



Culture shock and adaptation: International students' academic and social experiences at a State Islamic University

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ABSTRACT

Culture shock is described as the psychological discomfort that arises from experiencing new cultural settings, leading to feelings of confusion, anxiety, and disorientation. This research investigates the culture shock faced by international students and looks into how they cope with it. Through a qualitative method, data were collected via semi-structured interviews, observations, and reflective journals, and analysed using NVivo software. The study involved four international students—two from Thailand and two from the Philippines—who studied at the State Islamic University. The results highlighted five main areas of culture shock: (1) affective aspects, such as disorientation and loss of social support; (2) behavioral problems, including misunderstandings across cultures; (3) cognitive dissonance like language barriers and social obstacle to interaction; (4) intra psychological elements such as homesickness and limited language skills; and (5) academic challenges related to teaching styles, course material, and lack of information of institutional rules. The study reveals that university requires improved support systems for international students. Institutions should provide clear cultural orientation, improve cross-cultural communication training, and offer continuous academic and emotional support. These steps help students adjust more easily and prepare universities to work with diverse cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: academic challenges; adaptation; coping strategies; culture shock; international students

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INTRODUCTION

Comparable to a magnificent tapestry composed of threads representing beliefs, practices, values, and actions, culture is an extensive and challenging concept. Every strand weaves to create a unique pattern. This pattern reflects the identity of either a group or a person. Culture spans many aspects of life, not only languages and religions; it also includes cuisine, art, and many others. Fundamentally, culture embodies how we interact with our environment and defines who we are. Therefore, culture shock can happen as a result of encountering unfamiliar cultures. A culture shock is defined as a mental state marked by bewilderment, unease, and uncertainty brought on by significant cultural

variations. This phenomenon can occur when someone relocates to a foreign country, moves to another place or even modifies their social environment (Ullah Bhat & Nair, 2020).

Similarly, Oberg (1960), as cited in Marietza et al. (2023), defines culture shock as anxiety brought on by the lack of familiar signals and symbols in social interactions. It is regarded as a temporary reaction. This reaction can worsen major physical and psychological problems, making them difficult to control or predict. Likewise, culture shock, as Callen Ward et al. (2001) have noted, is a phenomenon felt by people moving across cultures, connected to the disorientation brought on by the loss of familiar symbols and social signals from their surroundings. Thus, experiencing culture

shock could result from not understanding the many elements and influences of an unknown culture, namely legal, political, educational, linguistic, and socio-cultural ones.

In his work, Kalvero Oberg (1960) found four main stages that people usually go through when exposed to a new cultural environment. These stages show an individual's complex mental and social journey as they attempt to accept alien cultures, beliefs, and customs. The honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and adjustment periods comprise the phases.

- a. The honeymoon phase is marked by extreme happiness and excitement. Joy and curiosity arise from the excitement of new experiences, distinctive cultural elements, and hopeful expectations, but this delight often only lasts briefly.
- b. Crisis stage is when individuals experience adverse feelings. When they start to see the significant differences between their home culture and the new one, feelings of worry, uncertainty, and aggravation grow. Obstacles to communication, difficulties adapting to daily life, and a sense of seclusion can bring on rage, aggravation, and even depression. This stage usually marks a pivotal decision that helps someone decide whether to keep trying to change or choose to go back to a more familiar environment.
- c. Recovery Stage is when people start developing strategies to handle their challenges. They learn about the new culture, interact with residents, and try to fit in with the current norms and behaviours. This proactive approach to cultural education helps people broaden their social circles and get a better grasp of their new surroundings.
- d. The adjustment stage is when people have successfully overcome obstacles and feel comfortable in their new cultural environment. They may boldly interact with people from many backgrounds, understand complex cultural sensitivities, and maybe welcome some aspects of the new culture. Rather than indicating total abandonment of their native cultural identity, this adaptation shows their capacity to flourish in a culturally varied environment (Oberg, 1960).

