

Coping Strategies to Improve the Quality of Life among Thai Students

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Abstract. Thai Students who are getting educated in Indonesia are experiencing various circumstances such as stress due to cultural differences. This makes the students have the appropriate coping strategies to adjust themselves in the face of cultural differences that are stressful. This research is a research survey conducted by spreading detailed questionnaire on a sample size of 99 Thai students in town X, Indonesia. The results obtained are that 75.8% of students experience culture shock with the percentage of male students being larger than female students. It is also found that CS experienced affects learning achievement index students, other than that based on the duration the length of stay affect coping strategies are conducted where the students stayed not long ago had a strategy of coping with high facing the CS is experienced so high CS found in students who have already live longer in Indonesia. We also found that coping strategy that focuses on emotions can have significant effects against CS.

Keywords: Culture shock, coping strategies, Thai students.

Introduction

The need of decent and quality education pushes many prospective college students to migrate from one area to another, either within the country or regions across country. As with Thai students who came to Indonesia to continue the studies have a sizable amount of devotees. As known in the case of one Islamic State University in the city of X, there are foreign students who are total 166 in number, which consist of 111 Thai students, 53 Malay students and 2 students from Somalia (Document Section Student Affairs Al-Jami'ah UIN SGD Bandung, 2016).

Cross cultural activities led to the situations where some individuals are facing unknown risks. Some of which is a matter of adaptability to environmental problems in the community (Bochner, 2003; Cupsa, 2018), new academic and personal problems (Cupsa, 2011; Xia, 2009). Several students from Thailand reveal that they sometimes feel difficult and uneasy to express themselves, having no confidence and not knowing their role in this new environment (Irwin, 2007). They are dealing with the situation and environments are different from the usual. The language, food and people of different cultures are entirely new to them. Many professors have teaching processes prepared in local languages and to suit local students needs and other students on campus also use the local language, while foreign students are not provided with enough language skills and Indonesian local language courses earlier. In addition they must cope with the anxiety of being away from their families. They reveal that they also felt less confident in new surroundings, because they feel like minority among students who come from the area and local people who have cultural characteristics (Cupsa, 2018). According to Siregar (2008) foreign students that

come in addition to communicate, adapt and share each other's experiences in a different culture also raises a sense of mutual suspicion between each other moreover it is easy for collisions in perception and cultures to occur in these situations. It is also pointed out by some students who feel that they are often ridiculed and considered stupid by a group of local friends who discuss using their local language.

This gives rise to anxiety, a feeling of pulling away, little or reduced interaction with people around, a sense of discomfort, confusion, feeling worthless and helpless. Such conditions for some people will probably give rise to a State of stress because of the situation faced is different from what they must have faced normally (Pyvis & Chapman, 2015). They tend to be aloof and not having a lot of communication with friends or the local community. They also live in groups and gather together with friends who came from Thailand as well. A sense of discomfort, confusion and anxiety experienced when in a new place, in the terms of psychology is known as culture shock.

According to Oberg (1960) culture shock is a "disease" suffered by individuals who live outside of own culture, this term contains the notion of the existence of feelings of anxiety, loss of direction, a feeling of not knowing what to do or not knowing how to do something, which is experienced by the individual while he is in an environment that is a new social culture. According to Furnham and Bochner (2005), a reaction that appears when someone is experiencing culture shock in terms of psychological among others that is anxious, sad, saturated, angry, lost confidence, sensitive (quick temper). In terms of physical signs, it includes appearance of psychosomatic disorders such as gastritis, allergies, headaches, and diarrhea. The reaction is the impact of the culture shock experienced by individuals

who moved to a new area. These impacts take place within a time period long enough that it could reach five years for those who have difficulty to adjust.

