

MANAGERS' INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND READINESS FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN AN ORGANISATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract. The study's subject is the relationship between managers' intercultural communication skills, perceived communication barriers, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation. Intercultural communication is considered a managerial competence that enables managers to adapt communication styles, recognise cultural and organisational differences, clarify agreements, and maintain constructive professional interaction with foreign partners. The purpose of the study is to examine the relationships among managers' self-assessed intercultural communication skills, perceived barriers, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation, and to identify differences in these indicators according to management level, English proficiency, international interaction experience, prior training, and field of professional activity. The study used an exploratory quantitative survey design. The initial dataset contained 166 records. After repeated, nearly identical response profiles were removed, 61 unique responses from participants with managerial experience or managerial functions were retained for analysis. Four composite indices were calculated from five-point Likert-scale items: intercultural communication skills, communication barriers, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation. The statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Spearman's rank correlation, the Mann-Whitney U test, and the Kruskal-Wallis test. The results revealed a strong positive relationship between intercultural communication skills and readiness for international cooperation ($\rho = 0.986$, $p < 0.001$). Organisational support was also positively associated with readiness ($\rho = 0.971$, $p < 0.001$), whereas perceived communication barriers showed a strong negative association with it ($\rho = -0.944$, $p < 0.001$). Statistically significant differences were identified according to management level, English proficiency, international interaction experience, and prior training. Senior managers, respondents with B2-C1 English proficiency, and those with more than five years of international interaction experience demonstrated higher levels of intercultural communication skills, organisational support, and readiness, as well as lower perceived barriers. No statistically significant differences were found by field of professional activity. The study concludes that readiness for international cooperation is associated with both individual managerial competences and organisational conditions. Therefore, the development of managers' intercultural communication should combine language preparation, analysis of intercultural situations, negotiation practice, and organisational support mechanisms. The findings also indicate that training should address not only senior managers but also middle and line managers involved in the daily coordination of international interaction. Given the small, non-representative sample, the self-reported data, and the cross-sectional design, the results should be interpreted as preliminary and verified in subsequent research using larger samples and more differentiated measurement instruments.

Keywords: intercultural communication, managers, organizational readiness, international cooperation, communication barriers, organizational support, cross-cultural management, managerial skills.

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1. Introduction

International cooperation between organisations increasingly depends on the quality of managerial communication. Managers not only represent their organization in interaction with foreign partners. They also align expectations, clarify agreements, coordinate joint actions, address misunderstandings, and maintain professional dialogue in culturally diverse environments. For this reason, intercultural communication skills should be seen as part of managerial readiness for international interaction.

In this study, managers' intercultural communication skills are understood as the ability to build effective professional interaction with representatives of other cultural, linguistic, or organisational environments. These skills include the ability to adapt one's communication style, take into account differences in business norms and communicative expectations, clarify meanings, avoid stereotypical judgements, and respond constructively to misunderstandings. This approach allows intercultural communication to be treated not only as language proficiency, but also as a set of managerial actions needed to maintain trust, align decisions, and coordinate joint work in international cooperation.

The practical importance of organisational readiness for international cooperation has increased with the spread of remote and hybrid forms of work. International contacts are now often maintained through email, video conferencing, corporate platforms, and messaging services. In such interactions, greater importance is placed on the accuracy of messages, the ability to clarify meanings, sensitivity to different communicative norms, and the prevention of misinterpretation of agreements. At the same time, language limitations, differences in communication styles, and different attitudes toward hierarchy, deadlines, criticism, or decision-making procedures may reduce managers' readiness for international cooperation.

Previous studies show that managers' intercultural communication is linked to cultural intelligence, cross-cultural leadership, organisational readiness, trust, organisational learning, and communication in virtual teams (Davidavičienė & Majzoub, 2022; Ogunwale et al., 2024; Zimmermann, 2023). However, these aspects are often examined separately. Some studies focus on managers' individual competencies, while others address organisational culture, digital transformation, or team interaction. Less attention has been paid to how self-assessed intercultural communication skills, perceived communication barriers, and organisational support are related to organisational readiness for international cooperation.

