





# Bridging Cultures through Community Engagement: Evaluating An International Summer Camp Initiative in Higher Education

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## Abstract

**Background:** International summer camps have become a vital form of social engagement in higher education, providing chances for cultural learning and global contact. However, a rigorous evaluation of participant perceptions is required to ensure program efficacy and sustainability.

**Objectives:** This study seeks to investigate students' impressions of the FKIP Universitas Lampung Summer Camp 2025, with an emphasis on cultural experience, program satisfaction, and areas for development in a community-based educational setting.

**Methods:** This study used a descriptive quantitative technique supported by qualitative data. A perception questionnaire with a Likert scale was provided to 17 participants, supplemented with open-ended responses to elicit deeper insights into their experiences.

**Result:** With mean values ranging from 4.50 to 4.89, the results show a high degree of participant satisfaction, especially in cultural activities, social connections, and committee support. Strong social ties and significant cross-cultural learning were noted by the participants. On the other hand, insufficient interaction with local pupils ( $M = 2.61$ ) and time management ( $M = 3.83$ ) were found to be moderate issues. Negative categories typically had low mean scores, suggesting that people thought the program was safe, inclusive, and relevant.

**Conclusion:** All things taken into account, the summer camp successfully served as a community engagement program that increased student experience and cross-cultural knowledge while emphasizing the need for better scheduling and more possibilities for local contact. In addition to benefiting international participants, the program provided sociocultural benefits for the local community by strengthening cultural promotion and encouraging collaboration between universities and local stakeholders.

## A. Introduction

In recent decades, international summer camp programs have become one of the most strategic approaches in higher education to promote intercultural learning, strengthen global citizenship values, and support the internationalization agenda of universities. Unlike conventional student exchange programs

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that often require long-term mobility, summer camps are designed as short-term yet intensive academic and cultural experiences that allow students from diverse nationalities to interact, collaborate, and immerse themselves in new cultural contexts. These programs are not merely recreational but are positioned as academic and community-based initiatives aimed at fostering global awareness, mutual respect, and cross-cultural competence (Matheus & Gaugler, 2020; Li et al., 2025).

The increasing complexity of globalization, alongside challenges such as digital transformation, migration, and intercultural conflicts, demands that students develop intercultural communicative competence as part of their essential 21st-century skills. Feng et al., (2025) argues that intercultural competence involves not only knowledge of cultural differences but also attitudes of openness, empathy, and adaptability that enable individuals to engage effectively across diverse cultural settings. Similarly, Van Rompay-Bartels & Watkins (2025) highlight that higher education institutions are now expected to integrate structured opportunities for intercultural encounters as part of their responsibility to prepare students as responsible global citizens. In this context, summer camps serve as a valuable pedagogical platform because they combine experiential learning, community service, and cultural immersion within a short yet impactful period.

The Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) Universitas Lampung Summer Camp 2025 was designed as an integrated program that reflects this global agenda while simultaneously promoting local wisdom. The camp was not only an avenue for academic and cultural immersion but also a form of international community service. Participants were introduced to Lampung's rich cultural heritage through traditional music, dance, and crafts, while also engaging in community-based activities such as village visits and environmental explorations. The program also involved local communities through cultural workshops, village visits, and traditional craft activities, which contributed to the promotion of local culture, intercultural exchange, and community-based tourism awareness in Lampung. By doing so, the program positioned local culture as a medium of international dialogue, enabling students from Indonesia, Africa, and other regions to appreciate cultural diversity and strengthen intercultural friendships. Such initiatives resonate with recent calls for higher education to foster international partnerships while empowering local communities (Lansing et al., 2023; Shyiramunda & van den Bersselaar, 2024; Leal Filho et al., 2025).

The program was also designed to involve local communities in Lampung as active partners in cultural exchange activities. Several activities were conducted in collaboration with local cultural actors, village communities, and small-scale craft practitioners. Through these interactions, the Summer Camp not only provided intercultural learning opportunities for international students but also supported local cultural promotion and strengthened community participation in educational tourism activities.