Cross-cultural migration—particularly in the form of foreign education—typically causes culture shock. Stark contrasts in the educational systems of other countries often cause students to experience misunderstanding. Variations in social norms, beliefs, and daily cultural practices present significant challenges for them as they work to fit in. They often find themselves in unfamiliar surroundings when studying overseas. According to Lin (year?), for these students, culture shock begins well before they depart from their native nations. International students often seem more stressed than their local peers as they negotiate new academic and social environments. Students studying abroad could run into a number of problems, including language obstacles, financial challenges, academic requirements, homesickness, and encounters with fellow students from their home country (Ward et al., 2001).

International or foreign students have to balance the difficulties of reaching academic objectives with acclimatizing to a different way of life. Cross-cultural studies have constantly emphasized the numerous adverse effects connected with culture shock, including sadness, worry, communication problems, and research challenges. People must actively participate in an adaptive process whereby they conform to the prevailing norms, values, and cultural customs of their new environment in order to flourish in a multicultural society. The process of cultural adaptation might influence the culture itself, too. Selective cultural adjustment is necessary to foster acceptance. This process requires navigating new norms while maintaining the integrity of one's core values, particularly those related to faith. Though challenging, the ability to negotiate and navigate a previously unthinkable foreign culture is vital for promoting comfort in both personal perspectives and the environment. Preventing misinterpretation requires understanding and respect for other civilization. Effective cultural adjustment involves employing strategy and tact to navigate new situations, rather than fundamentally improving one's core ideals. A cultural system can help these strategic adjustment processes. Simply put, cultural practices offer practical ways for individuals to learn and model behaviours needed for adaptation. (Magnon & Corbara, 2022).

The difficulty of fitting into a foreign culture abounds for international students

registering at the State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. For these people, switching into a new cultural context is a significant obstacle. Often impeding their adaptation is the culture shock experience, marked by isolation and challenges in fitting into new social and academic norms. This problem can impact both their mental health and their academic achievement. The obstacles that foreign students encounter in their academic activities at the State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, as a result, are emphasized in this study.

This study's distinctive aspects arise from its particular emphasis when contrasted against earlier research. Earlier studies have approached the culture shock phenomenon generally from the standpoint of newcomers, covering a broad and general approach. Conversely, this investigation finds a more precise range that targets the components of culture shock connected to teaching and learning activities. This study aims to identify the elements of culture shock that foreign students experience and assess the strategies they use to handle such difficulties. Notably, it examines the cultural shock experience that foreign students face in an academic context. By offering a more precise grasp of cultural dynamics and the cultural divides that arise in cross-cultural surroundings, the research results are expected to contribute to current knowledge, especially in the area of cross-cultural or intercultural studies. Furthermore, this study aims to contribute valuable insight that may slightly the support provided into international students, helping them better navigate their adaptation process.

METHOD

This qualitative research uses a narrative inquiry. Narrative research offers a complete narrative of a sequence of events in a storytelling style, as Clandinin pointed out. The researcher compiles stories about people's lives in this kind of investigation, presents their experiences, and chronicles their life tales (Clandinin, 2007).

Four international students—two Thai and two Filipinos—enrolling in the State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten became the subjects of this study. Using purposive sampling, the researchers chose those most likely to provide the exact insights needed for the study so as to get the most relevant data. Their pertinent knowledge and characteristics

suited the objectives of the research; hence, this chosen group was selected (Ferdinand, 2020). These four individuals, selected based on their specific characteristics and relevance to the research focus served as rich information sources for the understanding experiences of international students from two countries.

Figure 1
Selected Respondents

No.	Respondents	Gender	Origin	Faculty	Major
1.	Azwar	Male	Thailand	Education and Teacher Training	Islamic Education
2.	Lateepah	Female	Thailand	Education and Teacher Training	English Education
3.	Jayson	Male	Philippines	Education and Teacher Training	Islamic Education
4.	Nagdir	Male	Philippines	Ushuluddin and Adab	Arabic Language and Literature

According to Sugiyono, in qualitative research, the researcher serves several roles, including that of an observer, interviewer, data collector, and report writer on the results of the study. As a result, observations, interviews, and reflective journals are among the tools of research (Sugiyono, 2017).

