



Learning Outcomes on Intercultural Competence among Indonesian Exchange Students

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Abstract

This study explores the development of intercultural competence (ICC) among Indonesian exchange students in South Korea and the United States, focusing on their experiences of cultural adaptation and the development of key intercultural skills. Employing a qualitative research design, the study utilized semi-structured interviews with 20 Indonesian students to investigate how they navigated cultural differences and adapted to new environments. The results identify three key dimensions of ICC: emotional sensitivity, cultural awareness, and intercultural adaptability. Emotional sensitivity was crucial for managing culture shock and emotional adaptation to the host culture. Cultural awareness, which involved recognizing and understanding cultural differences, enabled students to adjust their perceptions and behaviors. Intercultural adaptability, the ability to modify communication styles and social practices, was essential for effective engagement in both academic and social settings. The study contributes to the existing body of literature on international student experiences by providing insights into the specific challenges faced by Indonesian students and offering practical recommendations for improving support systems to foster intercultural competence. The findings highlight the dynamic nature of ICC as a process that evolves through emotional, cognitive, and behavioral adjustments. Future research should focus on the long-term impacts of intercultural experiences on students' personal and professional lives, as well as the role of cultural contexts in shaping ICC development.

Introduction

In the contemporary era of globalization, the significance of intercultural communication competence (ICC) has grown substantially, particularly within the context of international education. As countries increasingly engage in cross-border interactions, the necessity for individuals to effectively navigate cultural diversity has become paramount. Globalization has facilitated unprecedented opportunities for international exchanges, with student mobility serving as one of the key avenues for fostering cross-cultural dialogue. As such, the development of intercultural competence is not merely beneficial but essential for students participating in exchange programs, where they are exposed to diverse cultural norms, values, and communication styles (McLean & Ransom, 2007; Barrett, 2018; Thinh, 2025). The ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries is not only a critical skill in the realm of education but also in the broader context of global citizenship, which calls for individuals to engage with, understand, and collaborate with others from different cultural backgrounds (Hunduma & Mekuria, 2024; Gibson et al., 2008).

Research on ICC has evolved over the past few decades, with an increasing emphasis on its role in the educational experiences of international students. While much of the literature has examined ICC in the context of language learning and cultural adaptation, there remains a

notable gap in understanding how specific student populations, such as Indonesian exchange students, experience and develop intercultural competence in diverse academic and social environments. Studies have shown that students from non-Western countries, such as Indonesia, often face unique challenges when participating in exchange programs in countries with distinct cultural frameworks (van Oorschot, 2014; Syahriani & Sain, 2025; Handa, 2013; Zuchowski et al., 2017). These challenges are multifaceted, encompassing not only linguistic barriers but also significant differences in social norms, academic expectations, and intercultural communication practices. Consequently, the development of ICC among Indonesian students abroad is crucial, not only for their academic success but also for their broader personal and professional growth in an increasingly interconnected world (Pinariya & Sujipto, 2021; Anfas et al., 2023; Noviyanti, 2024).

The challenges faced by Indonesian students in countries like South Korea and the United States are emblematic of the broader complexities of intercultural communication in international education. South Korea, with its collectivist cultural values and high-context communication style, presents a stark contrast to the individualistic and low-context culture of the United States (Westby, 2022; Babbitt, 2023). These cultural divergences often place international students in situations where they must not only adapt to new academic environments but also to new ways of thinking, behaving, and interacting with others. For Indonesian students, the ability to successfully navigate these differences requires more than just language proficiency; it demands the development of a nuanced understanding of cultural norms, values, and communication strategies that transcend the surface level (Dewan, 2025; Fenuku, 2024; Xin & Ping, 2023). As such, the role of ICC in facilitating these students' adaptation to their host environments is critical in determining the outcomes of their exchange experiences.

The existing body of literature on ICC in international student exchanges has largely focused on the general mechanisms of cultural adaptation, often overlooking the specific experiences of students from particular cultural backgrounds. While studies have explored intercultural communication in diverse educational contexts (Anfas et al., 2023; Spalding, 2022), there is a conspicuous lack of research on how Indonesian students, in particular, develop and apply ICC in the host countries of South Korea and the United States. This gap in the literature highlights the need for targeted research that investigates the intercultural challenges faced by Indonesian students and the strategies they employ to overcome them. By exploring these students' experiences, this study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how ICC functions within the context of student exchange programs, specifically focusing on the learning outcomes related to intercultural competence in South Korea and the United States (Ko et al., 2015; Choi et al., 2012; Hur et al., 2024).

