

## THE INTERCULTURAL STRUGGLE: PMM STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURE SHOCK AT UNIVERSITAS NEGERI MAKASSAR

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### Abstract

This qualitative study explores the determinants of culture shock experienced by students participating in the Program Merdeka Mengajar (PMM) at Universitas Negeri Makassar (UNM). Using Orly's (2021) framework on cultural adaptation, the research investigates the challenges faced by 5 PMM students as they navigate their academic and social environments in a new cultural setting. Through in-depth interviews, the study identifies key factors contributing to culture shock, including language barriers, differences in teaching methodologies, and cultural lifestyles. Findings suggest that these factors significantly impact students' academic performance, mental well-being, and overall adjustment to university life. The study highlights the need for targeted support mechanisms, such as cultural orientation programs and peer mentoring, to mitigate the negative effects of culture shock and promote smoother transitions for future PMM participants. This research contributes to the understanding of cross-cultural challenges in higher education and provides insights for improving the PMM experience at UNM.

**Keywords:** Culture Shock, PMM Students, Universitas Negeri Makassar

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multicultural nation, and it is inevitable that pupils from a variety of regions, with varying backgrounds and cultures, will mix. This diversity leads to cross-cultural occurrences that have the potential to become cultural disruptions for interregional students who are new to an area. Hofstede (1991) contends that the psychology of cross-cultural or cultural difference is fundamentally divided into two distinct patterns. One pertains to the psychological process, while the other pertains to the cultural context in which cross-cultural events transpire within community groups.

The way a person lives and even a society is much influenced by the culture in which one operates. According to Matsumoto (2007), culture is a collection of values and some knowledge handed on to the following generation between a group of people. Silver (2003) has clarified how a culture develops and is handed on through generations or altered in the following generation as well as how much university institutions have to do with it. Therefore, the university setting as a location to continue education to a higher degree is one acceptable scope for us to examine how culture plays a part in life, and how other phenomena occur that result from culture. Conversely, Musselin (2007) argues that universities are based on national trends rather than only specialized entities. Given that the norms or patterns are based on national ones, we can already observe from this that colleges could serve as a gathering place for different cultures.

According to Arnold (1993), culture is something descriptive that refers to the results of special work, knowledge, training, and socialization that is often commemorated in museums or in the form of archives. That means culture can be seen from any side. Matsumoto (2007) defines culture as a set of values and some information which is shared between a group of people that is passed on to the next generation, which enables them to fulfill their knowledge and basic survival needs, by coordinating the social behavior of people for appropriateness of their existence, to apply and continue successful social behavior, finding enjoyment and prosperity, and also the purpose of life. Shortly, culture can be

interpreted as a way of life that grows and develops in a society, is owned and agreed upon, and is passed down from one generation to the next.

Culture shock is a phenomenon in which a person feels the uncertainty, confusion or anxiety that may be experienced when moving to a new area and having to go through cultural adjustments a new environment. Keller (2014) states that culture shock is not a new phenomenon anymore but considered as a normal reaction when a person joins a new culture that is different from his or her original culture in an environment. On the other hand, Furnham (2010) defines culture shock as a situation when a person is unable to recognize social customs of the local culture, thus they are unable to perform behaviors that are in line with the norms of the new environment.

It can be seen that culture shock is a phenomenon experienced by a person that can be described as an excessive anxiety, stress, and homesickness that arises because it has not adapted to a new environment or because it faces unfamiliar symbols and signs in an area that is still unfamiliar. In other words, it can be said that culture shock is a complex reaction in the face of unexpected social interactions.

Cited from Parrillo (2014), among the factors that are considered to influence culture shock are intrapersonal factors and cultural variation factors. These intrapersonal factors include a person's communication skills or cross-cultural experience or can also be physical characteristics such as appearance, gender, and age. In some cases, people of a younger age tend to experience more culture shock than those who are older. While cultural variation factors usually occur due to the influence of cultural transition from one culture to another. This includes social behavior, customs, religion, education, norms, and language. Fan (2010) states that language and culture have a very close relationship and affect each other in varied and complex ways.

