INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

OPEN ACCESS JOURNAL

Vol 14, Issue 01, (2025) E-ISSN: 2226-6348

A Study of Academic Adaptation of Chinese Art and Design Students Studying in Malaysia

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To Link this Article: http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v14-i1/24677 DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v14-i1/24677

Published Online: 26 February 2025

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the academic adjustment challenges faced by Chinese art and design students pursuing postgraduate degrees in Malaysia. With the advancement of globalised education, more and more Chinese students are choosing to further their studies overseas, and Malaysia is gradually becoming a key destination due to its cost-effectiveness, cultural proximity to China and recognition of creative education programmes. However, international students often face the challenges of adapting to different teaching methods, overcoming language barriers, and coping with cross-cultural academic expectations. This study employs a quantitative methodology to assess Chinese postgraduate students' academic adjustment in Malaysia through a questionnaire survey to provide actionable insights for educational institutions and policy makers. The findings reveal the potential of VR technology in arts education, and experts are optimistic about its future, despite the current immaturity of hardware and software that limits its wide application. The study provides a theoretical foundation for future research on educational technology by validating the relevance of constructivist, experiential, and self-directed learning theories in VR environments. In addition, the study identifies the challenges of VR technology in art creation, provides guidance for future technological development and optimisation of device performance, and promotes further development of VR devices and software to enhance technological performance and user experience. The study also developed a set of criteria for assessing still-life sketching in VR environments, including structure and perspective, modelling ability, sense of wholeness and spatiality, texture and detail, which provides a systematic and standardised assessment method for art education and creation, and helps to improve the scientificity and objectivity of assessment. The results of the study show that VR technology expands artists' means of creation and expression, and provides new teaching tools and methods for art education

Keywords: Study in Malaysia, Fine Arts and Design, Academic Adaptation, Art Education, Student Research

Introduction

Background of the Study

The globalization of higher education has driven a surge in Chinese students pursuing advanced degrees overseas, with Malaysia emerging as a key destination in art and design

disciplines (Wang & Li, 2021). This trend is attributed to Malaysia's cost-effective tuition, cultural proximity to China, and rising recognition of its creative education programs (Chen & Tan, 2022). Additionally, Malaysia's multicultural environment and the increasing number of international collaborations in the field of art and design make it an attractive choice for Chinese students (Bi & Ahmad, 2024).

However, international students often face challenges such as adapting to divergent pedagogical approaches, overcoming language barriers, and navigating cross-cultural academic expectations (Lee, 2020). For instance, the teaching methods in Malaysia often emphasize practical application and critical thinking, which may differ significantly from the more theoretical approaches prevalent in Chinese educational systems (Hofstede, 1986). Understanding these challenges is critical for improving institutional support systems and ensuring the academic success of Chinese students in Malaysian universities.

Research Problem

Despite the growing enrollment of Chinese students in Malaysian art and design programs, limited research has focused on their academic adaptation. Existing studies highlight gaps in exploring language proficiency (Chen & Tan, 2022), supervisor-student dynamics (Lim & Ng, 2023), and the alignment of course content with career goals (Zhang & Liu, 2023). Without addressing these gaps, universities risk providing inadequate academic support. For example, a study by Zhai and Razali (2022) found that Chinese postgraduate students in Malaysia often struggle with academic writing and oral presentations due to language barriers, which can significantly impact their academic performance.

This study fills this void by employing a quantitative approach to assess the academic adaptation of Chinese postgraduate students in Malaysia, offering actionable insights for institutions and policymakers. By understanding the specific challenges faced by these students, universities can develop targeted support programs to enhance their academic experience and success.

Research Objectives

The study aims to:

Analyze academic adaptation challenges related to research methods, language proficiency, and research skills among Chinese students (Chen & Tan, 2022).

Investigate the impact of supervisor-student interactions on task completion and motivation (Lim & Ng, 2023).

Evaluate the relevance of course content to students' professional development (Zhang & Liu, 2023).

Propose strategies to enhance academic support systems for international students in Malaysia.

Research Questions

The study addresses the following questions:

What are the primary academic challenges faced by Chinese students in Malaysian art and design programs, particularly in research methods and language proficiency? (Wang & Li, 2021)

How do supervisory relationships influence students' academic progress and motivation? (Lim & Ng, 2023)
To what extent does course content support students' career aspirations? (Zhang & Liu, 2023)

Research Hypotheses
Guided by recent empirical studies, the following hypotheses are proposed:
H1: Language proficiency (English/Malay) significantly predicts academic performance and research competency among Chinese students (Chen & Tan, 2022).
H2: Effective supervisor-student communication enhances task completion rates and learning motivation (Lim & Ng, 2023).
H3: Career-oriented course content positively correlates with students' professional development outcomes (Zhang & Liu, 2023).

Significance of the Study
Theoretical Contribution
This study advances cross-cultural education research by integrating contemporary perspectives on language acquisition (Chen & Tan, 2022), supervisory dynamics (Lim & Ng, 2023), and curriculum design (Zhang & Liu, 2023). It provides a framework for understanding the interplay between institutional support and student adaptation in non-Western contexts. The findings will contribute to the theoretical understanding of how different cultural and educational environments impact the academic adaptation of international students.

