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International students' education for global peace: Insights from master students of international media studies at the Deutsche Welle Academy, Germany

 Peter Eshioke Egielewa¹,  Blessed Frederick Ngonso², Udochukwu Chidi Nwankwo³,  Fadera Ebrima⁴,  Kingsley Eghonghon Ukhurebor^{5*}

^{1,2}Department of Mass Communication, Edo State University Uzairue, Edo State, Nigeria.

³ACETEL, National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria.

⁴University of The Gambia, Brikama, Gambia.

⁵Department of Physics, Edo State University Uzairue, Edo State, Nigeria.

Corresponding Author: Kingsley Eghonghon Ukhurebor (Email: ukeghonghon@gmail.com)

Abstract

This study examines international students' education for global peace. Students who leave their home countries for educational tourism abroad encounter several challenges: a language barrier, cultural, ethical, and different educational systems, amongst others. Studies have shown that many international students face many challenges because of the need to interact in their new environment; these include communication problems (language), culture shock, the adaptation of value changes, and adjustment to new or completely different ethical principles, amongst others. Hence, this study investigates how 27 international students from 5 continents and 23 countries at the Master's Programme "International Media Studies" (IMS) at the Deutsche Welle Academy in Bonn, Germany, who graduated in 2016, communicated, collaborated, and peacefully coexisted during their two years of studies. Based on the mixed research method and the instrument of the questionnaire, the study is anchored on the symbolic interactionism theory. Findings show that American and African students were the fastest to adjust to an international setting. Findings also reveal that American students are the most optimistic about the IMS programme helping to promote global peace, while African and European students are less optimistic. The study recommends that African and Asian international students should learn more about the culture of the host country when they travel abroad for studies, especially on issues of politeness, patience, and tolerance, and international students, in general, should understand the ethical issues surrounding giving tips when they travel abroad for studies.

Keywords: Communication, Culture, Education, Media studies, Peace, Students.

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Transparency: The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The Ethical Committee of the Department of Mass Communication, Edo State University Uzairue, Edo State, Nigeria has granted approval for this study on 13 December 2022 (Ref. No. EDSU/DECR/22/0005).

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1. Introduction

Due to the effect of globalisation that has made the world a global village, international students are defined as "students who have crossed a national or territorial border for education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin." UNESCO Institute for Statistics [1] moves across continents and countries for education and tourism. According to The UNESCO, as of 2018, 5.6 million international students were studying outside their home countries [2, 3]. At postgraduate levels, international students are attracted to certain factors: the affordability of postgraduate tuition fees, the possibility of English-taught programmes, the possibility of accessing scholarships, the affordable living standards of international students, and acquiring quality educational experience [4, 5].

International students' mobility can be seen from a dual perspective: the host country's view and the international students view. From the perspective of host country, international students enrich the classroom with intercultural awareness, which boosts economic prospects by bringing many skilled workers. For example, in 2013 alone, international students contributed 400 million euros to the German economy, and their presence helped create 22,000 jobs. The majority of international students come primarily from six countries, namely: the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, Germany, and the Russian Federation. Also, the prominent sending countries of international students are China, India, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Nigeria, France, and Saudi Arabia [6] (see Figure 1). From the students' view, international students seek quality educational infrastructure, access to specializations that are not available in the students' native countries, exposure to other cultural experiences, and better future and prospective immigration opportunities [7].





















Top 10 sending countries of international students to Germany					
2013			2018		
Country of origin	Number	Percentage (%)	Country of origin	Number	Percentage (%)
 China	25,564	12.5	 China	36,915	13.1
 Russia	10,912	5.3	 India	17,294	6.1
 Austria	8,655	4.2	 Austria	11,130	3.9
 India	7,255	3.6	 Russia	10,795	3.8
 Bulgaria	6,764	3.3	 Italy	8,908	3.1
 Turkey	6,666	3.3	 Syria	8,618	3.1
 Poland	6,575	3.2	 Turkey	7,633	2.7
 Ukraine	6,264	3.1	 Iran	7,527	2.7
 France	6,023	2.9	 Cameroon	7,344	2.6
 Cameroon	5,833	2.9	 France	7,202	2.6

Figure 1. Top sending countries of international students' mobility to Germany between 2013 and 2018. Source: DAAD/German centre for higher education research and science studies.

In 2016, Germany overtook France to become the fourth country in the world hosting international students after the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. It has now become the first non-English-speaking country in that category. In 2017, Germany accommodated 358,895 international students. It has far exceeded the 350,000 mark the country set for itself for international students it wants to accommodate by 2020 [5]. This was consistent with the German "internationalization strategy" policy, which in 2013 was designed to attract the world's "smartest minds" by boosting international students' enrolment by at least 30% by 2020. Germany particularly sought young, graduate students with some level of German language competence [5].

Studies have shown that many international students face many challenges because of the need to interact in their new environment. These include communication problems (language), culture shock, the adaptation of value changes, and adjustment to new or completely different ethical principles, among others. Newsome and Cooper [4]; Wang, et al. [8]; Ngonso and Egielewa [9]; Mahmud and Foong [10]; Egielewa and Balogun [11] and Ngonso [12]. Natarova [7] identified some of the key challenges for international students, which include cultural and religious problems, lifestyle differences, social rules, social behaviours, and gender relations. These can naturally lead to communication problems and interpersonal conflicts [13, 14]. However, the extent to which international students overcome these problems depends on several factors, namely the length of stay, differences between host and home cultures, and the environment in which they live in the host countries [7, 15].

