



## Cultural and Social Capital in the Adaptation of Indonesian Students in the United States

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### Article

#### Article History

Received: 2023/ 09/ 06  
Reviewed: 2023/ 11/ 02  
Accepted: 2023/ 12/ 28  
Published: 2023/ 12/ 30

#### DOI:

[doi.org/10.29313/mimbar.v39i2.2704](https://doi.org/10.29313/mimbar.v39i2.2704)

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Volume : 39  
No. : 2  
Month : December  
Year : 2023  
Pages : 281 - 291

To cite this article (APA Style):

Karim Suryadi, Leni Anggraeni, Fitri Rahmafitria, Ega Prakarsa. (2023). Cultural and Social Capital in the Adaptation of Indonesian Students in the United States. *Jurnal Mimbar*. 39(2), 281-291.  
[doi.org/10.29313/mimbar.v39i2.2704](https://doi.org/10.29313/mimbar.v39i2.2704)

### Abstract

Research on the adaptation of Indonesian students abroad often emphasizes internal abilities, self-motivation, and various psychological aspects. However, in the study of educational globalization, it is important to reinforce research on internal and psychological aspects with external approaches, such as social and cultural approaches. Therefore, this study measures the cultural and social capital that facilitates the adaptation of Indonesian students in the United States. The research utilized a quantitative approach with multiple linear regression analysis to examine the relationship between variables. The findings indicate that both cultural and social capital have an impact on the adaptation abilities of Indonesian students in the United States, either simultaneously or partially, with social capital showing a more significant influence. The research aims to expand sociological theories related to student adaptation and serves as a strategic study to enhance the adaptation abilities of students studying abroad.

**Keywords:** cultural capital; social capital; study abroad; adaptation.

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### Introduction

International student mobility is a central issue in the study of education globalization. The United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom are the most popular study destinations for international students (Laad & Sharma, 2021; Studee, 2022). According to Project Atlas, 5.3 million students study abroad, with 1,095,299 international students concentrated in the United States. Asia has the highest number of students who move to other countries to meet global demand, with 645,622 students coming from the region. The largest proportion of these students come from China, India, and South Korea, respectively. In Southeast Asia, Vietnam has the highest number of international students with 21,631, followed by Indonesia with 7,489 for 2020-2021 (Opendoors, 2022).

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International students face various challenges when adapting to their new environment. Research shows that students experience physical and mental discomfort (Kazakova & Shastina, 2019), homesickness (Hack-Polay, 2020), loneliness (Wawera & McCamley, 2020), and environmental disparities between their home and study destination countries (Ou & Gu, 2021) when studying abroad. Additionally, studies have found that stress levels are particularly high for students in their first year of study abroad (Geng & Midford, 2015), and poor adaptability is associated with low academic achievement (Ganotice et al., 2022).

Asian regions face greater challenges in adapting to academic culture in the United States and Europe. Discussions of cross-cultural adaptation for immigrant students often involve fundamental differences, such as language and community values (Choi & Nieminen, 2013), as well as Asian values of collectivity that may not align with U.S. academic discussions (Lee & Ciftci, 2014). Additionally, psychological distress, including homesickness, depression, anxiety, stress (Mesidor & Sly, 2016), and feelings of isolation (Wei et al., 2007), are significant concerns. Asian students may face additional challenges in accessing mental health and counselling services due to a lack of awareness or understanding of these resources (Hwang et al., 2014).

The challenges faced by migrant students are a strategic topic of discussion, particularly in light of the increasing number of students studying abroad. It is important to analyze the potential opportunities and challenges in higher education research. This is especially true for Indonesian students studying abroad, as assessing their potential, opportunities, and challenges can provide a scientific basis for measuring and improving their adaptability and success. When considering potential aspects, Indonesian students possess a range of functional values that aid in adapting to new conditions. The cultural values of the collective society, such as language, religion, and ethnicity, serve as accessible capital for making adjustments. These cultural values can be relied upon as potential resources when adapting to new conditions. Additionally, the strong social relations among Indonesian students are characterized by collective values such as gotong royong, tolerance, and mutual respect (Pasteruk, 2020).

