

Self-Adjustment of Overseas Students during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Makassar City

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has made overseas students faced various changes and differences in various aspects of life that require adjustment. This study analyzes the adjustment process for overseas students in Makassar City using five aspects proposed by Haber and Runyon (2006), including aspects of accurate perception of reality, ability to cope with stress and anxiety, self-image, ability to express feelings, and good interpersonal abilities. This study uses a phenomenological approach. Data mining was carried out by observation and structured interviews. This study concludes that the two overseas students showed self-adjusting behavior by trying to build resilience and develop self-awareness, using active coping to the problems they faced, trying to create meaning and hope, establishing good intrapersonal relationships, trying to control and stabilize emotions. The dominant inhibiting factors are academic and cultural. Social support factors and the desire to develop themselves and get psychological well-being are factors that support overseas students in adjusting themselves.

Keywords

self-adjustment; overseas students; covid-19 pandemic



I. Introduction

One way the government optimizes so that people can be productive is to organize higher education to increase the competitiveness of the community. According to the Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education (2019), the number of universities in Indonesia reached 3.129, including academies, polytechnics, colleges, institutes, and universities. Currently, education, especially education in universities, is the main reason for the younger generation to migrate. The realization of better education is desired by every individual who has just finished high school education. The desire to get access to education at the best universities is usually not found in the area of origin or the city itself. This has resulted in some people have to migrate to get a better quality education according to the desired field (Irene, 2013). Sakamoto (2006) also added that some of the reasons students want to migrate are to gain knowledge and skills, get a job, get a higher status, and meet the expectations of the community (Sakamoto, 2006). This is considered as an effort to prove one's quality as an independent and responsible adult in making decisions (Santrock, 2002). In the process of maturing and achieving success, overseas students are faced with various changes and differences in various aspects of life that require self-confidence, independence, and adjustment.

Adjustment is an individual's effort to deal with internal desires, frustrations, and conflicts to be in harmony with various personal and environmental demands (Schneider, 1964). Good adjustment can provide benefits for individuals in increasing self-esteem, self-confidence, increasing appreciation of the area of origin, reducing ethnocentrism, intolerance, and stereotypes (Church, 1982). Nevertheless, not all overseas students can adapt well, especially during covid-19 pandemic, which still required the students to well

adapt to the environment, the culture and campus. It is widely known that with the emergence of Covid-19 on March 2, 2020, the government is trying to prevent the spread of this virus by issuing the policies for students to study online, which means all the work and school business are done at home. Covid-19 has made human life significantly changed; education is one example. Overseas students are among those affected by the pandemic. As the circular letter of Minister of Education No. 3 of 2020 on the prevention of Covid-19 in educational units, and No. 36962/MPKA/HK/2020 which requires students to conduct online learning activities at home (Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020).

Although the classes are conducted online, not all overseas students go back to their hometown. Some of the reasons they settle down are because they have other activities besides the academic activities, the internet network in their area is inadequate and they are afraid to travel far during the pandemic. Self-adjustment is one of the important requirements for achieving one's mental health. Many individuals suffer and they are unable to achieve happiness because of their inability to adapt. Hurlock (1999) suggests that when individuals are unable to make adjustments indeed it will cause impacts, such as the emergence of aggressive attitudes, unconfident, feeling of discomfort and surrender. The other impact is to fantasize too much to compensate for the dissatisfaction. Haber and Ruyon (2006) argue that everyone must have problems in achieving life goals and self-adjusting as a state or as a process. Individuals will continuously change the goals along with the changes that occur in the environment. Based on the concept of self-adjustment, an effective self-process can be measured by understanding the individual's ability to deal with an ever-changing environment. In pandemic, the condition provides an aspect of change that will affect an individual sense of control and the choices available. In line with the result of an online interview, one of the 2018 class overseas students explained that during the pandemic students had to adapt to a lot of online classes. There are still many obstacles faced, such as lack of understanding the character of the lecturer, the social interaction with friends is done online, it was difficult to meet friends directly, and lack of understanding friends.