Data collection for this research relied on semi-structured interview guidelines. Semi-structured interviews usually combine open and closed-ended questions (Adams, 2015). According to Sugiyono, participant observation yields more thorough and accurate information that enables a better knowledge of every behavior observed. Unstructured participant observation was used in this study; this kind of observation is not methodically related to the subject matter under observation (Sugiyono, 2017).

The researchers made field notes, noting the acts and behavior of every participant at the site. Direct participation in a teamwork environment yielded notes that became an essential storytelling research tool, interacts directly with the participants in the research setting. Furthermore, it emphasizes that these notes are a dynamic re-creation of events rather than a straightforward observation, implying that without the researchers' interpretative role, events cannot be understood entirely (Connelly & Clandinin, 2004).

Carter and Kurtts claim that the range of reflective journal styles—from unorganised to more structured ones—shows that people reflect on their experiences in several ways, therefore influencing their understanding of events. Learners should be free to research a variety of topics, experiment with new ideas,

and carefully analyse their thoughts and emotions. Teaching dialogues will assist students, as Zulfikar and Mujiburrahman say, in grasping how to evaluate circumstances and relate them to their own lives critically (cited in Sudirman et al., 2021).

This study employed NVivo 12 Plus to perform a comprehensive examination of the information collected. The analytical phase begins with establishing nodes or coding groups grounded in pertinent literature. These nodes serve as a structure for sorting and categorising the data. After that, the transcribed interviews were uploaded into NVivo as separate cases., NVivo 12 Plus supports a more organized and practical approach to qualitative analysis. The reliability of a qualitative research project can be evaluated using four key criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In this study, utilizing NVivo 12 Plus software assists in systematically documenting the coding process, thereby enhancing the dependability and confirmability of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results were gathered through semi-structured interviews, observations, and reflective journals created by the participants that the researchers compiled. The stories shared by each participant encompass their experiences, difficulties, and approaches to dealing with culture shock. A thorough description is provided below:

Nagdir's story: Indonesia is a great Muslim country

Nagdir, an international student currently enrolled in his first semester of Arabic Language and Literature at the State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten (UIN Banten), has experienced a unique path. His strong ambition to educate children in the Philippines, which necessitates obtaining a bachelor's degree, inspired him to return to academia. Throughout his period at UIN Banten, he felt a sense of belonging, as the people around him offered each other encouragement. In his three months there, he noticed a complete absence of stray dogs, which stood in stark contrast to the Philippines, where such dogs are prevalent and many Filipino Muslims have dogs as pets. He determined that the Serang region in Banten is a favorable environment for Muslims, as he had never witnessed stray dogs in the area.

Aspects of Culture Shock

Even though he was surprised by the lack of pet dogs around, Nagdir was struck by a sense of unease while commuting from the dormitory to campus. In addition to the considerable distance, he was on edge during the trip due to the presence of numerous careless motorcycle riders. He expressed,

The main challenge I frequently face is the long distance between the dormitory and the campus. To reach campus, I take a motorbike with a friend. While riding, I constantly experience feelings of insecurity and discomfort. It would be much more secure if the dormitory were located on campus, eliminating my concerns about these kinds of situations.

He mentioned that the instructional approach employed by the lecturer in his course was unlike those found in his homeland. From his perspective, learning in the classroom mainly consisted of student-led group presentations. This astonished him because of the varying levels of academic challenges and difficulties, especially in the ways teaching and learning were carried out.

The technique includes a classroom presentation, a usual practice in this setting. Each student works autonomously, gathering information, reading the texts, and sharing the knowledge acquired. I appreciate this method.

In a different response, he frequently pointed out that difficulties in understanding languages challenge him when dealing with cultural differences.

Language. I find it hard to express myself in Indonesian, and a few of my classmates seem to be hesitant to talk to me. Mastering the Indonesian vocabulary is tough for me; I come across words that are new to me, and I also have issues with their pronunciation.

