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Resilience of Internasional Students at Yogyakarta State University: A Phenomenology Study

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Abstract: Resilience of Internasional Students at Yogyakarta State University: A Phenomenology Study. In addition to affecting the development of technology and information, globalization also has an impact on education. In this borderless 21st century, we have easy access to information in the field of education. The ease of internet access contributes to the spread of different cultures, which attracts students to seek learning experiences abroad. This also applies vice versa, information about Indonesian culture that is spread throughout the world raises the interest of foreign students to study in Indonesia This research uses qualitative methods, this research involves 4 foreign students as sources who come from different programs, namely UNY-DISS (Yogyakarta State University Distinguished International Student Scholarship), Dharmasiswa, and KNB (Cooperation with Developing Countries). Data collection used an open-ended interview method. Where the researcher can ask additional questions to obtain in-depth information. The validity results used memberchecking, where participants were involved in providing feedback related to the data. The results of this study found that common problems often faced by international students are language barriers, cultural differences, and adapting to a new environment. International students become resilient based on the existence of positive thinking actions and a high sense of desire to learn that makes them resilient to the difficult situations they face. In general, high motivation and desire to learn increase the resilience of international students, as for the strategies they do to overcome the problems they face such as contacting friends or family, writing journals, and doing self-reflection.

Keywords: resilience, international student, culture shock.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization significantly impacts not only technological advancements but also educational practices (Sarpong and Adelekan 2023). In this 21st century, characterized by borderless connectivity, access to educational information has become prevalent, exemplified by the number by increasing number of journal publications involving international collaboration (Marginson 2022). In addition, globalization manifests in the mobility

of students pursuing study abroad (Nguyen et al. 2016). The internet, with its ease of access, plays a pivotal role in disseminating different cultures, attracting students worldwide to seek educational experiences outside their home countries. Conversely, the widespread dissemination of Indonesian culture raises the interest among international students to study in Indonesia.

One program that attracts international students to Indonesia is Darmasiswa, which is

managed by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Quoted from darmasiswa.kemdikbud.go.id, this program offers a 10-12 month opportunity for international students learn the Indonesian language and culture. Currently, Yogyakarta State University (UNY) hosts 23 international students under various programs, including Darmasiswa, UNY-DISS (Yogyakarta State University Distinguished International Student Scholarship), and KNB (Cooperation with Developing Countries).

Despite these opportunities, the academic workload for international students in higher education is notably heavier compared to their previous educational experiences as high school students (Arifin 2021), leading to a significant level of stress.- Academic stress, categorized as distress (McEwen 2019) roots from subjective perceptions in academic activities and pressure causing negative reactions for both high school students and university students (Barseli, Ifdil, and Nikmarijal 2017). Additionally, within higher education settings, academic stress affects both local and international students. Striking cultural differences are one of the external factors triggering stress in international students. The lecture system, culture, and food are often the main factors in triggering stress in international students.

One poignant account comes from an international student who shared his struggle to adapt to local food upon first arrival in Yogyakarta. He also expressed his ongoing difficulty in fully adjusting to the academic system and bureaucracy in Indonesia. This personal narrative illustrates the potential for international students to experience acculturative stress. Berry, as cited in (Alharbi and Smith 2018) explains, that when international students transition from their home country to another, they face various challenges, including the need to adapt to a new environment.

Thus, acculturative stress is the most common and frequent cause of stress experienced

by international students (Xu, O'Brien, and Chen 2020). Similarly, research conducted by (Forbes-Mewett 2020) found that for international students, education is key to their success. However, they face various pressures caused by different cultures, academic demands, and loneliness, all of which contribute to stress. Besides, culture shock can also trigger anxiety when dealing with unfamiliar situations (McKeering, Hwang, and Ng 2021). For international students, the cross-cultural phenomena can be stressful, as they must adapt to several transitions simultaneously (Bethel, Ward, and Fetvadjiev 2020). To cope with homesickness and other difficulties while studying abroad, international students often communicate with their parents through communication tools (Saravanan, Mohamad, and Alias 2019).

