

Reverse Culture Shock Phenomenon among Al Azhar Students in Egypt

Nisful Laili^{*}, Pawito², Sri Hastjarjo³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, 57126, Indonesia

^{*}Corresponding author's email: nisfullaili@student.uns.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Keywords

Reverse Culture Shock
Egypt
W-Curve Model
International Student

This study explores the reverse culture shock experienced by Indonesian students after returning from studying at Al Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. Utilizing the W-Curve model proposed by Gullahorn and Gullahorn, this research investigates the stages of cultural adjustment these students undergo, both abroad and upon their return home. Data were collected through interviews with four informants who had studied in Cairo for five to six years. The findings reveal that the students experienced initial excitement upon arrival in Egypt, followed by frustration and discomfort during the hostility phase. Over time, they adapted and felt at home in the new environment. Upon returning to Indonesia, they faced reverse culture shock, struggling to readjust to their home culture and environment. The study highlights the emotional and psychological challenges of reentry and underscores the importance of support systems to facilitate smoother transitions for returning students.

1. Introduction

International experience is an important component in higher education in the 21st century. UNESCO stated that Indonesia is a country that is ranked second in the scope of ASEAN countries, based on the number of students studying abroad (Marietha, 2024). McKeown describes that learning outside the state is the most likely experience to change a student's life. Regardless of the goal, students may experience feelings of disorientation due to their unfamiliarity with the new cultural situation. While culture shock is associated with initial adaptation to a new culture, reverse culture shock (Reverse Culture) refers to the shock of returning to the original culture after returning home from abroad for an extended period (Fanari et al., 2021).

International students have unique characteristics, especially when they study abroad because they mingle and communicate with other students who are different from them and residents. Miles explains that international students often face unique challenges different from domestic students before, during, and after the enrollment process. They must undergo life transitions that involve various challenges, such as cultural, linguistic, and social adaptation, which impact their well-being in the new society. This process requires not only academic but also emotional and social adjustments, which can affect their overall learning experience and integration (Raja et al., 2023).

This is also felt by international students studying in Egypt. There are several factors that Egypt is chosen by non-regional students, namely international students who study in Egypt consider Egypt to be a safe country, and safer than other countries in the region. Apart from that, international students choose Egypt because of its historical value, tourist riches and cultural experiences that Egypt offers. The perception of Egypt as a tourist destination was only found among non-regional students and was not apparent among regional international students. Furthermore, Egypt's ability to accommodate regional students from the Middle East and Africa at its universities is not offered by other countries in the region. This fact makes Egypt popular and familiarly called/known as "Umm al Donia," which means 'mother of the world' (Marei, 2021).

Indonesia and Egypt have many differences, especially in the areas of culture, communication, and learning systems. Universities, especially in Al Azhar Cairo, do not require their students to actively attend lectures. Learning activities are carried out in the form of lectures and do not feature discussion sessions. Apart from that, security in the country is also very minimal. The communication carried out between communities is also different so that many Indonesian students will experience culture shock when they first come to state the. However, this does not rule out the possibility that those studying outside the state also experienced reverse culture shock when returning to Indonesia (Murtadlo et al., 2020).

Reverse culture shock or reserve culture is a condition in which a person experiences cultural paralysis characterized by physical, psychological, and emotional difficulties. linguistics and the socio-cultural experiences experienced after living for a long time in a foreign country (Presbitero, 2016). Changes in perception and lifestyle can differ according to how many years students have lived abroad, age differences and culture so that usually what is considered normal and normal before they leave, is considered strange after returning (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). Reverse culture shock, or reserve culture, is a condition in which a person experiences physical, psychological, linguistic, and sociocultural difficulties after a long stay in a foreign country. The changes in perception and lifestyle experienced can differ depending on the duration of stay abroad, age differences, and culture. Things that were considered normal before leaving can become strange after returning.

Previous research explains that various factors influence students' experiences in dealing with reverse culture shock. Individual personality traits, such as openness to new experiences and adaptability, play an important role in coping with cultural change. Mental and emotional preparedness before returning to your home country also helps reduce the impact of reverse culture shock. In addition, the perceived similarity between the cultures of the home country and the host country can facilitate the adjustment process upon return. Cultural intelligence, namely the ability to understand and navigate different cultures effectively, also helps reduce adaptation difficulties. Lastly, the duration of stay in a foreign country influences the level of attachment and adaptation to a new culture, which impacts the experience of reverse culture shock when returning to the country of origin (Presbitero, 2016).

Similar research studies explored the relationship between self-disclosure and the difficulties experienced by students returning home after studying abroad. This research identifies challenges in readjustment, such as language, education system, bureaucracy, interpersonal relationships, social norms, transportation systems, and culture. Results show that students face difficulties in sharing their experiences due to a lack of understanding from others and difficulty in describing their unique experiences abroad. Students are more likely to disclose their experiences to friends who have also been abroad, parents, and romantic partners. This research emphasizes the importance of mindful and intentional communication in helping overcome reverse culture shock. The gap between this research and previous research is that this research focuses more on the experiences of international students in the W phase of the W-Curve phase according to Gullahorn & Gullahorn (Fanari et al., 2021).

