

# Analysis of Culture Shock Experienced Towards Indonesian Sailors in Overseas

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**Abstract:** This research aimed to find out the culture shock experienced towards Indonesian sailors who sailed to overseas. This research also focused on Indonesian sailors who experienced the cultural shock. There were 60 students as population and 10 students as responded to the questioners who studied Seafarers Training Grade IV Nautical and Machine Majors in BP2IP (Balai Pendidikan dan Pelatihan Ilmu Pelayaran) shipping education and training center Barombong Makassar Indonesia. The method in this research was descriptive qualitative. According to the culture research, it found four kinds of cultural shock (U-curve). They are Honeymoon, Culture Shock (Crisis/Frustration), Adjustment, Mastery. The implication of this research is to give understanding about the phase of culture shock who would like to sail to overseas.

**Keywords:** culture shock, u curve, indonesian sailors.

## 1. Introduction

A sailor is someone who works on passenger ships, freighters, and tanker ships, navigating sea-going vessels and assisting with maintenance, operation, and service of these vessels. Being a seaman is not the easy of career choices. Sailors are required to be at sea for extended periods of time. Most sailors are away from their families for several months before they come back to shore. While this is not a career for everyone, many people continue to find that the positives far outweigh the negatives. It is important to understand that being a sailor is sometimes dangerous work.

The workplace environment is not the most comfortable, as the living quarters on most vessels are often small and cramped with little to no privacy. Working with different people in countries also absolutely creates different perspectives and feeling rather than work in their own country. Therefore, culture shock is becoming the most issue among sailors who sailed in overseas.

Culture shock becomes an interesting topic to be discussed. Every country has a different culture. Culture cannot be separated from humans' life. Culture affects people in their society because of their ideas, values, attitudes, and normative or expected patterns of behaviour.

According to Taylor, culture or civilization is whole complex which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man a member of society [1]. According to Margaret, it means the whole complex of traditional behaviour which has been developed by the human race and is successively learned by each generation [2]. Therefore, it conclude that culture is attitudes, human behaviour, a way of life of people and everything that people have, think, and do as members of a society.

Culture shock is the anxiety and emotional disturbance experienced by people when two sets of realities and conceptualizations meet [3]. Poejiastuti stated that culture shock is relatively short-term feeling of disorientation of comfort due to unfamiliar of surroundings. The differences between cultures can make it very difficult to adjust to the new surroundings. People may encounter unfamiliar clothes, weather, and food as well as different people, schools, values, struggling to do things in new surroundings that were easy back home. Dealing with the differences can be very unsettling; those feelings are part adjusting to a new culture [4].



Culture shock is not a clinical term or medical condition. It is simply a common way to describe the confusing and nervous a person who may have after leaving a familiar culture to live in a new and different culture. Adjusting to a new environment takes a long time. People who cross cultures usually are uncomfortable at first and talk of feeling confused, discouraged, lonely and anxious. As they become more comfortable, however, many people find that learning in a new culture is stimulating and broadening. Based on the background above it is formulated research question “how are the phases of culture shock toward Indonesian sailor in overseas?”. From that question, it gives two objectives in this research, namely: to describe the culture shock and to reveal the phase of culture shock towards Indonesian sailors in overseas. Meanwhile the significance of this research is to give contributions to the readers and scientist to analyze culture shock in other perspectives. To avoid broaden analysis, this research limits the topic of the culture shock and the theory that used to analyze is culture theory by Lysgaard psychology of literature approach by Sigmund Freud [5].

## 2. Literature Review

Brisbin saw cultural sensitivity as the ability to perform accordance with both collectivism and individualism. In his study, cultural sensitivity is defined as the ability to identify whether individual are behaving with a collective or individualistic mindset, to be open-minded to other cultures, and to be flexible enough to behave in an appropriate manner in other culture [6].

Stefanie Baier in *International Students: Culture Shock and Adaption to the U.S Culture*, Teacher Education Department Eastern Michigan University. This study analyzes to what degree cultural background, gender differences, language proficiency, self-confidence/self-efficacy, and social support networks impact the adjustment process of international students to the US culture [7].