Meanwhile, one of the major state universities in Eastern Indonesia is Universitas Negeri Makassar. Every year, this campus is undoubtedly crowded with prospective new students from a variety of backgrounds, including those from within the island of Sulawesi and those from outside the island, who share the common objective of pursuing advanced education in accordance with their interests and potential. The globalization of industry, entertainment, education, and recreational activities is the propelling force behind the emergence of cultural mixing, which causes culture shock, as cited by Erez (1994).

In the context of implementing Permendikbud Number 3 of 2020, the Independent Campus (MBKM) program is one of the programs that Minister of Education and Culture, Nadiem Makarim, released. The MBKM program's policy is to grant students the opportunity to pursue three semesters of study outside of the Study Program Halim et al. (2024). The Independent Student Exchange (PMM) program is one of the MBKM programs that offers students the opportunity to study away from their native campus and explore for one semester at another campus in the country (Tohir, 2020). Of course, PMM students from regions other than Makassar are at a higher risk of experiencing the culture shock phenomenon due to their cultural influences, which are markedly distinct (Adler & Aycan, 2018; Qun et al., 2018). This presents a challenge for PMM students, as they must continue to study and socialize despite the challenges as they encounter in adapting to achieve their objectives. Conversely, the geographical situation in Makassar, which is exceedingly hot, is one of the factors that contribute to the disruption of PMM students (Kesuma, 2020).

If PMM students are unable to surmount the symptoms they experience or the problem of culture shock, it can result in negative consequences that can cause physical, psychological, and social harm (Brown & Holloway, 2008; Pedersen, 1994). Students who are unable to adjust may experience feelings of failure, boredom, or discomfort in their surroundings, which may culminate in symptoms of culture shock, including anxiety, insecurity, and other symptoms (Oberg, 1960). This would undoubtedly significantly disrupt

the concentration and productivity of students as they pursue their studies on campus, which is the primary objective of their exchanges (Silver, 2003).

The phenomenon of culture shock that occurs in PMM students, particularly those from outside South Sulawesi, in the English Department at Universitas Negeri Makassar, is highly intriguing and warrants further investigation in order to generate a social discovery that can be beneficial. The objective of this investigation is to offer a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon of culture shock, which encompasses the underlying factors that PMM students at Universitas Negeri Makassar has encountered. The research concerns of this study are as follows, as indicated by the research context that has been previously discussed: What are the factors that contribute to the culture shock phenomenon among PMM students in the English Department at Universitas Negeri Makassar?

## METHOD

This research employs a case study as its research design due to its primary objective of examining a phenomenon that an individual has encountered. The topic of case study research is quite broad, in contrast to the topics of other categories of research, according to Hancock, et al (2021). This is due to the fact that this research investigates comprehensive cases, including recent situations, new or existing programs or activities, and relevant topics that are relevant to a researcher who would be an appropriate area for a case study that aligns with their field of study.

The objective of the researcher employing this case study is to analyze cases in accordance with prior research and to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to the phenomenon of culture shock. Participants in this study were selected through purposive sampling, targeting PMM students placed in the English Department at Universitas Negeri Makassar. This specific group was chosen because they directly experience the cultural transition and academic adjustment central to the study's focus on culture shock. By selecting participants who are both non-local and immersed in an English-speaking academic environment, the research ensures that the data collected is deeply connected to the intercultural challenges the study aims to explore. This deliberate sampling strategy enhances the relevance and credibility of the findings.

The following is a table of participants consisting of five exchange students (PMM) who studied for approximately four months at State University of Makassar and lived in Rusunawa UNM Tidung.