In face of difficulty and in stressful environment of differences, individuals use a way so that they can adjusted in their new environment. A way to deal with this new environment in terms of psychology is known as “coping with”. Coping mechanisms are used by individuals to avoid conflicts between themselves and their environment or sometimes when situations are not suitable to them. So in this case the migrated students, find themselves in a new area, which has a culture and habits that are different from the usual culture they are used to in the place of their origins. When they experience a culture shock that raises their anxiety and discomfort, in order to avoid that, they resort to various coping mechanisms to adjust to the new environment. In the face of cultural pressure, Thai students are using efforts to reduce pressure either way to deal with it directly or by finding a way of avoiding it. So by using existing coping with culture shock methods they can suppress their anxiety and can adapt well.

Literature Review

Culture shock

Some of the problems associated with shock of new culture, anxiety, tension will be pressure in the new culture, habits and language differences giving rise to psychological reactions in the form of a feeling of helplessness and stress and these feelings are often referred to as culture shock. According to Oberg (1960) culture shock is the feeling of anxiety, lost direction, a feeling of not knowing what to do, experienced by an individual in the new environment. Lost symbol of culture in social interactions in a new place become triggers before the onset of culture shock. According to Bochner (2003), while being in a new environment, individuals who experience culture shock will bring up the physical and emotional reactions. Physical reactions not only because of the cultural differences and values embraced, but also due to differences in climate, food, transport and technology.

Irwin (2007) suggests that the symptoms of culture shock can be seen from physical or mental distress experienced by individuals when in new surroundings. Physical reactions including appeared psychosomatics such as gastritis, allergies, headaches, and diarrhea. Any of these symptoms is the impact of the culture shock experienced by individuals who moved to a new area. While the psychological reactions according to Ward, Bochoer & Furnham, (2005) includes the following three components of culture shock, i.e., affective, behavioral and cognitive.

Affective, here is a feeling in the form of positive or negative emotions that will decide whether to feel joy or dislike something. Response- this includes affective response to the confusion between different cultures and languages that they have not yet mastered, feelings of anxiety, suspicion and would like to be somewhere else

that is more convenient. *Behavioral*, this component encompasses real action (shown) or in the form of behavior that is presented, such as the exile of the local or indigenous people, a bit of contact with local people braiding, and decreased the value of academic or academic value were below the average. *Cognitive*, this component is a component of more complexes, covering how the individual thinks or believes about circumstances that are experienced as individuals realize that her anxiety will have a situation that is experienced, low self-esteem, and a sense of helplessness over unwanted experiences.

Coping strategies

According to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) they reveal that coping is a process used to deal with the pressure by means of managing the demands of internal and external individuals. According to Folkman, coping with manifest in the form of individual thought and behavior in the face of pressure from within and from outside, caused by the interaction of the individual with the environment is rated as stressor. To minimize this, individual stressors do efforts to reduce these pressures. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) divide this into two types of coping that is, problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping is focused to minimize pressure which caused stress by way of solving problems that are a source of stress. While emotion-focused coping with is more focused on controlling the response of the emotions caused by the stressors.

Emotion-focused coping, this strategy consists of cognitive processes to reduce emotional distress which consists of strategies such as avoidance, least contact, taking the distance, selective attention, comparisons positive, and negative values pull of the negative events of its function is to provide the emotional response to the problem. As for some of the indicators according to Lazarus and Folkman is as follows: distancing, self-control, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, positive reappraisal, seeking social support. *Problem-focused coping*, this strategy is centered on the issue of focus to reduce the demands of a stressful situation with how to confront and overcome the problems that are being experienced. As for some of the indicators of this strategy according to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984): confrontive coping, problem-solving planful, seeking social support-problem focused.

Methods

The subject of this research is the population of Thai students at the Islamic University of Bandung numbering 99 people who meet the criteria of foreign students who never lived in Indonesia before, and are still listed as active students in the University. These 99 Thai students consist of 3 different years i.e., 21 students of year 2015, 28 students of year 2014, and 50 students of the year 2013.

