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## The Analysis of Culture Shock Faced by Students of Madako University During the students exchange program (PMM)

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**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis culture shock yang dihadapi mahasiswa Universitas Madako selama program pertukaran mahasiswa (PMM). Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode wawancara semi-terstruktur terhadap 6 mahasiswa peserta program. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa para mahasiswa mengalami berbagai gejala culture shock, seperti rasa rindu kampung halaman, kebingungan dalam komunikasi, kehilangan nafsu makan, sulit tidur, dan kecemasan. Tantangan utama yang dihadapi meliputi perbedaan bahasa, gaya komunikasi, adat istiadat, serta norma sosial yang berlaku di lingkungan baru. Untuk mengatasi hal tersebut, mahasiswa menerapkan berbagai strategi adaptasi, seperti menjalin interaksi sosial dengan warga lokal, mengikuti kegiatan kampus secara aktif, serta mempersiapkan diri secara mental dan budaya. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya pembekalan budaya sebelum keberangkatan dan dukungan berkelanjutan selama program berlangsung agar mahasiswa dapat memperoleh pengalaman belajar yang optimal.

**Kata Kunci:** Analisis, Culture Shock, Pertukaran Mahasiswa.

**Abstract:** *This study aims the analysis of culture shock faced by students of madako university during the students exchange program (PMM). This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews with six program participants. The findings reveal that the students experienced various symptoms of culture shock, such as homesickness, communication difficulties, loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, and anxiety. The primary challenges they faced included language barriers, differences in communication styles, cultural customs, and social norms in the new environment. To address these challenges, students implemented various adaptation strategies, such as engaging in social interactions with local residents, actively participating in campus activities, and preparing themselves mentally and culturally. This study emphasizes the importance of cultural preparation before departure and continuous support throughout the program to ensure students can achieve optimal learning experiences.*

**Keywords:** *Analysis, Culture Shock, Student Exchange.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Student exchange programs are one of the strategies in higher education to broaden academic horizons and strengthen cross-cultural understanding. In Indonesia, the Independent Student Exchange Program (PMM) is designed to provide students with the opportunity to study at universities outside their home region to enhance their understanding of cultural, social, and national diversity. Sesriyani et al. (2022:6018) state that PMM focuses on helping students

understand the cultural diversity that exists in Indonesia and encouraging them to develop a broader national perspective after participating in the program. Furthermore, this program emphasizes the opportunity to study at a different university for one semester, allowing students to directly engage in new academic and social environments. Through PMM, students are expected to develop tolerance, adaptability, and cross-cultural communication skills.

Although PMM has positive goals, in practice, students often face difficulties in adjusting to their new environment. Differences in language, communication styles, social norms, lifestyle habits, and cultural and religious practices can trigger culture shock. According to Sitorus et al. (2023:2590), culture shock encompasses various aspects of daily life, such as food, dress, prices, lifestyle, and social customs. The greater the cultural differences encountered, the greater the impact of culture shock on the individual. This condition can cause feelings of anxiety, stress, and discomfort, and even potentially affect students' academic performance. In the initial stages, students often experience confusion, frustration, loneliness, and homesickness when faced with differences in language, cultural norms, food, and learning systems in a new environment.

This research was conducted due to the limited number of studies specifically addressing the culture shock experiences of Madako University students participating in the Merdeka Student Exchange Program. Madako University students, most of whom originate from Tolitoli, Central Sulawesi, face significant cultural differences when placed in Malang, Bandung, and Bali. These differences are evident in more subtle and indirect communication patterns, different social norms, and more complex cultural and religious practices, particularly in Bali. Based on initial interviews with Madako University PMM students, it was found that they experienced difficulties in understanding local dialects or accents, adjusting to different teaching styles, and integrating into their new social environment. This condition makes Madako University students a relevant subject for research to gain a more in-depth picture of the cultural adaptation process in the PMM context.

This study aims to analyze the symptoms of culture shock experienced by Madako University students during the Independent Student Exchange Program, identify the main challenges faced in the adaptation process, and describe the coping strategies used to overcome culture shock.

The study results showed that Madako University students experienced various symptoms of culture shock, such as homesickness, anxiety, confusion, communication difficulties, loss of appetite, and sleep disturbances. The main challenges faced included differences in language and communication styles, social norms, daily habits, and cultural and religious practices in the destination area. To overcome these challenges, students implemented various adaptation strategies, including establishing social interactions with the local community, actively participating in campus activities and the Nusantara Module, sharing experiences with fellow PMM participants, and preparing themselves mentally and culturally. These findings emphasize the importance of pre-departure cultural preparation and ongoing institutional support for students to adapt effectively during the exchange program.

## METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. This aligns with Lim's (2024:2) opinion, which states that qualitative research is a scientific research method that emphasizes in-depth data, context, and participant voices in understanding social phenomena.

The study participants were six Madako University students participating in the Merdeka Student Exchange Program and placed in Malang, Bandung, and Bali. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, taking into account the students' direct experiences in cultural adaptation during the program.

Research data was collected through semi-structured interviews that focused on the students' understanding of culture shock, their experiences, the challenges they faced, and the adaptation strategies they implemented. The data obtained were then analyzed using thematic analysis, which included data reduction, data presentation, verification, and conclusion drawing to identify key themes related to culture shock.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Symptoms of Culture Shock

Research results show that students experience various symptoms of culture shock, especially during the initial stages of placement. The most common emotional symptoms include homesickness, nervousness, anxiety, confusion, and fear of making mistakes. Furthermore, some students also experience physical symptoms such as loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, and fatigue. These symptoms affect students' comfort and confidence in social and academic interactions.

### Challenges Faced

The main challenges students face relate to differences in language and communication styles. Students from Tolitoli are accustomed to direct and assertive communication, while people in Malang and Bandung tend to use a more subtle and indirect communication style. In Bali, students also face the additional challenge of strongly differing religious practices and customs. Furthermore, students struggle to adapt to local cuisine, transportation systems, and social etiquette in their new environment.

### Coping Culture Shock

To cope with culture shock, students employ various adaptation strategies. These strategies include interacting with the local community, participating in campus activities and the Nusantara Module, sharing experiences with fellow PMM participants, and gradually adapting to local customs and cuisine. Students also recognize the importance of mental preparedness and cultural understanding as key factors in mitigating the impact of culture shock.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that Madako University students participating in the Merdeka Student Exchange Program experienced culture shock, characterized by emotional and physical symptoms. Differences in language, communication styles, cultural norms, and daily habits were the main sources of adaptation challenges. However, students were able to overcome these challenges through various adaptation strategies, such as social interaction, active participation in activities, and cultural learning. This research emphasizes the need for pre-departure cultural preparation and ongoing institutional support to ensure students' successful adaptation and optimal learning experience.

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