This study aimed to measure the influence of cultural capital and social capital on the adaptability of first-year Indonesian students in the United States. The research fills a theoretical gap by exploring the relationship between universities and external factors that contribute to students' ability to adapt. Researchers enhance research novelty by utilizing the latest scientific advancements. The concept of cultural adaptation has been widely explored in various scientific fields, as demonstrated by Bashir et al. (2021), Beaven and Spencer-Oatey (2016), Brown et al. (2016), V. Chirkov et al. (2007), Di Pietro (2015), King and Sondhi (2018), Le Huu Nghia (2019), Nilsson and Stålnacke (2019), Peng et al. (2015), and Yang et al. (2018). Their research indicates that students who study independently exhibit high adaptability. Several studies suggest that the desire to build a career is a determining factor in students' successful adaptation (Chao et al., 2017; Jaeger et al., 2017; King & Sondhi, 2018).

In addition to the above aspects, other studies have shown that external factors such as language, communication, and socio-cultural adjustment are the most important determinants in helping new students adapt to a new culture abroad (Cheng, 2020; Ferencz et al., 2020; King & Sondhi, 2018; Mamat & Rambely, 2016; Ping et al., 2019; Watson & Wolfel, 2015; Yueyue et al., 2022; Zhang & Li, 2022). Furthermore, research on intercultural adaptation is also widely produced to examine culture shock. During the adaptation period, the female students with a more mature age range were the most successful group in Croatia (Vulić-Prtorić & Oetjen, 2017). Various factors affect the adaptability of students studying abroad, including institutional factors (Renee' Harris & Hynes, 2019), duration of stay in the study destination country, understanding of global issues (Tuncer Unver et al., 2021; Wynveen et al., 2012), academic stress levels (Rathakrishnan et al., 2021), lack of information (Hertzum & Hyldegård, 2019), and local friends. It is important to consider these variables when assessing the adaptability of students studying abroad.

The scientific map presented above indicates that this research aims to enhance the socio-cultural adaptation of Indonesian students in the United States. The scientific argument for the novelty of this research is based on previous studies that recommend examining family relationships and their impact on adaptation levels (Alamri, 2017; Hapsari & Widyawati, 2016), exploring differences in social identity among students from different countries (Serrano-Sánchez et al., 2022), and considering the number of friends and social networks of students who live and communicate together, as well as the process of adaptation of students to the staff and academic environment (Renee 'Harris & Hynes, 2019). Researchers identified socio-cultural capital as a key factor in supporting the adaptability of Asian students, including those from Indonesia.

### Research Method

This study employed a quantitative approach and utilized both descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to compare means of the data, while inferential statistics were used to measure the research variables. The variables examined in this study were cultural capital, social capital, and adaptability of Indonesian students. The study involved 56 Indonesian students at various academic levels in the United States, selected through random sampling. The research instrument's validity was assessed through expert judgment using the Aiken index validation. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression while considering the classical assumption test.

### Results & Discussion

The study analyzed the characteristics of respondents according to their regional origin. These characteristics can aid in interpreting research data based on geographical location and explaining their relationship with factors that form cultural and social capital. Data based on regional origin can be presented as follows.

**Table 1**  
**Regional Origin**

<b>Regional Origin</b>	<b>frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam	1	1,8
Sumatera Barat	2	3,6
Sumatera Utara	1	1,8
Sumatera Selatan	1	1,8
Lampung	3	5,4
Jambi	1	1,8
DKI Jakarta	17	30,4
Jawa Barat	8	14,3
Jawa Tengah	1	1,8
Jawa Timur	4	7,1
Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta	1	1,8
Bali	1	1,8
Nusa Tenggara Barat	2	3,6
Nusa Tenggara Timur	2	3,6
Kalimantan Barat	1	1,8
Kalimantan Timur	1	1,8
Sulawesi Selatan	3	5,4
Sulawesi Utara	1	1,8
Maluku	3	5,4
Papua	2	3,6

The table illustrates the distribution of respondents across different regions. One respondent represented several regions, including Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam, North Sumatra, South Sumatra, Jambi, Central Java, Yogyakarta Special Region, Bali, West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, and North Sulawesi. Two respondents represented West Sumatra, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara, and Papua each. Furthermore, respondents are distributed across various regions, including Lampung (3), DKI Jakarta (17), West Java (8), East Java (4), South Sulawesi (3), and Maluku (3). Additionally, respondents can be categorized by gender.

