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Contextualizing Internationalization at Home: academic perspectives from Cypriot higher education in a changing global landscape

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This article explores academic staff perceptions and practices of Internationalization at Home (IaH) in the context of higher education in the Republic of Cyprus. Although IaH is increasingly promoted as a strategy for embedding international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum, its implementation varies depending on institutional and academic contexts. This study focuses on three key variables—academic rank, discipline, and institution type—to better understand how institutional and academic contexts shape faculty engagement with IaH. Drawing on data from 76 academic teaching staff across six universities, the study employs both quantitative (three-way ANOVA) and qualitative (Qualitative Content Analysis) approaches, based on insights gathered through a survey. The findings reveal that while most participants integrate some form of IaH into their teaching, notable differences emerge across ranks and disciplines. Senior academics are more likely to implement structurally supported activities, whereas junior staff rely on more accessible, student-centered strategies. STEM faculty tend to equate IaH with English-medium instruction and materials, while non-STEM staff report broader intercultural and pedagogical practices. These findings highlight the need for more context-sensitive approaches to IaH that consider differences in institutional positioning, pedagogical autonomy, and faculty development needs.

KEYWORDS

Internationalization at Home, academic staff, teaching practices, Cypriot higher education, inclusive internationalization

1 Introduction

The internationalization of higher education (HE) is increasingly viewed as a key indicator of institutional quality, with mobility being a central component (Knight, 2012; Ogden et al., 2020). Efforts in this area focus on facilitating student and faculty exchanges and establishing bilateral agreements to develop joint program and research collaborations. However, other perspectives challenge traditional frameworks, calling for a more nuanced and comprehensive approach to HE internationalization. de Wit (2024) underscores the need to reassess existing priorities and consider broader implications for its future. He highlights the ongoing debate on what constitutes genuine internationalization, arguing that while mobility remains a dominant aspect, a more critical and inclusive perspective is necessary to capture the full complexity of internationalization in HE.

Internationalization at Home (IaH) has been proposed as an inclusive approach (Janebová and Johnstone, 2022) that broadens the scope beyond physical mobility,

emphasizing the integration of international and intercultural dimensions into curricula (Leask, 2015), pedagogy (Lomer and Anthony-Okeke, 2019), campus activities (Jones, 2017; Hofmeyr, 2021), as well as Virtual Exchange which has been recognized as “a powerful instrument and catalyst in advancing efforts to internationalize home curricula” (O’Dowd and Beelen, 2021). Since its inception as a concept in 1998, IaH has aimed to ensure all university students engage with an international dimension in their studies (Nilsson, 2003). While efforts to define IaH continue (Beelen and Jones, 2015; Li and Xue, 2022), institutional recognition remains uneven. Moreover, awareness and implementation of IaH vary widely. Comparative studies (Almeida et al., 2018; Robson et al., 2018; Sierra-Huedo et al., 2024) highlight differences in how institutions integrate international, intercultural, and global dimensions, with inconsistent prioritization of internationalized curricula, intercultural pedagogies, and staff training specifically related to IaH.

Several factors can either enhance or hinder the implementation of IaH practices. One such factor is collaboration and partnerships with local and international stakeholders, which introduce diverse perspectives and create new opportunities (Cunningham et al., 2024). Another critical element is faculty engagement and training, since educators shape internationalized curricula and significantly influence student experiences (Li and Xue, 2023), including fostering their international competencies through domestic collaborations and language education (Plews, 2007). Moreover, institutional characteristics such as academic discipline (Eftekhari et al., 2025), type of institution (Kreber, 2009; Chanda and Betai, 2022; Svetlik and Braček Lalić, 2014; Tamrat, 2020), and academic rank (Childress, 2018; Stohl, 2007) also influence the degree to which IaH is prioritized and implemented. Although these factors have been examined in various contexts, their impact within Cypriot HE remains underexplored. To address this gap, the present study investigates academic staff perceptions of IaH in Cyprus, focusing on how institutional and academic dimensions shape its integration.

2 Academic staff perspectives on the significance and challenges of IaH

The growing importance of IaH was already recognized a decade ago in Beelen and Jones’s (2015) review and redefinition of the concept. Since then, its relevance to broader efforts in HE, particularly within the framework of comprehensive internationalization, which emphasizes the systematic integration of international dimensions across institutional operations, including faculty engagement, has been widely discussed (Hudzik, 2015; Janebová and Johnstone, 2022). This increasing attention is also reflected in the recent rise of systematic reviews that explore IaH practices from various perspectives (Eftekhari et al., 2025; Mittelmeier et al., 2024; Soulé et al., 2024), highlighting not only its benefits—such as the development of intercultural sensitivity, collaboration, and digital literacy—but also its challenges, including intercultural, pedagogical, and language-related barriers to implementation.

Despite the growing interest in IaH, little is known from the perspective of academic teaching staff who are not specialists in the field. Two studies stand out as exceptions. The first, conducted in Finland by Weimer et al. (2019), offers relevant insights into academic staff perceptions. The study found that only about half of the academic staff surveyed in the country ($n = 764$) regarded IaH as important. Furthermore, limited interest in IaH among academic personnel themselves (41%) was also highlighted as a significant obstacle. As the authors note, for individuals unfamiliar with what IaH entails, it is often mistakenly reduced to the mere presence of an international community and English-language offerings. These findings point to fragmented understandings of IaH and limited engagement among academic staff, which may hinder more systematic implementation.

The second study offering insights into academic staff perceptions and institutional engagement with IaH is the 6th IAU Global Survey by Marinoni and Pina Cardona (2024), which examines the internationalization of teaching and learning, including curriculum internationalization at home. Based on responses from 722 HE institutions across 110 countries and territories, the report highlights a significant shift in institutional priorities: 75% of institutions reported an increased emphasis on internationalizing the curriculum. Virtual exchanges—treated separately from COIL and online collaboration in the report, though conceptually similar (O’Dowd, 2023)—have gained prominence. However, these developments have also presented challenges for academic staff, particularly in adapting to new teaching methods associated with online and virtual internationalization. The report also notes that institutional type influences practice. While public and private HE institutions show similar overall engagement, private institutions are more likely to offer online degree programs and Virtual Exchange, and to adopt a wider range of practices such as integrating intercultural dimensions into learning outcomes, leveraging international staff and students, and investing in faculty development. These findings reinforce that effective IaH implementation depends not only on institutional strategy but also on faculty engagement and targeted professional support.

3 Institutional and academic dimensions of integrating IaH practices

The development of IaH in recent decades has also been characterized by its increasing integration across academic disciplines. This integration has occurred both within individual academic fields and through interdisciplinary initiatives. Examples of such interdisciplinary combinations include: (1) Language Studies, Information and Communications Technology, and Tourism Management; (2) Dental Technology and Business Management; (3) Global Nutrition and Culinary Arts; (4) Human Biology, Biochemistry, and Public Health; and (5) Engineering, Management, Economics, Mechatronics, and Robotics (Soulé et al., 2024).

This breadth of integration has been facilitated by the diverse modalities encompassed within IaH, notably in-campus cultural

diversity, particularly in multicultural classrooms with significant international student populations (Barbosa et al., 2020), and Virtual Exchange (O'Dowd, 2023). The prominence of Virtual Exchange in these initiatives reflects the ongoing trend toward the digitalization of education. For example, Helm and Beaven (2020) document case studies from a range of underrepresented disciplines, including tourism, performing arts, history, and STEM, alongside more commonly featured areas such as language and culture, and business. Another important finding regarding the integration of IaH practices is that their implementation varies across disciplines. Eftekhari et al. (2025) observed these differences in fields such as biology, business, engineering, law, mathematics, medicine, music, nursing, and psychology. Moreover, the authors noted that key components of IaH practices through an internationalized curriculum, such as intended learning outcomes and assessment practices, are rarely reported and therefore remain underexplored in all of these areas.

IaH practices do not occur in a vacuum; rather, they are shaped by both internationalization rationales and the broader institutional environment, with institutional type also being an influential factor (Marinoni and Pina Cardona, 2024). For instance, Kreber (2009) emphasizes the importance of advancing internationalization in teaching and identifies several underlying rationales. One such rationale is economic, often seen as a response to market forces stemming from the economic dimension of globalization, a view that is echoed by Pop et al. (2024), who note a growing perception that internationalization efforts are increasingly driven by economic motivations. Some studies argue that these rationales often manifest differently depending on whether the institution is public or private. For Chanda and Betai (2022) private HE institutions tend to adopt internationalization strategies, including IaH, with a stronger focus on employability, market responsiveness, and global competitiveness. These strategies may influence aspects such as curriculum design, pedagogic practices, and skill development. However, private HE institutions may also face distinct regulatory and structural challenges that affect the scope and effectiveness of their IaH initiatives (Tamrat, 2020). In contrast, public institutions may be more inclined toward cultural, academic, or political rationales for internationalization, depending on their mission and funding structures (Svetlik and Braček Lalić, 2014).

A less explored, yet equally important, factor in the implementation of IaH is academic rank. While institutional type and disciplinary context have received considerable attention, the influence of academic rank on faculty engagement with IaH practices remains relatively under-researched. As Stohl (2007) argues, a central challenge for advancing internationalization lies in effectively engaging faculty members. He emphasizes the importance of addressing institutional reward structures and academic cultures to foster sustained faculty commitment to internationalization efforts, including IaH. More recently, Childress (2018) has shown that while senior leaders frequently advocate for internationalization to prepare students for a globalized world, such efforts often fall short due to limited faculty engagement. Her work identifies concrete strategies that successful institutions have employed to overcome internal barriers, including the “5 I’s” model (intentionality, investments, infrastructure,

institutional networks, and individual support) as a framework for embedding faculty engagement in internationalization across teaching, research, and service.