The primary objective of this study is to examine the development of intercultural competence among Indonesian exchange students studying in South Korea and the United States. Through an in-depth analysis of their experiences, the study seeks to identify the specific challenges these students encounter, the strategies they use to overcome these challenges, and the role of ICC in shaping their academic, social, and personal outcomes. This research will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with quantitative surveys, to provide a holistic view of the students' intercultural learning outcomes. The comparative nature of this study, which focuses on two culturally distinct host countries, will offer valuable insights into the ways in which ICC is shaped by the cultural contexts of South Korea and the United States.

Furthermore, this research aims to fill a critical gap in the literature by focusing on Indonesian exchange students' experiences in these two specific cultural contexts. By doing so, it seeks to offer a more nuanced understanding of the factors that influence the development of ICC and how these factors can be leveraged to enhance the effectiveness of exchange programs. The findings of this study will provide important implications for universities, policymakers, and educators seeking to improve the support systems in place for international students and to ensure that these students are equipped with the intercultural skills necessary for success in the globalized world.

Methods

This study employs a case study and phenomenological research method with a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the experiences of Indonesian exchange students in South Korea and the United States, focusing on the development of their intercultural competence (ICC). The combination of these methods provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how students navigate cultural differences, adapt to new environments, and enhance their intercultural communication skills during their exchange programs. This section outlines the research design, participant selection, data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures, offering a detailed overview of how the study was conducted.

Research Design

The research design for this study is qualitative, with a descriptive and phenomenological orientation. Case study methodology was chosen due to its ability to provide an in-depth, contextually rich understanding of a particular phenomenon in this case, the development of intercultural competence among Indonesian students in their respective host countries. As defined by Yin (1982), case studies are particularly suited for investigating contemporary phenomena within their real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined. By focusing on Indonesian exchange students in South Korea and the United States, this research examines their lived experiences, providing insights into how they adapt to and engage with different cultural norms, values, and communication styles.

In conjunction with the case study approach, a phenomenological research method is employed. Phenomenology seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals and the meanings they attach to those experiences (Lindseth & Norberg, 2022; Van Manen, 2023). This method is particularly appropriate for exploring how participants perceive and interpret their encounters with cultural differences and how these encounters shape their understanding of intercultural competence. The phenomenological approach allows for a deep exploration of the students' personal, subjective experiences, offering insights into the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of intercultural communication that are central to the development of ICC.

Lastly, the qualitative descriptive approach serves as the foundation for data collection and analysis. This approach prioritizes clarity and simplicity in describing the experiences of participants, without relying on complex theoretical constructs. The goal is to provide a straightforward and comprehensive account of the students' experiences, highlighting the key challenges they face and the strategies they employ to enhance their intercultural communication skills. This approach allows for a detailed exploration of how Indonesian students engage with and adapt to the cultural contexts of South Korea and the United States.

Participant Selection

The participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling, a technique commonly employed in qualitative research to identify individuals who are likely to provide rich, relevant, and in-depth information about the research topic (Patton, 2002). The sample consisted of Indonesian exchange students who had participated in official exchange programs in South Korea or the United States. The selection criteria were as follows: (1) participants had to have spent at least one semester abroad as part of a student exchange program; (2) they had to be currently enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate program at an Indonesian university; (3) they must have actively participated in the exchange program, either as part of an academic or cultural exchange initiative.

A total of 20 participants were selected for the study, with 10 students from each of the two host countries, South Korea and the United States. This sample was designed to ensure a diversity of experiences, as students came from various regions in Indonesia and represented different academic disciplines. The participants were predominantly undergraduate students, with a smaller proportion of graduate students, reflecting the typical demographics of exchange programs. The aim was to capture a wide range of experiences across different cultural contexts, ensuring that the findings would provide insights into how ICC develops in both South Korea and the United States.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study was conducted through two primary methods: semi-structured interviews and a literature review. These methods were chosen for their ability to provide both personal, in-depth insights into the students' experiences and a theoretical framework for analyzing the data.

Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method. This interview format allows for flexibility, enabling the researcher to explore key topics while also providing participants with the opportunity to discuss their experiences in greater depth (Kvale, 1996). The interview guide was developed to address the core themes of intercultural competence, including emotional sensitivity (affective), cultural awareness (cognitive), and intercultural adaptability (behavioral) as defined by Ting-Toomey & Dorjee (2015). Key interview topics included the students' expectations prior to departure, the challenges they faced in adjusting to a new cultural environment, strategies for overcoming cultural differences, and the impact of these experiences on their development of intercultural competence.

The interviews were conducted in the participants' preferred language, primarily in Indonesian, although some participants also chose to conduct portions of the interviews in English. This flexibility allowed for a more natural and open exchange. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. The semi-structured format also allowed for follow-up questions, enabling the interviewer to probe deeper into specific responses and gain more nuanced insights into the participants' experiences.

A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted to contextualize the study and to inform the interview process. The literature review focused on existing research on intercultural competence, the experiences of international students, and the challenges faced by students in cross-cultural settings. This review provided a theoretical basis for the study, helping to identify key concepts and frameworks related to intercultural communication, and allowed for the integration of existing knowledge into the analysis of the interview data.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely used method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data. Thematic analysis provides a systematic approach to organizing and interpreting qualitative data, allowing the researcher to identify key themes related to the research questions. This method is particularly useful for understanding how participants experience and interpret intercultural communication in the context of their exchange programs.

The analysis process followed the six-phase approach outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006): (1) familiarization with the data through repeated reading of the transcripts; (2) generating initial codes by identifying meaningful segments of text; (3) searching for themes by grouping related codes; (4) reviewing themes to ensure they accurately reflect the data; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) writing up the findings, which involved interpreting the themes in relation to the research questions and the existing literature. NVivo software was used to assist with the coding and organization of the data, providing a more efficient and systematic approach to the analysis.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, triangulation was employed by comparing the interview data with insights drawn from the literature review. This method helped to verify the accuracy of the data and provided a more comprehensive understanding of the students' experiences in South Korea and the United States. Triangulation enhances the validity of qualitative research by ensuring that the findings are consistent and robust across different data sources (Denzin, 1978).

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study on the development of intercultural competence (ICC) among Indonesian exchange students in South Korea and the United States. The data analyzed from the semi-structured interviews with 20 participants (10 from each host country) were organized around three core themes central to the development of ICC: emotional sensitivity (affective process), cultural awareness (cognitive process), and intercultural adaptability (behavioral process). These findings are interpreted in the context of existing literature, emphasizing the role of intercultural competence in navigating cross-cultural differences and examining how students' experiences contribute to the literature on Indonesian students' unique challenges and strategies in these culturally distinct environments.

Emotional Sensitivity (Affective Process)

The first significant theme to emerge from the data was emotional sensitivity, which pertains to the students' ability to manage and regulate their emotional responses to cultural differences. This theme reflects the emotional challenges many students face upon entering a new cultural context. Participants described initial experiences of culture shock, characterized by feelings of discomfort, frustration, and isolation when they encountered practices or expectations that differed significantly from their home culture.

For instance, in South Korea, participants such as Andi described the sense of unease they initially felt regarding the formal communication styles in academic settings. Andi's reflection exemplifies the emotional challenges encountered:

"In Korea, I had to adjust to using formal language and bowing as a sign of respect to professors, which felt awkward at first. In Indonesia, the atmosphere is more casual in

academic settings. The rigidity of the communication made me feel uneasy, especially when it was expected even in informal situations." (Andi, interview, July 5, 2023)

Such feelings of discomfort are consistent with the literature on culture shock, where individuals often experience emotional distress when exposed to unfamiliar cultural norms (Murtiningsih, 2016). However, as the study progressed, it became evident that the participants' emotional responses evolved. Many students reported emotional adaptation as they adjusted to the expectations of their new cultural environments. This adaptation was not merely a process of overcoming discomfort but also involved a recalibration of their emotional responses to meet the norms of the host culture.