The instrument used in this research is culture shock scale and coping strategies scale. Culture shock scale

used is an adaptation of the scale of the Ward, Bochoer & Furnham (2005) who developed a theory of culture shock Oberg (1960). This scale has a validity of 0.882 and reliability of 0.780. While coping strategy scale was drawn up on the basis of behavioral indicators on strategy theory of coping with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) with validity of 0.898 and reliability of 0.763.

The data in this study is analyzed using descriptive analysis, by creating tabulations score of instruments that have been filled in by the respondents. The data is then processed using the statistical software programs to find the mean and standard deviation which will be used to categorize the level of culture shock and the extent of students coping with stress. In addition it also does descriptive analysis to find out if the gender of respondents makes any difference in their experience.

Results

Based on the data obtained and processed using calculation software found the average culture shock of 82.8 with standard deviation 10.4. It also revealed an average of 57.7 for coping strategies with standard deviation 6.39. Based on the results of the average and standard deviation obtained we can say that culture shock in Thai students is on the category amounting to 75.8%, while coping strategy of foreign students is also located on the category currently amounting to 70.7%.

Then what is notable is that male students are experiencing culture shock in higher intensity than female students, and there is no difference in average of coping with stress between male and female students. That is, both the male students as well as females have the capability of dealing with stress is relatively equal.

Then also the batch of 2013 had experienced culture shock higher than the batch of 2014 and 2015 and 2015 batch note that they have the capability of coping with stress better than the other batches of academic year. This shows that they have an effective capability for coping with stress. That is, how long the students live in the new culture does not affect their ability to cope with stress. Then based on the count distribution cross when obtained that 55 people are experiencing culture shock are coping with the stress of being. Coping with stress level means that students adjust to the culture shock experienced by the level. Further, 11 people experienced culture shock but they used lesser coping strategies. This means that some students are unable to lower the level of culture shock because of their ability to cope with stress. Furthermore, 9 people experienced culture shock but have high stress coping ability. This means that some students had the ability to cope with stress amidst culture shock.

Subsequently we acquired that Thai students have 73.73% of them scoring GPA below 3.0. This means that the majority of Thai students have a value below the average GPA.

Table 1. Cross tabulation of influence between dimensions.

	<i>Emosional Focused Coping</i>	<i>Problem Focused Coping</i>
<i>Affective</i>	R ² 0,08; *0,00	R ² 0,02; *0,10
<i>Behavioral</i>	R ² 0,12; *0,00	R ² 0,00; *0,43
<i>Cognitive</i>	R ² 0,05; *0,02	R ² 0,03; *0,07

Based on the table, the dimensions of the affective, behavioral and cognitive have no effect on the dimension of the problem focused coping so that it can be concluded that every dimension of the culture shock is having influence on the dimensions of emotion focused coping. That is, the culture shock can only exert influence significantly to emotion focused coping.

Discussion

According to Irwin (2007) he revealed there are several factors that can affect coping. 1) Physical variable individuals include gender, age, tribal, genetic factors (intelligentsia and temperament) the physical condition of the body and the status of the economy. 2) Characteristics of the personality, including whether extrovert or introvert individuals, immunity and resilience control in General. 3) Social-cognitive variables, including social support and perceived social network. 4) Relationship with the social environment, including how social interaction and social support received. 5) Coping Strategies, are efforts made by the individual in completing problems and adapting to changes in the situation of stress.

Gender proved to have no effect on the Thai students' while coping with stress. This can be seen from the fact that there is no difference between a significant score coping with stress of students both male and female. While the relationship with the social environment, including how social interaction and social support works as well as the accepted form of coping strategies performed can have an influence on coping with stress and will have an impact on the culture shock experienced.

The host research, may also explain the data obtained that every dimension of the culture shock is having influence on the dimensions of emotion focused coping. This shows that the dimensions of the affective, behavioral and cognitive effect is positive towards students coping with stress i.e. emotion focused coping. This means that the higher the culture shock experienced by the students higher the emotion focused coping. This happens due to the reaction of the culture shock that is presented in the form of students' affective reactions. Affective is feeling in the form of positive or negative emotions like they will feel joyous or dislike something. Response- this includes affective response to the

confusion when there will be difference in cultures and languages that they have not yet mastered, feelings of anxiety, suspicion and would like to be somewhere else that is more convenient.