In a study of 454 international students, Gareis (2012) (cited in Wang, et al. [8]) found out that 40% of "international students who are non-native English speakers (NNS) did not have American friends and sought more interactions with American students, and international students from East Asian countries had the least positive friendship experience in the United States than those from English-speaking countries and Northern and Central Europe" (p.556), which showed that the communication between non-native English-speaking international students and Americans was not harmonious. In another study, Udende, et al. [16] conducted a study to investigate the communication experience of 150 international students of the University of Ilorin, Nigeria. Findings show that 4 out of every 5 students reported difficulty communicating efficiently with their host counterparts due to cultural differences. Mahmud and Foong [10] found in a study of 42 international students at the Centre for American Education, Sunway University, Malaysia, that cultural awareness and knowledge of the host institution were two key cultural variables that can quicken a student's smooth acculturation process in a foreign university. In a study of 203 international students at the University of Illinois, Shupe [17] found out that international students face several challenges in foreign universities and experience interpersonal conflicts due to sociocultural differences in their new study environments.

There are, however, no known studies that have been carried out on intercultural communication challenges amongst international Masters students at the Deutsche Welle Academy in Bonn, Germany, and the possibility for such challenges to contribute to promoting global peace. The International Masters students who study International Media Studies at the Deutsche Welle Academy in the city of Bonn in Germany encounter intercultural communication challenges. This study investigates how the students who undertook the Master's programme from September 2014 to September 2016 perceive these problems in the context of their study period in Germany and how they interpret this vis-a-vis the promotion of global peace.

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What foreign languages can international IMS Master students communicate in?
2. To what extent are IMS Master Students able to communicate with a foreign audience?
3. What challenges do international IMS students encounter during their studies?
4. What kinds of ethical issues did IMS Master students encounter during their studies?
5. To what degree does the IMS Master's study contribute to global peace?

The following hypothesis has been developed to be tested in this study:

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant relationship between the continent of origin of international IMS Masters students and their perception of the IMS Master's programme being able to contribute to global peace.

2. Literature Review

2.1. International Students and Foreign Cultures

International students who seek educational experiences abroad encounter cultural differences referred to as "culture shock," described as a situation in which "individuals find themselves faced with challenges to their deeply held beliefs and understandings, which in turn pose potential threats to their sense of identity and sense of well-being" (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008, cited in Newsome and Cooper [4]). This occurs because such students find themselves in an "unfamiliar culture, language, economy, education, government, and society" and "lost" citizenship from their home countries, and they suddenly find themselves belonging to a "minority group" [4]. Consequently, the students pass from the initial culture shock and crisis to a harmonious assimilation of new cultural experiences in what Devito (2004) (cited in Newsome and Cooper [4]) referred to as the three stages of crisis, recovery, and adjustment.

In a specific way, international students must adjust to day-to-day living, (e.g., housing, transportation etc.), social norms, cross-cultural gender relationships, anxiety; depression; stress; cultural fatigue; unfamiliar social activities and lifestyles; feelings of worthlessness; frustration, homesickness, inability to communicate in a foreign language, threats to safety, financial difficulties, alienation, isolation, bewilderment, and loneliness (for those from collectivist cultures) (Zhang & Brunton, 2007; cited in Newsome and Cooper [4] and Mahmud and Foong [10]).

The above circumstances put international students in a so-called "limbo" situation in which the student feels far away from the comfort of his home country, and the feeling of "strangeness" in the host country makes them enter minimally into a relationship, thus limiting their friends' circle [4].

International students may find it difficult to adjust in international environments or host countries if their perception of the host and their cultures are far apart. Students who have fixed expectations of family, themselves and others may experience more stress than students who do not have such expectations [4].

However, international students, through the exchange of information and ideas, contribute to cultural and language diversity in their host countries and their exposure to different cultures, which enables both parties to learn how to develop social networks and address conflicts that can arise from cultural clashes [8]. Being able to confront intercultural conflict requires what Otten (2003) called (cited in Natarova [7] and Nadeem, et al. [18]) "intercultural communication competence (ICC)" defined by Lin [19] as "the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviours that negotiate each other's cultural identity or identities in a culturally diverse environment" (p.23). Intercultural communication competence can be expanded to three components that help to build positive and effective relationships with members of other cultures, namely:

- Long-term change of a person's knowledge (cognition): This entails knowledge of oneself and about others, as well as about culture in general.

- Attitudes (emotions): This entails the openness, strength, and optimistic outlook of the individual's mind to things in general.
- Skills (behaviour): This entails a display of respect, interaction management, ambiguity tolerance, empathy, relational rather than task behaviour, and interaction posture.

In cases of cultural crisis with international students, [Nadeem, et al. \[18\]](#) have emphasised attitude towards other cultures and argued that when "attitude towards other cultures is found to be more positive, then the individual is likely to be competent in intercultural communication"(p.48) and when the individual becomes competent in intercultural communication, "friendly communication" develops, and intercultural communication apprehension (ICA) is thus avoided or resolved. [Lin \[19\]](#) defines Intercultural communication apprehension as "the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated interaction with people of different groups, especially cultural, ethnic, and/or racial groups" (p.29). This eradicates tensions and makes crises easier to resolve. Intercultural communication apprehension, because it creates insecurity for the international student, can naturally lead to conflicts. [Kapur \[20\]](#) identified ways that can ease international students' apprehension, namely; restraint from criticising local culture, avoiding breaking the law, opening up to native speakers about difficulties with the language to get help, making friends, and hanging out with natives of host countries.