The two researchers were analyzing the culture shock in different context. However, this research was focus on the phase of culture shock that experienced by Indonesian sailors who sailed to overseas.

### 2.1 Culture Theory

The theory of culture refers to the process and time it takes a person to assimilate to a new culture. It is not always an easy transition. Living in a new culture can be jarring and very difficult to process, especially if it is drastically different from your own. A person that is being introduced into a new culture can feel a variety of different sensations. For example, one may feel frustrated because she or he cannot communicate or become angry because certain cultural norms do not make sense. In some cultures, spitting in public is considered bad manners. It may make you feel uncomfortable when the people of that culture think nothing of it. Cultural adaptation theory offers an explanation for these emotions. As a process of cultural adjustment, hypothesis of *U-Curve* by Lysgaard (1955 : 51), 1996) following figure of *U-curve* shows the four main stages of adjusting to a foreign culture. This is used as an original model of cultural adjustment.

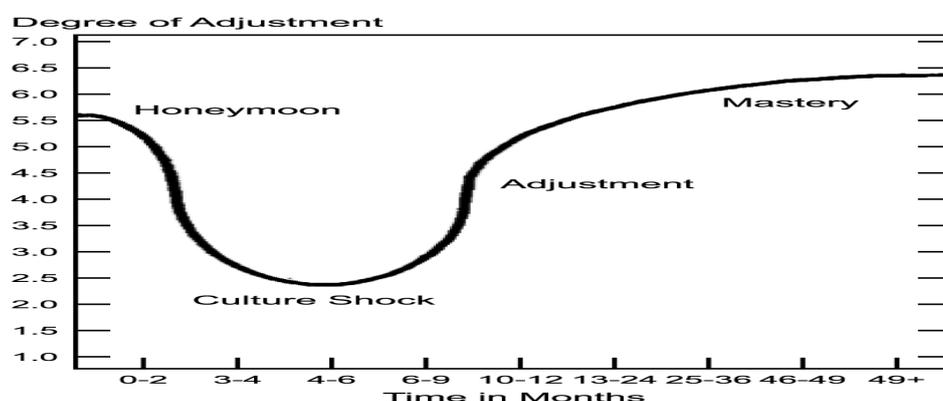


Figure 1. figure of *U-curve* shows the four main stages of adjusting to a foreign culture

## 2.2 Honeymoon

In this phase, people usually see minor problems and look forward to getting new experiences. During the time, cultural differences are seen as attractive and charming and they tend to see only the positive aspects of the difference of the new culture. This phase can last from a few days to about six weeks. People could be interested, open-minded and ready to accept a new culture in this first stage.

## 2.3 Culture shock (Crisis / Frustration)

This stage starts when people begin to see the situation they are in less idealistic and more realistic terms, so they see the more negative aspects of the host culture. The feelings people may experience are frustration, irritability and confusion. Especially the difference in language is a big issue as well as values and beliefs of the country. People find themselves in a situation of disappointment and reflection of the host culture due to the inconsistency between expectations and reality. From this time, people need to start to adjust themselves to a new culture.

## 2.4 Adjustment (Recovery)

This stage is a turning point. During this stage, people return home or they get the understanding and adjust to the host culture. The adjustment involves acquiring greater knowledge of language or culture of host country, and understanding the local situation. Besides, people have the great sense to expect things and to well control themselves.

## 2.5 Mastery

In the final stage, people have a sense of dual cultural identity and can get on with both host and home cultures, which is called biculturalism. They accept the new culture, and even more, start to think differences or similarities are valuable things that can be found only among the people who have experienced culture shock.

## 3. Method

An open questionnaire was developed for the purpose of the study and was administered as students Seafarers Training Grade IV Nautical Majors in BP2IP (Balai Pendidikan dan Pelatihan Ilmu Pelayaran) shipping education and training center Barombong Makassar Indonesia. In the year 2017 for 27 grades, it has two classes with 30 students each. One class is for nautical majority and machine the other one.

