A Study of UNIMEN Students' Perspectives on Cross-Cultural Adaptation in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the perspectives of Universitas Muhammadiyah Enrekang (UNIMEN) students on cross-cultural adaptation during their international internship in Thailand. Community service programs, which are mandatory for Indonesian tertiary students, offer practical experiences that bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world application. This research focuses on the challenges and adaptation strategies employed by students participating in teaching practices at private Thai schools. Using a qualitative methodology and thematic analysis, data were collected through interviews with eight fifth-semester students majoring in English Language Education. The findings identify eight key challenges: administrative issues, health problems, psychological stress, social integration difficulties, teaching challenges, culture shock, language barriers, and inadequate facilities. Cultural barriers, such as differences in the education system and social norms, led to experiences of homesickness and stress. Language difficulties were particularly pronounced due to limited Thai and English proficiency among locals. To address these challenges, students adopted several strategies, including seeking social support, engaging in cultural learning, using sign language, and fostering communication with locals. These strategies helped alleviate culture shock, improve cross-cultural understanding, and enhance teaching effectiveness. The study underscores the importance of adequate preparation, including cultural learning modules, and provides valuable insights for universities to better support future participants in international community service programs.

Keyword: Cross-cultural adaptation, Community service, Culture shock, International internship, UNIMEN students.

INTRODUCTION

Community service programs are activities that all students in Indonesian tertiary institutions are required to participate in. In Indonesian universities, community service programs have been in place for a long time. This activity is further bolstered by Article 20, paragraph 2 of the Law of the Republic of

Indonesia No. 20 of 2003 governing the National Education System, which stipulates that "higher education is required to provide education, research, and community service."

When students are in their fifth or seventh semester, they frequently participate in this activity. Community service programs help prepare participants to adjust to real-world situations. This program is typically carried out by sending students to specific communities to see how students implement teaching theories gained on campus and provide insight into how work is carried out in the chosen study program. Students gain and improve their competency due to this community service program practice.

This program is also undertaken outside of the country, known as an "international internship, by selecting students who can hold teaching practices overseas. This program's implementation in another country is an example of world-class institution implementation. At the Indonesian university level, especially for the UNIMEN (Universitas Muhammadiyah Enrekang) students, are enlisting in more significant numbers to participate in community service programs at some private Thai schools. The school charter emphasizes the importance of providing an environment and resources to meet students' life and social requirements.

Prospective teachers' students will have real teaching chances and experience through teaching practice in the community service program (Astuti et al., 2014; Hashona, 2014).

However, challenges will arise inside and outside the classroom for students participating in an international program. According to Rawjee et al. (2012), it causes students to experience cultural shock, language challenges, homesickness, educational system differences, and the loss of their existing social network. These difficulties make internship students feel uneasy, disoriented, puzzled, and worried, mainly when they are in a foreign country that they have never visited before, a situation known as a cultural barrier. This drives students to work hard to find answers to challenges they encounter throughout their internship. This study seeks to explore how UNIMEN students experience and adapt to their community service program in Thailand, focusing on the obstacles they encounter and the strategies they employ to overcome them.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Cross-Cultural Adaptation

Cross-cultural adaptation is vital to maintaining homeostasis and finding relaxation and comfort in a new context (Jantsch, 1980). Inherent in human nature, adaptation is a tool that should be utilized when encountering a foreign culture for the first time. Immigrants and their host communities must communicate well to survive for successful cross-cultural adaptation. Change occurs because of these communication activities (von Bertalanffy, 1968). After a period, the individual can create a relatively consistent, mutually beneficial, and productive relationship with the new culture.

Individuals' experiences in a new and unfamiliar culture are described by phrases such as acculturation, deculturation, adjustment, integration, assimilation, and culture shock, which are all concepts used by Kim (2001) in his cross-cultural adaptation theory to characterize their experiences. Kim can connect these concepts to cross-cultural adaptability.

Assimilation refers to how a person adapts to a new culture and acquires some of its characteristics. Another important term is deculturation, which means letting go of old habits while adopting new ones. Cuisine, clothing, music, and other "surface" components of a culture's traditions tend to alter first due to acculturation and deculturation. When civilizations interact and learn from one another, more profound changes can occur in moral and ethical standards, joy, and aesthetic beauty (Kim, 2017).

