

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of The Study

Culture is a vast and intricate concept, much like a beautiful tapestry woven from threads of beliefs, customs, values, and behaviors. Each thread intertwines, creating a unique and distinctive pattern. This pattern then becomes the identity of an individual or a group. Culture encompasses more than just language and religion; it also includes art, cuisine, and various other aspects of life. In essence, culture reflects who we are and how we interact with the world. Consequently, when individuals encounter unfamiliar cultures, they may experience culture shock. Culture shock is a psychological state marked by feelings of disorientation, anxiety, and confusion stemming from significant cultural differences. This can occur when a person relocates to a different country, moves to a big city, or even simply changes their social context environment.¹

Cross-cultural mobility, particularly regarding studying abroad, often results in culture shock. International students frequently face cultural disorientation due to significant differences between the academic environments of their home and host countries. Disparities in social norms, values, and everyday cultural practices present major challenges to their

¹ Sami- Ullah Bhat and Dr. Tushar Nair, “Cultural Shock in Anita Desai’s Novels,” Smart Moves Journal IJELLH 8, no. 12 (December 28, 2020): 170–185.

adaptation process. They often encounter unfamiliar surroundings while studying abroad. According to Lin, culture shock for international students begins well before they leave their home countries. As they adjust to new educational and social environments, international students experience higher stress levels than their domestic peers. Those pursuing education abroad may confront various life challenges, including language barriers, financial constraints, academic pressures, homesickness, and social interactions with other students countrymen.²

Culture shock occurs when a person enters and becomes immersed in a new environment, experiencing both physical and psychological discomfort as a result. It is defined as a state of anxiety stemming from the loss of familiar signs, symbols, and routines. These signs include the various ways individuals regulate their behavior in daily life. This phenomenon is felt by individuals as they adjust to a markedly different cultural environment. Shifts in lifestyle, preferences, values, and the communication systems and language of the new culture often trigger complex psychological and social responses. This is a normal aspect of the acculturation process. International or foreign students face the dual pressures of academic success and cultural adaptation. Cross-cultural studies have consistently shown a range of negative effects linked to culture shock, including depression, anxiety, communication difficulties, and academic struggles.

² Colleen Ward, Stephen Bochner, and Adrian Furnham, *The Psychology of Culture Shock, Second Edition*, second. (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2001).

To participate effectively in a diverse cultural environment, individuals must proactively engage in an adaptation process that involves adjusting to the prevailing norms, values, and cultural practices of their new setting. Cultural adaptation can influence the sensitivity of the culture itself. For instance, language adjustments in intervention materials are crucial. To ensure acceptance, it's important to incorporate cultural values. Adapting to a foreign culture that was once unimaginable is certainly challenging, but it is necessary for creating comfort in both perspectives and the environment. Foreign cultures must be studied and respected to avoid misunderstandings. Adapting involves optimizing existing values in life. Cultural processes can enhance adaptive values. In other words, cultural processes also represent viable evolutionary pathways characterized by behaviors transmitted through social interactions learning.³

International students enrolling at the State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten inevitably confront the challenge of culture shock. Adapting to a different cultural environment serves as a significant obstacle for these students. Culture shock, marked by feelings of alienation and the struggle to adjust to new social and academic norms, frequently impedes the adaptation process. This phenomenon can impact both academic performance and psychological well-being. Consequently, this research

³ Valentin Magnon and Bruno Corbara, "When the 'Satisficing' Is the New 'Fittest': How a Proscriptive Definition of Adaptation Can Change Our View of Cognition and Culture," *Science of Nature* 109, no. 5 (October 1, 2022).

underscores the issue of culture shock faced by international students during teaching and learning activities at the State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten.

B. Formulation of The Problem

In this research, the researcher is eager to identify:

1. In what aspects do international students encounter culture shock?
2. How do international students overcome problems caused by culture shock?

C. The Objectives of The Study

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To identify aspects of culture shock encountered by international students.
2. To analyze the strategies used by international students in dealing with culture shock.

D. Benefits of The Study

1. Theoretical Benefits

- a) This research is expected to enhance the body of knowledge, particularly in the field of cultural studies, by offering a deeper understanding of cultural dynamics and the phenomenon of cultural gaps that arise in cross-cultural contexts.
- b) The results of this research can serve as both a theoretical and practical reference in cultural studies, especially concerning the concept of cultural gaps, their root causes, and effective adaptation strategies.

- c) This research is expected to inspire the growth of a collective awareness regarding the significance of interculturalism, which is the capacity to understand, appreciate, and adapt to various cultures.

2. Practical Benefits

- a) For international students

This research can serve as a valuable reference for understanding their cultural adaptation process. It helps them accurately identify factors that contribute to culture shock and develop effective adaptation strategies.

- b) For educational institutions, this research can act as a valuable reference in creating effective support programs to aid the adaptation process and improve the satisfaction of international students.

- c) For Researcher

This research can enhance researchers' understanding of various cultural and social dimensions and offer a valuable dataset for future studies.

E. Clarification of The Term

1. Culture Shock

Formulated by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg, 'culture shock' is a psychological phenomenon that describes an individual's reaction to a foreign cultural environment. The absence of familiar cultural references in a new social context triggers temporary feelings of discomfort and uncertainty.⁴

⁴ I Wy Dirgeyasa, *Cross-Cultural Communication*, ed. Widya Setia sari, first. (Prenada Media, 2022).

2. International Students

The 2006 Global Education Digest by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics defines an internationally mobile student as a person who has left their home country or territory to study in another country.

F. Organization of Writing

This study is systematically organized to offer a thorough understanding of the culture shock faced by international students during teaching and learning activities.

Chapter I Chapter I, serving as the introduction, will outline the background of the problem, the research questions, the objectives of the study, the significance of the research, the operational definitions of key terms, and the organization of this thesis.

Chapter II Chapter II offers a comprehensive literature review, including the theoretical framework, an assessment of previous relevant studies, and the conceptual framework that underpins this research.

Chapter III Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, covering the research setting and timeline, the research design, the selection of respondents and participants, the data collection methods, and the data analysis procedures.

Chapter IV This chapter presents the research findings and discusses them, offering an interpretation of the empirical results.

Chapter V This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the research, along with suggestions for future studies and the practical implications of the findings. This structured approach aims to ensure that this thesis makes a significant contribution to the field of English Language Education within the Faculty of Education and Teacher Training.