In discussing a theoretical framework for this study, the symbolic interactionism theory seems apt. Symbolic interactionism explains the relationships between individuals in society, mediated essentially by language and symbols [\[21, 22\]](#). Although the theory can be traced to Max Weber, it was George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) who founded symbolic interactionism in 1920. Although he never published his work on it, it was, however, Herbert Blumer, Mead's student, who coined the term "symbolic interactionism" and outlined the basic tenet, [\[21-23\]](#):

- Humans interact with things based on the meanings ascribed to those things;
- The ascribed meaning of things comes from our interactions with others and society;
- The meanings of things are interpreted by a person when dealing with them in specific circumstances.

Symbolic-interactionism theorists identify patterns of interaction between individuals through observation of one-on-one interactions. These observations seek to identify the signs and symbols used to communicate messages [\[21-23\]](#).

Both race and gender are understood through the symbolic interactionist theorists' lens. Race and gender are social constructs, and they function based on what people believe to be true. Those beliefs make people socially input meanings into race and gender, and such socially constructed meanings of race and gender thus enable people to decide with whom to interact and how to do so [\[23\]](#).

This can be seen, for example, in the context of police brutal force against blacks in the United States. The theoretical meanings that the US police have of blacks, namely criminals, inform their brutal use of force in emergencies where blacks are involved.

Nonetheless, critics of the theory opine that the symbolic interactionism theorists emphasise the micro-level of interaction while ignoring the macro-level of society and argue that society also constructs meanings that individuals interpret and apply. An example is what the mass media inputs in the construction of meanings [\[23\]](#).

The symbolic interactionism theory best explains this study because it deals extensively with language and symbols, two key elements of culture that international students encounter when abroad. Students' ability to be successful in their educational tourism abroad is to be able to have high intercultural communication competence (ICC), which essentially this theory posits.

3. Methodology

The study used the mixed research method, namely quantitative and qualitative approaches, to understand a problem that a study seeks to solve [\[24\]](#). While the quantitative method involves the collection of quantifiable data and analysed with the aid of statistical tools, the qualitative method analyses subjective and personalized opinions of participants based on broad questions based on key terms and concepts [\[24\]](#). Data for the mixed research method are usually collected together or separately from the study participants, but they are analysed by drawing data from both the quantitative and qualitative methods.

3.1. Participants

The study population are students of the renowned Master's Degree Programme which draws students from several countries annually to study International Media Studies (IMS). It is a 4-semester course programme that started in 2009. The majority of students receive a German government scholarship (DAAD), and the course is taught in both German and English.

The study used the entire population of 27 international students from 5 continents and 23 countries that were admitted in September 2014 for the two-year Master's programme of "International Media Studies" (IMS) at the Deutsche Welle Academy in the German city of Bonn and completed their studies in September 2016.

3.2. Sample Size and Procedure

The study used a Google Form (see [Appendix A](#)) to retrieve responses from participants. Based on the [Krejcie and Morgan \[25\]](#) formula for determining sample size, a population of between 20 and 29 people require a sample size of 19. However, the sample size for this study based on the respondents that filled out the online Google Form is 17 (see [Table 1](#)), which is 90% of the required sample size and is representative enough for the reliability of the study. The Google Form

questionnaire link was sent to the Alumni WhatsApp group of the 2014-2016 IMS class and collected responses from November 18th to November 30th, 2020.

Table 1.
Respondents and sample size of the research.

S/no	Continent	Country	Male	Female	Total number of IMS students (2014-2016)	Sample size
1.	Africa	Nigeria	2	0	2	1
2.		Cameroon	0	1	1	
3.		Senegal	1	0	1	
4.		Uganda	0	1	1	1
5.		Tanzania	0	1	1	1
6.	Asia	Hong-Kong	0	1	1	
7.		Indonesia	0	1	1	1
8.		Pakistan	1	0	1	1
9.		Afghanistan	1	0	1	
10.		Iran	0	1	1	1
11.		Syria	1	0	1	
12.	Europe	Spain	0	1	1	1
13.		Macedonia	0	1	1	
14.		Ukraine	0	1	1	1
15.		Russia	0	1	1	1
16.		Switzerland	0	1	1	1
17.		Germany	0	3	3	2
18.	South America	Brazil	0	1	1	
19.		Colombia	1	1	2	1
20.		Peru	0	1	1	1
21.		Ecuador	0	1	1	1
22.		Bolivia	0	1	1	1
23.	North America	USA	0	1	1	1
	5	23	7	20	27	17

4. Findings/Results

The results of this study are presented below under the respective research questions.

Research question one: What foreign languages can international IMS Master students communicate in?

Figure 2 indicates that about 4 in every 5 students of the IMS Master students graduating class spoke both English and German, and 1 in 10 students spoke French. These results show that at the onset of the programme many of the students who came for the IMS programme had an international personality because they could communicate in at least one international language.