During this first semester, most of the educational content he received was in Indonesian, and even topics like the Prophet's Biography (Sirah Nabi) were conducted in that language. Nagdir had no difficulties with the lessons provided in Arabic, as he had already learned that language thoroughly. Nonetheless, some Arabic instructional materials were also presented in a

combination of Indonesian, similar to how other languages, such as English, are taught. He remarked that this posed a significant challenge for him because not only was English a language he had yet to grasp, but the lecturers also integrated Indonesian into their explanations, adding to his difficulties.

Strategies to Overcome Culture Shock

Nagdir frequently looks for help and advice to navigate the various cultural traditions and obstacles he faces. The encouragement from trusted individuals greatly assists him in tackling these challenges. He candidly shares his experiences,

I try to engage actively during lessons and pose as many questions to the teacher as I can for some interaction. Still, I often turn to my classmates and ask, "What was covered before? I'm having trouble understanding it." Then, a friend usually explains it to me.

Nagdir regularly seeks support to manage his difficulties. Nonetheless, he also evaluates himself positively because he feels he is mainly responsible for handling his problems.

The people in my life are all very encouraging and reliable. However, in this situation, the absolute control rests with me. I make it a point to motivate myself to keep learning and progressing. When I encounter challenges, I always stay composed and reassure myself, reminding myself that my main objective is to focus on my studies seriously.

Jayson's story: Indonesian hospitality is warmer than the tropical sun

Jayson is an international student from the Philippines who is studying Islamic Religious Education. He held this position for three months during his first semester, starting in the middle of the semester. When he arrived at Soekarno-Hatta Airport, he was taken aback by the kindness of the people who greeted him since he had no expectations or preconceptions about Indonesia or UIN Banten. Indonesia's warm air seemed unmatched by the warmth of its residents. He was treated like a member of the family and made to feel totally welcome. He felt at ease in the heat as he would in his own house.

Aspects of Culture Shock

Jayson was bewildered and perplexed by a cultural practice, which made him uneasy both when he saw it and when it was directed at him. This was the practice of hand-kissing that many students engaged in in classrooms and dormitories. They did this to strangers, lecturers, fellow students, and even people they met for the first time. He felt cognitive dissonance because this procedure was so unfamiliar to him. By outlining the circumstances, he demonstrated this.

The practice of hand-kissing here is really strange to me. At first, I wondered why we kiss hands rather than shake them. Do the folks here genuinely like hands so much? When I saw it for the first time, I was caught off guard and felt disoriented. Kissing someone else's hand is not a typical greeting in the Philippines; we do it with our relatives, like our moms, and that's about it. We greet strangers or friends by kissing their hands rather than shaking hands here.

The primary cause was language difficulties. Being an international student at UIN Banten was complicated for Jayson to handle. Everything pertaining to it. His linguistic barriers were directly related to his language, which included his communication abilities, relationships, conversations, comprehension of the course content, and other academic stresses. He said,

Perhaps everything is hard for me, particularly when it comes to language. Everything provided, including the content and materials, is in Indonesian. The tasks are the same. I was unsure of what to do or how to finish an assignment the lecturer gave me in class. Similar circumstances could overwhelm me with anxiety and stress.

Jayson appeared to have difficulty interacting with others. He displayed a notable challenge in starting discussions with others, giving the impression that he is aloof and unsure of himself. He only spoke with people who were fluent in the languages he was at ease with, such as Arabic, English, and Filipino. He only communicates in Indonesian via WhatsApp, with the help of Google Translate.

I exclusively use WhatsApp to communicate in Indonesian, with Google Translate helping us out. It takes a lot of time to speak Indonesian directly. I spent a lot of time in my room when I was in the dorm. Consequently, we never practice or speak Indonesian.

Jayson felt that he was missing essential social support that might help him learn a language. In his language, he conveyed his need for assistance on his language learning path. He needed outside assistance since he had trouble learning a new language. He expressed himself by saying,

The difficulty we have dealing with language barriers here may be due to the lack of unique events catered to me and my friends.

He also found learning resources that were quite different from what he had learned in the Philippines during his prior education. Especially in areas like Pancasila Education, the Indonesian language was used at an advanced and sophisticated level. Since enrolling at UIN Banten as an international student, he had never seen anything like this.