From a theoretical standpoint, understanding the success of such programs requires attention to participants' perceptions. Perception, as Nes et al. (2023) emphasize, is the cognitive process through which individuals interpret stimuli from their environment. It is shaped by three key elements: (1) the stimuli, namely; the events, activities, and interactions encountered during the camp; (2) the perceiver; participants' personal characteristics, motivations, and prior experiences; and (3) the situational context; time, setting, and cultural relevance of the program. These elements interact to form an individual's overall evaluation of an experience. In educational and intercultural contexts, perceptions are not trivial; they directly influence satisfaction, learning outcomes, and willingness to engage in future collaborations (Gibson et al., 2012; Robbins & Judge, 2019; Lin et al., 2023).

In the FKIP Universitas Lampung Summer Camp 2025, the stimuli were represented by carefully structured activities such as cultural workshops, campus tours, and outdoor explorations. The perceivers were students from multiple countries with diverse academic and cultural backgrounds, each bringing unique motivations and expectations. Meanwhile, the situational context encompassed the program's duration, facilities, and the cultural environment of Lampung. Evaluating how these three aspects interacted provides meaningful insights into the effectiveness of the camp as both a learning and community service activity.

Furthermore, evaluating participants' perceptions is critical for two main reasons. First, it ensures that the program's design and implementation align with the expectations and learning needs of international participants. Feedback from participants enables organizers to identify strengths and areas for

improvement, thereby contributing to program sustainability. Second, perception studies enrich the broader literature on intercultural education and experiential learning by documenting how short-term mobility programs influence students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral development. Recent studies confirm that students who participate in structured intercultural programs report enhanced self-confidence, cultural empathy, and collaborative skills (Feng et al., 2025). Such findings underscore the transformative potential of summer camps as part of higher education's internationalization strategies.

Community engagement is another dimension that situates this program within the broader mission of Indonesian higher education. According to the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy, universities are encouraged to bridge academic learning with real-world contexts through community-based activities. International summer camps align with this mandate by connecting local cultural communities with international participants, creating mutual benefits. For local communities, such programs provide opportunities to showcase cultural heritage, strengthen tourism potential, and promote cross-cultural appreciation. For participants, they offer authentic experiences that go beyond textbooks, fostering direct interactions with local people, traditions, and environments (Wang et al., 2024; Kirchhoff et al., 2024).

The transformative nature of such experiences can also be explained through Kolb's experiential learning theory, which posits that learning is most effective when individuals actively engage in concrete experiences, reflect on them, conceptualize insights, and apply new knowledge in different contexts (Kolb, 2014). In the context of the Summer Camp, cultural workshops, village visits, and outdoor activities served as the concrete experiences; reflection sessions allowed students to process meaning; and intercultural discussions provided opportunities to conceptualize lessons learned. This cycle of experiential learning is expected to strengthen participants' intercultural competence while also deepening their appreciation of Lampung's cultural identity (Astprachon et al., 2025).

At the same time, international collaboration is an essential dimension of the program. Universities are increasingly judged not only by their academic outputs but also by their ability to build sustainable partnerships with institutions across borders. Programs like the FKIP Universitas Lampung Summer Camp exemplify a form of *internationalization at home*, in which global engagement is achieved without requiring all students to travel abroad for long-term studies (Moshtari & Safarpour, 2024; Keshishi et al., 2023; Yang & Li, 2024). By hosting international students within the local academic environment, Universitas Lampung contributes to global dialogue while positioning itself as an institution that supports inclusive internationalization.

However, while summer camps offer numerous benefits, challenges remain. Previous studies indicate that short-term intercultural programs may sometimes struggle with issues of time management, insufficient rest, or limited interaction with local students (Lin et al., 2023; Leal Filho et al., 2025). These factors influence participants' perceptions and, if not addressed, may reduce the overall effectiveness of the program. Therefore, systematic evaluation of participants' perceptions is essential, not only as a feedback mechanism but also as a scholarly contribution to the development of intercultural education models.

