

The Phenomenon of Culture Shock: Experiences of Non-Local Lecturers at Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kerinci

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Abstract: Culture shock is a phenomenon commonly experienced by individuals when entering new environments and cultures. This study aims to delve into the experiences of non-local lecturers who encountered culture shock while working at the Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kerinci. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, this research involved five non-local lecturers as research subjects. Data was collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that non-local lecturers underwent four phases in the cultural adaptation process: honeymoon, rejection, adjustment or negotiation, and mastery. In the honeymoon phase, they tend to be enthusiastic and enjoy new experiences. However, as time passes, they begin to face difficulties in adapting to the different social and cultural environments. The rejection phase is characterized by feelings of frustration and a desire to return to their home environment. In the adjustment or negotiation phase, they start seeking ways to overcome the challenges they face and build better social relationships. Eventually, they reach the mastery phase where they can adapt well and even enjoy life in the new environment

Keywords: Culture Shock, Non-Local Lecturer, Experience, Cultural Adaptation

Abstrak: *Culture shock* merupakan fenomena yang umum dialami individu ketika memasuki lingkungan dan budaya baru. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menggali pengalaman dosen luar daerah yang mengalami *culture shock* saat bekerja di Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kerinci. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan fenomenologi kualitatif, penelitian ini melibatkan lima dosen luar daerah sebagai subjek penelitian. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa dosen luar daerah menjalani empat fase dalam proses adaptasi budaya: *honeymoon*, *rejection*, *adjustment* atau *negotiation*, dan *mastery*. Pada fase *honeymoon*, mereka cenderung antusias dan menikmati pengalaman baru. Namun, seiring berjalannya waktu, mereka mulai menghadapi kesulitan dalam beradaptasi dengan lingkungan sosial dan budaya yang berbeda. Fase *rejection* ditandai dengan perasaan frustrasi dan keinginan untuk kembali ke lingkungan asal. Pada fase *adjustment* atau *negotiation*, mereka mulai mencari cara untuk mengatasi tantangan yang mereka hadapi dan membangun hubungan sosial yang lebih baik. Akhirnya, mereka mencapai fase *mastery* di mana mereka dapat beradaptasi dengan baik dan bahkan menikmati hidup di lingkungan baru.

Kata Kunci: Culture Shock, Dosen Luar Daerah, Pengalaman, Adaptasi Budaya



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Introduction

Relocating to a culturally diverse environment often triggers a phenomenon known as culture shock. This phenomenon can elicit a range of psychological and social responses, including feelings of confusion, stress, and social isolation. The prevalence of culture shock varies across different countries, as documented in numerous studies. Indonesian migrant workers experience culture shock in areas such as language, environment, workplace relationships, food, and clothing (Rafika et al., 2018). Foreign health professionals from developing countries face challenges such as unfamiliar environments, family and professional issues, and management challenges when working in developed countries (Guru et al., 2012). Omani citizens and expatriates in Oman experience culture shock related to communication, clothing, religion, and food, with religion and tradition being significant influencing factors (Rajasekar & Renand, 2013). Furthermore, intercultural

communication challenges and culture shock have been found to impact the quality and effectiveness of teaching in higher education, with foreign students in the US, UK, and Australia, as well as foreign teachers in China, experiencing these issues (Yang et al., 2018). Subsequent studies on Indonesian students studying in Australia (Zahra et al., 2024), international students in Indonesia (Ahmed & Shahzeb, 2024), international students at Satya Negara Bekasi University (Olivia et al., 2024), and students in Pontianak, Indonesia (Wati & Selegam, 2023) have also revealed instances of culture shock.

Culture shock has a significantly negative impact on an individual's psychological well-being when adapting to a new cultural environment (Ayub et al., 2024). Individuals experiencing culture shock often face challenges such as changes in diet, social norms, language, and behavior, leading to stress, anxiety, and depression (Guru et al., 2012; Olivia et al., 2024; Sundayana, 2024). The social environment significantly influences how individuals respond to culture shock. Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes social learning processes, including how individuals acquire and modify behavior through observation and experience (Bandura, 1999; Luszczynska et al., 2015). Culture shock is a significant experience for individuals in foreign environments, referring to the psychological and social reactions experienced when adapting to a new culture, often resulting in feelings of disorientation, stress, frustration, and depression (Upadhyay, 2018).

