

CULTURAL ADAPTATION AND SOCIAL EXPERIENCE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Ni'matuz Zuhroh*¹, Samsul Susilawati*², Aniek Rahmaniah*³, Ulfi Andrian Sari*⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Jl Gajayana No 50 Kota Malang, Indonesia

*¹zuhroh@pips.uin-malang.ac.id, ²susilawati@pips.uin-malang.ac.id, ³arahmaniah@pips.uin-malang.ac.id, ⁴ulfiandriansari@uin-malang.ac.id

Abstract

This study seeks to answer the question of how the process of cultural adaptation and social experience of international students. Research on cultural adaptation and social experience that occurs in international students in Malang City uses a qualitative research type. Data were obtained through observation and in-depth interviews with international students. The next process after the interview is the transcription of the data. In analyzing and interpreting data, this research uses an empirical phenomenological approach. The results of this study found several challenges of cultural adaptation faced as follows: 1) Barriers to communication adaptation and interpersonal interaction, related to the mastery of Indonesian, the use of mixed languages in the local community, as well as aspects of cultural values in communication. 2) Barriers to adaptation to differences in food choices and tastes. 3) The gap in cultural values or culture shock between habits and home culture with habits and host culture. 4) Barriers to adaptation to multi-cultural demographics: meeting and interacting with various people on campus and Malang City consisting of various tribes, nations, ethnicities, and races. 5) Barriers to institutional and bureaucratic adaptation, such as not yet optimal language programs and cultural introductions and low efficiency in administrative and bureaucratic services. 6) Barriers to the cultural adaptation competence of the individual sojourner himself.

Keywords: Cultural Adaptation; Social Experience; Culture Shock

A. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, studying abroad for students has become a common phenomenon, along with the development of transportation and information technology. In addition, countries around the world have made interesting policies to increase the number of international students. They are expected to bring their ideas and thoughts to inspire the people of their home country. However, the main problem for international students is their ability to adapt in a foreign environment. When international students study in a foreign environment, they must learn to socialize, communicate and overcome difficulties in their lives (Mareza & Nugroho, 2017; Purba & Silaban, 2021; Roshima, 2017; Vidyarini, 2017).

Not a few people travel abroad for various reasons, such as vacations, continuing education, business trips, and for various other reasons. An individual who visits or lives in another country for a specific reason or purpose and stays temporarily is called a sojourner. Sojourner is different from immigrant, sojourner is defined as a person who visits a country for a certain time (temporary), while immigrant is a definition for those who are intended to live in another country for a long period of time, even permanently (permanent). Both sojourners and immigrants usually face complex situations, circumstances, and challenges of cultural adaptation.

A negative response that arises when someone enters a new place or country with a different culture from the place of origin, creates a condition known as culture shock (Amanah, 2018; Indriani et al., 2021; Pratiwi, 2021; Salmah, 2016). Culture shock does not look at age and gender. Culture shock is defined as problems or discomfort that arise both psychologically and physically experienced by sojourners and immigrants (Samovar et al., 2010). Different perceptions in each individual can cause culture shock .

A sojourner who inhabits a country for a certain reason and for a certain time, often experiences a clash or incompatibility with the host-culture . The existence of a personal identity that has been attached to each individual who enters a new country tends to cause conflict within each individual, which has the potential to become an obstacle to cultural adaptation.

International students studying in Indonesia are international students as a result of collaboration with a number of countries, such as: the United States, the Middle East, Asean, and Europe. The increasing number of international students who come to study in Indonesia shows that Indonesia is a study destination country that is quite attractive to students from abroad.

The interactions that occur between international students and Indonesians, especially Javanese people with different cultural backgrounds lead to a process of cultural adaptation between the two parties. For individual sojourners , Javanese culture which is a host-culture is considered interesting, because it has its own uniqueness. However, in the process of cultural adaptation, there are a number of cultural challenges, such as differences in language, values, and others that tend to become obstacles in the beginning of their interaction.

Cultural adaptation is important because it can determine the success of an international student in his studies. According to a study by Ejaz (2017), about 40% of sojourners (expatriates) fail to adapt, with an estimated failure to adapt to the host culture environment as high as 70%. Failure stems from the inability of the host culture environment to adjust, and the lack of interpersonal skills of the sojourner .

