

Social Self-Efficacy Mediates Wechat Use and Cross-Cultural Adaptation Among International Students in Chengdu, China

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Abstract: *Social media supports international students to become more integrated into the host culture during their adaptation and to maintain ties with people their home country. In China, WeChat has the social attributes to help international students to cope with academic and social challenges in the host society but it seems that personal self-confidence may affect sociocultural adjustment. The study examines the relationship between WeChat use, social self-efficacy and cross-cultural adaptation among international students in China. The preliminary study involved 24 international students in China who filled in an online questionnaire on cross-cultural exposure, WeChat usage, social self-efficacy and cross-cultural adaptation was formulated. The results showed frequent WeChat use, and it helped the respondents to learn Chinese language skills, make friends, and obtain social support to deal with study and life problems. They also reported positive attitudes towards their social skills and confidence in their host countries, but they were less confident when talking to strangers or expressing their opinions. Nevertheless, the respondents reported satisfactory cross-cultural adaptation because of the support from classmates, teachers, and the university. However, they were neutral on whether they have integrated into the culture in China, or felt capable talking to locals and making decisions. Our findings indicated that social self-efficacy exerts an indirect effect on the unidirectional link between social use of WeChat and cross-cultural adaptation.*

Keywords: International Students, Wechat Use, Social Self-Efficacy, Cross-Cultural Adaptation, China

1. Introduction

Cross-cultural adaptation of international students is an issue that tertiary institutions have to deal with to ensure that the students can cope with the stress of adjusting to the host culture. China is currently the largest destination for international students in Asia and the third largest in the world, after the United States and the United Kingdom (English & Zhang, 2020). In 2018, a total of 492,185 international students from 196 countries and regions were enrolled at 1,004 higher education institutions across 31 provinces in China, of which 52.44% were pursuing academic studies, while 12.81% were recipients of Chinese government scholarships (MoE, 2019). The majority of international students in China are from Asia, with South Korea, Thailand, Pakistan and India being the most prevalent countries of origin (MoE, 2019). Internationalization has become a mainstream activity in higher education that continues to influence higher education today (Kufaine, 2024), and student mobility is an important component of internationalization in higher education (Liu, 2021).

Some of the challenges in cross-cultural adaptation experienced by international students include social functioning and academic functioning skills (Athukorala, 2021). It is expected that they have language barriers but they also often encounter academic challenges, social problems and isolation, and relationship anxiety (Gong et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2018).

Research shows that social networking can mitigate the stress experienced by international students in a new cultural environment (Hassan et al., 2021; Pang & Wang, 2020). However, international students in China cannot freely access Facebook, Google, and Twitter due to political restrictions since 2009 (Athukorala, 2021). Consequently, WeChat has emerged as a significant platform for international students in China to socially connect and interact within the country (Cao & Jia, 2024).

Use of social media may facilitate socio-cultural processes of cross-cultural adaptation (Zhu & Krever, 2017). Nevertheless, the precise mechanisms through which this facilitation occurs remain to be elucidated (Li & Peng, 2019). Social acceptance is a key determinant of adjustment in educational settings (Bandura et al., 1996). In the case of international students, social self-confidence and competence are crucial for gaining acceptance in culturally different educational and social environments (Fan & Mak, 1998). Individuals' beliefs about social skills and confidence affect a wide variety of indices of adjustment (Toyokawa & Toyokawa, 2002). Individuals' perceived social confidence, also known as social self-efficacy, is associated with personal psychological adaptation (Betz et al., 2003) and influences various domains of an individual's life experience, including social adaptation and academic performance (Herman & Betz, 2004; Smith & Betz, 2000). Self-efficacy beliefs in the social domain are significantly associated with various aspects of adjustment. The relationship between international students' cross-cultural adaptation and their social self-efficacy is a particularly promising area for future investigation (Lin, 2006).

Despite the potential role of social media use and social self-efficacy in the process of international students' intercultural adjustment, past studies have not investigated these two variables together with international students' intercultural adjustment. Consequently, there is a paucity of knowledge regarding the relationship between the three variables. By investigating social self-efficacy as an intermediate variable between WeChat use and cross-cultural adaptation among international students, it will be possible to reveal the indirect effects of international students' social media use on their cross-cultural adaptation. This will further enrich the research on cross-cultural adjustments.

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between WeChat use, social self-efficacy, and cross-cultural adaptation among international students in China. The specific aspects examined were the prior cross-cultural exposure of international students, and the indirect role of social self-efficacy in the relationship between WeChat use and cross-cultural adjustment.