Several factors contribute to culture shock in a new environment, including language barriers, differences in food, safety concerns, and social interactions (Olivia et al., 2024; Qizi, 2020), intrapersonal factors, cultural differences, and socio-political manifestations (Dagus et al., 2024; Intan, 2019). Other factors such as customs, behaviors, values, religion, traditions, and other cultural aspects also contribute to culture shock in individuals (Likandi & Sugiyartati, 2023). Symptoms of culture shock include anxiety, stress, uncertainty, overload, fear, insecurity, sadness, loneliness, distress, behavioral changes, stress, depression, loss of identity, low self-esteem, feelings of loss, and homesickness (Eliani, 2022).

The process of an individual adapting to a new environment or culture must be done quickly and is typically cyclical and recursive, with the individual actively choosing how to respond to challenges (Anderson, 1994). The adaptation process usually involves phases such as the honeymoon phase, rejection phase, adjustment or negotiation phase, and mastery phase, where individuals gradually adjust to the new cultural environment by immersing themselves in the local culture, maintaining communication with locals, friends, and family, and being open to cultural differences (Anwar & Supriyono, 2024; Guru et al., 2012; Yandri et al., 2022; Zahra et al., 2024). Language proficiency, a supportive university community, and the integration of cultural assimilation into the curriculum play significant roles in helping individuals adapt to their new academic environment (Ahmed & Shahzeb, 2024; Lovin et al., 2023). Successful adaptation can lead to personal growth, increased self-awareness, and the development of intercultural competence (Alfaiz et al., 2022; Upadhyay, 2018).

Adapting to a new environment and culture is a multi-phase process involving mental, behavioral, and communicative adjustments (Yusef, 2023), thus the ability to adapt to new environments and cultures should be learned and practiced firsthand. This adaptation process is crucial for individuals experiencing culture shock, as it influences self-awareness, conformity to the new cultural environment, and motivation to improve (Сячлова, 2018). Successful adaptation to a new environment and culture requires understanding, flexibility, and a willingness to learn and accept differences. The phenomenon of culture shock becomes an interesting subject for research, revealing how individuals who experience culture shock are able to adapt to the new culture they are experiencing.

While the extant literature confirms that culture shock is a common phenomenon among relocating academics e.g., (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Oberg, 1960), and underscores the significance of adjustment in multicultural settings (Ward et al., 2020), a significant gap persists in studies focused on the specific Indonesian context. Previous research has primarily concentrated on international students or academics moving abroad e.g., (Berry, 2005), or has only addressed the macro aspects of academic migration. Specifically, studies investigating the experiences of culture shock endured by non-local lecturers serving at Institut Agama Islam Negeri located in regions with strong local cultural and traditional ties, such as IAIN Kerinci, remain highly scarce

(Dwiatmoko & Setiawan, 2019). This condition presents unique adaptive challenges that involve negotiating between the universal academic culture, the Islamic values upheld by the institution, and the pervasive local customs.

The phenomenon of culture shock has prompted researchers to conduct extensive studies to better understand the reactions of individuals experiencing culture shock, such as students from various regions, both domestic and international, who are adapting to new environments in universities, schools, or boarding schools (Ahmed & Shahzeb, 2024; Olivia et al., 2024; Yan'li, 2023). However, research on culture shock among university lecturers is scarce, even though the inability of lecturers to adapt while experiencing culture shock can hinder their potential to transfer knowledge to students and make the teaching and learning process ineffective.

Consequently, this research endeavors to bridge this established gap. Employing an in-depth qualitative approach, the novelty of this study lies in its exploration and mapping of the specific dimensions of culture shock experienced by non-local lecturers at IAIN Kerinci—ranging from the honeymoon phase, rejection phase, adjustment/negotiation phase, and mastery phase. This study will offer a unique contribution by presenting a relevant adjustment framework for non-local lecturers in the PTKI environment, which can serve as a foundation for IAIN Kerinci and similar institutions in formulating orientation policies and psycho-social support for new academic staff.

Based on the numerous research studies previously discussed, there appears to be a lack of review articles that attempt to uncover the phenomenon of culture shock among university lecturers. Therefore, the aim of this research is to gather information from lecturers from outside the region regarding their experiences of culture shock, from the honeymoon phase, rejection phase, adjustment or negotiation phase, and mastery phase. This study is important because the data revealed in this research will be very helpful for new lecturers to be able to adapt quickly to a new environment. This research differs from the previous research conducted by Maisaroh & Ali (2021) which was conducted on Arabic language lecturers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study will explain how the process of culture shock occurs and how lecturers are able to adapt to the conditions of culture shock they experience.

