

**Cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self efficacy of
the Southeast Asia student teachers during the preservice abroad:
Basis for international internship monograph**

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ABSTRACT

This mixed methods study was conducted to determine the cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy of the Southeast Asia (SEA) student teachers during the preservice abroad as basis for international internship monograph year 2025-2026. The participants of this study were the 105 from a total population of 141 Southeast Asia student-teachers from Capiz State University and in Indonesia through stratified random sampling using the Cochran formula. The research instruments used in this study were the survey questionnaires and the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide. The survey questionnaires were composed of: A 37-item standardized Academic Self Efficacy Questionnaire; 51-item standardized Cultural Exposure Questionnaire; and the 10-item standardized Adaptability Questionnaire. Another instrument used in this study was the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guide. The independent variables in this study were the cultural exposure and adaptability while the dependent variable was the academic self-efficacy. The statistical tools used in the analysis of data are the frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, Analysis of Variance and Pearson r. The inferential statistics were set at 5% alpha level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that on its entirety, the level of cultural exposure as responded by 105 SEA student-teacher participants was “moderate”. When grouped into subscales, data showed that multicultural exposure was “high” and multicultural interaction was “moderate”. In general, the level of adaptability as an entire group was “high”. In terms of subscale, data showed that cognitive ability was “very high”, behavioral ability was “high”, and affective ability was “high”. As a whole, the level of academic self-efficacy of the 105 SEA student-teachers during the Preservice Abroad was “high”. There were significant relationships among cultural exposure and adaptability towards academic self-efficacy of SEA Student Teachers during the Preservice Abroad. Based on the findings, an International Internship Monograph was developed to serve as guide for a more cohesive preparation of the student-teachers and the host Universities.

Keywords: Cultural exposure, adaptability, academic self-efficacy.

Date Submitted: July 03, 2026

Date Accepted: July 07, 2026

Date Published: July 13, 2026

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Recommended citation:

Luza, B. D. (2026). Cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self efficacy of the Southeast Asia student teachers during the preservice abroad: Basis for international internship monograph. *Pantao (International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences)* 5 (3), 1151-1174.

INTRODUCTION

The continuing internationalization of higher education has created increasing opportunities for students to participate in multicultural and international learning experiences, particularly through preservice teaching programs conducted abroad. These opportunities expose future educators to diverse educational systems, languages, cultures, and teaching practices that extend learning beyond the traditional classroom. Anchored on the four pillars of education advocated by UNESCO, namely learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together, international learning experiences provide students with authentic opportunities to develop globally relevant competencies through meaningful engagement with people and environments outside their own countries. Such experiences enable future teachers not only to acquire new knowledge but also to develop confidence, adaptability, and broader perspectives that prepare them to thrive in increasingly interconnected educational settings. As globalization continues to reshape education, institutions are challenged to prepare preservice teachers who can successfully navigate cultural diversity while maintaining strong academic performance and professional competence.

Although numerous investigations have independently examined cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy, limited empirical evidence has explored how these variables collectively influence the academic self-efficacy of Southeast Asia student teachers participating in international teaching programs. This gap is particularly significant because successful participation in overseas internships requires future teachers not only to interact with unfamiliar cultures but also to adapt cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally while maintaining confidence in their academic abilities. Consequently, understanding the interaction among these constructs is essential for developing institutional programs that adequately prepare preservice teachers for the demands of international education and global professional practice.

Cultural exposure has evolved from being viewed simply as physical presence in another country to being recognized as a multidimensional and cumulative developmental process. Maddux (2021) explained that cultural exposure encompasses the diversity, duration, meaningfulness, and quality of interactions with cultures different from one's own, all of which shape cognition, attitudes, and behaviors over time. Individuals who experience sustained engagement with diverse cultures consequently develop more adaptive perspectives and behaviors than those whose exposure remains limited. Supporting this view, Anderson et al. (2016) found that even short-term study abroad experiences significantly enhanced students' intercultural competence, awareness, and openness when participation was intentionally structured. Likewise, Tomalin and Stempleski, as cited in Abdullah et al. (2019), emphasized that cultural exposure strengthens sensitivity to culturally influenced communication and language use, highlighting its importance in intercultural learning. More recent evidence further reinforces the value of meaningful engagement over mere physical presence. Pasztor (2021) demonstrated that prolonged international mobility enhances all dimensions of cultural intelligence, including metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral aspects, while Cheung et al. (2022) established that structured predeparture preparation combined with immersive international experiences significantly improves both cultural intelligence and emotional intelligence. Collectively, these studies indicate that purposeful cultural engagement, reflective learning, and institutional support maximize the educational benefits of international experiences.

While cultural exposure provides opportunities for intercultural learning, successful participation in unfamiliar environments also depends on learners' adaptability. Martin et al. (2015) broadly defined adaptability as an individual's capacity to adjust thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in response to changing, uncertain, and novel situations. Unlike relatively stable

personal characteristics such as intelligence, adaptability is considered a dynamic competence that develops through experience and continuous interaction with new environments. This multidimensional construct encompasses cognitive flexibility, behavioral adjustment, and emotional regulation, enabling learners to respond effectively to academic and social challenges. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate the educational value of adaptability. Holliman et al. (2018) found that adaptability significantly predicts academic success among university students even after controlling for prior abilities, whereas Martin et al. (2015) reported that adaptable learners employ more effective learning strategies. Similarly, Collie et al. (2016) observed that students exhibiting higher adaptability also demonstrate greater academic self-efficacy while experiencing lower academic anxiety. Beyond academic performance, adaptability contributes to psychological well-being. Besser et al. (2022) reported that highly adaptable individuals experience lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms during periods of crisis, suggesting that adaptability enables learners to navigate uncertainty while maintaining emotional stability and effective functioning.