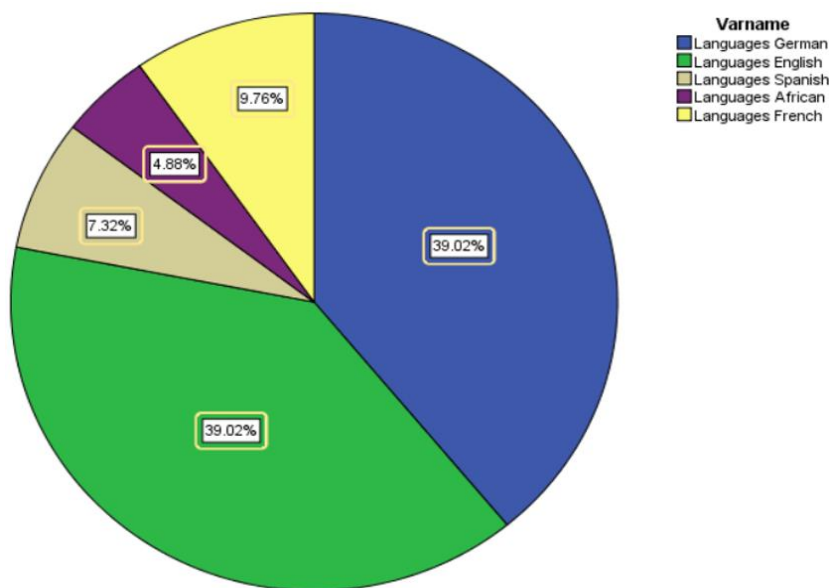


Figure 2.
International languages by IMS masters students of Deutsche Welle Academy Germany in the 2016 graduation year.

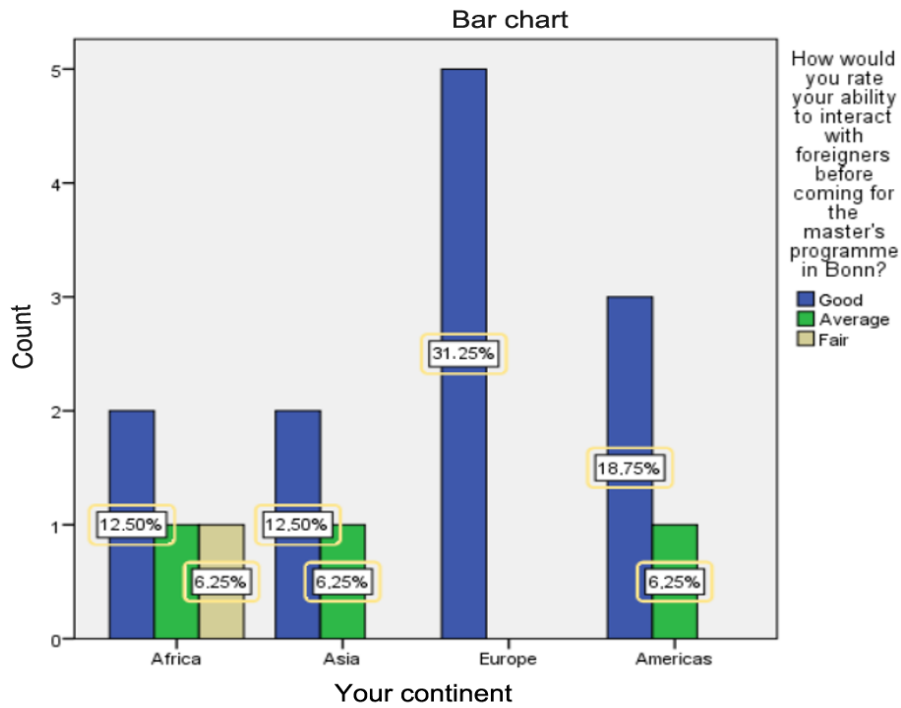


Figure 3. How international students assess their communicative competence before the IMS masters studies at the Deutsche Welle Academy Germany in the 2014 admission year.

Research question two: To what extent are IMS Master students able to communicate with a foreign audience?

Figure 3 shows how international students assessed their international communicative competence before they began their IMS studies in Germany in 2014. Data shows that European students (31.25%) had the highest competence in terms of communicating with an international audience, while African students had the least international competence with a 6.25% "fair" evaluation. Data in Figure 4 shows, however, that at the end of the two-year Master's programme, American students (25%) had the highest level of international communicative competence, with Asians having the least international competence outlook. The results show that Americans and Africans were the fastest to adjust in an international setting, with their evaluations of themselves rising while those of Europeans and Asians declined.