Table 1. The table of respondent's information

No.	Students	Region of Origin	Ethnic Group	Home University
1	JA	West Kalimantan	Malay	Tanjung Pura University
2	SD	Aceh	Aceh	Syah Kuala University
3	CA	Aceh	Aceh	Syah Kuala University
4	NN	Medan, North Sumatra	Javanese	State University of Medan
5	SA	Yogyakarta	Javanese	State University of Yogyakarta

In conducting the research, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with five PMM students who studied for approximately 4 months at UNM and lived in Rusunawa UNM Tidung to obtain more accurate data based on previously prepared interview guidelines. The data collected in the interview is more accurate because it comes directly from the research subject. As Edward, et al (2013) said, interviews are conducted to provide opportunities for researchers to explore participants' ideas and beliefs in data collection that may not be obtained or accurate with other methods such as observation.

The data analysis method used in this research was a qualitative data analysis method based on Huberman & Miles (2002). The first step is data reduction which in accordance with the previous data collection procedures. Next data displays which in this stage, the data that has been selected is presented in the form of brief descriptions, groupings, categorizations, or others. The last one, drawing conclusions or verifying data in accordance with how qualitative research methods are carried out.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### *Language*

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with 5 PMM students at Makassar State University, it was found that the language factor is the most dominant factor causing culture shock for students. From the initial interview questions, the researchers asked how language differences affect students' daily lives and whether they experience shock, disturbance or difficulty due to the language mix. Some students admitted that they were surprised after arriving in Makassar because in fact, the language used daily was different from the Indonesian language they had been speaking. As some of the following student statement from the interview:

JA: *“kalau dengan teman-teman yang dari luar ya, dari provinsi lain, suku lain, Alhamdulillah sih saya masih bisa untuk menyesuaikan, malah Biasanya kalau ngomong sama mereka malah ngikut logatnya. Karena kita ngomong masih pake bahasa Indonesia juga. Kalau misalnya ngomong sama orang Medan gitu, kadang ngikut-ngikut juga intonasi suaranya gitu. Apalagi kadang sama orang Sunda. Tapi yang cukup terkejut dan awalnya sampai ada miskomunikasi itu pas ngomong sama orang Makassar yang ternyata gak pake bahasa Indonesia sehari-harinya. Jadi kayak yang sebelumnya saya bilang, ada beberapa awalan akhiran yang bikin bingung kayak “ji”, “ta”, “mi” begitu”.*

(“With friends from outside, from other provinces, other tribes, Alhamdulillah, I’m is still able to adjust, in fact, usually when we talk to them, we follow their accent. Because we still use Indonesian too. If, for example, we talk to Medan people, sometimes we follow the intonation of their voice. Especially sometimes with Sundanese people. But I was quite surprised and initially there was a miscommunication when talking to a Makassarese person who apparently doesn't use Indonesian everyday. So like I said before, there are some prefixes and suffixes that make me confused like "ji", "ta", "mi" like that”).

On the other hand, SA said:

SA: *“Ya, awalnya itu cukup terkendala ngomongnya sama teman-teman yang lain apalagi yang aslinya Makassar karena itu tadi pikirnya disini itu pakai Bahasa Indonesia pada umumnya juga gitu, ternyata beda. Jadi kadang waktu belajar pun itu masih suka bingung kalau dosennya pakai full bahasa sini ngejelasinnya”*

(Yes, at first it was quite constrained to talk to other friends, especially those who are originally from Makassar because they thought that here they use Indonesian in general, it turns out to be different. So sometimes when studying, I still like to be confused if the lecturer uses full local language to explain it).

As stated above, JA revealed that in daily communication with his friends who come from various regions, he could still adjust well because they still use Indonesian in daily speaking although with different accents. However, they both stated that they were also quite surprised because they realized that Makassarese people seemed to have their own language

accent. This leads to confusion and miscommunication that is commonly experienced when speaking or communicating with Makassarese people. They still feel unfamiliar with the addition of prefixes and suffixes to words used in Makassarese. In contrast to the following statement from the informant:

SD: *“Oke, setelah beberapa saat ada, kayak dari bahasa gitu kan, kadang mereka kebawa Bahasa mereka sendiri, jadi kita awalnya sedikit terkejut “hah? Aduh apa yah yang mereka bilang itu” gitu. Sampe pernah beraniin nanya “eh itu apa sih artinya?” akhirnya mereka dikit- dikit jelasin dan akhirnya terbiasa”*

(Okay, after a while there, like from the language, sometimes they get carried away with their own language, so we initially shocked a little "huh? Ouch, what did they say". Until once I dared to ask "eh what does that mean?" finally they explained it a little and finally got used to it.)