Given this background, the present study aims to examine international participants' perceptions of the FKIP Universitas Lampung Summer Camp 2025. Specifically, it investigates how participants evaluated the program in terms of activities, organization, and cultural relevance. The study situates itself within the broader discourse on intercultural competence, experiential learning, and higher education internationalization. By analyzing participants' feedback, this research seeks to contribute to the refinement of future summer camp programs while also reinforcing the role of Indonesian universities in advancing cultural diplomacy and community engagement on the global stage.

## B. Methods

The implementation of the Summer Camp followed a structured eight-day program as outlined in the official rundown. Day 1 began with participant arrival, a welcome dinner, and orientation to introduce the committee, facilitators, and fellow students. Day 2 featured a campus tour and cultural workshops on traditional dance and music, complemented by interactive cultural exchange activities. Day 3 and 4 emphasized educational visits to Negeri Katon village, the Lampung Museum, and a pottery-making workshop, enabling hands-on community engagement. Day 5 was dedicated to outdoor exploration,

including snorkeling and an excursion to Kelagian Island, combining recreation, environmental appreciation, and team building. Finally, Day 6 to 8 centered on collaborative cultural performances, reflection sessions, and a closing ceremony with a farewell dinner, highlighting the intercultural friendships and learning achieved during the camp.



**Figure 1.** Local cultural practitioners introducing traditional Lampung crafts to participants.

The Summer Camp was implemented as a community-based service program consisting of three main phases: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. During the preparation phase, the organizing committee coordinated with local stakeholders, including village representatives, cultural practitioners, and tourism service providers. The implementation phase focused on intercultural activities, cultural workshops, educational visits, and community interactions involving both international participants and local communities. Finally, the evaluation phase involved collecting participant feedback and documenting the outcomes of the program for future improvement and sustainability.



**Figure 2.** Participants' involvement in traditional dance and music.

In addition to the committee, the program was supported by academic supervisors accompanying international students. One of them was Dr. Yupika Maryansyah, S.Pd., M.Pd., from Universitas Muhammadiyah Bengkulu, who served as a mentor and facilitator throughout the camp. He played a vital role in connecting participants' daily activities with intercultural learning outcomes, providing guidance during workshops, field trips, and outdoor excursions. His involvement ensured that the program's objectives, promoting cultural heritage, enhancing intercultural competence, and supporting international collaboration, were not only implemented but also academically contextualized through reflective mentoring.



**Figure 3.** interaction between international participants and local community members.

Local community members also contributed directly to the program by facilitating traditional dance sessions, introducing local crafts and culinary practices, and supporting village-based activities. Their participation enabled participants to experience authentic cultural interactions while simultaneously promoting local cultural heritage to international audiences.



**Figure 4.** International students learned to make Lampung batik

In order to investigate participants' views on the program, this study employed a descriptive evaluative approach to explore participants' perceptions of the *FKIP Universitas Lampung Summer Camp 2025*. The design combined quantitative analysis of questionnaire responses with qualitative insights from participants' open-ended comments. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of how international participants perceived the program in terms of its activities, organization, and cultural relevance.

The participants of this study were international students who joined the Summer Camp organized by the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) Universitas Lampung in July 2025. The camp was attended by students from various countries, including Ghana, Chad, Nigeria, and Madagascar, Egypt, Malaysia, Japan, Liberia, Uganda, Kenya, Sudan, Thailand, representing diverse educational institutions. In total, 17 participants completed the perception questionnaire distributed at the end of the program. Their varied nationalities and educational backgrounds enriched the intercultural dimension of the study.