People's reluctance to change and their desire to preserve their previous habits add to the "stress" associated with adaptive changes. Someone can choose to protect their former behaviors and remain true to their original self if they so want. A person's ability to cope with stress and achieve a state of equilibrium is enhanced through learning new skills, habits, and inventiveness as he or she tries to achieve a state of equilibrium (Kim, 2017). People pass through the "stress" stage and begin to experience the "adaptation" stage because of their efforts and experiences. Adaptation necessitates stress, in this perspective. That is to say, the more one strives in the stress phase, the better one becomes at adapting to the phase. The "growth" process begins when the individual has successfully dealt with stress and adaptability. In the new surroundings, one does not feel alienated or alone; one's sense of self-equilibrium and self-fulfillment are all part of the growth process.

As has been mentioned before that student who participate in the international internship program mostly experience cultural shock, language challenges, et cetera. This is because they are placed in a new circumstance where they have not experienced it before. The impact of the above problems makes it students are difficult to socialize with the community. This point elaborates on some obstacles above that have been hampering students' community service or international internships.

Cultural Shock

Many researchers have defined the meaning of cultural shock. Winkelman (1994) states that culture shock occurs when person moves from his or her native culture to another where he/she feels uncomfortable with the environment. This situation makes people feel depressed due to a lack of knowledge about the place background where they visit.

This explanation is in line with Oberg's (1960) perspective that culture shock is a feeling of confusion, especially for those who have been unexpectedly going abroad. This means when people move to a new nation or experience a new culture, they may face culture shock, which

is defined as feelings of uncertainty, perplexity, or anxiety.

Culture shock can be caused by a variety of factors, both major and minor factors, such as unfamiliar greetings, hand gestures, strange food, language difficulties, and getting lost in a new city (Grafia, 2019). These things happen and are unavoidable for those who just want to visit a country without acquiring sufficient insight regarding the new place.

Therefore, Xia (2009) states that to avoid culture shock when traveling to a particular country, people should have obtained important information, e.g., history of the place, folk's character and belief system, language, and food culinary.

The culture shock situation above can be exemplified to the African students while studying in Indonesia for the students' exchange program. The study was conducted by Mihayo (2019). She reveals that most African students from 2016, 2017, and 2018 had experienced culture shock for the first time, greeting Indonesian society.

Furthermore, this study shows that, psychologically, African students were stressed and depressed just because they had to adapt to a new situation and culture that they had never faced before, such as education system, food, social value, and living condition. Thereby, the implication of this condition degrades African students' motivation in conducting their academic activities.

Strategy to Deal with the Culture Shock

At this point, the researchers elaborate some strategies and ways to deal with and resolve culture shock based on experts' thoughts. Zhou et al. (2008) argue that the most logical reason why people are getting culture shock when visiting a new place is that they do not have cultural understanding. In addition, Noer, Astri & Hairuddin (2021) stated that when studying in a foreign country, it is essential to understand the dynamics of international community interaction.

This triggers academicians to facilitate students with the Cultural Learning (CL) topic when desiring to conduct students exchange program. The CL approach will give a preservice explanation to students about the understanding of culture in a particular area, e.g., ethnocentrism, local wisdom, belief system, language, cultural identity, and people's character. By having the CL understanding, students can minimize their shock when adapting to a new circumstance (Baharuddin & Arafah, 2021).

Another strategy to minimize stress due to culture shock is amplified by Wahyuni (2019). Based on her research, she classifies some ways to face culture shock, e.g., self-confidence, acceptance, seeking social support. The first strategy refers to people's optimism and belief that they can handle the situation. Whenever they meet or socialize with a new community that has a different culture and behavior, they are optimistic that they can

overcome their nervous, shock, and miss-cultural understanding.

Furthermore, the second strategy regards the acceptance, which means students, as a foreigner who visits a new place, should understand and respect the custom of the area. However, this custom might be suitable or opposed to their original custom. By accepting this culture, the exchange students or people who like traveling worldwide might minimize their confusion (Baharuddin & Gosal, 2020).

The last strategy relates to social support, which means students can consult their problems, stress, and unstable feeling with their friends, family, or professional consultant. This strategy also discusses how to heal the pressure if the students are shocked.