Similar research discusses reverse culture shock, symptoms of distress, and psychological well-being of new foreign degree holders in Pakistan. This research explores the impact of reverse culture shock on the psychological well-being, anxiety, and depression of these individuals. This research also found a relationship between reverse culture shock and symptoms of distress, age, and duration of stay abroad. The results showed that reverse culture shock was a strong predictor of psychological well-being, anxiety, and depression. This research highlights the importance of social and psychological support for individuals experiencing reverse culture shock. The gap between this research and previous research is that this research focuses on the experiences of students who experience Reverse Culture Shock with in-depth interviews (Akhtar et al., 2022).

According to Cross cultural adaptation by Kim, there are several things that underlie the first intercultural adaptation, a person moving to a place with a different or foreign culture from the culture he or she belongs to. Second, someone who lives and depends on a new environment with the aim of meeting individual and group needs. Third, the person is at least experienced in communicating with residents (Harvey, 2007). According to Kim, the cultural adaptation process is described in the form of a "U" curve developed by Oberg to show the emotional ups and downs of a newcomer during the adaptation process. Gullahorn and Gullahorn then developed this model into a "W" curve. There are

four important points in the adaptation process according to Oberg. First, the "honeymoon" phase where immigrants feel happy with the new environment. Second, the "crisis" phase where migrants experience cultural shock, face obstacles due to cultural differences, and feel uncomfortable. Third, the "recovery" phase where immigrants begin to adjust to the new environment. Finally, the "honeymoon at home" phase when immigrants feel comfortable again after successfully adjusting (Laila & Purwasito, 2016).

This research uses Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory to understand the reverse culture shock experience of Al Azhar Cairo students after returning to Indonesia. This theory helps in understanding the cross-cultural adaptation process experienced by students, including the challenges they face and the strategies they use to overcome them these challenges. In this research, the model that will be used is the W-curve Adjustment Model because researchers want to know the stages of culture shock experienced by informants when returning from abroad. Gullahorn & Gullahorn put forward the W-curve as a model that extends the U-curve hypothesis to account for reverse culture shock. This type of culture shock occurs when immigrants return home, where it can cause more severe difficulties due to its unexpected nature compared to the original shock experienced first being in a new culture (Liu et al., 2015).

The stages of culture shock in the W-curve model by Gullahorn & Gullahorn consist of the honeymoon phase, hostility phase, hostility phase, humor stage, the 'at home stage, re-entry phase, and resocialization stage (Jackson, 2014):

1. The Honeymoon Phase

When foreigners first arrive in a new culture, they often feel excited and look forward to the days ahead. Initially, they ignore the negative aspects of the host culture, focusing instead on new experiences and surroundings. This phase, often termed as euphoria, marks the peak of their cheerful mood and enthusiasm to start a new life away from home.

2. Hostility Phase

The second phase, often called 'culture shock', 'crisis', or 'disintegration', occurs once the euphoria wears off. Foreigners start to feel uncomfortable and may stand out due to differences in accent, dress, food preferences, or values. They feel overwhelmed and frustrated by the psychological, cognitive, and physical demands of the new culture, leading to irritability and questioning their decision to go abroad. Some may even return to their home country at this stage.

3. Humorous Stage

The third stage, known as 'reorientation', 'reintegration', or 'adjustment and recovery', is when foreigners regain their sense of humor. They realize many problems stem from cultural differences and misunderstandings. In this phase, they start feeling balanced, positive, and more willing to engage with locals. Despite growing familiarity with the host culture, occasional homesickness persists.

4. The 'At Home' Stage

In the 'adaptation' and 'resolution' stage, foreigners feel at home and content in the host environment. They understand and appreciate the host language, culture, and lifestyle. They communicate freely, participate actively in activities, build trusted friendships, and gain self-confidence. This stage enables effective problem-solving and conflict mediation within the cultural context.

5. Re-entry Phase

Re-entry or reverse culture shock involves readjustment, reacculturation, and reassimilation into one's home culture after living abroad. Returning foreigners may struggle to readjust due to a shift in perspective or idealized image of their home country formed while abroad. They might miss the independence and friendships they had abroad, finding it hard to fit back into the local rhythm of life. This can lead to identity confusion, feeling caught between the world they left and the one they've returned to.

6. Resocialization Stage

The final stage in the W-curve model is resocialization or reintegration. People who returned to their home countries began to feel stable and comfortable again. They are willing to communicate effectively and appropriately with their family members, friends, and colleagues. Like the recovery and adjustment phase in the host country, foreigners can get used to and reintegrate with the local way of life.

This research aims to find out how Al Azhar Cairo students describe their adaptation process when returning to Indonesia and how students feel al azhar Cairo faced reverse culture shock when he returned to Indonesia. This research is interesting because it can reveal the transformation of identity and personal values that individuals experience in cross-cultural contexts, providing deep insight into how global experiences influence their perspectives and adaptation in their home environment.