The primary instrument used in this study was a Perception Questionnaire developed on the basis of perception theory (Gibson et al., 2012; Robbins & Judge, 2019). The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements that were grouped into three main dimensions. The first dimension, stimuli, referred to participants' responses to various camp experiences, including cultural workshops, performances, committee support, and accommodation. The second dimension, perceiver characteristics, focused on individual factors such as participants' personal interests, prior experiences, expectations, and learning

outcomes. The third dimension, situational context, addressed perceptions related to time management, safety, cultural immersion, and environmental conditions that framed the overall experience of the program. Responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). In addition, two open-ended questions invited participants to provide written comments on the strengths and areas for improvement of the program. Content validity of the instrument was established through expert judgment, involving three academics in the fields of educational research, intercultural studies, and psychometrics. They reviewed each item for relevance to the theoretical framework. Reliability of the scale was later examined using Cronbach's Alpha to ensure internal consistency.

Data were collected at the end of the Summer Camp using an online Google Form distributed to all participants. Respondents were asked to provide demographic information (name, nationality, institutional affiliation), complete the 20 perception statements, and answer two open-ended questions. Participation was voluntary, and responses were treated with confidentiality. Afterward, the data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In the quantitative analysis, each item of the questionnaire was examined through descriptive statistics, including the calculation of mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage distributions. To ensure consistency, negatively worded items were reverse-coded before composite scores were calculated. The interpretation of results was guided by specific criteria: a mean score between 4.00 and 5.00 indicated a very positive perception, a mean score between 3.00 and 3.99 reflected a moderately positive perception, and a mean score below 3.00 suggested a negative perception. In addition, a qualitative analysis was conducted on participants' open-ended responses, which were examined thematically to capture both positive feedback and constructive criticism. The emerging themes were then triangulated with the quantitative results, providing a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of participants' overall perceptions of the program.

## C. Results and Discussion

### 1. Results

The descriptive analysis of the perception questionnaire shows that participants' evaluation of the *FKIP Universitas Lampung Summer Camp 2025* was generally very positive. Most of the positive items obtained high mean scores, ranging from 4.50 to 4.89, with particularly strong agreement on the welcome dinner ( $M = 4.78$ ), committee assistance ( $M = 4.83$ ), and friendships gained ( $M = 4.89$ ). Cultural workshops ( $M = 4.78$ ), traditional performances ( $M = 4.67$ ), and outdoor activities such as snorkeling and island exploration ( $M = 4.61$ ) were also highly appreciated. These results indicate a high level of satisfaction with the cultural and social aspects of the program. Meanwhile, some items reflected more moderate responses. For instance, the statement about having enough personal time for rest (Item 13) received a moderately positive mean score ( $M = 3.83$ ). Likewise, the negative item on the schedule being too packed (Item 2) obtained a mean of 3.11, showing a split perception among participants. Another area of concern was the lack of opportunities for interaction with local students (Item 10), with a mean score of 2.61.

Beyond participant satisfaction, the activities also generated positive engagement with the local community. Cultural workshops and village visits involved local residents, artisans, and cultural performers who actively introduced Lampung traditions to international participants. This interaction contributed to the promotion of local culture and provided opportunities for communities to participate in international cultural exchange activities.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Positive Items (N = 17)

Item No	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	%SA/A	%N	%SD/D
1	The welcome dinner helped me feel comfortable.	4.78	0.43	100.0	0.0	0.0
3	The cultural workshops enriched my knowledge of Indonesian culture.	4.78	0.43	94.4	5.6	0.0
5	The committee provided sufficient assistance.	4.83	0.38	100.0	0.0	0.0
7	The traditional music and dance performances were memorable.	4.67	0.49	94.4	5.6	0.0
9	The campus tour helped me understand the academic environment.	4.50	0.62	88.9	11.1	0.0
11	I enjoyed the outdoor activities such as snorkeling and island exploration.	4.61	0.50	94.4	5.6	0.0
13	The overall schedule provided enough personal time for rest.	3.83	1.20	61.1	22.2	16.7
15	I gained new friendships during the summer camp.	4.89	0.32	100.0	0.0	0.0
17	The accommodation was comfortable and met my needs.	4.56	0.51	94.4	5.6	0.0
19	The program improved my cross-cultural understanding.	4.72	0.46	100.0	0.0	0.0
20	I would recommend this Summer Camp to other students.	4.83	0.38	100.0	0.0	0.0

