

Surviving and Thriving: The Role of Social Support in Mitigating Culture Shock Among East Nusa Tenggara Students in Salatiga

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the relationship between social support and culture shock among sojourner students from East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) studying at Satya Wacana Christian University, Salatiga. The research is motivated by the phenomenon of many students from NTT migrating to Java Island to obtain quality education but often facing cultural adaptation challenges. The study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The variables examined were social support based on Zimet et al.'s (1988) concept, which includes aspects of family support, friends, and significant others, and culture shock based on Taft's (1977) concept, which encompasses aspects of tension, feelings of loss, rejection of new cultures, role confusion, surprise and anxiety, feelings of helplessness, and interpersonal stress. The research sample consisted of 80 students from NTT, selected through accidental sampling technique. Data collection utilized questionnaires with Likert scales. Data analysis was performed using Pearson product-moment correlation through SPSS. The results showed no significant relationship between social support and culture shock, with a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.010$ and significance value of 0.467 ($p > 0.05$). 65% of respondents had moderate levels of social support, 21.3% low levels, and 13.8% high levels. As for culture shock, 61.3% of respondents were in the moderate category, 13.8% in the low category, and 25% in the high category. These findings indicate that while social support is important for emotional comfort, the intensity of culture shock experienced by students is more influenced by the complexity of differences in values, language, and cultural norms. Sojourner students who first arrive in Java typically face culture shock due to significant differences in lifestyle, language, social norms, habits, and cultural values that require time to adapt to.

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BACKGROUND

The approach to education on Java Island shows higher progress than on other islands, with the support of adequate facilities and buildings that meet quality standards (Putri & Anggaunitakiranantika, 2020). This makes migrating a common culture, including among students (Febrianty et al., 2022). Many students migrate to Java Island to achieve success through better education in their desired fields. The community expects that foreign students studying in Java will return after completing their education (Nugroho & Mareza, 2023). The public perception that education in Java is superior encourages many students, such as those from East Nusa Tenggara, to continue their studies on this island, given the more adequate educational facilities (Adawiyah, 2018; Andre & Huwae, 2022). So that many people move to Java to get an education in the hope of getting a good quality education.

However, the arrival of migrant students on Java Island often raises cultural issues. Students from Eastern Indonesia who migrate to Java usually bring different cultures and values from the local community. Although they need social interaction to fulfil their needs and survive, these cultural differences often trigger conflicts in the adaptation process (Zain, 2020). This situation is exacerbated by the views of local people influenced by their cultural values (Yang, 2023). Some students, especially from Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), tend to only hang out with colleagues from their home region, maintain old habits, and experience culture shock. As a result, many choose to live in groups with students from the same area to reduce discomfort (Ernofalina, 2017; Larung & Purawati, 2021; Mufidah & Fadilah, 2022; Salmah, 2016).

This phenomenon is referred to as culture shock, which is a psychological term that describes the conditions and feelings of individuals when dealing with different social and cultural environments. Culture shock can be experienced by anyone who has lived in a place for a long period of time and then, for various reasons, moves to another place with different social and cultural characteristics from their place of origin (Aldino & Fitriani, 2020; Yang, 2023). In addition to social interaction, food is also a trigger for culture shock (Pramesti et al., 2022).

One effective way to reduce culture shock is through social support (Goldstein & Keller, 2015). Culture shock, often experienced by university students, is mainly caused by a lack of social support. Social support defined as an individual's ability, and togetherness support (Aditya & Permatasari, 2021; Maharani & Adriansyah, 2021), as well as support from family, friends, and meaningful individuals (Brown & Greenfield, 2021; Yildirim & Tanrıverdi, 2020).

Support systems help people navigate and adjust to unfamiliar or stressful circumstances by giving emotional reassurance, practical advice, and a sense of security (Kristiana et al., 2022). Such assistance serves as a psychological and social safety net, allowing people to overcome early emotions of uncertainty, anxiety, or loneliness when confronted with new situations, whether they are geographical relocations, professional transitions,

educational settings, or cultural transformations (English et al., 2021; Shu et al., 2020).

Furthermore, English et al. (2021) indicates that social support has a significant effect on the anxiety and psychological well-being of sojourners in China. Greater support from host nationals and international friends correlates with reduced anxiety and improved psychological health. Furthermore, cultural distance serves as a moderating factor in these dynamics; sojourners who perceive a smaller cultural distance to China tend to experience stronger negative correlations between social support and anxiety, as well as stronger positive correlations between social support and well-being. These results underscore the essential role of social support in facilitating successful adaptation for sojourners in a new cultural environment.

Based on these problems, this study aims to determine the relationship between social support and culture shock in sojourner students from NTT who migrate to Salatiga. The results of this study are expected to be a reference in the psychological field, especially those related to social support and culture shock. Thus, the hypothesis proposed in this study is that there is a negative relationship between social support and culture shock. The higher the social support for individuals, the lower the culture shock experienced by sojourner students from NTT and vice versa.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study used a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The research variable is social support proposed by Zimet et al. (1988) with aspects of support from family, support from friends, and support from close people who are valuable to individuals. The second variable is culture shock proposed by Taft (1977) with aspects of tension, feelings of loss, rejection of new cultures, role confusion, surprise and anxiety, feelings of helplessness, and interpersonal stress. The sample was taken through nonprobability technique with accidental sampling (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018) and 80 students from NTT were obtained as respondents.