2. Method

The preliminary study using a correlational research design involved 24 international students currently studying in China. Table 1 shows that the respondents with a majority aged 18-25 were predominantly female (58.33%). Most of them came from Asian countries (83.33%), and 70.83% did not have any Chinese family members. In terms of educational background, 83.33% of respondents were university students, 50% of whom majored in education and management. The majority of Chinese Proficiency Test (HSK) candidates (70.83%) achieved

level 4, while 54.17% of international students stayed in China for more than one year and 41.67% used Chinese more than two hours a day after entering China.

Table 1: Background information on respondents (N=24)

Background		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	14	58.33
	Male	10	41.67
Age	Under 18 years old	1	4.17
	18-25	21	87.50
	Over 25	2	8.33
Regional	Asian countries	20	83.33
	African countries	2	4.17
	Other countries	3	12.50
Education	Undergraduate	20	83.33
	Postgraduate	2	8.33
	Other	2	8.33
Major	Literature	5	20.83
	Education	6	25.00
	Management	6	25.00
	Other	7	29.17
HSK (Chinese Proficiency Test)	HSK Level 4	17	70.83
	HSK Level 5	6	25.00
	HSK Level 6	1	4.17
Time spent in China	Under 3 months	2	8.33
	3-6 months	2	8.33
	6-12 months	7	29.17
	More than 1 year	13	54.17
How often do you use the Chinese language after your arrival in China?	Less than 30 minutes per day	4	16.67
	30-60 minutes per day	7	29.17
	1-2 hours per day	3	12.5
	More than 2 hours per day	10	41.67

The questionnaire focused on four key areas: the prior cross-cultural exposure (4 items), use of WeChat (20 items), social self-efficacy (16 items), and cross-cultural adaptation (31 items). The items were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 for strongly disagree, 5 for strongly agree). It is important to establish their prior cross-cultural exposure because if the respondents have extensive exposure to the host country culture, then their cross-cultural adaptation is less challenging. When the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient $\alpha > .7$, it means that the scale has good reliability (George & Mallery, 2019). Table 2 shows that Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha > .7$) for the three components of WeChat use, social self-efficacy, and cross-cultural adaptation indicate acceptable internal consistency.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics (N=24)

	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Prior cross-cultural exposure	.425	.425	4
WeChat use	.961	.961	20
Social self-efficacy	.969	.970	16
Cross-cultural adaptation	.970	.970	31

The questionnaire was constructed using the online platform “Questionnaire Star” and the link was disseminated to international students in China and their acquaintances via WeChat. The data was downloaded as an Excel spreadsheet, coded, and subjected to further analysis. The frequencies and percentages were calculated in order to determine the extent of WeChat use, social self-efficacy, and cross-cultural adaptation among international students in China. Pearson correlation was conducted to analyse the relationship between WeChat use, social self-efficacy, and cross-cultural adaptation among international students in China.

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of a study investigating prior cross-cultural exposure, the use of WeChat, social self-efficacy and cross-cultural adaptation among international students in China. This study will analyse the social self-efficacy of international students in China as an indirect factor of the impact of their WeChat use on cross-cultural adaptation.

3.1 Prior cross-cultural exposure

The results on prior cross-cultural exposure in Table 3 showed that the respondents had minimal exposure to Chinese culture before they came to China as international students. Indicator of international exchange experience is the number of family members and friends from other countries as well as exposure through visits and videos or movies. A total of 70.83% of the respondents had no family members who are Chinese but two of them (8.33%) had two family members who are Chinese and five (20.83%) had more than two family members who are Chinese. For the 20.83% of the respondents, Chinese culture is less alien.

Table 3: Prior cross-cultural exposure of international students in China (N=24)

Cross-cultural Exposure		Frequency	Percentage
How many family members are from other races (i.e. not Chinese)?	None	17	70.83
	1-2	2	8.33
	More than 2	5	20.83
How many friends from other countries do you have?	None	2	8.33
	1	6	25.00
	2	5	20.83
	More than 2	11	45.83
How many other countries have you visited?	None	5	20.83
	1	15	62.50
	2	2	8.33
	More than 2	2	8.33
How often do you watch movies/videos about other countries?	None	0	0
	1 - 2 times in a week	16	66.67
	3 - 4 times in a week	3	12.50
	More than 5 times in a week	3	20.83

Less than half (45.83%) of the respondents reported that they have more than two friends from other countries, but 8.33% did not have any friends from other countries. We did not ask if their friends were from China because the main purpose of the item was to find out how much exposure they had to foreign cultures through friendship. Cross-cultural exposure through visiting other countries was minimal as well. Five respondents (20.83%) had never been outside of China while 62.50% had visited one country and 8.33% had visited two countries. However, 8.33% had visited more than two countries, and would have more knowledge and experience of other countries than the 90% of the respondents.