4 National policy and legislative framework shaping IaH in the Republic of Cyprus

Understanding IaH in Cyprus requires situating it within the national policy and regulatory framework governing HE. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth oversees both public and private HE institutions, aiming to position Cyprus as a regional educational and research hub under the auspices of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Bologna Process (Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, 2024). The development of HE in Cyprus has also been strongly influenced by European integration processes and international evaluations. As Klerides and Philippou (2015) note, the educational reforms of 2004–2014 were shaped by the Bologna Process, the Treaty of Nice, and international assessments such as PISA, which have pushed Cyprus toward adopting western models of governance and quality assurance. These historical and international influences underpin the current legislative and policy framework within which internationalization practices are situated.

A key legal milestone was the enactment of Law 136(I)/2015, which established the *Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education* as the central authority for external evaluation and accreditation across all HE institutions (CYQAA, 2015). As Emilianides and Hadjisoteriou (2020) highlight, education policy in Cyprus is deeply rooted in constitutional principles and international conventions, which guide the development of quality assurance mechanisms and regulatory policies affecting both public and private universities. Under this legislation, both public and private universities are legally mandated to undergo institutional, departmental, and programmatic accreditation in compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ENQA, 2018). This framework consolidated previously fragmented quality assurance practices into a single national system, ensuring alignment with European benchmarks (Eurydice, 2025).

Despite a strategic push for internationalization, national policy continues to emphasize student mobility and institutional branding, with little explicit mention of IaH (European Commission, Directorate General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2024). Moreover, public universities are legally restricted from offering undergraduate instruction in English, which limits the implementation of some type of IaH practices. In contrast, private universities, operating under a more flexible legislative framework, frequently deliver English-medium programs (AACRAO, 2024; Philenews, 2025). Hence, within this policy and institutional landscape, it is unsurprising that the implementation of IaH teaching and learning practices in Cyprus has been documented in only a limited number of studies. These efforts have been identified in both public and private universities, and academic rank does not appear to be a determining factor in their

dissemination. However, the available examples are limited to two disciplines: language learning (Nicolaou and Sevilla-Pavón, 2016; Sevilla-Pavón and Nicolaou, 2020) and Occupational Therapy (Psychouli et al., 2020). A shared characteristic of these studies is their exclusive focus on a single IaH modality: Virtual Exchange. Given the limited body of published research in the Cypriot HE context, the present study was undertaken to investigate IaH practices that may be implemented by academic staff but remain undocumented in the existing literature.

5 Methods

This study aims to investigate academic staff perceptions of IaH in Cypriot HE, focusing on the influence of academic discipline, institutional type, and academic rank. Additionally, it examines the extent to which academic staff in the Republic of Cyprus engage in IaH activities and their implementation practices. The study is guided by two research questions (RQ):

- RQ1: To what extent do academic discipline, institution type, and academic rank influence academic staff perceptions of IaH in Cypriot HE, particularly in terms of its perceived importance, departmental priority, challenges and implementation?
- RQ2: What activities, if any, do academic staff implement to promote IaH practices in their classes, and how do these activities vary according to their academic discipline, type of institution, and academic rank?

5.1 Instruments

The main instrument for data collection in this study was a modified version of the 6th Global Survey Report by the International Association of Universities (Marinoni and Pina Cardona, 2024). The modification incorporated elements from Weimer et al.'s (2019) survey on IaH. Both the Marinoni and Pina Cardona (2024) survey and that of Weimer et al. (2019) have been validated and found reliable for examining academic staff perceptions of IaH. Our survey was structured into three sections: a consent form, a participant profile, and an IaH section, comprising both closed- and open-ended questions. As part of a larger study, the survey was conducted under a methodology approved by the Cyprus National Bioethics Committee. This study reports on a specific subset of the survey results, focusing on the perceived importance of IaH, the priority assigned to it within academic staff's departments, the challenges to advancing IaH, and its implementation in class. The survey was administered online.

5.2 Survey distribution

The online survey was sent to all accredited universities founded in the Republic of Cyprus, with voluntary participation open to all academic staff, regardless of discipline, department, or academic rank. Responses were received from six universities

(three public and three private), reflecting the institutions where academic staff chose to participate. Subsequently, a desk-based search of publicly available documents on internationalization activities and strategic initiatives was conducted on the websites of the six universities. The three public institutions (U1, U2, and U3)¹ showed similar levels of documentation (44, 44, and 36 documents), whereas the private universities varied considerably, with U4 providing 143 documents, U6 108, and U5 only 25. These documents were further examined with a focus on keywords related to internationalization practices and on the terminology used by the institutions to describe these activities. The analysis was guided by the frameworks and conceptual approaches proposed by Ferencz and Rumbley (2022) and Seeber et al. (2020). Table 1 displays the frequency and distribution of the terminology identified across the documents.

Table 1 shows an uneven distribution of internationalization terminology. *International program* are most frequently referenced (103 instances), followed by EMI program (39) and *Double degree courses* or *Joint program* (31), underscoring their importance in institutional strategies. *Intercultural education* appears 21 times. Interestingly, neither IaH nor Virtual mobility are referenced explicitly, raising questions about how these six institutions ensure international learning opportunities for all students.

5.3 Participants

Seventy-six academic teaching staff from six universities in the Republic of Cyprus participated in the study with 42.1% male ($n = 32$) and 57.9% female ($n = 44$). Their mean age at the time of data collection was 45.7 years. Most held a doctorate (88.2%, $n = 67$), with 11.8% ($n = 9$) holding a master's degree. Participants were classified by academic rank into three groups²: Group 1 (20 Special Scientists, 11 Special Teaching Staff); Group 2 (6 Lecturers, 11 Assistant Professors); and Group 3 (14 Associate Professors, 14 Professors).

The academic staff represented a diverse range of 23 disciplines: Education was the most represented category, with 14.5% ($n = 11$) in general Education, and 13.2% ($n = 10$) in Language Teaching. Linguistics, and Engineering and Technology each accounted for 10.5% ($n = 8$), while Interdisciplinary STEM oriented programs comprised 9.2% ($n = 7$). Social Sciences included Journalism, Media Studies, and Communication (3.9%, $n = 3$) and Psychology (6.6%, $n = 5$). Contributions from Natural Sciences were led by Chemistry (5.3%, $n = 4$), followed by Biology (2.6%, $n = 2$)

¹ To ensure confidentiality, the names of the institutions are not disclosed. The abbreviation "U" indicates "University."

² The classification of academic rank reflects academic roles within the Cypriot HE system: Group 1 focused primarily on teaching, with no formal research obligations; this group included permanent and non-permanent staff who may hold a PhD and engage in research, although they are not required to do so. Group 2 comprised non-tenured academics at an early stage of their career (defined by career stage rather than age), who carried teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. Group 3 consisted of tenured faculty, who likewise combined teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities but within permanent positions.

TABLE 1 Key terms and concepts of internationalization in publicly available documents from the six universities in Cyprus employing the study's participants.

Keywords	Universities						
	U1	U2	U3	U4	U5	U6	Total
International program	1	1	1	20	0	80	103
English-medium-instruction (EMI) programs	6	0	2	3	8	20	39
Double degree courses or Joint program	2	1	4	20	2	2	31
Mobility	6	9	3	2	4	0	24
Intercultural Education	0	4	3	12	1	1	21
Global professionals and citizens	1	3	1	0	0	1	6
Global citizenship skills	0	3	1	0	0	1	5
Internationalization strategies	1	1	0	2	1	0	5
Intercultural competences	0	0	3	1	0	0	4
Internationalization plan	0	1	0	2	0	0	3
Internationalization actions	0	1	0	2	0	0	3
Global citizenship as a graduate attribute	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
International learning	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Global Learning	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Internationalization at Home	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Virtual academic mobilities	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Virtual Exchange	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

and Mathematics (1.3%, $n = 1$). Other fields such as Arts and Humanities included History (2.6%, $n = 2$), Archaeology and Arts (each 1.3%, $n = 1$). Other contributions were noted in Business (2.6%, $n = 2$), Law (1.3%, $n = 1$), Environmental Studies and Forestry (1.3%, $n = 1$), Architecture (1.3%, $n = 1$), Earth Sciences (1.3%, $n = 1$), and Health fields, including Global Health (1.3%, $n = 1$), Medicine (2.6%, $n = 2$), and Nursing (2.6%, $n = 2$). Computer Sciences also contributed 2.6% ($n = 2$).

The participants disciplines were classified according to the ISCED-F 2013 categories (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014). These disciplines were further grouped into two overarching categories, STEM and non-STEM fields, following the approach of prior studies (OECD, 2024) that analyze differences between these domains in educational contexts according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics's (2014) classification. Table 2 presents the distribution of participants by academic discipline and institution type.

5.4 Data analysis

Three-way ANOVAs were conducted on the quantitative data of the survey to examine the results for four key areas: the Importance of IaH, the Priority of IaH for the Department, Challenges to Advancing IaH, and the Implementation of IaH Practices. The analyses explored the effects of three independent variables: academic discipline (STEM vs. non-STEM), institution type (public vs. private), and academic rank (Groups 1–3, as previously defined). Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS

(version 25), with significance levels set at $p < 0.05$. Qualitative data, collected through open-ended questions, were analyzed using Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), following an inductive, data-driven approach (Selvi, 2020). First- and second-level coding were employed to reduce the data into groups of categories. These categories then formed the basis for quantitative analyses, primarily involving frequencies and percentages. NVivo Release 1.0 (Jackson and Bazeley, 2019), was employed to support the coding process.