2. Method

This research is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. A phenomenological approach is used to understand a person's related life experiences with a person's subjectivity (Denlin & Lincoln, 2009). Researchers seek to uncover how individuals experience, feel, and give meaning to certain phenomena from their own perspective, without intervening or changing those experiences. There are two sources of data, namely primary and secondary. Primary data was obtained from in-depth interviews with Al Azhar Alumni Students Cairo Egypt and secondary data obtained from literature reviews related to the research topic. Purposive sampling technique was carried out in research to determine research informants. Purposive sampling is not random which sampling sample selected who understands the research topic (Lenaini, 2021). Informants must have an understanding that is relevant to the phenomenon being studied so that results can be obtained has validity. Thus, the selection of informants in research based on following criteria: (1) Graduate students of Al Azhar Cairo Egypt. (2) Students who have lived for at least 4 years in Egypt. (3) Students who have returned to Indonesia.

Tabel 1. Informant Data

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Length of Stay	Informant
1.	ABSR	Male	26	6 Tahun	Informant 1
2.	FAA	Female	26	5 Tahun	Informant 2
3.	SNA	Female	26	5 Tahun	Informant 3
4.	TP	Male	26	5 Tahun	Informant 4

3. Result

This research was conducted on Al Azhar graduate students Cairo Egyptians with a minimum of 4 years of education. Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory is used to understand the reverse culture shock experience of Al Azhar Cairo students after returning to Indonesia. This theory helps reveal the cross-cultural adaptation process experienced by students, including the challenges they face and the strategies they use to overcome these challenges. In this context, the W-Curve approach consisting of four phases - Pre-Departure (Leave-Taking) Stage, Honeymoon (At Home) Stage, Reverse Culture Shock (Re-Entry Shock) Stage, and Readjustment (Reintegration) Stage - is used to describe the emotional and psychological dynamics experienced by students during the process of readjusting to their culture of origin.

3.1. New Place and New Culture for International Students

International students must adapt to a new place, facing the challenges of a different culture, language, and educational system from their home country. This adaptation process involves adjusting to different social norms, interaction with local communities, and understand and adapt to a lifestyle that may be very different from the one they are familiar with. Redfield et al explain that the process of acculturation and cross-cultural adaptation involves changes that occur because of ongoing

interactions between two or more cultures. The term acculturation refers to the process of change resulting from continuous contact between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds (Liu, 2017).

“....jujur pas tahun awal aku rasanya emang sudah gak kuat karena orang mereka kan keras dan banyak fir'aun nya,.... Rasanya gak mau balik lagi ke mesir, karena gak betah sama lingkungan...” - Informant 1

This statement reveals the difficulties experienced by the informant when returning to Indonesia at first. Informants felt uncomfortable and uncomfortable because they considered local society to be harsh and authoritarian, likened to "pharaohs". This experience made him not want to return to Egypt because he felt it did not suit the environment he faced in Indonesia.

“...Ada beberapa yang bikin kaget kek suhu di puncak musim panas dan musim dingin yang lebih ekstrim dari pada di Indonesia, kahidupan ibu kota yang agak berbeda dengan di desa, dan sebagainya...” informant 4

The statement from Informant 4 describes the culture shock experienced after living abroad and returning to Indonesia. Informants were surprised by the extreme temperature differences in the country where they live compared to Indonesia, where summer and winter temperatures are much higher extreme. Apart from that, life in capital cities abroad is felt to be very different compared to life in villages in Indonesia. These differences encompass various aspects of daily life that demand significant adjustments, illustrating the cross-cultural adaptation challenges faced by individuals when they return to their home environments.

“...awal di Mesir aku tinggal di asrama ya, jadi lumayan berat jugaa, yang aku pikirin tuh pokoknya gimana cara dapet beasiswa aja...” – informant 4

This statement describes the informant's initial experience while living in Egypt. Living in a dormitory was initially felt by the informant to be quite difficult, indicating challenges in adapting to a new environment. The Informant's main focus during this period was how to get a scholarship, indicating the priority and pressure felt to ensure financial support for his studies. This reflects how initial adaptation in a foreign country can be fraught with practical and emotional challenges, as well as pressure to meet academic and financial goals.

“...aku adaptasi cepet karenaaa temennya banyak, maksudnya kan aku berangkat lewat broker. jadi udah dekat sama merekaa. Jadi waktu ke Mesir yaaa bisa beradaptasi cepet karena bantuan mereka juga...” – informant 3

This statement explains that the informant was able to adapt quickly in Egypt because he had many friends. Before leaving, the informant connected with new friends through a broker, so he already had a close relationship with them before arriving in Egypt. The presence of these new friends helped the informant to adapt quickly because they had social support and assistance in facing initial challenges in the new environment.