In addition, Mihayo (2019) enhances a good strategy that can be applied for the exchange student to avoid being depressed because of culture shock, i.e., getting involved in campus activities. These activities should be in line with the student's passion and interest. It could be an activity that can support their academics or hobbies.

For instance, the exchange students majoring in the English Language Studies Program can join the English club that facilitates them to conduct debate, storytelling, reading poetry, and TOEFL/IELTS practice. These activities are expected to increase students' English language skills and forget their stress.

On the other hand, the exchange students can also participate and join a particular organization that matches their hobbies, such as dancing, singing, swimming, etc. These activities are surely recommended for students who desire to minimize their stress and depression.

Benefits of Applying Strategies in Culture Shock

The previous point just discussed that students should practice some strategies to overcome the culture shock. By having and applying strategies, students can obtain benefits that can support their further career in many aspects such as language acquisition, new social networks, lots of experiences, and cross-cultural understanding.

For instance, if the students are concerned about studying the Culture Learning of the area they are visiting, they become multicultural persons. They can respect each other, easily socialize with their new friends, expand their social network, and be accepted wherever they want to travel.

Furthermore, suppose the students apply Mihayo's (2019) strategy (joining the English club or any engaging communities in line with their passion and hobbies) to overcome their stress and depression due to the culture shock. In that case, they can obtain various benefits, e.g., improving language skills, developing self-confidence in public speaking, etc (Baharuddin et al., 2021).

METHODS

Research Design

This study was designed by using the qualitative research method. This method

investigated the students' perspectives on cross-cultural adaptation in Thailand. This was also to explore and examine possible qualitative data overlooked in previous studies.

Participants

The study applied the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is most useful when studying a specific cultural domain (Tongco, 2007). Participants selected in this study were the students of Universitas Muhammadiyah Enrekang (UNIMEN) who had carried out an international internship program in Thailand. The criteria for participants in the international internship program were (1) passing three stages of the test (English language skills, talent, and read/write the Quran), and (2) participating in preparation for learning culture, English, and talent. Eight students had participated in this study. They were in the fifth semester majoring in English Language Education (PBI).

Data Collection

The researchers collected the data through the interview as the research instrument. This instrument was given to investigate the students' perception regarding cross-cultural adaptation in Thailand. The interview guide was revised and adapted from the interview guide by Nurbatra (2017). A semi-structured interview was conducted using a prepared interview guide, recorder, and notes. There were two stages to the interview; (1) participants were invited and asked for their willingness to participate in this study, and (2) the researchers interviewed nine students individually to get more information related to the students' perceptions and experiences based on ten topic questions in the guideline.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by using thematic analysis. In qualitative research, thematic analysis is the most popular method for examining participant responses (Braun and Clarke, 2006). There were three stages; (1) summarizing the data by selecting the essential points and classifying the data based on specific themes, (2) presenting the data by making a brief description of the results, and (3) drawing conclusion and verification to review the objective of the study.

FINDING

Researchers discovered eight issues that interns confront while undertaking overseas internships in southern Thailand. The following are the solutions to the problems:

1. Administration (Visa)

Due to the fact that this program is implemented abroad, interns are required to bring their visas and passports to participate. In this example, researchers discovered three informants having difficulty getting visa extensions while in the country. This is because they do not know how to extend the validity of their visa. The other five informants, on the other hand, had no

problems obtaining a visa. The following is what they said:

"Problem when applying for a visa since they don't understand the procedure; solution: contact the school's director to assist." (Transcript 1.1)

"We were having difficulties applying for a visa since I was unfamiliar with the system; our visa was almost up. Therefore, it occurred to me that if it was not extended quickly, we might be sent home." As a result, the school and we had to investigate ways and information for visa extensions, and as a result, it was extended without penalty thanks to the work of our visa director." (Transcript 1.3)

Because they did not understand the process or how to do it while in the nation, they had problems extending their visas, according to the statement. As a workaround, they turn to the school for help in securing their visas. According to their testimony in the interview, the solution they came up with was effective in solving the problem.