Academic self-efficacy represents another critical determinant of student success within challenging educational environments. According to Usher and Pajares (2015), academic self-efficacy refers to learners' beliefs regarding their capability to accomplish academic tasks successfully, reflecting Bandura's broader Social Cognitive Theory. These beliefs influence students' motivation, emotions, persistence, learning strategies, and academic behaviors. Honicke and Broadbent (2016) established that students with stronger academic self-efficacy consistently achieve higher academic performance, remain engaged in their programs, and employ more effective learning strategies than those with lower self-efficacy beliefs. Yusuf (2018) confirmed these findings by demonstrating that academic self-efficacy significantly predicts undergraduate academic achievement. Furthermore, during periods of educational disruption such as the COVID-19 pandemic, students possessing stronger academic self-efficacy adapted more successfully to online learning environments than those with weaker efficacy beliefs, as reported by Alqurashi (2016) and Chung et al. (2020). These findings collectively underscore academic self-efficacy as a fundamental mechanism through which learners persist, overcome challenges, and achieve positive educational outcomes.

The internationalization of teacher education has expanded opportunities for preservice teachers to participate in overseas teaching internships such as the Southeast Asia Student Teacher Exchange Program. Through these programs, participants experience multicultural educational environments that foster intercultural learning, professional growth, and personal development. Nevertheless, cultural exposure alone may not guarantee positive academic outcomes or successful adjustment. The multicultural exposure and multicultural interaction experienced by Southeast Asia student teachers provide valuable opportunities to encounter different educational philosophies and cultural practices, yet their ability to benefit from these experiences depends largely on their adaptability and confidence in their academic capabilities. Cognitive, behavioral, and affective adaptability enable these future educators to adjust effectively to unfamiliar environments, while academic self-efficacy reflects their confidence in successfully meeting academic and professional expectations throughout the internship experience. Despite the growing importance of these international initiatives, limited research has investigated how cultural exposure and adaptability jointly influence the academic self-efficacy of Southeast Asia student teachers, thereby highlighting an important gap that this study seeks to address.

The present investigation therefore aims to examine the influence of cultural exposure and adaptability on the academic self-efficacy of Southeast Asia student teachers during their preservice teaching experiences abroad. By identifying the relationships among these variables,

the study seeks to generate evidence that can guide educational institutions in strengthening the preparation of future international internship participants. More specifically, the findings are intended to support the development of an International Internship Monograph that will enhance cultural readiness, adaptability, and academic confidence among preservice teachers while providing practical guidance for both participating students and host universities.

The study is primarily anchored in Experiential Learning Theory developed by Kolb and Kolb (2017), which posits that meaningful learning occurs through direct experience followed by reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation. As a learner centered and constructivist framework, Experiential Learning Theory provides a strong foundation for multicultural and international education because it recognizes authentic experience as the catalyst for knowledge construction and competency development. Within the context of international teaching internships, firsthand exposure to different cultures serves as the concrete experience that initiates learning, while reflective processes enable participants to interpret cultural encounters and apply newly acquired knowledge to future interactions. Cheung et al. (2022) further explained that cultural exposure alone is insufficient unless learners engage in systematic reflection that transforms experiences into lasting intercultural competencies. Similarly, Thu Hà et al. (2023) demonstrated that reflective experimentation enables teachers to strengthen their adaptability by evaluating and refining instructional strategies in response to diverse classroom contexts. These perspectives collectively affirm that experiential learning provides the mechanism through which cultural exposure contributes to professional and personal development.

The study is likewise grounded in Social Cognitive Theory, which explains that individuals develop knowledge, behaviors, and beliefs through observation, interaction, and reciprocal influences among personal, behavioral, and environmental factors, as discussed by Nickerson (2023). Within this framework, learners strengthen their confidence by observing successful behaviors, interpreting environmental feedback, and developing beliefs about their own capabilities. Martin et al. (2015) explained that adaptability itself is influenced by individuals' beliefs regarding their ability to adjust successfully to unfamiliar situations, suggesting that observing others overcome challenges strengthens one's own adaptive capacities. Consistent with this perspective, Collie et al. (2016) found that supportive classroom environments and exposure to successful peers promote greater adaptability among students. Holliman et al. (2018) likewise emphasized that self-belief serves as a critical determinant of adaptive behavior, while Zajacova et al. (2015) demonstrated that observation and interaction facilitate adaptability even within unfamiliar virtual learning environments. These findings reinforce Bandura's proposition that confidence in one's capabilities shapes behavioral adjustment across diverse educational settings.

Social Cognitive Theory also provides the conceptual foundation for understanding academic self-efficacy within international educational contexts. Li and Dewaele (2021) demonstrated that academic self-efficacy mediates the influence of cultural adaptation on international students' academic achievement, indicating that successful cultural adjustment alone does not necessarily translate into positive academic outcomes unless accompanied by strong efficacy beliefs. Honicke and Broadbent (2016) similarly confirmed that academic self-efficacy functions as a primary motivational mechanism that enables students to persist despite educational challenges, while Cassidy (2015) showed that learners possessing stronger academic self-efficacy respond to academic setbacks with greater persistence, effective problem solving, and constructive cognitive reappraisal rather than avoidance. Together, Experiential Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory provide complementary perspectives that explain how authentic intercultural experiences, reflective learning, observational processes, and self-efficacy beliefs interact to shape the adaptability and academic confidence of Southeast Asia student teachers.