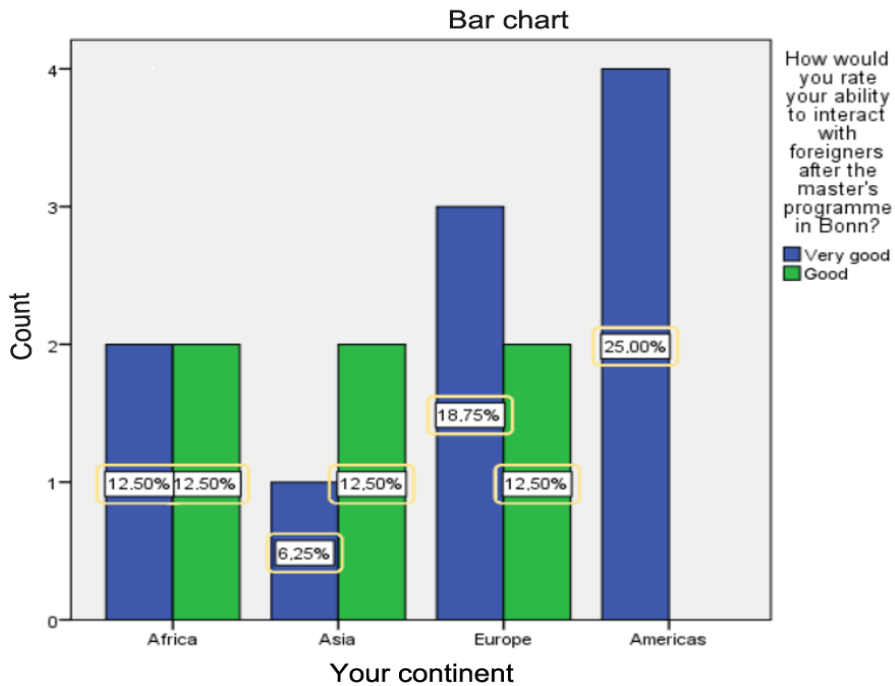


Figure 4. How international students assess their communicative competence after the IMS masters studies at the Deutsche Welle Academy Germany in the 2016 graduation year.

Table 2.
Major challenges encountered by IMS masters students of Deutsche Welle Academy Germany between 2014 and 2016.

		Barriers								Total
		Language barrier	Cultural differences	Different ethical principles	Different understanding of time	Differences in understanding male and female roles in general	Differences in relating to roles of persons in a group	Differences in the educational system	Different understanding of politeness, patience and tolerance	
Continent	Africa	1	3	3	1	1	1	2	3	15 (36%)
	Asia	3	2	1	1	0	1	1	3	12 (29%)
	Europe	0	1	1	0	1	3	1	2	9 (21%)
	Americas	0	1	0	2	0	0	2	1	6 (14%)
Total percentage		4 (10%)	7 (17%)	5 (12%)	4 (10%)	2 (4%)	5 (12%)	6 (14%)	9 (21%)	42(100%)

Research question three: What challenges do international IMS students encounter during their studies?

Table 2 shows that the majority of international students at the IMS Masters studies at the Deutsche Welle had the problem of a different understanding of politeness, patience, and tolerance (21%) when faced with an international audience, with the problem of understanding male and female roles in general being the least challenging (4%). Similarly, African students (36%) and Asian students (29%) had the most challenges, while American students had the least challenges (14%). These data confirm the data in Figure 5, which show that American students have the most international communicative competence.

Research question four: What kinds of ethical issues did IMS Master students encounter during their studies?

Figure 5 shows that European and African students were uncomfortable with giving tips to people who were simply doing their jobs (n=4). In other words, people can be given tips, but this shouldn't be the norm. Similarly, the majority of Asian and European students (n=3) discovered that all jobs should be treated equally without discrimination, that it would be socially unethical to consider some jobs more important than others. The least problem for most students was writing exams without external assistance. However, European students still believed it was an ethical issue to be taken seriously (n=1). In general, apart from the ethical issues of giving tips to people who were doing their jobs and respecting all kinds of jobs, Asian students had the least ethical issues to deal with (n=5 in total) when compared to European students, who had the most ethical issues to worry about (n=14 in total).

