



## **LEVELS OF CULTURE SHOCK IN STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY**

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**Abstract:** Culture shock is very much related to the situation where someone living in a new environment experiences worries and uncertainties of excessive feelings and thoughts. In the University of Singaperbangsa Karawang (UNSIKA), the presence of culture shock is very apparent among students. This condition is not only motivated by the status of UNSIKA as a State University in Karawang area but also because the position of Karawang City is located on the border of the Capital City, in which it is the center of Metropolitan life. Thus, this situation may affect the social conditions of the community which is later formed a culture shock. There are a big number of students who come to study at UNSIKA from various regions, including outside Java Island. This condition makes culture shock experienced by students at UNSIKA at varying stages.

**Keywords:** culture shock, students, university.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

*Culture Shock* is one of the challenges that cannot be avoided by every individual when living in a new environment. A study conducted by Oberg (1960), entitled *Culture Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments*, states that *culture shock* arises because of anxiety as a result of the loss of all signs and symbols that have become a habit or commonly used among the community in everyday relationships. These signs include a thousand and one ways to control oneself in dealing with everyday situations.

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In daily life, every human being has habits that describe their interaction with their social environment. These habits are formed due to external influences, such as living habits, or self-habituation brought from one's origin, cultural background, geographical conditions of the home environment, new place or environment, and the development of the times (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2020). All of the aforementioned external influences are called culture.

Culture contains the order of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religions, time, roles, spatial relations, the concept of the universe, material objects, and possessions that are acquired by large groups of people from generation to generation through individual and group efforts (Mulyana, 2010). When someone gets to know a new culture or a foreign culture, he/she will lose the “cultural clue” that he/she has had before. Like a fish that comes out of the water, someone who enters a new culture must make adjustments to the new environment in which he/she lives. In this adjustment process, individuals usually experience *culture shock*.

*Culture shock* is often seen as one of the challenges in the intercultural communication context, especially in the era of globalization as it is today, where the world seems limitless and allows the meeting between one culture and another. Moreover, the development into the era of globalization certainly has a major influence on all aspects of life, including education. Globalization is increasingly opening opportunities for people to get proper education, one of which is to open opportunities for people to study at the best universities, either outside the region or outside the island and even abroad. For this reason, there are more students from various regions coming to an area/city to study, as students at the University of Singaperbangsa Karawang.

Since the University of Singaperbangsa Karawang (UNSIKA) has changed its status to become a state university, Karawang City has become increasingly crowded with migrants. In addition, Karawang City is also an industrial city with many employees working in various companies. Most of them are migrants from various regions outside Karawang. The status as a state university that UNSIKA holds is also in great demand by students from outside Karawang. Therefore, this situation triggers *culture shock* in the social environment in Karawang, especially among overseas students of the University of Singaperbangsa Karawang. In this research context, the term

*overseas students* are related to students from outside Karawang who pursue their study at UNSIKA.

*Culture shock* can be experienced by anyone, including students who study in a new place far from home. This is in line with research conducted by Suryandari (2012) on "Culture Shock Communication of University Students from out of Madura", revealing that *culture shock* is a natural phenomenon when people visit new culture. People who experience *culture shock* are in a condition where they cannot get accustomed or have not found comfort either physically or emotionally. Differences in cultural backgrounds, perspectives, languages, social environment, climate and weather, food, clothing, and living habits become a series of problems that must be faced by overseas students.

A study conducted by Sicat (2011) on "Foreign Students' Cultural Adjustments and Coping Strategies" states that overseas students, just like migrants or travelers, must face cultural differences and must make adjustments. Adjustment is a continuous process that is a demand from one situation to another that cannot happen overnight. Many things can affect the adjustment process, such as communication variables in acculturation, namely personal factors (intrapersonal), such as personal characteristics, individual motivation, individual perceptions, individual knowledge, and prior experience. Besides, it is also influenced by the skills of individual communication in social communication (interpersonal) and the atmosphere of the new cultural communication environment (Rakhmat & Mulyana, 2010). For this reason, many researchers began to research students' *culture shock*, including research regarding the level of *culture shock* in students at the University of Singaperbangsa Karawang (UNSIKA).

