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A Qualitative Study Exploring the Social Adjustment in Foreign Students at Universitas Islam Riau after Supportive Group Therapy

Icha Herawati, Ahmad Hidayat and Irfani Rizal

Universitas Islam Riau

ABSTRACT

There are 61 foreign students enrolled in undergraduate and master programs at Universitas Islam Riau. The problems that they commonly find are difficulties in following academic activities, difficulties in making new friends and adapting with other students. Based on observations made on foreign students from Pattani, Southern Thailand, they tend to be in groups and mingle with their fellow friends. In living their life as Pattani students at Universitas Islam Riau, they faced various problems. Common problems include academic pressure, financial problems, feelings of loneliness, interpersonal conflicts, difficulties facing change and problems developing personal autonomy. This research aims to explore the social adjustment of foreign students at University Islam Riau after supportive group therapy through the observation of their Bahasa vocabulary, friendships with local students from Riau, and confidence in undergoing lectures. This is a qualitative study exploring the social adjustment in foreign students at UIR after supportive group therapy. The therapy used is in the form of group counseling, eating together, and exercising together. Recommendations are made at the end of the article.

Keywords: Support Group Therapy, Social Adjustment, Foreign Students

INTRODUCTION

In the framework of the internationalization program since the 20th century, Universitas Islam Riau (UIR) tried to improve its quality with a variety of visions and missions. UIR's current vision is to become superior and prominent in Southeast Asia in 2020. To realize this vision, the program implemented is internationalization program including accepting foreign students and sending students abroad. Individuals who study abroad are also called foreign students. This is in accordance with Ministerial Regulation number 25 of 2008, that foreign students are foreign citizens attending education at Indonesian tertiary institutions (Ministerial Regulation, 2008).

In this study what is meant by international students is foreign students who stay for a while to complete their education and are committed to returning to their country. The main problem they face when they are in a new place is to adjust to the new circumstances and environment. Because many things are different from the place of origin so that it can cause rejection, resistance or psychological tension and pressure (Helmi, 2017). The social adjustment of foreign students in this study is interpreted as the ability of foreign students to interact and socialize with other people and certain situations in their social environment effectively and healthily so that these foreign students get satisfaction in their efforts to meet their initial goal of coming to Universitas Islam Riau. The interpretation also includes conditions where the foreign students are able to make adjustments both with themselves and their social environments such as lecturers, native students, and the surrounding community.

The main problem international students faced when they were in the new institution was, of course, to adjust to the new circumstances and environment. Many things are different from the place of origin so that it can cause rejection, resistance or psychological tension and pressure. According to Gayatri (2007) studying in tertiary institutions is a stressful period. Gajdzik (2005) states that any student, both undergraduate and graduate level, domestic and foreign students, must face a number of problems in the transition to tertiary education. Meanwhile, according to Bentley (Hutapea, 2014) that since arriving, international students may face challenges in adjusting to life and learning in their new environment. In other words, international students must undergo change and undoubtedly need a transition period before mingling with the environment.

Culture shock can be experienced by anyone, including students who study outside the city of residence or even outside the country. A study conducted by Suryandari (2012) on "Culture Shock Communication of Foreign Students in Madura", revealed that culture shock is a natural phenomenon when people visit new culture. People who experience culture shock are in an uncomfortable condition both physically and emotionally. Differences in cultural backgrounds, perspectives, languages, social environment, climate and weather, food, clothing, and daily habits become a series of problems that must be faced by overseas students.

Indrianie (2012) conducted a research at Maranatha Christian University in Bandung which showed that there was a change in the degree of culture shock after participating in culture adjustment training, in this case, the degree of culture shock in Maranatha Christian University Bandung Students (who came from outside West Java) had decreased after attending the culture adjustment training. The decline in culture shock occurs gradually during the monitoring process which is carried out once a week for a month.

Culture shock is a condition that causes the physical and emotional discomfort a person experiences when coming to live in a different country or place than where they came from. Qun, Syihabuddin, Mulyati, and Damaianti (2018) provide these terms to express a lack of direction, a sense of not knowing what to do or how to do things in a new environment, and not knowing what is right or wrong. Pattani students are reported to experience shocked by the new culture or new environment they experience, which makes them feel sad, feeling alone even at the beginning of the lecture because of the many differences Pattani students have experienced.