The informants faced various challenges when they first lived abroad which caused them to feel a culture shock. These challenges include difficulty adapting to cultural differences, extreme weather, different living conditions, as well as financial and academic pressures. Culture shock is a process in which a person experiences a change in the way they understand and respond to a new, unfamiliar environment. The term "shock" refers to the emotional, cognitive, and physical impact felt when a person experiences discomfort and uncertainty in the face of an unfamiliar situation or environment. This can make a person feel like they are losing control or unable to function properly in the face of a new reality. Culture shock and shock often occur simultaneously, affecting the way a person views themselves, others, and their surroundings (Cups, 2018).

3.2. Acceptance of New Culture

Acceptance of a new culture by Al Azhar students is a complex and varied process. Some students may quickly accept and adjust to a new culture, while others may have trouble or resistance to the change. A new culture can be adopted by someone by understanding how communication such as starting a conversation, following the way of communication where they live (Soemantri, 2019). Like the informants who also studied the way Egyptians communicate:

“....orang Mesir itu kan suka banget muji muji dan gombal, jdi kemudahan banget buat kita yang udah jago bahasa arab sehari harinya mereka dan kita aplikasikan kepada mereka....awalnya aku gak terbiasa sama kayak gitu, tapi lama lama aku juga ngikutin”
– informant 2

This statement describes how students from Indonesia adapted to Egyptian culture, especially in terms of communication habits. Over time and with increasing Arabic language skills, these students began to adapt and adopt these communication habits in their daily interactions.

“....di Mesir nih mereka lebih sweet talker dri orang Indonesia kalo masalah muji tapi ya gak semua orang, bahkan minoritas lah yg begitu.. mayoritasnya memang sweet talker tapi bukan yg ramah bgt gitu loh semuanya. tapi urusan muji nomor satu mereka...kalo buat muamallah sama mereka gitu, mereka soalnya juga seneng kalo dipuji puji...” informant 3

This statement expresses a student's observation about the communication habits of Egyptian society, especially when it comes to compliments. In Egypt, many people tend to be good at sweet talkers and often give compliments, although not everyone has that attitude. Although many people like to compliment, they are not always very friendly. However, in daily interactions (muamalah), Egyptian people really appreciate praise and feel happy when they are praised.

“....Orang Mesir itu kalo tau kita gak bisa bahasa mereka bakal di jutekin atau malah di becandain, kayak misal naik uber dan kita ga bisa bahasa mereka bisa aja kita dimahalin bayarnya, beda sama yang kalo misal muji muji mereka kita bisa dapet gratisan....” – informant 2

This statement describes Indonesian students' experiences of social dynamics and communication challenges in Egypt. This experience highlights the importance of language skills and effective communication strategies to adapt and avoid adverse situations in different cultural environments. The informants' adaptation to Egyptian culture was not only in terms of communication.

“... di Mesir yang bikin aku nyaman itu cara mereka belajar, mereka ga malu mau jadi ambisius jadi belajarnya bener bener belajar.. mereka juga ga peduli, jadi kalo mau nanya nanya ke syekh nya ga akan ada yang bilang cari muka...” – informant 2

This statement describes the positive aspects experienced by Indonesian students while studying in Egypt, especially related to the learning environment and attitudes towards education. Students feel comfortable with the way they study in Egypt because the people are not shy about being ambitious in education. They are very serious about learning and show high dedication. Apart from that, society's attitude of not really caring about other people's opinions gives students the freedom to ask questions directly to the sheikhs or teachers without fear of being seen as seeking attention. This environment that supports ambition and openness helps students feel more comfortable and motivated in their learning process.

“...kalau ketemu sama masisir atau orang Mesir langsung, ketika mereka ngegombal gitu, saya juga coba menimpali, itu kan cara adaptasi juga...” – informant 4

The informant explained that he tried to adapt by responding to teasing or teasing, which is the way Egyptians communicate. This shows the informant's way of adapting to local culture. Increased understanding of a language that can be used to interact and communicate with residents can help them in academic and social situations. Apart from that, it also allows someone to better understand the cultural context of the communication (Gong et al., 2021).

The informants did not just adapt passively to the differences between their home culture and local Egyptian culture. They also appreciate the unique and positive things about local culture so that acceptance is not only in terms of language or education but also as a whole existing culture. This makes students feel more at home in Egypt, as explained by informant 1:

“....pas udah mau pulang dan gak lanjut di mesir, itu rasanya bener bener nyesek...masih pengen lama lagi di Mesir meskipun aku kesel sama orang – orang mereka, entah apa yg buat aku betah disana, mungkin dosen dosenku...” – informant 1

The informant's statement shows that there are certain aspects of life in Egypt that make him feel at home, one of which is the positive influence of his lecturers. International students are often satisfied

with the quality of education outside his country. Differences in educational systems, surrounding environments and access to better resources and wider professional networks make them more comfortable and at home (Chung et al., 2018).