**Table 1**  
**Gender**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	23	41,1
Female	33	58,9

The study's respondents were predominantly women, with a frequency of 33 people, followed by 23 men. This finding provides a representative description of the cultural and social capital variables possessed by Indonesian students as they adapt to life in the United States.

**Table 2**  
**Education Level**

<b>Tingkat Pendidikan</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
S1 (Undergraduate)	14	25.0
S2 (Graduate)	32	57.1
S3 (Doctoral)	10	17.9

Based on the data above, 32 respondents were students at S2 level, while 14 were undergraduate students and 10 were doctoral students. The characteristics of respondents based on their location of residence in the U.S. will be described next. Indonesian students studying in the U.S. reside in various states.

**Table 3**  
**Live in the United States**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Oregon	2	3.6
Washington DC	4	7.1
California	9	16.1
Kentucky	1	1.8
Kansas	1	1.8
Utah	1	1.8
New York	4	7.1
Minnesota	7	12.5
Illinois	2	3.6
Pennsylvania	3	5.4
Dakota Utara	1	1.8
Arizona	2	3.6
Georgia	2	3.6
Florida	3	5.4
Wisconsin	2	3.6
Nebraska	1	1.8
Alabama	3	5.4
Michigan	1	1.8
Massachusetts	1	1.8
Virginia	1	1.8
Louisiana	2	3.6
Carolina Utara	1	1.8
Connecticut	1	1.8
Ohio	1	1.8

The table indicates that California is the state with the highest number of student residents, with a frequency of 9 people. Other states have a more even distribution, with 1 to 3 respondents.

The discussion starts with an inferential statistical analysis of the cultural capital variables. This variable is represented by 9 statement items, which are divided into 2 main sub-variables: embodied cultural capital and objectified cultural capital. The test for embodied cultural capital includes eight aspects: 1) parents introducing higher education abroad, 2) parents providing an open choice to pursue higher education abroad, 3) parents helping to prepare for higher education, 4) parents providing time to choose higher education abroad, 5) parents training the habit of asking teachers about learning outcomes, 6) parents convincing the individual of the benefits of pursuing higher education abroad, 7) parents strictly educating politeness values, and 8) parents providing a

supportive environment to encourage reading habits. The sub-variable of objectified cultural capital is represented by one statement item: respondents collect literature, books, and articles related to their interests.

**Table 4**  
**Cultural Capital Variables Categorization**

<b>Cultural Capital</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
High	22	39.3
Medium	29	51.8
Low	5	8.9

The table illustrates that Indonesian students studying in the U.S. have a moderate level of cultural capital on average, with a frequency of 29 people or 51.8%. Additionally, students with high cultural capital have a fairly high frequency of 22 people or 39.3%, while those with low cultural capital have a frequency of only 5 people or 8.9%.

The next variable in the inferential analysis is the social capital variable. Family social capital refers to the ability of parents to provide emotional support for students. Bridging social capital encompasses student interactions with the academic community, local residents, campus organizations, or international students. Bonding social capital refers to relationships between students and new friends and international students. Maintaining home country social capital refers to relationships between Indonesian students and friends in the same country. This section presents the categorization of research results for social capital variables, which are divided into four main indicators: family social capital, bridging social capital, bonding social capital, and maintaining home country social capital.

**Table 5**  
**Social Capital Variable Categorization**

<b>Social Capital</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
High	27	48.2
Medium	29	51.8
Low	0	0

The table illustrates that Indonesian students studying higher education in the U.S. have moderate levels of social capital on average, with 29 individuals accounting for 51.8% of the sample.

Additionally, 27 individuals have high levels of social capital, while none have low levels.