For the remaining negative items, participants' responses showed strong disagreement, as indicated by low mean scores: activities being irrelevant (M = 1.94), feeling excluded (M = 1.72), and feeling unsafe during trips (M = 2.11). These results confirm that most participants considered the program relevant, inclusive, and safe. However, a few aspects such as workshop duration (M = 2.61) and the closing ceremony (M = 2.28) were perceived less favorably, suggesting areas for improvement.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics of Negative Items (N = 17)

Item No	Statement	Mean	Std. Dev.	%SA/A	%N	%SD/D
2	The schedule was too packed and exhausting.	3.11	1.32	50.0	16.7	33.3
4	Some of the activities were irrelevant or uninteresting.	1.94	1.16	11.1	11.1	77.8
6	I often felt confused due to unclear instructions.	2.06	1.30	16.7	16.7	66.7
8	I didn't feel included during the group activities.	1.72	1.32	11.1	5.6	83.3
10	The program lacked opportunities for interaction with local students.	2.61	1.42	33.3	11.1	55.6
12	The traditional cooking class was not interesting to me.	2.22	1.18	16.7	22.2	61.1
14	The closing ceremony was poorly organized.	2.28	1.27	22.2	22.2	55.6
16	The duration of each workshop was too long and tiring.	2.61	1.20	22.2	33.3	44.5
18	I didn't feel safe during the boat and snorkeling activities.	2.11	1.32	16.7	16.7	66.7

In addition to the quantitative findings, participants also provided open-ended comments that offered deeper insights into their experiences. The majority of comments were highly positive, describing the Summer Camp as *valuable, enjoyable, wonderful, and an unforgettable experience*. Several participants emphasized that the program was *eye-opening* in terms of intercultural learning and expressed gratitude to the committee for their efforts in organizing the camp. Others highlighted the importance of continuing such programs in the future, with remarks such as *good! should continue this program in the future and I hope next year I can participate again*. At the same time, a few constructive suggestions emerged, including the need for more personal time to rest, as one participant noted, *“Terima kasih banyak. Jika bisa, lebih baik kasih waktu istirahat lebih lama.”* Overall, the open-ended responses reinforce the quantitative results, confirming that participants experienced the program as meaningful, culturally enriching, and socially rewarding, while also pointing to areas for further improvement.

## 2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the FKIP Universitas Lampung Summer Camp 2025 successfully achieved its primary objectives of promoting cultural enrichment, enhancing social interaction, and strengthening intercultural learning among international participants. Participants expressed very positive evaluations of cultural workshops, traditional performances, committee support, and opportunities for friendship building, with mean scores exceeding 4.50 on a 5-point scale. Such results confirm the relevance of perception theory, which posits that individuals’ interpretations of experiences are shaped by the interplay of external stimuli, personal characteristics, and situational contexts (Gibson et al., 2012; Robbins & Judge, 2019). However, a more critical analysis reveals that while the program was generally effective, certain limitations particularly regarding time management, interaction with local students, and the pacing of activities require careful consideration to ensure future improvements.

### Stimuli as a determinant of positive experiences

The high satisfaction scores on cultural workshops, traditional dance and music performances, and outdoor activities underscore the role of stimuli in shaping participants’ perceptions. Stimuli in this context refer to the concrete events, activities, and organizational support provided by the program. As noted by perception theorists, stimuli serve as the first point of contact through which individuals make sense of new environments (Robbins & Judge, 2019). When stimuli are novel, engaging, and culturally rich, participants are more likely to evaluate their experiences positively.