Research on four foreigners from Japan who work in Surabaya, it is known that they experience culture shock due to difficulty adjusting to the work environment. Among the causes of their difficulties are differences in time awareness and work ethic, between them and their Indonesian colleagues, so they wish to return to their home country as soon as possible. The effects experienced by employees from Japan are stress which causes difficulty sleeping, the desire to return to Japan, and feeling confused about what to do in the office (Chiang, 2015).

Research conducted by a group of students who took part in a student exchange in Paris is one example of a failure in cultural adaptation. When students are in the honeymoon phase , which is euphoria to live in Paris, a tragedy occurs, namely the death of one of the participants. Because of the tragedy , the effect is a sense of dislike to live in Paris. They become stressed , so they have to go to the doctor because of feelings of fear and disappointment due to the tragedy of death (Gómez et al., 2014).

The main problem in adapting sojourners when interacting with other students and local residents is the habits brought by sojourners which are very different from those of the local population. Habit is a very basic thing that often appears clearly. If they succeed in doing ways to improve the friction and succeed in getting rid of the friction, then they are individuals who are successful in the process of cultural adaptation.

Meanwhile, social experience is a form of self-socialization from a person based on knowledge and curiosity obtained directly from field experience. From the statements of several foreign students, they got social experience after conducting field research on Islamic boarding schools. They live in the cottage, learn routines, communicate, then create a sense of community and social empathy.

This study seeks to answer the question of how is the process of cultural adaptation to international students at the State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang (UIN Malang)? What are the social experiences that international students get after being directly involved in research or field visits ?

This study is expected to be a reference, especially in the study of cultural adaptation and social experience. In a specific context, it is how to develop individual competencies to be able to

adapt and socialize in the host culture environment (the environment in a new culture) and to describe the process of cultural adaptation and social experience.

This study is expected to provide an overview of the reality of intercultural adaptation among international students, and can be a source of literacy that can help international students understand the problems of cultural adaptation they face.

The findings and suggestions from this study can be input for the exchange program stakeholders and international student-accepting institutions to consider alternative efforts to minimize the barriers to communication and socio-cultural gaps experienced by international students who are under the institution's program.

B. METHODS

Research on cultural adaptation and social experiences that occur in international students in Malang City uses a qualitative research type. According to (2004), a qualitative approach is an approach to the study of social habits that occur, which explains and analyzes the culture and habits of humans and their groups from their point of view. In the context of this research, international students who come from different countries will describe or tell individual experiences experienced in Malang City that are related to culture, such as differences in customs and habits encountered by Malang City residents which will then be interpreted by the community. Researchers to get the gist of each experience.

The data obtained by the interview will be reduced and extracts that are relevant to the research theme, namely about cultural adaptation and social experience, which are then made into several themes and analyzed more deeply using a phenomenological approach.

The phenomenological perspective helps researchers to enter the way of thinking or the point of view of the participants or research subjects, how they interpret social phenomena. Creswell (2007) said that the study of phenomenology seeks to explore individual meanings about life experiences. The phenomenological perspective is used to explore the deepest awareness of international students about the process of cultural adaptation experienced directly and their social experiences.

Data were obtained through observation (seeing directly their activities, both in academic and non-academic processes related to social activities), and in-depth interviews (in-depth interviews). to international students. The next process after the interview is the transcription of the data. Transcripts of interviews were conducted to facilitate the analysis process. From the results of these observations and interviews, the information or experiences of these international students are then sorted according to the theme of cultural adaptation and social experience. Furthermore , the data obtained is processed and analyzed to be able to answer the problem formulation that has been determined at the beginning of the study.

Meanwhile, the subjects in this study were foreign students (sojourners) who were at UIN Maliki Malang for study assignments. The research subjects were chosen purposively , especially some students who took part in the BIPA (Indonesian for Foreign Speakers) program at the UIN Maliki Malang campus. Secondary data was obtained from most of the student data in BIPA UIN Maliki Malang in the form of student document data, activity documentation, data about the programs that students participated in BIPA UIN Maliki Malang.

This study uses an interpretive paradigm with a phenomenological approach where research is carried out by understanding the conscious experience experienced directly by international students who live in Malang City for a certain period of time. To explain the cultural adaptation process carried out by international students, the researcher uses the cultural adaptation process that exists between international students and the new culture in Malang City, which results in several obstacles that refer to culture shock . In the adaptation process, many factors play a role, both from within the international students themselves and external factors.