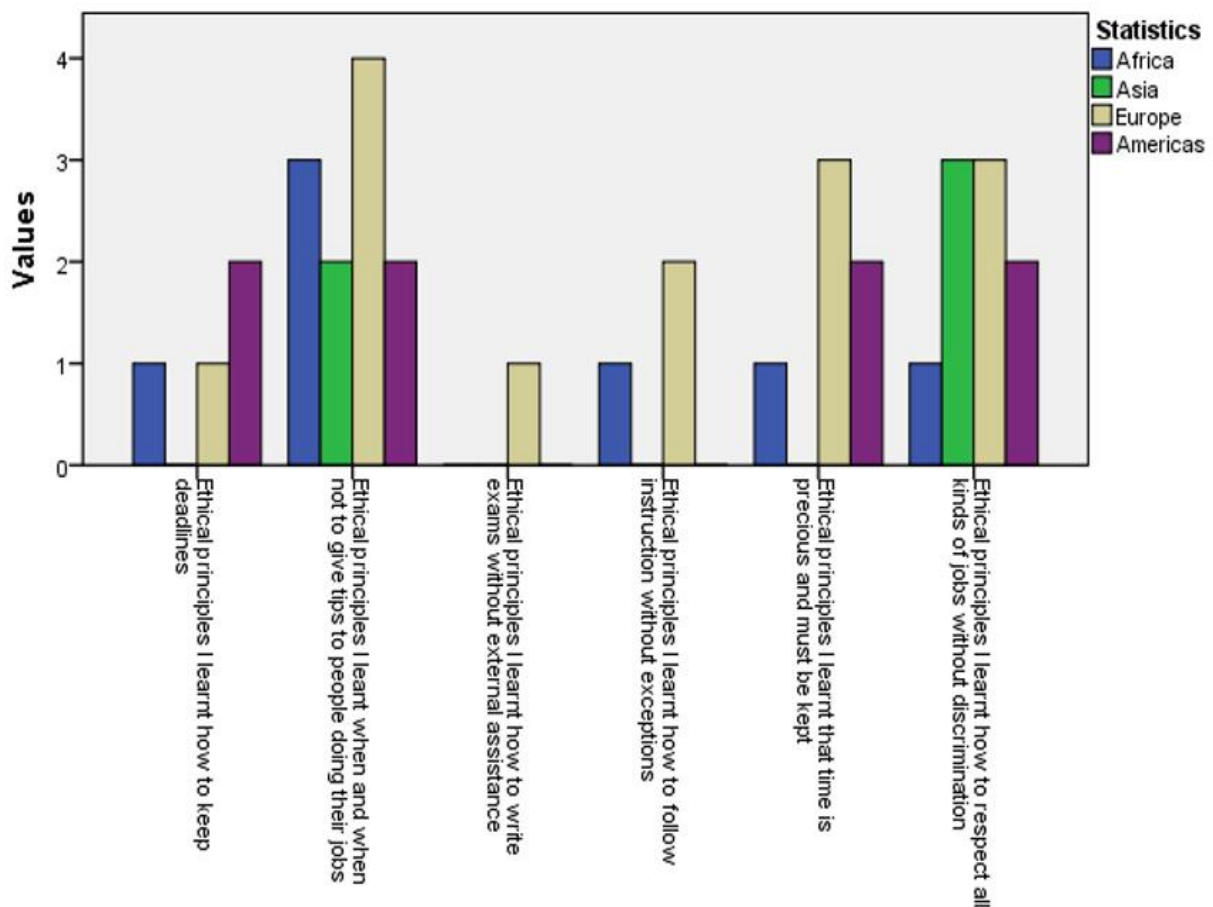


Figure 5. Major ethical issues encountered by IMS masters students of Deutsche Welle Academy Germany between 2014 and 2016.

In response to overcoming the concern of European and African international students with the ethical problem, some respondents explained their justifications as follows:

African respondent (1): "Tips should be given only if they are given to improve service and not just for good service done."

African respondent (2): "If they are doing their job well, then they don't need a tip. Tips should be given to those who are not doing their job well."

European respondent (1): "Tips should be voluntary. It is an ethical problem for me, when in some cases, "tips" are even added to the bill of the customer. In that case, it is forced on the customer and no longer a voluntary gesture."

European respondent (2): "Receiving "tips" is not the right of any worker, and the moment a worker begins to see it that way, the practice should be stopped."

From the responses above, there is a clear dichotomy on the ethical problem international students see in the giving tips. African international students see no reason to giving of tips to people who are doing jobs that are defined in their job

description. Instead, tips should be given as motivation for those who are not rendering good service to encourage them to improve their services. On the other hand, European international students see tips as an ethical problem when they are forced on the customer, in which case they become a cunning way of extorting money from customers. As long as the voluntary nature of tips is taken away, it becomes a serious unethical practice.

Research question five: To what degree do the IMS Master studies contribute to global peace?

In the discharge of group tasks, many respondents emphasized the possibility of conflict triggers arising from three clusters, namely: leadership role execution, difficulty accepting other students' views in group tasks, and the dominance of a social group over the others. Table 3 shows that amongst IMS Master students, the possibility of conflict arising would come overwhelmingly from difficulty accepting other students' views in group tasks (73%), while the dominance of a social group over the others (7%) was least likely to cause any crisis amongst the IMS students. However, 1 out of every 5 students believes that the execution of the leadership function is likely to cause a crisis amongst the IMS students (20%). In terms of the potential of IMS studies contributing to the promotion of peace, Figure 6 shows that American students are the most optimistic ("very much") that the IMS programme, due to its multicultural outlook, can contribute to global peace (n=3). European and African students are the least optimistic ("I don't know") about the contributions of IMS to global peace (n=2).

Table 3. Three clusters of likely crisis-causing situations amongst IMS masters students of Deutsche Welle Academy Germany between 2014 and 2016.

-	Cluster 1 Leadership role execution	Cluster 2 Difficulty in accepting other students' views in group tasks	Cluster 3 Dominance of a social group over others
Respondent 1	-	To accept the meaning of others, the culture of discussion	-
Respondent 2	-	-	For some students, their social group was predominant in group work
Respondent 3	Executing a leadership role in a group	-	-
Respondent 4	Time management and sharing of responsibilities	-	-
Respondent 5	-	Dealing with strong opinions while remaining polite	-
Respondent 6	-	Understanding tasks	-
Respondent 7	-	Different cultural ways of communicating and different standards of doing/achieving the result.	-
Respondent 8	-	Choosing ideas for projects in groups where people would pitch very different ideas at the same time	-
Respondent 9	-	Style of working together is different	-
Respondent 10	-	Different values, responsibilities to perform a role	-
Respondent 11	-	Misunderstanding amongst group members	-
Respondent 12	-	Personal differences	-
Respondent 13	-	Cultural differences make tasks difficult	-
Respondent 14	-	Understanding of politeness, patience and tolerance	-
Respondent 15	Teamwork coordination	-	-
Total	3	11	1
Percentage	20%	73%	7%