Data collection used a questionnaire instrument with question items that provided answer options based on the Likert Scale (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The Likert scale used goes through 5 scales, namely Strongly Agree (5); Agree (4); Neutral (3); Disagree (2); Strongly Disagree (1) for social support measurement by Zimet et al. (1988) with 12 item statement. The culture shock was measurement with Likert scale through 3 scale namely Often (3); Sometimes (2); Never (1) by Taft (1977) with 12 item statement. Instrument testing was carried out with a reliability test and data analysis to determine the relationship between social support and culture shock using Pearson product-moment correlation assisted through the SPSS application.

The following are the results of the validity and reliability tests where each item is declared valid and reliable when it has a value of more than the specified one (Hair et al., 2019). This research item has a reliability value of .828 for social support and .889 for culture shock.

RESEARCH RESULTS

This study obtained data through a psychological scale given to 80 students studying at Satya Wacana Christian University on September 17, 2024, to October 28, 2024.

Respondents' demographics

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondent

Categories	Frequencies	Percentage
Sex		
Female	30	37,5%
Male	50	62,5%
Total	80	100%
Faculty		
Faculty of Language and Arts	2	2,5%
Faculty of Economics and Business	6	7,5%
Faculty of Law	7	8,75%
Faculty of Social and Communication Science	10	12,5%
Faculty of Medicine and Health Science	5	6,25%
Faculty of Agriculture and Business	2	2,5%
Faculty of Psychology	11	13,75%
Faculty of Science and Mathematics	1	1,25%
Faculty of Electronics and Computer Engineering	1	1,25%
Faculty of Information Technology	8	10%
Faculty of Theology	27	33,75%
Total	80	100%
Age		
17 y.o	3	3,75%
18 y.o	16	20%
19 y.o	11	13,75%
20 y.o	11	13,75%
21 y.o	22	27,5%
22 y.o	8	10%
23 y.o	5	6,25%
24 y.o	2	2,5%
25 y.o	1	1,25%
27 y.o	1	1,25%
Total	80	100%
Batch		
2019	2	2,5%
2020	20	25%
2021	14	17,5%
2022	12	15%
2023	10	12,5%
2024	22	27,5%
Total	80	100%

Based on the table, there were more male participants than female, with 50 people (62.5%) for men and 30 people

(37.5%) for women. In the faculty category, the Faculty of Theology had the highest number of participants, with 27 people (33.75%), while the Faculty of Science and Mathematics and the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering each had the fewest participants, with 1 person (1.25%). For the age category, the most participants were 21 years old, as many as 22 people (27.5%), while 25 and 27 years old had the least number, each with 1 person (1.25%). In the generation category, the most participants came from the 2024 generation with 27.5%, while the 2019 generation was the least with 2 people (2.5%).

Descriptive Statistic

Table 2. Social Support Categories

No	Interval	Category	Frequencies	Percentage
1	16 < x ≤ 39	Low	17	21,3%
2	40 < x ≤ 56	Medium	52	65%
3	57 < X ≤ 61	High	11	13,8%
Total			80	100%

Mean= 48.54; Min=16; Max= 61; SD= 8.413

Based on the results of the categorization of social support in the table, the mean is 48.54 and the standard deviation is 8.413. Respondents in this study empirically show that 11 students (13.8%) have high social support, 52 students (65%) have moderate social support, and 17 students (21.3%) have low social support.

Table 3. Culture Shock Categories

Interval	Categories	Frequencies	Percentage
12 < x ≤ 16	Low	11	13,8%
17 < x ≤ 25	Medium	49	61,3%
26 < X ≤ 31	High	20	25%
		80	100%

Mean= 21.60; Min=12; Max= 31; SD= 4.342

The results of the analysis in the table show that the average level of culture shock of respondents is 21.60 with a standard deviation of 4.342. Empirically, 25% of respondents (20 students) experienced high culture shock, 61.3% (49 students) were at a moderate level, and 13.8% (11 students) showed a low level of culture shock.

Normality Test

Table 4. Normality Test Result

	Social Support	Culture Shock
N	80	80
Normal Parameters ^a	48.54	21.60
Mean		
Std. Deviation	8.413	4.342
Most Extreme	.082	.113
Absolute		
Differences Positive	.069	.113
Negative	-.082	-.095
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.729	1.013
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.663	.256

The normality test results show that both variables have a significance $p > 0.05$. The Social Support variable has a Kolmogorov-Smirnov value of 0.729 with a significance of 0.663, so it is declared normally distributed. The same thing

happened to the Culture Shock variable with a Kolmogorov-Smirnov value of 1.013 and a significance of 0.256, which also showed a normal distribution.