In analyzing and interpreting the data, this research uses an empirical phenomenological approach where the core of the empirical approach is based on the reflection of the participants on the actual issue and to find out the power and steps to lead to the research results. The phenomenological approach in this study looks at, describes, and analyzes phenomena that occur in a society that are experienced directly by international students, and then based on their experiences

they are grouped into appropriate themes.

The basic principles put forward about phenomenology are applied in this study, namely by understanding the world of informants or experiences experienced by international students directly in the process of cultural adaptation. While language is a means of meaning that connects the researcher with the informant. In this study, the mindset of international students is interpreted in how they communicate with their environment, place of residence, campus, or associations they join.

Interpreting the experience of informants is important in research with a phenomenological approach, starting with the process of understanding the direct experience of international students with different aspects of uniqueness. In addition, interpretation is an active process of thought and creative action in clarifying the personal experience of international students.

C. RESULT & DISCUSSION

One of the differences that between the host culture and home culture is the collectivistic and individualistic environmental culture. Research subjects are accustomed to an individualistic environment meanwhile, they have to deal directly with a collective environment. In the ongoing process of cultural adaptation, research subjects experience difficult times to be able to enter a new culture. This phase is a phase of culture shock , a phase also known as a crisis phase, marked by the characteristics of a sojourner who experiences symptoms of cultural shock , namely differences in views about values or habits that exist in local communities.

As stated that culture shock arises when sojourners encounter conditions or conditions that are different from their own culture where this change makes them fail to understand the ideology and behavior of the local population(Adelia & Eliana, 2012; Harahap, 2021; Jaenudin et al., 2020; McKinley, 2019; Zuraida Henny, Christina Rochayati, 2011). So according to Mulyana and Rakhmad (2007), if a sojourner has expressed discomfort with the attitude of the local population (local values/norms), then the sojourner is in a phase of culture shock. The reality experienced by the research subjects, so it can be said that the research subjects experienced a culture-shock phase , related to the socio-cultural gap in the process of cultural adaptation that they lived.

Individualistic culture is known to have characteristics, one of which is the tendency to construct self freely. Unlike the case with the host culture environment which tends to be collectivistic, which prefers togetherness. The country of origin of the research subjects, some of which are individualistic. In individualistic cultures it is believed that the autonomy of an individual is the most important thing. In contrast to informants who come from Palestine or Arab League countries and India, who are categorized as having a low individualistic index, they tend to be more concerned with group life or loyal to their group. The intended groups are groups that may be relevant, namely the nuclear family and extended family, and groups within the organization. This means that Palestine and India have similarities with Indonesia which tends to refer to collectivistic culture.

Based on observations and interviews, all research subjects faced a number of similar cultural adaptation challenges. This study found several kinds of cultural adaptation challenges faced by informants in Malang City. The barriers to adaptation are in the following matters: 1) Barriers to adaptation of communication and interpersonal interaction, related to the mastery of Indonesian, the use of mixed languages in the local community, as well as aspects of cultural values in communication. 2) Barriers to adaptation to differences in food choices and tastes. 3) Cultural value gap or shock culture between habits and home culture with habits and host culture . The cultural gap, especially in socio-cultural concepts/values regarding the concept of public-privacy, such as: collectivistic culture, the ethics of association between men and women, and unwritten social-social rules, such as curfew rules for residents. boarding house/dormitory. 4) Barriers to adaptation to multi-cultural demographics: meeting and interacting with various people on campus and Malang City consisting of various tribes, nations, ethnicities, and races. 5) Barriers to institutional and bureaucratic adaptation, such as not yet optimal language programs and cultural introductions and low efficiency in administrative and bureaucratic services. 6) Barriers to the cultural adaptation competence of the individual sojourner himself.

Every individual who lives in the community tries to live in the direction of the cultural patterns and meaning systems that are formed in the community environment. This is so that the

interactions that occur between individuals run well and smoothly. In addition, it aims to be accepted by individuals in the community or society who use cultural patterns and systems as the basis or philosophy of living together. Therefore, each individual will try to adjust attitudes and behavior based on the rules, values and norms taught by their culture which is the basis of life in thinking and acting.