Perhaps citizenship-related material. Because the vocabulary is so sophisticated, it's pretty challenging. Nationality is the topic of the course. In the Philippines, this type of learning is combined with Topics like citizenship, which may be discussed. The terminology utilized is rather sophisticated, making it complicated.

Strategies to overcome culture shock

Observation sparks questions in his mind, which helps him logically analyze confusion, differences, overwhelm, and challenges, allowing him to understand them and consider the best course of action.

I observe and attempt to adapt to the culture. Since I'm a tourist in your nation, I need to adjust to fit in. As a result, I learned how to blend in by watching the actions of others, asking questions, and doing my research.

When he understood that initiating interactions is not at all challenging, he became conscious of his challenges in social interactions and started to analyze himself. He should seize the opportunity to start chats,

such as saying hello to friends in the classroom or the dorm. He is committed to conducting a Positive Re-evaluation and evaluating himself, which will help him. As he mentioned in his reflection notebook, this is how it is.

From our discussion, I discovered that we should occasionally put shyness aside and take the lead in saying hello. With kind friends on hand to share in your joy and support you through periods of grief, it's also a happy day. I discovered today that when you're sad, don't be afraid to confide in your pals.

When dealing with the challenges he faced as a student at UIN Banten, he developed methods to relax his mind, which at times led to feelings of loneliness, anxiety, and similar experiences. To manage these emotions, he redirects his attention by participating in various enjoyable activities that help him feel better. This technique enables him to manage his feelings for a limited time.

I view humorous clips to distract myself from unpleasant emotions. These clips amuse me and offer a brief escape. While they temporarily distract me from my unease, they are unable to alter my situation.

Lateepah's story: I thought Indonesia was like Malaysia

Lateepah Toheh, widely referred to as Lateepah, is currently in her second semester studying English Education. She hails from Pattani Province, located in Southern Thailand. For the past three months, she has been an international student. Her choice to further her education at UIN Banten was inspired by numerous individuals from Pattani who had successfully studied in Indonesia, encouraging her to emulate their paths. Additionally, she felt that Indonesia had cultural and language connections with Malaysia, leading her to think that learning Indonesian would be relatively simple, similar to Malay, as the Pattani language resembles Kelantanese Malay.

Aspects of Culture Shock

Before she arrived in Indonesia, particularly at UIN Banten, Lateepah expected that the culture, encompassing language and traditions, would closely resemble that of Malaysia. In preparation for her education at

UIN Banten, she took the initiative to study Indonesian culture and acquire a basic understanding of the language.

I understand that each area has its own unique culture. Since I will be residing in a foreign country, I will explore what it's like through YouTube vlogs and informative videos about Indonesia. I also intend to teach myself the language prior to my departure.

Furthermore, when she got to UIN Banten, she was taken aback and puzzled by how closely males and females interacted. In Pattani, there are strict guidelines regarding the distance and interaction between the sexes; they hardly talk to one another unless it's necessary. In this environment, however, men and women interact very openly and intimately. When she first noticed this, she experienced feelings of confusion, shock, and discomfort.

I found it surprising and bewildering because many situations involved both men and women in activities both in and out of class. For instance, during class, males and females sit together, with men here and women there, side by side. Nonetheless, even though men and women share the same classroom, they still maintain separation, with all the men on one side and all the women on the other, ensuring they do not mix. This arrangement unsettles me and causes discomfort.

During her early days as an international student at UIN Banten, Lateepah experienced intense feelings of being overwhelmed and lonely because of the various difficulties she faced. Anything that deviated from what she was accustomed to posed a challenge, inciting negative feelings. She shared,

At first, I found everything to be tough: conversing, comprehending, eating, attending classes, the subjects, and completing college assignments. Everything felt extremely hard for me, which caused me a lot of stress.

She mentioned that the primary obstacle she encountered as an international student at UIN Banten was the language issue. This communication challenge led to feelings of being overwhelmed and cut off from others. She reflected on this in her journal.