Regarding *culture shock* theories, Oberg (in Bochner, 2003) states that *culture shock* is an individual's reaction when he/she comes and lives in a new environment that he/she does not yet know. The initial reaction that might arise is anxiety due to individuals losing signs that they are already getting used to in their old environment. Bochner (Furnharm and Bochner, 2003) also revealed that the reaction that arises can be in the form of uncomfortable feelings living in an unknown environment, where if the individual continues to develop these feelings and does not make adjustments to the new environment, it can lead her/him to stress. Hammersley and Atkinson (in Rianty & Pujiriyani, 2010) revealed that *culture shock* usually appears in the first days of individuals coming to a new environment. *Culture shock* arises

because when individuals are in a new environment, they will encounter habits, customs, and values that are different from what they have adopted in the old environment so that it can cause them to have trauma.

Winkelman (1994; Goldstein, 2015) mentions the causes of *culture shock* as follows:

A. *Stress Reaction*

Stress can cause a wide range of physiological reactions that can damage the function of the immune system and increase susceptibility to all types of diseases. Individuals who are living in a new environment and culture can experience stress caused by physiological and psychological factors.

B. *Cognitive Fatigue*

The new culture requires a conscious effort to understand things that are processed unconsciously in one's culture. Someone has to make efforts to understand the meaning of new languages and nonverbal communication in the new social environment. A mindful and demanding effort to understand all this new information can be very tiring and results in mental and emotional exhaustion.

C. *Role Shock*

Changes in social roles and interpersonal relationships can affect well-being and self-concept, thus causing individuals to experience role shock. In the new culture, the previous role is replaced by a role that is still unfamiliar.

D. *Personal Shock*

Self-esteem, self-identity, well-being, and life satisfaction are maintained by individual cultural systems.

In addition, there are 4 stages of the emergence of *culture shock* (Goldstein, 2015), namely:

1. Phase 1: *the honeymoon phase*

This is a stage where you will feel happy when you arrive in a new country, especially if you have never visited the country before.

2. Phase 2: *the crisis phase*

At this stage, you will find some differences in the new country. You feel that few things do not fit you, for example, foods, the accent that is difficult to understand, buying and selling habits, and feeling lonely. These things make you feel alienated from the environment. However, you will get through it soon if you can adjust well.

3. Phase 3: *the adjustment phase*

At this stage, you are getting used to interacting with a new environment in the new country.

4. Phase 4: *bi-cultural phase*

This is a stage where you begin to feel comfortable living with two cultures at once. This is a good indication because you have made it through a small natural selection. However, some students admire foreign cultures so much that when they return to their own country, they feel alienated from their own culture. For this reason, there must be a balance between understanding foreign culture without leaving our identity as Indonesians.

## **METHOD**

This study employed a descriptive method by making use of questionnaires or *google Forms* distributed to measure the level of *culture shock* experienced by University of Singaperbangsa Karawang (UNSIKA) students by linking the causes of *culture shock* experienced by the respondents based on Winkelmen's theory (in Goldstein, 2015). The objects analyzed in this study were UNSIKA students from several faculties and study programs totaling 280 respondents. Researchers collected data using assessments (*google form*) or factual choice questions (things that were experienced and felt) and the scale of the *culture shock* stage. The results from the *google form* were then analyzed and linked to the causes of *culture shock* by Winkelmen (1994). The results of data analysis were in the form of an explanation of the level of *culture shock* experienced by UNSIKA students and its causes. Each answer choice with the level of discomfort experienced was then associated with the cause of the *culture shock*.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Like a newcomer who visits a new place with a culture and environment that is completely new and different from the previous environment, *culture shock* becomes a challenge that cannot be avoided by overseas students. Their initial purpose of going to other regions was to study, where they had an obligation to study well to obtain good grades. However, if these students experience a condition such as *culture shock*, the situation can become an obstacle to pursue their education, later this will disrupt their learning activities. This is in

line with research conducted by Pyvis and Chapman (2005), entitled "Culture shock and international students' offshore", which states that *culture shock* on students studying outside their area of residence is a phenomenon that cannot be ignored.

This also happened at the University of Singaperbangsa Karawang (UNSIKA), where *culture shock* could cause academic problems for students. It is also likely to have an impact on the institution or campus where the students pursue their study because it will affect the quality of education and the reputation of the institution.

