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Culture Shock and Adaptation Among Students in Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM) Program

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Abstract—*Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM)* is one of the activities of *Kampus Merdeka* Program. Individuals who move to another place can have culture shock due to the differential places or settings. They also need to adapt to the new environment. This study aims to know what the students' culture shock and adaptation. This study used descriptive qualitative research using phenomenological approach. The data was gathered using in-depth interviews and analysis using U-Curve theory. There were five informants who were experienced in the PMM Program. The results showed all informants felt culture shock and had their strategy to adapt with the new culture.

Keywords—culture shock, adaptation, PMM, students

abstrak—*Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM)* adalah salah satu aktivitas dari program *Kampus Merdeka*. Seseorang yang berpindah lokasi bisa mengalami gegar budaya dikarenakan perbedaan lokasi, budaya, cuaca, makanan dan lingkungan. Seseorang tersebut juga memerlukan adaptasi terhadap budaya baru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melihat gegar budaya dan adaptasi yang dimiliki oleh mahasiswa PMM. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi. Data dalam penelitian ini didapatkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan diolah berdasarkan teori U-Curve. Terdapat lima informan yang diwawancarai dalam penelitian ini, mereka merupakan mahasiswa yang pernah mengikuti program PMM. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan semua informan merasakan gegar budaya dan mempunyai strategi tersendiri untuk dapat beradaptasi dengan budaya yang baru.

Kata kunci—gegar budaya, adaptasi, PMM, mahasiswa

INTRODUCTION

Kampus Merdeka (Independent Campus) is a policy launched by The Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia for higher education. There are eight main activities in *Kampus Merdeka*, including certified internships and independent study, teaching assistant or *Kampus Mengajar*, Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA), *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* and entrepreneurial activities. *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM)* is one of the activities of *Kampus Merdeka Program*. *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM)* is an exchange program in which the students can take one semester studying in another campus (Wibisono & Umiyati, 2023). This program has several outcomes, 1) improving the students' ability

to apply the insights about nation, 2) understanding of diversity in *suku, agama, ras dan antar golongan (SARA)* and increasing the unity, 3) developing encounters and intensive dialogues within diversity and fostering mutual understanding to strengthen their unity, 4) widening and enhancing students' academic and knowledge (Gulo et al., 2023).

The diversity in Indonesia gives a challenge for students who are participating in *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM) Program*. Individuals who move to another place can have culture shock due to the different places or cultures. According to Maizan (2020) culture shock is a negative emotional reaction by individuals when transitioning into a new culture that is significantly different from their original culture. Culture shock is also a feeling of desperation, fear, emotional distress, and a strong feeling to return home or home sick (Maulani & Wahyutama, 2022). When an individual is in a different environment, he or she has to adjust to the new culture and habits that exist in that environment.

Students who join in *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM) Program* definitely need to adapt to get used to the new culture, environment, and communication of the surrounding community. Students must know the local language in order to communicate with the local community and adapt with their culture. This condition can cause individuals to experience feelings of inferiority, solitude, and a lack of self-confidence in the situation that they are not familiar with (Siregar & Kustanti, 2020). Adaptation is an important thing for an individual when it comes to a new environment.

Based on the phenomenon above, the researcher thought that students face culture shock and might have the strategy or adaptation with the new culture and environment. For this reason, the researcher wants to conduct research entitled **Culture Shock and Adaptation Among Students in *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM) Program***.

METHOD

This study used descriptive qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems. It could be informants' experiences or perceptions, and behavior (Tenny et al., 2022). In addition, phenomenological approach focuses on how individuals perceive and interpret their experiences.

In this study, the research subjects were informants who had experienced in *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka (PMM) Program*. There were five informants in this study. Their initials were NIK, DS, DAS who from IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro and two more informants were from snowball sampling who experienced PMM program same with the first informant, they were BS and TPDW. In addition, the data were collected through in-depth interviews using a voice recorder, then transcribed for analysis.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study focus on students' experiences that contribute to culture shock and adaptation. Using U- Curve theory as a framework, the phases of culture shock and adaptation were analyzed through their experiences. There are four

phases in U-Curve theory, for instance honeymoon phase, culture shock phase, recovery phase and adaptation phase.

Tabel 1. Honeymoon Phase

Informant	Motivation	Honeymoon Phase
NIK	Curiosity to apply the program Relation, wants to get insights Get new experiences	Shock and excited to know the results
DS	Improving his skills Relation, wants to get insights and knowledge Learn about new culture	Shock and excited to know the results
DAS	Interesting with the program Relation, learn about new culture	Shock, speechless, excited to know the results and mixed-feeling
BS	Got motivation from their friends Relation, improving his skills Learn about new culture	Shock, excited, mixed-feeling and confused
TPDW	Want to learn about new culture	Shock and excited to know the results

The study aims to understand the experiences of students during the Honeymoon phase, which is the first phase when they have not yet felt culture shock. During this phase, informants feel joy, euphoria and they are still having good expectations of their environment, culture, language, community and food. In this phase, most of the informants had the same motivation, such as getting a relationship and they wanted to learn about new culture. They also have motivation, like wanting to make new friends or relations, learn about different cultures, gain knowledge, and improve their skill in another campus. According to Rahayu (2023) developing skills helps individuals interact better with others and see things from different perspectives.