This finding aligns with previous studies on short-term intercultural programs, which highlight that well-structured cultural immersion activities significantly enhance students’ appreciation of host cultures (Kuo et al., 2023; Davies et al., 2024; Shopo et al., 2025). For instance, Feng et al. (2025) found that students in summer programs reported substantial gains in cultural knowledge when exposed to interactive workshops and local traditions. Similarly, Matheus & Gaugler (2020) emphasizes that experiential cultural activities, such as music, dance, and culinary practices, function as catalysts for intercultural competence development because they engage learners emotionally as well as cognitively.

The FKIP Summer Camp’s success in this regard suggests that integrating experiential stimuli with reflective learning components is essential for maximizing cultural impact. However, it should be noted that while stimuli are important, they are not sufficient on their own to guarantee meaningful learning; participants’ motivations and the situational context also shape how such stimuli are interpreted.

The program also demonstrated community engagement outcomes through the involvement of local stakeholders in cultural and educational activities. Local communities did not function merely as objects of observation but as active contributors who shared cultural knowledge and participated in intercultural interactions. Such participation aligns with the principles of community-based service programs that emphasize collaboration, mutual learning, and sociocultural empowerment.

### **Perceiver characteristics and the role of expectations**

From the perspective of perceiver characteristics, the findings reveal that participants' motivations and expectations for cultural learning and friendship-building were well fulfilled (Diem et al., 2023; Shadieff et al., 2020). The strong agreement on items such as *gaining new friendships* and *improving cross-cultural understanding* reflects the alignment between participants' personal goals and the program's design.

This supports the view of Lansing et al. (2023), Shyiramunda & van den Bersselaar (2024), and Leal Filho et al. (2025), who argue that intercultural learning outcomes are maximized when program objectives resonate with participants' pre-existing motivations and aspirations. Moreover, Robbins & Judge (2019) emphasize that perceptions are not neutral; they are filtered through individual expectations, prior experiences, and cognitive frames. For instance, participants who arrived with a strong desire for cultural exploration were more likely to interpret the workshops and excursions positively.

Nevertheless, reliance on participants' expectations can also be problematic. If expectations are unmet, such as the reported limited interaction with local student participants may experience dissonance, leading to lower satisfaction. This echoes Lin et al.'s (2023) observation that unmet expectations in short-term intercultural programs often lead to critical feedback, even when other aspects of the program are well-executed. Thus, organizers must not only design activities that showcase local culture but also ensure that participants' expectations for intercultural dialogue are realistically addressed.

### **Situational context: challenges of time and structure**

The situational context emerged as a more complex factor shaping participants' perceptions. Time management was a recurring concern, with participants noting the intensity of the schedule and insufficient personal time for rest. The mean score for schedule-related items was notably lower ( $M = 3.11$ ), reflecting mixed evaluations.

This finding is consistent with studies indicating that over-packed schedules in short-term programs can generate fatigue and reduce opportunities for informal intercultural engagement (Leal Filho et al., 2025). Kolb's (2014) experiential learning model underscores that reflection is a critical stage in the learning cycle. Without adequate downtime, participants may struggle to process and internalize their experiences, thereby reducing the transformative potential of the program.

Furthermore, the relatively low evaluation regarding opportunities for interaction with local students highlights another situational limitation. Although participants engaged in cultural workshops and community visits, the lack of structured dialogue with local peers diminished the depth of intercultural exchange. Research suggests that direct peer-to-peer engagement is among the most effective ways to develop intercultural empathy and global citizenship skills (Van Rompay-Bartels & Watkins, 2025). In the absence of such interactions, participants' exposure to the host culture may remain surface-level rather than deeply relational.

Thus, while the stimuli were strong and participants' motivations were well addressed, situational constraints particularly regarding time allocation and local engagement limited the program's overall impact.

### **Integrating findings with broader literature**

The overall findings reinforce the multidimensional nature of perception, supporting the framework proposed by Gibson et al. (2012) and Robbins & Judge (2019). Stimuli, perceiver characteristics, and situational context interacted to shape participants' evaluations in nuanced ways. Importantly, the study

confirms that positive stimuli and strong participant motivations can offset certain contextual limitations, but not entirely eliminate them.