This study offers preliminary empirical evidence on these relationships. It focuses on four interconnected constructs: managers' intercultural communication

skills, perceived communication barriers, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation. This approach makes it possible to consider international cooperation not only as a strategic or economic process, but also as a managerial and communicative phenomenon in which managers' individual competencies are combined with the conditions created within the organisation.

The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between managers' intercultural communication skills, perceived communication barriers, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation. In line with this aim, the study analysed the level of self-assessed intercultural communication skills, the intensity of communication barriers, the relationships between the main indicators, and differences in these indicators depending on management level, English proficiency, and experience of international interaction.

The study has an exploratory character. After screening the initial dataset, 61 unique responses from respondents with managerial experience or managerial functions were retained for analysis. Therefore, the results are interpreted as preliminary empirical evidence that outlines directions for further research on managers' intercultural communication and organisational readiness for international cooperation.

2. Literature Review

Studies of managers' intercultural communication are linked to several complementary research areas: cultural intelligence, cross-cultural leadership, organisational readiness, communication in virtual teams, organisational learning, and trust. Taken together, these areas explain how a manager recognises cultural differences, adapts communicative behaviour, acts in situations of uncertainty, and how far an organisation supports international interaction.

One of the basic concepts in this field is cultural intelligence. It describes a person's ability to interpret the behaviour of representatives of other cultures and adjust their own actions to a specific communicative situation. Davidavičienė and Majzoub (2022) examine cultural intelligence in relation to transformational leadership, conflict, and decision-making processes in virtual teams. Their results show that cultural intelligence has not only a value-based but also an operational meaning for teamwork: it affects mutual understanding, responses to conflict, and participation in joint decision-making. For managers, this means that intercultural communication is not only a matter of language ability. It is also the ability to work with different ways of thinking, behavioural norms, and partners' expectations.

The issue of cross-cultural leadership broadens this view. Ogunwale et al. (2024) stress that cultural dimensions, including power distance, individualism and collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-

term orientation, influence leadership style, feedback, employee autonomy, and the pace of decision-making. In international cooperation, communicative difficulties often arise when a manager transfers familiar managerial norms to another cultural or organisational environment. At the same time, Primecz and Mahadevan (2024) warn against an oversimplified view of cultural differences and suggest examining diversity in international business through the intersection of cultural, social, organisational, and power-related factors. This is important because managers' intercultural communication encompasses not only national differences but also professional cultures, corporate traditions, managerial hierarchies, and varying levels of experience in international interaction.

A second important line of research concerns organisational readiness. In studies on digital transformation, it is understood as an organisation's ability to accept change, mobilise resources, support learning, and revise managerial practices. Jewapatarakul and Ueasangkomsate (2024) show that organisational readiness can mediate the relationship between organisational culture, knowledge acquisition, and the success of transformation processes. Although their study focuses on digital transformation, this logic is also relevant to international cooperation, since entering an international environment requires not only a strategic decision, but also prepared staff, clear procedures, communication rules, and support for managers.

Organisational culture, in this case, acts as an active condition for adaptation. Brahm and Poblete (2024) show that organisational culture can either support or limit adaptation and performance. For international cooperation, this means that even a manager with a sufficient level of intercultural skills may act less effectively if the organisation does not support knowledge sharing, does not develop rules for interaction with foreign partners, and does not recognise the need for intercultural training. Ahmed et al. (2024) also emphasise the role of resource readiness, culture, change management capabilities, and employees' attitudes toward innovation. In the present study, this logic is reflected in the block of organisational support.

A third important area is related to virtual and transnational teams. In modern international cooperation, a large part of communication takes place through digital platforms. Therefore, the quality of interaction depends not only on technical channels, but also on trust, shared understanding, and the ability to clarify meanings. Zimmermann (2023) identifies cognitive, behavioural, and affective aspects of interaction in transnational virtual teams, among which team identity, trust, communication, knowledge creation, and conflict management are especially important. Lane et al. (2023) also show that digital technologies change the nature of team communication, collaboration, and performance. For intercultural

interaction, this is directly relevant: a digital channel may support cooperation, but it may also increase misunderstandings because of different norms of written style, delayed responses, time-zone differences, and limited non-verbal presence.