6 Results

6.1 Academic staff perceptions on the implementation of IaH practices

The first research question examined the extent to which academic discipline (STEM, $n = 31$; non-STEM, $n = 45$), type of institution (public, $n = 49$; private, $n = 27$), and academic rank (G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist, $n = 31$; G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer, $n = 17$; G3: Professor or Associate Professor, $n = 28$) influence academic staff perceptions regarding the implementation of IaH practices in Cypriot HE. Specifically, this question explored how academic staff view the importance of IaH in their departments, whether IaH is considered a strategic priority, the key challenges associated with advancing it, and whether they implement IaH in their classes.

TABLE 2 Distribution of participants by academic discipline and institution type.

Academic fields by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2014) categories and OECD (2024) distribution	Public universities		Private universities	
	N	%	N	%
STEM fields				
Earth sciences	1	(1%)	0	(0%)
Engineering, Manufacturing, and Construction	7	(9%)	2	(3%)
Health and Welfare (specifically health-related fields)	3	(4%)	2	(3%)
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	2	(3%)	0	(0%)
Interdisciplinary STEM oriented programs	5	(7%)	2	(3%)
Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Statistics	4	(5%)	3	(4%)
Total	22	(29%)	9	(12%)
Non-STEM fields				
Agriculture and Forestry	1	(1%)	0	(0%)
Arts and Humanities	9	(12%)	3	(4%)
Business, Administration, and Law	1	(1%)	2	(3%)
Education	9	(12%)	12	(16%)
Social Sciences, Journalism, and Information	7	(9%)	1	(1%)
Total	27	(36%)	18	(24%)

6.1.1 Academic staff perceptions of the importance of IaH in their departments

Descriptive statistics analysis of academic staff perceptions toward the importance of IaH in their departments are presented in [Table 3](#).

Overall, [Table 3](#) indicates that participants from private institutions reported higher mean scores, suggesting stronger agreement with the importance of IaH. In private STEM fields, Group 2 consistently rated IaH highly ($M = 4.00$), while group 3 scored slightly lower ($M = 3.50$). Conversely, in public STEM fields, Group 3 reported the highest agreement ($M = 3.71$), while Group 1 expressed more ambivalence ($M = 2.25$). In non-STEM fields, public institutions showed consistently positive responses, particularly among Group 3 ($M = 3.78$). Private non-STEM responses varied, with Group 2 showing the highest agreement ($M = 3.63$), while Group 1 exhibited more neutral perceptions ($M = 2.25$).

The results of a three-way ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of the academic rank on the academic staff perceptions toward the importance of IaH in their departments, $F_{(2,65)} = 6.418$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.17$ ([Figure 1](#)). Pairwise comparisons revealed that the mean academic staff perceptions of the importance of IaH in their departments was significantly lower for Group 1 than both Group 2 ($p < 0.05$) and Group 3 ($p < 0.001$). The mean academic staff perceptions of the importance of IaH in their departments was not significantly different between Groups 2 and 3 ($p = 0.488$).

Academic discipline had no significant effect on academic staff perceptions of IaH importance, $F_{(1,65)} = 1.094$, $p = 0.299$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$, with no difference between STEM and non-STEM fields. Institution type also showed no significant effect, $F_{(1,65)} = 0.002$, $p = 0.962$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.00$, with perceptions similar across public and private institutions.

6.1.2 Academic staff perceptions of IaH as a strategic priority in their departments

Descriptive statistics on academic staff perceptions of IaH as a strategic priority in their departments are summarized in [Table 4](#).

[Table 4](#) indicates that perceptions of IaH as a strategic priority vary by discipline, institution type, and academic rank. Public institutions reported lower overall means (STEM: $M = 2.14$, non-STEM: $M = 2.22$), with Group 3 in both disciplines showing stronger agreement (STEM: $M = 2.71$, non-STEM: $M = 2.67$). In private institutions, Group 2 and Group 3 had similar positive responses ($M = 2.44$ in STEM, $M = 2.22$ in non-STEM). Group 1 consistently reported the lowest agreement, especially in private non-STEM fields ($M = 1.25$).

A three-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of academic rank on academic staff perceptions of IaH as a strategic priority within their departments, $F_{(2,65)} = 12.434$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.28$ ([Figure 2](#)). Pairwise comparisons indicated that the mean perceptions of IaH as a strategic priority were significantly lower among Group 1 compared to both Group 2 ($p < 0.05$) and Group 3 ($p < 0.001$). No significant difference was observed between groups 2 and 3 ($p = 0.862$). As previously observed, there was no significant effect of academic discipline on academic staff perceptions of IaH as a strategic priority, $F_{(1,65)} = 0.375$, $p = 0.543$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$, indicating no difference between STEM and non-STEM fields. Similarly, institution type had no significant effect, $F_{(1,65)} = 2.539$, $p = 0.116$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.04$, with perceptions comparable between public and private institutions.

6.1.3 Academic staff perceptions of challenges to advancing IaH in their departments

Descriptive statistics illustrating academic staff perceptions of the challenges to advancing IaH in their departments are presented in [Table 5](#).

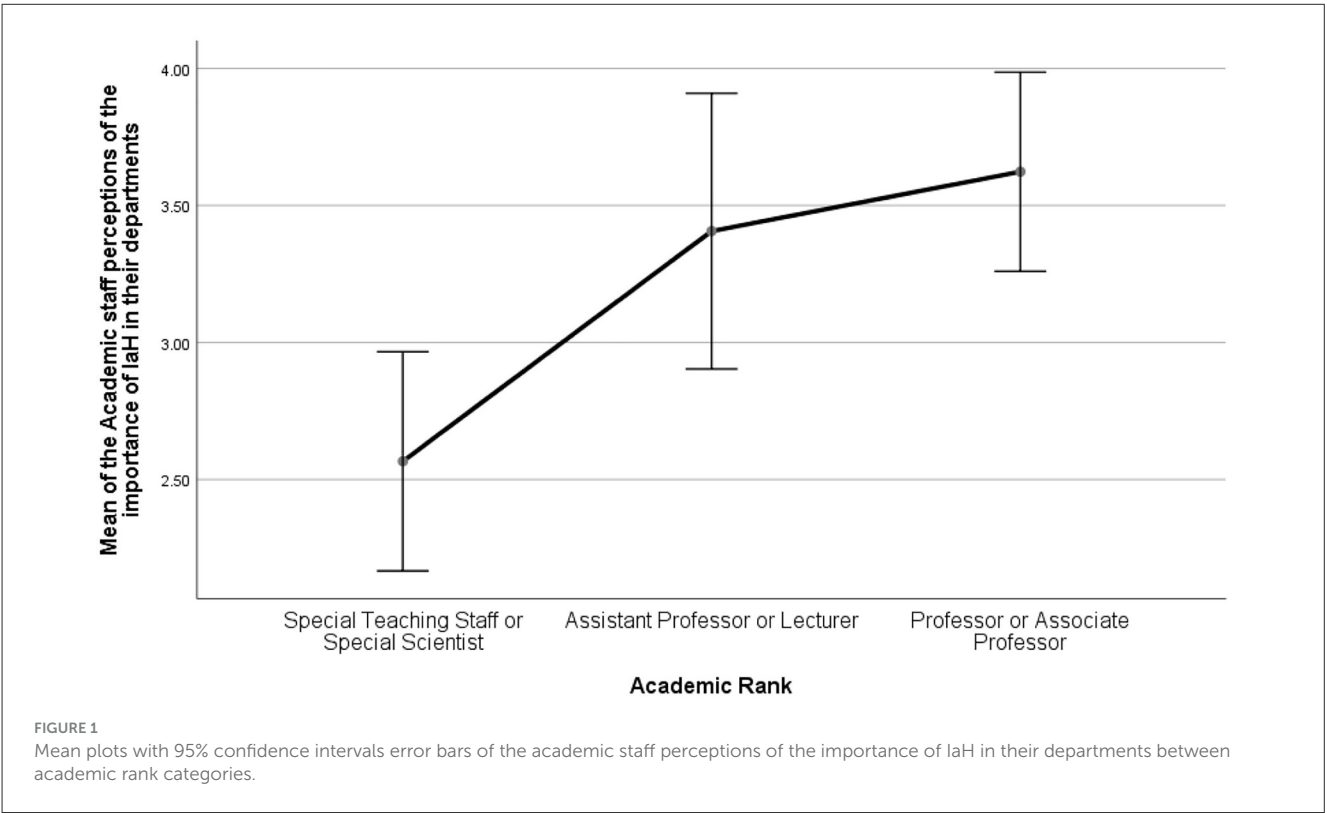
[Table 5](#) highlights variations in perceptions of challenges to advancing IaH. Public universities- STEM fields reported moderate agreement overall ($M = 2.05$), with Group 3 expressing the strongest concerns ($M = 2.86$). In private universities STEM fields, responses were similar ($M = 2.11$), led by Group 2 ($M = 2.33$). Non-STEM fields showed higher agreement overall, especially in private universities ($M = 2.61$), where Group 3 consistently identified challenges ($M = 3.00$). Public universities non-STEM fields reported slightly lower means ($M = 2.41$), with Group 3 expressing stronger concerns ($M = 2.67$).