Everything is challenging for me, whether it's interacting with professors or peers. My language proficiency is not very high, hindering my ability to share my thoughts. When I'm exhausted, everything starts to feel even harder.

Besides her difficulties with Indonesian, she also encountered issues with other languages, especially English. This combination of language barriers posed a significant challenge, forcing her to work on mastering two foreign languages at once. Moreover, the lecturers' explanations that blended Indonesian and English were perplexing. The different accents in English used by both lecturers and fellow students were also new to her.

Indeed, from the outset, the primary challenge for me was the language, particularly since I needed to learn English. For instance, the teacher presented the grammar topics using a mix of English and Indonesian, which made it hard for me to understand, despite the explanations.

Another cultural shock she encountered was concerning the academic expectations tied to teaching styles in the classroom. The method of teaching through presentations at UIN Banten was quite different from what she was used to in Pattani.

In the classroom, I have mainly been focused on listening during my studies so far. Since I began attending after the mid-term exam, I haven't participated in any presentation groups or similar activities. Because of this, I've mostly just absorbed what was being explained in class.

The challenges and sense of loneliness she experienced as a student at UIN Banten occasionally made her feel homesick.

In those instances, when comprehension eluded me, I would ponder, "Why is this so difficult? Why is Indonesia so tough?" This led to a desire to return home.

Lateepah expressed that she requires social assistance from the university to help her cope with language and cultural barriers. She has heard about BIPA courses and is looking forward to joining them. She stated,

I need to take a BIPA class since I haven't had one yet. The class would help me adjust quickly, learn the language, and grasp the local cultures.

Strategies to overcome culture shock

Lateepah approached her problems by consistently looking for solutions to her challenges. She confronted her difficulties with language through a targeted approach by establishing personal objectives and ambitions. She motivated herself to converse in both Indonesian and English, aspiring to engage with local students every day. She explained it as follows,

I frequently set a goal and challenge for myself: to speak with at least one local student each day to enhance my language skills.

She found support and motivation from trustworthy people to negotiate the obstacles of linguistic variety. She could feel that those nearby were mainly on her side. She gives examples of times she turned to assistance.

Although language obstacles make it difficult for me to express my ideas, I want to tell the lecturer about the problem. In such circumstances, I would ask Kak Nurai to transmit my message to the lecturer.

She never voiced resentment or negatively commented despite the range of languages and cultural practices she encountered. As her reflective diary writings made clear, she maintained a good attitude and used a flexible strategy based on investigating cultural differences.

Whenever I have trouble understanding a new culture, I try to be open and learn from my observations. Seeing challenges as opportunities for development and having the will to learn inspires me to adapt to a new environment.

Moreover, she built contacts via cultural exchanges gained from attending campus social activities, especially a language club, where she joined a student group event.

Though I am still new, there haven't been any significant events since I joined the student language club. Still, I went to a club meeting.

Still, she stayed true to her previous religious and cultural beliefs. She was strong about setting boundaries in her friendships with guys. She stated,

I keep a safe distance from any men, whether they are friends or professors. I cannot jeopardize my cultural identity, as my society does not permit that. I respect local culture and am somewhat knowledgeable about it.

Azwar's story: I like Indonesia

Saifuddin Lateeh, affectionately known as Saif or Azwar, gazed across the UIN Banten campus with a wide smile. Almost two years had passed since he left his hometown of Pattani, Thailand. He had always aspired to emulate his parents, who graduated from UIN Bandung and UIN Medan, by pursuing his education in Indonesia. He likes Indonesia.

Aspects of Culture Shock

Azwar is the first international student from Pattani to study at UIN Banten, and he has spent nearly two years as an international student. Being the first of his kind, he encountered many difficulties. The cultural disparities he encountered and his unfamiliarity with his new environment overwhelmed him. The confusion he experienced led him to question. Whether what he witnessed was accurate or acceptable. This perplexity continued to trouble him. He shared,

I make neither comments nor judgments about anything. It could be acceptable since I was startled and puzzled when I first saw it that men and women here don't maintain a fixed distance. We in Pattani lack gender proximity; we are not accustomed to being close. I sometimes wonder if this is acceptable or not. Regarding female lecturers, when they are greeted by shaking hands, they do so in that way; but the older lecturers, regardless of gender, still avoid physical touch. This confuses me; I sense this situation is wrong.