The sample was only for sailor students who experienced sailing to overseas. However, it found 5 students in nautical majority and 5 students either in machine majority. All ten students had different places to sail, namely: Singapore(1 student), India (2 students), Netherland (1 student), Qatar (2 students), United Arab Emirates (2 student), Spain (1 student), Malaysia (1 student).

Some points were revealed and asked in the questionnaire:

- How long did you enjoy new experience in new place of your work?
- When did you feel homesick in your work place?
- When did you adjust to the host culture in your work place?
- When did you get on with both host and home culture in your work place?

Each subject completed questionnaire individually at his own convenience. The questionnaires used Bahasa Indonesia to ease the respondents to answer freely and sincere. However, the writer transferred into English to bridge source language into the target language.

The obtained data was analyzed descriptive qualitative as well in the form of narrative presentations. Everything was presented as it was. The data and responses were neither subtracted nor added to maintain the originality of the story. The next step was to find out the respondents' common answers then to create classification. If the respondents' answer had a great variety and proved inconsistent one another then the data was presented as it was.

## 4. Result

### 4.1 Honeymoon

The question was how long they enjoyed new experience in new work place. Many respondents answered between 2 weeks until 4 weeks. These are 3 examples respondents' answers;

*When I joined the company and they sent me to Qatar, it was such as a joy experienced. I found new co-worker, new habits and new environment which it was so different when I worked in Indonesia. It just happened for 3 weeks.*

*I sailed to India and my position was an abbey for one year. Firstly, it felt really nice and joyful because I found new place and new friends but it just happened two weeks. I got difficulty to adjust with Indians' co-worker. They seemed un-tidy and dirty. That eased me to lost nice experience.*

*That was my first time to sail to Singapore. My contract was one year and Alhamdulillah I could finish and still joined that company even though I continued and upgrade my study here. It was nice and excellent experiences. It felt 4 weeks or one month.*

As above comments, the honeymoon phase as the first step in culture shock was joyful and attractive. However, it found different period to enjoy the new experience in new work place of work. Other respondents were mostly answer between second weeks into the fourth weeks.

### 4.2 Culture shock (Crisis / Frustration)

The next question was when they felt homesick in a new work place. This question had short and long answers, it was short because the respondents just answered by writing the numbers, meanwhile it was long description because they shared their feeling. However, the writer just wrote the numbers in the tabulated data below;

**Table 1.** Respondents responded toward culture shock

Initial Name	Country	Feeling homesick
MHR	India	It was in the fourth weeks on board
MA	India	It was in the third weeks on board
IR	Qatar	It was fifth weeks on board
MB	Singapore	It was in Second month
AB	Netherland	It was in Second month
AK	Spain	It was fifth weeks on board
MMW	Malaysia	It was in Second month
MIM	United Arab Emirates	It was in second month on board
AMR	Qatar	It was in sixth weeks
AR	United Arab Emirates	It was in Second month

From the data above, it concluded that it was between third weeks until eighth weeks the respondents felt homesick or culture shock in a new work place. Some of them mentioned feeling homesick to families and food as the basic reason.

### 4.3 Adjustment (recovery)

The third question was asking about the length of the respondents to adjust their new environment towards their life during their running contract. We could see the data below;

**Table 2.** Adjustment Phase

Initial Name	Country	Adjustment
MHR	India	The third month
MA	India	The third month
IR	Qatar	It was in the third month
MB	Singapore	It was in the third month
AB	Netherland	It was in the third month
AK	Spain	It was eighth weeks on board
MMW	Malaysia	The third month
MIM	United Arab Emirates	The third month
AMR	Qatar	It was in tenth weeks
AR	United Arab Emirates	The third month

From the respondents' answer, most of them were in the third of months to adjust in their new work place. However, there were also in eighth and tenth weeks on board.