A three-way ANOVA identified a significant main effect of academic discipline on academic staff perceptions of challenges in advancing IaH within their departments, $F_{(1,65)} = 6.911$, $p < 0.05$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.10$ ([Figure 3](#)). Pairwise comparisons indicated that perceptions of challenges were significantly lower for STEM fields compared to non-STEM fields ($p < 0.05$). Similarly, a

TABLE 3 Descriptive statistics for the academic staff perceptions of the importance of IaH in their departments between academic discipline, institution type and academic rank categories.

Academic discipline	Institution type	Academic rank	N	Mean	Std. error	95% confidence interval	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
STEM fields	Public	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	12	2.25	0.35	1.48	3.02
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	3	2.67	0.88	−1.13	6.46
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	7	3.71	0.18	3.26	4.17
		Total	22	2.77	0.26	2.23	3.32
	Private	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	0	–	–	–	–
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	3	4.00	0.00	4.00	4.00
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	6	3.50	0.50	2.21	4.79
		Total	9	3.67	0.33	2.90	4.44
Non-STEM fields	Public	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	15	3.20	0.28	2.60	3.80
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	3	3.33	0.33	1.90	4.77
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	9	3.78	0.15	3.44	4.12
		Total	27	3.41	0.17	3.06	3.76
	Private	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	4	2.25	0.75	−0.14	4.64
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	8	3.63	0.18	3.19	4.06
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	6	3.50	0.22	2.93	4.07
		Total	18	3.28	0.23	2.80	3.75

“G” stands for group.

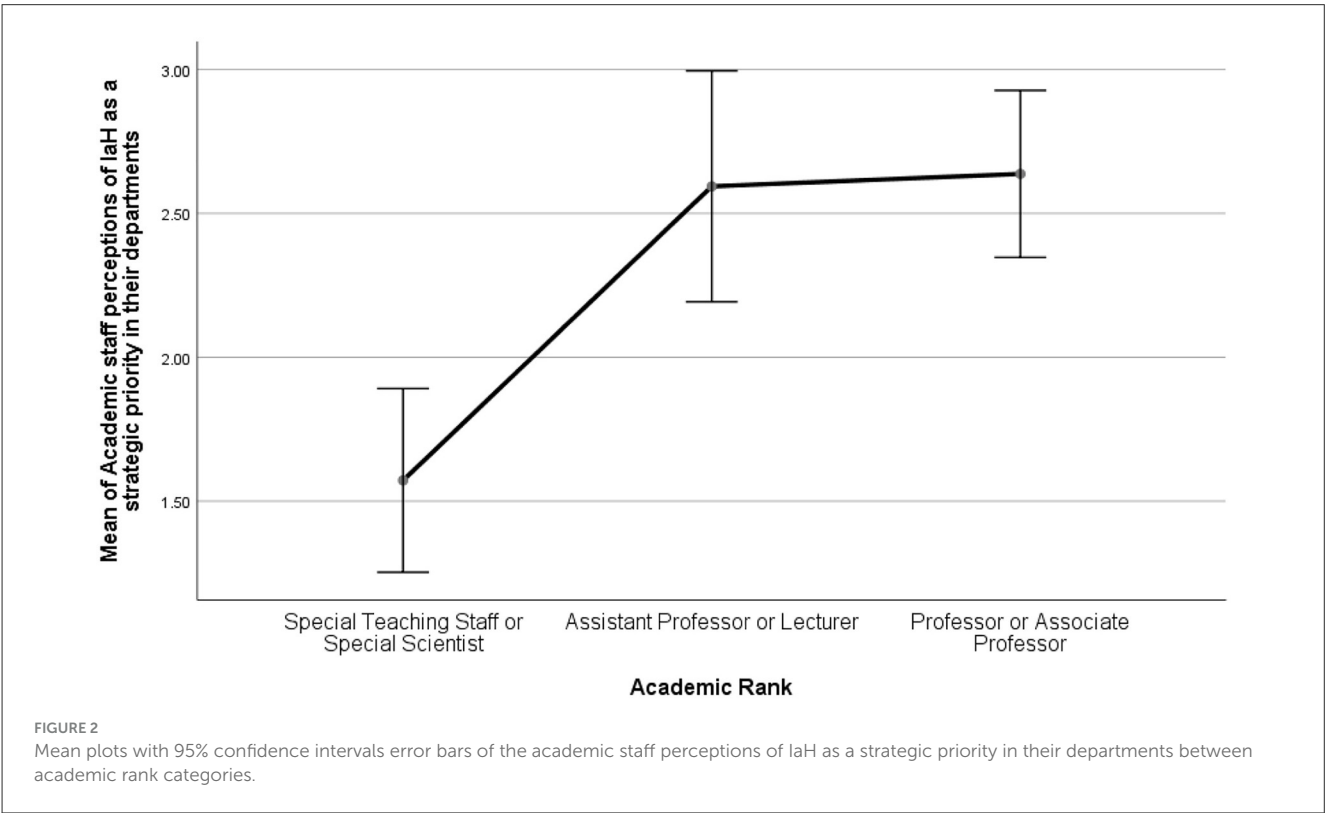


significant main effect of academic rank was observed on academic staff perceptions of challenges in advancing IaH within their departments, $F_{(2,65)} = 7.365$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.19$ (Figure 4). Pairwise comparisons showed that perceptions of challenges were

significantly lower for Group 1 compared to Group 3 ($p < 0.01$). No significant differences were found between Group 2 and Group 3 ($p = 0.228$) or between Group 2 and Group 1 ($p = 0.084$). There was no significant effect of Institution type on academic staff

TABLE 4 Descriptive statistics for the academic staff perceptions of IaH as a strategic priority in their departments between academic discipline, institution type and academic rank categories.

Academic discipline	Institution type	Academic rank	N	Mean	Std. error	95% confidence interval	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
STEM fields	Public	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	12	1.67	0.26	1.10	2.23
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	3	2.67	0.33	1.23	4.10
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	7	2.71	0.18	2.26	3.17
		Total	22	2.14	0.19	1.74	2.53
	Private	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	0				
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	3	2.33	0.67	−0.54	5.20
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	6	2.50	0.34	1.62	3.38
		Total	9	2.44	0.29	1.77	3.12
Non-STEM fields	Public	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	15	1.80	0.24	1.28	2.32
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	3	3.00	0.00	3.00	3.00
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	9	2.67	0.17	2.28	3.05
		Total	27	2.22	0.17	1.87	2.57
	Private	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	4	1.25	0.25	0.45	2.05
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	8	2.38	0.26	1.75	3.00
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	6	2.67	0.21	2.12	3.21
		Total	18	2.22	0.19	1.82	2.62

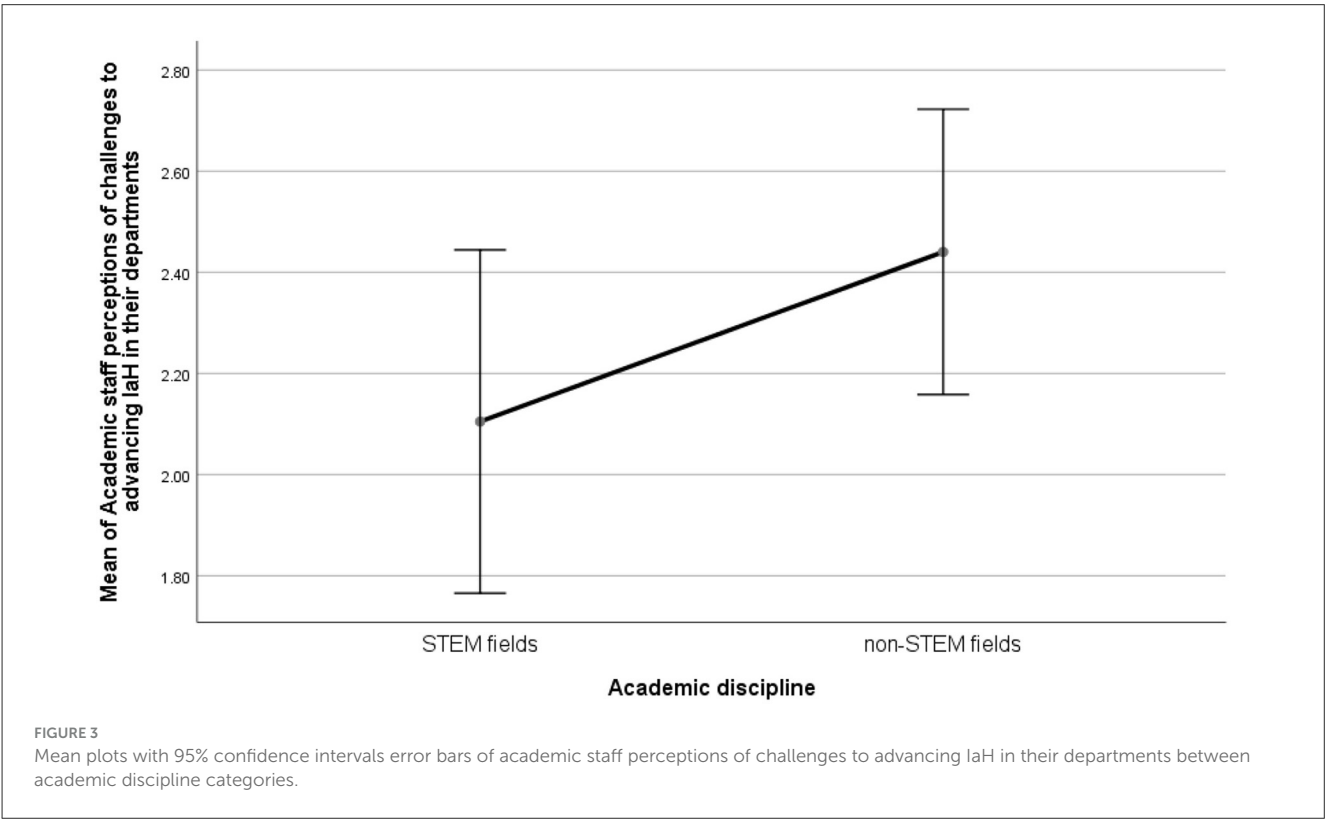


perceptions of challenges to advancing IaH, $F_{(1,65)} = 0.226$, $p = 0.636$, $\eta^2_p = 0.00$.