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of international students studying in Yogyakarta, especially at Yogyakarta State University. Researchers believe that resilience can help international students to adapt to cultural differences and educational systems. Resilience is an important element that contributes to the success of international students in developing psychological abilities that help them become resilient in the face of challenges (Khairina et al. 2020). According to (Connor and Davidson 2003) Resilience is the capacity of a person to tolerate pressure, stress, and to deal with sadness, anxiety, and depression. However, (Smith et al. 2008) defined resilience asas the capacity to cope with disease, adapt and thrive, and recover from stress and hardship. Resilience, as one of the positive psychology variables, is understood as the ability to adapt when faced with threatening and unfavorable situations (Snyder & Lopez, 2010). Previous research indicates that resilience includes optimism, social support, self-efficacy, and psychological well-being (Molinero et al., 2018). This research aims to fill the gap in understanding how resilience helps international

students adjust to new environments, thus providing insights for educational institutions to better understand and support these students.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study are international students enrolled in different study programs. The sample selection used purposive sampling involving 4 students from different countries, according to (Thompson et al. 2023) the sample was selected based on the criteria determined by the researcher. In this study, researchers determined the sample criteria, as follows: international students of Yogyakarta State University who enrolled in Dharmasiswa program, UNY- DISS (Yogyakarta State University Distinguished International Student Scholarship), or KNB (Cooperation with Developing Countries) programs.

Research Design and Procedures

The research a qualitative, using phenomenological methods. According to (Cresswell 2014) phenomenological describes the meanings common to several individuals from their experiences of a particular concept or phenomenon chosen to explore their lived experiences and meaning-making processes. This approach aims to unveil and comprehend their behaviors, motivations, and perceptions through descriptive and interpretative means. This research was conducted offline in a span of 4 months, starting from September to December 2023, the research period was adjusted to the teaching and learning activities on campus.

Instrument

The data were collected through openended interviews, and the questions referred to the theory of resilience (Connor and Davidson 2003). After gathering the information, then data validity testing was carried out by conducting member checks with participants. The interview grids can be seen in Table 1

Data Analysis

This research will use a thematic method to analyze the data in this study to find themes and

| | Aspect | Indicator | Questions |
|----|---|--|--|
| 1. | Personal competence; high standard and tenacity | Able to be a competent, resilient, and high-standard individual | Why did you decide to study at Yogya? |
| 2. | Trust in one's instincts; tolerance of negative affect; strengthening effect of stress | Able to cope with stress quickly and stay focused on goals despite pressure or problems | What is the most challenging part for you to do while studying abroad? |
| 3. | Positive acceptance of change and secure relationships | Can accept change positively and maintain good relationships with others. | How do you adapt to the differences in culture and language while you've been studying here? |
| 4. | Control and Factor | Able to self-regulate | Could you explain briefly how to manage yourself during stressful circumstances? |
| 5. | Spiritual influences | Individuals consider that existing problems are a destiny from God and must be passed with positive feelings so that individuals must continue to struggle to achieve goals. | Despite the difficulties of learning here, are there any positive aspects that motivate you to continue? |

Table 1. Interview grid

patterns in the participant narratives on resilience and their study abroad experience.

- 1. Data Collection: By interviewing participants about their experience, the interview will be recorded to enable further analysis.
- 2. Transcription: Transcribe the interview verbatim to capture the exact words used by the participant
- 3. Coding: Highlight significant statements from participant
- 4. Theme development: identify themes that capture participant experience.
- 5. Descriptive and interpretive analysis: Describe and interpret the themes, writing detailed

information about the finding

Validation: Share finding with participant for feedback

■ RESULTAND DISCUSSION

This study aims to explore the experiences of international students to be resilient, to the situations they face while studying in the city of Yogyakarta. Based on interviews with four international students who are actively studying in the city of Yogyakarta, the following interview results were obtained. Table 2 displays participant information, which includes initials, gender, major, country of origin, and registered program.

 Table 2. Participant

| Initials | Gender | Country of Origin | Major | Program |
|----------|--------|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| 1. AB | Female | Kazakhstan | English Education | UNY-DISS |
| 2. SS | Female | Thailand Indonesian | | Dharmasiswa |
| | remaie | Thanana | Language | |
| 3. SM | Female | Egypt | Psychology | UNY-DISS |
| 4. RO | Male | Japan | Indonesian | Dharmasiswa |
| 7. KO | Maic | | Language | Dilaimasiswa |

Theme1. The decision to study to Yogya

".....I decided to study at Yogya because of my friend, she's studying at this university and majoring in Art. She informed me about the UNY-DISS scholarship program and helped me with the document preparations" (Participant AB)

Subject AB is a new student from the class of 2022, he is a student who passed the UNY DISS scholarship selection. The subject explained that she found out about this program through her friend who was studying at the same university.

"..... During COVID, my friend told me about the Dharmasiswa scholarship, she said "if you want to go to Indonesia to study, you can apply for this year's scholarship". So I decided to prepare myself to apply for this scholarship" (Participant SS).