When compared to other studies, the FKIP Summer Camp results are consistent with [Feng et al.'s \(2025\)](#) finding that short-term international programs generate substantial cultural learning despite logistical constraints. However, the present study also echoes critiques by [Avsec et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Olaitan \(2024\)](#), who caution that without careful attention to balance and interaction opportunities, short-term programs risk becoming overly performative rather than transformative.

The program's achievements in fostering cultural appreciation are commendable, but the identified shortcomings underscore the need for iterative refinement. Future camps should emphasize balance between structured activities and informal intercultural encounters, ensuring that participants not only observe cultural practices but also co-create knowledge with local peers.

## 2.1 Implications

The findings of this study carry several practical and theoretical implications. Practically, the overwhelmingly positive perceptions indicate that the FKIP Universitas Lampung Summer Camp 2025 has successfully provided a meaningful intercultural learning environment. Program organizers are encouraged to maintain key strengths such as cultural immersion activities, well-organized social events, and strong committee support, as these aspects significantly contributed to participants' satisfaction.

However, the results also highlight areas that require improvement. The moderate responses related to time management suggest the need to redesign the program schedule to better balance structured activities and personal rest time. In addition, the relatively low score regarding interaction with local students implies that future programs should incorporate more structured and intentional engagement opportunities, such as collaborative projects or peer-mentoring sessions.

From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the importance of experiential learning and intercultural exposure in enhancing students' global awareness. It also demonstrates how short-term international programs can foster social connectedness and cultural understanding when supported by effective program design.

In addition, the program contributed to the promotion of Lampung cultural identity and strengthened relationships between higher education institutions and local communities. The involvement of local cultural practitioners and village communities indicates that international summer camp activities can serve as a sustainable model of culture-based community engagement.

## 2.2 Research contribution

This study contributes to the growing body of research on international short-term academic programs, particularly in the context of summer camps organized by higher education institutions in Indonesia. First, it provides empirical evidence on participants' perceptions using both quantitative and qualitative data, offering a comprehensive evaluation of program effectiveness.

Second, the study highlights specific program components such as cultural workshops, outdoor activities, and social interactions that significantly influence participant satisfaction. This detailed breakdown offers practical insights for institutions seeking to design or improve similar programs.

Third, the integration of open-ended responses enriches the findings by capturing participants' lived experiences, thereby bridging the gap between statistical analysis and real-world perceptions. As such, this research not only evaluates a specific program but also serves as a reference model for future intercultural and experiential learning initiatives.

### 2.3 Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the reliance on self-reported perceptions introduces the possibility of social desirability bias, as participants may have evaluated the program more positively out of politeness or gratitude. Second, the relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of the findings. Third, the absence of longitudinal follow-up means that the long-term impact of the camp on participants' intercultural competence remains unknown.

Addressing these limitations in future research could involve triangulating survey data with observational methods, interviews, or longitudinal tracking of participants' intercultural development. Such approaches would provide a more holistic understanding of the program's impact.

The findings of this study carry several implications. For theory, the study reinforces the applicability of perception theory in educational and intercultural contexts. It demonstrates how the tripartite framework of stimuli, perceiver, and context can be operationalized to evaluate program effectiveness. Moreover, it highlights the importance of integrating experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2014) into program design, ensuring that cultural stimuli are coupled with opportunities for reflection and conceptualization.

For practice, organizers of international summer camps should prioritize balance and inclusivity. Time management must be optimized to provide sufficient rest and reflection opportunities. Structured platforms for interaction with local students should be embedded into the program, such as collaborative projects, peer discussions, or joint community service. Additionally, safety, clarity of instructions, and event management remain critical to maintaining participants' trust and satisfaction.