2. Health Problems

At this time, the researcher discovered that eight of the informants had health issues. This is due to various variables, including weather changes, persons who become ill easily, problems with certain drugs, and the Covid 19 epidemic. They explained:

"The drugs used in Indonesia are significantly different from those used in Thailand; thankfully, I have a supply of medicines and must utilize them wisely." (Transcript 2.2)

" Because the weather in Indonesia and Thailand differs slightly, it has an impact on my health, so I must get enough rest, take medication, and try to acclimate to the weather there. As a result, my health will be restored." (Transcript 2.4)

It may be inferred that various factors, including multiple drugs, frequent illness and exhaustion, and weather changes, contributed to their health difficulties during their apprenticeship in Thailand. Some of these concerns can be dealt with by carrying medicines and vitamins from home, obtaining adequate rest and adjusting to the weather in the new location. They stated that their answer was primarily to tackle their problem in the interview. Although it takes a long time to acclimate to changing climate, it is gradually becoming possible.

3. Psychological Problems

According to the researcher's investigation on psychological issues, eight informants stated this was a common concern among interns. They mentioned the following:

"They distinguished themselves too much from the alumnus who had been apprenticed at the school, putting pressure on me and lowering my mental capacity. To relieve some of that stress, I try to excel in all I do and to be the greatest at everything I do." (Transcript 4.2)

"When I initially came, I was overcome with homesickness and a strong desire to return home. This made me want to give up on continuing this internship program. Still, with the help of friends and a teacher from school,

I was eventually able to control my mental state and treat homesickness, and I always spoke with them via video chat or telephone." *(Transcript 4.6)*

Their psychological well-being suffered as a result of this statement, including being constantly differentiated by previous interns, academic pressure, homesickness, and separation from their families, among other things. These people get around this by continually doing well and thinking optimistically in order to reduce anxiety levels. Based on the interview results, they said that the remedies they came up with could help them overcome their psychological issues.

4. Social Problems

The researcher discovered that six informants experienced issues with their social milieu, specifically their roommates and school setting, at the time. On the other hand, the other two students have no problems with their social surroundings. They mentioned the following:

"Due to a lack of comprehension of the local language, there is little interaction between pupils and neighbors in the vicinity of the school. The answer is to study the local language by asking students or residents for some vocabulary words that are thought to be similar". *(Transcript 6.5)*

"I have a problem with my roommate, and it's a problem sleeping with the students, where the garbage is scattered around the room, and of course, it can cause boredom for the interns because they are focused on

preparing teaching materials, so I have to accept the situation and try to always talk to them to keep the room clean. (Transcript 6.8)

They are uneasy with their housemates as a result of these difficulties, which include a lack of cleanliness and a continual thousand, which disturbs the interns. Additionally, there is a lack of social connection with the community as a result of language barriers and the embarrassment associated with saying hello. The cure is to regularly remind them to be courteous of their roommate, to always endeavor to be nice, and to greet them with a smile. They mentioned in their interview that the method they chose resolved the issue successfully.

5. Teaching Problems

The eight informants reported that their teaching difficulties stemmed from issues with instructional schedules and supplies. Aside from that, linguistic barriers make it tough to communicate with students.

"Because I teach at the elementary and junior high school levels, the challenge is in preparing the material because there are no books provided for junior high school, so I have to find the material myself," they explained. The solution is that I frequently inquire of other community service buddies about the junior high school subject being taught." (Transcript 7.4)

"I don't know what it was because I was the only internship student at the school, but teaching directly because of direct instruction from the school without any planning and observation, confusing interns like me, especially at that time when they immediately got a lot of classes to teach,

especially at that time when they immediately got a lot of classes to teach, I don't know what it was because I was the only internship student at the school." But I had to accept and live it because it is my primary responsibility to choose this internship and alleviate my bewilderment. I asked my tutor teacher to teach or provide some guidance on what I should do when I go to school." (Transcript 7.5)

They had difficulties when teaching as a result of this statement, including students who did not understand and caused a commotion, the teaching schedule, and the prepared content. Their solution to these issues is to incorporate sign language and a small amount of previously learned Thai language, even if it is only the fundamentals, and to always include games related to the material being taught, in addition to using teaching methods that are simple for students to understand, such as tool demonstration. They stated in the interview that this strategy worked when they attempted it and that it worked despite the lengthy process.

6. Culture Shock

At this stage, seven informants stated that they experienced culture shock when they first arrived in the country. Meanwhile, one informant did not experience culture shock because he had researched and learned about Thailand to acclimate to all of the differences when he arrived.