Just like Participant AB, participant SS got information about the dharmasiswa scholarship from her friend, SS decided to apply for this scholarship because she had long been interested in Indonesian culture.

As for RO, the dharmasiswa student has a different statement. RO had taken Indonesian language courses for 3 semesters in his college, then he decided to deepen the Indonesian language by joining the Dharmasiswa program.

".....While in Japan I studied Indonesian for 3 semesters, then I got a scholarship to study Indonesian here" (Participant RO)

Furthermore, the fourth participant, SM attended Indonesian language classes held by the

Indonesian Cultural Center in Cairo. Then he received information on scholarships to study in Indonesia.

"....Because at that time there were free Indonesian language classes at the Indonesian cultural center in Cairo. But, after that, there was information on scholarships to study in Indonesia. So I immediately applied for the scholarship" (Participant SM)

Theme 2. Language and Cultural Differences

".....When I first came to this city, I was surprised. The culture here is so different from my country, I was often lonely and wanted to go back to my country. Some days I had difficulty in learning because my Indonesian was not fluent" (Participant, SM).

When SM first came to Indonesia, she felt sad and wanted to return to her country. But now he is used to the environment here. Even though he has adapted, the subject still feels culture shock, especially on matters of privacy and shop schedules that are different from his country. For her, this is a surprising cultural difference.

"....When I first came here, I was initially surprised by the situation. But, for me, adapting to a new place is quite easy. Maybe because I lived in several countries, adapting to new pace is much easier" (Participants, AB).

When she first came to Indonesia, participant AB experienced culture shock due to cultural differences that contrasted with his home country. But for her, was quite easy to adapt because she had previously lived in England for 2 years and visited several other countries.

As for SS, she explained that there are cultural differences that are quite prominent here, he added that Indonesians are very friendly and always help her, even though herway of speaking is not like Indonesians.

"...There is no big difference, it just the difference is that people here are more friendly

so if we have anything we can ask locals, they are always ready to help us and people here can understand even though we speak poorly Indonesian" (Participant SS)

However, participant RO stated that the striking cultural differences related to daily activities

"...Because of this, I think there's a big difference between my country and here, there is often sudden notice. Also when people go to eat at the cafeteria they are usually with friends, rarely do they eat alone" (Participant)

Theme 3. Interacting with local people

".... In the beginning, it was very difficult to make friends with local people, usually they tend to be in groups. So getting into a friendship group is quite difficult" (Participants, RO).

Participant RO mentioned that when he first came to Yogya he found it difficult to interact with local people. This is because the majority of local people have friendship groups, therefore it takes time to make friends with local people.

"....Although I'm used to and have adapted to the campus environment, I still can't socialize well with local people" (Participants, SM).

As for participant SM, he said that even though she has lived in Yogya for 1 year, he has not been able to adapt to local people. She added that she has been able to interact with classmates and lecturers on campus, but she is not used to interacting with local people.

"...The local people are very helpful, even though my Indonesian is not fluent, they can understand me" (Participants, SS).

"....I learned that I didn't understand anything here, because English education is something new for me. I appreciate my classmates for understanding my situation and always helping me to understand the lectures"

While participants AB and SS, they think it is easy to interact with local people, for them local

people are very friendly and always help them even though their Indonesian is limited. The positive reactions from local people helped them to adapt to the new environment

Theme 4. Academic challenge

"..... I had difficulty learning when I first came here, especially in the language barrier and study program. In the end, I had to change my major" (Participants, AB).

For Participant AB, the biggest challenge was changing majors. Participant AB had difficulty due to the language barrier in college, which required her to change his major.

".... The biggest challenge during my study here was the language and cultural differences because in this country i don't speak my language and its quite challenging" (Participants, SM)

Participant SM, stated that the biggest challenge was language and cultural differences. For her, it took a lot of courage to deal with this situation, especially since she had to struggle alone in facing her obstacles.

"....For me, the biggest challenge is in the language, some of my classmates are not fluent in Indonesian and English, so it is a bit difficult to understand and there are often misunderstandings between us" (Participant SS)

Just like Participant SM, language barriers are often an obstacle for Participant SS in communicating with others, especially her classmates. To minimize the bad situation, SS used a translator tool to make it easier for him to communicate with his classmates.