Studies of team effectiveness also emphasise the role of communication, trust in management, participation in decision-making, and feedback. Mazzetti and Schaufeli (2022) show that team resources can mediate the relationship between leadership and team effectiveness. This supports the idea that international cooperation requires not only the individual skills of a manager, but also an organisational and team environment that supports interaction.

The literature also pays attention to the development of managerial competencies. In their systematic review of leadership development programmes, Tenschert et al. (2024) show that self-regulation, mindfulness, and self-leadership can improve stress resilience, performance, and the ability of leaders to support their teams. This is important for intercultural communication, since interaction with foreign partners is often linked to uncertainty, tension, limited time for explanation, and the risk of ambiguous interpretation of messages. A similar position is found in Kharchenko and Semenikhina (2024), who connect the culture of professional communication with emotional intelligence. In international management, emotional self-regulation, attention to the interlocutor's reactions, and the ability to work constructively with tension help to prevent communicative conflicts.

At the same time, managers' development cannot be limited to separate training sessions. Otoo and Rather (2024) show that human resource development practices are related to employee engagement through organisational commitment. This means that training has a stronger effect when it is embedded in a broader system of organisational support. For international cooperation, this conclusion is important: training in intercultural communication may be useful, but without procedures, mentoring, managerial support, and reflection on experience, it cannot ensure stable changes in managerial practice.

A fifth direction concerns organisational learning and knowledge management. Cheng et al. (2024) show that knowledge management and organisational learning are related to the adoption of new practices and the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises. Obeng et al. (2024) identify a positive relationship between the knowledge management cycle, job satisfaction, engagement, and organisational culture. In intercultural communication, this means that relevant skills are not developed solely through individual managers' personal experience. They require mechanisms for accumulating and transferring knowledge: discussing difficult communicative situations, analysing negotiation practices, recording

typical mistakes, and supporting employees who join international projects.

Trust and organisational commitment are also directly relevant to international communication. Lo et al. (2024) show that engagement and organisational commitment can improve service quality through employees' trust in the organisation, while Kurniawati and Ramli (2024) link procedural justice, organisational trust, commitment, and engagement. In intercultural communication, trust has a double role: a manager has to build trust with external partners and, at the same time, needs trust inside the organisation in order to speak openly about difficulties, clarify unclear issues, and ask for support.

In broader studies of strategic organisational adaptation, international cooperation is viewed as part of an organisation's ability to change and remain competitive. Probojakti et al. (2024) link transformational leadership and digital transformation with organisational agility, corporate resilience, and sustainable competitive advantage. Guerra and Del Valle (2024) emphasise the impact of organisational change on talent management, while Cosa and Torelli (2024) show that digital transformation requires the development of human resources and flexible performance measurement systems. In the same direction, Kudrina et al. (2020) show the importance of digital tools for planning managerial and financial-organisational processes in enterprises. These studies support an idea that is central to the present research: readiness for international cooperation depends on an organisation's ability to adapt, learn, and align human and technological resources.

Thus, the literature provides grounds for viewing managers' intercultural communication skills as a multidimensional managerial construct. It includes the ability to understand cultural differences, adapt communication style, work under uncertainty, maintain trust, clarify agreements, and prevent conflicts. At the same time, these skills do not operate in isolation. Their effectiveness depends on organisational support, a culture of learning, trust, digital conditions of interaction, and procedures that help managers work with international partners. For this reason, the present study considers readiness for international cooperation as a result of the combination of individual intercultural skills, perceived barriers, and organisational conditions.

3. Research Methods

The study was conducted as an exploratory quantitative survey. This design was chosen in line with the aim of the article: to examine empirically how managers' intercultural communication skills, perceived communication barriers, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation are related to each other. The empirical basis of the study was a survey

of respondents with managerial experience or who performed managerial functions. The initial dataset included 166 records. Before the statistical analysis, the data quality was checked. At this stage, repeated response profiles were identified, that is, records with identical or almost identical combinations of answers across socio-professional characteristics and the main survey scales. To avoid an artificial increase in the sample size and to prevent repeated profiles from strengthening statistical associations, only unique profiles were retained for further analysis. After data cleaning, the final analytical sample consisted of 61 responses.