For policy, the findings support the role of international summer camps as a model of *internationalization at home* (Moshtari & Safarpour, 2024; Keshishi et al., 2023; Yang & Li, 2024). By hosting international participants and integrating them into local cultural settings, Indonesian universities can advance global engagement while simultaneously promoting national cultural heritage. Such initiatives align with the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) framework, which encourages community engagement and global exposure as integral to higher education.

In sum, the FKIP Universitas Lampung Summer Camp 2025 illustrates both the promise and the challenges of short-term intercultural programs. While participants reported overwhelmingly positive perceptions of cultural activities and social interactions, situational constraints such as time intensity and limited local engagement tempered the program's overall effectiveness. The study contributes to the literature by confirming that perceptions of intercultural programs are shaped not only by external stimuli but also by participants' expectations and contextual factors. Moving forward, deliberate efforts to balance structure with flexibility, and performance with interaction, will be crucial in enhancing the transformative impact of such programs.

### 2.4 Suggestions

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be proposed to strengthen future implementations of the *FKIP Universitas Lampung Summer Camp*. First, improvements in time management are essential. The daily schedule should be adjusted to reduce intensity, allowing participants more personal time for rest and reflection. A balance between academic or cultural workshops and recreational activities would help prevent fatigue and ensure a more enjoyable experience. Second, the program should provide greater opportunities for local interaction, as many participants expressed the need for more engagement with local students. This could be achieved through structured collaborative projects, cultural exchange sessions, or joint community service activities that foster authentic intercultural immersion. Third, it is important to maintain and enrich cultural activities, particularly workshops on traditional dance, music, and crafts, which were highly valued by participants.

These activities should continue to combine experiential learning with contextual explanations to deepen cultural appreciation. Additionally, safety and event management must remain a priority. Clear communication and safety protocols should be consistently applied during outdoor activities, while the organization of major events, such as the closing ceremony, should be improved to leave a lasting positive impression. Finally, the Summer Camp should be sustained as a model of internationalization

and community service, positioning it as a recurring program that promotes Indonesian cultural heritage and intercultural competence. Integrating systematic feedback from participants and collaborating with local stakeholders will ensure the program continues to grow as a best practice in higher education internationalization and community engagement.

#### **D. Conclusion**

The evaluation of participants' perceptions of the *FKIP Universitas Lampung Summer Camp 2025* indicates that the program was highly successful in achieving its primary objectives. Participants reported very positive experiences regarding cultural workshops, traditional performances, committee assistance, and opportunities to build friendships, with most items scoring above 4.50. These results affirm that the program effectively provided meaningful cultural stimuli and organizational support that enriched participants' intercultural learning and social experiences.

Nonetheless, several challenges were identified. A portion of participants perceived the schedule as too intensive, with insufficient personal time for rest. In addition, the relatively low score on opportunities for interaction with local students highlights the need to provide more structured avenues for intercultural engagement. While negative items related to irrelevance, exclusion, or safety concerns received very low agreement, suggesting the program was inclusive, relevant, and safe areas such as time management, workshop duration, and event organization (e.g., the closing ceremony) remain points for improvement.

These findings validate framework of perception by Gibson et al. (2012) and Robbins & Judge (2019), confirming that participants' evaluations are shaped not only by stimuli (events and activities) but also by perceiver characteristics (motivation, expectations) and situational context (time and cultural setting).

Beyond intercultural learning outcomes, the Summer Camp also contributed to community engagement by involving local communities in cultural exchange activities and promoting Lampung cultural heritage to international participants. The collaboration between universities, local stakeholders, and community members created positive sociocultural interactions that supported mutual understanding and cultural appreciation. Furthermore, the program demonstrates strong potential for sustainability as a culture-based community service initiative that can continue to strengthen international collaboration, community participation, and local cultural promotion in future implementations.

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#### **F. Author Contribution Statement**

All authors contributed significantly to this research. YM was responsible for conceptualizing the study, designing the research instrument, and drafting the manuscript. AM contributed to data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the results. SD and F reviewed and revised the manuscript critically for important intellectual content. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript

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