3.3. Reverse Culture Shock

Reverse culture shock is a process of readjusting, reacculturating, and reassimilating into one's culture of origin after living in a different culture for a significant period. It involves readjustment, re-habituation, and reintegration into the culture of origin after a person has lived in a different culture for a long time (Gaw, 2000). After Returning to the international student's home country, they often feel disconnected from their culture of origin, so they need time to reconnect and adapt to their surroundings. Symptoms of reverse culture shock felt by students include feelings of loss when thinking about study locations, believing that those who have never been abroad do not understand it, and feeling annoyed with the wealth and expenses of their home country (Tomlin et al., 2014). This was felt by the informant:

“...Waktu h-2 bulan excited.... soalnya excited mau baliknya tuh karena liat temen temen mulai pada pulang, jdi juga menanti banget kapan ya aku pulang begitu habis itu karena udah keburu capek ngurus berkas dan makin knowing the fact gak tau kapan lagi bisa ke Mesir jadi sedih tapi yaudah...” – informant 3

“... aku pas mau pulang seneng banget tentu, excited soalnya selama aku di Mesir kan gak pernah pulang....” – informant 2

Both informants felt excited about returning home but also began to feel tired and burdened by the administrative processes that had to be completed. This reflects the enthusiasm and stress often experienced in preparation for returning to one's country of origin.

“...aku simpen setiap step langkah kemana mana sama mereka, khususnya kawan kawan dekatku, rasanya bener bener sedih...” informant 1

“...tetapi hari H banget, aku beneran mencoba creating memories dengan ke tempat tempat yg aku sering kunjungi disana....” – informant 3

Informant 1 showed feelings of nostalgia and emotional attachment to his friends before returning home. This sadness reflects the process of detaching oneself from the environment and relationships that have been formed while in Egypt. Then Informant 3 tried to create memories by visiting places he often visited while in Egypt. This action reflects an attempt to strengthen emotional ties and preserve memories from a stay abroad. This is part of the process of releasing oneself emotionally and preparing oneself to return to Indonesia.

“...aku waktu mau pulang Indonesia gak jalan jalan, tapi pamitan sama senior seniorku, temen temen dan guru guru.. rasa nya berat banget karna ga tau kapan lagi mau balik ke mesir...kalo seneng ya lumayan lah, tapi lebih ke berat” – informant 4

Informant 4 showed intense feelings before returning home. The focus is not on the streets, but on parting with important people in his life during his time in Egypt, such as seniors, friends, and teachers. The heavy feeling of leaving them reflects how deep the emotional bond that has been formed.

“...jadi pas di bis terakhir tuh, semacam ngasih salam perpisahan dengan bis...waktu momen jalan sendiri di bis itu nangis engga sih, mellow iya. nangis tuh ya waktu di bandara aja karna dibawa suasana dan gak suka banget aku sama perpisahan...” – informant 3

Informant 3's statement describes an emotional and difficult moment of separation. Informant 3 reflected how hard it was to leave the environment and people who had become an important part of his life while in Egypt. When they returned to Indonesia after graduating, the informants experienced reverse culture shock in which they found it difficult to face themselves in their home country.

“...Aku pas baru balik Mesir pernah ditahap yang sedihh banget dan sebel banget sama orang orang di Indonesia khususnya temen – temenku, aku berpikir mereka itu ga ada simpati sama orang Palestine sampe aku unfoll semua temen – temen aku di instagram. Tapi setelah itu alhamdulillah perasaan aku normal lagi ...” – informan 2

Informant 2 experienced negative emotions such as sadness and annoyance due to differences in attitudes and values between himself who had been influenced by experiences in Egypt and his friends in Indonesia. Informant 2's statement shows how individuals can experience various intense emotions and internal conflicts during the re-adaptation process (reacculturation) after returning to their home country.

“...Aku selama kurang lebih 5 bulan di Indonesia ngerasa masih sedih, gak tau ya kenapa, kalau ada yang cerita tentang Mesir rasanya pengen balik...jujur berat hati ninggalin mesir...”
– informant 1

Informant 1's feelings of sadness lasted for five months, showing how difficult the readjustment process was. The desire to return to Egypt when hearing stories about the country indicates a sense of loss and longing for the experience and environment. Informant 1 felt uncomfortable and frustrated with a new environment (Indonesia which should be the place of origin). The heavy heart of leaving Egypt illustrates the difficulty of adapting to returning to an old environment that now feels foreign.

“ waktu lagi stres di Indonesia rasanya aku pengen balik lagi ke Mesir... karena apa ya disini kan lebih berasa tuntutan nya..” – informant 3

Informants feel stressed and overwhelmed by the demands and expectations in Indonesia. This is characterized by a feeling that returning to one's country of origin is not as easy as imagined, often accompanied by taste frustration and nostalgia for the country left behind. Informants realized that life in their home country brought different challenges and pressures compared to those they experienced abroad. Reverse culture shock is an emotional and psychological stage that must be faced when a person adjusts back to their home environment, like the initial steps a student takes when living abroad for the first time. To overcome these challenges, international students have gone through a readjustment process using a variety of different strategies (Moonsup & Pookcharoen, 2017).

