

# **The Dynamics between Allocentric-Idiocentric Personality Dimensions, Perceived Acculturative Stress and Cross-Cultural Adaptation: A Literature Review**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Individual-level cultural orientation is a key personal variable affecting the acculturation process and outcomes. Based on the literature, this review unravels the dynamics between allocentric-idiocentric personality dimensions, acculturative stress, and cross-cultural adaptation among international students. The literature consistently documents that acculturative stress is negatively associated with cross-adaptation. However, it reveals inconsistent findings regarding the relationships of allocentric-idiocentric personality dimensions with acculturative stress and cross-cultural adaptation. Some studies suggest that allocentrism is associated with reduced acculturative stress and enhanced cross-cultural adaptation, while others link it to increased acculturative stress and poorer adaptation. Similarly, idiocentrism has been related to lower acculturative stress and improved adaptation in some studies, but to higher stress and poorer adaptation in others. Acculturative stress has been suggested as a potential mediator between allocentrism-idiocentrism and adaptation. The review highlights the need for further research on how allocentric and idiocentric personality tendencies influence acculturative processes and outcomes.*

**Keywords:** allocentric personality, cross-cultural adaptation, idiocentric personality, international students, perceived acculturative stress

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant impacts of globalization in the 21st century is the internationalization of higher education. This phenomenon has resulted in an unprecedented increase in international student mobility, with students from all corners of the globe traveling to different countries in pursuit of educational opportunities. As a result, international students, often referred to as 'study abroad students,' 'student sojourners,' or simply 'international students,' have become a distinct and growing demographic within higher education systems worldwide. These students temporarily relocate to foreign countries with the primary goal of achieving academic success, and they often face unique challenges in adapting to new environments and cultures (Bochner, 2006). While there has been extensive research on various aspects of the international student experience, one area that has consistently attracted scholarly attention is the process of cross-cultural adaptation. Cross-cultural adaptation refers to how international students adjust to and navigate the cultural, social, and psychological challenges they face in their host countries (Ward & Kennedy, 1994). This adjustment process is often demanding and stressful as students are required to adapt to unfamiliar social norms, language barriers, and different educational systems. A variety of research has highlighted the key challenges faced by international students during this period of transition, including homesickness, culture shock, fear, discrimination, and the development of multicultural competence (Ali et al., 2024; Andrade, 2006; Liu et al., 2016; Mahmud et al., 2010; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994).

Additionally, students often experience financial stress, language difficulties, and a lack of support or understanding from the broader host community (Araujo, 2011; Sherry et al., 2010; Xue & Singh, 2025), all of which can negatively impact their academic performance and well-being. Beyond these challenges, several factors have been identified as influencing the success or failure of cross-cultural adaptation for international students. These factors include cultural distance, self-efficacy, resilience, coping styles, and personality traits, as well as external resources such as social support networks (Araujo, 2011; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Yusoff, 2011). Emotional intelligence, cultural intelligence, sociocultural competence, and social and academic support have also been found to play a significant role in facilitating the adaptation of international students (Ayoob et al., 2015; Beri et al., 2025; Gebregergis & Csukonyi, 2025; Vergara et al., 2010). These individual-level factors, along with the broader contextual and situational factors, contribute to the overall experience of international students and the extent to which they

successfully integrate into their new environment. Among the various factors that influence cross-cultural adaptation, cultural orientation and acculturative stress are particularly critical. Cultural orientation, which refers to the degree to which individuals identify with the cultural values of their home country versus those of their host country, has a profound impact on adaptation. One of the most widely studied dimensions of cultural orientation is the collectivism-individualism, often characterized by allocentric (collectivist) and idiocentric (individualist) personality traits (Triandis, 1995). These orientations shape how students perceive and navigate social interactions, and they influence their ability to cope with the stresses of adapting to a new cultural context. Acculturative stress, which refers to the psychological distress experienced when individuals encounter challenges while adjusting to a new culture (Berry, 2005), is another key factor that affects cross-cultural adaptation. Acculturative stress can manifest in various ways, including anxiety, depression, loneliness, and frustration, and it can significantly hinder the adjustment process for international students. The interaction between cultural orientation and acculturative stress is complex and multifaceted, with different cultural orientations potentially moderating the level of stress experienced during adaptation.

### **Aim of the of the Review**

Although there is a growing body of literature examining the influence of collectivism-individualism and acculturative stress on cross-cultural adaptation, there is still a lack of critical analysis that integrates these two concepts within the context of international students' adaptation. While previous studies have reviewed the effects of these factors in isolation, few have considered the dynamic interplay between individual-level cultural orientation and acculturative stress, and how this relationship influences the overall adaptation process. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for developing more effective support systems and interventions that can facilitate the successful adaptation of international students. The primary aim of this review is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between allocentric-idiocentric personality traits, acculturative stress, and cross-cultural adaptation among international students. By synthesizing existing research on these factors, this review seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of how cultural orientation and acculturative stress interact to influence the adaptation process. This will offer valuable insights into the challenges faced by international students and help inform strategies for enhancing their adjustment and overall well-being during their sojourn abroad.