"....Previously, I had visited Indonesia, so I understood the situation in this country a little. But for me the biggest challenge is adapting to a new place, usually, if there is nothing I know I will ask my friends" (participant, RO)

Different from the resto f Participants, Participant RO stated that he had visited Indonesia so he was quite familiar with the situation in Indonesia. Nevertheless, the biggest challenge is adapting to a new place. RO tend to ask their friends if he need help

Theme 5. Coping Strategies

".... To be resilient I always think first before making a big decision, therefore I have to regulate myself and always be disciplined. I think discipline is important to maintain my condition" (Participants, AB)

For Participant AB, the most important thing to be resilient is to remain disciplined. She explained that if he acts without thinking, it will have a bad impact on her. She also added that thinking positively can hel her become resilient.

"... When I experience stress I always write down the problems I face. When I write down my problems, it makes me understand and easier to find solutions" (Participant, SS).

When facing problems, SS participants tend to write down their problems in the form of journals. For her, journaling activities help her to unravel the problems and the stress while studying abroad.

"...When I am stressed, I go out for a walk. Right now I'm trying to balance my time between studying and having fun." (Participants, SM)

For SM participants to deal with her stress, she take a break and take his time for me time. SM participants try to cope with stress by balancing study time and rest time

"....When I'm stressed I will call my friend, and tell him about the difficulties I'm going through" (Participant, RO)

When overcoming stress, participant RO contacted his friend in his hometown. For, him sharing stories with his friends is a way to cope with stress.

Based on the interview results, participants have their ways to become resilient. According to (Connor & Davidson, 2003) resilience is divided into 5 aspects, namely: personal

competence, trust in one instinct, positive acceptance of change and secure relationship, self-control, and spirituality. Regarding personal competence, international students are highly motivated to learn new things, which motivates them to study abroad. In the aspect of trust in one's instincts, it is shown by international students' confidence in finding solutions to solve problems. Common problems that are often experienced by international students include communication problems. This is following the results of research (Rayyan et al., 2023), which states that communication problems often occur in international students where they have difficulty finding the right word when communicating with others, there are supporting problems such as adaptation and interacting with local residents. In the aspect of positive acceptance, It is stated that individuals who have high positive acceptance tend to have a higher level of resilience (Sagone and Indiana 2017). Furthermore, this is shown by International students slowly began to adapt to the new environment, although some participants found it difficult to interact with local residents.

Furthermore, in the aspect of selfregulation, self-regulation is an important aspect in resilience, to help participants to overcome difficult situations. The sense of self-regulation possessed by participants is largely based on their learning motivation. This statement supports research (Kurt and Tomak 2022), which states that international students who have clear motivation and goals have good self-regulation, this is because it is based on their desire to achieve success. Last, in the aspect of spirituality. Spirituality is shown by the presence of positive thoughts in participants where they believe that there are positive things that become their strength while study abroad. (Hatami and Shekarchizadeh 2022), added that spirituality is directly related to resilience, while (Saputra 2020) mention that involving spirituality in learning can help students

increase life satisfaction, religiosity, and good attitudes in everyday life.

Resilience is a term that is often associated simultaneously with coping and recovery (Baker, Baker, and Burrell 2021). Young adults who possess resilience have greater resistance to risky conduct and higher positive emotional selfregulation. There are so many ways for international students to be resilient to the obstacles they face when studying in another country. The effectiveness of coping is related to the type of stressor and the condition of the individual. In addition, coping is influenced by the cultural background and habits of each individual (Akhtar and Kroener-Herwig 2019). For international students, it is undeniable that resilience is an important aspect to have a successful learning experience (Singh 2021). Meanwhile, resilience is often influenced by conditions of well-being and engagement (McKeering et al. 2021). Therefore, the campus must also be more proactive in helping international students to adapt to the new environment. Such as providing services that can support international students while they study at university (Holdsworth, Turner, and Scott-Young 2018).

When studying abroad, international students faced many challenges, especially in culture, situation, and language (Molinero et al., 2018). Cultural differences are often a challenge for singleton students to adapt to the surrounding environment, which makes them homesick. For both Participants, the challenges they faced had an impact on their academic success, especially the language barrier (Singh 2021). One of the Participants added that when she first came to Yogya to study, she felt lonely. This incident was caused by the lack of social support and homesickness which led the Participants to experience anxiety, loneliness, and confusion which tended to encourage them to isolate themselves (Alasmari 2023). Of the various

challenges that have been mentioned, international students often experience psychological challenges, while adapting to a new environment. Loneliness is one of the biggest challenges experienced by international students, this loneliness is caused by low self-confidence, loneliness, and identity tension which leads to loneliness (Gong et al. 2021).