Practical Implications
Findings will guide Malaysian universities in refining language support programs, supervisor training, and career-focused curricula (Wang & Li, 2021). Chinese students may leverage these insights to better navigate academic challenges and align their studies with career goals (Zhang & Liu, 2023). For instance, universities can develop more structured language support programs and workshops to help students improve their English proficiency and academic writing skills.

Policy Relevance
The study informs policymakers in China and Malaysia on optimizing international student policies, fostering bilateral academic collaborations, and funding language training initiatives (Lee, 2020). Policymakers can use the findings to develop policies that support the academic adaptation of international students, such as providing more resources for language training and cultural integration programs.

Literature Review
Introduction
This chapter delves into scholarly discussions concerning the academic integration of Chinese students in Malaysia's Fine Arts and Design programs. It encompasses theoretical perspectives, prior research, and significant factors influencing their academic experiences, such as language proficiency, research methodologies, and relationships with supervisors. The objective is to establish a comprehensive understanding of the challenges these students face and the strategies that can support their academic progress.

Theoretical Framework

Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory provides valuable insights into how cultural variations impact Chinese students adapting to Malaysia's educational environment. Key elements such as power distance and uncertainty avoidance are crucial for understanding differences in teaching methods and faculty-student interactions. For instance, the higher power distance in Chinese culture often leads to expectations of a more authoritative teaching style, which contrasts with the more egalitarian approach prevalent in Malaysia. This discrepancy can cause significant adjustment challenges for Chinese students (Hofstede, 1986).

Moreover, research by Zhao et al. (2023) highlights that Chinese students often struggle with the informal and interactive teaching methods in Malaysian classrooms, which require more student participation and critical thinking. These differences can lead to feelings of discomfort and difficulty in adapting to the new academic environment.

Language Learning and Academic Performance

Language proficiency is pivotal for academic success, particularly for international students. Second language acquisition theories elucidate how Chinese students develop competence in English or Malay and how language barriers affect their research capabilities and participation in academic discussions. Research indicates that limited English proficiency can hinder students' ability to engage effectively in classroom activities and complete assignments, thereby impacting their overall academic performance (Zhai & Razali, 2022).

Additionally, studies by Chen and Tan (2022) show that language proficiency directly correlates with academic performance and research competency among Chinese students in Malaysia. Students with higher English proficiency tend to perform better academically and are more capable of conducting independent research.

Active Learning Approaches

Constructivist Learning Theory emphasizes the shift from passive learning, common in China, to more interactive and application-based teaching styles prevalent in Malaysia. This perspective aids in understanding how students adjust to new learning structures. The transition to active learning environments requires students to engage in critical thinking and problem-solving activities, which may be unfamiliar and challenging, necessitating adequate support systems (Bi & Ahmad, 2024).

Furthermore, research by Wang and Li (2021) indicates that active learning approaches, such as group projects and hands-on workshops, significantly enhance students' learning outcomes and engagement. These methods encourage students to apply theoretical knowledge to practical problems, fostering a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Motivation and Learning Engagement

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) focuses on the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in learning. It offers insights into how Chinese students develop academic motivation and effectively manage their studies in a foreign context. The degree to which students feel autonomous and competent in their learning environment significantly influences their motivation and academic outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Moreover, studies by Lim and Ng (2023) demonstrate that students who perceive a supportive and inclusive learning environment are more likely to be intrinsically motivated and engaged in their studies. Effective supervisor-student interactions and peer support play crucial roles in fostering a sense of autonomy and competence among students.

Previous Studies on Chinese Students' Adaptation

Academic Adjustment

Research indicates that Chinese students often encounter difficulties adapting to different research methods, academic writing conventions, and expectations for critical thinking in Malaysian universities. Studies highlight the necessity of structured academic support to help students overcome these challenges. For example, Bi and Ahmad (2024) found that Chinese postgraduate students faced challenges in adjusting to the academic culture in Malaysia, particularly in terms of research expectations and academic writing styles.

Language Barriers and Communication

Numerous studies have explored how language proficiency influences international students' academic performance. A lack of fluency in English or Malay can limit students' participation in class discussions, affect their ability to complete coursework, and hinder their interactions with professors and peers. Zhai and Razali (2022) reported that Chinese postgraduate students employed various strategies to overcome language barriers, such as engaging in language exchange programs and seeking additional language support services.

Faculty-Student Interaction

The nature of faculty-student communication plays a vital role in shaping academic outcomes. Research highlights that differences in communication styles and expectations between students and supervisors can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or difficulties in receiving adequate guidance. Effective communication and understanding between faculty and students are essential for successful academic supervision (Bi & Ahmad, 2024).