## **Research Questions**

1. How does acculturative stress influence cross-cultural adaptation?
2. How are allocentric-idiocentric personality traits associated with cross-cultural adaptation?
3. What is the relationship between allocentric-idiocentric personality traits and acculturative stress?
4. Does acculturative stress act as a potential mediator between allocentric-idiocentric personality dimensions and cross-cultural adaptation?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Cross-Cultural Adaptation**

In the field of acculturation research, adaptation broadly refers to the psychological state of health and the degree to which individuals successfully adjust to a new sociocultural environment (Sam & Berry, 2010). Cross-cultural adaptation is conceptualized into two distinct yet interconnected domains: psychological and sociocultural adjustment (Searle & Ward, 1990). Psychological adaptation pertains to the affective or emotional aspects of acculturative outcomes. It encompasses factors such as psychological well-being, self-esteem, happiness, life satisfaction, and depression. These indicators reflect the degree of emotional stability and contentment experienced by individuals in a new cultural context. Psychological adaptation is rooted in the stress and coping paradigm, emphasizing the impact of acculturative life changes, the interpretation of these changes, and the development of effective coping strategies to address intercultural challenges (Ward et al., 2005). Factors such as personality traits, self-efficacy, emotional resilience, and modes of acculturation significantly influence psychological adaptation (Ward et al., 2005). Sociocultural adaptation, on the other hand, refers to the behavioral dimensions of intercultural transition. This domain focuses on the social learning processes through which individuals navigate and adapt to the demands of a new sociocultural environment (Ward & Kennedy, 1994; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). From a cultural learning perspective, sociocultural difficulties arise due to the limited capacity to manage daily sociocultural interactions effectively (Masgoret & Ward, 2006). Successful sociocultural adaptation requires individuals to acquire culture-specific behavioral and social skills that enable them to function competently within a multicultural context. These skills include verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as knowledge of cultural norms, rules, and conventions that contribute to sociocultural competence (Ward & Kennedy, 1994).

The stress and coping framework and the cultural learning perspective underscore the distinct theoretical approaches required to understand these two domains of cross-cultural adaptation. The stress and coping framework emphasizes psychological and situational factors that either facilitate or hinder psychological adaptation. Conversely, the cultural learning perspective highlights the necessity of acquiring intercultural competencies to navigate sociocultural challenges effectively. Although Ward and Kennedy (1994) proposed that personal variables are stronger predictors of psychological adaptation, whereas contextual variables primarily influence sociocultural adaptation, there is evidence suggesting that individual variables can influence both domains ((Wilson et al., 2013; Zhang & Goodson, 2011b). The interconnection between these domains suggests that cross-cultural adaptation is a multidimensional process influenced by a range of personal and situational factors. Cross-cultural researchers assert that no single variable can fully explain acculturative outcomes, as the process is shaped by a dynamic interplay of multiple factors (Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Berry (1997) emphasized the role of pre-existing individual attributes in shaping acculturative experiences. Situational factors, such as the cultural distance between the host and home cultures, also play a critical role in the adaptation process. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the adaptation of international students is affected by both situational and individual difference variables, highlighting the complex and multidimensional nature of cross-cultural adaptation. In the current review, both psychological and sociocultural aspects of cross-adaptation have been analyzed as outcome variables, focusing on their relationships with acculturative stress and allocentric-idiocentric personality traits.

### **Perceived Acculturative Stress**

Acculturation refers to the process through which individuals undergo social, cultural, and psychological changes as a result of direct interaction with people from different cultural backgrounds (Berry, 2005). This complex phenomenon involves adapting to new cultural environments while simultaneously negotiating the preservation of one's own cultural identity. For international students, acculturation is often an inherently stressful process, as it requires navigating unfamiliar social, academic, and cultural landscapes. Such challenges may adversely impact their psychological well-being (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Adapting to the host country's environment can be particularly demanding for international students, as they face cumulative pressures related to mastering a new language, understanding unfamiliar cultural values, adhering to different social norms, and overcoming academic difficulties.

These stressors, when prolonged and unrelenting, can lead to heightened levels of acculturative stress (Mustaffa & Ilias, 2013). Berry (2005) conceptualizes acculturative stress as a natural response to the challenges associated with cultural adaptation. Although some degree of stress may be expected and even considered a normal part of the acculturation process, persistent and unmanaged acculturative stress can escalate into serious psychological issues, such as depression and anxiety. These risks are particularly pronounced when individuals lack effective stress-coping strategies (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Berry (2003) widely recognized acculturation model provides a structured framework for understanding this process. The model delineates two levels of acculturation: group-level and individual-level. Group-level acculturation occurs at the macro level and involves changes in social structures, institutional practices, and cultural norms within a society. Individual-level acculturation, on the other hand, operates at a micro level and encompasses the behavioral and psychological changes experienced by individuals as they adapt to new cultural settings Berry (2005). A comprehensive understanding of acculturation requires acknowledging the characteristics of both cultural groups involved in the interaction, the individuals and their cultural backgrounds, as well as the host community and its cultural attributes. According to Sam and Berry (2010), individuals bring their pre-existing mental frameworks, attitudes, and practices into the acculturative context, while the host society presents its own distinct cultural features. Thus, acculturation can be understood as a dynamic process of psychological and behavioral transformation that occurs through sustained contact with culturally diverse groups (Berry, 2005; Sam & Berry, 2010).