Guided by these theoretical foundations, the study conceptualizes cultural exposure and adaptability as the independent variables influencing the academic self-efficacy of Southeast Asia student teachers. Cultural exposure is represented through multicultural exposure and multicultural interaction, whereas adaptability encompasses cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions. Academic self-efficacy serves as the dependent variable reflecting participants' confidence in their ability to succeed academically throughout their international teaching experience. The proposed International Internship Monograph constitutes the intended output of the investigation, translating the study's empirical findings into a practical resource that can strengthen the preparation of future Southeast Asia student teachers and support host institutions in delivering more effective and culturally responsive international internship programs. This integrated conceptual framework provides a coherent explanation of how intercultural experiences, adaptive competencies, and efficacy beliefs collectively contribute to the successful preparation of globally competent preservice educators.

Statement of the problem

The purpose of this study was to determine the cultural exposure and adaptability towards academic self-efficacy of the southeast asia student-teachers of Capiz State University (CAPSU) and the Indonesian SEA exchange student-teachers from Indonesia as basis for international internship monograph.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of cultural exposure as an entire group and in terms of multicultural exposure and multicultural interaction?
2. What is the level of adaptability as an entire group and in terms of cognitive ability, behavioral ability, and affective ability?
3. What is the level of academic self-efficacy of the SEA student-teachers during the preservice abroad?
4. Are there significant relationships among cultural exposure and adaptability towards academic self-efficacy of SEA student-teachers during the preservice abroad?
5. What output can be drawn from the results of the study?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the purpose of the study and research design, the methods employed, and the statistical data analysis procedures used to test the hypotheses of the study. The main purpose of this study was to determine the cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy of the southeast asia student-teachers during the preservice abroad as basis for International Internship Monograph.

This study utilized the mixed methods or the quantitative-qualitative method of research. According to Creswell (2012), mixed method research design is a design for collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem. Quantitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher decides what to study, asks specific, narrow questions, collects quantifiable data from participants, analyzes these numbers using statistics, and conducts the inquiry in an unbiased, objective manner, while qualitative research is a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words or text from participants, describes and analyzes these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner

(Creswell, 2012). The type of quantitative research used in this study was the survey-correlational research. The survey method obtains data to determine the specific characteristics of a group, and the purpose of a survey is to get a general picture of the characteristics of a study population at a particular time. On the other hand, David (2004 as cited in Sabid 2014) defined correlation research as an attempt to explain the nature of association or relationship between two or more quantifiable variables, the purpose of which is to establish a relationship or lack of it or to use a relationship in making predictions. On the other hand, the qualitative data gathering method used in this study was the Focus Group Discussion, an informal in-depth discussion in which a small number of participants (6 to 10) elaborate about topics of special importance to a particular research issue (Creswell, 2012). The FGD was used to explain and interpret more fully the results of surveys and to further confirm the result of the quantitative data obtained from the study in order to verify it more deeply.

The independent variables of the study were cultural exposure and adaptability, while the dependent variable was academic self-efficacy of the southeast asia student-teachers during the preservice abroad. The statistical tools that were used in the study were frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, while the inferential statistic was the Pearson r. The alpha level of significance was set at 0.05 for the inferential test.

The participants of this study were 105 out of the 141 southeast asia student-teachers from Capiz State University, Capiz, Philippines, and from Indonesia. Of the population of 81 student-teachers from Capiz State University, a sample of 60 was drawn, and of the population of 60 student-teachers from Indonesia, a sample of 45 was drawn, yielding a total population of 141 and a total sample of 105. The Cochran formula was used to determine the sample size of the study, and the participants of the study were selected using stratified random sampling. Stratified random sampling involves dividing the population members into non overlapping groups called strata, formed based on members' shared attributes or characteristics; a random sample from each stratum was taken in a number proportional to the stratum's size when compared to the population, and these subsets of the strata were then pooled to form a random sample (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2018). The participants were selected at random using the drawing of lots, meaning that all the names of the southeast asia student-teachers per institution were written on rolled slips of paper and placed in a box, from which the required number of respondents was drawn. The names of the southeast asia student-teachers drawn from each box served as the participants in the study, and the proportional allocation formula was used to get the appropriate sample size from each station involved in the study.

The profile of the 105 respondents of the study revealed that 76 (72.4%) were female while 29 (27.6%) were male. In terms of age, 94 (89.5%) were above 21 years old while 11 (10.5%) were below 20 years old. In terms of course or degree in college, the majority of the respondents, 100 (95.2%), were enrolled in Secondary Education, followed by 3 (2.9%) taking AB English, and 2 (1.9%) enrolled in Elementary Education. As to the father's highest educational attainment, 22 (21.0%) reached high school level, 19 (18.1%) were at the elementary level, 19 (18.1%) were elementary graduates, 19 (18.1%) reached college level, 15 (14.3%) were high school graduates, 11 (10.5%) were college graduates, while 0 (.0%) were at the master's level, 0 (.0%) were master's graduates, 0 (.0%) were at the doctorate level, and 0 (.0%) were doctorate graduates. In terms of the mother's highest educational attainment, 26 (21.0%) were high school graduates, 18 (17.1%) reached high school level, 18 (17.1%) were college graduates, 17 (16.2%) were at the elementary level, 13 (12.4%) were elementary graduates, 9 (8.6%) reached college level, while 2 (1.9%) were at the master's level, 2 (1.9%) were master's graduates, 0 (0.0%) were at the doctorate level, and 0 (0.0%) were doctorate graduates.

Data in this study were gathered using standardized questionnaires, attached to which was the personal data sheet. The personal data sheet was used to collect data about the personal

profile of college students in terms of sex, age, course, and parents' highest educational attainment.