Because of a language barrier, Azwar had challenges that hampered his ability to understand others and communicate. He had trouble comprehending the tongue spoken around him when he arrived at UIN Banten. This barrier in communication not only impacted his relationships but also changed

his academic experience in the classroom; he mentioned,

For example, when we give presentations, I struggle to engage in class discussions. Sometimes my friends speak very rapidly, making it difficult for me to follow the subjects being discussed. Usually, friends or lecturers ask, "Saif, do you have a question?" In these situations. However, because I find it difficult to state my questions clearly, I hesitate to participate in class. Usually, I would rather wait and pose my queries after the class is over.

Particularly in relation to the teaching methods used by UIN Banten lecturers, Azwar noticed a significant change in the degree of academic stress. Regular and ongoing presentations made up the primary teaching technique used in class. He stated,

My last school's teacher would offer explanations; our job was primarily to listen and understand the subject. The textbooks were already provided. Here, on the other hand, we always give group presentations and engage in question-and-answer sessions so that every pupil can join the dialogues.

Furthermore, information within the campus itself is difficult to obtain. Azwar experienced challenges in acquiring information regarding academic matters and other campus activities. The information he obtained would often be unexpected or lacking in completeness. He stated,

I, too, struggled to obtain lecture updates. Information on courses came unbidden at times, which made it difficult for me to keep current. I would, for instance, drive from the dorm to the campus—which is a great distance—only to be informed upon arrival that the session had been called off. For me, this presented challenges.

Strategies to overcome culture shock

When confronted with ambiguity or strange cultural practices, Azwar started by focusing on adaptation. He hence carefully observed the actions, ceremonies, and the changing world around him. He explained,

I asked what is forbidden here and what is frequently done. I was also watching the people surrounding me. I pay attention to and if something confuses me or catches my eye.

Moreover, he continually motivates himself to learn from the challenges and trials he encounters. As he vehemently stated, he continuously learns from the challenges he encounters. He said,

Because my goal is to acquire information, I view the difficulties I confront as elements of a person's educational path. Facing a challenge or difficulty does not imply that I give up; instead, every issue I face drives my wish to expand my knowledge. Because problems always have solutions, I never lose hope, and my desire to learn stays strong.

Throughout his adaptive process, he always showed great assurance about his fitting into the new environment and culture. Despite having language and cultural hurdles, he interacted confidently with other students and local people. By participating in campus activities and events, he confidently sought to build cross-cultural connections.

I wanted to learn more about the language and culture here, so I joined the language student action group at that point. Furthermore, I volunteered at the Tarbiyah library. My duties as a library volunteer included assisting librarians in book organization, monitoring inventory, and managing several jobs. Many of my friends, especially those from the PAI department, volunteered at the library as well, therefore giving me several chances for education.

Furthermore, the BIPA language sessions he attended for two months after arriving at UIN Banten motivated him. Helping him to fit in with the language and several cultural customs was the BIPA initiative. He also sought assistance managing bad feelings like homesickness and overload by contacting his family back at home. He said,

I call my mother often to relieve my bad feelings. I thereafter try to understand what I see here. As long as the culture is good and does not conflict with my values, I work to understand and change.

Discussion

This study offers insights into the aspects that cause culture shock for students from abroad and the methods they use to manage it. It investigates the diverse factors that contribute to culture shock in international students and the ways they adapt. The research highlights five key domains: affective dimensions, including feelings of disorientation and reduced social support; behavioral manifestations, such as Intercultural misunderstandings; cognitive dissonance, like language barriers and cognitive conflict; intrapsychological factors, particularly language proficiency and homesickness; and academic challenges, defined by course content, teaching style and methods, and lack of information about institutional rules. Furthermore, the coping strategies revealed in this study comprise adaptive strategies, focused coping approaches, and emotion-focused coping techniques.