According to Berry (1997), acculturation outcomes can be conceptualized in two ways. First, individuals may encounter manageable behavioral changes that pose minimal challenges. These mild difficulties are often referred to as adjustments because the adaptive changes primarily involve the acculturating individual rather than the host community (Ward et al., 2005). Due to the non-problematic nature of these stages, individuals are less likely to experience pronounced acculturative challenges. Nonetheless, cultural conflicts may arise and can often be addressed through conformity to the mainstream culture. For individuals striving for integration, such conflicts can be resolved within the framework of multiculturalism. Conversely, those who remain in a state of sustained separation or marginalization may be excluded from the acculturation process and experience heightened cultural conflict. The second conceptualization, acculturative stress, reflects the challenges individuals face when acculturation results in difficulties that cannot be resolved through normal intercultural adjustments. Within the general stress and coping paradigm, this approach emphasizes the process by which

individuals cope with acculturative challenges both initially and over time. Acculturative stress is defined as a stress reaction to life events embedded in the acculturation process (Berry, 2005). It can negatively impact psychological well-being, potentially leading to physical and mental health issues (Rudmin, 2009). The acculturative stress model underscores that when international students engage in cross-cultural interactions for the first time, they encounter significant and novel cultural experiences. While these experiences may be exciting, they can also be perceived as threatening, demanding, or confusing, particularly during the early stages of cultural transition. If students appraise these experiences negatively and fail to cope effectively, they are at greater risk of experiencing acculturative stress. This stress can, in turn, adversely affect their psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Acculturative stress is particularly relevant to international students as they navigate a new cultural environment. The combination of novel and challenging intercultural experiences may lead to difficulties in adaptation, especially if the students perceive these experiences negatively. When students struggle to manage these acculturative difficulties, their psychological well-being and overall adaptation may suffer.

### **Cultural Dimensions of Individualism and Collectivism**

Scholars have developed various definitions of culture, reflecting its complex and multifaceted nature. Geert Hofstede, a renowned cross-cultural and social psychologist, defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 6). This conceptualization emphasizes the shared mental frameworks that differentiate groups and guide behavior within specific social contexts. Similarly, another prominent figure in cross-cultural psychology, Harry Charalambos Triandis, offered a more detailed definition of culture as “shared attitudes, beliefs, categorizations, expectations, norms, roles, self-definitions, values, and other such elements of subjective culture found among individuals whose interactions were facilitated by shared language, historical period, and geographic region” (Triandis, 1972, p. 3). Triandis’ definition underscores the interplay between shared psychological constructs and the historical and geographical factors that shape cultural identity. Culture can also be understood as a form of group identification. Members of a cultural group recognize themselves as part of the collective, aligning their behaviors with the norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes characteristic of that group (Iliste, 2017). This alignment reinforces the sense of belonging and facilitates coherent group functioning. Triandis (1972) further categorized culture into two distinct types: material culture

and subjective culture. Material culture encompasses the tangible, physical aspects of a cultural system, such as food, clothing, tools, housing, and technology, which serve as visible markers of cultural identity. Conversely, subjective culture involves the intangible, non-material elements of culture, such as beliefs, values, norms, language, morals, and societal rules. It also includes the organizational and institutional frameworks that influence how individuals within the culture think, perceive, and behave. Subjective culture is particularly significant in social psychology because these elements shape how individuals interact with members of their own group and with those from other cultural backgrounds. The present literature review is situated within the domain of subjective culture. Its focus is on understanding how the intangible elements of culture influence individual and group behaviors, perceptions, and social interactions.

Hofstede's national-level analysis of culture provides a useful framework for exploring cultural differences. His model identifies key dimensions of culture, including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long-term versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint (Hofstede, 2011). These dimensions offer a structured approach to examining how cultural variations influence attitudes and behaviors across societies. While culture can be characterized along multiple dimensions, this review concentrates on the dimension of individualism versus collectivism, which is central to understanding variations in social behavior and group dynamics. Individualistic cultures prioritize personal autonomy, self-expression, and individual achievements, whereas collectivistic cultures emphasize group harmony, interdependence, and the collective well-being of the group. By focusing on this dimension, the study review aims to analyze how cultural orientations shape individuals' perceptions and interactions within and across cultural groups. This cultural dimension represents the extent to which a culture emphasizes independence versus interdependence, shaping the way individuals relate to themselves and others (Triandis, 1993). Specifically, it captures whether individuals in a particular culture construct their self-concept based on an individualistic self or a collective self (Triandis, 1995). According to Hofstede, individualism as a cultural dimension prioritizes individual rights over societal duties, emphasizes self-reliance and immediate family bonds, and places great value on personal autonomy and self-fulfillment. In such cultures, identity is often derived from personal achievements and individual goals rather than group affiliations (Hofstede, 1983). Chiu, Kim, and Wan (2008), as cited in Carducci (2012), characterize individualistic cultures, such as those in North America and Western Europe, as emphasizing the uniqueness of personal characteristics, goals,