The Cultural Exposure Questionnaire was a standardized questionnaire with different subscales such as multicultural exposure and multicultural interaction. The multicultural exposure subscale was a 28-item adopted scale, and the multicultural interaction subscale was a 23-item scale adopted from Aytug et al. (2018). The questionnaire was answered using a five-point scale in which a score of 5 corresponded to the response Always, 4 to Often, 3 to Sometimes, 2 to Rarely, and 1 to Never. To describe the cultural exposure, the following scale was used: 4.21 to 5.00 was described as Very high, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.61 to 3.40 as Moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very Low. The cultural exposure questionnaire was face and content validated by the panel members, and the suggestions and recommendations for the improvement of the instrument were incorporated in the modification of the instrument. Once the instrument was face and content validated, the questionnaire was pilot tested to thirty (30) randomly selected southeast asia student-teachers who were not included as participants of the study. The result of the pilot testing was used in determining the computer processed factor analysis, construct validation, and reliability testing of the research instrument using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Software. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), if the computed item is equal to 0.70 or more but not more than 1.0, the questionnaire is considered reliable, while items with factor analysis of .50 and above are included in the instrument and those below .50 are discarded.

The Adaptability Questionnaire is a standardized questionnaire with different subscales such as cognitive adaptability, behavioral adaptability, and affective adaptability. The cognitive adaptability subscale was a 3-item scale, the behavioral adaptability subscale was a 3-item scale, and the affective adaptability subscale was a 4-item scale, all from Dam et al. (2020). The questionnaire was answered using the same five-point scale in which a score of 5 corresponded to the response Always, 4 to Often, 3 to Sometimes, 2 to Rarely, and 1 to Never. To describe the cultural exposure, the same scale was used, wherein 4.21 to 5.00 was described as Very high, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.61 to 3.40 as Moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very Low. The adaptability questionnaire was face and content validated by the panel members, and the suggestions and recommendations for the improvement of the instrument were incorporated in the modification of the instrument. Once the instrument was face and content validated, the questionnaire was pilot tested to thirty (30) randomly selected southeast asia student-teachers who were not included as participants of the study. The result of the pilot testing was used in determining the computer processed factor analysis, construct validation, and reliability testing of the research instrument using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Software. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), if the computed item is equal to 0.70 or more but not more than 1.0, the questionnaire is considered reliable, while items with factor analysis of .50 and above are included in the instrument and those below .50 are discarded.

The Academic Self-Efficacy Questionnaire was a 37-item standardized questionnaire adapted from Gafoor and Ashraf (2006, cited in <https://www.researchgate.net/pub/262924154> ret.4/27/21). The questionnaire was answered using a five-point scale in which a score of 5 corresponded to the response Exactly true, 4 to Nearly true, 3 to Neutral, 2 to Nearly false, and 1 to Exactly false. To describe the academic self-efficacy, the following arbitrary scale was used: 4.21 to 5.00 was described as Very High, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.61 to 3.40 as Moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very Low. The academic self-efficacy questionnaire was face and content validated by the panel members, and the suggestions and recommendations for the improvement of the instrument were incorporated in the modification

of the instrument. Once the instrument was face and content validated, the questionnaire was pilot tested to thirty (30) randomly selected southeast asia student-teachers who were not included as participants of the study. The result of the pilot testing was used in determining the computer processed factor analysis, construct validation, and reliability testing of the research instrument using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Software. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), if the computed item is equal to 0.70 or more but not more than 1.0, the questionnaire is considered reliable, while items with factor analysis of .50 and above are included in the instrument and those below .50 are discarded.

Before collecting the data, a permission letter was secured from the President of the University. Upon approval, the consent of the Vice President for Extension and Linkages was also sought to determine the sample size and conduct the survey among the southeast asia student-teachers who might participate in the study. Due to the new normal and the distance of the SEA student-teachers, the researcher administered the questionnaire to the respondents via Google Forms. After the questionnaires were answered, they were encoded, processed, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Software. The data collected were treated with utmost confidentiality.

Data gathered from the study were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Frequency count and percentage were used to describe the personal data information of the southeast asia student interns. The mean was used to determine the level of cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy of the southeast asia student-teachers. Standard deviation was used to determine the homogeneity as well as the heterogeneity of the cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy. The Pearson r , set at 0.05% alpha level of significance, was used to determine the relationships among the cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discussion derived from data gathered from 105 southeast asia student-teachers from Capiz State University, Capiz, Philippines, and from Indonesia, who participated in this combination of survey-correlational and qualitative research design. Data were gathered through three survey instruments, namely the Cultural Exposure Questionnaire, the Adaptability Questionnaire, and the Academic Self-Efficacy Questionnaire, together with a personal data sheet used to obtain the socio-demographic profile of the respondents, and a focus group discussion (FGD) utilized to further shed light on and support the quantitative findings. Descriptive statistics, including frequency count, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, and the inferential statistic Pearson r , set at the 0.05 alpha level of significance, were employed to analyze the data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The discussion that follows is grounded entirely in the data gathered from these 105 participants, and the results are interpreted in direct relation to the objectives of the study, namely to determine the level of cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy of the southeast asia student-teachers during the preservice abroad, and to examine the significance of the relationships among these variables.