Informant SD stated that she also experienced culture shock because of the mixing of languages during the PMM period both from students and fellow PMM students who came from different regions. This made her confused and moreover there might be miscommunication that occurred.

### ***Cultural Lifestyles***

The next factor that causes culture shock among PMM students is lifestyle. This factor can occur due to differences in the lifestyle of students during the exchange period which can include the way of life, values, morals, attitudes, etc. The researchers raised the question of whether there were any surprises, disturbances, or difficulties faced by students due to the mixing of cultures that might bring them together with new people with their respective habits. The following are the statements of the informants:

JA : *“Ya ada sih yah keterkejutan karena kan ini pertama kali juga saya ketemu orang- orang dengan budaya-budaya yang berbeda. Dari Jawa, Sumatera, Papua juga ada dan itu budaya mereka, gaya hidup mereka itu sangat beda yah. Misalkan mereka yang tinggal di kampung-kampung kayak saya gitu kan, mungkin agak mirip yah gaya hidupnya, tapi banyak juga kan yah yang asalnya dari Jakarta, di Jawa, di kota-kota besar, tentu gaya hidup mereka beda gitu dengan kita. Jadi awalnya agak kaget juga, tapi saya jadi mandangnya sebagai pengetahuan baru gitu. Ooo gaya hidup mereka tuh seperti ini ternyata”*

(Yes, there is a shock of course, because this is my first time meeting people with different cultures. There are people from Java, Sumatra, Papua and their culture, their lifestyle is very different. For example, those who live in villages like me, maybe their lifestyle is a bit similar, but there are also many who come from Jakarta, in Java, in big cities, of course their lifestyle is different from ours. So at first I was a bit surprised too, but I came to see it as new knowledge. Ooo their lifestyle is like this apparently).

JA expressed his surprise at the cultural differences he encountered during his student exchange period in Makassar. Not only from the culture of Makassar that he came to, but also because of the mix of cultures from students from other regions. One of the things that surprised JA was the lifestyle, especially the learning style of other students which he thought was unusual from what he often encountered, which he stated in the next extract below:

JA: *“Kadang sampe ada juga yang mereka tuh kuliahnya, gaya kuliahnya, gaya belajarnya tuh bener-bener niat banget, sampe tengah malam pun masih ngerjain tugas bener-bener effort, ambis gitu. Beda dengan kita yang mungkin yah biasa-biasa aja. Jadi kayak agak kaget juga karena mereka gaya belajarnya tuh kayak benar-benar keras gitu. Itu biasanya mereka yang kuliah di Universitas besar di Jawa gitu. Dibandingkan kita yang berasal dari universitas biasa, itu kayak beda banget”*

(Sometimes there are also those whose lectures, lecture style, learning style are really intense, until the middle of the night they are still working on assignments, really effortful, ambitious. It's different from us who are probably mediocre. So I was a bit surprised because their learning style is really hard. That's usually those who study at big universities in Java. Compared to us who come from ordinary universities, it's like really different)

From the extract above, JA also stated that he was very surprised to see the learning style of students who came from big campuses in Java who were sometimes really ambitious to stay up late and harder than the habits he often did and encountered.