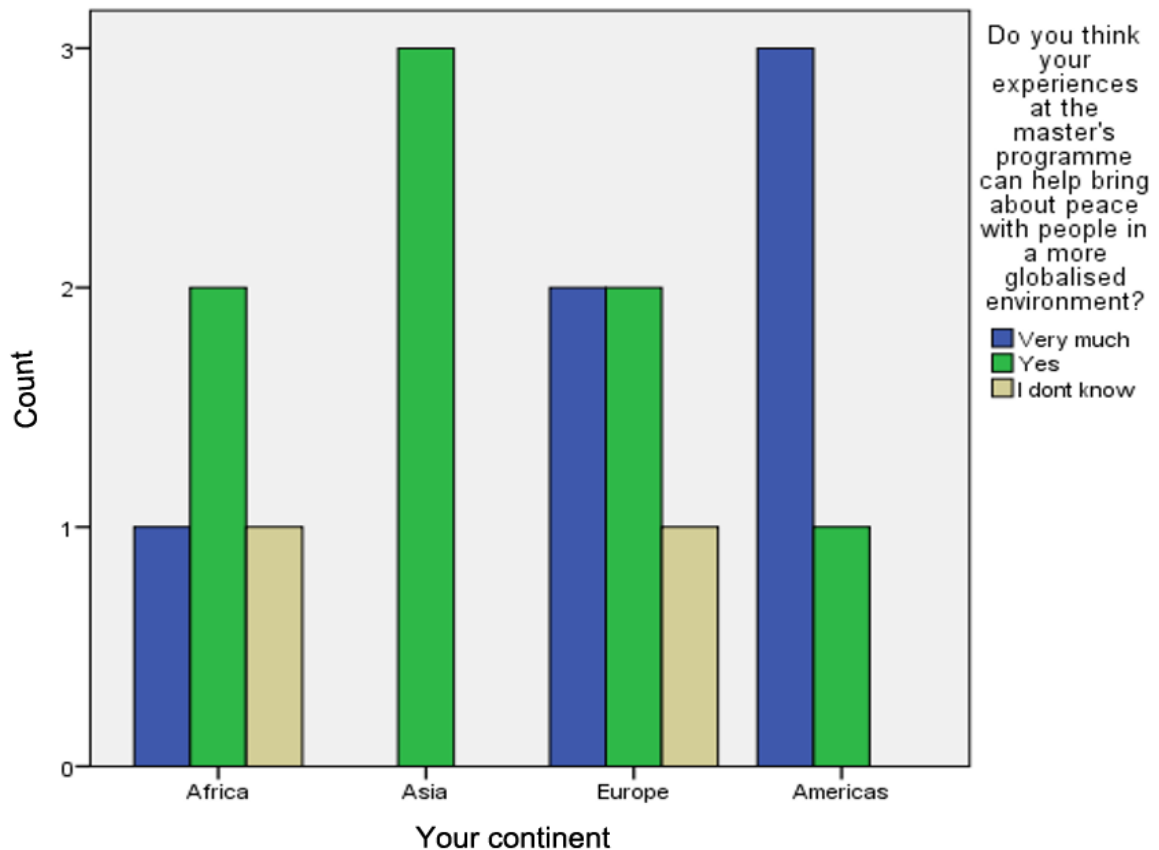


Figure 6. Perception of IMS masters students of Deutsche Welle Academy Germany between 2014 and 2016 about the contribution of the programme to global peace.

4.1. Test of the Hypothesis

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant relationship between the continent of origin of international IMS Masters students and their perception of the IMS Master's programme being able to contribute to global peace.

Table 4. Chi-square tests from research.

-	Value	df	Asymp. sig. (2-sided)
Pearson chi-square	6.500	6	0.370
Likelihood ratio	7.812	6	0.252
Linear-by-linear association	2.425	1	0.119
No of valid cases	17	-	-

If a predetermined alpha level of significance is given at 0.5 with a degree of freedom of 6, the chi-square results from Table 4 show that the p-value is above 0.05 at 0.370. Thus, with a p-value of 0.370, which is higher than the conventionally accepted significance level of 0.05 (i.e., $p > 0.05$), the null hypothesis is accepted. In other words, there is no significant relationship between the continent of origin of international IMS Masters students and their perception of the IMS Master's programme being able to contribute to global peace. This means that international IMS students' perception of the IMS Master's programme being able to contribute to global peace is not dependent on the continent the students come from. This finding contradicts the data from Figure 6 of this research, which shows that American students are the most optimistic that the IMS programme, due to its multicultural outlook, would contribute to global peace (n=3), while European and African students are the least optimistic about the contributions of IMS to global peace (n=2). The negligible difference between the continents may help to explain this contradiction.

5. Discussion of Findings/Results

Results from this study have shown that most international students speak at least English and German, and another 10% communicate in French, giving the students a very international outlook. However, while African students had the least competence to deal with an international audience before the IMS programme, European students could already deal with an international audience prior to the IMS programme. Nonetheless, at the end of the two-year programme, Americans and Africans' competence to deal with an international audience overtook that of European students, indicating that American and African students were the fastest to adjust in an international setting. This transformation of American and African students from cultural crisis to adjustment has been well explained by Devito (2004) (cited in Newsome and

Cooper [4]), who argue that international students pass through the three stages of crisis, recovery, and adjustment. Such an adjustment in which European students went from being international in outlook while in the comfort of their home countries to recline to loneliness in a foreign country aligns with Newsome and Cooper [4] postulation of the “limbo” situation that international students find themselves in, which thus limits their openness to others.