"I felt like I just wanted to go back to Indonesia for the first two weeks since the reality was not what I envisioned before

going; there were numerous disparities in everything," they stated. But I can overcome this by spending a lot of time speaking with my friends and teachers there and gradually learning about their culture." (Transcript 8.4)

"I thought the local people's culture and the culture they accepted were slightly different, causing culture shock, but I understood that I was gradually learning about local culture and accepting differences, allowing me to adapt and overcome the culture shock I was experiencing." (Transcript 8.8)

There are a number of factors that contribute to this issue, including cultural differences, food, discomfort, adjustment, and disparities in acceptance of the expression that reality isn't as nice as the expectations felt while in Thailand. Because we as immigrants must adjust to other nations, the approach they take to solve these challenges is to become accustomed to describing cultural differences or customs so that they comprehend and not misinterpret the local culture.

7. Language Barrier

For anyone visiting a country for the first time, language issues are a common and debilitating difficulty. These incidents occurred to their eight informants, who claimed that the several languages used made communication difficult, primarily because (Thai) pupils, some professors, and members of the community did not speak English, despite the fact that English is an international language. As a result, the

informants began looking for solutions to these issues.

"Communicating with students, instructors, and the community is challenging; even when we use English to speak, only a small percentage of people understand because their language is still thick, so I have to use body language first, then English to ask for things." To get through these obstacles, I had to study their language so that I could interact with them; it took me approximately a month to learn enough Thai to communicate with them." (Transcript 9.6)

"Even though Malay and Indonesian appear to be similar, they have a lot of variances in pronunciation since Malay is thicker and has more distinguishing traits. So, I learned Malay to speak with them." (Transcript 9.8)

The challenge they confront is that it is complicated for them to speak or ask for something with people in Thailand, including pupils and teachers, due to the differences in languages, particularly Thai people's low English proficiency. So, to cope with this difficulty, they use body language, and the apprentice pupils learn the language of the people who live there to accommodate themselves, even if only the fundamentals can address the problem. They stated in the interview that the remedy they applied aided them or was successful.

8. **Facilities Problem**

The most vital aspects of any environment are the facilities. This problem affects seven informants since the absence of facilities makes it difficult to attend

(Thailand). Such as sleeping amenities, teaching facilities, personal use facilities, and so forth.

"There was a month when it was hot outside, and there was no fan in our room, so we were frequently overheated, so I contacted the school director, and they provided us a fan, even though one could at least alleviate the heat." (Transcript 10.1)

"Inadequate amenities, such as rooms without toilets and other equipment, forced my buddy to inquire about the absence of facilities with the director." (Transcript 10.2)

Apprentices are uneasy since the school does not provide adequate amenities. For example, a lack of room facilities encourages students to join forces, everyday amenities, and teaching facilities. When they discovered that the school's facilities were lacking, they came up with a solution by contacting the school director. Room facilities, for example, were cited as a problem in an interview since the school had a limited number of rooms and the students had to accept what was given them.

DISCUSSION

International internships are challenging because they necessitate substantial preparation, which includes mental preparation, financial planning, administrative planning, and a variety of other issues, among others. We have also learned, through the course of this apprenticeship, that teaching is tough when you don't have any prior experience or have never

received formal training, as Marion (2007) stated out, this is especially true for individuals who have only recently entered the field of education. Furthermore, this program takes place in a country with a separate language, culture, and social environment, all of which can present difficulties when undertaking an internship in a different country. One of the reasons why researchers are investigating the problem that international internship students are experiencing while performing teaching practices in southern Thailand is to benefit from the experiences of internship student alumni, which includes researchers themselves. For students who are interested in participating in overseas internships in the future, this document is intended to serve as a reference or guideline.

According to the findings of the informant study, there are eight issues that internship students experience when teaching practices in southern Thailand: The first is an administrative issue. According to Nurbatra (2015), a visa is necessary for traveling abroad because it serves as an official permit letter to stay in the target nation. In this situation, the visa must be processed within the ISL time. Visas and passports have been the most critical documentation for apprentices to join this program since it was launched abroad. In this example, the internship students file their passports at the immigration office before leaving, while the Universitas Muhammadiyah

Enrekang's International Affairs Office assists with visa processing.

