

## IMPLEMENTATION OF GROUP COUNSELING IN OVERCOMING CULTURE SHOCK FOR OVERSEAS STUDENTS OF UIN SUMATRA UTARA

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### Abstract

This research aims to explore the application of group counseling in addressing the culture shock experienced by migrant students at UIN Sumatra Utara. The research method used is qualitative with a descriptive approach. Primary data was obtained through interviews and observations of migrant students participating in group counseling sessions. The research findings indicate that the implementation of group counseling is effective in assisting migrant students in dealing with culture shock. Through group counseling sessions, migrant students can express their problems and discomfort arising from cultural differences. Discussions and interactions with fellow migrant students and group counseling facilitators provide emotional support, understanding, and self-adjustment strategies. The application of group counseling also helps migrant students gain new insights about themselves, and the new culture, and strengthen their social skills. In this process, group support and togetherness in addressing culture shock became important factors in the success of migrant students' adjustment.

**Keywords:** *Group Counseling; Culture Shock; Overseas Students.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Culture is an intriguing concept that captures attention, where individuals can acquire a wealth of knowledge through culture. This includes language usage, building social relationships, and socializing practices. In cultural diversity, there is often a process of cultural adaptation in which individuals attempt to integrate their personal habits and traditions to fit into the new culture they encounter. However, in this process, culture shock often occurs, which is a feeling of surprise or discomfort experienced by individuals who move to a new environment and culture (Pratiwi & Susanto, 2020).

Culture shock is often seen as a problem related to work or sudden relocation to a new environment. This is caused by the anxiety that arises from losing the social cues and symbols that have been acquired since early socialization. These cues can be in the form of words, gestures, facial expressions, habits, or norms learned from childhood. When someone enters a foreign culture, all or most of these cues are lost and no longer exist.

The process of interaction and the new conditions often bring discomfort to students when entering a new environment, known as culture shock. According to Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, culture shock causes stress and tension when facing situations that are different from before. Students experience culture shock in terms of language differences, clothing styles, food and eating habits, interpersonal relationships, weather conditions (climate), study schedules, eating and sleeping routines, as well as behavioral differences between men and women (Indriani, 2012). Culture shock poses challenges of adjustment at cognitive, socio-emotional, behavioral, and psychological levels experienced by individuals in a different culture (Anugrah Eka Pratiwi, 2020).

Generation Z or Gen Z is a generation that is expected to play an important role in Indonesia's future progress (Jimmi et al., 2023). When entering the world of college, they face a crucial transition period where they need to choose a college or campus where they will continue their education. In making this decision, several students with strong determination were willing to wander far from their homes in order to realize their dreams. They look for colleges located in remote locations, hoping to gain new experiences and improve their knowledge and skills during their studies. On the other hand, there are also students who choose to continue their studies outside the city according to the instructions and guidance from their parents. This decision may be based on considerations of better quality education or wider opportunities outside their city of residence. In each of these choices, various reasons and motivations lead them to migrate, but all of them have the same goal, which is to gain experience and broaden their horizons during college.

Culture shock is the experience of surprise and pressure felt by an individual when facing a new cultural environment that they have never encountered before. The decision to migrate in order to pursue studies at their dream campus distances students from their parents. One university that has cultural diversity is the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, which attracts students from various regions in Indonesia. For example, out of 29 second-semester Early Childhood Islamic Education (PIAUD) students, there are representatives from various regions, such as 48% from Deli Serdang Regency, 3% from Dairi Regency, 3% from Langkat Regency, 10% from Labuhan Batu Regency, 3% from Mandailing Natal Regency, 14% from Padang Lawas Regency, 7% from Asahan Regency, 7% from North Tapanuli Regency, and 3% from Simalungun Regency. Through classroom observations, it can be seen that the majority of them still use their own regional language and have slightly different ways of adapting. This indicates that the majority of students studying in big cities come from outside the region.

According to Oberg in Ridwan (Mulyana, 2010), culture shock is a condition that occurs when an individual lives outside of their cultural environment and is trying to adapt to the new environment. Another opinion expressed by Adler in (F. Sharifi, 2013) states that culture shock is a series of emotional reactions that arise due to the loss of support from the previous culture, caused by a lack of understanding in facing new and different experiences.