needs, and motives. These cultures underscore the importance of self-expression and the satisfaction of personal needs, viewing these as central to individual well-being. In individualistic societies, the self is perceived as distinct and separate, warranting protection and cultivation. Individuals are encouraged to capitalize on their unique abilities and talents, fostering traits such as creativity, self-reliance, and assertiveness. Triandis (1995) defines individualism as “a social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as being part of one or more collectives (family, co-worker, tribe, or nation); are primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives; are willing to give priority to the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals; and emphasize their connectedness with members of these collectives” (p. 2).

In contrast, collectivism reflects a cultural orientation that values interdependence, group solidarity, and the maintenance of harmony within a group or society. This perspective views individuals not as isolated entities but as interconnected members of a collective, where responsibilities and accountability are shared (Neuliep, 2015; Triandis & Suh, 2002). Collectivistic cultures are often described as “tight” societies with well-defined norms and expectations for behavior, requiring members to adhere closely to collective values and roles (Carducci, 2012; Triandis, 1995). These cultures prioritize relational bonds and view the self in relation to others, emphasizing shared responsibilities and collective welfare. Triandis (1995) further conceptualizes collectivism as “a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals, who view themselves as independent of collectives; are primarily motivated by their preferences, needs, rights, and the contracts they have established with others; give priority to personal goals over the goals of others; and emphasize the rational analyses of the advantages and disadvantages to associating with others” (p. 2). The dichotomy between individualism and collectivism highlights fundamental differences in cultural values and the ways people perceive and navigate their social worlds. These distinctions influence communication styles, decision-making processes, and interpersonal relationships, shaping the behaviors and attitudes of individuals within their respective cultural contexts.

### **Personality Dimensions of Allocentrism and Idiocentrism**

Personality is broadly defined as “a configuration of cognitions, emotions, and habits which are activated when situations stimulate their expression and generally determine the individual’s unique adjustment to the world” (Triandis, 2001, p. 908). This conceptualization emphasizes the dynamic interplay of mental processes, emotional responses, and behavioral patterns that shape how individuals interact with and adapt to

their environments. When studying the relationship between culture and psychology, it is essential to distinguish between levels of analysis because findings often differ depending on whether the focus is on cultural or individual phenomena (Triandis, 2001). At the cultural level, patterns reflect shared values, norms, and practices, while at the individual level, these cultural influences are manifested in personal tendencies and behaviors. Given these differences, Triandis (2001) highlights the importance of employing distinct terminology to appropriately capture these levels of analysis. To bridge the cultural and individual perspectives, Triandis and colleagues introduced the concepts of allocentrism and idiocentrism as personality tendencies that correspond to cultural syndromes of collectivism and individualism, respectively (Triandis et al., 1985). Allocentrism is defined as a personality tendency characterized by a sense of interdependence, group solidarity, sociability, and close relationships with others. Allocentric individuals tend to emphasize shared values and common goals within their in-groups (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 2001). They are highly attuned to the cultural norms and values of their community and are often willing to subordinate their personal needs, rights, and goals to those of their group. Consequently, allocentric individuals are more community-oriented than self-oriented. In contrast, idiocentrism refers to a personality orientation that prioritizes independence, competition, uniqueness, dominance, self-reliance, and emotional distance from in-groups (Triandis, 2001). Idiocentric individuals focus on personal freedom, self-enhancement, and self-actualization, often viewing the self as the primary instrument for achieving these objectives. They prioritize their own needs, goals, and rights over those of their group, emphasizing individual ability and personal achievement (Cross et al., 2000; Triandis, 2001; Triandis & Suh, 2002). While allocentric and idiocentric individuals can be found in both individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Triandis, 1995, 2001), studies suggest that approximately 60% of individuals in collectivistic cultures exhibit allocentric tendencies, whereas 60% of individuals in individualistic cultures display idiocentric tendencies (Triandis & Suh, 2002). The culture-fit theory proposes that individuals experience better psychological adjustment when their personality tendencies align with the dominant cultural orientation. Allocentric individuals tend to adapt more successfully in collectivistic cultures, whereas idiocentric individuals thrive in individualistic contexts. However, it is crucial to note that healthy individuals typically exhibit both allocentric and idiocentric tendencies to varying degrees. These attributes are tools that individuals employ flexibly based on the context (Triandis, 2005). Well-adjusted individuals demonstrate the ability to adapt by showing allocentric tendencies in some

situations and idiocentric tendencies in others, reflecting a balanced and versatile personality (Triandis, 2005).