Due to the fact that some students did not know how to extend their visas during their internship and the school where they were residing for the first time did not know how to do so as well, they had to travel back and forth between immigration and even the Indonesian embassy in order to do so. Students that participate in this community program request that the school aid them in seeking a visa extension in order to deal with their current circumstance, which is a visa denial. Universities and colleges that are ignorant of their visa extension seek information and advice from experienced individuals. The second problem involved a medical concern. For the uninitiated, health is defined as a condition of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, rather than simply the absence of illness or weakness.

As a result, personal health is critical for carrying out tasks. Students must also deal with this issue when completing internships in foreign countries. This was also a difficulty for students participating in overseas internships in southern Thailand who were pursuing health-related careers. When some of the internship students get sick, such as with ulcers, headaches, coughs, and other diseases, they are met with treatments that are different from those they are accustomed to while in Indonesia. This is a challenge for some of the interns who are prone to illness. They are fortunate in that they bring

their medications from Indonesia, which they must take with caution.

Aside from that, the majority of the student interns said that they had to deal with a climate that was different from that of Indonesia. In his journal, Nurbatra (2015) states that South Thailand has a different environment. Several students became ill throughout the ISL process. It was so hot that some students became dehydrated and could not engage fully in the ISL program. When the weather was inclement during the transition season, infections could strike. When they returned to Indonesia, they were confronted with the Covid 19 Pandemic, forcing apprentices to take extra precautions with their health. They brought medicines from home, took medicine and vitamins, got appropriate rest, and adjusted to the local weather to deal with the situation. The third issue was psychological issues. When it comes to psychology, which involves a person's mental state, thoughts, and behavior in new situations, this is a significant issue for internship students when they are in a new place that is unfamiliar to them, particularly in Thailand, where they are required to be far away from family, friends, and people they interact with regularly. It causes students to confront issues such as culture shock, language difficulties, homesickness, variations in the educational system, and the loss of their established social network, according to Rawjee, et al. (2012).

This necessitates the control of their mental state. Many factors influence their mental health while they are there, including homesickness, school pressure, and the availability of statements that distinguish between former and current community service program participants; all of these factors, of course, can contribute to their psychological difficulties. To deal with this problem, students should always do good work, think positively to release tension, and call or video call with their families to treat homesickness. The fourth issue was social issues. According to Holsaple (2012), interns who participated in an internship program were more tolerant in society, especially when dealing with differences. Internships undertaken by students in an international program would confront several challenges due to various events occurring in multiple settings. Interns, particularly their relationships with housemates, go through it during their International Internship.

Some interns expressed dissatisfaction with their housemates, stating that they could not get along. For example, a cluttered room, a lack of cleanliness awareness, and the need to clean it; additionally, they constantly seek attention from the teachers. Then there's the lack of social interaction with the community due to language barriers and the humiliation of saying hi. To address this issue, interns urge them always to be kind to their roommates, be friendly, and greet everyone with a smile. The fifth program was a teaching one. Apprentices are expected to teach in schools that associations in southern Thailand have formed.

They teach subjects according to their competence or majors, although some also teach other subjects taught by tutor teachers as part of their foreign internships. They encountered teaching issues in two ways: teaching schedules and teaching materials.

There is the issue of teaching schedules, which is important because interns need time to observe classes, students, and the whole ambiance of the school. In the event that they are permitted only one day of recuperation, they are immediately allocated a teaching schedule, with some being assigned more than 10 classes to teach in one week. As a result, they had Kindergarten, Pre-Primary (Primary), Mattayom 1-3 (junior high school), and Mattayom 3-6 (senior high school) classrooms in less than a week after starting construction. The second challenge that interns face is customizing teaching materials to fit the needs of students in a classroom setting. According to them, they taught English, Malay, and mathematics, which presented a challenge when educating students who could not understand the topic. As a result, the class became raucous, and the apprentices found it difficult to maintain control over the situation. Aside from that, despite the fact that they had prepared the necessary materials for the session, the necessary adjustments proved to be more difficult than they had anticipated.