Nia, who studied in the United States, illustrated this process of emotional adjustment in response to language barriers and social misunderstandings:

"In the beginning, I often felt excluded because I couldn't catch the humor in conversations. But over time, I learned not to take it personally and began to engage with my classmates more openly, which helped me feel more included." (Nia, interview, August 12, 2023)

This emotional regulation and self-awareness in handling cultural misunderstandings align with Deardorff's (2009) view of emotional intelligence as a key component of ICC, where the ability to manage emotions fosters effective communication across cultures. Participants who successfully adapted emotionally were able to navigate their cross-cultural experiences with greater ease and confidence.

Cultural Awareness (Cognitive Process)

The theme of cultural awareness emerged as a pivotal element in the development of intercultural competence. Students reported significant growth in their cognitive understanding of both their own culture and the host culture, as they reflected on the differences they encountered. This cognitive process involved recognizing and adjusting to cultural practices, values, and communication styles that were initially unfamiliar.

In South Korea, for example, the concept of collectivism was a point of reflection for many students. Rudi's experience underscores how the cultural emphasis on group harmony shaped his understanding of social interactions in Korea:

"In Korea, group harmony is a priority. I was surprised at how students put the group's interests above their own, even when it meant suppressing personal opinions. In Indonesia, we value open discussion more, so it was an adjustment to learn that expressing individual opinions isn't always appropriate in group settings." (Rudi, interview, July 19, 2023)

This shift in cognitive understanding reflects the broader concept of cultural adaptation, where students adjust their worldview to incorporate new cultural insights (Deardorff, 2009). Participants not only learned about the cultural values of their host countries but also began to recognize the cultural assumptions they had carried with them. In the United States, students such as Siti reflected on how the emphasis on individualism in American culture challenged their Indonesian collectivist values. Siti noted:

"In the US, people value independence and self-expression. At first, I thought it was strange because in Indonesia, we usually make decisions as a group. I had to adjust to the American way of thinking, where expressing individual opinions is encouraged." (Siti, interview, August 10, 2023)

The cognitive process of self-reflection on cultural values and communication practices allowed participants to develop greater intercultural awareness, enabling them to better navigate the cultural landscapes of their host countries.

Intercultural Adaptability (Behavioral Process)

The third theme to emerge was intercultural adaptability, which refers to students' ability to adjust their behavioral responses to align with the norms and expectations of their host cultures. This theme was integral to the students' overall development of intercultural competence, as it involved modifying their communication styles, social behaviors, and daily practices to integrate more effectively into their new environments.

In South Korea, students like Nia emphasized the importance of adapting to formal social interactions. She reflected on her initial discomfort with the level of formality in communication, but noted that as she became more accustomed to the cultural expectations, her behavioral flexibility increased:

"At first, I felt uncomfortable with how formal everything was, especially when interacting with professors. But over time, I realized that this formality was a sign of respect. I had to adjust by using more formal language and being more reserved in my body language." (Nia, interview, August 12, 2023)

Similarly, students in the United States learned to modify their communication styles to match the directness valued in American culture. Joko's experience provides insight into the adjustment process:

"I had to learn to be more direct in my communication. In Indonesia, we are more indirect, especially when dealing with sensitive topics. But in the US, people appreciate honesty and directness, so I had to adjust my communication style to fit in." (Joko, interview, August 9, 2023)

These findings align with Deardorff's (2009) model of intercultural competence, which emphasizes the importance of behavioral flexibility in effectively engaging across cultures. The students' ability to adapt their behaviour whether through adjusting their communication style, learning new social norms, or adapting to different academic expectations was essential in facilitating their integration into their host cultures.

Developing Intercultural Competence among Indonesian Exchange Students

This study demonstrates that emotional sensitivity serves as a fundamental dimension in the development of intercultural competence among Indonesian exchange students in South Korea and the United States. The students' experiences reveal that emotional reactions such as anxiety, confusion, and discomfort at the early stages of cultural immersion are not simply symptoms of maladaptation but important phases of intercultural growth. These findings support Deardorff's (2009) process model of intercultural competence, which emphasizes affective regulation as the foundation of intercultural learning. The ability to manage emotions and sustain openness to uncertainty allows students to transform initial discomfort into meaningful engagement with cultural difference. This emotional transformation also reflects Bennett & Hammer (2017) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, which posits that individuals move progressively from ethnocentric to ethnorelative orientations. Students' narratives in this study illustrate that feelings of alienation eventually evolved into empathy and tolerance, forming the emotional basis for cognitive and behavioral adaptation. These outcomes align with previous findings by Zabin (2022), who underline that emotional resilience is an essential starting point for effective intercultural communication.