### **Acculturative Stress, Psychological and Sociocultural Adaptation**

Acculturative stress is widely regarded as a significant factor influencing the psychological and sociocultural adjustment of immigrants, including international students. This form of stress arises from the challenges associated with adapting to a new cultural environment, and its effects extend across a spectrum of outcomes. On the psychological front, acculturative stress has been linked to heightened levels of psychological distress and depression, as well as reduced life satisfaction and happiness. For example, Chung and Epstein (2014) identified a strong association between acculturative stress, perceived discrimination, and increased psychological distress. This finding aligns with broader evidence suggesting that individuals experiencing high levels of acculturative stress are more likely to report greater distress and depression, alongside lower satisfaction with life and diminished happiness (e.g., Lee et al., 2004; Rice et al., 2012; Thomson et al., 2006; Wei et al., 2007). Further supporting this connection, Liu et al. (2016) conducted a survey of 567 international students in China, examining the relationship between specific components of acculturative stress and depression. Their results revealed a significant positive correlation, indicating that the stress associated with cultural adjustment directly contributes to depressive symptoms. Such findings highlight the pervasive impact of acculturative stress on the mental health of international students and underscore the need for targeted interventions to mitigate its effects.

Acculturative stress also exerts a profound influence on sociocultural adaptation of international students, affecting critical areas such as interpersonal communication, community engagement, ecological adaptation, academic performance, and language proficiency. Mahmood and Burke (2018) explored these sociocultural dimensions in a quantitative study involving 413 international students in the United States. Their findings demonstrated an inverse relationship between acculturative stress and sociocultural adaptation, with students experiencing lower stress levels reporting greater competence across sociocultural domains. Notably, these domains included effective interpersonal communication, active community involvement, and improved academic and linguistic performance. However, as their study relied on correlational analysis, it could not establish a causal or predictive relationship, leaving room for further exploration. Additionally, components of acculturative stress such as homesickness, perceived discrimination, and culture shock have been identified as particularly

detrimental to international students' adaptive behaviors (Chang, 2016; Sandhu, 1994). These acculturative factors often undermine students' ability to engage effectively with their new environment, compounding the challenges of cultural transition. These findings further underscore the multifaceted nature of acculturative stress and its varied effects on individuals.

A systematic review by Smith and Khawaja (2011) provided a comprehensive examination of acculturative experiences, revealing a generally positive relationship between acculturative stress and adaptive outcomes. However, the authors also emphasized that adjustment to a new intercultural environment is highly complex and influenced by a multitude of factors. For instance, a comparative study conducted in the UK found that international students who employed effective coping strategies, such as problem-solving and emotional regulation, managed to adapt successfully despite experiencing significant acculturative stress (Saad, 2015). Tiwari (2017), in a systematic review, highlighted the inconsistent and sometimes contradictory findings regarding the relationship between acculturative stress and mental health. This variability was also echoed by Fox et al. (2017), who pointed to unresolved questions in the literature, emphasizing the need for further investigation to clarify the nuanced dynamics at play. Complementing these studies, Yerken et al. (2022) examined the sociocultural difficulties faced by international students in Hungary, specifically their association with mental health outcomes. Their findings revealed that sociocultural challenges were positively correlated with depressive symptoms and negatively related to life satisfaction and resilient coping, further illustrating the detrimental impact of acculturative stress. Taken together, these studies provide compelling evidence of the profound influence of acculturative stress on both psychological and sociocultural adaptation among international students. However, they also highlight significant variability in outcomes, which can be shaped by factors such as individual differences, coping mechanisms, and contextual variables. This underscores the need for future research to adopt a more holistic approach, considering the interplay of these factors to develop effective strategies for supporting international students in their cultural transition and overall adaptation.

### **Allocentric-Idiocentric Personality Dimensions and Acculturative Stress**

The relationship between psychological attributes, specifically allocentrism, and idiocentrism, and the acculturative challenges faced by international students remains an underexplored area of research. Despite this gap, existing literature provides valuable insights. Available studies

suggest that acculturative stress is negatively associated with allocentrism and positively associated with idiocentrism. In essence, individuals with idiocentric tendencies experience higher levels of acculturative difficulties compared to their allocentric counterparts. Bhullar et al. (2012), for example, found that university students with allocentric values reported lower levels of stress and anxiety. This suggests that the collectivist focus inherent in allocentric traits may buffer individuals against the psychological strains of adapting to a host culture. Similarly, Du et al. (2015) investigated acculturative stress among 641 Chinese internal migrants and found it to be negatively correlated with a collective cultural orientation. This highlights that individuals with a collectivist or allocentric personality orientation are more likely to experience smoother adaptation and fewer acculturative challenges. The flexibility of allocentric individuals plays a crucial role in their acculturation process. Unlike idiocentrics, who tend to view their behaviors and personal characteristics as stable and unchanging, allocentrics perceive their attributes as adaptable and context-dependent. This malleability allows allocentric individuals to modify their behaviors to align with the demands of a new cultural environment without necessarily abandoning their native cultural identity (Lay et al., 1998). Such adaptability is closely linked to the integration strategy of Berry (1997), which is widely regarded as an optimal approach to acculturation. The integration strategy involves maintaining one's cultural heritage while simultaneously forming positive relationships and engaging effectively with the host culture.