Besides adapting to the culture and language, adjusting to the surrounding environment is also a challenge for them (Kim 2017). In daily life, adapting to a new culture can be related to other things, one of which is adapting to the local population. The language barrier reduces their desire to mingle with the local community, which hinders their integration into the local community (Gong et al. 2021). The separation experienced by international students tends to make them separate from the new culture, preventing them from mingling with the local community (Alasmari, 2023).

Some things motivate them to persist in continuing their education in Yogya such as treatment from local people and their interaction with their classmates. These motivations help them to stay, but they also provide them with many good opportunities. Organizing social opportunities, such as cultural exchanges, and extracurricular activities, allow international students to adapt to the new environment (Collins, Dailey-Strand, and Callaghan 2021). Moreover, these interactions are responded to well by the local community. This situation encourages selfconfidence in international students. This interaction can be used as an opportunity for international students to hone their Indonesian language skills. The more they often hone their Indonesian language skills, the more confidence will emerge. The existence of self-confidence makes it easier for them to adapt to a new environment (Purwati and Silvia 2021). People who learn a foreign language are required to be confident in using the language, especially in

communicating without worrying about grammar and language structure (Alberth 2018).

To be successful in their studies, international students must be able to adjust to the destination country, but more importantly, be able to adjust to academic life on campus (McLeod et al., 2021). To help international students adapt to the surrounding environment, they must improve their language skills, manage their time, and have coping strategies (Alsahafi and Shin 2017).

There are so many ways for international students to be resilient to the obstacles they face when studying in another country. The effectiveness of coping is related to the type of stressor and the condition of the individual. In addition, coping is influenced by the cultural background and habits of each individual (Akhtar and Kroener-Herwig 2019). For international students, it is undeniable that resilience is an important aspect of having a successful learning experience (Singh 2021). Meanwhile, resilience is often influenced by conditions of well-being and engagement (McKeering et al. 2021). Therefore, the campus must also be more proactive in helping international students adapt to the new environment such as providing services that can support international students while they study at the university (Holdsworth et al. 2018). In addition, it tis important for the campus to be more proactive in providing services for international students to deal with culture shock (Presbitero 2016).

The results of this study are in line with the research (Rayyan et al. 2023) which confirmed that many challenges faced by international students such as language barriers, adapting to new environments, and cultural differences. To deal with difficult situations, international students need high resilience, which is supported by research (Miranda and Cruz 2022) which produces findings that resilience has a major role in the well-being of international students. As for

the results of the study, resilience can help to improve quality of life, which is following the results of research (Kim & Cronley, 2020) which shows that resilience has a positive output on quality of life, especially in health, in this study it is stated that resilient individuals can maintain themselves to deal with difficult situations.

In addition to having an impact on technology advancement, globalization is also having an impact on education. Students are encouraged to seek the best education possible by the accessibility of information, and some even choose to continue their studies overseas. However, being a foreign student is not always simple; among the many hurdles that international students frequently encounter are linguistic barriers and cultural differences. Resilience has become crucial for individuals who pursue their education in another country. International students with high resilience are significantly more capable of adjusting to environments where the customs differ from their home country. The uniqueness of this study lies in the participants involving international students from various countries so that it can provide a broad view of resilience. The study's limitations came from the limited diversity of international student participants, whose mainly came from Asia and Africa. No participants represent other continents, such as Europe, America, or Australia.

Meta-Theme 5. International student challenge during study abroad

Some participants stated that communicating with locals, overcoming cultural differences, and language barriers were the main obstacles they faced while studying abroad. Some participants stated that they found it difficult to communicate with locals because of the cultural gaps that existed, which made them hesitant to do so. International students find that their classmates support them in adjusting to their new surroundings. (Presbitero 2016) The campus

needs to take the initiative to help overseas students adjust to their new surroundings to deal with this predicament.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to out investigate the resilience-building process among international students. Studying abroad poses unique challenges for these students, including language barriers, cultural differences, and environmental adjustments (Xu et al. 2020). (Dayakisni & Yuniardi, 2017) The loss of familiar cues, such as language, can identity tension, confusion, and anxiety among international students, often resulting their isolation and avoidance of interaction with the local community (Alasmari 2023) These conditions can hinder their academic success, underscoring the vital role of universities, in providing moral support and services that aid their adaptation to the academic and social environments in the community (Presbitero 2016). Motivation, a key factor in enhancing resilience, is also explored in this study. A strong motivation and desire to learn new things boost confidence among students. Ultimately, international students employ diverse strategies to overcome their challenges and cultivate resilience.

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