The following table 1 presents the results of field studies conducted by researchers regarding the level of the *culture shock* of UNSIKA students together with *culture shock's* forms and characteristics or symptoms.

**Table 1. Levels of the culture shock of students at UNSIKA**

Level of Culture Shock	Form	Characteristics or Symptoms
<i>The honeymoon phase</i>	83% of respondents (students in various faculties and study programs at UNSIKA), preferred to spend their time window-shopping, visiting places they don't know about and have never been visited to get rid of curiosity, and also trying the taste of local/ traditional food. This is following the <i>culture shock</i> stage of <i>the honeymoon phase</i> , where you will feel happy when you arrive in a new country, especially if you have never visited the country before.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Feeling comfortable staying outside the residence.</li> <li>2. Feeling more comfortable spending time longer outside the house.</li> <li>3. Feeling comfortable traveling.</li> <li>4. More interested in exploring new places.</li> <li>5. Having a high interest or high curiosity for new or unknown things.</li> <li>6. More interested in digging the ins and outs of Karawang City.</li> </ol>
<i>The crisis phase</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As many as 52% of respondents (UNSIKA students in various faculties and study programs) felt uncomfortable and a bit afraid of their new environment and living habits related to rules and manners in their new neighborhood (Karawang environment).</li> <li>2. Thus, those at the stage of <i>the crisis phase</i> preferred to avoid socializing with residents around their new environment or spending time going out or go for window-shopping.</li> <li>3. 33% of respondents (students at</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Feeling uncomfortable staying at home/ residence.</li> <li>8. Feeling more comfortable staying at campus than staying at my residence (dorm/ boarding house).</li> <li>9. Feeling afraid, worried, and anxious.</li> <li>10. Feeling awkward with the social environment, neighbors, and campus environment.</li> <li>11. Having difficulties starting conversation.</li> <li>12. Having not known the manners, customs, and</li> </ol>

Level of Culture Shock	Form	Characteristics or Symptoms
	UNSIKA from various faculties and study programs) were sick shortly after starting living in a new place and far from family (Karawang City) as university students. 4. Uniquely, 33 % out of 280 respondents, with 73 out of 92 respondents were female students.	habits of the community, neighbors, and campus environment. 13. Do not understand the language used as a communication tool around and the surrounding community. 14. Feeling uncomfortable with the life habits of the socialization of the community around the residence.
<i>The adjustment phase</i>	100% of respondents (UNSIKA students in various faculties and study programs) answered that it takes about 1 to 2 semesters (6-12 months) to adapt and blend in with the culture in Karawang environment and be able to recognize and blend in with the culture in their daily lives. Hence, at this stage students felt the <i>long-term culture shock</i> .	15. Experiencing various illnesses (e.g. fever) shortly when started living far from home. 16. Less active in talking or communicating with people around the residence and campus.
<i>Bi-cultural phase</i>	17% of respondents (UNSIKA students in various faculties and study programs) felt the <i>culture shock</i> at the <i>Bi-cultural phase</i> . These respondents were students from Karawang City, however, some students come from outside the Karawang region, but already got used to living far from their families (before going to college, they went to school outside their residential area). Hence, they felt quite comfortable living in a new place.	17. Prefer to use Indonesian when communicating rather than with their local language.

When viewed from the characteristics or symptoms that arise, it shows that the causes of *culture shock* are following Winkelmen's theory, namely *Stress Reaction* related to stress that could cause physiological reactions, *Cognitive Fatigue* that happened because of the challenge to recognize or learn new things or new languages, *Role Shock* which was in the form of changes in social roles and interpersonal relationships, and *Personal Shock* which was in the form of symptoms that arise by the default of his/her self (Winkelmen, 1994).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

*Culture shock* is always associated with moving to a new place or living in a new environment. However, in this study it can be concluded that the average number of students at of University of Singaperbangsa Karawang (UNSIKA) is dominated by migrants or non-native citizens of Karawang, so *culture shock* is highly experienced by average respondents.

*Culture shock* experienced was caused by many factors. However, from these factors, there was a uniqueness found in the results of the data analysis. One of the *culture shock* stages, *the crisis phase*, was dominated by female students. Hence, it is very interesting to conduct further research on the influence of gender on *culture shock* or the differences between women and men on *culture shock*.

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