Gegar budaya bukan sekadar reaksi negatif yang dialami seseorang, tetapi juga merupakan proses pembelajaran. Culture shock is an important stage that individuals must face when moving to a new environment. They have to confront social, psychological, and philosophical challenges that arise from cultural differences. Culture shock is often associated with anxiety caused by

understanding the signs and symbols in social interactions (Hadawiah, 2019). Essentially, culture shock is an emotional response due to the lack of support from the native culture and the adjustment to the new culture. Culture shock can also be seen as a process of cultural learning and personal development. The problems and stress experienced during culture shock are actually part of the process of understanding changes in one's life. In this conflict, there is potential for new experiences that can contribute to personal development

According (Putra et al., 2018) there are several barriers that often occur when someone experiences culture shock: (1) Physical barriers related to communication constraints such as time differences, environment, personal needs, and other physical factors, (2) Cultural barriers that arise from differences in ethnicity, religion, and social aspects between different cultures (Jupriono, 2010), (3) Perceptual barriers that arise because each individual has different perceptions, leading to different understandings within each culture, (4) Motivational barriers originating from within the individual, (5) Experiential barriers that occur because each individual has different life experiences, leading to different perceptions and concepts (Furham, 2012), (6) Emotional barriers related to personal emotions and feelings, and (7) Linguistic barriers that arise when individuals are in a new environment with a different language.

Their motivation to continue their studies in big cities is to explore a broader environment, learn independently, choose their favorite campus, environmental factors including parental desires, and the availability of Islamic knowledge at the chosen campus. As a result, they are forced to rent temporary accommodations such as boarding houses, dormitories, or staying with family or relatives. In addition, choosing a campus outside their hometown makes some people become more independent and proficient in managing finances, as well as learning to be independent in financial management.

However, for some students who are experiencing their first time living away from home or becoming boarders, they tend to experience culture shock. This is because they were previously accustomed to living at home with their families. For example, when they lived with their families, they were usually used to asking for help if they needed something. However, as migrant students, they are required to be independent in doing everything due to the situation that demands it.

Individual reactions to culture shock can vary depending on their individual experiences. Although not many, there are people who are unable to adapt outside their home country. Cultural shocks usually occur to those who live and have to face the challenges of daily life in a new place. According to Ridwan (2016:204), there are several common initial reactions that individuals experiencing culture shock may have, such as: 1) Feelings of sadness, loneliness, frustration, and negative stereotypes towards the new culture 2) The appearance of physical pain due to psychosomatics, such as diarrhea, ulcers, etc. 3) Changes in temperament 4) Homesickness. 5) Re-questioning the self-identity that has been believed so far. If previously she believed herself to be an attractive person, she suddenly felt that she was an undistinguished person. 6) Loss of self-confidence The desire to continue to associate with people who have the same culture as him (Afikah, 2019).

In situations like this, special treatment is needed in the form of group counseling services that involve discussions about culture shock. Researchers carry out this service with the aim of providing in-depth understanding to students who experience culture shock about individual identity and its unique development, understand the situations and challenges they face, and so on.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study is a qualitative research with a descriptive approach that focuses on the current situation (Sugiyono, 2011). The descriptive analysis method is used by selecting relevant data related to the research problem formulation. Data collection is done through observation, interviews, and documentation. This research discusses ways to overcome culture shock among students. The primary data used in this study are direct interviews with 10 students who have experienced culture shock. The data analysis technique follows the model developed by (Matthew et al., 2014), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion/verification. Data validity is ensured through source triangulation, data collection technique triangulation, and time triangulation.

Data triangulation can help improve the reliability of qualitative research by providing consistent results across various sources or methods. Thus, a researcher can ensure that the results are not influenced by chance. This triangulation uses data from multiple sources to answer research questions. For example, a researcher can use archival records and field observations to study the history of a particular place or event. By using multiple sources, researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the research questions and reduce the potential bias of relying on a single source. Time triangulation is done by checking with interviews, observations, or other techniques at different times and situations, repeatedly until certainty is obtained. The researcher used morning and afternoon as the time periods for data collection.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Group Counseling Services are assistance services provided by an expert to a person or group of people for the development of a more effective daily life disturbed by an independent focus that is able to control oneself through the provision of types of services and support activities in the learning process (Prayitno, 2004).

The goal of group counseling services is to create a safe and supportive environment where participants can share their experiences, engage in social interactions, and gain new insights about themselves and the issues they face. Through this process, group participants can receive emotional support, gain new perspectives, and develop more effective coping skills and strategies.

In group counseling services, various counseling techniques and approaches can be utilized, such as group discussions, role-playing exercises, reflective activities, and group assignments. Counselors play a role in facilitating interactions among group participants, helping to identify unhealthy thought patterns or behaviors, and providing guidance and support in the process of change (Sukatini et al., 2022).