In this study, all informants had the same reaction at first, such as shock and excitement to know the results. Because most of them do not expect the result before. However, DAS and BS had negative or overwhelming emotions, such as mixed-feeling and confusion. In the interview session, DAS and BS said that they do not know how to act and seek permission from their parents.

Tabel 2. Culture Shock Phase

Informant	Environmental Aspects	Social Aspects	Reaction
NIK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language, weather, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Miscommunication because of tone and 	Sick because of the weather, confused, afraid of

	and foods differences	accent of the native speaker	miscommunication and homesick.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need lots of time to be fluent on local language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High cost of living 	
DS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language, weather, and foods differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miscommunication because of tone and accent of the native speaker • High cost of living 	Irritation and homesickness.
DAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language, weather, and foods differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not know the meaning of their language • High cost of living 	Shock, barely interaction with the local community.
BS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language, weather, and foods differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture differences 	Fever and diarrhea.
TPDW	Weather (High temperature)	-	Headache

In the culture shock phase, there are two aspects, such as environmental and social aspects. All informants felt the same environmental aspects, such as the difference in language, weather, and food. When the culture of a newcomer is far different from the culture of the host, it can cause culture shock in language barrier (Aulia et al., 2023). It affects their daily life when they need to communicate with classmates or the local community. Meanwhile, TPDW as the fifth informant only felt the weather differences, which he could not deal with high temperature and he got a headache.

Different tones and accents can lead to miscommunication. According to Grafia (2022) individuals may struggle with the nuances of the local language and accent, which can create barriers in effective communication and lead to feelings of anxiety and confusion. DAS, as the third informant, does not know the meaning of the local language at first. Thus, it made her barely interact with the local community.

Tabel 3. Recovery Phase

Informant	How the informants managed recovery phase
NIK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction and socializing with the local community.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the culture and local language. • Having the motivation to ask the meaning of the word with the local community.
DS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barely interacting with the local community. • Does not have motivation to learn the local language.
DAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation herself to be open-minded. • Learn with students from the same university and class.
BS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiative to learn language with students from the same class. • Motivation himself.
TPDW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having high self-efficacy and motivation. • Made friends with classmates.

In this phase, the informants were able to build interaction with the new environment, socialize with the local community and motivate themselves to build confidence. When informants improve their motivation to learn the local language, they can adapt and communicate with the local community (Mufidah & Fadilah, 2022). NIK, as the first informant, tried to motivate herself to ask the word that she did not know with the local community or peers in her campus. Same as DAS, BS, and TPDW who take initiative to learn the local language and motivate to be open-minded with new culture.

However, DS, as the second informant, does not have motivation to learn the local language and barely interacts with the local community. Based on the interview, DAS felt comfortable with the new environment so he did not want to learn the local language. He was able to recover with help from his friends or classmates regularly.

Tabel 4. Adaptation Phase

Informant	Duration of Adaptation
NIK	1 Month
DS	2 Days
DAS	1 Month
BS	3 Weeks
TPDW	3 Days

In the adaptation phase, the informants begin to understand and embrace their new culture. They also can adapt to the two cultures and experience a sense of enjoyment in both cultures. DS and TPDW adapted quickly, only taking 2-3 days to adapt with the culture shock. Their rapid adaptation can be attributed to their mental preparation and the essential items they brought with them for the new environment. BS as the third participant required about 3 weeks to adapt fully with culture shock because he began to understand the local community and its dynamics. However, NIK and DAS took approximately 1 month to adapt with the culture, language, environment, and food.

CONCLUSION

Culture shock is a feeling of discomfort when individuals move to another place or settings. All informants from *Pertukaran Mahasiswa Merdeka* (PMM) faced experiences of culture shock and having their strategy to adapt with new culture and environment. In the honeymoon phase, all informants generally felt excited and shocked to know the results. When individuals move to another place, they need to adapt with new culture, language, food, weather, and environment. In the culture shock phase, each informant has their own culture shock, such as health problems that affect their daily life. However, in the recovery phase, most informants found their own motivation to learn and adapt to new culture, although one informant did not want to motivate himself. In the adaptation phase, all informants have their own duration of adaptation that reflects their own journey in new places. Based on the result and analysis above, the researcher found that all informants have the complexity of adapting to a new culture and their own ability to overcome obstacles in unfamiliar places.

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