Cultural exposure of SEA student-teachers

The findings of the study revealed that, in its entirety, the level of cultural exposure as responded to by the 105 SEA student-teachers is Moderate ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .62$). When grouped into the different types of cultural exposure, data show that SEA student-teachers exhibit a High level of multicultural exposure ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .60$), and a Moderate level of multicultural interaction ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .78$), based on the scale wherein 4.21 to 5.00 is

described as Very high, 3.41 to 4.20 as High, 2.61 to 3.40 as Moderate, 1.81 to 2.60 as Low, and 1.00 to 1.80 as Very low. The result of this study implies that the moderate level of cultural exposure present among SEA student-teachers indicates that they encountered a new culture during their time abroad, but their exposure to that culture was somewhat limited. Many exchange student-teachers are required to adhere to a certain academic schedule and length for their exchange programs with host schools in their native countries, and most of their time is spent within their host schools, either within the school itself or in collaboration with other exchange students, teachers, and students within their own schools. Thus, while these student-teachers may have had some exposure to the culture of their host countries, they may have been lacking in opportunities to interact with or explore the cultures within which those host school students live. For these reasons, it is likely that the exposure of these teachers to cultural diversity is somewhat present but not fully immersive, also for safety and security reasons, as they are confined within the safety of the school and their dormitories to prevent international conflict between two countries and the school itself, which explains the moderate levels of cultural exposure of these southeast asia student-teachers.

In addition, in relation to their high level of multicultural exposure, these SEA student-teachers often had exposure to different cultures during their time abroad as part of their exchange program. The diversity within these exchange programs is likely due to their international nature and the exposure of the students to individuals from different countries and cultures. These exchange students also had exposure to different teaching styles from other teachers within their host countries, as well as from other exchange students, and during their time abroad at these host universities, they were likely exposed to different cultural and multicultural awareness events. These various forms of exposure to different cultures outside of their own indicate the high level of multicultural exposure of these southeast asia student-teachers. As these students were from different islands of their home country, they were likely more active in sharing their own cultures with others, as well as any other cultures that they had encountered, and because their host countries were of different religions, these SEA exchange teachers were also exposed to the religions and religious customs of their host countries abroad.

The level of interaction between individuals of different cultures was also moderate. While the teachers were placed into schools that were culturally diverse, that does not necessarily indicate that there were many interactions between student-teachers and individuals of different cultural backgrounds, as such interactions may be limited by factors like language differences, cultural differences, or even the cultural differences between the two groups of individuals involved in the interaction. For instance, student-teachers may have interacted with others who shared backgrounds with the student-teachers themselves, and the roles of the student-teachers in the classrooms may have limited their interactions outside of the classroom. Thus, while the schools were culturally diverse, the interactions between individuals of different cultural backgrounds were moderate in level.

These findings are supported by the ideas and experiences discussed by the participants of the focus group discussion. The moderate levels of cultural exposure are attributed to the fact that while these student-teachers encountered different cultures, they did so to only a certain extent, with many of their experiences being of only short-term nature, leaving them without the time to fully understand and immerse themselves in that other culture. Discussant 1 explained that the result appears to be moderate because although there was a chance to experience a different culture while teaching in Indonesia, the exposure was still limited, since the stay was only for a short period of time, preventing full experience of all parts of the culture and education system, with communication also occasionally difficult because of language

differences. Discussant 5 noted that because the cultures are quite similar, international travel, immersion activities, and intercultural friendships did help foster empathy, broaden perspectives, and increase cultural understanding, though these experiences did not create a wide impact after the exchange, as they mostly remained personal experiences. Discussant 9 shared that the level of cultural exposure can be categorized as moderate because engagement with local students, teachers, and the school environment was still shaped by the structured nature of the program and limited duration of stay, with opportunities to fully immerse in the wider community, local traditions, and everyday social life relatively limited. Discussant 10 recommended designing cultural trips that are more engaging and interactive and focused on local identity, such as bringing participants to festivals, churches, and historical landmarks like Panay Church and the Panay Bell, and prioritizing the exploration of places within Capiz first to better understand the history, culture, and community of the host province before traveling to other cities.

The result of this study also supports the findings of Maddux (2021), who also discovered that there was a moderate level of cultural exposure amongst SEA teacher students, as cultural exposure encompasses the experiences that a student has with cultures that are different from their own, beyond the physical presence within the other culture. The findings of Anderson et al. (2016) also support the findings of this study, as the researchers discovered that among university students who participated in short-term programs abroad to experience different cultures, the exposure to these cultures was found to be significantly helpful in increasing the student's cultural awareness and openness toward others of other cultures, with these cultural programs implemented to showcase the uniqueness and identities of the cultures within their countries of residence.

Adaptability of SEA student-teachers

The findings of the study revealed that, in its entirety, the level of adaptability as responded to by the 105 SEA student-teachers is High ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .58$). When grouped into the different types of adaptability, data show that SEA student-teachers exhibited a Very high level of cognitive adaptability ($M = 4.30$, $SD = .66$), a high level of behavioral adaptability ($M = 4.01$, $SD = .72$), and a high level of affective adaptability ($M = 3.76$, $SD = .69$). The high level of adaptability of the southeast asia student-teachers indicates that adaptability to different situations is already a behavior exhibited by these teacher candidates every day. The SEA student-teachers did not struggle with adapting to change in the classroom; instead, they were comfortable with adapting to these changing situations, and their adaptability skills are the result of the teachers having encountered these types of situations regularly in their everyday lives. As a result, they are able to use these skills in completing their everyday tasks, and they appear to exhibit natural resilience in the face of those tasks or situations.

Such adaptability may have been developed as a result of the students' training as teachers, as well as their responsibilities to the students they teach. Many of these students were likely teacher interns themselves, who had to adapt to the students they taught, to the strategies they taught to those students, or even to adapt to the conditions of their classrooms altogether. Finally, some of these students may have adapted to these roles as teachers as a result of their exposure to exchange and teaching programs that require these students to adapt to the classrooms they enter and teach in. Some of the teachers had experienced some degree of immersion in their own cooperating schools prior to the arrival of the exchange students, which contributed to their confidence in their abilities to adapt to the different environments of the exchange students' classrooms.