However, the relationship between allocentrism and acculturation success is not entirely straightforward. While allocentric traits generally facilitate smoother adaptation, challenges can still arise. For instance, allocentric individuals may struggle if they are unable to modify their behaviors effectively or if the host culture's norms are in stark conflict with their own. Failure to integrate successfully can result in heightened acculturative stress, even for those with an inherently collectivist orientation. Moreover, allocentrics with strong family-oriented tendencies might face unique vulnerabilities during the acculturation process. These individuals are often deeply connected to their families and cultural roots, which can make the transition to an unfamiliar cultural context more challenging. Cross-cultural researchers argue that the success of allocentrics in adapting to a new host culture depends not only on their inherent flexibility but also on external factors such as social support systems and the degree of receptivity within the host culture. Lay et al. (1998) emphasized that allocentrics who employ integration strategies tend to adapt more effectively, but when such strategies are not viable, they may encounter significant stressors. In contrast, idiocentric individuals, by prioritizing personal goals and independence, often find

themselves less prepared to navigate the complexities of a collectivist-oriented host culture. Their reluctance or inability to adapt their behaviors to fit the expectations of the new cultural environment can exacerbate feelings of isolation and acculturative stress. Furthermore, their strong emphasis on autonomy may hinder their capacity to seek or accept social support, a critical resource in the acculturation process. These findings collectively highlight that while allocentric traits generally promote smoother transitions, the outcomes are influenced by a dynamic interplay of individual, cultural, and situational factors. Understanding these complexities is crucial for developing targeted interventions to support international students in overcoming acculturative challenges.

### **Allocentric-Idiocentric Personality Dimensions and Psychological Adaptation**

The nature of the relationships between the personality dimensions of allocentrism and idiocentrism with psychological well-being, life satisfaction, happiness, and depression appears to be somewhat mixed and inconsistent. Some studies indicate that allocentrism is related to greater psychological adaptation, such as higher life satisfaction (Verkuyten & Lay, 1998) better social support, and lower levels of loneliness (Triandis et al., 1988; Triandis et al., 1985; Zhang et al., 2007). On the other hand, idiocentrism has been correlated with higher self-esteem, higher levels of depression and suicidal ideation, and reduced social support (Zhang et al., 2007). Research conducted among college students in individualistic cultures offers further insight into these relationships. For instance, in Australia, students with idiocentric personality orientations were found to be less satisfied with their interpersonal relationships, less likely to seek social support, poorer at managing their own emotions and the emotions of others, and more likely to experience hopelessness and suicidal ideation (Scott et al., 2004). Another study conducted in the United States, a similarly individualistic context, reported that allocentric university students exhibited greater subjective well-being and life satisfaction. In contrast, idiocentric students experienced a lower sense of positive well-being (Bettencourt & Dorr 1997). Extending this line of inquiry, Kernahan et al. (2000) examined the relationships between allocentrism, idiocentrism, and subjective well-being among African American and European American university students in the United States. Their findings revealed that the association between allocentrism and both life satisfaction and subjective well-being was stronger for African American students than for European American students. By contrast, idiocentrism exhibited a more negative relationship with subjective well-being and life satisfaction for European American

students compared to African American students. These differences might be explained by the cultural orientations of the two groups, as African American culture is often described as more collectivistic, while European American culture tends to be more individualistic.

Similarly, Bhullar et al. (2012) conducted an individual-level study to examine the associations between individualistic-collectivistic orientations and emotional intelligence, mental health, and life satisfaction among university students from India (a collectivistic culture) and Australia (an individualistic culture). The results revealed that students with collectivistic tendencies in both samples demonstrated higher levels of emotional intelligence and better mental health. However, cultural orientation was not significantly associated with life satisfaction. Recent studies further support the hypothesis that individuals with collectivistic personality orientations tend to report higher life satisfaction (e.g., Germani et al., 2021; Krys et al., 2019). Additional evidence comes from a systematic review by Humphrey and Bliuc (2022), which synthesized 14 individual-level studies on the relationships between Western individualism and psychological well-being among young people in Western cultural contexts. The reviewed studies consistently revealed that individualism was associated with lower levels of life satisfaction, greater depressive symptoms, and increased suicidal ideation among young people (Humphrey & Bliuc, 2022). Another perspective emerges from the study of Kusaka (1995), which was conducted on the influence of individualism-collectivism orientations on international students' college adjustment. The findings of this study revealed that international students with more collectivistic personality tendencies showed better adjustment to college life, whereas those with individualistic personality orientations were more likely to experience psychological challenges. Based on these findings, it can generally be inferred that allocentric personality traits contribute to life satisfaction and subjective well-being by protecting individuals from the adverse effects of individualistic cultural orientations. In contrast, idiocentric personality traits appear to exacerbate these negative effects, as idiocentrism does not serve as a protective factor within individualistic cultural contexts.