The reaction of affective makes Thai students have feelings of incompatibility and dislike for food, the behavior of the association and the local community, not being able to dress comfortably because it is often the subject of humor and others. Besides, the Thai students also often feel confused and anxious because they are far away from parents as well as feel suspicious whether there will be safety and security for them in this new environment. Because of the culture shock experienced by the form of affective reactions, the students perform coping mechanisms which are more to control emotions i.e. emotion-focused coping. Coping strategies consists of cognitive processes to reduce emotional distress which consists of strategies such as avoidance, leaving, taking the distance, selective attention, positive comparisons, and compelling to value the negative of the negative events that its function is to regulate the emotional response to the problem. Affective reactions when subjected to Thai students, they use a way to minimize the pressure that is being experienced affectively by evasion and having retrieval range with local communities. The strategy of evasion and maintaining this distance is what causes the culture shock experienced by the student to not decline. Therefore the score obtained shows a culture shock among the Thai students to the level of them being lonely. Such a condition is possible because difference in cultures is not too much, that is still in the sphere of the culture of the Middle East and the Malay family. The climate, food and transportation are also not very different. Only native customs are different, such as the association between the sexes, languages and some values that are embraced.

In addition there are also aspects of affective aspects of behavioral and cognitive. On the aspect of behavior, as seen from the behavior of those little braid contact with local people because of the difficulties in understanding the language of Sunda and Bahasa Indonesia. Then they also prefer to keep away and evade, while they feel more comfortable hanging out with their Thai friends in comparison with their local friends. In addition most Thai students have a GPA below average. This is demonstrated by the data form with contents of their GPA. Overall majority of Thai students have GPA below 3.0. While in Thailand, the students cognitive aspect to realize and understand the situations that are being experienced, is by confirming the anxiety and sense of powerlessness that is being experienced.

Among the male Thai students, they have habits such as hanging out, smoking and not attending college. These customs usually is seen to be similar among all of them irrespective of gender differences. It is possible to become an indicator of the ability of coping with the low, so the experienced culture shock remains high.

When an individual decides to stay and survive, then the individual slowly begins to open and understand the differences that exist, ranging from the study of a new

culture, adapting to the new climate and food. Ward, Bochoer, Furnham (2005), declares that "first of all individuals experience a feeling of isolation from the old culture. And the process of disintegration occurs when individuals are increasingly aware of the existence of a variety of differences between the cultures of the old and new culture that followed the rejection of the new culture. However, this will be followed by the integration of the new culture and the moment they began to master the local language, they are increasingly able to negotiate their needs. And finally they reach the stage of independence, where they are able to create meaning from a variety of circumstances, and the difference that there can finally be enjoyed and accepted. Then everything begins to appear as a sense of belonging to a new culture. New culture integrated with old cultures adhered and make it new and they can fit well in the new environment. The process of adjustment done by Thai students of batch 2013 may have some constraints which are not resolved and to occur continuously to accumulate while causing difficulty in finding a way out to solve them. In addition it is also seen from the score of low stress coping abilities meaning that these Thai students have limited ability in coping with stress. Conditions such as this leads to culture shock experienced higher than the other batches.

Conclusion

The research shows that 75.8% of students experience culture shock with the male students having a greater level of culture shock compared to female students. It is also found that the culture shock experienced also has an influence on their learning achievement, other than that, based on the duration and the length of their stay, the coping strategies are conducted where the students who have not lived in the new place for a longer period of time face higher amounts of culture shock, while its low for students who have already lived there longer. Finally it is also found that coping strategy that focuses on emotions can have significant effects on the culture shock that is experienced by every individual foreign student.

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