The student-teachers exhibited a very high level of cognitive adaptability during the exchange program, as their exposure to diverse cultures, information, and digital platforms

enabled them to adjust their thinking, understand different perspectives, and respond logically to various situations. Furthermore, their educational background and teaching experiences, particularly in lesson planning, classroom management, decision-making, and problem-solving, contributed to the development of strong critical thinking and mental adaptability skills, which collectively enhanced their ability to adapt effectively to unfamiliar situations and environments. The southeast asia student-teachers also demonstrated a high level of behavioral adaptability, indicating their ability to adjust their behaviors and teaching practices in unfamiliar environments, evident in how they modified their teaching methods, observed and mirrored local teaching behaviors, adjusted their body language, and responded to students' needs and reactions. Although the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) contributed to their preparation, their adaptability was primarily shaped by their prior teaching experiences, particularly in practice teaching, classroom management, and student interaction, enabling them to respond effectively to new cultural and educational settings and adapt to situations beyond their prior preparation. Consequently, the SEA student-teachers demonstrated a high level of affective adaptability, indicating their ability to manage emotions and respond positively to unfamiliar situations and cultures, becoming respectful, patient, understanding, and open toward individuals with different backgrounds through their experiences in diverse school environments, developing emotional awareness, acceptance of cultural differences, and the ability to reflect on their experiences and emotions.

The results of this study are also compatible with the ideas, perceptions, and experiences of the discussants of the focus group discussions regarding the high level of adaptability of those discussants due to their varied experiences adapting to new environments throughout their careers as teachers. Discussant 3 shared that as SEA student-teachers they had to adjust to many new situations like a different school environment, teaching style, and culture, describing how during the first week of only observing the class, it seemed manageable, but upon actually teaching, even slowing down speech was still too fast for the students, requiring further slowing of voice and a calmer manner of speaking, and recognizing that every class is different and cannot be grouped the same way, such as one class in which only one student could speak English, requiring continual adjustment of teaching. Discussant 4 shared that adaptability can be considered high because adjustment was needed to a new environment, culture, and way of teaching in Indonesia, with initially unfamiliar things becoming manageable through learning to adapt and be flexible, understanding students, communicating with teachers, and following classroom practices. Discussant 6 noted that adaptability is high due to conditioning oneself to be resilient and adaptable, aided by the PDOS conducted days prior, requiring swift adjustment to cope with changes in order to function as an exchange student and perform expected tasks. Discussant 8 explained that adaptability can be considered high due to quick adjustment to a new cultural and educational environment, with living among roommates from different cultural backgrounds requiring adaptation of communication style, daily habits, and mindset to maintain harmonious relationships, in addition to flexibility demanded by the teaching practicum in adjusting teaching strategies to suit students' needs, classroom dynamics, and the local education system, as well as adapting to new social norms, language use, and interactions with both teachers and students.

The results of this study also support the findings of Hofhuis et al. (2020), which investigate the concept of adaptability as it relates to the cultural and cross-cultural adaptability of individuals, especially in the context of international students. Moreover, the study by Zhang and Goodson (2019) also found that adaptability was associated with the ability of individuals to socially and culturally adjust to their new environment, indicating that they did not experience stress from these alterations to their culture and society.

Academic self-efficacy of SEA student-teachers

The findings of the study revealed that, in its entirety, the level of academic self-efficacy as responded to by the 105 SEA student-teachers is High ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .56$). These implications indicate that the southeast asia student-teachers have a high level of academic self-efficacy and trust in their individual abilities to handle the academics associated with their teaching careers, remaining unwilling to become discouraged by academic demands and taking initiative despite any challenges in their teaching careers. This must have arisen as a result of the role of the SEA student-teachers, who have likely encountered situations within their classrooms in which they had to take initiative themselves despite their instructors. Other factors that may have contributed to their self-efficacy in academic environments include their sense of responsibility toward their institutions or their country, as the motivation to represent their institutions well may have contributed to their sense of confidence in their abilities in academic environments, along with their exposure to making decisions within their careers contributing to their sense of capability in performing certain tasks within their classrooms.

The findings of this study are supported by the ideas and experiences shared by the participants during the focus group discussion. Discussant 4 shared that academic self-efficacy can be considered high because of confidence in completing tasks and organizing lessons, being able to plan activities, manage teaching, and help students learn effectively even in a new environment, which made them believe more in their abilities and showed that academic goals could be achieved even in challenging situations. Discussant 5 explained that because participation in the SEA Teacher program requires planning lessons, teaching in real classrooms, and managing academic responsibilities in a different educational setting, successfully completing these tasks helps strengthen confidence in the ability to organize learning, solve academic challenges, and achieve teaching goals. Discussant 6 stated that high academic self-efficacy is reflected in confidence in completing tasks and achieving academic goals, consistently organizing responsibilities such as preparing lesson plans, delivering lessons, and completing required reports, remaining confident in managing time, applying course learnings, and accomplishing tasks efficiently despite the challenges of teaching in a new environment. Discussant 8 noted remaining confident in performing the role of teacher despite being in a new educational and cultural environment, actively engaging with students and teachers, completing academic tasks and teaching duties successfully, and reflecting a belief in one's own capabilities through willingness to take initiative and adjust teaching approaches. Discussant 9 shared that academic self-efficacy can be considered high due to remaining confident in handling academic challenges such as adjusting to new curricula, engaging students with diverse learning needs, and meeting the expectations of mentor teachers, with the ability to stay motivated, take initiative, and complete teaching tasks successfully reflecting a strong belief in academic capabilities.