Lastly, all the respondents had indirect exposure to other cultures through movies or videos but to different extents. A total of 66.67% watched videos from other countries one to two times a

week while 12.50% watched videos three to four times in a week. Another 20.83% watched movies/videos about other countries more than five times a week. Putting all the information together, probably 20%-50% of the respondents had more cross-cultural exposure through mixed marriages in the family, friends from other countries, travelling to other countries, and watching movies/videos about other countries.

3.2 WeChat usage among international students in China

Table 4 shows that WeChat use is high among the respondents because 50% of respondents reported using WeChat for more than two hours per day, and only 8.33% used WeChat for less than 30 minutes per day. As to when they started using WeChat, 79.17% reported that they had been using WeChat for over a year. The information tallies with the demographic information (Table 1) whereby 83.34% of the respondents had been in China for more than 6 months (29.17% for 6-12 months, 54.17% for more than 1 year). Since they arrived in China, the majority of respondents have incorporated WeChat into their social lives on a regular basis.

Table 4: Frequency of WeChat usage among international students in China (N=24)

		Frequency	Percentage
How often do you use WeChat?	Less than 30 minutes per day	2	8.33
	30-60 minutes per day	7	29.12
	1-2 hours per day	3	12.5
	More than 2 hours per day	12	50.00
When did you start using WeChat?	Less than 3 months ago	1	4.17
	3-6 months ago	2	8.33
	6-12 months ago	2	8.33
	More than 1 year ago	19	79.1

Table 5 shows the specifics of WeChat usage among international students in China. As a score of “1” means “strongly disagree” and a score of “5” is “strongly agree”, the mean scores indicate a positive attitude towards WeChat.

Table 5: WeChat usage among international students in China (N=24)

Item	Mean	SD
1. WeChat is free to use	5.00	1.43
2. WeChat is easy to use	4.50	1.50
3. WeChat is useful to make life easier in China	4.50	1.27
4. I use WeChat to make new friends	4.50	1.07
5. I find that using WeChat can improve my Chinese language skills	4.00	1.18
6. I use WeChat can strengthen social ties	4.00	1.17
7. I use WeChat can strengthen social support	4.00	1.05
8. I use WeChat to get to know Chinese culture	4.00	1.02
9. I use WeChat to talk about life problems	3.50	1.30
10. I use WeChat to keep in touch with friends	3.50	1.27
11. I use WeChat to talk about study problems	3.50	1.14
12. I use WeChat can help me integrate into life in China faster	3.50	1.11
13. I use WeChat can bring me closer to my friends in other countries	3.50	1.07
14. I use WeChat to participate in Chinese social activities	3.50	0.97
15. I have a lot of WeChat friends	3.00	1.41
16. I use WeChat to get study resources	3.00	1.10
17. I use WeChat can strengthen emotional support	3.00	1.10
18. I am proud to tell people that I'm on WeChat	3.00	1.06
19. I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto WeChat for some time	2.50	1.32
20. I use WeChat can overcome homesickness or loneliness	2.50	1.01
Overall	3.63	1.18

Note: 1 for Strongly disagree and 5 for Strongly agree

WeChat is useful to the respondents, and it is free (M=5.00) and easy to use (M=4.50). They concurred that WeChat is a user-friendly platform that makes life easier in China (M=4.50) and helps them to make new friends (M=4.50).

WeChat facilitates a more seamless life in China helping them to engage with the people in the community. WeChat also facilitates the acquisition of Chinese language skills (M=4.0), an understanding of Chinese society and culture (M=4.0). Additionally, they noted that WeChat can facilitate the formation of new friendships, access to social support, and the strengthening of social relationships (range of 4.00 to 4.50). This suggests that international students in China can readily utilize WeChat for social interaction and social life once they have settled in the host country, which in turn will facilitate their social-cultural adaptation.

The international students in China participating in this study indicated that even if they did not log in to WeChat for an extended period, they did not necessarily lose contact. This is because they have means to access other social networking platforms and keep in touch with their family, friends and other contacts in their home country. Furthermore, they perceived that WeChat use did not significantly contribute to overcoming feelings of loneliness (M=2.50). This could be attributed to the fact that their family members and friends were not utilizing WeChat, and the connection between them was still maintained through the original social media.