Method

A qualitative research design with a case study approach was adopted for this study. This methodology was selected to facilitate an intensive examination of the culture shock phenomenon as experienced by non-local academic staff at Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kerinci. Consequently, a profound comprehension of the lecturers' lived experiences, perspectives, and adaptive mechanisms was attainable.

The study involved five permanent lecturers at Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kerinci who originated from outside the Kerinci region. Participants were purposively selected based on the criteria of having worked at Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kerinci for at least one year and having experience living in an environment different from their place of origin. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the participants' lived experiences of culture shock. The interview guide was developed based on the existing literature on culture shock and pilot-tested with a colleague. Participant observation was concurrently employed to triangulate the data and gain a more holistic understanding of the participants' daily lives and interactions within the university and broader community. All participants provided informed consent prior to the study, and their anonymity was ensured throughout the research process.

The data analysis was conducted using the principles of Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), adapted into a systematic four-stage coding process to manage the qualitative richness of the interviews. The stages were: (1) Verbatim Transcription of all audio-recorded interviews to ensure fidelity to the participants' voices. (2) Open Coding, where initial concepts, phrases, and ideas were extracted line-by-line from the transcripts to generate a large pool of initial codes. (3) Axial Coding, where the initial codes were compared, grouped, and categorized into broader, cohesive sub-themes and core themes. Thematic saturation was employed as the criterion for concluding the coding process, confirming that no new themes or insights emerged from the final interviews. (4) Selective Coding, where the major categories were refined, integrated, and organized

around a central phenomenon: the core cultural negotiation experienced by non-local lecturers. Finally, the identified themes were not merely descriptive but were interpreted analytically within the established theoretical framework of culture shock e.g., Ward's ABC model (Zhou et al., 2008) and the unique socio-cultural and institutional context of Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kerinci.

To ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the findings, several strategies were employed based on Guba et al., (1994) criteria: 1) Credibility, we employed member checking, whereby key participants were invited to review the initial thematic summaries and interpretations to confirm that the findings accurately reflected their experiences. Triangulation was also used by cross-referencing interview data with field notes and relevant institutional documents (e.g., orientation materials) to provide convergent evidence for the emerging themes. 2). Dependability, the entire data analysis process, including the coding tree and decision trail, was meticulously documented. This detailed record allows for an audit trail, enabling other researchers to potentially replicate the procedures used in the study, and 3) Transferability, we provided thick description of the research setting (IAIN Kerinci and its specific local context) and the characteristics of the non-local lecturers, allowing readers to assess the degree to which the findings might be applicable to other similar State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI).

Results and Discussions

This study explored the lived experiences of culture shock among non-local lecturers at Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Kerinci. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews and participant observation, four major themes emerged, representing the sequential phases of culture shock as theorized by Oberg (1960), the honeymoon phase, rejection phase, adjustment/negotiation phase, and mastery phase. These themes reflect not only emotional and psychological responses but also the dynamic processes of cultural learning and identity negotiation.

Table 1. Thematic Findings: Phases of Culture Shock Experienced by Non-Local Lecturers at IAIN Kerinci

Culture Shock Phase	Thematic Description	Representative Quotes
Honeymoon Phase	Initial fascination, excitement, and positive impressions of the new environment and culture.	<i>"It was like a beautiful dream..."</i> (Informant 4)
Rejection Phase	Feelings of alienation, homesickness, frustration with communication and social norms.	<i>"I started feeling excluded..."</i> (Informant 1)
Adjustment Phase	Active efforts to learn cultural norms, adapt communication styles, and establish social connections.	<i>"I started adjusting my tone..."</i> (Informant 1)
Mastery Phase	Sense of belonging, emotional stability, and cultural competence in both professional and social contexts.	<i>"Now I feel like I belong..."</i> (Informant 1)

Honeymoon Phase

In this initial stage, participants described feelings of excitement, fascination, and appreciation for the local environment and culture. The natural beauty of Kerinci, the friendliness of the people, and the calm, religious atmosphere of the institution created a sense of comfort and optimism.

Informant 1: "When I first arrived, I was amazed by the mountains, the cool weather, and the hospitality of the people. It felt like a refreshing escape from the city."

Informant 2: "I was genuinely excited. Everything seemed peaceful and religious, which aligned well with my values as an academic in an Islamic institution."

Informant 3: "The local food, the culture, the greetings all felt very warm and welcoming. I didn't expect to adapt so quickly at first."