“... Sampai Indonesia hal yang paling ingin aku lakukan bareng orang spesial yaitu orang tuaku... karna aku balik Indonesia memang panggilan orang tua..” – informant 1

The informant's statement reflects the feeling of happiness and comfort of being at home after being abroad for so long. The main reason for returning home, namely a call from parents, shows that there are certain responsibilities and expectations that they must fulfill.

“...saat pulang ke Indonesia setelah lulus, seperti manusia kebanyakan manusia pengen jajanan Indonesia yang walaupun gak sehat dan banyak gula tapi enak...” informant 3

The informant felt happy and eager to return to enjoying things that were familiar and missed, such as local food. The desire to enjoy Indonesian snacks, even though they are unhealthy, reflects the sense of nostalgia and comfort they feel when they return home. This shows that although there are challenges in the readjustment process, there are also positive and enjoyable aspects that help them feel more connected to their culture of origin. Reverse culture shock is felt by international students, one of which is because their world view has changed significantly while studying abroad. They are more easily irritated by things that were previously considered normal. They do not anticipate that the house will change, that friendships will disappear, and that people will judge them differently or otherwise (Le & Lacost, 2017).

3.4. Discussion

Reverse culture shock refers to an individual's experience of initially feeling joyful and comfortable after returning home from abroad, as they return to a familiar environment. However, as time goes by in the first year, they begin to experience psychological tension and isolation because they face the difference between expectations and the reality of life at home. This feeling arises because they realize that the people around them may not fully understand or appreciate the changes and experiences they experience while abroad, giving rise to a feeling of alienation and frustration (Dettweiler et al., 2015). The W curve is used in this research to explore the perceptions of Al Azhar Cairo students after graduating and returning to Indonesia. Four sources have been interviewed and the results show that they experienced reverse culture shock when they returned to Indonesia after studying in Cairo Egypt for approximately five to six years.

The W curve proposition is used in this research to explain Reverse Culture Shock (RCS). Gullahorn and Gullahorn proposed the W curve to describe the stages that individuals experience from their arrival in a foreign country to their return to their home country (Dettweiler et al., 2015). In the initial stage, namely the Honeymoon Phase, international students usually feel very enthusiastic and enthusiastic about living life in a new country. They tend to ignore negative aspects and focus more on new, interesting things in their environment. They felt happy to have arrived in Egypt. The informant explained that the first time they arrived in Egypt they felt happy and had no expectations. However, some have expectations that Egypt is a peaceful country and in fact that is not the case. The honeymoon phase begins with happiness and excitement in the beginning before someone feels depressed or has an emotional negative (Agha & Tayşir, 2021).

After the initial euphoria wears off, students begin to feel discomfort and discomfort frustrated with their new environment. They may feel isolated, overwhelmed, and start to question their decision to live abroad. As one informant said, he felt uncomfortable and uncomfortable with local society which was considered harsh and authoritarian. This sparked feelings of doubt about the informant's initial decision to live abroad. The informant's use of the term "like a pharaoh" reflects the informant's experience of authoritarianism and strict control, which is very different from the norms he usually encounters in Indonesia. Hostility Phase is an event unfamiliarity or strangeness due to cultural differences that was previously considered trivial and funny is now something that triggers stress in a new place (Neuliep, 2017)

After passing this stage, the informant began to enter the Humorous Stage. At this stage, international students begin to adjust to their new environment after going through a phase of crisis or hostility. They begin to understand that many of the challenges they face are caused by cultural differences and misunderstandings. Students begin to laugh at the difficulties they face and find ways to overcome cultural differences in a more relaxed manner. This is a sign that they are starting to feel more comfortable and better able to interact with the local community. Informants began to understand and accept different communication styles, and were able to respond with humor. Responding to gossip is one way of interacting which shows that the informant is starting to feel comfortable with local social norms. The humorous phase is part of the crisis, distress, hostility and withdrawal stages experienced by sojourners after the honeymoon phase in the cross-cultural adaptation process. After the initial euphoria (honeymoon phase) wears off, sojourners often face periods a difficult period marked by feelings of isolation, frustrated, and uncomfortable with their new environment (Ward et al., 1998). The adaptation process in the host country is important for international students. By relying on friendship, interaction with local people and communication, it makes them feel more at home in the host country (Belford, 2017)

In the 'At Home' stage, students feel at home and comfortable in their new environment, just like at home. They begin to appreciate and understand local culture well. Examples from Informant 2 show that he feels comfortable with the way of learning and attitudes of Egyptian society, which makes him feel at home. Likewise with Informant 1, even though he experienced difficulties, he still wanted to stay longer in Egypt because he felt emotionally connected to the environment and people there, especially with his lecturers who might have created an environment that made him feel comfortable and appreciated. Gullahorn & Gullahorn revealed that when immigrants have found comfort in a new environment so that it feels like 'home', then they are already in the adaptation phase (Tjondronegoro, 2023). The informants experienced difficulty in readjusting to Indonesian culture after living in Egypt. One of them is related to learning conditions in Indonesia and Egypt. The informant still cannot accept that the learning levels of Egyptian and Indonesian society are very different so that the informant feels that he is not used to the way Indonesian society learns. Apart from that, there are informants who have been in Indonesia for five months and have not been able to feel comfortable living in Indonesia. The informant felt that he still wanted to return to Egypt and live there. The re-entry phase is defined as a series of experiences and behaviors experienced when a person returns to their place of origin after being involved in another context for a long enough period of time to cause some degree of mental and emotional adjustment before functioning optimally in that 'new' environment (Gray & Savicki, 2015).