Also, results show that African and Asian students had the most challenges in trying to understand politeness, patience, and tolerance with others. This problem was least common for American students, indicating that American students have the most international communicative competence. This seems to buttress the finding by Gareis (2012) (cited in Wang, et al. [8]) that international students from East Asian countries had the least positive friendship experience while studying in the United States.

Also, in terms of dealing with ethical issues by international students at the IMS programme, results show that European and African students were uncomfortable with giving tips to people who were simply doing their jobs. Further interviews with respondents show that Europeans simply do not want to be compelled to give tips. African students would only give tips not because someone does his or her job well but only to encourage those who didn't do their jobs well to be better.

In terms of conflict situations amongst international students and the possibility for peaceful coexistence, results show three distinct clusters of responses. However, the majority of students say that the difficulty of accommodating and accepting other students' views in group tasks was their biggest crisis-causing situation, while the dominance of one social group over the others was the least crisis-causing scenario. This has been captured by Wang, et al. [8] in their view that as long as many cultures come together, conflict is likely to arise, and such conflicts are going to be resolved by students with high “intercultural communication competence (ICC)” (Otten, 2003, cited in Natarova [7]; Lin [19] and Nadeem, et al. [18]). While American students were the most optimistic about the IMS programme helping to promote global peace, African and European students were less optimistic.

A Chi-square test did not find any significant relationship between the continent of origin of international IMS Masters students and their perception of the IMS Master's programme being able to contribute to global peace. In other words, international IMS students' perception of the IMS Master's programme being able to contribute to global peace is not dependent on the continent a student comes from.

The symbolic interactionism theory suits the study because it explains language and symbols, two key elements of culture that international students must confront when in a foreign country for educational purposes.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings above, it can be concluded that international Masters Students speak mainly English and German and partly French. Also, upon encountering foreign students in an international setting, Americans and Africans' competence to deal with an international audience overtook that of European students, indicating that American and African students were the fastest to adjust. However, African and Asian students had the most challenges in trying to understand politeness, patience, and tolerance with regards to dealing with others. Ethically, European and African students were uncomfortable with giving tips to people who were simply doing their jobs. While Africans want it to go to those with poor services, Europeans emphasize that tips must be voluntary. Also, difficulty in accommodating and accepting other students' views in group tasks was the biggest crisis-causing situation for IMS Masters students. Finally, American students are the most optimistic about the IMS programme helping to promote global peace, while African and European students are less optimistic.

As a result of the above findings, the following are recommended:

1. African and Asian international Students should learn more about the culture of the host country when they travel abroad for studies, especially on issues of politeness, patience, and tolerance.
2. International students should understand the ethical issues surrounding giving tips when they travel abroad.
3. International students should see IMS studies as an opportunity to promote global peace.
4. European students should not give away their international outlook when they travel outside of their native countries.
5. International students should learn how to deal with students from different cultural settings, especially if they have to carry out joint tasks.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

1. What is your sex?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Others
2. Your Continent
 - a. Africa
 - b. Asia
 - c. Europe
 - d. North America
 - e. South America
3. Your Country.....
4. Language spoken
 - a. German
 - b. English
 - c. French
 - d. Spanish
 - e. Arabic
 - f. Portuguese
 - g. African
 - h. Others
5. How would you rate your ability to interact with foreigners before coming for the Master's programme in Bonn?
 - a. Very good
 - b. good
 - c. Average
 - d. Fair
 - e. Poor
6. How would you rate your ability to interact with foreigners after the Master's programme in Bonn?
 - a. Very good
 - b. good
 - c. Average
 - d. Fair
 - e. Poor
7. What were the barriers you encountered while studying at the Deutsche Welle in Germany?
 - a. Language barrier
 - b. Cultural differences
 - c. Different ethical principles
 - d. Different understanding of time
 - e. Differences in understanding male and female roles in general
 - f. Differences in relating to roles of

- persons in a group g. Differences in the educational system h. Different understanding of politeness, patience and tolerance i. Others
8. What did you learn while studying at the Deutsche Welle in Germany?
 - a. I learnt how to keep deadlines
 - b. I learnt when and when not to give tips to people doing their jobs
 - c. I learnt how to write exams without external assistance
 - d. I learnt how to follow instruction without exceptions
 - e. I learnt that time is precious and must be kept
 - f. I learnt how to respect all kinds of jobs without discrimination
 - g. Others
 9. Do you think you learnt how to communicate with an international audience from your experiences at the Master's programme?
 - a. Very much
 - b. Yes
 - c. I don't know
 - d. I don't think so
 - e. Not at all
 10. Do you think you learnt how to peacefully coexist with an international audience from your experiences at the Master's programme?
 - a. Very much
 - b. Yes
 - c. I don't know
 - d. I don't think so
 - e. Not at all
 11. Do you think you learnt how to collaborate with an international audience from your experiences at the Master's programme?
 - a. Very much
 - b. Yes
 - c. I don't know
 - d. I don't think so
 - e. Not at all
 12. Do you think your experiences at the Master's programme can help bring about peace with people in a more globalised environment?
 - a. Very much
 - b. Yes
 - c. I don't know
 - d. I don't think so
 - e. Not at all