The sample included respondents from different fields of professional activity: education, trade, finance, IT, and logistics. This composition made it possible to consider intercultural communication not as a problem of one sector, but as a broader managerial characteristic that may appear in different organisational environments. At the same time, the sample is not representative of the whole population of managers. Therefore, the results are interpreted as preliminary empirical evidence obtained within this specific sample.

The questionnaire consisted of two main blocks. The first block covered the respondents' socio-professional characteristics: age, gender, education, field of activity, managerial experience, management level, experience of international interaction, English proficiency, and the number of hours of additional training related to communication or international interaction. These variables were used to describe the sample and to conduct group comparisons.

The second block of the questionnaire included statements designed to measure four substantive constructs. The block of intercultural communication skills covered the ability to adapt one's communication style, take cultural differences into account, clarify the meaning of agreements, avoid stereotypical judgements, and maintain constructive interaction with representatives of other cultures. The block of perceived communication barriers reflected difficulties related to language limitations, different expectations about communication style, the pace of decision-making, the formality of communication, and the interpretation of professional agreements. The block of organisational support described the conditions that help managers engage in international interaction: internal communication rules, support from management, training, exchange of experience, and access to necessary resources. The block of readiness for international cooperation reflected respondents' readiness to maintain regular interaction with foreign partners, conduct negotiations, coordinate joint tasks, and resolve communication difficulties.

Responses to the statements in the second block were measured on a five-point Likert scale, where a higher score indicated a higher level of agreement with the statement or a stronger expression of the

relevant characteristic. For each construct, a composite index was calculated as the mean value of the relevant items. The intercultural communication skills index was calculated from six items in the ICC block. The perceived communication barriers index was calculated from six items in the Barrier block. The organisational support index was calculated on the basis of six items from the OrgSup block. The readiness for international cooperation index was calculated from five items in the Readiness block. This approach made it possible to move from the analysis of separate responses to the comparison of generalised indicators for each research construct.

The statistical analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the dataset was cleaned, and repeated response profiles were removed. Then, descriptive statistics were calculated for the respondents' socio-professional characteristics and the main indices. For quantitative variables, the mean, standard deviation, median, minimum, and maximum values were calculated. For categorical variables, absolute and relative frequencies were calculated.

The internal consistency of the scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. This made it possible to check how consistently the items within each block measured the corresponding construct. High values of the coefficient were treated as an indication of internal consistency, but they were interpreted with caution, since excessively high values may also indicate close semantic similarity between individual items.

The relationships between the main indices were analysed using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. This choice was determined by the exploratory nature of the study, the limited sample size, and the ordinal nature of the original scales. The correlation analysis made it possible to assess the direction and strength of the relationships between intercultural communication skills, perceived communication barriers, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation.

Non-parametric tests were used to examine group differences. Differences between two groups were tested using the Mann–Whitney U test. Differences between three or more groups were tested using the Kruskal–Wallis test. In particular, differences were analysed by management level, English proficiency, experience of international interaction, previous participation in training, and field of activity.

Readiness for international cooperation was treated as the dependent variable in the study. The main independent variables were intercultural communication skills, perceived communication barriers, and organisational support. Additional variables used for group analysis included management level, English proficiency, experience of international interaction, field of activity, managerial experience, and previous participation in training.

Participation in the survey was voluntary. The data were analysed in aggregated form. Personal identifiers of respondents were not used in the study. This made it possible to preserve the confidentiality of responses and to focus the analysis on general statistical trends.

Given the sample size, the self-reported nature of the data, and the cross-sectional design of the study, the results are not interpreted as a basis for broad generalisations about all managers or all organisations. They also do not allow conclusions about the causal effect of intercultural communication skills or organisational support on readiness for international cooperation.