Given the importance of identifying potential challenges in the implementation of IaH, the study sought to explore the types of obstacles perceived by academic staff within their departments. To this end, a list of eight options was provided, and participants were asked to select up to three. Figure 5 displays the results.

TABLE 5 Descriptive statistics for the academic staff perceptions of challenges to advancing IaH in their departments between academic discipline, institution type and academic rank categories.

Academic discipline	Institution type	Academic rank	N	Mean	Std. error	95% confidence interval	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
STEM fields	Public	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	12	1.67	0.28	1.04	2.29
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	3	1.67	0.33	0.23	3.10
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	7	2.86	0.14	2.51	3.21
		Total	22	2.05	0.20	1.62	2.47
	Private	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	0				
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	3	2.33	0.67	−0.54	5.20
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	6	2.00	0.45	0.85	3.15
		Total	9	2.11	0.35	1.30	2.92
Non-STEM fields	Public	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	15	2.27	0.25	1.73	2.80
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	3	2.33	0.67	−0.54	5.20
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	9	2.67	0.24	2.12	3.21
		Total	27	2.41	0.17	2.06	2.76
	Private	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	4	1.50	0.50	−0.09	3.09
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	8	2.88	0.13	2.58	3.17
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	6	3.00	0.00	3.00	3.00
		Total	18	2.61	0.18	2.22	3.00



The analysis of challenges perceived by academic staff in implementing IaH reveals notable differences across groups. Group 1 identifies the limited expertise of academic personnel (63.20%) as the most prominent challenge, alongside the absence of training (46.20%) and a lack of institutional policies encouraging IaH (45.20%), highlighting the need

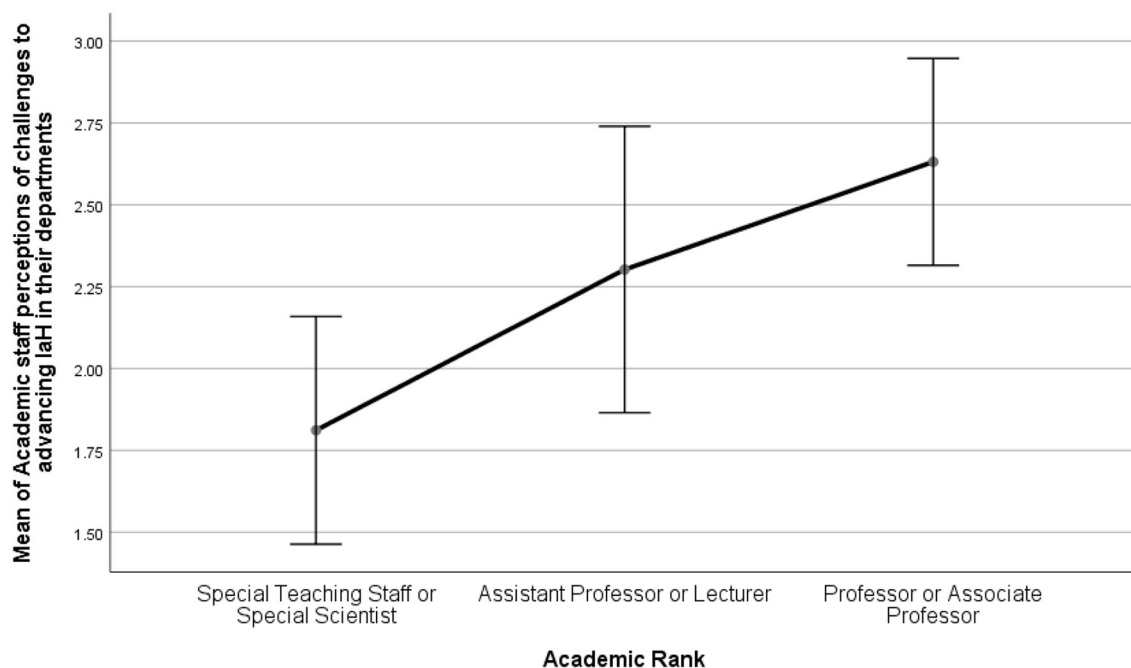


FIGURE 4

Mean plots with 95% confidence intervals error bars of academic staff perceptions of challenges to advancing IaH in their departments between academic rank categories.

Top three challenges to advancing IaH

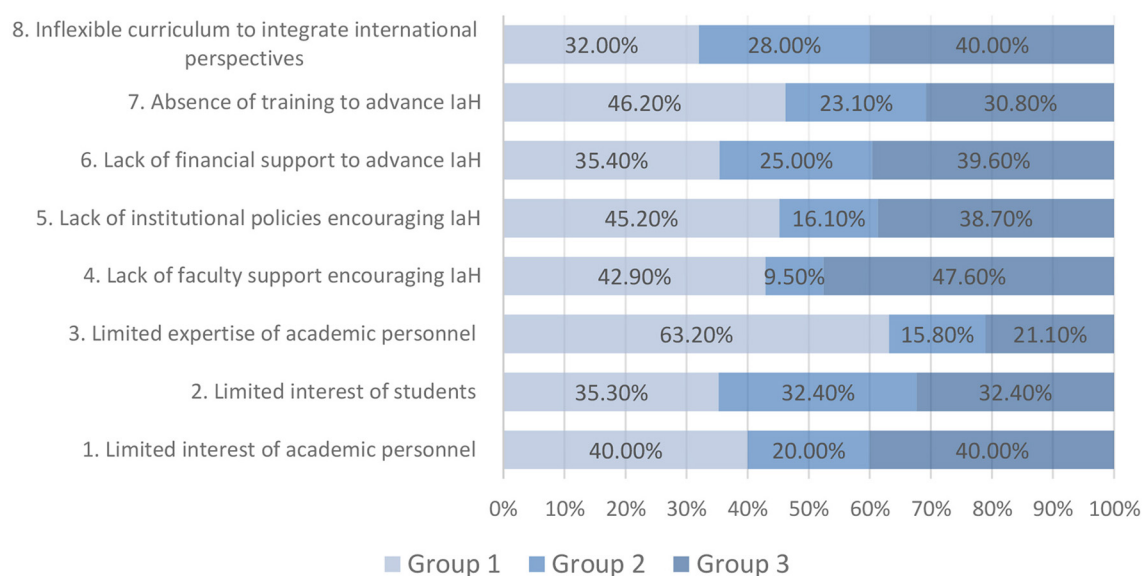


FIGURE 5

Top three challenges perceived by academic staff in advancing IaH.

for professional development and structural support. In contrast, Group 2 reports challenges with limited student interest (32.40%) and inflexible curricula (28.00%) as more prevalent, with less emphasis on faculty or institutional barriers. Group 3 underscores the lack of faculty support

(47.60%), inflexible curricula (40.00%), and insufficient financial resources (39.60%) as key obstacles, suggesting structural impediments within institutions. These findings indicate that while some challenges are shared, others vary significantly by group, reflecting diverse institutional and

contextual needs that must be addressed to advance IaH initiatives effectively.

Taking these challenges into account, the focus shifted to determining the extent to which academic staff actively integrate IaH initiatives into their teaching.

6.1.4 Implementation of IaH practices in the classroom

When asked about their engagement with IaH practices, 68.4% ($N = 52$) of respondents indicated that they do incorporate such practices into their teaching, while 31.6% ($N = 24$) reported that they do not. This suggests that the academic staff who participated in this study are, to some extent, proactive in integrating IaH initiatives, although a significant proportion still refrains from doing so. Table 6 presents descriptive statistics on the implementation of IaH practices in the classroom.

Table 6 reveals moderate implementation of IaH practices in classrooms, with higher engagement in non-STEM fields (public: $M = 1.74$; private: $M = 1.72$) compared to STEM fields (public: $M = 1.64$; private: $M = 1.56$). Group 3 consistently reported greater implementation, particularly in public STEM ($M = 2.00$) and public non-STEM ($M = 1.89$). Group 1 reported the lowest engagement, especially in private non-STEM fields ($M = 1.25$).

Finally, a three-way ANOVA was also conducted to examine the effect of academic discipline, type of institution, and academic rank on the implementation of IaH practices in the classroom. The analysis revealed significant main effects

for academic discipline ($F_{(1,65)} = 5.242$, $p = 0.025$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.075$) and academic rank ($F_{(2,65)} = 5.750$, $p = 0.005$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.150$), indicating that non-STEM fields and Group 3 reported higher levels of IaH implementation (Figures 6, 7). Pairwise comparisons for academic rank revealed that Group 3 reported significantly higher levels of IaH implementation compared to Group 1. However, no significant differences were found between Group 1 and Group 2 ($p = 0.219$) or between Group 2 and Group 3 ($p = 0.146$). These findings highlight the significant role of the highest rank (Group 3) in implementing IaH practices, while differences among other ranks were not statistically significant.