Informant 4: "It was like a beautiful dream; I felt respected and appreciated for being here."

Informant 5: "In the beginning, I was fascinated by how everything seemed harmonious from the landscapes to the work culture."

The honeymoon phase reflects the initial enthusiasm and idealization of the new environment by the non-local lecturers. This stage was characterized by a romanticized perception of Kerinci's natural beauty, its religious ambiance, and the warmth of its people. The participants tended to focus on surface-level cultural experiences that aligned with their personal or professional values. At this stage, the challenges of integration were not yet fully realized, and the participants remained hopeful and optimistic about their future adaptation. The phase underscores how first impressions can create a positive emotional buffer before deeper cultural differences are encountered.

The initial experiences of non-local lecturers at IAIN Kerinci align precisely with the Honeymoon Phase of Oberg's U-Curve model (Oberg, 1960). Informant 5's statement "*In the beginning, I was fascinated by how everything seemed harmonious from the landscapes to the work culture*" indicates a high level of affective positivity, where novelty overrides perceived differences. Crucially, this phase can be understood as a period of cognitive priming. The initial positive impressions help minimize the immediate stress of the new environment, providing a psychological buffer. However, this finding also subtly underscores the unique context of PTKI: the initial harmony might be facilitated by a shared overarching Islamic identity, which acts as a common ground, delaying the onset of deeper cultural friction that is more common in purely secular cross-cultural transitions (Berry, 2005).

Rejection Phase

As initial excitement wore off, participants began to confront the challenges of cultural difference. Feelings of isolation, frustration, and misunderstanding were common. The contrast between their expectations and the realities of communication, institutional bureaucracy, and social dynamics led to a period of emotional discomfort.

Informant 1: "After a few months, I started feeling excluded in certain discussions. My way of expressing ideas was considered too direct or even impolite."

Informant 2: "It became clear that I was seen as an outsider. I struggled to make deeper connections, even with colleagues."

Informant 3: "Sometimes I felt homesick, especially during holidays. The customs were different, and I missed the ease of communication back home."

Informant 4: "I was frustrated with how decisions were made slowly, and how indirect people were in saying things. I didn't know how to respond."

Informant 5: "Even though people were polite, I sensed a barrier. I didn't feel fully accepted into the social circles."

The rejection phase marks a critical turning point where the initial optimism gives way to cultural dissonance and emotional discomfort. The non-local lecturers began to recognize and feel the impact of underlying cultural differences, particularly in communication styles, social expectations, and institutional dynamics. Feelings of isolation, frustration, and being "othered" were commonly reported, signaling a clash between personal identity and the perceived cultural norms of the new environment. This stage is essential in the culture shock process as it reveals the invisible boundaries that separate "integration" from "inclusion," highlighting the need for deeper cultural sensitivity and institutional support.

The transition into the Rejection Phase is starkly illustrated by Informant 4's frustration: "*I was frustrated with how decisions were made slowly, and how indirect people were in saying things. I didn't know how to respond.*" This experience maps directly onto the Affective and Behavioral dimensions of Ward's ABC Model of intercultural adaptation (Ward et al., 2020). The frustration highlights a breakdown in behavioral competence, specifically in navigating the local communication

style, which is often high-context and indirect due to strong communal ties in the Kerinci region. This maladjustment leads to the affective stress typical of culture shock's "trough." This finding is critical because it suggests that for non-local academics in PTKI settings, the rejection isn't just about social norms but often centers on organizational and professional communication dynamics, where local custom (indirection, collectivism) clashes with the universal expectation of academic efficiency and directness.

Adjustment / Negotiation Phase

In this phase, participants actively engaged in learning the cultural norms and adapting their behavior accordingly. They developed strategies for communication, observed local customs, and sought to bridge differences through flexibility and empathy.

Informant 1: "I started adjusting my tone in meetings and paid more attention to how locals spoke—more soft-spoken, more implied rather than direct."

Informant 2: "I asked a local colleague to help me understand the do's and don'ts in the office. It really helped me avoid misunderstandings."

Informant 3: "I joined community events and learned the local dialect. It made people more open to me."

Informant 4: "I realized I had to shift my perspective. Instead of expecting them to understand me, I tried to understand them better."

Informant 5: "I stopped comparing things to my hometown and started embracing what was unique here. That changed everything."