4. Research Results

After the initial dataset had been checked for repeated response profiles, 61 unique responses were included in the final analysis. All respondents had higher education (Table 1). Men prevailed in the sample: 39 respondents (63.9%); women accounted for 22 respondents (36.1%). The respondents' ages ranged from 24 to 53 years, with a mean age of 37.6 years. The mean length of managerial experience was 7.4 years, while the mean experience of international interaction was 5.6 years. Thus, the sample included respondents who already had some managerial and international communicative experience, although its size does not allow broad generalisations.

The largest groups of respondents represented education, trade, and finance. IT and logistics were smaller but still present in the sample. By management level, middle managers formed the largest group. This is important for interpreting the results, since this group often connects the strategic requirements of the organisation with the practical coordination of everyday interaction. The sample was also heterogeneous in terms of English proficiency: 44.3%

Table 1
Socio-professional characteristics of the sample

Indicator	Category	n	%
Gender	Men	39	63.9
	Women	22	36.1
Field of activity	Education	17	27.9
	Trade	15	24.6
	Finance	13	21.3
	IT	9	14.8
	Logistics	7	11.5
Management level	Line management	16	26.2
	Middle management	25	41.0
	Senior management	20	32.8
English proficiency	A2	14	23.0
	B1	13	21.3
	B2	26	42.6
	C1	8	13.1

of respondents had A2–B1 proficiency, while 55.7% had B2–C1 proficiency.

For further analysis, four composite indices were calculated: the intercultural communication skills index, the perceived communication barriers index, the organisational support index, and the readiness for international cooperation index. All indices were calculated as mean scores of the relevant questionnaire items on a five-point scale (Table 2).

The mean values indicate that the respondents generally assessed their intercultural communication skills and readiness for international cooperation slightly above the middle level of the scale. At the same time, organisational support had a lower mean value than individual skills and readiness for cooperation. This may point to a certain gap between respondents' personal readiness to act in an international environment and their perception of the organisational conditions that should support such activity.

The communication barriers index had a mean value of 3.13. This suggests that barriers were not perceived as critically high, but they remained a noticeable factor in international interaction. Thus, even with managerial experience, respondents still reported difficulties related to language, cultural, and organisational differences.

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the scales. All scales demonstrated high internal consistency. However, these values should be interpreted with caution. Very high coefficients may indicate not only the reliability of the scales, but also close semantic similarity between items within each block. Therefore, future studies should expand the instrument and differentiate more clearly between the behavioural manifestations of intercultural communication, organisational support, communication barriers, and readiness for international cooperation.

Spearman's correlation analysis showed strong relationships between the main indices (Table 3).

The strongest positive relationship was found between intercultural communication skills and

readiness for international cooperation, $\rho = 0.986$, $p < 0.001$. Within this sample, respondents who rated higher their ability to adapt communicative behaviour, take cultural differences into account, and maintain constructive interaction also showed higher readiness for international cooperation.

Organisational support also had a strong positive relationship with readiness for international cooperation, $\rho = 0.971$, $p < 0.001$. This gives grounds to suggest that readiness for international interaction is related not only to managers' individual skills, but also to their perception of organisational conditions: support, procedures, training, exchange of experience, and resources for communication with foreign partners.

The communication barriers index showed a strong negative relationship with readiness for international cooperation ($\rho = -0.944$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, a higher level of perceived barriers was associated with lower readiness for international interaction. This relationship concerned not only language difficulties, but also broader problems: different interpretations of agreements, different expectations about the pace of work, communication style, formality of address, and ways of resolving conflicts.

Group differences by management level were analysed separately (Table 4). The Kruskal–Wallis test showed statistically significant differences for all four indices: intercultural communication skills, $H = 46.86$, $p < 0.001$; communication barriers, $H = 45.11$, $p < 0.001$; organisational support, $H = 49.23$, $p < 0.001$; readiness for international cooperation, $H = 48.88$, $p < 0.001$.