Furthermore, the respondents are uncertain as to whether utilizing WeChat to discuss academic and personal matters can facilitate the maintenance of connections with friends both domestically and internationally. WeChat is, after all, a social networking platform. Academic discussions require more extensive communication and are perhaps more effective when conducted face-to-face. Moreover, it is uncertain whether the use of WeChat can facilitate the integration of international students into Chinese society and culture more rapidly because there were mixed responses for this item (M=3.00).

3.3 Social self-efficacy among international students in China

Table 6 provides five-point Likert scale mean values for the items measuring social self-efficacy of international students in China. The scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The findings indicate that international students in China exhibit relatively high levels of social self-efficacy (M=3.06). They also demonstrate positive attitudes towards their social skills and confidence in their host countries.

Table 6: Social self-efficacy among international students in China (N=24)

Item	Mean	SD
1. I am confident to make friends with people my own age	4.50	1.14
2. I am confident to attend parties or social events where there are people I know	4.50	1.04
3. I am confident in expressing my feelings to others	3.50	1.18
4. I am confident to ask someone to go out for a meal or to spend time together I use WeChat to talk about study problems	3.50	1.12
5. I am confident in responding to an invitation to a party hosted by a well-known or popular person	3.50	1.08
6. I am confident in volunteering to lead a group or organization	3.50	0.94
7. I am confident to make friends in a group where everyone knows each other	3.50	0.90
8. I am confident to work with unfamiliar people on school, work, community, or other projects	3.00	0.95
9. I am confident to put myself in a new and different social situation	3.00	0.93
10. I am confident to ask for help when I need it	2.50	1.24
11. I am confident to join a table at lunch or dinner when there are already people sitting and talking	2.50	1.17

12. I am confident to share interesting experiences I have had with a group of people		
13. I am confident in volunteering to help organize an event	2.50	1.00
14. I am confident to make them acquaintances feel comfortable in my circle of friends	2.50	1.09
15. I am confident to express my opinion in a group of people discussing a topic that interests me	2.50	0.88
	2.00	1.02
16. I am confident to start a conversation with someone I don't know well		
	2.00	0.85
Overall	3.06	1.03

Note: 1 for Strongly disagree and 5 for Strongly agree

In general, international students in China may be less confident when talking to strangers or expressing their opinions (M=2.00), which may be related to the Asian trait of being reserved and shy in a general sense (Ungson & Braunstein, 2004), as 83.33% of the international students in China in this study were from Asian countries. Nevertheless, they demonstrated considerable social skills in responding to invitations, leading groups, expressing feelings, and making friends in a circle of acquaintances (M=3.50). In particular, they exhibit a high level of confidence in forming friendships with their peers and attending social events with acquaintances (M=4.50). These findings indicate that they are able to cope positively with challenges in unfamiliar cultural environments.

3.4 Cross-cultural adaptation among international students in China

The level of intercultural adaptation of the international students in China was also measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), as shown in Table 7. In general, the mean of the intercultural adaptation level of international students in China is situated above the mid-point of three, indicating that cross-cultural adaptation is satisfactory.

There was only one item with a mean score of below three (Item 31, M=2.50). The respondents did not seem to know much about the basic laws and regulations in China, which may be due to their status as international students who do not often encounter problems with laws and regulations in China.

Table 7: Cross-cultural adaptation among international students in China (N=24)

Item	Mean	SD
1. I respect the values and cultural norms of China	5.00	0.93
2. I had a full life in China	5.00	0.88
3. I can handle the daily problems I face in China	4.50	1.12
4. I am satisfied that my teachers provide the necessary support when I need it	4.50	1.03
5. I am satisfied with my academic progress	4.50	0.93
6. I am satisfied with the support at my university	4.50	0.91
7. I can deal with unsatisfactory service	4.50	0.91
8. I can make others understand me	4.50	0.88
9. I am satisfied with expressing myself in class	4.50	0.87
10. I am satisfied with my new teacher's teaching style	4.50	0.86
11. I know where to buy basic necessities in China	4.00	1.26
12. I know how to travel in China	4.00	1.04
13. I can insist on to anything	4.00	0.94
14. I can deal with unpleasant/excessive/aggressive people	4.00	0.91
15. I know how to survive on my own budget in China	4.00	0.81
16. I understand the requirements of the university and am satisfied	4.00	0.76
17. I enjoy the local food and music of China	3.50	1.04
18. I find it easy to make decisions in China	3.50	1.03
19. I understand the holidays and rituals of China	3.50	1.01