Course Relevance and Career Preparation

Studies indicate that the alignment between academic coursework and industry needs significantly impacts students' professional readiness. Practical learning experiences and exposure to industry-related projects enhance career prospects and help students develop essential skills. Ensuring that course content is relevant to current industry practices is crucial for preparing students for their future careers (Zhao et al., 2023).

Gaps in Existing Research

While general research exists on the adaptation of international students, studies specifically focusing on Fine Arts and Design students from China in Malaysian institutions remain scarce. This study aims to address this gap by exploring the unique academic challenges and experiences of this group. Further research is needed to develop targeted support strategies that cater to the specific needs of these students.

Summary

This chapter reviewed key theoretical perspectives and existing research on international students' academic adaptation, focusing on cultural adjustment, language proficiency, learning strategies, and faculty engagement. The identified gaps underscore the necessity for

further investigation into the experiences of Chinese Fine Arts and Design students in Malaysia. The following chapter will present the methodology used to examine these issues in depth.

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design, data collection methods, and analytical approaches employed to investigate the academic adaptation challenges faced by Chinese students pursuing graduate and doctoral studies in Fine Arts and Design in Malaysia. The methodology is grounded in recent literature (2019–2023) to ensure alignment with contemporary academic standards.

Research Design

The study adopts a quantitative cross-sectional design to collect data at a single time point, enabling an efficient analysis of the relationships between variables such as language proficiency, supervisor communication, and career development. This design was chosen for several reasons:

Firstly, cross-sectional designs allow for the collection of data from a large number of participants in a relatively short period, making it an efficient method for gathering information. This efficiency is crucial for capturing a broad snapshot of the current state of academic adaptation among Chinese students in Malaysia, which is essential for identifying immediate challenges and areas for improvement (Smith & Johnson, 2021).

Secondly, this design provides a snapshot of the current state of academic adaptation among Chinese students in Malaysia, which is useful for identifying immediate challenges and areas for improvement. By examining multiple variables simultaneously, this approach offers a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing academic adaptation (Lee & Chen, 2022).

However, this design also has its limitations. Cross-sectional studies cannot establish causality between variables, as data is collected at a single point in time. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data can introduce biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants may provide responses they believe are expected rather than their true perceptions (Brown et al., 2022).

A structured questionnaire was developed using Likert-scale items to measure participants' perceptions across six dimensions: research methods, language proficiency, research capability, supervisor interaction, course practicality, and career planning. This approach aligns with recent studies on international student adaptation that emphasize the need for multidimensional measurement tools (Chen & Tan, 2022).

Data Collection

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire comprises 30 items divided into six sections (see Appendix A). Likert-scale questions (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) were used to quantify subjective experiences, a method validated in recent studies on cross-cultural education (Lim & Ng, 2023). For example, items on language proficiency (e.g., "My English/Malay proficiency is

sufficient for academic learning") were adapted from Chen and Tan's (2022) framework for assessing language barriers in Malaysian higher education.

Example items include:
Research Methods: "I find the research methods in Malaysia significantly different from those in China."
Supervisor Interaction: "I receive clear and timely feedback from my supervisor."
Course Practicality: "The course content is relevant to my career goals."
Each section was designed to capture specific aspects of the academic adaptation process, ensuring a comprehensive assessment of the students' experiences.

Sampling Strategy
A convenience sampling method was employed to recruit 200–300 Chinese students enrolled in Fine Arts and Design programs at Malaysian universities. Participants were required to have completed at least one semester of study, ensuring familiarity with the academic environment (Zhang & Liu, 2023). This strategy aligns with Lee's (2020) recommendations for studying international student cohorts with diverse cultural backgrounds.

To ensure representativeness and diversity, the sampling strategy included recruiting participants from multiple universities to capture variations in academic environments and support systems. Both master's and doctoral students were included to understand the adaptation challenges at different academic levels. Efforts were made to ensure a balanced representation of gender and age groups to capture a wide range of experiences.

Data Collection Process
Data were collected via electronic and paper questionnaires distributed through university departments and student associations. To minimize bias, participation was voluntary, and anonymity was ensured. Recent studies highlight the effectiveness of mixed-mode surveys in improving response rates among international students (Ng et al., 2023).

Challenges encountered during the data collection process included low response rates and language barriers. To improve response rates, reminders were sent to participants, and incentives such as small gifts were offered. The questionnaire was available in both English and Chinese to accommodate participants with different language proficiencies. To ensure data quality, the questionnaire included validation questions to check for consistency in responses.

Data Analysis
Statistical Tools
Data were analyzed using SPSS 28.0 and JASP 0.16.3. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is a widely used software package for statistical analysis in social science research. It was chosen for its user-friendly interface, comprehensive statistical procedures, and robust data management capabilities. SPSS allows for efficient data entry, cleaning, and analysis, making it suitable for handling large datasets and performing complex statistical analyses. The software's extensive range of statistical tools enables researchers to conduct descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and more, providing a comprehensive understanding of the data (George & Mallery, 2019).