The uncertainty, confusion and the emergencies caused by covid-19 raises various academic demands that must be resolved with all the limitations possessed by overseas students. The demands faced by overseas students are responsibilities and self-adjustment in their new environment. Changes that occur during the pandemic become a source of stressors, especially for overseas students. Based on the data collected by UNESCO shows that students around the world affected by covid-19 experience psychological distress during the pandemic in the form of anxiety symptoms, especially boarding student, student who have acquaintances infected by the virus and low family income (Schlesselman, Cain & DiVall, 2020). Pressures and obstacles that can't be managed properly can cause stress. Stress among overseas students has a negative impact on the health and emotional stability of those students (Brown, 2008).

Based on the facts and research results that have been presented, researchers are interested in describing how to adjust overseas students who do not return to their hometown, namely in Makassar city during online learning on Covid-19 pandemic by emphasizing the 5 aspects of self-adjustment offer by Haber and Runyon (2006) including an accurate perception of reality, The ability to cope stress and anxiety, self-image and the ability to express feelings and intrapersonal abilities. The purpose of this study is to find out how to adjust overseas students during the covid-19 pandemic in the city of Makassar.

II. Review of Literature

Overseas students are individuals who live in other areas who come to study in higher education and prepare themselves in the management of a college expertise expertise diploma, bachelor, master, or specialist (Budiman, 2006). The main reason people migrate is to achieve success which requires courage to be more confident and independent, and ready to face various changes in new situations and environments Kato and Salim (Fitri and Kustanti, 2018). Achieving these goals requires adjustments in various ways. This is experienced by overseas students, where when they leave their hometown, overseas students are in a learning pattern that requires them to face an environment with different circumstances and social life.

Haber and Runyon (2006) state that everyone must experience problems in achieving their life goals and adapting as a situation or as a process. They keep changing their goals according to the circumstances of their environment. Individuals change their goals in life along with changes that occur in their environment. Based on the concept of self-adjustment, it can be seen how the individual's ability to deal with a changing environment. Self-adjustment is a dynamic process that aims to change individual behavior so that a more appropriate relationship (harmony) occurs between the individual and the surrounding environment.

According to Yani in Syardiansyah (2020) performance is a result of work achieved by a person in carrying out the tasks assigned to him based on skill, experience and sincerity as well as time. Werdhiastutie et al (2020) stated that the development of human resources should focus more on increasing productivity and efficiency. This can be realized because today's competition, especially among nations, is getting tougher and demands the quality of strong human resources as managers and implementers in an organization or institution.

Haber and Runyon (2006), including aspects of 1) Accurate perception of reality is able to determine realistic goals according to their abilities and able to recognize consequences and actions to lead to appropriate behavior. 2) Ability to cope with stress and anxiety is able to overcome the problems that arise in life and able to accept the failures experienced. 3) Self-image is individuals have a positive self-image either through personal assessment or through other people, so that individuals can feel psychological comfort. 4) Ability to express feelings is individual has good emotional expression and control. 5) Good interpersonal abilities is Individuals who can adapt well are able to create a mutually beneficial relationship with one another.

III. Research Methods

The research method used in this research is qualitative. Moleong (2009) explains that qualitative research is a method that intends to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects in depth described descriptively by utilizing various scientific methods. The approach used in this study is phenomenological. This approach was chosen because the phenomenological view seeks to understand the meaning of events and their relation to people used to being in certain situations. Husserl (Bagong, 2005) states that the phenomenological method is considered to study behavior, experience, and human interaction in everyday life.

In this study, researchers wanted to explore the experiences experienced by overseas students in making adjustments during the COVID-19 pandemic. The criteria used to determine the participants in this study are following the problem and research objectives

(Smith, Flower & Larkin, 2009). Based on these considerations, the participants in this study were two participants with the criteria of overseas students living alone in Makassar City and not with their parents and relatives. The two informants are overseas undergraduate students from West Nusa Tenggara and Southeast Sulawesi. Informants with the initials SR and PA.