6.2 Activities implemented by academic staff to promote IaH in their classes

The second research question of this study investigated the activities academic staff employ to promote IaH practices in their classes. The reported results correspond to the 52 participants who indicated using IaH activities in their classes. The QCA of the open-ended responses resulted in nine main codes, which were derived inductively from the data. Table 7 provides an overview of the nine codes, including their descriptions, representative examples, and frequencies.

As significant differences were observed in participants' academic disciplines and ranks regarding IaH implementation, the analysis further investigated whether differences existed in the types

TABLE 6 Descriptive statistics for the Implementation of IaH practices in the classroom between academic discipline, institution type and academic rank categories.

Academic discipline	Institution type	Academic rank	N	Mean	Std. error	95% confidence interval	
						Lower bound	Upper bound
STEM fields	Public	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	12	1.50	0.15	1.17	1.83
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	3	1.33	0.33	−0.10	2.77
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	7	2.00	0.00	2.00	2.00
		Total	22	1.64	0.10	1.42	1.85
	Private	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	0				
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	3	1.33	0.33	−0.10	2.77
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	6	1.67	0.21	1.12	2.21
		Total	9	1.56	0.18	1.15	1.96
Non-STEM fields	Public	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	15	1.60	0.13	1.32	1.88
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	3	2.00	0.00	2.00	2.00
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	9	1.89	0.11	1.63	2.15
		Total	27	1.74	0.09	1.56	1.92
	Private	G1: Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientist	4	1.25	0.25	0.45	2.05
		G2: Assistant Professor or Lecturer	8	1.88	0.13	1.58	2.17
		G3: Professor or Associate Professor	6	1.83	0.17	1.40	2.26
		Total	18	1.72	0.11	1.49	1.95

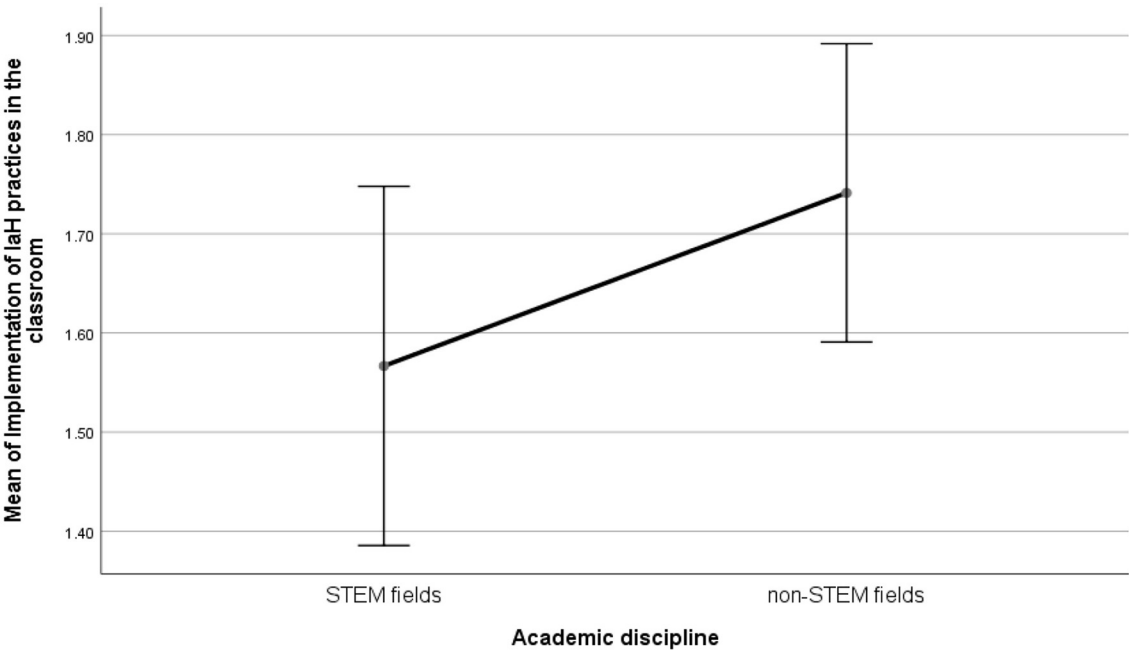


FIGURE 6
Mean plots with 95% confidence intervals error bars of implementation of IaH practices between academic discipline categories.

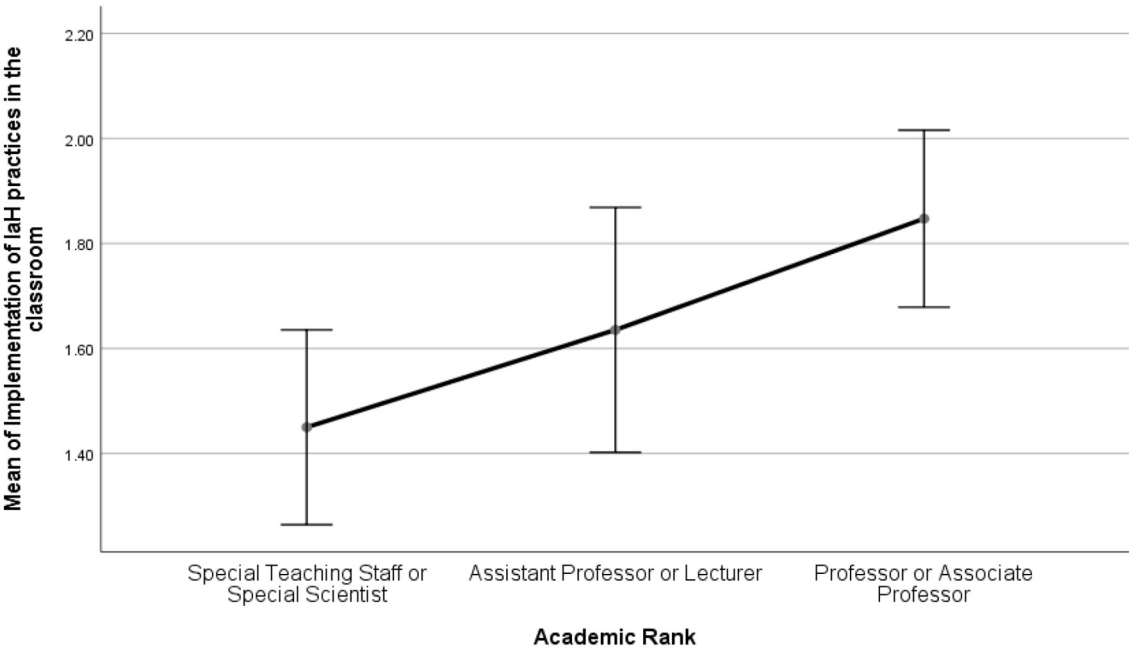


FIGURE 7
Mean plots with 95% confidence intervals error bars of implementation of IaH practices academic discipline categories.

of IaH practices reported by participants. Figures 8, 9 illustrate the distribution of these reported practices, classified according to the nine codes (Table 7). Analysis of code distributions by academic field (Figure 8) indicates that most IaH practices were more prominent among

non-STEM than STEM disciplines, particularly “Encouraging Mobility and Intercultural Competence” and “Virtual Exchange and Online Collaboration”, which appeared exclusively in non-STEM (100% vs. 0%). “Comparative—International Case Studies and Cultural Sharing and Discussion” were also

TABLE 7 Codebook for qualitative analysis of academic staff IaH practices.

