation can be broadly classified into intrinsic and extrinsic factors based on the source. Extrinsic motivation is triggered by factors outside the activity itself, while intrinsic motivation is generated by an individual's needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Benden and Lauermann (2023) and O'Keefe et al. (2017) reported a high degree of consistency between interest and motivation. Whether driven by internal or external, strong motivation steers individuals toward goals and enables them to exert their full potential (Weber, 2003). Students participating in overseas internships are usually influenced by multiple driving forces rather than a single factor. A number of past studies have found a correlation between the motivations of proactive students and their learning styles. For example, Mazer et al. (2007) reported significant correlations between student motivation and affective learning and between student motivation and global measures.

Overseas internships inherently provide a dual experience of travel and learning. de Freitas Coelho et al. (2018) asserted that an unforgettable travel experience could cultivate the traveler's cultural awareness, expand their knowledge, and enhance their abilities and skills. The creation of memorable travel experiences depends on the interplay of individual, relational, and environmental factors. These experiences are subsequently affected by ambiance, socialization, and the ability to express and reflect on emotions.

According to the self-efficacy model proposed by Bandura (1997), self-efficacy influences behavior choices and thought patterns. Individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to take proactive action and respond to challenges with increased effort. Conversely, individuals with low self-efficacy tend to exhibit self-sabotage and withdrawal behaviors when facing difficulties. Therefore, it is clear that self-efficacy has a positive impact on job performance in any context. Borstorff et al. (1997) mentioned that employees who believe that they have the ability to work in different cultural settings actively pursue overseas opportunities. This assertion implies that motivation reinforces self-efficacy and that overseas internship constraints decrease as self-efficacy is strengthened by motivation. Therefore, highly motivated students are likely to exhibit strong self-efficacy and be less impacted by internship constraints. To test this argument, we proposed the following research hypothesis:

H3: Motivation has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between self-efficacy and overseas internship constraints.

When individuals are exposed to different cultures, they often experience a period of conflict and doubt. Pintrich and DeGroot (1990) included an emotional component in their social cognitive theory

of learning motivation and suggested that emotions are influenced by cultural exposure. Peterson (2004) mentioned that internal emotional factors are important for fostering cultural intelligence. In fact, these emotional factors serve as antecedents to motivation. Klooster et al. (2008) investigated the impact of cultural distance on the perception of overseas internships and found that cross-cultural adaptation and management skills are among the factors influencing the success of overseas internships, particularly for internships in developing countries or countries with low living standards. These findings suggested that the asymmetry of cultural distance, psychological distance, and perceived learning of management skills tends to impact local interactions negatively. In other words, when individuals are no longer motivated to learn about different cultures, do not perceive improvements in management skills, or have uneven respect for different cultures, their experience, acceptance, or passion for cross-cultural encounters gradually weaken, ultimately leading to an inability to achieve a positive learning experience.

Therefore, we believe that highly motivated students are better able to foster cultural intelligence and minimize overseas internship constraints. To test this argument, we proposed the following research hypothesis:

H4: Motivation has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between cultural intelligence and overseas internship constraints.

The research model for this section of the literature review is as follows (Fig. 1):

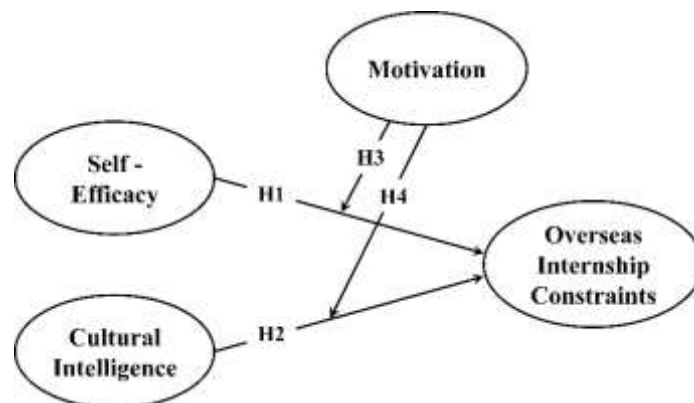


Figure 1: Research model

3. METHODS

3.1 Measure

We referenced several questionnaires proposed in previous studies and made appropriate revisions to

develop the questionnaires for this study. The self-efficacy, cultural intelligence, overseas internship constraints, and motivation questionnaires were adapted from those proposed by Bandura (1997), Peterson (2004), Tien (1999), and Pintrich and DeGroot (1990), respectively. A Likert 7-point scoring system was used to score the questionnaires, providing respondents with seven options ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The Cronbach's alpha values for all four dimensions of this study were above 0.8, indicating excellent reliability.

3.2 Data collection, sample, and statistical method

The questionnaire survey targeted university students majoring in hospitality-related disciplines in Taiwan. A total of 320 questionnaires were distributed, and 296 valid responses were retrieved for an effective response rate of 92.5%. Regarding demographics, female participants accounted for 60.1% of the samples. Japan was the most popular choice for overseas internships among the respondents, accounting for 23.6% of the samples. Singapore and the United States/Canada were the next preferred destinations, each accounting for 14.2%. The least preferred internship locations were Mainland China and Hong Kong/Macau, accounting for 6.4% and 4.4%, respectively. Furthermore, 38.5% of the participants reported having full-time or part-time work experience.

For hypothesis testing, the collected data were analyzed using the correlation, multiple regression, and hierarchical regression analysis methods included in SPSS 19.