The key to successful learning for international students is their adjustment (Novera, 2004). In addition, the Church (Indiranie 2012) argued that the success of the transition depends on the ability to let go or to be able to change their attitudes, values, behavior and learn new things in the new environment.

One way to overcome the cultural shock that Pattani students can make is to adapt to local students, in this case, students from Riau. Based on some previous studies (Indrianie, 2012) it is explained that training in cultural adjustment can reduce cultural shock among foreign students. Cultural adjustment training is a form of cross-cultural training aimed at helping foreign students reduce cultural shock in order to adapt to their new environment. In this exercise, researchers provide information on Riau habits and culture, conducting group counseling so that researchers can identify the problems faced by Pattani students. This research proposed in an attempt gave social support therapy to help the social adjustment ability of foreign students at Universitas Islam Riau.

METHOD

The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method after supportive group therapy. As stated by Azwar (1999) "descriptive research aims to describe systematically and accurately, facts and characteristics about the population or about a particular field". Descriptive research mostly uses data collection techniques in the form of surveys or field research. In this study, the data collected is through interview, observation, and experimental program that is descriptive in nature, it does not intend to seek explanations to test hypotheses, make predictions or study the implications. In this study using sampling with a saturated sampling technique, because the population is less than 100 people, the sampling technique taken is all members of the population of 61 foreign students in Universitas Islam Riau.

This technique is in accordance with that proposed by Riduwan (2010), Saturated Sampling is a sampling technique when all populations are used as samples and also known as census, so this type of research is called a census. To obtain data or information, information and data needed, researchers use data collection techniques as follows: Primary Data Collection Techniques, Namely, data collection techniques that are carried out directly at the study site in accordance with the problem under study.

FINDINGS

Based on data, the main reasons these international students chose to enroll at UIR is that they get information about lectures at UIR. They got information that the quality at UIR is good, the cost is not too expensive, and the culture in Riau is not much different from their culture which is Thai Malay culture. They chose UIR also because UIR is a university-based on Islam and also they want to find new experience and knowledge by undergoing lectures at UIR. The foreign students are predominantly from Pattani, which is southern Thailand. They are all Muslim and their parents' work is all in agriculture, namely as a rubber farmer.

The data Demographic from Pattani students were 31 male (59.61 percent) and 21 female (40.38 percent). Furthermore, from the age category, it can be seen that the highest number of Pattani students is at the age of 23 years as many as 13 people or 25% percent. Furthermore, based on the semester category, it can be said that in the 7th semester there were 17 students or 32.69 percent of Indonesian students.

After undergoing lectures and new life at UIR, they felt happy and comfortable because they gained new knowledge and insights. In undergoing recovery they also found some of the same difficulties, including difficulties in terms of the use and understanding of Indonesian language.

Based on the analysis of social adjustment, they experience the same problem. Tendencies among them are more comfortable gathering and hanging out with fellow Thai students because of their limitations in using language. However, they also socialize with other Indonesian students in their lectures. But only to the extent that they admit that not all students even a few can understand them as foreign students. According to these foreign students, there are other UIR students who help them and understand their situation and position as foreign students, but there are also some who are ignorant of them and do not care about the difficulties experienced by these foreign students.

The dominant foreign students from Thailand do not participate in many organizations on campus because they have an organization specific for Thai students. However, they follow when there are events on campus. That is because they want to try to socialize and aim to increase their ability to speak Indonesian and socialize with students from diverse backgrounds.

Thai student associations (PMIPTI) are quite strong, this can be seen from the Thai student organizations that they follow and also they choose a place to live together that has been passed down for generations and is obtained from their seniors because they feel comfortable and easier when they live together. They assume that fellow Thai students are the only family that can help all the difficulties they face at UIR. They did not rule out the possibility for them to stay apart, but they have not dared to because they do not fully understand the language and culture of the Riau people.

The state of life of foreign students to socialize with the environment, the academy's, and culture effectively in achieving its objectives so that foreign students can obtain satisfaction through life and lectures in UIR. Social adjustment is the ability of individuals to act effectively and benefit from social reality, situations, and relationships. The goal is that demands or needs in life and social relations are met in a way that is acceptable and satisfies all parties. If the individual wants to develop a relationship of ability in social adjustment in the community, he must respect the rights of others, be able to create a healthy relationship with others, develop friendship, play an active role in social activities, respect the values, norms and socio-cultural laws in the environment community (Maslihah, 2012).