Even though most studies seem to favor the positive contributions of allocentrism to life satisfaction and psychological well-being, some research has documented that idiocentrism (or individualism) is positively associated with psychological well-being (Suh, 2007) and life satisfaction (Yetim, 2003) while being negatively related to depression. Conversely, these studies have reported that allocentrism is linked to lower levels of life satisfaction (Yetim, 2003), reduced subjective well-being (Suh, 2007), and greater depressive symptoms (Dinn & Caldwell-Harris, 2016; Lay et al., 1998). In line with these studies, research conducted among

international students found that self-construal, which is associated with the idiocentric personality trait, was negatively linked to perceived stress through direct coping strategies (Cross, 1995). This suggests that individuals with a more independent self-construal may experience less stress when utilizing direct coping mechanisms. In contrast, interdependent self-construal, which is associated with allocentric personality traits, was found to be positively and directly related to perceived stress (Cross, 1995). This implies that those with a more interdependent self-construal may experience higher stress levels in certain situations. The contradictory findings across these studies highlight the complexity of the relationship between allocentric-idiocentric personality traits and psychological adaptation. Given these mixed results, further research is needed to better understand how these personality traits influence stress and adaptation processes among international students.

### **Allocentric-Idiocentric Personality Dimensions and Sociocultural Adaptation**

Sociocultural adaptation involves the development of social and behavioral skills that facilitate successful functioning in the host context. Sociocultural adaptation encompasses a variety of domains, including academic performance, language proficiency, personal interests and engagement in community activities, ecological adjustment, and effective interpersonal communication (Wilson, 2013). These elements collectively capture the diverse aspects of adjustment that international students navigate while living and studying abroad. Although limited research directly examines the impact of allocentric and idiocentric personality tendencies on these dimensions of sociocultural adaptation among international students, related studies shed light on the broader influence of individualism and collectivism on student adjustment. For example, Cho et al. (2010) investigated the role of cultural values among university students in South Korea. Their findings demonstrated that both individualistic and collectivistic cultural orientations positively contributed to academic and social adjustment. This suggests that both allocentrism and idiocentrism, representing collectivistic and individualistic tendencies, respectively, may have beneficial effects on college adjustment, albeit through distinct pathways.

Conversely, Dabul et al. (1995) examined the relationship between idiocentrism and academic success among junior high school students, reporting that those with idiocentric values achieved higher academic outcomes compared to their allocentric counterparts. Similarly, Triandis et al. (1985) found that allocentric individuals, despite exhibiting greater academic motivation, often prioritized social recognition and



competition, which could occasionally detract from academic performance. These findings suggest that allocentric tendencies may pose certain challenges to academic achievement; however, they also highlight the complexity of these dynamics. Allocentric individuals often exhibit traits such as industriousness and resilience, which are critical for overcoming academic challenges and achieving success. When applied to international students, allocentric individuals are likely to prioritize interpersonal relationships and social bonds. They may actively engage in social interactions and build meaningful connections within multicultural environments. This interpersonal focus can enable allocentric students to acquire and enhance the social and behavioral skills essential for sociocultural adaptation. In contrast, idiocentric students may emphasize independence and self-reliance, which could shape their adaptation experiences differently. These contrasting tendencies highlight the multifaceted nature of sociocultural adaptation and underscore the role of personality orientations in influencing how international students navigate and succeed in diverse sociocultural contexts.

### **Acculturative stress as a potential mediator of allocentric-idiocentric personality dimensions and cross-cultural adaptation**

While no sufficient empirical studies have specifically examined the mediating effect of acculturative stress in the relationship between allocentrism-idiocentrism and cross-cultural adaptation, several generally related studies have explored acculturative stress as a potential mediator in acculturation processes and acculturative outcomes. These studies suggest that acculturative stress plays a significant role in how individuals adapt to new cultural environments and manage psychological well-being. For instance, Gebregergis et al. (2019) conducted a cross-sectional study with a sample of 506 international students in China, demonstrating that acculturative stress fully mediated the relationship between cultural intelligence and depression. Their findings revealed that international students with higher levels of cultural intelligence experienced lower levels of depression. This study supports the idea that acculturative stress acts as a key mechanism linking cultural adjustment processes, such as cultural intelligence, with mental health outcomes. Further research has shown that acculturative stress mediates the relationship between acculturation and mental distress, including depression. Other studies also indicated that lower levels of acculturation are associated with higher levels of acculturative stress, which in turn leads to more severe mental health problems, such as depressive symptoms (Cho et al., 2017; Jang & Chiriboga, 2009). These findings emphasize the importance of effective

acculturation in reducing stress and improving mental health among international students.