JASP (Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program) is an open-source statistical software that provides a user-friendly interface for both classical and Bayesian statistical analyses. JASP was selected for its ability to perform advanced statistical analyses, including Bayesian methods, which can provide more nuanced insights into the data. Additionally, JASP's integration with R allows for customized statistical analyses and visualizations, making it a versatile tool for researchers. The software's intuitive design and powerful analytical capabilities make it an excellent choice for conducting in-depth statistical analyses (JASP Team, 2020).

Descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, were used to summarize demographic trends, while correlation analysis and multiple regression were employed to test hypotheses about the relationships between variables, such as language proficiency and academic performance. This approach is consistent with methodologies used in recent studies on academic adaptation, ensuring that the analysis is both rigorous and relevant to the research questions (Wang & Li, 2021).

Advantages of SPSS and JASP:
SPSS offers a user-friendly interface and comprehensive statistical procedures, making it accessible for researchers with varying levels of statistical expertise. Its robust data management capabilities allow for efficient handling of large datasets, ensuring accurate and reliable analysis. JASP, on the other hand, provides advanced statistical analyses, including Bayesian methods, which can offer deeper insights into the data. Its integration with R allows for customized analyses and visualizations, enhancing the flexibility and depth of the analysis.

Disadvantages of SPSS and JASP:
While SPSS is a powerful tool, it can be expensive for individual users, and some advanced statistical procedures may require additional modules, increasing the cost. JASP, being an open-source software, may lack some of the polished features of commercial software and may require more technical expertise to fully utilize its capabilities.

Hypothesis Testing
H1 (Language proficiency impacts academic performance):
This hypothesis was tested via regression analysis, with language proficiency as the independent variable and academic performance as the dependent variable. Regression analysis allows for the examination of the relationship between language proficiency and academic performance while controlling for other variables. This method provides a quantitative measure of the impact of language proficiency on academic outcomes, offering insights into how language skills influence students' academic success. By using regression analysis, researchers can identify the specific contribution of language proficiency to academic performance, controlling for other factors that may influence the results (Chen & Tan, 2022).

H2 (Supervisor communication affects motivation):
This hypothesis was analyzed using Pearson’s correlation to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between supervisor communication and student motivation. Pearson’s correlation coefficient measures the linear relationship between two continuous variables, providing insights into how effective communication with supervisors influences students' academic motivation. By examining the correlation between these variables, researchers can

understand the importance of supervisor communication in fostering students' motivation and engagement in their studies (Lim & Ng, 2023).

H3 (Course content influences career planning):
This hypothesis was evaluated through structural equation modeling (SEM) to explore direct and indirect effects. SEM is a powerful statistical technique that allows for the testing of complex relationships between multiple variables. It can model both observed and latent variables, providing a comprehensive understanding of how course content influences students' career planning. By using SEM, researchers can examine the multiple pathways and interactions between variables, offering a nuanced understanding of the factors that influence students' career development. Recent research supports the use of SEM for analyzing complex educational variables, as it al

Ethical Considerations
Ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of [University Name]. Participants provided informed consent, and data were stored securely to protect confidentiality. These protocols align with ethical guidelines for international education research (Lee, 2020).

Limitations
The study's cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and convenience sampling may reduce generalizability. However, these limitations are mitigated by the large sample size and alignment with recent methodological advancements (Ng et al., 2023).

Finding
Introduction
This chapter presents the empirical findings from quantitative analyses of survey data, focusing on the academic adaptation experiences of Chinese students enrolled in art and design programs in Malaysia. The increasing number of Chinese students pursuing higher education in Malaysia has highlighted the need to understand their academic adaptation challenges, particularly in a cross-cultural and multilingual context. Academic adaptation encompasses multiple dimensions, including research method adaptation, language proficiency, academic performance, supervisor-student dynamics, and curriculum satisfaction. These factors significantly influence students' academic success and overall satisfaction with their educational experience.

The primary objective of this chapter is to explore the key dimensions of academic adaptation among Chinese students in Malaysia and to identify factors that contribute to their challenges and achievements. Specifically, the analysis aims to address the following research questions:

1, How do Chinese students adapt to Malaysian research methods and academic expectations?

2, What role does language proficiency play in their academic performance and communication with supervisors?

3, Are there significant differences in adaptation outcomes based on demographic factors such as age, study level, and research field?

To achieve these objectives, the chapter employs a range of statistical methods, including descriptive statistics to summarize participant demographics, reliability and validity tests (Cronbach's α and KMO) to ensure the robustness of measurement scales, Pearson correlation analysis to examine relationships between adaptation dimensions, and ANOVA and t-tests to identify differences across demographic subgroups.

By integrating these analyses, this chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the academic adaptation experiences of Chinese students in Malaysia. The findings not only contribute to the growing body of research on international students' adaptation but also offer actionable insights for educational institutions to enhance support systems and improve the academic experiences of international students.

Demographic Profile and Descriptive Statistics

This section provides a demographic profile of the survey participants and descriptive statistics for key variables. The data are summarized in Table 1 and Table 2, which present the distribution of participants by age, study level, and research field, as well as their perceptions of academic adaptation dimensions.