During the adjustment or negotiation phase, participants began to consciously engage with the local culture, developing coping mechanisms and intercultural strategies to reduce tension and misunderstandings. This phase illustrates a shift from emotional response to cognitive and behavioral adaptation, as lecturers adjusted their communication styles, sought guidance from colleagues, and immersed themselves in community life. It also reflects a process of internal negotiation, where individuals began to balance their own cultural identities with the demands of the new environment. This phase reveals the importance of agency, empathy, and flexibility in facilitating cultural learning and resilience.

The shift to the Adjustment Phase is marked by a conscious and deliberate effort toward adaptation. Informant 2's strategy "*I asked a local colleague to help me understand the do's and don'ts in the office. It really helped me avoid misunderstandings*" demonstrates a proactive approach that moves the experience toward success. This active seeking of knowledge and social support perfectly aligns with the Cognitive and Behavioral components of the ABC Model. By actively seeking advice, the lecturer engages in Behavioral Learning to acquire context-specific "dos and don'ts," reducing future misunderstandings and subsequent affective stress. Furthermore, this collective learning process reflects the strategy of Integration (Berry et al., 1992), where individuals maintain their non-local professional identity while seeking positive relationships and skills within the host culture. In the IAIN context, this support from a "local colleague" highlights the critical role of institutional mentorship in facilitating successful adjustment.

Mastery Phase

Eventually, participants reached a stage of cultural competence and emotional stability. They reported a sense of belonging, confidence in navigating social and professional contexts, and even pride in becoming part of the local community.

Informant 1: "Now I feel like I belong. People come to me not just for work matters but for personal advice too."

Informant 2: "I've found my rhythm. I know when to speak, when to listen, and how to contribute effectively."

Informant 3: "I'm involved in student activities and even help organize community projects. I no longer feel like an outsider."

Informant 4: "I've grown personally and professionally through this experience. It taught me patience and deeper intercultural understanding."

Informant 5: "I feel accepted. My identity as a non-local is no longer a limitation but an asset."

In the mastery phase, non-local lecturers reported a sense of belonging, confidence, and emotional stability in their roles and communities. They had internalized many local norms while maintaining their individual identities, achieving a dynamic cultural balance. This stage demonstrates the culmination of a successful acculturation process, where differences no longer triggered anxiety but were embraced as part of a complex intercultural identity. Participants moved from being perceived as outsiders to being accepted and even appreciated within the institutional and social contexts. This phase highlights the transformative power of intercultural experience in enhancing personal growth and professional development.

The attainment of the Mastery Phase signifies not merely survival, but the achievement of cultural competence and acculturation. Informant 1's statement "Now I feel like I belong. People come to me not just for work matters but for personal advice too" serves as strong empirical evidence for achieving a state of bicultural identity and deep social integration. The fact that local colleagues seek personal advice from the non-local lecturer indicates a reciprocal relationship and acceptance that transcends the initial professional barrier. This outcome confirms the final stage of the W-Curve model and suggests a successful Integration acculturation outcome (Berry, 2005; Oberg, 1960). The finding is a unique contribution as it shows that affective stability in the PTKI environment is achieved when the lecturer can successfully align their professional role with the strong communal and kinship expectations of the local culture, thus solidifying a sense of belonging within both the institution and the community.

The honeymoon phase of culture shock is characterized by an initial sense of excitement and happiness as individuals encounter a new cultural environment. This phase is often marked by positive feelings and a sense of adventure, as seen in the experiences of Kangean students adapting to life in an Islamic boarding school, where they initially feel joy in their new surroundings (Anwar & Supriyono, 2024). Research indicates that this phase can significantly influence overall well-being and satisfaction during the early stages of an international sojourn, with pre-arrival factors such as intercultural competence and knowledge about the host country playing a crucial role in shaping these initial experiences (Intan, 2019; Schartner & Young, 2015). However, while the honeymoon phase is generally positive, it can lead to a stark contrast with subsequent phases, such as the crisis phase, where discomfort and anxiety may arise due to cultural differences (Sigalingging & Idaman, 2023). Thus, understanding the honeymoon phase is essential for navigating the complexities of cultural adaptation.