The technique of extracting or collecting data in this study is the method of observation and interviews. Observations were made by researchers in the daily lives of the two participants. An interview is a conversation between two parties, where the interviewer (interviewer) asks questions, and the interviewee answers the interviewer's questions (Moleong, 2009). The type of interview that will be conducted is an interview with general guidelines (Poerwandari, 2005). In this interview process, the researcher is equipped with an interview guide that lists the issues that must be covered, aiming to remind the researcher about the aspects that must be discussed in the interview process. The type of interview used by the researcher in this study is a structured interview with open standard guidelines, which are prepared in detail and complete with questions. Therefore, before conducting the interview, the interviewer prepares an interview guide to direct the conversation to certain aspects of the subject's life or experience as a whole and in-depth (Poerwandari, 2005). The credibility strengthening technique carried out by the researcher is (1) doing triangulation of data sources, namely using observations at the participants' residences and friends who live with participants so that researchers know about the participants' daily lives, (2) theoretical triangulation, namely. The study's results and conclusions on the adjustment of immigrant students during the Covid-19 pandemic were compared with the theory of Haber and Runyon. This study seeks to answer the question, namely, how to adjust to overseas students during the COVID-19 pandemic in Makassar City.

IV. Results and Discussion

Adjustment to both participants is seen from several behaviors that arise in each participant. The adjustment can be seen from the way the subject is accumulating his view of the existing reality, trying to deal with stress and anxiety, having a picture of himself, having a way of expressing feelings, and relating to the people around him. Based on the data that has been obtained from the two participants and the data analysis that the researchers have carried out, it can be seen that the description of the self-adjustment ability of overseas students during the covid-19 pandemic in Makassar City, among others, is as follows:

Table 1. Self-Adjustment Ability of Overseas Students during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Makassar City

Aspect	Reflection on behavior
Accurate perception of reality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limiting off-campus activities - Developing new routines that are healthy and can help with the adjustments. - Reaching out and interacting with others in a meaningful way and as long as it really matters
Ability to cope with stress and anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crying in the room then sleep - Shutting up and trying to find a way out on your own while grumbling - Looking for information related to maintaining mental

	health during the pandemic in various online sources
Self-image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being grateful if there are people who praise their strengths - Facing the their weaknesses and trying to be able to stand from those weaknesses
Ability to express feelings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Controlling emotions or stabilizing emotions, so that they are not excessive in expressing their negative emotions - Choosing to remain silent if a friend offends you
Good interpersonal skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining closeness with other people and friends around them - Actively participating in joint activities with local students - Greeting friends or people they meet first - Communicating deeper while joking with people they already know well - Building familiarity using online platforms

The achievement of self-adjustment in overseas students in this study, indicated by the ability to adapt interpersonally in the form of a desire to show that overseas students are able to learn with a new environment, so that they are able to face difficulties in academic achievement. This was shown by the SR by trying to ask questions related to assignments with their boarding friends when experiencing problems. Another form of interpersonal adjustment of overseas students is that those informants try to maintain close relationships with friends and the residents around them. When SR and PA feel bored, the overseas students and their boarding house friends go for walks while still complying with health protocols, even PA always participates in community activities, so that people know and accept overseas students. One of the supporting factors is because of the support from peers and people around them who are sensitive to the behavior that appears in overseas students when they experience learning problems with different cultures and languages. This is in line with the opinion of Schneiders (Wijaya, 2007) which shows that individuals try hard to be able to overcome conflicts and frustrations because of the inhibition of their inner needs, so that harmony are achieved between themselves and their environments.

Good interpersonal skills have an important influence on the way an individual adjusts to become an independent person. As stated in the study outcome, it illustrates that overseas students make self-adjustments by involving themselves in activities outside the campus. They do not hesitate to ask for help from friends and acceptance of the environment. Schneider (1964) suggested that many factors influence self-adjustment to the environment in this case, the campus environment and the subject's residence, one of which is the relationship with friends. Friends have a significant role in a person's adjustment and influence the views and behavior of the individual.

Maturity in individual adjustment can be achieved by creating good relationships with other people such as friends, people around them, playing an active role in a community, and respecting the culture and language in which the subject is located. The acceptance of various authorities who can understand the culture of overseas students certainly supports them. Therefore, it can facilitate the teaching process on campus. However, SR participants experienced a problem understanding the language used by the people in Makassar and the way of communication and eventually made PA interpret non-verbal language more often. It made SR wait for the local student to start the approach first. Overseas students who have good self-adjustment are more influenced by accurate perceptions of the reality of the environment in which the subject lives. A supportive environment tends to make overseas students can socialize well, Haber and Runyon (2006).