4. RESULTS

Table 1 shows the inter-correlations of the four specified variables. The absolute values of variables ranged from .061 to .749, lower than the recommended threshold of .85 from Kline (2015). This provided a good indication of the discriminant validity of the collected data.

Table 1: Correlation matrix among constructs

Construct	Mean	SD	Discriminate validity			
			(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) Self-efficacy	5.041	.731	1			
(2) Cultural intelligence	5.553	.828	.592	1		
(3) Overseas internship constraints	4.963	.836	-.061	-.179	1	
(4) Motivation	5.412	1.015	.685	.749	-.127	1

Table 2 shows a strong correlation between the self-efficacy and cultural intelligence of university

students and overseas internship constraints ($t = -3.693, p < .001$; $t = -4.754, p < .001$). The analysis results supported H1 and H2.

Table 2: The impact of self-efficacy and cultural intelligence on overseas internship constraints

Construct	Unstd.		Std.	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	B	SE	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Self-efficacy	-.295	.080	-.257	-3.693	<.001	.649	1.540
Cultural intelligence	-.335	.070	-.331	-4.754	<.001	.649	1.540

Dependent variable: Overseas internship constraints

An analysis of the impact of motivation on overseas internship constraints among Taiwanese university students indicated that self-efficacy and cultural intelligence negatively impacted overseas internship constraints (Table 2). Subsequently, we tested the moderating effect of motivation. As tabulated in Table 3, the results showed that the moderation effect of motivation on the relationship between self-efficacy and overseas internship constraints did not exist ($B = -.036, p > .05$). By comparison, motivation moderated the relationship between cultural intelligence and overseas internship constraints ($B = -.134, p < .05$), whereby increased motivation strengthened the negative impact of cultural intelligence on overseas internship constraints. These results supported H4 but rejected H3.

Table 3: The moderation effect of motivation on overseas internship constraints

Variable	Overseas internship constraints	
	Model 1	Model 2
Self-efficacy	-.279***	-.279***
Motivation	-.318***	-.349***
Self-efficacy*Motivation		-.036
Model F	8.951	6.110
R ²	.058	.059
ΔR ²		.001
Cultural intelligence	-.191*	-.186*
Motivation	-.015	-.090
Cultural intelligence*Motivation		-.134*
Model F	4.864	5.161



R ²	.032	.050
ΔR ²		.018

5. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Our analyses revealed that self-efficacy and cultural intelligence have significant negative effects on overseas internship constraints, implying that university students with higher self-efficacy or cultural intelligence tend to have fewer overseas internship constraints. Similar results have been found in previous studies (Brislin et al., 2006; Liu, 2020). When individuals voluntarily or involuntarily participate in various overseas assignments, regardless of the duration of their stay, they are likely to encounter cultural challenges and pressures. Different cultures feature different cultural norms. Sensitivity to these norms may vary among individuals depending on their cultural upbringing. Some individuals can quickly identify and adjust their behavior according to these norms (Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000), while others are slower to cope with the impact of cultural adjustments, leading to psychological or emotional exhaustion (Lam et al., 2022). Therefore, individuals with high cultural intelligence are often praised for understanding cultural etiquette and being aware of cultural norms (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2006). They also demonstrate an increased willingness to try and accept new things.

According to analysis outcomes, we found that self-efficacy and cultural intelligence are equally influential on overseas internship constraints (the standardized regression coefficients are approximate), suggesting that university students with higher self-control can better organize their work schedule and set personal goals (such as participating in overseas internships). Their motivations for participating in overseas internships are also less impacted by factors, such as poor language skills or lack of international experience. Once they have decided to pursue overseas internship opportunities, they tend to evaluate themselves, identify their shortcomings, and make improvements to fulfill preset goals. Therefore, strengthening self-efficacy and cultural intelligence greatly increases the likeliness of overcoming overseas internship constraints.

The analysis outcomes also highlighted that motivation negatively moderates the relationship between cultural intelligence and overseas internship constraints but does not moderate the relationship between self-efficacy and overseas internship constraints, suggesting that constraints decrease concurrently with an increase in cultural intelligence and that this effect is amplified by an increase in motivation. Individuals with internalized motivation find it easier to demonstrate strong and effective beliefs when dealing with new cultural experiences. They also tend to adjust themselves to adapt to new situations or tasks (Earley & Ang, 2003). The influence of self-efficacy on overseas internship constraints is not significantly affected by motivational factors. This is because self-efficacy is a subjective perception of one's own abilities rather than actual proficiency. Templer et al. (2006)



suggested that cross-cultural training in organizations should include the development and enhancement of trainees' self-efficacy to enhance their ability to adapt to different cultures.

The participants in this study were university students in Taiwan majoring in hospitality and related fields, while the organizations providing overseas internships were not within the scope of this study. Teng et al. (2022) recommended evaluating the feedback of internship organizations, particularly those of the supervisor, to elucidate the experiences and effectiveness of both parties involved because factors, such as human elements or company policies, can affect students' willingness, motivation, and internship experiences. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted educational institutions at all levels to reconsider their business models, including enrollment, performance evaluation, and career counseling. It has also shifted overseas learning from being a predominantly face-to-face experience in the past to a more remote collaborative experience (Cobham, 2022). Therefore, the utilization of online platforms to enhance students' cultural intelligence, reduce cultural shock, and provide online training to improve self-efficacy seems to be a worthwhile topic of research moving forward.

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