Regarding the aspects that cause culture shock in foreign students, this study's primary conclusion centers on their emotional experiences. How these pupils adjusted depended heavily on these affective states, which mirror a person's psychological state affected by their environment, cultural history, and past experiences. The results indicated specifically that most of the foreign students reported confusion; all four people mentioned a yearning for familiar locations and emotions of being overwhelmed; two of them lacked enough social support in their new cultural environment. The affective side is connected with both good and bad emotions. Consequently, people adapting to unfamiliar surroundings sometimes experience sorrow, anxiety, and bewilderment (Ward et al., 2001).

In addition to affective factors, behavioral aspects were also identified as significant contributors to culture shock. Behavioral aspects pertain to the process of cultural adaptation undertaken by international students. Miscommunication between local students or residents and international students was prevalent, with three out of four international students reporting such experiences. According to Ward et al., the behavioral dimension encompasses the individual's adaptation to social norms and the development of interpersonal skills. During this process, individuals frequently encounter challenges such as verbal and nonverbal misunderstandings, which can potentially lead to conflict (Ward et al., 2001).

International students faced cognitive dissonance, challenges in adapting to the new language, and difficulties with social interaction. A noteworthy portion had trouble with picking up the language, while others dealt with cognitive dissonance and challenges in social interactions. Ward et al. suggest that the cognitive aspect involves changes in a person's view of their identity and principles due to exposure to another culture. This experience can manifest as cognitive dissonance and a range of difficulties, including negative perceptions, difficulties in language acquisition, rigid thinking patterns, and social interaction challenges. (Ward et al., 2001)

Furthermore, research shows that personal psychological elements also play a role in how international students experience culture shock. These factors include language barriers and communication skills, as four international students encountered issues with language that affected their communication skills. The previously discussed factors correspond with Parrillo's theory, which proposes that various aspects, like intrapsychological factors such as language proficiency, homesickness, cross-cultural interaction, personal characteristics, tolerance, and access to resources, affect culture shock (Parrillo, 2008).

The second aspect of this study focuses on the methods that international students utilize to cope with culture shock and its related challenges. The results show that these students tend to adopt various similar approaches during their adjustment phase. Each of the four participants engaged in strategies to gain knowledge about the unfamiliar culture and developed an open-minded perspective toward it. Additionally, three out of the four international students applied a method of proactively creating cross-cultural interactions, while all four demonstrated flexibilities in accepting the new culture. This finding supports the theory suggested by Pujiyanti and Zuliani, which asserts that culture shock can be reduced when individuals make an effort to be open-minded, acquire knowledge about the culture they are experiencing, and form intercultural relationships. Therefore, if one can understand the dynamics of the new culture, they can become adaptable and adjust successfully (Pujiyanti & Zuliani, 2014).

The next approach utilized is focused coping. In this situation, it was observed that all four international students practiced logical analysis, positive re-evaluation, and

seeking guidance and support, while one of them engaged in problem-solving activities. In addition to focused coping, they also implemented emotion-focused coping techniques, with every participant utilizing strategies to deal with negative emotions and escape from the problem. This aligns with Rudolf H. Moos's theory, which identifies two kinds of coping: focused coping, divided into four areas— psychological analysis, positive re-evaluation, seeking guidance and support, and problem-solving—and emotion-focused coping, which prioritizes efforts to reduce negative motions and escape from the situation problems (Febrina Maharani & Misnawati, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This research has clarified the aspects of culture shock encountered by international students in the context of teaching and learning activities. The researchers identified distinct facets of the culture shock phenomenon among international students at the State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. These facets include affective, behavioral, cognitive, and intrapsychological dimensions.

Subsequently, international students employ various coping strategies to address the multifaceted aspects and challenges of cultural phenomena within teaching-learning activities. The strategies utilized include focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and adapting to the new culture. This study highlights the need for university to develop complete support systems that match the social, cultural, and academic needs of international students. Institutions should provide clear cultural introduction programs, improve cross-cultural communication training for staff and students, and offer ongoing academic and emotional support services. These efforts are important not only to help students adjust more easily but also to strengthen the university's readiness to welcome students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

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