The international students do not do enough to socialize themselves as they choose to gather more with fellow Thai students. This is because they think it is safer and easier if they are always together. Social adjustment is a term that often refers to the process of adjusting someone in the context of interaction with the surrounding environment. According to Gerungan (2010) adjustment is a "passive" adjustment, where our activities are determined by the environment, and there is a meaning that is "active", where we affect the environment. Every change in the environment of a person's life in the broadest sense causes him to have to adapt himself to that environment, both in the passive and active sense.

Woodworth (in Gerungan, 2010) highlighted that there are four types of relationships between individuals and their environment. Individuals can experience conflict with their environment, individuals can use their environment, individuals can participate with their environment, and individuals can adapt to the environment. Adjusting to and even then can be interpreted in a broad sense and can mean changing yourself in accordance with the circumstances and desires of self. In the case of Education it can be implied that this includes studying abroad.

Social adjustment according to Nurdin (2009) is a process of adjustment to the social environment in human relations. Through this process, humans obtain satisfaction of their needs. When individuals interact with their social environment, these individuals must pay attention to the existing demands and social expectations of their behavior.

According to Hurlock (in Pratiwi & Nugroho, 2015), if individuals are not able to make social adjustments, it will cause increasingly complex problems. The whole process of life and individual life will always be colored by relationships with others, both within the scope of the family, school, and society at large, and as a social creature, individuals always need the association in their lives with others, recognition and acceptance of themselves from others. Pratiwi & Nugroho (2015) said that social adjustment is one aspect of individual self-adjustment that leads to conformity between his needs and the environment in which he is located and interacts effectively and efficiently. The social adjustment will be felt to be important when individuals are faced with gaps that arise in social relationships with others.

Confidence in foreign students can influence their adjustment to the campus environment and the environment in which they live, so they can position themselves and be well received by their

environment. The success or failure of students in the process of social adjustment in school is closely related to the factors that influence it. In general, the factors that influence the adjustment of foreign students on the campus and community environment consist of internal and external factors. Internal factors with strength factors that exist in individuals that include physical conditions, psychological determinants such as maturity, social development, moral, emotional intelligence, talent, and interests (Andani, 2017).

External factors such as the climate of family life, campus life, and society play a strong role in the adjustment of the student. Furthermore, Surya (in Nurdin, 2009) suggested that the factors that influence social adaptation are as follows: (a) Physical conditions which include nature, physical structure, nervous system, muscle glands, health and others, (b) Conditions of development and maturity, including intellectual and social, moral, emotional and emotional development and maturity.

- 1) Environmental conditions include home/family, campus and community.
- 2) Psychological determinants which include learning experiences, habituation, self-determination, frustration, and conflict, as well as academic activities.
- 3) Determination *cultural* form of cultural and religious

DISCUSSION

The results of the research in the field also found that these foreign students encountered problems due to similar issues, which stems from the weak mastery of local language. The difficulties they face come from Indonesian language proficiency. This results in a lack of understanding of lectures and ability to socialize with other students, even less intermingling in the outside environment. They admit all of that because of their limited ability to speak Indonesian so that condition makes them less confident to present themselves and their existence.

1. Suggestions for Universitas Islam Riau

Universitas Islam Riau (UIR) in accordance with the goal of becoming a superior UIR 2020 in Southeast Asia can better prepare to face international students, such as providing special language programs for foreign students, activating language center institutions for foreign student language programs, and require new foreign students to join Indonesian students' accommodations so that their social and language development is better

2. Suggestions for Foreign Students

Foreign student will benefit from having great motivation and determination to gain knowledge as well as being more proactive in making better adjustments in the academic, social and cultural fields to achieve their goals of studying at UIR.

3. Suggestions for Lecturers and Other Students

The lecturers can be more sensitive to their surroundings so that when they see foreign students who are struggling, and can help each other and understand each other

4. Suggestions for UIR Students

For UIR student especially students who come from Indonesia or are called local students, should be more sensitive to their surroundings so they can open up and help foreign students adjust themselves in academic, socially, and culturally while undergoing lectures at UIR. And as a result, gives a good impression for foreign students in hanging out with local students.

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