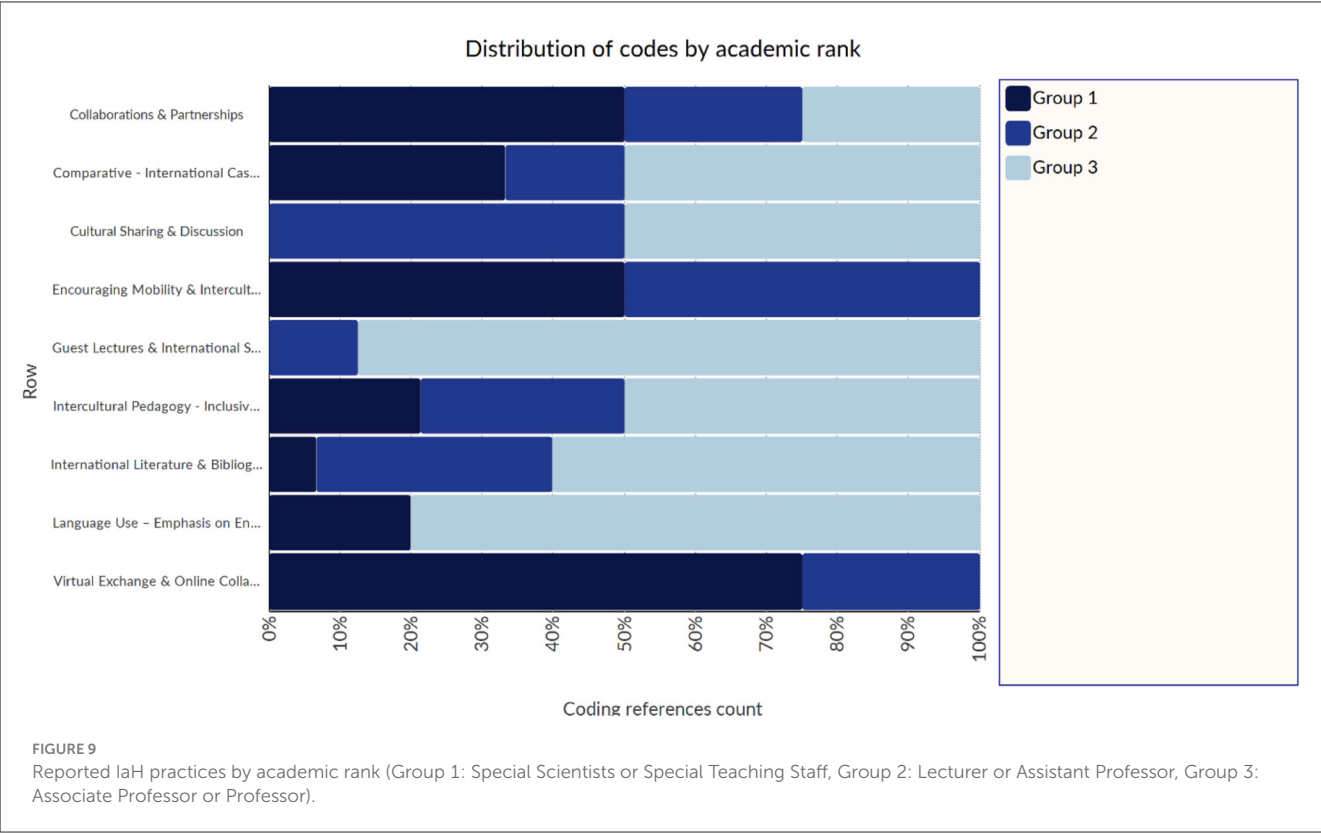
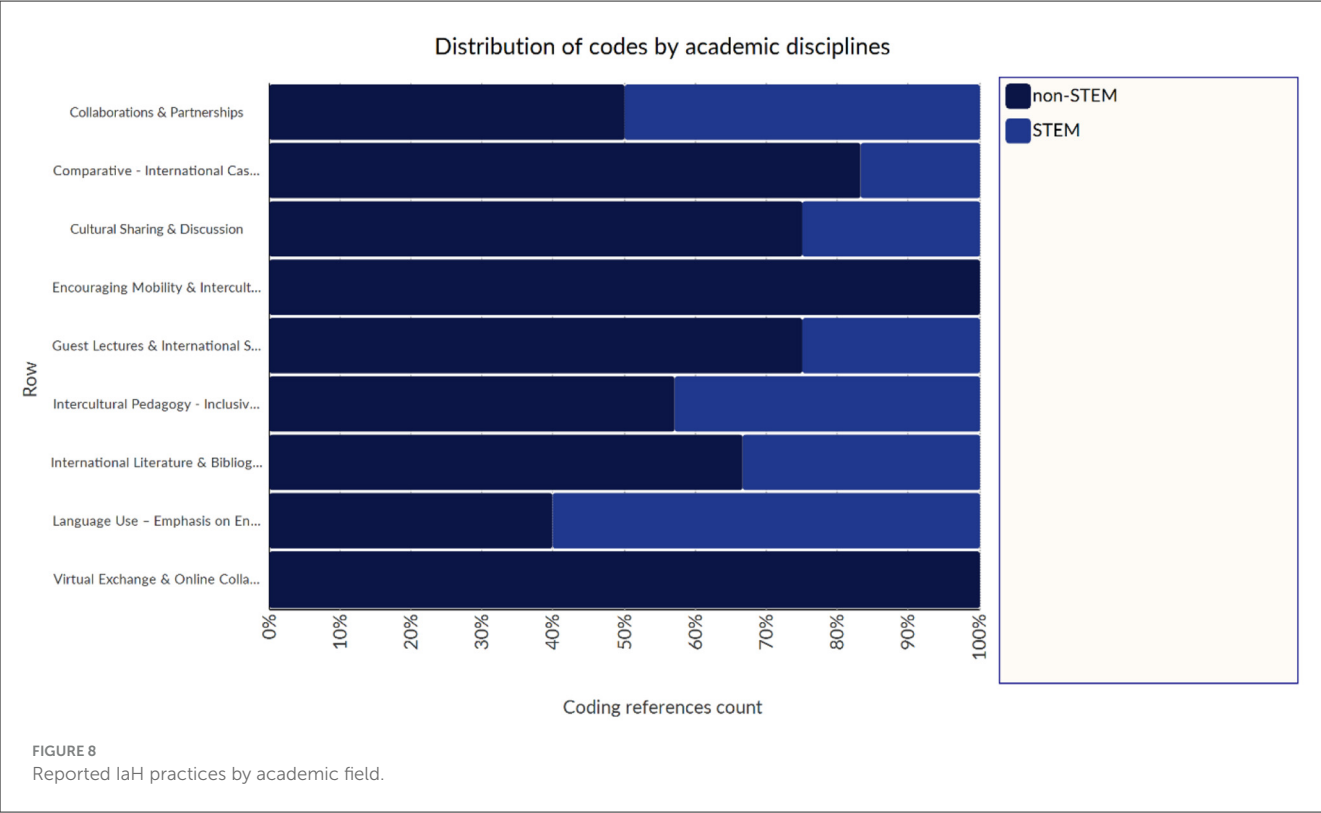
Codes	Description	Examples	Frequency
(1) Collaborations and Partnerships	Collaborations with other universities, research consortia, international PhD committees, or formal partnerships.	“Collaboration with other universities to offer postgraduate courses or short courses” (P11, Non-STEM: Linguistics, Public University, Professor)	4
(2) Comparative—International Case Studies	Use of case studies, examples, or comparisons drawn from different countries or cultural contexts.	“[I] Give central role to how the contents apply in other countries.” (P60, Non-STEM: Economics, Public University, Assistant Professor); “Business processes and Case studies which are applied to advanced maritime organizations.” (P64, Non-STEM: Business, Private University, Associate Professor)	6
(3) Cultural Sharing and Discussion	Activities where students share aspects of their culture, customs, or habits in class discussions or presentations.	“I encourage students to talk about customs and habits involving their culture and we create a beautiful discussion in the classroom which leads to a power point presentation concerning the above-mentioned matter. Then we try to find similarities that connect the different cultures.” (P3, Non-STEM, Education, Private University, Lecturer); “I invite students to give presentations about relevant course material that concerns their countries. In discussions, I encourage students to share their experiences from around the world.” (P67, STEM: Biology, Private University, Associate Professor)	4
(4) Encouraging Mobility and Intercultural Competence	Promotion of student/faculty mobility (e.g., Erasmus), international summer schools, and development of intercultural skills.	“As a teacher, I always provide students with a global perspective of the scientific field. Participating in mobility activities is recommended for students.” (P48, Non-STEM: Linguistics, Public University, Assistant Professor).	2
(5) Guest Lectures and International Speakers	Invitations extended to foreign scholars or professionals to give talks, workshops, or classes.	“I invite scholars from the globe to offer online lectures and workshops within our classes” (P71, Non-STEM: Architecture, Private University, Associate Professor).	8
(6) Intercultural Pedagogy – Inclusive Teaching	Teaching approaches that foster equity and inclusivity, welcoming diverse cultural backgrounds.	“I give power to my students by making their voices heard. E.g. a student from Ukraine creates a text in Greek and the lesson is based on it. We explore the values that jump out the text. These values are co-explored in several socio-cultural contexts.” (P21, Non-STEM: Language Teaching, Public University, Special Scientist); “Welcoming the input and contribution of students of different countries in class and encouraging interactions with Cypriot students” (P44, Non-STEM: Journalism media studies and communication, Public University, Assistant Professor).	14
(7) International Literature and Bibliography	Integration of international sources, articles, or global scholarship into curricula.	“By supporting the international aspect: references/bibliography/publications, good practices.” (P25, Non-STEM: Education, Private University, Lecturer).	15
(8) Language Use – Emphasis on English	Use of English as the medium of instruction and/or the integration of English-language teaching materials and activities.	“I maximize the need of English language use in all my courses, written, spoken, and reading skills. 99.9% of the scientific literature, scientific tools and dissemination opportunities require a good knowledge of English.” (P37, STEM: Chemistry, Public University, Professor)”	5
(9) Virtual Exchange and Online Collaboration	Use of virtual platforms or online projects to connect students across different national or cultural contexts.	“I conduct a project with the University of Maine at Farmington, USA, in which students from my university and the American one collaborate and meet virtually once a week in order to develop a lesson plan focusing on how to teach English based on intercultural awareness activities.” (P3, Non-STEM: Education, Private University, Lecturer)	4

“P” stands for participant.

heavily concentrated in non-STEM fields (89.19% and 80.15%, respectively). In contrast, “Language Use—Emphasis on English” stood out as the only practice more prevalent in STEM than non-STEM (60.32% vs. 39.68%). For codes such as “Collaborations and Partnerships”, “Guest Lectures and International Speakers”, “Intercultural Pedagogy – Inclusive Teaching”, and “International Literature and Bibliography”, the distribution between non-STEM and STEM was more balanced, though still favoring non-STEM. These findings suggest that while certain IaH practices are widely adopted across disciplines, others appear strongly aligned with either non-STEM or STEM contexts.