SD: “...Kebetulan saya itu sekamarnya dengan orang Jawa, orang Papua dan orang Medan. Jadi kadang kami itu kalau masak itu, cara kami masak beda, cara dia masak beda lagi tuh. Jadi kadang ada perdebatan kecil gitu. Jadi karena adanya perdebatan itu jadi akhirnya kita gabung aja, udah”

(For me, it was about the language that was the most important. Then, habits. I happen to share a room with a Javanese, a Papuan and a Medanese. So sometimes when we cook, the way we cook is different, the way he cooks is different. So sometimes there are small arguments. So because of that debate, we finally just merged, that's it.)

Due to differences in habits or lifestyles, especially in terms of food tastes, it is not uncommon for small arguments to occur when cooking between SD and her dorm mates who come from areas with considerable cultural differences, namely Aceh, Java, Papua, and Medan. The existence of these debates is the impact of cultural differences, especially lifestyles that cause culture shock due to lifestyle factors among PMM students at UNM.

SA: “Awal-awal saya di Makassar kaget banget cara berkendara orang-orang disini tuh bikin panik. Jadi kalau misal lagi macet gitu kan, kadang gak ada yang mau ngalah sampe klakson klakson gitu, terus kalau lagi mau nyebrang tuh sampe deg-degan banget karena semuanya pada balap-balap gitu disini”

(When I first arrived in Makassar, I was really surprised by the way people drive here. For example, if there's a traffic jam, sometimes no one wants to give in until they honk their horns, and if you want to cross the street, you're really nervous because everyone is racing here.)

Cultural shock, especially lifestyle, was also experienced by SA where she was surprised to see the driving culture in Makassar which she thought that was very different from what she was used to seeing in her origin. According to SA, the heavy traffic conditions and driving style in Makassar made her feel very panicked. When she was in a very noisy traffic jam, the drivers honked at each other and no one wanted to give in, making her very scared when she was about to cross the road.

If some of the informants above stated that the cultural shock she felt was caused by lifestyle factors in Makassar, NN admitted that she did not have anything to be shocked about, as she stated below;

NN: “Ehh, untuk terkejut nggaknya sih nggak terlalu. Karena gaya hidup di Medan dan di Makassar 11, 12. Orang-orangnya aja sih yang lebih hedon di Makassar, tapi tetap nggak juga yang memamerkan hartanya gitu loh. Jadi yah saya hidup kayak air aja, jalan aja gitu”

(Ehh, I'm not really surprised. Because the lifestyles in Medan and Makassar are 11, 12. The people are just more hedon in Makassar, but they still don't show off their wealth. So yeah, I just live like water, just walk like that)

Based on the extract above, we could understand that NN did not really experience shock or culture shock, especially due to lifestyle factors, because there is no significant difference

between the lifestyle in Medan and in Makassar, where the most prominent according to her is hedonism.

### **Education**

The last factor found to cause culture shock among PMM students is educational factors. This factor can include educational environment, structure, teaching methods, types of assignments or projects, grading patterns, etc. Researchers raised questions related to whether there are significant differences that make PMM students may experience shock, disturbance, or difficulty in the midst of a new educational environment in the area they just entered which certainly has a system to a situation that they are not familiar with. The following are the statements of the relevant sources:

Discipline is something that students expect given their initial view of the UNM campus. However, the reality they found was that discipline was still not very orderly at UNM, especially in the classrooms where they studied. However, discipline was not the only thing in education that surprised PMM students. Other things such as learning methods and campus facilities are also things that surprise them in reality. As stated by students in the following extract:

NN: *“Mungkin dari metode belajarnya yang agak beda, kalau di universitas saya tuh mahasiswa yang cari materi, terus nanti kita yang presentasikan. Jadi sebelum memulai semester itu, kita dikasi RPS, setelah itu kita dibagi kelompok, dan setiap pertemuan itu akan ada presentasi. Nah nanti setelah presentasi, di tambahin sama dosennya. Kalau di UNM, kita tuh jadi keenakan. Dateng, duduk, dengerin dosen, nyatet kalau ada yang penting, abis itu nugas. Kalau di kelas yang saya ampu itu cukup jarang presentasinya. Jadi untuk metode pembelajarannya, di UNM itu yah jauh lebih efektif karena kayak ilmunya itu kita dapat banget gitu. Karena dosennya banyak ngejelasin gitu”*