The comparative nature of this study also indicates that emotional responses vary depending on the cultural context of the host country. In South Korea, students were expected to maintain emotional restraint and to demonstrate respect for hierarchical relationships, reflecting the collectivist orientation of Korean society. This finding is consistent with Murtiningsih (2016), who observed that Indonesian students must develop emotional discipline to adapt successfully in Korean environments. By contrast, in the United States, openness, self-expression, and assertiveness were valued forms of emotional communication, requiring students to adopt more expressive behaviors. These contrasting experiences demonstrate that emotional sensitivity is not a static attribute but a flexible capacity shaped by cultural expectations. The ability to regulate emotions according to situational norms exemplifies a mature form of intercultural competence, confirming Makhmutova et al. (2018), who identified emotional flexibility as an essential feature of successful adaptation in foreign settings.

The development of cultural awareness constitutes the cognitive dimension of intercultural competence. The findings indicate that cultural learning is not limited to gaining factual knowledge about the host culture but also involves a deep process of reflection on one's own cultural assumptions. The participants' reflections show that intercultural encounters stimulated self-examination, leading to a broader understanding of how cultural values influence perception and behavior. This process supports Gudykunst & Kim (1992) theoretical perspective that intercultural communication competence develops through the reconstruction of cultural meaning systems. Students in this study realized that their understanding of collectivism, harmony, and authority was challenged and reconstructed when confronted with the individualistic norms of the United States or the formal hierarchical values of South Korea. Through such experiences, they developed metacognitive awareness, or the ability to think about cultural reasoning, a process described by Chedru & Ostapchuk (2023) as central to intercultural intelligence.

This transformation reflects a form of learning that is not mechanical but transformative. As Jackson (2011) explain, intercultural learning reshapes identity through reflective engagement, allowing individuals to construct new frames of reference. Students who actively engaged in critical self-reflection, questioned stereotypes, and compared cultural logics exhibited more advanced cognitive adaptation than those who remained passive observers. Holmes & O'Neill (2012) similarly emphasize that intercultural competence develops through continuous interpretation of social meaning rather than through exposure alone. The cognitive development observed in this study therefore reflects the internalization of new perspectives, enabling students to view behaviors across cultures as logical within their specific contexts rather than as deviations from a norm.

The behavioral component of intercultural competence, represented by adaptability, is the outward manifestation of emotional and cognitive development. The findings demonstrate that students learned to modify their communication styles and social behavior to align with the expectations of their host cultures. This behavioral adjustment is consistent with Deardorff's (2006) view that intercultural competence entails effective and appropriate communication, combining internal attitudes with external performance. Indonesian students in South Korea, for instance, learned to express respect through formal speech, indirect communication, and controlled body language. Conversely, in the United States, they adapted to a more direct and egalitarian communication style. This behavioral flexibility validates the observations of Tanasy et al. (2024), who found that Indonesian students in Western contexts develop adaptive interactional strategies to build cross-cultural friendships.

Behavioral adaptability represents the practical consolidation of emotional stability and cognitive awareness. It is also evidence that intercultural competence develops through repetition and reflection over time, as noted by Hagar (2018). Students who displayed flexibility in adjusting their behavior became more confident in navigating academic and social contexts, demonstrating an ability to interpret and respond appropriately to situational cues. The iterative process of behavioral learning observed in this study echoes Kianinezhad (2024) conclusion that continuous intercultural engagement increases tolerance for ambiguity and broadens behavioral repertoires. These patterns suggest that intercultural competence should be viewed as a cyclical and evolving process rather than a linear sequence of skills acquisition.