The benefits of group counseling services include gaining diverse perspectives from other group members, feeling heard and understood, and building strong social connections. Additionally, through interactions with group members who have similar experiences, individuals can feel more. According to the researchers, individuals who lack experience in interacting with different cultures and have a lack of factual information about their new environment and location are more prone to experiencing culture shock. This phenomenon can be explained by their insufficient preparation in facing the various aspects of cross-cultural experiences in their new environment. As a result, they face broader and emotional complex discomfort. Furthermore, socio-cultural variations also play a crucial role in influencing the level of transition between their original culture and the new culture. The greater the cultural differences, the higher the potential for culture shock.

To address the challenges of culture shock faced by students, researchers recommend the implementation of group counseling services. These services aim to provide support and guidance to students in coping with cultural changes and adaptation (Handayani & Yuca, 2018). In its implementation, a group leader, who can be a trained counselor or facilitator, will facilitate group activities that involve interaction among participants. These activities are designed to develop public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and enhance the ability to express opinions, suggestions, ideas, responses, and feelings to others.

Through group counseling services, students have the opportunity to share their experiences, support each other, and gain new insights into themselves and the issues they face. Interacting with fellow group members who also experience culture shock can foster a sense of connection and reduce feelings of alienation (Syaifulloh et al., 2020). Additionally, the group leader will provide the necessary guidance and support in the process of change and adaptation. Thus, group counseling services become an effective tool in helping students overcome culture shock and acquire more effective skills and strategies for navigating a new cultural environment.

The stages in group counseling services can be outlined as follows (Syaifulloh et al., 2020):

#### *Formation Stage*

**Member Selection:** Before conducting group counseling services, the researcher will serve as the group leader. The leader gathers several students who will participate in the group counseling, with a total of ten students. **Set Group Goals:** The objectives of the group counseling implementation, according to Prayitno (1995), include developing public speaking skills, expressing opinions, suggestions, ideas, responses, and feelings for others, self-control, and more.

**Determine the time and place of group counseling:** The timing and location of group counseling sessions need to be determined so that all group members can gather together at the same time. **Group Counseling Materials:** The group leader is responsible for preparing the necessary materials for group counseling. The materials discussed in group counseling are limited to culture shock and are obtained by the group leader through references from books or the internet.

**Introduction:** The group leader also provides initial encouragement and motivation to all group counseling members. Introductions are conducted at the beginning of the group counseling session. Prior to that, the leader explains the group counseling, including the code of ethics and rules implemented during the sessions. The code of ethics is explained because not all student members fully understand the concept of group counseling. The rules of group counseling are also explained to ensure that students do not violate them and can participate smoothly in the counseling sessions.

#### *Transition Stage*

In the transition phase, the group leader reiterates the core activities of group counseling, which is to discuss the members' issues. Before starting the core activities, students are asked to evaluate their readiness to engage in group counseling. The purpose of this stage is to help students familiarize themselves with the group's atmosphere, build trust with group members, and feel more comfortable expressing their opinions without hesitation. This allows the group counseling process to run smoothly, and the problems faced by the students can be solved.

#### *Group Counseling Activities Stage*

This stage is crucial in the implementation of group counseling, where group members focus on the desired goals, discuss relevant topics, and work on resolving their self-confidence issues. In this group counseling activity, the researcher acts as an observer throughout the process and also serves as the group leader, while the students act as group members. Based on observations made during the group counseling sessions, the group leader provides direct training to the group members. It is evident that some students feel shy when faced with a large audience and speaking in public. Therefore, during the group counseling process, the group leader asks one of the students to practice speaking in front of the entire group by sharing their personal experience with culture shock. They share stories about the various changes they experienced when moving to the city of Medan, but over time, they began to accept and adapt to the new culture.

#### *Termination Stage*

The group leader announces that the group counseling session will soon come to an end and expresses appreciation for the achievements made by the group as a whole and each individual student. For the next activities, the leader and the students discuss and determine the schedule for the next group counseling session. The counselor also asks the counseling participants for their impressions and feedback after participating in the group counseling session. The final stage concludes by saying farewell and expressing gratitude to the group counseling members for their participation in the group counseling service. The group leader leads a closing prayer to conclude the group counseling process.