The study examines the acculturative efforts of Indonesian students studying in the US to adapt to the new culture. Cultural adaptability is the main focus of the study. The concept of cultural adaptability is measured through 11 statements divided into 5 indicators: 1) Quantity of interaction with host nationals, 2) Active participation in foreign cultural experiences, 3) Active efforts to learn the local language (dialect/idiom), 4) Ability to identify and integrate with the culture of the host country, and 5) Affective difficulties in self-adjustment (homesickness/feeling out of place). The table below categorises the results of research on the adaptability of Indonesian students in the U.S.

**Table 6**  
**Adaptation Variable Categorization**

<b>Adaptation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
High	27	48.2
Medium	29	51.8
Low	0	0

The table illustrates that Indonesian students studying in the U.S. have medium adaptability on average, with a frequency of 29 people or 51.8%.

Furthermore, 48.2% of Indonesian students (27 individuals) exhibit high adaptability, while none exhibit low adaptability. The following inferential statistical analysis will test the impact of the research variables through simultaneous and partial tests. The test was conducted to demonstrate the combined influence of cultural capital and social capital variables on the adaptation variable. The study employed simultaneous and partial tests to examine the influence of cultural and social capital variables on the adaptability of Indonesian students in the U.S. The simultaneous test demonstrated the combined effect of both variables on the adaptation outcome, while the partial tests examined their individual effects. The findings of both tests are presented in the table below.

**Table 7**  
**Anova**

Model	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	f	Sig.
Regression	189.151	2	94.575	6.786	.002
Residual	738.688	53	13.938		
Total	927.839	55			

Source: data analysis with SPSS 23

The table above indicates that the calculated F value is 6.786, which is greater than the F table value in this study (3.17). Based on this information, it can be concluded that there is a simultaneous relationship between cultural capital and social capital variables that affect the adaptability of Indonesian students in the U.S. The study also conducted a partial test to examine the relationship between the influence of cultural capital and social capital on the adaptability of Indonesian students separately. The results of the partial test are displayed below.

**Table 8**  
**t-test**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
X1	.286	.096	.375	2.976	.004
X2	.346	.102	.418	3.381	.001

Source: data analysis with SPSS 23

According to the table above, the t-value for cultural capital (2.976) and social capital (3.381) are both greater than the t-table value (2.005). The results indicate that both the cultural capital and social capital variables partially influence the adaptability of Indonesian students studying in the US. Additionally, the researchers conducted a coefficient of determination test on the variables both together and separately, which is displayed in the table below.

**Table 9**  
**Coefficient of Determination**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.452	.204	.174	3.73330

The coefficient of determination test indicates that the R Square value is 0.204 or 20%. This value represents the influence of variables X1 and X2 on variable Y, specifically the influence of cultural capital and social capital variables on the adaptability of Indonesian students in the U.S. The partial determination coefficient test can display the direct relationship ability of each variable as follows.

**Table 10**  
**Partial Coefficient of Determination**

Variable	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	Correlation coefficient	Value	R <sup>2</sup>
X1	0.206	0.375	0,07725	0.204
X2	0.303	0.418	0,126654	

The table illustrates that the cultural capital variable accounts for 0.077 or 8% of the adaptability, while the social capital variable accounts for 0.1266 or 12%. Therefore, the combined value is 0.204 or 20%.

The research findings indicate that both cultural capital and social capital, both together and separately, influence the adaptability of Indonesian students studying in the U.S. Specifically, the study suggests that aspects of family parenting can serve as cultural capital for students, providing them with the necessary resources to adapt to a new environment. Improving parenting and strengthening family institutions can increase cultural capital for children, which can be useful when studying abroad. Developing open and democratic parenting values that encourage children to ask questions, provide support for learning, and prioritize education is a significant way to increase cultural capital.

The research findings above support the theoretical position that the family, as the primary socialization agent, plays a crucial role in shaping good values. Bourdieu argues that the family serves as a means for society to reproduce and create itself. When parents from different social classes pass

on certain values to their children, it can improve the quality of society in an evolutionary and sustainable way. Families play a crucial role in socializing children by instilling functional values that can aid in social mobility (Bourdieu, 1983).