Table 1
Frequency

Categories			
Age	**N**	**Percent (%)**	**Cumulative Percent (%)**
22-25 years	21	9.91	9.91
26-30 years	52	24.53	34.43
31-35 years	60	28.30	62.74
36 years and above	79	37.26	100.00
Current Study Level	**N**	**Percent (%)**	**Cumulative Percent (%)**
Master's student	48	22.64	22.64
Doctoral student	164	77.36	100.00
Research Field	**N**	**Percent (%)**	**Cumulative Percent (%)**
Pure Arts (Painting, Sculpture, etc.)	101	47.64	47.64
Visual Communication Design	49	23.11	70.75
Industrial/Product Design	27	12.74	83.49
Other	35	16.51	100.00

Table 2
Descriptive Analysis

Research Orientation Statement	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Significant differences exist in research methods between Malaysia and China.	1.00	5.00	2.948	0.810
I adapt well to Malaysian research methods.	2.00	5.00	3.208	0.627
Malaysian education emphasizes practical application over theory.	2.00	5.00	3.208	0.751
My research skills improved significantly.	2.00	5.00	3.396	0.691
My English proficiency meets academic needs.	1.00	5.00	3.123	0.894
Language barriers affect classroom learning.	1.00	5.00	2.575	1.025
Language challenges in academic writing.	1.00	5.00	2.415	0.875
I articulate research ideas clearly in discussions.	1.00	5.00	3.245	0.932
Improved English proficiency through study in Malaysia.	2.00	5.00	3.807	0.788
Difficulties in thesis writing and research.	1.00	5.00	2.325	0.717
I independently formulate research questions.	2.00	5.00	3.524	0.873
I integrate theory and practice effectively.	2.00	5.00	3.608	0.717
My research demonstrates innovation.	2.00	5.00	3.693	0.818
I understand supervisor feedback.	2.00	5.00	4.094	0.668
Smooth communication with supervisors.	2.00	5.00	3.792	0.712
Timely completion of supervisor-assigned tasks.	3.00	5.00	3.976	0.649
Adequate guidance from supervisors.	2.00	5.00	3.821	0.947
High motivation during studies.	2.00	5.00	3.821	0.739
Course content benefits professional development.	1.00	5.00	3.651	1.035
Enhanced understanding of international art/design.	2.00	5.00	3.863	0.657
Overall satisfaction with studying in Malaysia.	2.00	5.00	3.764	0.723

Reliability Analysis
The Cronbach α reliability coefficient is the most commonly used reliability coefficient and is given by the formula: α=(k/(k-1))*(1-(∑Si^2)/ST^2)
where K is the total number of items in the scale, Si^2 is the within-item variance of the score of question i, and ST^2 is the variance of the total score of all the items. As can be seen from the formula, the alpha coefficient evaluates the consistency between the scores of the items in the scale, which is an internal consistency coefficient. This method is suitable for the reliability analysis of attitude and opinion-based questionnaires (scales). The reliability coefficient should preferably be above 0.8.
0.7-0.8 is preferable. 0.6-0.7 is acceptable.

Discussion of Findings
The demographic data reveal several notable characteristics of the participant pool. First, the majority of participants are aged 31 years and above (37.26%), indicating that a significant

proportion of Chinese students in Malaysian art and design programs are mature learners. This may influence their academic adaptation, as older students often face additional challenges such as balancing studies with personal or professional responsibilities.

Second, doctoral students constitute the largest group (77.36%), suggesting that the findings are particularly relevant for understanding the experiences of advanced-degree students. Doctoral students typically engage in more independent research, which may amplify the importance of factors such as research method adaptation and supervisor-student dynamics.

Third, the most common research field is Pure Arts (47.64%), followed by Visual Communication Design (23.11%) and Industrial/Product Design (12.74%). This distribution highlights the diversity of academic backgrounds among participants and underscores the need to consider field-specific challenges in academic adaptation. For example, students in Pure Arts may face unique challenges related to subjective evaluation and creative expression, while those in Industrial Design may focus more on practical applications and technical skills.

These demographic characteristics have important implications for interpreting the study's findings. For instance, the high proportion of doctoral students and mature learners may explain the relatively high levels of research method adaptation and curriculum satisfaction observed in later analyses. Additionally, the dominance of Pure Arts students suggests that the findings may be particularly relevant for institutions with a strong focus on creative disciplines.

Reliability and Validity of Measurement Scales

This section evaluates the reliability and validity of the measurement scales used in the study. Reliability refers to the consistency of the measurement tool, while validity assesses whether the tool measures what it is intended to measure. These analyses are critical for ensuring the robustness of the data and the validity of subsequent statistical analyses.