Finally, when the results are analyzed from the perspective of academic rank, distinct patterns emerge. “Collaborations and

Partnerships are most prominent” in Group 1 (48.48%), followed by Group 2 (33.33%) and Group 3 (18.18%). “Comparative—International Case Studies” are most frequently reported by Group 1 (47.30%) and Group 3 (37.84%), with a smaller percentage from Group 2 (14.86%). “Cultural Sharing and Discussion” is predominantly associated with Group 2 (62.50%) and Group 3 (37.50%), with no representation from Group 1 (0%). “Encouraging Mobility and Intercultural Competence” is reported exclusively by Group 1 (61.67%) and Group 2 (38.33%), with no contributions from Group 3 (0%). “Guest Lectures and International Speakers” are overwhelmingly represented in Group 3 (92.37%), with minimal reporting from Group 2 (7.63%) and none from Group 1 (0%). “Intercultural



Pedagogy—Inclusive Teaching” is more prevalent in Group 3 (44.11%) than in Group 1 (33.15%) or Group 2 (22.74%). “International Literature and Bibliography” is most commonly reported by Group 3 (61.15%), followed by Group 2 (27.31%)

and Group 1 (11.54%). “Language Use—Emphasis on English” shows the highest frequency in Group 3 (80.95%), with smaller contributions from Group 1 (19.05%) and none from Group 2 (0%). Lastly, “Virtual Exchange and Online Collaboration”

is nearly evenly split between Group 1 (48.91%) and Group 2 (51.09%), with no reporting from Group 3 (0%). These findings highlight again the variation in IaH practices across academic ranks.

7 Discussion

The results of this study indicate that, in the six universities explored in the Republic of Cyprus, IaH is implemented through a variety of activities, including formal curriculum (Leask, 2015), campus-based initiatives (Jones, 2017; Hofmeyr, 2021), and Virtual Exchange (O'Dowd, 2023). However, the extent and nature of this implementation are shaped by multiple factors to varying degrees. Previous research has pointed to academic rank as a potential factor in IaH implementation (Stohl, 2007), and our study reinforces this view: academic rank emerged as a significant variable shaping how faculty perceive the importance of IaH. Senior academics—particularly Associate and Full Professors (Group 3)—tended to express stronger support for IaH compared to Special Teaching Staff or Special Scientists (Group 1). This hierarchy in perception may reflect underlying differences in institutional power, access to professional networks, and opportunities for career development, all of which can shape an individual's engagement with IaH initiatives. Childress' (2018) "5 I's" model could serve as a guiding framework for enhancing support for less senior staff.

Perceptions of challenges also varied notably by academic rank. Special Teaching Staff and Special Scientists highlighted a lack of expertise and training, particularly in adapting to new teaching methods associated with online and virtual internationalization, as a key obstacle (Marinoni and Pina Cardona, 2024). Lecturers and Assistant Professors (Group 2) were more likely to mention limited student interest, also noted by Weimer et al. (2019) in Finnish HE institutions, as well as inflexible curricula. In contrast, Associate and Full Professors pointed to broader institutional barriers, such as insufficient funding and limited faculty support (Marinoni and Pina Cardona, 2024). These differences suggest that academic rank influences not only how IaH is perceived but also the kinds of challenges that might be encountered in practice.

Contrary to expectations, this study found that neither academic discipline nor institution type had a statistically significant effect on how faculty assessed the overall importance or strategic priority of IaH. This may suggest that systemic or cultural factors, such as national policies, shared academic values, or sector-wide professional development practices, play a more substantial role than structural differences alone in shaping faculty attitudes (Marinoni and Pina Cardona, 2024). However, discipline did emerge as a relevant factor when looking more closely at perceived challenges. Faculty in non-STEM fields reported greater difficulties in advancing IaH, reinforcing earlier observations that implementation varies across disciplines (Eftekhar et al., 2025), and aligning with Helm and Beaven's (2020) documentation of underrepresentation and specific challenges in fields such as the arts, tourism, and humanities. These findings point to the need for discipline-sensitive approaches that consider curriculum constraints, pedagogical traditions, and resourcing differences.

The lack of variation between public and private institutions is also noteworthy. While previous research has suggested that institution type may influence IaH rationales—such as

employability and market responsiveness in private HE institutions (Chanda and Betai, 2022) vs. more cultural or academic motivations in public HE institutions (Svetlik and Braček Lalić, 2014)—our results indicate that these differing rationales may not significantly affect faculty perceptions at the implementation level. This implies that broader, sector-wide challenges may overshadow institutional distinctions, supporting Tamrat's (2020) argument that both public and private institutions face structural and regulatory barriers that can limit the reach of IaH initiatives.

Despite the challenges identified, nearly 70% of respondents reported integrating IaH into their teaching practices. Consistent with the quantitative findings, rank-based variation also emerged in the types of IaH practices reported. "Guest Lectures and International Speakers" were reported almost exclusively by senior faculty (Group 3), whereas Virtual Exchange and Online Collaboration were more commonly mentioned by lower- and medium ranked academic staff (Group 1 and Group 2). These patterns suggest that role-specific responsibilities and access to institutional resources may influence which forms of IaH are feasible or prioritized by staff at different career stages. This reinforces previous calls for differentiated support structures that account for the varied constraints and motivations across academic ranks (Clifford and Montgomery, 2017).

While the quantitative analysis revealed no statistically significant differences in how the importance of IaH is perceived across academic disciplines, qualitative findings point to clear disciplinary variation in its implementation (Eftekhar et al., 2025; Helm and Beaven, 2020). This aligns with observations by Mittelmeier et al. (2024), who argue that disciplines adopt distinct rationales and strategies for internationalization based on their underlying epistemologies. In our study, academic staff from non-STEM fields more frequently reported using practices, such as "Comparative International Case Studies, Cultural Sharing and Discussion, and Intercultural Pedagogy", approaches commonly associated with the humanities and social sciences, where culturally situated learning and diverse perspectives are emphasized (Jones and Killick, 2007; Leask, 2009).

In contrast, consistent with Weimer et al.'s (2019) findings, academic staff in STEM disciplines frequently cited "Language Use," typically linked to English-medium instruction, as their primary form of IaH practice. This reflects a more instrumental model of internationalization (Wächter and Maiworm, 2014), which remains somewhat disconnected from emerging efforts to decolonize IaH practices (Wimpenny et al., 2021). This trend resonates with current debates in Cyprus, where the introduction of English-medium undergraduate programs in public universities is often equated with internationalization (AACRAO, 2024; Philenews, 2025). The following excerpt portrays this situation:

"Due to our legal restriction to have undergrad courses only in Greek our only way of diversifying our undergraduate student body is through foreign student who live in Cyprus and have gone through the Greek speaking elementary and/or high school system" (P16, Engineering Design, Public University, Professor).

The participant's comment exposes the practical tensions between national language policies, equity in access, and the aspirations to internationalize HE (Emilianides and Hadjisoteriou,

2020; Klerides and Philippou, 2015). Finally, the scarcity of Virtual Exchange and Intercultural Competence activities reported in STEM fields reflects the same absence in the documents analyzed from the six universities (cf. Table 1) and further supports earlier discussions that internationalization in these domains often manifests as global research collaboration or language policy rather than student-centered pedagogical practices (Leask, 2009). These results underscore the importance of tailoring IaH strategies not only to academic rank but also to disciplinary context, recognizing that different fields operate under distinct teaching traditions, curricular structures, and internationalization logics.

7.1 Limitations

This study's findings should be interpreted with certain considerations in mind. First, the sample was drawn solely from six Cypriot HE institutions, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other cultural or institutional contexts. Second, the relatively modest sample size and the reliance on self-reported perceptions introduce the possibility of response bias, particularly if those more engaged in IaH were more inclined to participate. Third, without direct classroom observation, the extent to which reported perceptions and IaH activities actually occur in practice remains unverified. Finally, while the study examined key variables (academic discipline, institution type, and rank), other factors, such as individual motivation, institutional resources, or leadership support, were not explored in depth and could further influence IaH implementation.

8 Conclusion

This study highlights the complex interplay of academic rank, disciplinary context, and structural constraints in shaping how IaH is perceived and practiced by academic staff in Cyprus. While institution type appeared to have limited influence, academic rank emerged as a key factor in determining both faculty attitudes and the types of IaH activities adopted. Disciplinary context also influenced the forms that IaH takes in practice. Although no statistically significant differences were found in how faculty across disciplines perceive the importance of IaH, qualitative findings revealed meaningful variation in implementation. Academic staff in non-STEM fields reported a wider range of culturally embedded practices, such as intercultural pedagogy and international case studies, while those in STEM disciplines were more likely to rely on an interpretation of IaH linked to English-language instruction, a model that remains largely disconnected from decolonizing approaches to internationalization. This resonates with current debates in Cyprus, where the push for English-medium undergraduate programs in public universities is often equated with internationalization. Despite these tensions, the widespread adoption of diverse IaH strategies by academic staff, regardless of institutional type, demonstrates both a commitment to global engagement and the adaptability of faculty working within varying constraints. Moving forward, efforts to enhance IaH in Cyprus must be grounded in policies that recognize

the differentiated needs of academic staff across ranks and disciplines. Stakeholders, from university leadership to national policy makers, must ensure that support for IaH includes professional development, curricular flexibility, and inclusive language policies. Only by addressing these contextual factors can IaH become a truly integrated and transformative element of HE in Cyprus.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available due to confidentiality agreements with participants. It contains potentially identifiable information from academic staff at higher education institutions in Cyprus. Access is therefore restricted to protect participants' anonymity and comply with ethical research standards by the Cyprus National Bioethical Committee. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to soule.maria-victoria@ucy.ac.cy.

Ethics statement

This study involved human participants. The study design was approved by the Cyprus National Bioethics Committee. All participants provided written informed consent to take part in the study.

Author contributions

MS: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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