(Maybe the learning method is a bit different, if at my university it is the students who look for material, then later we will present it. So before starting the semester, we are given the RPS, after that we are divided into groups, and every meeting there will be a presentation. Well later after the presentation, the lecturer will add to it. At UNM, we are so comfortable. Come, sit, listen to the lecturer, write down if there is something important, after that the assignment. In the class that I teach, the presentation is quite rare. So for the learning method, at UNM it is much more effective because we really get the knowledge. Because the lecturer explains a lot)

Based on the extract above, NN stated that she was quite surprised by the difference in teaching- learning style in class which was different from what she usually did on her home campus. It made her have to try to adjust and adapt to the new learning methods for her on the UNM campus. Even so, time by time, NN admitted that the knowledge she gained at UNM with this method ultimately felt more effective for her.

JA: *“Ternyata kita kuliahnya di Parangtambung, yang mohon maaf fasilitasnya tidak jauh berbeda dengan yang dikampus saya. Tapi yah masih sangat layaklah yah untuk belajar. Cuman kemarin itu sempat masuk ke ruang kelas yang kecil banget gitu, sedangkan mahasiswanya ada 30an, jadi kayak ngepas banget gitu, jadi kayak overloadlah gitu. Jadi kaget banget juga, karena biasanya di tempat saya pun itu satu kelas cuman ada sekitar 20an mahasiswa bahkan ada yang dibatasi cuman belasan karena emang dibagi rata biar gak terlalu ramai. Tapi kemarin di UNM mohon maaf sempat nyari kelas kosong karena rata-rata udah pada penuh juga kelasnya”*

(It turns out that we study in Parangtambung, which sorry the facilities are not much different from those in my campus. But yeah, it's still very feasible to study. just yesterday I got into a classroom that was really small, while there were 30 students, so it was like it was really tight, so it was like an overload. So I was really surprised too, because usually in my place there are

only about 20 students in a class, some are even limited to a dozen because they are evenly divided so that they are not too crowded. But yesterday at UNM, I'm sorry that I had to look for an empty class because most of the classes were already full.)

In addition, in the extract above JA also recounts his surprise when he found the classroom quite small while the students were around 30 people which made the class appear overloaded. He stated that even on his original campus, sometimes one class was limited to 20 people so that it would not be too crowded. He even experienced a shortage of classrooms when he was going to lecture. This came as a surprise to him, as it was far from his previous expectations.

Taken together, the themes of language, cultural lifestyle, and education reveal how culture shock among PMM students is a multi-layered experience that extends across both personal and academic domains. Language barriers often acted as the entry point to deeper cultural dissonance, influencing students' ability to socialize and engage in daily life. These challenges were compounded by unfamiliar lifestyle norms and educational practices that required constant adaptation. The interplay of these three dimensions illustrates that culture shock is not a singular event but an ongoing negotiation of identity, belonging, and resilience within a new cultural and institutional environment.

## Discussion

The theory of factors of culture shock by Olray S. (2021) was employed in this study to elucidate the various factors that contribute to culture shock, such as the impact of language, lifestyle, and education. The aforementioned results are based on interviews with five PMM students who originate from distinct regions and exhibit symptoms of culture shock at varying phases and due to a variety of factors. The interview method reveals that the language, cultural lifestyles, and education factors are influenced by three factors that affect culture shock.

First, the language factor is the factor that initially causes the most individuals to experience culture shock, as PMM students who arrive in Makassar experience a variety of symptoms, including bewilderment, communication difficulties, and miscommunication, according to the results of the researchers' analysis. The majority of these incidents were the result of PMM students' misconception that the language spoken in Makassar was Indonesian, which is the language used in their native regions. Conversely, Qun, et al. (2018) conducted comparable research that demonstrates distinct effects of the language shock phenomenon, including anxiety, tension, and the most severe lack of confidence or motivation to venture beyond their comfort zone into a foreign culture (Mumford, 1998).