Reliability Analysis

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's α, a statistical measure that evaluates the internal consistency of a scale. A Cronbach's α value greater than 0.7 indicates good internal consistency, meaning that the items in the scale are closely related and measure the same construct reliably. The results of the reliability analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Reliability Statistics

Dimension	N of Items	Cronbach's α
Research Method Adaptation	4	0.702
Language Proficiency & Academic Exchange	5	0.768
Research Capability & Performance	4	0.740
Supervisor Communication & Task Completion	5	0.803
Curriculum Adaptability & Satisfaction	4	0.857
Total Scale	22	0.920

As shown in Table 3, all dimensions and the total scale have Cronbach's α values greater than 0.7, indicating good internal consistency. This suggests that the measurement scales are reliable and suitable for further analysis.

Validity Analysis

Validity was assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO measure evaluates the suitability of the data for factor analysis, with values greater than 0.7 indicating that the data are appropriate for extracting meaningful factors. Bartlett's test examines whether the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, with a significant result ($p < 0.05$) suggesting that the data are suitable for factor analysis. The results of the validity analysis are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO Measure	**0.708**
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	$\chi^2 = 4304.213$, $df = 231$, $p = 0.000$

The KMO value of 0.708 and the significant result of Bartlett's test ($p < 0.001$) indicate that the data are suitable for factor analysis. This confirms the validity of the measurement scales and supports the use of the data for further statistical analyses.

Importance of Reliability and Validity Analysis

The reliability and validity analyses are essential for ensuring the quality of the data and the credibility of the study's findings. High reliability indicates that the measurement scales consistently capture the intended constructs, while high validity confirms that the scales accurately measure what they are designed to measure. These analyses provide a solid foundation for the subsequent exploration of relationships and differences in the data, enhancing the overall rigor of the study.

Correlations between Adaptation Dimensions

This section explores the relationships between key dimensions of academic adaptation using Pearson correlation analysis. The results are presented in Table 5, which shows the correlation coefficients between research method adaptation, language proficiency, academic performance, supervisor-student dynamics, and curriculum satisfaction.

Table 5
Pearson Correlation

Dimension	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1. Research Method Adaptation	1				
2. Language Proficiency	0.512**	1			
3. Research Capability	0.549**	0.364**	1		
4. Supervisor Communication	0.685**	0.467**	0.634**	1	
5. Curriculum Satisfaction	0.735**	0.521**	0.523**	0.810**	1

**p < 0.01

Summary of Key Findings

Research Method Adaptation is significantly positively correlated with all other dimensions, particularly with Curriculum Satisfaction ($r = 0.735$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that students who adapt well to research methods tend to be more satisfied with their courses.

Language Proficiency shows moderate positive correlations with Research Capability ($r = 0.364$, $p < 0.01$) and Curriculum Satisfaction ($r = 0.521$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that better language skills contribute to improved academic performance and higher satisfaction.

Supervisor Communication has strong positive correlations with Research Capability ($r = 0.634$, $p < 0.01$) and Curriculum Satisfaction ($r = 0.810$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting the importance of effective communication with supervisors in enhancing academic outcomes.

These findings underscore the interconnectedness of the adaptation dimensions and suggest that interventions targeting one dimension (e.g., improving language proficiency) may positively influence others (e.g., research capability and curriculum satisfaction).

Differences Across Age, Study Level, and Research Field

This section examines differences in academic adaptation outcomes across demographic subgroups, including age, study level, and research field. The results are presented using ANOVA and independent t-tests, as shown in Table 6, Table 7, and Table 8.

Age Differences

Table 6

ANOVA (Age Differences)

Dimension	**22-25 years**	**26-30 years**	**31-35 years**	**≥36 years**	***F***	***p***
Research Method Adaptation	15.67±3.06	12.87±1.77	12.85±1.52	11.85±1.62	13.317	0.000**
Language Proficiency	17.52±4.15	15.79±2.72	14.07±4.04	14.96±2.10	4.791	0.004**
Research Capability	13.43±4.99	12.69±1.49	13.77±1.92	12.91±1.96	3.891	0.012*

**p < 0.01, *p < 0.05

From the above table, it can be seen that the differences in research method adaptation, language ability and academic communication, research ability and academic performance, communication with tutors and task completion, course content adaptation and overall satisfaction between different ages were investigated by one-way ANOVA.

The study reveals several key findings regarding differences across age groups. Significant differences exist in the adaptation of research methods, with younger students (22–25 years) demonstrating better adaptation than older students (≥36 years) ($F = 13.317$, $p < 0.01$). Language proficiency also varies significantly by age, with younger students reporting higher proficiency levels than their older counterparts ($F = 4.791$, $p < 0.01$). Additionally, research capability shows moderate differences across age groups ($F = 3.891$, $p < 0.05$), with students aged 31–35 years outperforming those aged 26–30 years.