20. I feel that I fit in China	3.50	1.00
21. I am adapting to the way of life in China	3.50	0.94
22. I know how to cope with anxiety	3.50	0.87
23. My classmates are there for me when I need help	3.00	1.07
24. I know what to do in an emergency in China	3.00	1.03
25. I feel powerful in China	3.00	0.92
26. I felt at ease about talking to locals	3.00	0.91
27. I still enjoy the things I used to enjoy in China	3.00	0.87
28. I feel close to China's social environment	3.00	0.87
29. I feel capable in China	3.00	0.82
30. I believe I have integrated into the culture in China	3.00	0.70
31. I know the basic legal regulations in China	2.50	0.94
Overall	3.79	0.94

Note: 1 for Strongly disagree and 5 for Strongly agree

The international students in China are satisfied with academic support (M=4.50), and they are largely able to make themselves understood by others and deal with unsatisfactory services and problems in daily life (M=4.50). They respect Chinese values and cultural norms and feel that life in China is fulfilling (M=5.00). They are able to travel in China, adhere to any lifestyle they choose, purchase essential items, and survive on a budget (M=4.00). These findings indicate that international students are adapting well to the social and cultural environment in China.

Of course, there are many uncertain situations in the process of cross-cultural adaptation for international students in China, who are not sure that they have integrated into Chinese life. This is because they are not sure of their proximity to the Chinese social environment and their ability to handle emergencies as well as feel comfortable talking to locals (M=3.00).

A key point to note is that 54.17% of international students in China remained in the country for more than one year. This implies that their social interactions and social activities during this period of time have an impact on their current level of intercultural adaptation. The intercultural adaptation of the international student respondents in China in terms of coping with unpleasant people (M=4.00), dealing with unsatisfactory services (M=4.50), being able to make others understand me (M=4.50), and being adapted to the Chinese way of life (M=3.50) indicates to a large extent the social skills and social confidence the individual possesses in their social activities.

3.5 Relationship between WeChat usage, social self-efficacy and cross-culture adaptation

In order to ensure the statistical significance of the results of the analysis of this questionnaire, the reliability of the measurement scales of WeChat Use, Social Self-Efficacy and Cross-cultural Adaptation of international students in Chengdu, China was analysed in the research adoption using the SPSS24.0 statistical software.

The Pearson correlation test (Table 8) indicates that $p < .01$, which suggests that there is a significant correlation between the variables. Specifically, there is a positive correlation between WeChat use and social self-efficacy ($r=.720^{**}$, $p=.0001$) and cross-cultural adjustment ($r=.736^{**}$, $p=.0001$) among international students in China. Additionally, there is a positive correlation between social self-efficacy and its cross-cultural adjustment ($r=.714^{**}$, $p=.0001$). The more frequently individuals use WeChat to socialize and communicate in the host country, the higher their sense of Cronbach's Alpha social efficacy and the more likely they are to have good cross-cultural adaptation.

In other words, international students in Chengdu, China, who regularly use WeChat to obtain information, socialize, and maintain social relationships are likely to have higher social self-efficacy and are more likely to have a positive impact on their cross-cultural adaptation. It is reasonable to hypothesize that for international students in China, social self-efficacy may be an indirectly effective factor influencing their WeChat use for cross-cultural adaptation.

Table 8: Correlations between WeChat use, social self-efficacy and cross-cultural adaptation (N=24)

	WeChat use	Social self-efficacy	Cross-cultural adaptation
WeChat use	1	.720**	.736**
Social self-efficacy		1	.714**
Cross-cultural adaptation			1

Note: **Significantly correlated at the .01 level

4. Conclusion

A study of the relationship between the use of WeChat, social self-efficacy and cross-cultural adaptation among international students in Chengdu, China, found that the frequent use of WeChat contributed to their social self-efficacy, which in turn supported their cross-cultural adaptation. The frequent use of WeChat enhances the capacity and self-assurance of international students to engage socially in the host country. This, in turn, contributes to their more straightforward integration into Chinese society and better coping with the challenges of daily life, academic adaptation, social-cultural adaptation, psychological adaptation, and language barriers. The following section will present two noteworthy findings.