Additionally, the Makassar vocabulary is consistently followed by Makassar accents and affixes in this investigation. A comparable study was conducted by Fan (2010), which examined the comprehension and experiences of ten Asian students in relation to language shock. Ten Asian students from the TESOL program in the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania participated in the study, which demonstrated that the English learning and teaching of these students from Asian backgrounds were influenced by cultural and linguistic differences. The findings indicated that students from Asian backgrounds at the University of Tasmania experienced language shock in terms of linguistic and sociolinguistic components. This suggests that language shock occurs in academic settings, such as campuses, as a result of the diverse sociolinguistic and linguistic components.

Nevertheless, PMM students asserted that the role of accompanying lecturers, who acquaint them with the local language, was of great assistance during the adaptation stage of language shock. In contrast to other investigations into the experiences of Asian students who



encountered culture shock in the United States, which demonstrated the opposite. Anjalin, et al (2017) discovered that none of the participants in this study recognized the assistance provided by their university in overcoming culture shock. In order to acclimate and thrive in the new culture, international students must exert their own initiative to learn from the host country's culture.

The findings indicated that the lifestyle of PMM students was highly diverse, encompassing a wide range of factors such as learning styles, food, customs, and socialization that differed from their native environment or area. This factor may be corroborated by comparable research conducted by Kesuma (2020). The findings of the investigation indicated that the graduate students encountered culture shock during their time on campus due to the disparities between Indonesian culture, particularly Acehese culture, and Western culture in terms of the academic lifestyle and education system. This demonstrates the impact of varying lifestyles on an individual's culture shock.

Education system, the last factor, emerged as a significant contributing factor to culture shock among PMM students, particularly due to differences in academic expectations, classroom interaction, and institutional procedures. This aligns with the findings of Bahri & Sitorus (2022), who examined Indonesian students in Singapore and found that disparities in the education system—such as attendance policies and learning methodologies—were primary sources of disorientation and stress. While their study focused on international mobility, our findings demonstrate that similar challenges arise within national borders, emphasizing that institutional diversity across Indonesian universities can also trigger culture shock. Each institution's unique academic culture means that external students must quickly adapt to unfamiliar structures, which can be overwhelming.

Our findings further complement Xia's (2009) assertion that social support plays a crucial role during cultural adaptation, and echo Przylecki's (2018) emphasis on the value of interpersonal interaction in navigating cultural learning. However, this study adds a new layer by showing how these adaptive strategies are not only relevant in cross-national transitions but also essential in intra-national contexts marked by significant cultural and institutional variation. The process of adaptation among PMM students was found to be deeply relational—anchored in their ability to seek support and establish connections with peers and lecturers. In this way, our findings extend the existing literature by highlighting the nuanced ways internal cultural diversity within Indonesia challenges students, while also reinforcing the importance of socially embedded coping mechanisms.

## CONCLUSION

This study offers a unique contribution by highlighting the presence of culture shock among cross-regional students within Indonesia, specifically PMM participants in the English Department at Universitas Negeri Makassar. Unlike previous research that primarily focuses on international students, this study reveals that even within a single nation, cultural diversity can present significant adaptation challenges. Language barriers, lifestyle differences, and variations in educational norms were found to deeply affect students' confidence, communication, and social engagement. These findings emphasize that culture shock is a complex, internal-national phenomenon that influences students' daily lives and their socio-cultural development.

The implications of this research are particularly relevant for the design and implementation of student exchange programs in Indonesia. Institutions should consider offering structured cultural orientation, language support, and academic mentoring to help students navigate regional differences more effectively. Additionally, future research should expand the scope by examining similar experiences in other universities, disciplines, or

involving host community perspectives. Such efforts can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive exchange system that reflects Indonesia's rich cultural diversity.

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