The rejection phase of culture shock is characterized by feelings of discomfort and disorientation as individuals confront the differences between their home culture and the new environment. This phase, often referred to as the "disintegration" phase, involves a significant emotional response, including frustration, anxiety, and identity crises, as individuals struggle to adapt to unfamiliar social norms and practices (Filippov, 1995; Petkova, 2009). Research indicates that this phase can lead to behavioral changes, such as withdrawal or idealization of one's original culture, as individuals grapple with feelings of loss and confusion (Anwar & Supriyono, 2024; Intan, 2019). Additionally, the rejection of cultural practices may stem from perceptions of out-groups, reflecting deeper societal issues related to exclusion and identity struggles (Bojanić et al., 2022; Okada, 2017). Overall, the rejection phase is a critical component of the culture shock experience, highlighting the psychological and social challenges faced by individuals in new cultural contexts (Anwar & Supriyono, 2024; Ward et al., 2020).

The adjustment or negotiation phase of culture shock is a critical period where individuals begin to reconcile their experiences in a new cultural environment. This phase follows initial feelings of excitement (the honeymoon phase) and discomfort (the crisis phase) and is characterized by a gradual acceptance of cultural differences. Research indicates that during this adjustment phase, individuals engage in various adaptation strategies, such as increasing interactions with locals, learning the language, and participating in community activities, which enhance their intercultural communication competence (Andani & Purworini, 2018; Pratiwi & Susanto, 2020). Moreover, the

adjustment phase can lead to a deeper understanding and acceptance of cultural differences, as seen in the experiences of Kangean students who transition from discomfort to reintegration and autonomy (Anwar & Supriyono, 2024). However, the adjustment process is not uniform; it varies significantly based on individual backgrounds and the specific cultural context, highlighting the complexity of cultural adaptation (Patron, 2004). Ultimately, successful navigation through this phase can foster personal growth and a more profound appreciation of diversity (Intan, 2019).

The mastery phase of culture shock, often referred to as the adaptation phase, is characterized by a gradual adjustment to the new cultural environment after experiencing initial disorientation and frustration. According to Xia, overseas Chinese students typically navigate through four stages: euphoria, frustration, adjustment, and adaptation, with the latter being crucial for their mental well-being during their studies abroad (Xia, 2020). Similarly, Intan identifies the adaptation phase as a critical point where individuals begin to reconcile their identity within the new culture, moving past feelings of loss and frustration (Intan, 2019). Moreover, Frazier and Kasten highlight that mastery can also lead to reverse culture shock, where individuals struggle to readjust to their original culture after becoming accustomed to a new one (Frazier & Kasten, 2015). This duality emphasizes the complexity of cultural adaptation, as mastery involves not only acclimatization to the new culture but also the challenges faced upon returning home. Thus, the mastery phase is essential for fostering resilience and identity integration in international experiences (Frazier & Kasten, 2015; Pyvis & Chapman, 2005; Xia, 2020).

This study is limited by its qualitative scope and focus on a single institution. Future research should pursue a quantitative study to measure the correlation between psychological and sociocultural adaptation outcomes across multiple PTKIs in diverse cultural settings. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be valuable in tracking the long-term sustainability of the "mastery" status achieved by non-local lecturers.

Conclusions

This study successfully explored the culture shock phenomenon among non-local lecturers at Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Kerinci, confirming that their acculturation journey follows the established four-phase trajectory: the honeymoon, rejection, adjustment/negotiation, and mastery phases. The initial honeymoon phase is defined by enthusiasm, but this quickly yields to the rejection phase, characterized by affective stress stemming from challenges in navigating high-context communication and local organizational norms. Crucially, the subsequent adjustment/negotiation phase is marked by a deliberate shift toward integrative acculturation strategies, ultimately leading to the mastery phase where lecturers achieve social belonging and cultural competence.

The findings offer significant contextual validation to Oberg's U-Curve model within the under-researched setting of State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI). Specifically, this study contributes to the literature by highlighting that the trough of the rejection phase in this unique environment is amplified by the tripartite negotiation between universal academic culture, local customs, and institutional Islamic values. Furthermore, the successful transition to the mastery phase is demonstrably facilitated not just by individual effort, but by institutional support and mentorship, suggesting that the communal culture of PTKI can act as a powerful mitigating factor for culture shock when strategically engaged.

These insights carry vital practical implications for IAIN Kerinci and similar institutions. The findings recommend the formal establishment of a structured "Intercultural Mentorship Program" that pairs non-local lecturers with local colleagues, focusing specifically on training in high-context communication and the nuances of local religious-cultural adab (etiquette), thus accelerating the adjustment phase. Furthermore, the institution should review its onboarding procedures to proactively address potential sources of frustration identified during the rejection phase, particularly concerning decision-making processes and organizational communication transparency.

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