Additionally, acculturative stress has been shown to mediate the relationship between cultural orientation and psychological functioning (Du et al., 2015). This highlights that students with a balanced cultural orientation, integrating both their native and host cultures, experienced less acculturative stress. This balanced orientation not only mitigated stress but also protected against negative psychological outcomes, enhancing overall health and well-being. Acculturative stress has also been found to mediate the impact of multicultural personality traits on intercultural effectiveness (Hofhuis et al., 2020). Individuals with higher emotional stability experienced lower levels of perceived stress and demonstrated better intercultural effectiveness, suggesting that emotional stability can act as a buffer against acculturative stress and enhance the ability to navigate cultural differences effectively. Moreover, Wu and Mak (2012) explored the mediating role of acculturative stress in the acculturation process and psychological distress among Chinese university students in Hong Kong. Their study indicated that students who experienced smoother intercultural transitions reported lower levels of acculturative stress, which in turn was associated with lower psychological distress. This underscores the importance of effective intercultural adaptation in reducing stress and promoting better psychological outcomes. Taken together, while there is a lack of research specifically addressing the mediating role of acculturative stress between allocentrism-idiocentrism and cross-cultural adaptation, the broader body of literature strongly supports the idea that acculturative stress plays a pivotal role in mediating the relationship between antecedents and outcomes of cross-cultural adaptation.

## **Contributions and Limitations of the Review**

The primary objective of this review was to explore the complex relationships between allocentric and idiocentric personality attributes, acculturative stress, and cross-cultural adaptation among international students. By examining these dynamics, the review enhances understanding of how individual personality traits influence the acculturation process and its outcomes, offering valuable insights into the psychological and sociocultural challenges faced by international students. The review underscores the critical influence of individual-level cultural orientations, such as allocentrism and idiocentrism, in determining cross-cultural adaptation outcomes through the potential mediation effect of perceived acculturative stress. These insights provide a meaningful foundation for future researchers aiming to investigate the influence of

personality traits on adaptation outcomes in culturally diverse environments. Furthermore, the findings carry practical implications for higher education institutions, including universities, educators, counselors, and administrators, who work closely with international students. Recognizing the role of allocentric and idiocentric personality attributes can enable these stakeholders to design more tailored and effective strategies to support international students in navigating cultural transitions and addressing acculturation challenges.

Despite its contributions, the review is not without limitations. First, while it aims to provide a better understanding of the interplay between allocentric-idiocentric personality traits, acculturative stress, and cross-cultural adaptation, the analysis is predominantly general and lacks the rigor of a systematic synthesis. A systematic review or meta-analysis would offer a more detailed and statistically grounded understanding of the relationships among these variables. Future reviews are encouraged to adopt such methodologies to offer more clear and comprehensive insights. Second, the review relies heavily on general literature related to the broader student population, rather than exclusively focusing on studies specific to international students. This limitation arises from a scarcity of research targeting this unique group. Consequently, while the findings are informative, they may not fully capture the specific experiences and challenges faced by international students. Future studies should prioritize synthesizing research dedicated to this demographic to bridge this gap and enhance the applicability of findings. Lastly, although the review emphasizes individual-level cultural orientations, both individual and national-level cultural factors may play significant roles in shaping the cross-cultural adaptation process. Future research could expand the scope by integrating national-level cultural orientations, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the multilevel cultural influences on cross-cultural adaptation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Cross-cultural adaptation of international students is a complex process shaped by various personal and situational factors. This review focused on individual-level cultural orientation as a personal factor, examining its relationship with acculturation challenges and outcomes. Specifically, the interplay between allocentric-idiocentric personality traits, acculturative stress, and cross-cultural adaptation was analyzed. The literature consistently documents that acculturative stress is negatively associated with both psychological and sociocultural adaptation. However, it reveals mixed and inconsistent findings regarding the relationships between allocentric-idiocentric personality dimensions and

cross-cultural adaptation. While many studies indicated that allocentric individuals tend to experience lower levels of acculturative stress and achieve better cross-cultural adaptation, idiocentric individuals were often reported to face greater acculturation challenges and exhibit poorer intercultural adaptation. However, some studies found that idiocentric personality traits are positively associated with cross-cultural adaptation and negatively with acculturative difficulties, whereas allocentric traits are linked to greater acculturative stress and poorer cross-cultural adaptation. This review also identified acculturative stress as a potential mediator between allocentric and idiocentric personality traits and cross-cultural adaptation. These findings highlight the role of individual-level cultural orientation in shaping the cross-cultural adaptation of international students. University communities and other stakeholders involved in supporting international students should take these personality traits into account when addressing the acculturation processes and outcomes of students. Implementing strategies that recognize these individual differences can help improve the well-being and adaptation outcomes of international students.

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