### *Follow-up*

In the implementation of group counseling, the leader's task is to evaluate the success of the work behavior and develop a follow-up plan. The aim of this stage is to assess the extent to which the group counseling session has achieved the desired outcome and determine the next steps to be taken by the leader. In the follow-up process, the leader can organize further guidance and counseling programs if needed, such as individual counseling. This is done as an alternative to address the issues faced by the students, ensuring that these problems are resolved and resolved

Based on the findings, the researcher concludes that although international students experience culture shock upon their arrival, it does not permanently discourage them from completing their studies. The initial discomfort caused by the differences in social and cultural environments in Medan tends to fade over time. The adaptation process experienced by individuals is influenced by their daily interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds. Through intensive academic activities, individuals gradually engage in the process of assimilation with others, which encourages them to interact and realize that as social beings, they mutually need each other in exchanging the necessary information to achieve their academic goals.



The data collection process for BKPI Students in 2022 was carried out carefully and planned

International students who experience culture shock and start interacting with new people in a new cultural environment indirectly trigger deep self-reflection, allowing individuals to discover new insights about their psychological aspects. Through the emotional experiences that occur while interacting with the new culture, this new structure becomes more visible and tangible within individuals.

It is important to note that the experience of interacting with a new culture is not always negative; on the contrary, it can be a catalyst for individuals to delve into and understand themselves more deeply. This process helps individuals become more flexible in adapting to the new culture they encounter. Along this journey, individuals naturally discover new meanings and embrace the influences of the new culture, which assist them in adapting to their new environment.

The discovery of new meanings is an ongoing process that involves a deeper understanding of one's identity and values. Through interactions with a new culture, individuals can expand their understanding of themselves and enhance their adaptability skills. This process of self-adjustment not only helps individuals function better in a new environment but also opens opportunities for broader personal growth.

In this context, it is important to emphasize that adapting to a new culture is not an instant or immediate process. It requires time, patience, and openness for individuals to embrace change and learn about the new culture with an open mindset. With the continuous influence of the new culture, individuals can continue to develop and integrate new aspects into themselves, becoming more comprehensive individuals who are connected to the world around them.

In the process of adaptation and adjustment to the culture in Medan, international students can create a more comfortable sense of belonging and resolve tensions that arise from cultural differences. Effective and smooth communication among individuals is a crucial factor in this

regard (Aufirandra et al., 2017). However, effective communication can only occur if individuals are willing to accept and adapt to the culture of the place they are in.

It is important for international students to actively engage in social and cultural activities in Medan, such as participating in local events, interacting with local residents, and learning about cultural customs and traditions. By doing so, they can broaden their knowledge and understanding of the local culture, as well as building better relationships with the community (Eko Risdianto, Meizul Zuki, 2021). With culture shock, they can provide mutual support and motivation to each other.

The implementation of group counseling in overcoming culture shock among international students at UIN Sumatra Utara provides significant benefits in assisting students to face challenges and difficulties related to cultural adaptation. Culture shock is a common phenomenon that occurs when individuals move to a new environment with different cultures, norms and values. International students often experience feelings of alienation, confusion, anxiety, and discomfort when adapting to a new culture.

Through the implementation of group counseling, international students have the opportunity to share their experiences and challenges in dealing with culture shock. Within the group, they can interact with fellow international students who are experiencing similar situations, creating a safe and structured space to support and understand each other.

Group counseling also provides the much-needed social and emotional support for international students. They feel heard, understood, and supported by fellow group members. Through the process of group counseling, international students can explore and express their feelings, concerns and emotions associated with cultural differences. This social support can help reduce levels of stress, anxiety, and loneliness often associated with culture shock.

Appreciating and accepting the cultural diversity around us is an important first step in adapting to a new culture. By respecting cultural differences and actively engaging in social activities and seeking social support, international students can overcome the tensions and difficulties that arise from cultural differences. They can also create a harmonious and comfortable environment for communication amidst cultural diversity, making the process of adaptation easier and more effective.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings presented in the discussion, it can be concluded that culture shock is a phenomenon where individuals exhibit negative reactions when they find themselves in a new environment and culture. When experiencing culture shock, individuals often respond in ways that are not aligned with expectations due to differences in communication styles and customs.

In facing culture shock as international students in Medan, the process of adaptation and adjustment to the new culture plays a crucial role. Although culture shock occurs upon initial arrival, with time and through the experience of interacting with the new culture, the feeling of discomfort will naturally diminish. It is important for international students to adopt an open, accepting and respectful attitude towards the cultural diversity around them.

In the effort to adapt, international students should actively engage in social and cultural activities in Medan, interact with local residents, and learn about customs and cultural traditions. Additionally, seeking social support from fellow international students and the university is also an important step in dealing with culture shock.

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