Participants' positive self-image also becomes a supporter in the adjustment process by facing their strengths and weaknesses by trying to rise from these weaknesses. It aligns with the view expressed by Haber and Runyon (2006) that individuals who can think realistically about themselves are those who can recognize their respective weaknesses and strengths and can develop their potential optimally. Respondents take it by acquiring self-awareness of their limitations during the pandemic and hope that this pandemic will pass over time.

Regarding the subject's ability to adapt, it is undeniable that the subject also experiences problems during study group activities at universities during the Covid-19 pandemic. It happens due to the lack of understanding of the learning partner towards the task. Therefore, the subject tries to control or stabilize the emotions. According to Haber and Runyon (in Irene, 2013), individuals in making adjustments must have the ability to express feelings that are felt realistically and in control of their environmental conditions. Another obstacle faced by overseas students in making adjustments is the maturity of individuals to socialize when they become a standing joke. For instance, when PA does not understand the language they use. Self-confidence is a supporting factor for the subject's self-acceptance. Self-acceptance is a criterion for individuals who have good self-adjustment attitudes (Wijaya, 2007).

Regarding the language use issue, although PA has difficulties understanding people's skills around the subject, these difficulties can be overcome by effective interaction with the environment. Therefore, mobility and orientation are key strategies to overcome limitations in adapting to the environment. The presence of social skills to move freely in their new environment is the characteristic of mobility ability. This self-adjustment skill is closely related to the ability to accurately perceive the reality where the subject lives, to cope with stress and anxiety, to express feelings, to have good interpersonal skills, and supported by the subject's self-image (Irene, 2013).

The informant's ability to adapt cannot be secluded from the role and support of the nuclear family, extended family, friends, and lecturers. The informant's parents in this study provided financial support, motivation, advice, and suggestions. This support is very influential in reducing the possibility of stress, so that even in a pandemic condition, the two informants can carry out their activities well. This is in line with the opinion from Walker & Satterwhite (Mustafa, Nasir, & Yusoooff, 2010) who found that parental support had a positive influence on their child's coping abilities and reduced the level of stress which was experienced when studying in college.

Support from friends was also one of the motivating factors for both participants. The presence of friends helped overseas students to make adjustments. Social support from friends is a good mental source in reducing the intensity of psychiatric disorders such as loneliness, rejection, discrimination and frustration (Stroul, in Solomon, 2004). Another thing found in this study is that although overseas students can interact well with friends and local residents, overseas students prefer friends from the same area to share their problems. Even though they do not meet, overseas students and friends build close relationships and communicate through online platforms such as telephone or other social medias.

Various kinds of obstacles experienced by participants while adjusting to the Covid-19 pandemic finally made participants look for strategies to solve the problems they faced. This is done by the participants to get a stable or balanced state in themselves, such as how they regulate and stabilize their emotions, thoughts, and attitudes and they also try to face the problem directly (Shiraev & Levy, 2012). These show their readiness to adapt, the desire to develop themselves and get psychological well-being.

V. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the adjustment of overseas students is indicated by: (1) accurate perception of reality by the subject, by understanding the environmental conditions in which the subject is located with all the changes, especially academic adjustments during the pandemic of Covid-19. (2) The existence of the ability to overcome stress and anxiety by the subject in dealing with the problems encountered during in their places (dormitory) and with their peers, by trying to solve each of these problems. Adjustments are made in the hope of not causing a prolonged conflict. (3) The self-image possessed by the subject becomes one way of adjusting to face the strengths and weaknesses possessed by trying to rise up from these weaknesses. (4) The ability to express feelings by the subject is by controlling, stabilizing emotions and being more open to the problems at hand. (5) Interpersonal skills are carried out by adaptation in the form of desires that show that overseas students are able to learn in a new environment, so they can minimize the difficulties with academic achievement and the social situation in which the subject is located. One of them is by creating a form of intimacy using an online platform.

Suggestions for further researchers who want to research this theme are expected to strengthen the data obtained by using techniques to strengthen the credibility of significant others and member check.

For practitioners and universities, they can create more effective mentoring programs for overseas students based on the needs of overseas students during the Covid-19 pandemic which is expected to be a good progress in achieving academic achievement of overseas students.

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