In the last phase that is Resocialization In this phase, informants begin to readjust to their home environment. They start to feel more comfortable and able to interact well. As explained by informant 3, he felt he had to start adapting to the environment in Indonesia. The informant felt that he had to

accept the fact that he now lives in Indonesia and is no longer an Al Azhar student. This resocialization stage indicates that individuals who return to their home country after an experience abroad successfully reintegrate themselves into their culture of origin without too much difficulty. They tend to focus on their life in their home country and may ignore or minimize their experiences abroad (Gray & Savicki, 2015).

Duration of international students Education outside the state makes them familiar with the environment and culture there. So that when they return to their country of origin they will feel reverse culture shock as felt by the four informants. Reverse culture shock is a psychological phenomenon often experienced by individuals after living abroad for a significant period of time and then returning to their home country. This term refers to a readjustment process that involves a variety of emotional, social, and psychological challenges. The W-Curve concept in reverse culture shock describes the common emotional patterns experienced by individuals in this process. The initial stage is euphoria or excitement at the prospect of returning home, followed by adaptation difficulties or reverse culture shock involving feelings of confusion, frustration, and difficulty adapting to a changed home environment. The final stage of readjustment Where individuals begin to feel comfortable and reconnect with their home environment (Peterson, 2017).

4. Conclusion

The process of cross-cultural adaptation, both when living abroad and when returning to your home country, is a complex journey and takes time. Stages such as the honeymoon phase, hostility phase, and humorous stage are part of this process, where individuals experience various emotional and psychological changes. Re-entry phase and resocialization Stage is also important in readjusting to the original environment. Reverse culture shock is a frequent phenomenon and suggests that adaptation back to one's home environment can also pose challenges. It is important for individuals experiencing environmental changes to have a good understanding of this adaptation process in order to overcome the challenges that arise and achieve good emotional and psychological balance. Four informants explained that they experienced reverse culture shock when they first arrived in Egypt. Two informants reported that they did not need much time to adapt, while the other two required a longer period to adjust. The informants who quickly overcame the initial culture shock also did not take long to deal with reverse culture shock upon returning home. Conversely, those who took longer to get through the culture shock phase in Egypt also needed more time to readjust to their home country, experiencing reverse culture shock. This study is limited by its focus solely on students from Al Azhar Cairo. Future research could broaden the scope by including international students from various countries who return to Indonesia and experience reverse culture shock. This approach would provide a more diverse range of experiences.

5. Acknowledgement

Sincere gratitude is extended to all who supported and contributed to this research. Special thanks to the supervisors for their invaluable guidance and direction, and to the informants who generously shared their time and experiences.

6. References

- Agha, O. M. A., & Tayşir, N. K. (2021). Reverse Culture Shock Among International Business Administration Exchange Students. *International Journal of Commerce and Finance*, 7(2), 71–100.
- Andini rizka marietha (februari, 2024) <https://goodstats.id/article/keren-jumlah-mahasiswa-indonesia-belajar-di-luar-negeri-terbanyak-kedua-di-asean-0t504>
- Akhtar, M., Kamal, A., Imtiaz, S., & Hayee, A. A. (2022). Reverse culture shock, distress symptoms and psychological well-being of fresh foreign degree holders in Pakistan. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 50(1), 191–203. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22520>
- Chung, A. Y., Chen, K., Jung, G., & Li, M. (2018). Thinking Outside the Box: The National Context for Educational Preparation and Adaptation among Chinese and Korean International Students.