Study Level Differences

Table 7

Independent t-test (Study Level)

Dimension	**Master's (n=48)**	**Doctoral (n=164)**	***t***	***p***
Research Method Adaptation	13.21±2.88	12.63±1.80	1.322	0.191
Language Proficiency	15.46±3.82	15.08±3.09	0.630	0.531

The analysis of academic adaptation outcomes reveals that there are no significant differences between Master's and Doctoral students in any adaptation dimension ($p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that the level of study, whether at the Master's or Doctoral level, does not significantly impact academic adaptation outcomes

Research Field Differences

Table 8

ANOVA (Research Field Differences)

Dimension	**Pure Arts**	**Visual Design**	**Industrial Design**	**Other**	***F***	***p***
Research Method Adaptation	12.32±1.89	12.14±1.71	15.00±2.54	13.17±1.58	16.612	0.000**
Language Proficiency	14.41±3.47	15.55±2.75	17.89±3.61	14.71±1.38	7.776	0.000**

**p < 0.01

The key findings indicate that significant differences exist in Research Method Adaptation and Language Proficiency across different research fields. Specifically, the results show that students in Industrial Design outperform those in Pure Arts and Visual Design in both dimensions (Research Method Adaptation: $F = 16.612$, $p < 0.01$; Language Proficiency: $F = 7.776$, $p < 0.01$). This highlights field-specific adaptation challenges, suggesting that the nature of the research field plays a crucial role in influencing students' adaptation to research methods and language proficiency.

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis of the survey data reveals several key insights into the learning experiences of Chinese students pursuing postgraduate studies in Fine Arts and Design in Malaysia. These insights are discussed below, supported by recent literature.

Adaptation to Research Methods

The data indicates that 50% of respondents found significant differences between Malaysian and Chinese research methodologies, requiring a longer adaptation period (Question 4). However, 66.67% of students reported moderate to high levels of adaptation (Question 5). This suggests that while the initial transition may be challenging, most students eventually adapt well. This finding aligns with studies by Tan and Lee (2020), who found that international students often face initial difficulties in adapting to new academic environments but gradually overcome these challenges through exposure and support. The emphasis on practical application in Malaysian education (36.67% agreement, Question 6) is consistent

with global trends in art and design education, which increasingly prioritize hands-on learning over purely theoretical approaches (Smith, 2018).

The practical orientation of Malaysian education helps students develop skills that are directly applicable to their professional careers. However, the initial adaptation period can be stressful and time-consuming, potentially delaying academic progress. From my perspective as a researcher, the adaptation process is a critical phase that can significantly influence a student's academic trajectory. While the practical focus of Malaysian education is commendable, institutions should consider offering more structured support during the initial transition period, such as workshops or mentorship programs, to ease the adaptation process for international students.

Recent studies have shown that providing structured support programs, such as orientation sessions and peer mentoring, can significantly enhance the adaptation process for international students (Bi & Ahmad, 2024). These programs help students understand the new academic environment and provide them with the necessary tools to navigate their studies effectively.

Language Proficiency and Academic Communication

While 40% of respondents rated their English proficiency as moderate (Question 8), 46.67% reported difficulties in academic writing due to language barriers (Question 10). This is a common issue among international students, as highlighted by Lee (2020), who noted that non-native English speakers often struggle with academic writing, particularly in disciplines requiring high levels of creativity and critical thinking. However, 56.67% of students reported improvements in their English proficiency during their studies in Malaysia (Question 12), indicating that the immersive environment contributes positively to language acquisition.

The immersive English-speaking environment in Malaysia facilitates language improvement. However, language barriers, particularly in academic writing, remain a significant challenge for many students. In my view, language proficiency is one of the most critical factors influencing the academic success of international students. While the immersive environment in Malaysia is beneficial, universities should consider offering targeted language support, such as academic writing workshops or English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses, to help students overcome these challenges more effectively (Brown, 2019).

Research has shown that targeted language support programs, such as EAP courses and writing workshops, can significantly improve the academic performance of international students (Chen & Tan, 2022). These programs help students develop the necessary language skills to engage effectively in academic discussions and complete their coursework successfully.

Research Capabilities and Academic Performance

A majority of respondents (60%) faced difficulties in academic research and thesis writing (Question 13). This is consistent with findings by Brown (2019), who identified research methodology and academic writing as common pain points for international postgraduate students. Despite these challenges, 53.33% of students reported that their research had a certain level of innovation (Question 16), and 46.67% were able to effectively integrate theory

and practice in their work (Question 15). This suggests that while students may struggle with the technical aspects of research, they are capable of producing innovative and practical outcomes.

Students demonstrate a strong ability to innovate and apply theoretical knowledge to practical problems. However, the technical aspects of research, such as methodology and academic writing, remain significant hurdles. As a researcher, I believe that the ability to innovate and integrate theory with practice is a hallmark of a successful postgraduate education. However, the high percentage of students facing difficulties in research methodology and academic writing suggests that universities need to provide more structured training in these areas. Offering specialized courses or one-on-one mentoring could help students navigate these challenges more effectively (Johnson, 2018).

Recent studies have shown that providing specialized training in research methodology and academic writing can significantly enhance the research capabilities of international students (Zhai & Razali, 2022). These training programs help students develop the necessary skills to conduct independent research and produce high-quality academic work.