Linearities Test

Table 5. Linearities Test Result

	F	Sig.
Social Support * Culture Shock	1.233	.255

From the results of the linearity test, the Fcount value is 1.233 with sig = 0.255 ($p > 0.005$) which shows that Social

Support and Culture Shock in sojourner students from NTT studying at UKSW have a linear value.

Hypothesis Test

Table 6. Hypothesis Test Result

Pearson Correlation	Sig.	N
-.010	.467	80

Partial Correlation Test

Table 7. Partial Correlation Test

		Family Support	Friends Support	Support from a close or valued person	Culture Shock
Family Support	Correlation		.574	.631	.090
	Sig.		.000	.000	.213
Friends Support	Correlation	.574		.713	-.126
	Sig.	.000		.000	.134
Support from a close or valued person	Correlation	.631	.713		.010
	Sig.	.000	.000		.466

From the table above, examined the relationship between various forms of social support and culture shock. It was shown that each aspect of social support, including family support, friend support, and support from a close or valued person, significantly related. However, the results indicated that no aspect of social support was significantly related to culture shock.

DISCUSSION

The correlation test results show that social support has no significant correlation on culture shock, with a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.010$ and a significance value of 0.467 ($p > 0.05$). This shows that the level of social support received by students is not significantly correlated with the intensity of culture shock experienced. This finding is consistent with the research of Nugroho & Mareza (2023) which states that although social support is important for self-adjustment, its effect on culture shock is not always significant. Andre & Huwae (2022) also found that social support can provide emotional comfort without directly reducing the intensity of culture shock.

Sojourner students who arrive in Java for the first time and stay for six months usually face culture shock due to significant cultural differences between their home and new

environment. These differences include lifestyle, language, social norms, habits, and cultural values that require time to adapt to (Jefriyanto et al., 2020). This initial phase is often the most vulnerable period, characterized by emotional distress, confusion, and a sense of alienation. While social support from family, friends, or significant others can help reduce feelings of loneliness, the process of adapting to a new culture still requires time, openness, and an individual's ability to adapt.

Social support serves as an emotional counterweight in dealing with culture shock, but the intensity of cultural adjustment challenges extends far beyond mere social connections. The complex interplay of different values, language barriers, and varying cultural norms significantly impacts how individuals experience and navigate cultural transitions (Baria & Gomez, 2022). When examining value differences, the contrast between individualistic and collectivistic orientations creates fundamental challenges in understanding social interactions and decision-making processes, while language differences present additional hurdles in both verbal and non-verbal communication (Ernofalina, 2017). These challenges are further complicated by normative differences that encompass a wide range of social expectations and behavioural standards, including

etiquette, dress codes, dining customs, and social interaction protocols.

The present study found that each aspect of social support is, to a certain extent, significantly related to the others. These aspects are interrelated with the conditions experienced by sojourner students. It is an inevitable consequence of being immersed in a new culture that they will find a sense of belonging and establish a sense of connection with the people they meet. Although they may experience culture shock, the people they meet can provide a source of support. This includes families who can now provide support with the help of technology.

The psychological effects of moving cultures run in stages from the high of the honeymoon phase, through the low of crisis to finally settling into adjustment (Jaenudin et al., 2022). People go through different levels of stress, anxiety and homesickness during this period, which is often directly related to the cultural distance between their home and host culture. Another aspect making this effort difficult are environmental and institutional factors: the difference in climate, infrastructure, health-care system, education practices and bureaucracy (Bai & Wang, 2024). Developing good strategies for coping will be critical, such as establishing new circles of friends (which usually do not come immediately upon arrival to a new location), immersing in the local culture in positive ways (i.e., learning about it constantly and engaging with it), maintaining some ties to the essential part(s) of one's own life that made going abroad so powerful, and developing routines/rituals that connect and ground individuals within their new surroundings (Mustafa, 2021).

A total of 65% of research participants had social support in the moderate category, which means they received enough help in the form of comfort, attention, and appreciation from the environment. Meanwhile, 21.3% were in the low category, and 13.8% were in the high category. For culture shock, 61.3% of participants were in the moderate category, indicating a good psychological reaction to the new environment. A total of 13.8% of participants experienced low culture shock with little or no tension, while 25% were in the high category, showing poor psychological reactions, such as tension, confusion, and feelings of helplessness. Inadequate social support tends to exacerbate the level of culture shock experienced by students, reinforcing anxiety and difficulty in adjusting.

This study is limited to the number of respondents who were only obtained were 80 respondents so it may not be able to represent the entire population of sojourner students from NTT at Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana. The research uses a quantitative approach so that it has not captured the subjective experiences of students in dealing with culture shock.

CONCLUSION

Social support does not have a significant relationship with culture shock experienced by sojourner students from NTT at UKSW. This shows that although there is a very weak negative relationship between the two variables, this relationship is not strong enough to be statistically

significant. In other words, the level of social support received by students does not significantly affect the level of culture shock they experience when adjusting to their new environment in Salatiga. Future research can further explore how sojourner students perceive and interpret social support and its impact on the culture shock experienced.

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