The position of family institutions in building cultural capital is a determinant in helping students adapt when studying abroad, as shown by previous studies (Hari et al., 2021; J. Chen & Zhu, 2022; Demes & Geeraert, 2015). Good habituation in family institutions leads to changes in the level of student adaptation abroad, and differences in habituation have a linear effect. Furthermore, the family's significant assets, such as the high level of education of both parents, serve as a strong motivator for children to pursue education abroad (Van Mol, 2022). Motivation plays a crucial role in driving various actions (Ameliana et al., 2021; Marwa & Rahmafritria, 2018). This research position challenges the findings of several studies that suggest intrinsic motivation as a key factor in student adaptation (Chirkov et al., 2007; Chirkov et al., 2008; Yang & MacCallum, 2021; Yu & Downing, 2012) when studying abroad.

Furthermore, this study also supports the idea that social capital can be a valuable resource for students when adapting to a new environment. Strengthening social networks, particularly within the family environment, can provide students with valuable capital to aid in their adaptation to studying abroad. This includes increasing interaction with parents, relatives, and other social connections. Additionally, enhancing social networks in other areas has also been shown to have a similar impact. Building relationships with universities, the academic community, becoming members of international student organizations, relationships with supervisors, and maintaining good relationships with friends from the same country can be considered social capital for Indonesian students in adapting to a new environment in the U.S.

The study's results indicate that Indonesian students have identified several potential social networks that can aid in their adaptation during their early years of study. Social networks are viewed as a source of accessible capital (Rochman et al., 2019) and have been shown to support students in adapting to life abroad (Glass et al., 2014; Ng et al., 2013; O'Reilly et al., 2010). This study's results complement the current scholarly map by including extrinsic aspects, such as religion (Bodycott, 2012; Y. Yu & Moskal, 2019), international teachers (Volet & Jones, 2012), conditions in the study destination country (Dadabaev & Akhmedova, 2022; Perez-Encinas et al., 2021), and access to social media (Pang, 2020). Research in other contexts has also shown that social capital norms determine adaptive capacity (Supriadi et al., 2020). Voluntary cooperation among community groups has been closely linked to common cultural values of networks, trust, and solidarity (Fiisabilillah et al., 2014).

The research findings suggest that cultural capital and social capital have different influences on the adaptability of Indonesian students in the U.S. Previous research indicates several differences between cultural capital and social capital in this regard. Firstly, cultural capital is more intrinsic than social capital in terms of its scope. When adapting to a new environment abroad, it may be more beneficial to prioritize intense interaction with various interest groups over relying solely on aspects of knowledge, cognitive skills, or other social attributes formed through cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2018; Hauberer, 2010). Solidarity within the family and social community has been shown to be an important factor in supporting students during the adjustment period and aiding in their success in the adaptation process (Shahidul et al., 2015).

Secondly, there is a distinction between cultural capital and social capital in terms of their nature. Social capital is more dynamic as it can change and adapt through social interaction (Bourdieu, 2018; Hauberer, 2010). This implies that changes in the scope of interaction can rapidly impact social capital, particularly in a new environment where new students are required to build intense interactions. Meanwhile, cultural capital remains relatively stable over time, both as a legacy and as a result of the socialization process. This stability is reflected in credentials such as diplomas, as well as in attitudes and habits (Archer & Leathwood, 2005; Huang, 2019).

Thirdly, social capital highlights the significance of establishing connections with others (Chen & Starobin, 2019; Li & Chen, 2014). Indonesian students can benefit from accessing a range of new and exclusive resources to aid their adaptation. In contrast, cultural capital encompasses resources that already exist in the form of students' knowledge, values, skills, and social status. Students perceive cultural capital through their character and personality (Alanen & Siisiäinen, 2011; Nyíró & Durst, 2021).

## Conclusions

The study shows that cultural capital and social capital have a significant effect on the adaptation of Indonesian students in the United States. The increase in cultural capital, which is reproduced in family institutions, can lead to an increase in the adaptability of Indonesian students

in a new environment. Additionally, social capital is also a valuable resource for Indonesian students when adapting in the United States. An increase in social capital leads to greater adaptability among Indonesian students in the United States. The importance of social capital in facilitating the adaptation of Indonesian students in the United States has been demonstrated to be significant.

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