Firstly, for international students in China, a particular challenge of cross-cultural adaptation is interpersonal interaction and social integration in an unfamiliar host environment (Yu & Guo, 2021). The use of social media can promote the development of relationships between individuals from diverse backgrounds, thereby forming a rich social structure. Furthermore, the influence of social media on an individual's capacity to engage in social activities is evident (Hall, 2018). The use of WeChat helps international students in China to develop a strong sense of social awareness, facilitate their social interactions and exchanges, enhance their social skills and social confidence, and improve their cross-cultural adaptation, these findings are in accordance with the research propositions put forth by Cao and Jia (2024). The use of the Chinese social media platform WeChat provides international students with a convenient way to engage in social activities within the host country. This, in turn, promotes the formation of new social connections, making them more confident and capable of socializing and adapting to different cultural environments.

The results indicate a high correlation between the use of WeChat, social self-efficacy and cross-cultural adaptation among international students in China. It also means that the intensity of WeChat use can help and improve international students' social relationships and cultural adaptation in the host country. Social networking make the process of cultural adaptation easier, especially in terms of improving language skills and finding information (Durham, 2004; Nseke, 2018). Those with a higher degree of social self-efficacy are typically able to cope with social interactions and tend to experience positive emotions when faced with various life stressors (Chiu, 2014), the use of WeChat contributes to self-improvement (Qiu, 2018), whereas, international students with high social self-efficacy are more likely to cope with psychological isolation, academic performance, cultural pressures, and other issues associated with cross-cultural adaptation (Lin & Bets, 2009; Tsai et al., 2017). It can be hypothesised that the use of WeChat and social self-efficacy may serve as important factors influencing the cross-

cultural adaptation of international students in their host country. It is proposed that frequent WeChat use and higher social self-efficacy may facilitate positive interactions between international students and assist them in adapting to the socio-cultural, daily life, academic activities, and affective adaptations of their host country, this finding also supports the claims of the previous study (Hassan et al., 2021; Pedersen et al., 2011; Zhao, 2019).

Secondly, the findings indicate that international students' WeChat use is associated with their social self-efficacy, which in turn affects their cross-cultural adaptation. This suggests that there may be an indirect moderating effect of social self-efficacy in the causal mechanism of WeChat use on their cross-cultural adaptation. Socializing in an unfamiliar environment can be challenging for international students, but knowledge of the dominant culture can alleviate intergroup anxiety and uncertainty (Stephan, 2014), while information pushing and searching on WeChat can provide the opportunity to help international students access cultural knowledge and traditions of the host society (Pang, 2020). WeChat can be considered an instrumental resource that effectively motivates international students to engage in academic and social activities (Cao et al., 2024). Furthermore, WeChat serves as an effective tool for facilitating cross-cultural exposure, which enhances international students' competence and confidence in socializing in the host country, in line with Yan's (2018) findings. International students' social skills are important in their ability to cope with culture shock, and positive social interaction in the host country plays an important role in their cultural adaptation (Chapdelaine & Alexitch, 2004). In addition, international students who more actively use local social media to interact and socialize with locals may receive more social support from locals, as social support is usually embedded in social relationships (Li & Peng, 2019). Social support contributes to social self-efficacy, and promotes students' academic adaptation (Carmeli et al., 2021). The findings from these studies concur to show that WeChat social tools help international students to access information, strengthen social support and interpersonal relationships while increasing their social self-efficacy, and help them to cope with the socio-cultural as well as academic aspects of cross-cultural adaptation. In other words, it is likely that social self-efficacy plays an intermediate moderating role in the effect of international students' WeChat use on their cross-cultural adaptation. It may have been the case that WeChat use was an antecedent to behavioral engagement, with the information, emotional, academic and social support received enhancing their social self-efficacy and indirectly engaging in the outcome of cross-cultural adaptation.

Nevertheless, several limitations need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the findings are based on a limited sample of international students in Chengdu, China, which is a relatively small sample size. Future studies can further expand the sample in order to obtain findings which are more representative of international students in China. Secondly, our study solely examined the use of WeChat social media by international students in China, and did not investigate other popular Chinese apps such as microblog, TikTok and QQ Messenger. Consequently, future research could investigate the utilization of other Chinese social media platforms by international students and compare the respective roles these platforms play in their cross-cultural adaptation process. Finally, our study proposed a relationship between international students' social media use, their social self-efficacy and cross-cultural adaptation. It also revealed the interrelationships between the study variables. However, there is no clarity on how social self-efficacy moderates the effect of WeChat use on cross-cultural adaptation among international students in China. Furthermore, the existence of an indirect influence mechanism in this relationship needs to be further investigated.

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