Cultural differences that exist in each individual can cause problems that will become obstacles in communicating and interacting (Kim, 2001). This research places it on the focus of phenomenological studies that are directly related to the cultural realm and further examines how cultural crossings and present a phenomenon and social problems experienced by international students who come and live in Indonesia. Therefore, it is important to place the problems of cultural adaptation experienced by research subjects in one perspective of socio-cultural studies.

From a comprehensive analysis of the results of interviews with international students and the elaboration of research data, there are several efforts made to overcome the barriers to social and cultural adaptation of international students at UIN Maliki Malang. These efforts are as illustrated in the following chart:

Table 1. Socio-Cultural Barriers and Efforts to Overcome them

No.	Socio-Cultural Barriers	Efforts to Overcome Socio-Cultural Barriers
1	Barriers to communication adaptation and interpersonal interaction, related to the mastery of Indonesian, the use of mixed languages in the local community, as well as aspects of cultural values in communication	Participate in intensive Indonesian language learning
2	Barriers to adaptation to differences in food choices and tastes.	Participate in the practice class for the BIPA program, namely cooking.
3	Cultural value gap or shock culture between habits and home culture with habits and host culture . The cultural gap, especially in socio-cultural concepts/values regarding the concept of privacy.	Participated in social class programs, visits to several Islamic boarding schools, visits to several family events in Malang City (sit in program).
4	Barriers to adaptation to multi-cultural demographics: meeting and interacting with various people on campus and Malang City consisting of various tribes, nations, ethnicities, and races.	Participate in selected practice class activities such as batik, dance, gamelan. Attend various workshops and seminars. Participate in social visit classes to cultural tourism sites.
5	Barriers to institutional and bureaucratic adaptation, such as the suboptimal language program and cultural introduction and low efficiency in administrative and bureaucratic services.	Facilitators are provided to assist with administrative needs and bureaucratic services for international students.
6	Barriers to the cultural adaptation competence of the individual sojourner himself.	Participate in various organizational activities, sports clubs, nature lovers club mingling with local students.

Some of the efforts made by UIN Malang in order to help reduce socio-cultural barriers to international students are as follows: 1) Participate in intensive Indonesian language learning. 2) Participate in the practice class for the BIPA program, namely cooking. 3) Participate in social class programs, visits to several Islamic boarding schools, visits to several family events in Malang City (sit in program). 4) Participate in selected practice class activities such as batik, dance, gamelan; Participate in various workshops and seminars; Participate in social visit classes to cultural tourism sites. 5) Facilitators are provided to assist with administrative needs and bureaucratic services for international students. 6) Participate in various organizational activities, sports clubs, nature lovers

club mingling with local students.

D. CONCLUSION

Some of the aspects below determine the level of individual readiness to face the challenges of adaptation in the destination country and determine how short or long the cultural adaptation process will take place. These aspects include: 1) Mastery of host-culture language and/or international language of instruction, 2) Personal characteristics, such as age, introvert/extrovert type, and mentality, 3) Motivation, 4) Perception of host-culture, pluralism, and especially about cultural differences, 5) Obtaining adequate information about the destination country, 6) Pre-dominant visits, such as tourists and/or intercultural experiences, 7) Support for comprehensive socio-cultural and cultural introduction programs by the receiving institution, 8) Existence local native friends as mediators/facilitators or consultant personal assistance which is indeed provided to help student expatriates understand and face the challenges of culture shock, 9) The existence of communities that allow sojourners to join and socialize, 10) Availability of several facilities that allow sojourners to feel more comfortable easy to get the information you need.

If these aspects are managed synergistically well, the barriers to cultural adaptation in the service of international student exchange programs or students can be minimized and assist in the process of cultural adaptation of international students.

Meanwhile, based on the acknowledgment and analysis of the results of interviews and observations of informants, this study found two important things that were agreed by all research informants that the basic support that helped their adaptation process, especially in aspects of communication and interaction as well as socio-cultural, was in two areas. types of support, namely: 1) institutional support in the form of campus introduction programs and language and cultural service programs organized by the university, in this case BIPA plays a very important role in helping support academic facilitators, and 2) social support from local friends, both on campus as well as in the residential environment, is seen as an effective way in the process and critical period of adaptation of international students.