The result of this study conforms to the findings of Honicke et al. (2016) in emphasizing the importance of academic self-efficacy as a key predictor of learning engagement, learning persistence, and even resilience in challenging or unfamiliar academic learning environments. Moreover, Doménech et al. (2017) underscored the importance of academic self-efficacy in student engagement and self-regulated learning, noting that it significantly impacted deep learning strategy use and persistence. Additionally, Phan (2015) also demonstrated that self-efficacy was the factor that mediated the effect of the quality of instruction on student engagement, thus indicating that improved engagement led to improved learning outcomes for the students.

Relationships among cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy

The results of the Pearson r analysis show that there is a significant relationship between cultural exposure and adaptability, $r = .545$, with $p = .000$. There is also a significant relationship between cultural exposure and academic self-efficacy, $r = 0.522$, with $p = .000$, and a significant relationship between academic self-efficacy and adaptability, $r = .727$, with $p = .000$, all found significant at the 0.05 alpha level of significance. The significant relationship among cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy is positively correlated, indicating that these variables increase together. The student-teachers, for instance, gained more confidence in their academic abilities after being exposed to different cultures and adapting to new situations. By exposing themselves to different cultures, they had to adapt their methods of teaching to accommodate students with different needs, and thus they began to use the knowledge they had learned in different situations to make decisions regarding their own teaching methods. Consequently, the student-teachers began to feel more capable in their abilities, as challenging themselves and adapting their teaching methods and strategies led to an increase in their sense of confidence regarding their abilities.

The observations and experiences shared by the discussants further illuminate the correlation and significance of each of these concepts. Discussant 3 agreed that cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy work together, explaining that being exposed to different cultures helped in understanding students' behaviors and learning styles, such as students who struggled with English but excelled in other subjects, requiring adaptation through activity based learning, slowing down explanations, and matching energy and tone to the class, with observation prior to teaching being key to understanding student behavior, and adjustment based on observation combined with seeing students complete activities and achieve good scores strengthening confidence in handling lessons and achieving goals, so that cultural exposure improves adaptability and adaptability strengthens academic self-efficacy. Discussant 6 agreed that there is a significant relationship among the three constructs because they influence and strengthen one another, noting that being exposed to a different culture and school environment required adjustment of thinking, behavior, and emotions, a process of adapting that helped in becoming more flexible and open to new ways of teaching and learning. Discussant 8 agreed that the three are interconnected, explaining that exposure to a different culture pushed the discussant to face new challenges, with adaptability helping to adjust thinking, behavior, and emotions in those situations, resulting in greater confidence in the ability to handle teaching tasks and academic responsibilities, so that cultural exposure creates the experience, adaptability helps manage it, and academic self-efficacy develops from successfully going through both. Discussant 9 believed there is a strong connection among cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy, sharing that being in a different cultural and educational environment as a SEA student-teacher in the Philippines required leaving the comfort zone and interacting with students and teachers from different backgrounds, which helped in becoming more open-minded and improved adaptability in thinking, behavior, and emotions, in turn increasing confidence in teaching, classroom management, and handling challenges, showing that cultural exposure helps build adaptability, and together they increase academic self-efficacy. Discussant 10 affirmed that there is a significant relationship among cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy because these three work well in challenging a person's ability to survive in different settings, whether in culture or in life, with survival and satisfaction achieved in making an impact on students in cooperating schools under DepEd and at the host university campus, and with the learnings acquired described as momentous for future life in the university and in Indonesia.

This finding supports the study conducted by Basith et al. (2020), which determined that academic self-efficacy significantly predicts the success of students in adapting to unfamiliar academic cultures, specifically finding that students with higher levels of academic self-efficacy adapted better to unfamiliar academic cultures than students with low levels of academic self-efficacy, setting more suitable goals for themselves, investing more effort into achieving those goals, and having more appropriate evaluations of their successes and failures when adapting to unfamiliar academic cultures. It also supports the study conducted by Zhou and Lin (2016) regarding the finding that self-efficacy within academic environments significantly predicted the level of adjustment and satisfaction of international students. Additionally, another study by Li and Dewaele (2021) discovered that the factor mediating the relationship between cultural adaptation and academic achievement was the academic self-efficacy of international students. Leutwyler and Meier (2018) found that international teaching practicums for student-teachers showed that requiring teachers to view the behavior within their classroom through the lens of culture led to the development of cognitive adaptability. Lastly, the study by Santoro and Major (2019) discovered that the cultural exposure the student-teachers experienced while completing these placements led to increased reflexivity among the student-teachers, who began to recognize the sociocultural aspects of teaching and learning, leading to the formation of more inclusive teachers themselves.

Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there are no significant relationships among cultural exposure and adaptability towards academic self-efficacy of SEA student-teachers during the preservice abroad is rejected.