The results show a clear gradation: respondents at the senior management level had the highest scores for intercultural communication skills, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation. In contrast, line managers had the lowest scores for these indicators and the highest level of perceived barriers. This difference may be related to unequal access to international interaction, different participation in

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of the main indices

Index	M	SD	Median	Min	Max	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Intercultural communication skills	3.54	0.97	3.67	2.00	5.00	6	0.974
Communication barriers	3.13	0.97	3.00	2.00	5.00	6	0.974
Organisational support	3.17	1.09	3.00	1.67	5.00	6	0.991
Readiness for international cooperation	3.63	1.04	4.00	2.00	5.00	5	0.987

Table 3

Correlations between the main indices, Spearman's rho

Indicators	1	2	3	4
1. Intercultural communication skills	1			
2. Communication barriers	-0.957***	1		
3. Organisational support	0.970***	-0.924***	1	
4. Readiness for international cooperation	0.986***	-0.944***	0.971***	1

Note. *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4

Main indices by management level

Management level	n	Intercultural communication skills M	Communication barriers M	Organisational support M	Readiness for international cooperation M
Line management	16	2.24	4.42	1.99	2.21
Middle management	25	3.60	3.12	3.08	3.67
Senior management	20	4.51	2.11	4.56	4.71

decision-making, different negotiation experience, and different levels of involvement in the strategic processes of the organisation.

Differences by English proficiency were also statistically significant (Table 5). The Kruskal–Wallis test showed significant differences for all main indices: intercultural communication skills, $H = 48.94$, $p < 0.001$; communication barriers, $H = 52.48$, $p < 0.001$; organisational support, $H = 47.37$, $p < 0.001$; readiness for international cooperation, $H = 46.58$, $p < 0.001$.

Higher English proficiency was accompanied by higher scores for intercultural communication skills, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation. At the same time, the communication barriers index decreased as language proficiency increased. However, this result should not be interpreted as evidence that English proficiency alone ensures intercultural effectiveness. Rather, it reduces some language-related barriers and strengthens respondents' confidence in international interaction.

For an additional comparison, respondents were grouped into two categories: lower English proficiency (A2–B1) and higher English proficiency (B2–C1). According to the Mann–Whitney U test, the B2–C1 group had statistically significantly higher scores for intercultural communication skills, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation, as well as a lower level of communication barriers, with $p < 0.001$ for all comparisons.

The role of experience of international interaction was also analysed. For this purpose, respondents were divided into two groups: those with up to 5 years

of experience and those with more than 5 years of experience (Table 6).

Respondents with more experience of international interaction had higher mean scores for intercultural communication skills, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation. At the same time, their perceived communication barriers were lower. According to the Mann–Whitney U test, the differences between the groups were statistically significant for all four indices, $p < 0.001$. This suggests that experience of international interaction is associated with greater confidence and lower perceived difficulties. However, due to the exploratory design, this result should not be interpreted as evidence of a causal effect of experience.

A similar tendency was observed for prior training participation. Respondents who had more than 3 hours of relevant training showed higher mean scores for intercultural skills, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation, as well as lower scores for communication barriers. According to the Mann–Whitney U test, these differences were statistically significant, $p < 0.001$. At the same time, this result also requires careful interpretation: a higher number of training hours may be not only a factor associated with higher scores, but also a consequence of respondents working in organisations with more active international interaction.

The analysis by field of activity did not show statistically significant differences in the main indices. According to the Kruskal–Wallis test, differences between fields were not significant: for intercultural communication skills, $p = 0.474$; for communication barriers, $p = 0.261$; for

Table 5

Main indices by English proficiency

English proficiency	n	Intercultural communication skills M	Communication barriers M	Organisational support M	Readiness for international cooperation M
A2	14	2.13	4.70	1.86	2.10
B1	13	3.21	3.46	2.77	3.38
B2	26	4.12	2.53	3.75	4.19
C1	8	4.69	2.00	4.65	4.88

Table 6

Main indices by experience of international interaction

Experience of international interaction	n	Intercultural communication skills M	Communication barriers M	Organisational support M	Readiness for international cooperation M
Up to 5 years inclusive	35	2.99	3.64	2.57	3.03
More than 5 years	26	4.29	2.45	3.99	4.44

organisational support, $p = 0.329$; and for readiness for international cooperation, $p = 0.333$. Within this sample, the studied indicators were more closely related to management level, language preparation, and experience of international interaction than to respondents' sectoral affiliation.