#### 4.4 Mastery

In the final stage, people had already accepted the new culture, and even more, start to think differences or similarities are valuable things that can be found only among the people who have experienced culture shock. The question was when they got on with both host and home culture in a new work place. The data was tabulated below:

**Table 3.** Mastery Phase

Initial Name	Country	Adjustment
MHR	India	In the fourth month
MA	India	In the fifth month
IR	Qatar	In the fifth month
MB	Singapore	In the fourth month
AB	Netherland	In the fifth month
AK	Spain	In the fifth month
MMW	Malaysia	In the fourth month
MIM	United Arab Emirates	In the fifth month
AMR	Qatar	In the fifth month
AR	United Arab Emirates	In the fourth and half month

The table above shows the respondents' answers to the fourth question. Based on the table above, in mastery phase of culture shock was between in fourth and fifth month.

## 5. Discussion

As it has been stated before that living in the different places in the long period away from family and natural habits from the mother land cannot be avoided for the Indonesian sailors to work in overseas to earn money as their profession and responsibility to their family. People from one context moved to the new context because of several reasons. And, of course mobility might change the nature of our society, and it also affects the individuals involved. This present findings had revealed the phase of respondents' culture shock experienced. The phase used U-curve used to analyze culture theory by Lysgaard and psychology of literature approach by Sigmund Freud.

The first phase is honeymoon. It is the phase where people usually see minor problems and look forward to getting new experiences. During the time, cultural differences are seen as attractive and charming and they tend to see only the positive aspects of the difference of the new culture. From respondents' answer, it found between two until four weeks to gain attractive and joyful to work in overseas. In addition, they also shared several reasons, namely: getting new environment, new co-workers from different countries, food, culture, and also the condition on board was different from Indonesia.

The second phase is culture shock (crisis/ frustration). The data found that they were in the critical situation where the most respondents began to see the situation more negative aspects of the host culture. Actually, in the beginning of their arrival, they did not pay any attention to the language, where English language became their communication on board. Meanwhile, in this second phase they did in frustration and getting disappointed towards language, missing their families, home food, and the culture due to the inconsistency between expectations and reality. The data shows, it was between third weeks until eighth weeks the respondents felt stress, homesick and culture shock in a new work place.

The third phase is adjustment (recovery). Recovery means people have great sense to control themselves to see and learn about the language and culture of host culture. Their adjustment involves greater knowledge to understand their surroundings. The questionnaires described the respondents' answers that most of them were in the third of months to adjust in their new work place. However, there were also in eighth and tenth weeks on board. Some of respondent just wrote the numbers, meanwhile there were also mentioned their reason about getting adjustment in work place, namely; professionalism, career, experience and money. They stated that overseas has good money rather than working in Indonesia.

The last phase is mastery. In this stage, respondents had a sense of dual cultural identity and language that could get on with both host and home cultures and language. They had already accepted the new culture, and even more, start to think differences or similarities are valuable things that can be found only among the people who have experienced culture shock. The respondents' answer was getting in mastery phase is between in fourth and fifth month which they had enjoyed their work and life on board. In addition, several respondents noted also on their questionnaires that they are even still in contract towards that company and now they are in off position, after finishing their grade, they would back to sail to overseas.

## **6. Conclusion**

The result of this study indicates that Indonesian sailors sailed to overseas also experienced culture shock. The phase of having culture shock was described in the U-curve, namely; honeymoon, culture shock (crisis/ frustration), adjustment (recovery), and mastery.

It had been revealed that sailors in honeymoon phase were between two until four weeks to gain attractive and joyful to work in overseas. In cultures shock phase, the data shows, it was between the third week until eighth week the respondents felt stress, homesick and culture shock in a new work place. However, the third phase is adjustment (recovery) where the respondents began to adjust and learn about the language and culture of the host culture. It was in the third of month to adjust in their new work place. However, there were also in eighth and tenth week on board. The last phase is mastery, the respondents answered that it is between fourth and fifth month to enjoy their work and master the condition of their surroundings.

It is strongly recommended for the sailors who want to sail to overseas for the first time to browse and learn about the host culture. And also, it is recommended to practice and learns about English language as daily conversation on board.

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