Taken as a whole, the findings drawn from the 105 SEA student-teacher participants demonstrate that these student-teachers exhibited a Moderate level of cultural exposure ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .62$), composed of a High level of multicultural exposure ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .60$) and a Moderate level of multicultural interaction ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .78$), a High level of adaptability ($M = 4.00$, $SD = .58$), composed of a Very high level of cognitive adaptability ($M = 4.30$, $SD = .66$), a High level of behavioral adaptability ($M = 4.01$, $SD = .72$), and a High level of affective adaptability ($M = 3.76$, $SD = .69$), and a High level of academic self-efficacy ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .56$), with all three variables found to be significantly and positively interrelated, as evidenced by the Pearson r results between cultural exposure and adaptability ($r = .545$, $p = .000$), between cultural exposure and academic self-efficacy ($r = 0.522$, $p = .000$), and between academic self-efficacy and adaptability ($r = .727$, $p = .000$). The results directly address the study's objectives by revealing that although these student-teachers' immersion in their host cultures remained moderate and somewhat structured, their capacity to adjust cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively to unfamiliar teaching environments was consistently high, and this adaptability in turn was strongly associated with their confidence in their own academic and teaching capabilities. These findings contribute to the field by providing empirical, mixed methods evidence, grounded in both quantitative correlational data and qualitative focus group testimony, of how cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy function as interrelated constructs within the specific context of a Southeast Asian pre-service teacher exchange program, reinforcing existing theoretical perspectives on cross-cultural adaptation and self-efficacy while extending them to the international teaching internship context. Collectively, these results provide the empirical foundation for the conclusions, implications, and the proposed International Internship Monograph to be presented in the subsequent chapter, where recommendations for strengthening cultural immersion opportunities and sustaining adaptive and self-efficacious teaching practices among future SEA student-teachers are discussed in greater detail.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Southeast Asia student teachers attained a moderate level of cultural exposure, a high level of adaptability, and a high level of academic self-efficacy during their preservice teaching experience abroad. Although the participants' cultural exposure was generally moderate, it contributed meaningfully to the development of intercultural awareness, respectful interactions with culturally diverse individuals, and improved collaboration and communication skills. The participants demonstrated openness to different perspectives, curiosity about other cultures, and increased participation in multicultural activities, all of which strengthened their confidence and adaptability in diverse environments. Their experiences, including trying local food, visiting cultural landmarks, and engaging in respectful interactions with members of the host community, enabled them to navigate daily life successfully in a foreign country. Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that opportunities remain for deeper cultural immersion, particularly in understanding the host country's values, family systems, and broader societal context. These results suggest that international internship programs should provide more comprehensive cultural engagement activities that move beyond surface level experiences and promote meaningful intercultural learning.

The study further revealed that the Southeast Asia student teachers possess a high level of adaptability, indicating their strong capacity to adjust cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally to unfamiliar educational and cultural environments. Their adaptability enabled them to respond effectively to varying classroom dynamics, understand the expectations of new educational settings, remain composed during challenging situations, and modify their teaching strategies according to the needs of their learners. The participants also demonstrated a willingness to seek constructive feedback from mentors and students to improve their instructional practices and continuously refine their teaching approaches. These findings suggest that adaptability serves as an important professional competency that facilitates successful transitions into diverse teaching environments and supports continuous professional growth. Consequently, educational institutions should continue providing experiential learning opportunities, reflective activities, and structured training programs that further strengthen preservice teachers' adaptive capacities and prepare them to address the increasingly complex demands of multicultural classrooms.

Similarly, the participants exhibited a high level of academic self-efficacy, reflecting strong confidence in their ability to perform academic and professional teaching responsibilities successfully. This confidence was evident in their willingness to take initiative, embrace challenging tasks, seek innovative teaching approaches, and independently acquire new knowledge and instructional strategies. Their positive beliefs regarding their academic capabilities are likely to enhance the quality of their teaching, sustain motivation when confronted with difficulties, and contribute to long term professional success as educators. These findings reinforce the importance of cultivating academic self-efficacy as a fundamental characteristic that supports effective teaching performance, lifelong learning, and continued professional development among future teachers.

The significant relationships identified among the study variables further emphasize the interconnected nature of cultural exposure, adaptability, and academic self-efficacy. The findings indicate that cultural exposure contributes to the development of adaptability by allowing individuals to experience diverse cultural contexts that encourage flexible thinking, effective communication, and appropriate behavioral adjustment. As learners engage more meaningfully with different cultures, they develop stronger adaptive skills that enable them to

respond confidently to unfamiliar situations. Likewise, cultural exposure positively influences academic self-efficacy by broadening students' perspectives, enriching their educational experiences, and strengthening their confidence in completing academic and teaching related tasks. These results suggest that educational institutions should expand opportunities for cultural immersion, multicultural engagement, and international exchange programs while integrating activities that intentionally foster both global awareness and academic confidence. Providing greater institutional support for these initiatives can strengthen students' preparedness for international teaching experiences and future professional responsibilities.

Moreover, the study established a significant relationship between academic self-efficacy and adaptability, indicating that individuals who possess greater confidence in their abilities are more likely to adapt successfully to changing academic and professional environments. This finding highlights the importance of simultaneously developing self-confidence and adaptive skills through educational programs that combine authentic practice-based learning, reflective experiences, and opportunities for successful task completion. Such experiences allow students to strengthen their belief in their capabilities while learning to modify their approaches in response to new challenges, thereby reinforcing both their adaptability and self-efficacy. Consequently, teacher education institutions are encouraged to provide comprehensive training that integrates cultural exposure, experiential learning, adaptability development, and academic self-efficacy enhancement as complementary components of preservice teacher preparation.

Overall, the findings affirm that meaningful cultural experiences, strong adaptability, and high academic self-efficacy collectively contribute to the successful preparation of Southeast Asia student teachers for international teaching assignments. Although participants demonstrated positive levels across these dimensions, expanding opportunities for deeper cultural immersion, sustained intercultural engagement, and integrated experiential learning can further strengthen their readiness for global educational practice. The proposed International Internship Monograph therefore serves as a practical resource that can guide educational institutions in designing more cohesive preparation programs for student teachers and host universities. By emphasizing authentic multicultural experiences, adaptability development, reflective practice, and the cultivation of academic self-efficacy, teacher education institutions can better prepare future educators to excel in diverse international settings while promoting culturally responsive, confident, and professionally competent teaching.

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