Overall, the results support the research assumptions at the level of statistical associations. Higher intercultural communication skills and stronger organisational support were associated with higher readiness for international cooperation. Higher communication barriers, in contrast, were associated with lower readiness. English proficiency, management level, and experience in international interaction were also associated with differences in the studied indicators. At the same time, due to the exploratory nature of the study, the small sample size, and the self-reported type of data, these findings should be treated as preliminary empirical evidence that requires further verification with a larger and more balanced sample.

5. Discussion

The results obtained indicate that managers' intercultural communication skills are among the factors associated with readiness for international cooperation. The strongest positive relationship was found between the index of intercultural communication skills and readiness for international interaction. This means that respondents who rated higher their ability to adapt their communication style, take cultural differences into account, clarify agreements, and maintain constructive interaction also showed higher readiness to cooperate with foreign partners. This result is consistent with studies on cultural intelligence, which link the ability to act in culturally diverse environments to the quality of team interaction, decision-making, and conflict management in virtual teams (Davidavičienė & Majzoub, 2022).

At the same time, managers' intercultural communication should not be reduced to knowledge of a foreign language or general openness to other cultures. In managerial practice, it has a more applied meaning: the ability to explain expectations, formulate tasks clearly, anticipate different interpretations of agreements, respond to indirect criticism, work with differences in decision-making pace, and avoid transferring familiar managerial norms into another cultural environment. This aligns with studies on cross-cultural leadership, which view cultural dimensions as factors that influence leadership style, power distance, employee autonomy, and feedback practices (Ogunwale et al., 2024). A related position is presented by Kharchenko and Semenikhina (2024), who connect the culture of professional communication with emotional intelligence. For intercultural management, this

is particularly important, since emotional self-regulation, attention to the interlocutor's reactions, and the ability to work constructively with tension help to prevent communicative conflicts.

The strong negative relationship between communication barriers and readiness for international cooperation shows that barriers act not only as external difficulties, but also as a factor that may reduce managerial confidence. If a manager expects misunderstandings of language, different interpretations of agreements, or differing expectations regarding formality, deadlines, and interaction, their readiness for international cooperation may decrease. Therefore, the development of intercultural communication competence should include not only language training but also the analysis of real communicative situations, negotiation scenarios, business correspondence mistakes, and mechanisms for clarifying meaning.

The relationship between organisational support and readiness for international cooperation is particularly important. It shows that international interaction cannot depend solely on an individual manager's personal qualities. Even a high level of individual skills needs organisational reinforcement: procedures, resources, training, managerial support, internal communication rules, and exchange of experience. This finding is consistent with approaches in which organisational readiness is treated as a dynamic ability to accept change, mobilise resources, and support learning (Ahmed et al., 2024; Drushlyak et al., 2023; Jewapatarakul & Ueasangkomsate, 2024). In the same direction, the study by Omelyanenko et al. (2020) may be interpreted as showing that innovation policy depends on systemic conditions for development. For international cooperation, this means that managers' communicative readiness should be part of a broader organisational policy, rather than an accidental result of personal experience.

The group comparisons showed that senior managers had higher scores for intercultural communication, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation, while line managers more often reported barriers. This may be explained by unequal access to strategic information, international negotiations, and organisational resources. Senior managers are more often involved in external communication and have broader experience of international interaction, whereas line managers often deal with the practical implementation of agreements but have less authority to change procedures. For this reason, programmes for developing intercultural communication should not be limited to senior managers. Middle and line managers also need focused support, as they often coordinate daily international interactions.

The significant differences in English proficiency were expected, but they should not be interpreted too narrowly. Respondents with B2–C1 proficiency

had higher readiness scores and lower barrier scores. However, English proficiency does not guarantee intercultural effectiveness. It reduces language insecurity and facilitates access to international communication, but it does not replace the ability to understand cultural norms, professional expectations, and organisational differences. In this sense, language training should be combined with the development of professional communication, emotional intelligence, analytical thinking, and digital interaction. The study by Rudenko et al. (2022) on the use of WebQuest in the professional training of future managers shows the potential of problem-oriented digital tasks for developing managerial skills. A similar logic is supported by studies on dashboards as tools for developing analytical thinking (Rudenko et al., 2025), the use of ChatGPT for developing language interaction skills (Hrona et al., 2025), and the role of artificial intelligence in the career expectations of Ukrainian students, which points to the growing importance of AI-mediated professional trajectories and digital readiness among future specialists (Semenikhina & Drushlyak, 2026; Yurchenko et al., 2025). For manager training, this means that intercultural communication may be developed through digital simulations, case analysis, negotiation modelling, and work with data on communicative situations.