- Research in Comparative and International Education, 13(3), 418–438.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1745499918791364>
- Cupsa, I. (2018). Culture Shock and Identity. *Transactional Analysis Journal*, 48(2), 181–191.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03621537.2018.1431467>
- Denlin & Lincoln. 2009. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar
- Dettweiler, U., Ünlü, A., Lauterbach, G., Legl, A., Simon, P., & Kugelmann, C. (2015). Alien at home: Adjustment strategies of students returning from a six-months over-sea's educational programme. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 44, 72–87.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2014.10.005>
- Fanari, A., Liu, R. W., & Foerster, T. (2021). Homesick or Sick-of-Home? Examining the Effects of Self-Disclosure on Students' Reverse Culture Shock after Studying Abroad: A Mixed-Method Study. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 50(3), 273–303.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.2020.1866643>
- Gaw, K. F. (2000). Reverse culture shock in students returning from overseas. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24(2000), 83–104. Retrieved from www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel
- Gong, Y., Gao, X., Li, M., & Lai, C. (2021). Cultural adaptation challenges and strategies during study abroad: New Zealand students in China. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 34(4), 417–437.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2020.1856129>
- Gray, K. M., & Savicki, V. (2015). Study Abroad Reentry: Behavior, Affect, and Cultural Distance. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 26(1), 264–278.
<https://doi.org/10.36366/frontiers.v26i1.370>
- Gu, Q., & Schweisfurth, M. (2015). Transnational connections, competences and identities: Experiences of Chinese international students after their return “home.” *British Educational Research Journal*, 41(6), 947–970. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3175>
- Harvey, Benjamin. (2007). ‘Testing the Integrative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation A Student’s Experience in Italy and Spain’ *Advance in Communication Theory & Research*. vol. 1. no. 2. p. 3. Diakses pada 30 Desember 2015, <http://www.k-state.edu/actr/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/e1-2benharvey.pdf>.
- Jackson, J. (2014). *Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication*. New York: University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing.
- La'ia, J. L., & Purwasito, A. (2016). Adaptasi Antarbudaya Mahasiswa Asing UNS (Studi Deskriptif Kualitatif tentang Hambatan Komunikasi Antarbudaya Mahasiswa Asing dalam Beradaptasi di Solo Tahun 2015). *Jurnal Komunikasi Massa*, 1–19. Retrieved from <https://digilib.uns.ac.id/dokumen/detail/52238/Adaptasi-Antarbudaya-Mahasiswa-Asing-UNS-Studi-Deskriptif-Kualitatif-tentang-Hambatan-Komunikasi-Antarbudaya-Mahasiswa-Asing-dalam-Beradaptasi-di-Solo-Tahun-2015>
- Le, A. T., & Lacost, B. Y. (2017). Vietnamese graduate international student repatriates: Reverse adjustment. *Journal of International Students*, 7(3), 449–466.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.570295>
- Lenaini, I. (2021). Teknik Pengambilan Sampel Purposive Dan. *Jurnal Kajian, Penelitian Dan Pengembangan Pendidikan Sejarah*, 6(1), 33–39.
- Liu, S. (2017). Cross-cultural adaptation: An identity approach. *Intercultural Communication*, (July 2017), 437–455. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501500060-020>
- Liu, K. L. (2016). Exploring Intercultural Competence through An Intercultural Extracurricular Activity in Taiwan. *Journal of Language and Cultural Education*, 4(1), 99-109.
- Marei, M. (2021). Comparing International Student Dispositions in Egypt: The Influences of Safety, History, and Culture. In: Schoole, C.T., Lee, J.J. (eds) *Intra-Africa Student Mobility in Higher Education*. Palgrave Studies in Global Higher Education. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-78517-8_6

- Moonsup, J., & Pookcharoen, S. (2017). Reverse Culture Shock: Readjustment Problems Encountered by Thai Returnees after Returning from an AFS Exchange Program Abroad. ... Retrieved from doi. Retrieved from http://ethesisarchive.library.tu.ac.th/thesis/2017/TU_2017_5406040062_8893_8781.pdf
- Murtadlo, M., Basri, H., & Qowaid, Q. (2020). Egypt and It's Implication for Modernizing of Education in Indonesia. *Jurnal Penelitian Agama Dan Sosial Budaya*, 297–306. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.8-10-2019.2294530>
- Peterson, T. O., & Aikens, S. D. (2017). Examining the relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX) and objective performance within higher education: An exploratory empirical study. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 16(2), 109-128.
- Presbitero, A. (2016). Culture shock and reverse culture shock: The moderating role of cultural intelligence in international students' adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 53, 28–38. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2016.05.004>
- Raja, R., Ma, J., Zhang, M., Li, X. Y., Almutairi, N. S., & Almutairi, A. H. (2023). Social identity loss and reverse culture shock: Experiences of international students in China during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14(February), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.994411>
- Soemantri, N. P. (2019). Adaptasi Budaya Mahasiswa Asal Indonesia Di Australia. *WACANA, Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Komunikasi*, 18(1), 46–56. <https://doi.org/10.32509/wacana.v18i1.727>
- Tjondronegoro, I. Y. (2023). Peran Kompetensi Antarbudaya Dalam Mengatasi Culture Shock Pada Intercultural Friendship (Studi Kasus Pelajar Indonesia Yang Kembali Dari Australia). *Nucl. Phys.*, 13(1), 104–116.
- Tomlin, C. R., Miller, M. L., Schellhase, E., New, G., Karwa, R., & Nabwire Ouma, M. (2014). Assessing reverse culture shock following an international pharmacy practice experience. *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning*, 6(1), 106–113. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cptl.2013.09.015>
- Ward, C., Okura, Y., Kennedy, A., & Kojima, T. (1998). The U-curve on trial: longitudinal study adjustment during cross cultural transition. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 22(No. 3), 277–291.