When they encounter difficulties, they employ sign language and a small amount of Thai language, even if it is simply the fundamentals, to help them solve their problems. They always contain games that are connected to the content being taught and employ simple approaches that are easy for students to understand, such as employing tools to demonstrate how to use the equipment properly. This was backed up by Noom-ura (2013), who noted that an additional high-ranking issue among Thai students is a lack of English language competence. Despite studying English for around six years in primary school, secondary school pupils' skills are still rudimentary. As a result, the internship participants create a role-play to solve the problem. The sixth was a cultural shock, defined as a sensation of worry, depression, or uncertainty caused by a disconnect between your own culture, environment, and traditions while living in a foreign nation or civilization.

According to Veda and Rani (2016), a culture barrier occurs when people become conscious of their values, beliefs, and attitudes due to their diverse backgrounds. It usually affects international students studying and living outside of their own country and travelers. Those subjected to culture shock go through periods of euphoria, discomfort, adjustment, and a different acceptance that reality is not as beautiful as their expectations in Thailand. There was something wrong about the lunch, according to the interns, who said that the cuisine was mostly sour, the vegetables were eaten uncooked, and their drinks were frigid and sweet when they were there. In Indonesia, we eat breakfast with warm and fried beverages, therefore this is strange for them. Some said

they were unaware of aspects of Thai culture, such as how to properly greet the elderly and how to accept gifts without becoming insulted.

To address this issue, they have become accustomed to discussing cultural differences or practices to comprehend, not misinterpret, and learn about the local culture. This is necessary since we, as immigrants, must adjust to new environments. Daro, et cetera (2013). Culture shock is a common occurrence when someone visits a new place they have never visited, and it has been demonstrated that anyone entering a new environment will experience it.The most common issue faced by interns there was the fifth language barrier. The participants in this multinational program claimed that they had linguistic difficulties. Interns have a hard time engaging with locals.

Therefore, language becomes a challenge. Interns converse in English, but only a few people, such as teachers, particularly English instructors, and principals, comprehend it. Thai is spoken in some parts of Thailand, while Malay is spoken in others. Although Indonesian is similar to Malay, the interns in the program do not speak the language and must struggle to interact with the locals. To address this issue, they began connecting with those who did not speak English or Malay using sign language and studying community languages such as Thai and Malay. According to Wulan & Dwi (2020), the most challenging issue for participants was language. This is because the participants do not speak Thai, and the students do not speak

Indonesian. One of the means of communication should be English as an international language.

On the other hand, the participants believe that Thai students find it challenging to communicate in English. The eighth issue was with the facilities they receive while there; some students believe that the facilities they receive are inadequate, particularly housing facilities; one student stated that he received a room that he had to share with other students, which could disrupt the interns' privacy and concentration; others indicated that they received a room without a toilet, forcing them to leave the room to take a shower; and others stated that they did not receive facilities such as a fan, forcing them to overheat at all times. Then there's the issue of teaching facilities, specifically the lack of appropriate teaching aids and teaching stationery. To address these issues, they enquired at the school about the issue of limited living amenities while purchasing teaching materials from local stationery stores.

CONCLUSIONS

The researchers conclude that during their community service program in Thailand, the UNIMEN students face several challenges due to the unfamiliar environment and their lack of prior international work experience. Based on the data collected, the problems were categorized into the following areas: 1) Administration, 2) Health Problems, 3) Psychological Issues, 4) Social Problems, 5)

Teaching Problems, 6) Culture Shock, 7) Language Barriers, and 8) Facility Problems.

For example, as seen in Transcript 1.1, the students were unaware of the procedure for obtaining a visa, a crucial document for visiting a foreign country. Additionally, the weather in Thailand became a significant health issue for some students (Transcript 2.4), contributing to physical discomfort during their community service. Moreover, the language barrier, particularly with Thailand's local language, made it difficult for students to socialize and communicate effectively with Thai people, as seen in Transcripts 9.6 and 9.8.

To address these challenges, the students employed various strategies. For health-related issues caused by the Thai weather, students bought medicine and took vitamins to strengthen their immune systems. Many students also experienced homesickness, which affected their mental and emotional well-being. To cope with this, they used digital devices such as mobile phones and laptops to stay connected with family and friends through video calls, WhatsApp, and Facebook.

Lastly, to overcome teaching challenges and the language barrier when conveying content to Thai students, UNIMEN students used sign language and gestures, particularly with those who did not speak English.

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