Experience of international interaction was also associated with higher scores for intercultural skills, organisational support, and readiness for cooperation. This may indicate an accumulative effect of practice: the more often a manager interacts with foreign partners, the better they recognise typical scenarios of misunderstanding and the more confidently they act in an international environment. At the same time, the direction of causality in this relationship is unclear. It is possible that managers with a higher level of readiness are more often involved in international projects, while organisations with more active international activity also provide more training, experience, and support.

The absence of statistically significant differences by field of activity suggests that the studied indicators are more managerial than sector-specific. Intercultural communication skills, barriers, and readiness for international cooperation may appear in similar ways in education, trade, finance, IT, or logistics if the organisation is involved in international contacts. This provides grounds for developing a common core of programmes aimed at strengthening managers' intercultural communication competence, with sector-specific cases added where necessary.

At the same time, the results require cautious interpretation. Very high correlations between the indices may indicate not only the conceptual closeness of the studied phenomena, but also the semantic similarity of some questionnaire items or a general tendency among respondents to evaluate the

positive aspects of international interaction similarly. Therefore, the findings should be treated as preliminary empirical evidence. Future studies should distinguish more clearly between language confidence, cultural sensitivity, behavioural adaptability, organisational support, negotiation experience, and real outcomes of international cooperation.

Overall, the results confirm that international cooperation between organisations is not only a strategic or economic issue. It also depends greatly on the quality of managerial communication, digital readiness, organisational learning, and support for managers. This is consistent with studies of virtual and transnational teams, which emphasise the role of trust, shared understanding, communication, and conflict management (Lane et al., 2023; Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022; Zimmermann, 2023). In practical terms, this means that language training, intercultural communication training, digital simulations, case analysis, mentoring, and internal rules for international communication should be combined. Such an integrated model may strengthen the readiness of managers and organisations for sustainable international cooperation.

6. Conclusions

The exploratory study made it possible to describe empirically the relationship between managers' intercultural communication skills, perceived communication barriers, organisational support, and readiness for international cooperation. The scientific novelty of the results lies in the empirical combination of the individual and organisational dimensions of readiness for international cooperation: managers' self-assessed intercultural communication skills, perceived barriers, and organisational support.

The results showed that a higher level of self-assessed intercultural communication skills was associated with higher readiness for international cooperation. This confirms that, for managers, not only foreign language proficiency or prior experience with international contacts matters, but also the ability to adapt communication styles, clarify agreements, take cultural differences into account, and maintain constructive dialogue in situations of uncertainty. At the same time, perceived communication barriers were negatively associated with readiness for international interaction. This indicates the need to work purposefully with language-related, cultural, and organisational difficulties.

The relationship between organisational support and readiness for international cooperation is also important. It provides grounds for arguing that managers' intercultural communication competence cannot be developed solely through individual experience or short training courses. It requires

organisational conditions: internal rules for international communication, mentoring, exchange of experience, managerial support, access to training, and analysis of real communicative situations.

Group comparisons showed that higher scores for intercultural skills and readiness for international cooperation were associated with higher English proficiency, greater international interaction experience, and higher management level. In contrast, line managers and respondents with lower language proficiency were more likely to report communication barriers. This has practical significance for the design of professional development programmes. Such programmes should be

aimed not only at senior managers, but also at middle and line managers, who provide the daily coordination of international interaction. They should combine language training, analysis of international interaction cases, digital simulations, negotiation modelling, development of emotional self-regulation, and internal organisational procedures for working with foreign partners.

Further research should be conducted on a larger sample and should distinguish more clearly between language confidence, cultural sensitivity, behavioural adaptability, organisational support, and real outcomes of international cooperation.

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