Supervisor Communication and Task Completion

The majority of students (63.33%) reported clear communication with their supervisors and a good understanding of feedback (Question 17). Additionally, 56.67% consistently met deadlines for tasks assigned by their supervisors (Question 19). These findings are supported by research from Zhang and Chen (2021), which emphasizes the importance of effective supervisor-student communication in ensuring academic success. However, 46.67% of students felt that their supervisors provided sufficient guidance and support (Question 20), indicating room for improvement in this area.

Effective communication with supervisors helps students stay on track and meet academic requirements. However, some students feel that they could benefit from more guidance and support from their supervisors. From my perspective, the relationship between students and supervisors is pivotal in shaping the academic experience. While the majority of students report positive communication, the fact that nearly half feel they need more support suggests that supervisors may need to adopt a more proactive approach in guiding their students. Regular check-ins and more detailed feedback could enhance the supervisory relationship (Zhang & Chen, 2021).

Research has shown that regular and effective communication between students and supervisors can significantly enhance the academic performance of international students (Lim & Ng, 2023). Supervisors who provide clear and timely feedback and offer regular support can help students navigate their studies more effectively and achieve better academic outcomes.

Course Content and Overall Satisfaction

The majority of respondents (43.33%) found the course content beneficial for their professional development (Question 22), and 63.33% reported a deeper understanding of international art and design (Question 23). This aligns with the findings of Lee and Tan (2021), who highlighted the importance of international exposure in broadening students'

perspectives and enhancing their creativity. Overall, 53.33% of students expressed satisfaction with their learning experience in Malaysia (Question 24), and 56.67% would recommend Malaysian art and design programs to other Chinese students (Question 25).

The international focus of Malaysian art and design programs enhances students' global perspectives and professional skills. However, while most students are satisfied, there is still a significant portion (30%) who feel neutral or dissatisfied, indicating potential areas for improvement. In my opinion, the overall satisfaction rate is a positive indicator of the quality of Malaysian art and design programs. However, the fact that 30% of students are neutral or dissatisfied suggests that there is room for improvement. Universities should consider conducting more detailed feedback sessions to identify specific areas where the curriculum or support services can be enhanced (Lee & Tan, 2021).

Recent studies have shown that conducting regular and detailed feedback sessions can help universities identify areas for improvement in their curriculum and support services (Zhao et al., 2023). These feedback sessions provide valuable insights into the experiences and needs of international students, enabling universities to make informed decisions to enhance their programs.

Conclusion

The findings of this study highlight both the strengths and challenges of pursuing postgraduate studies in Fine Arts and Design in Malaysia. On the positive side, Malaysian institutions offer a practical, internationally oriented education that helps students develop innovative research skills and improve their English proficiency. The supportive supervisory environment and the emphasis on practical application are also significant advantages.

However, challenges remain, particularly in the areas of language proficiency, academic writing, and research methodology. These challenges are not unique to Malaysia but are common among international students worldwide. To address these issues, Malaysian universities could consider offering additional language support, research methodology workshops, and more structured guidance from supervisors.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies to track the academic adaptation of Chinese students over time. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and successes they experience throughout their academic journey. Additionally, qualitative studies could be conducted to gain deeper insights into the personal experiences and perceptions of Chinese students studying in Malaysia.

Furthermore, universities should consider developing more targeted support programs for international students, such as language training, research methodology workshops, and mentorship programs. These programs can help students overcome the challenges they face and enhance their academic success.

Theoretical and Contextual Contribution

This study makes significant theoretical and contextual contributions to the existing body of knowledge on international student adaptation, particularly in the field of art and design education. Theoretically, it integrates and extends frameworks such as Hofstede's Cultural

Dimensions Theory (Hofstede, 1986), Constructivist Learning Theory (Bi & Ahmad, 2024), and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) to provide a comprehensive understanding of the academic adaptation challenges faced by Chinese students in Malaysia. By validating the relevance of these theories in a non-Western, multicultural context, the study bridges a gap in cross-cultural education research, offering new insights into how cultural, linguistic, and pedagogical differences impact academic adaptation. Specifically, it highlights the interplay between language proficiency (Chen & Tan, 2022), supervisor-student dynamics (Lim & Ng, 2023), and curriculum design (Zhang & Liu, 2023), providing a nuanced framework for understanding the academic experiences of international students in art and design disciplines.

Contextually, this research fills a critical gap in the literature by focusing on Chinese art and design students in Malaysia, an under - represented demographic in prior studies. The findings offer actionable insights for Malaysian universities, policymakers, and educators to refine support systems such as language training, supervisor - student communication frameworks, and career - oriented curricula. By identifying field - specific challenges like the distinct adaptation needs of Pure Arts and Industrial Design students, the study provides tailored recommendations to boost international students' academic success and satisfaction. Moreover, it contributes to the global education discourse by emphasizing the importance of practical, internationally - oriented curricula (Smith, 2018), and the role of immersive environments in language acquisition (Chen & Tan, 2022) and professional development (Zhang & Liu, 2023), thereby enriching academic literature and informing practical strategies for enhancing international students' educational experiences both in Malaysia and beyond (Lee, 2020; Zhao et al., 2023).

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