When viewed as an integrated whole, the affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of intercultural competence interact dynamically. Emotional sensitivity enables openness to difference, cultural awareness transforms this openness into understanding, and behavioral adaptability converts understanding into practice. The integration of these three domains supports Dardorff's (2009) cyclical model, which conceptualizes intercultural competence as an ongoing process of internal reflection and external application. For Indonesian students, whose cultural background emphasizes relational harmony and collective identity, the process of adaptation required balancing familiar social values with the contrasting norms of assertiveness and autonomy encountered in the host cultures. This identity negotiation supports Kim (2009) argument that intercultural competence involves reconstructing multiple identities in response to differing cultural demands.

The institutional and social environments also played a critical role in shaping the students' intercultural learning. Universities that provided inclusive learning environments, intercultural mentoring, and peer engagement opportunities facilitated smoother adaptation. Conversely, environments that lacked social support structures tended to heighten feelings of isolation and delay intercultural growth. These findings support Hang and Zhang (2023), who argue that institutional inclusivity enhances the development of transitional competence. The co-construction of intercultural learning within supportive institutional frameworks underscores that competence is both an individual and collective process.

Theoretically, the study reaffirms that intercultural competence is a multidimensional construct that involves affective, cognitive, and behavioral interaction. By focusing on Indonesian students' experiences in both Asian and Western contexts, the study contributes to the refinement of existing models by showing that intercultural competence is not culture-free but rather contextually situated. The findings demonstrate that competence develops through the intersection of individual disposition, cultural orientation, and institutional context. Practically, the results hold significant implications for higher education policy and program design. Pre-departure orientation should emphasize emotional readiness by equipping students with coping strategies for culture shock and uncertainty. Host institutions should create structured spaces for intercultural reflection such as mentoring, discussion forums, and cross-cultural workshops to foster cognitive growth. Continuous exposure to local social and academic practices should also be accompanied by guided reflection to reinforce behavioral adaptation. These recommendations align with Gaitán Aguilar et al. (2024), who propose a holistic approach to global citizenship education integrating emotional, cognitive, and behavioral learning.

Indonesian universities can further strengthen internationalization efforts by embedding reflective intercultural learning within the curriculum. Structured reflection activities such as intercultural journals or post-exchange seminars could help returning students consolidate their intercultural understanding. This approach is consistent with Majewska (2023) perspective that

the development of global competence should be an institutional commitment embedded in educational programs rather than a personal initiative.

While this research offers rich qualitative insights, it is limited by its relatively small sample and the short-term nature of the exchange experience. Future studies could employ mixed methods that combine qualitative exploration with quantitative validation using established measurement scales. Longitudinal research would also provide valuable understanding of how intercultural competence influences students' professional development after returning to Indonesia. In addition, future research could explore the influence of gender, discipline, and religious identity on the process of adaptation. Expanding the scope of study to include additional host countries such as Japan, Australia, or European contexts could provide comparative insights into how cultural distance affects adaptation. Furthermore, given the growing prevalence of digital mobility, virtual exchange programs should be investigated to understand how online interactions contribute to intercultural development as suggested by Machwate et al. (2021).

Conclusion

This study examined the development of intercultural competence (ICC) among Indonesian exchange students in South Korea and the United States, highlighting the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of cultural adaptation. The findings underscore that emotional sensitivity, in particular, plays a critical role in managing initial culture shock and adjusting to the emotional demands of living in a foreign culture. Students were required to regulate their emotions in response to unfamiliar norms and behaviors, which is an essential skill in the process of intercultural competence development. Additionally, the study found that cultural awareness, defined as understanding and reflecting on both one's own and the host culture's values and practices, significantly contributed to students' ability to navigate cross-cultural interactions. The development of intercultural adaptability, particularly in modifying communication styles and social behaviors, emerged as another key component that facilitated the students' successful integration into their host cultures.

The study's contributions lie in its specific focus on Indonesian students' experiences, a demographic often underrepresented in the existing literature on intercultural competence. By examining the unique challenges faced by Indonesian students in culturally distinct settings such as South Korea and the United States, this research expands the understanding of how students from non-Western backgrounds engage with and adapt to cultural differences. The findings also highlight the importance of targeted support systems for international students to enhance their ICC development.

Future research should further investigate the long-term impacts of intercultural experiences on students' professional trajectories and personal growth, as well as explore the influence of specific cultural contexts on the development of ICC across diverse student populations.

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