REFERENCES

- Adelia, C. I. A., & Eliana, R. (2012). Peran Dimensi Kepribadian Big Five Terhadap Penyesuaian Psikologis Pada Mahasiswa Indonesia Yang Studi Keluar Negeri. *Psikologia*, 7(2), 74–80.
- Amanah, S. (2018). Motivasi dan Culture Shock Mahasiswa Asing di STAIN KEDIRI Dalam Lingkungan Budaya Kediri. *Jurnal Sosial Politik*, 4(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.22219/sospol.v4i1.5254>
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods* (Second). Oxford University Press.
- Chiang, S.-Y. (2015). Cultural Adaptation as a Sense-Making Experience: International Students in China. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 16(2), 397–413. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-014-0346-4>
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Sage Publication.
- Ejaz, W., Naeem, M., Shahid, A., Anpalagan, A., & Jo, M. (2017). Efficient Energy Management for the Internet of Things in Smart Cities. *IEEE Communications Magazine*, 55(1), 84–91. <https://doi.org/10.1109/MCOM.2017.1600218CM>
- Gómez, E., Urzúa, A., & Glass, C. R. (2014). International Student Adjustment to College: Social Networks, Acculturation, and Leisure. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 32, 7–25.
- Harahap, F. (2021). Self-Adjustment Dynamic In Sojourner College Students. *Journal of Psychology and Instruction*, 4(3), 83–89.
- Indriani, D. P., Hubeis, A. V., & Kuswanto, S. (2021). Pengaruh Kejutan Budaya Asing (Culture Shock) Terhadap Perilaku Dan Kinerja Karyawan Bank Woori Saudara Wilayah Bogor. *Jurnal Aplikasi Bisnis Dan Manajemen*, 7(2), 440–450. <https://doi.org/10.17358/jabm.7.2.440>
- Jaenudin, U., Sahroni, D., & Ramdani, Z. (2020). Culture Shock sebagai Mediator antara Kepribadian Reformer terhadap Sojourner Adjustment. *Psymphatic : Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi*, 7(1), 117–128. <https://doi.org/10.15575/psy.v7i1.8575>

- Kim, Y. Y. (2001). *Be Coming Intercultural: an Integrated Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation*. Sage Publication.
- Mareza, L., & Nugroho, A. (2017). Minoritas Ditengah Mayoritas (Strategi Adaptasi Sosial Budaya Mahasiswa Asing Dan Mahasiswa Luar Jawa Di Ump). *SOSIOHUMANIORA: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 2(2), 46–53. <https://doi.org/10.30738/sosio.v2i2.549>
- McKinley, M. T. (2019). Supervising the sojourner: Multicultural supervision of international students. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*, 13, 174–179. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tep0000269>
- Mulyana, D., & Rakhmat, J. (2007). *Komunikasi Antarbudaya Panduan Berkomunikasi Dengan Orang-orang Berbeda Budaya*. Rosdakarya.
- Pratiwi, W. P. S. (2021). *Culture Shock Mahasiswa Internasional di Indonesia*. 328–333.
- Purba, C. A., & Silaban, Y. N. (2021). Pola Komunikasi Dan Adaptasi Budaya Mahasiswa Asing Di Universitas Prima Indonesia. *BIP: Jurna Bahasa Indonesia Prima*, 3(1), 108–113.
- Roshima, R. (2017). Komunikasi Antarbudaya Mahasiswa Asing Dengan Mahasiswa Pribumi (Studi Kualitatif dengan Pendekatan Interaksi Simbolik Pada Interaksi Mahasiswa Asal Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam dengan Mahasiswa Pribumi di UIN SUSKA Riau). *Jom Fisip*, 4(01), 1–15. <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/186313-ID-komunikasi-antarbudaya-mahasiswa-asing-d.pdf>
- Salmah, I. (2016). Culture Shock dan Strategi Coping Pada Mahasiswa Asing Program Darmasiswa. *Psikoborneo: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi*, 4(4), 568–575. <https://doi.org/10.30872/psikoborneo.v4i4.4245>
- Samovar, L. A., Porter, R. E., McDaniel, E. R., & Sidabalok, I. M. (2010). *Komunikasi Lintas Budaya: Communication Between Cultures*. Salemba Humanika.
- Vidyarini, T. N. (2017). *Adaptasi Budaya Oleh Mahasiswa Internasional*: 7(2), 71–79. <https://doi.org/10.9744/scriptura.7.2.71-79>
- Zuraida Henny, Christina Rochayati, I. (2011). Komunikasi Antarbudaya Mahasiswa Korea Selatan di Yogyakarta. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 9(1), 44–48.