

## Management of Self-Taught Learning for Non-Religious Background Students toward Culture Shock at One State Islamic University

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received: 07-04-2023

Revised: 17-06-2023

Accepted: 07-07-2023

#### Keyword:

Culture Shock;  
Islamic Higher Education;  
Non-Religious Background  
Students;  
Self-Taught Learning.

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges of students from non-religious backgrounds when facing culture shock and highlight the management of self-taught learning carried out by students of one of the Islamic tertiary institutions in Bandung. This article used qualitative research method, a case study. Primary data source came from interviews with eight participants. The data analysis technique used was data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results showed that students with non-religious backgrounds who majored in religion at Islamic tertiary institutions experienced culture shock when participating in learning. The culture shock was in the form of being left behind in understanding the core theories of the department, due to their educational background coming from a public school. It required the students to start from zero compared to students with religious education backgrounds (Madrasah Aliyah and pesantren) who could directly participate in learning and deepen the knowledge. Based on the results of interviews with the respondents, the most common self-taught learning they did were study in their free time, study hard and study outside class hours, by reading books from various literacy.

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### How to Cite:

Syafnan, S., Putra, E., Bustami, Y., & Surayya, L. (2023). Management of Self-Taught Learning for Non-Religious Background Students toward Culture Shock at State Islamic University. *Ta'dib: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 28(1), 13-24

 <https://doi.org/10.19109/td.v28i1.16809>

### INTRODUCTION

One of the crucial problems in the world of education is culture shock. All levels of students can experience this problem such as elementary school students, high school students, and even college students. Culture shock is a person's psychological pressure that is felt in new social conditions. Culture shock can also be understood as a process of initial

adjustment to a new environment (Goldstein & Keller, 2015; Pacheco, 2020). culture shock can be triggered by a sense of anxiety resulting from the loss of all symbols and signs with long-known social relationships. Research has also shown that culture shock can have a negative impact on students' sociocultural and psychological adaptation (Xiaoqiong, 2008; Yang et al., 2018)

The moving of locations from villages to cities causes and creates problems for the students themselves. Moving to a new school environment is one of the most traumatic events in one's academic life, as for most newcomers, culture shock at some level is unavoidable (Brown & Holloway, 2008). Students who experience culture shock tend to feel disoriented because they have difficulty adjusting to a new environment (Fanari et al., 2021).

When students experience culture shock like the conditions above, students become disappointed or unstable in the new school environment. They feel that there is a cultural clash in the new environment with the previous environment. It requires them to adapt by understanding what they should carry out. The intensity of these difficult feelings varies depending on the context and the person (Skakni et al., 2022). So that in the end culture shock is interpreted as a process in which students feel discomfort, anxiety, and distress in a new culture (Pacheco, 2020).

Several previous studies such as Lin (2006) revealed that adaptation to a new culture as mentioned as a process undertaken by students could be classified into three phases: experiencing culture shock, seeking social support to overcome culture shock, and gaining intercultural competence. Meanwhile, Cupsa (2018) revealed that the existence of culture shock had implications for student identity which can help him or her develop, understand more and have a long mind in dealing with orders at the personal level, between individuals, and between groups. With an understanding of culture shock, students can build compassionate capacities for themselves and others and become more sensitive to what a person needs when facing radical life changes.

Changes in the environment felt by a student are also accompanied by a change in institutional status to a better-quality level. The transformation of the Islamic Religious Institute into an Islamic University also colored Islamic education in Indonesia. Therefore, it is possible that many students not only come from religious educational backgrounds but also come from general educational backgrounds (non-religious backgrounds). Apart from that, there is also a comparison of religion majors which dominates more than general majors because many students from general education major in religion. So that students from general education majoring in religion find it difficult to adapt or experience culture shock to the environment and the subjects studied in the religion department. This condition happened in one of the Islamic tertiary institutions in Bandung.

Self-taught learning can be used as an alternative learning model for students who experience culture shock to provide a balance to religious subjects that were not previously studied in public schools. Self-taught learning can be understood as the act of learning to educate students themselves. This article explores the challenges of students from non-religious backgrounds when they face culture shock at an Islamic university in Bandung. In addition, this article also aims to highlight the management of self-taught learning carried out by students of one of the Islamic tertiary institutions in Bandung. This is very urgent because not all students who have the opportunity to study at Islamic tertiary institutions

have a good scientific basis and capacity. So it requires additional religious studies to follow and complete the standard lecture load set by universities.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Student Culture shock**

Culture shock comes from a combination of two words, namely the word culture which means the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group., and also the word shock which means a sudden upsetting or surprising event or experience. So when combined, culture shock has the meaning of the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes (Wangsanata et al., 2021). In Indonesia what is referred as culture shock is interpreted as something that describes a person's condition in dealing with situations and conditions towards environmental changes that are different from the environment in which he or she lives (Harlinda & Susilo, 2018). Some experts define culture shock as an anxiety experienced by an individual in adjusting to a new environment, which is different from the original environment, due to differences in social interaction, culture and must live with the new culture for quite a long time with a specific purpose (Khoirunnisa & Soemantri, 2019; Lombard, 2014). Meanwhile, according to Furham and Bocher cited in Julianti (2019), culture shock is when an individual is unable to recognize something new and social habits found in a new culture, where he or she must be ready to follow and behave according to the norms and rules that are apply in the new environment.

Everyone who is in a new environment will definitely experience culture shock with different psychological reactions. Some bring it to positive things, some even bring it to negative things. The process of dealing with this new environmental change consists of three components, namely affective (feelings of confusion, anxiety and doubt), behavior (disturbed social interaction) and cognitive (a combination of feelings that can lead to feelings of lack of confidence) (Dianingrum & Sitorus, 2022). So that someone who experiences culture shock will make him or her think negatively, lose direction, not know what to do and even be affected by the new culture. According to Wangka & Silvia (2021), (2021), the occurrence of culture shock in a person is influenced by several factors. First, intrapersonal factors. This factor is related to one's communication skills, one's experience in time and place in a cultural environment, and one's access to resources. Besides that, physical characteristics such as lifestyle, age, health greatly affect the existence of culture shock experienced by someone. So that culture shock happens a lot to someone who is at a young age, and it happens a lot to a woman. Second, cultural diversity greatly influences one culture to another. On this factor, culture shock will occur more quickly if the cultural influences are increasingly prominent. This is related to the social behavior of the community, its customs, religion, language, educational strata and norms that apply in society. The more differences between the two cultures, the lower the social interaction between the two. Third, social and political manifestations. This factor is related to societal attitudes that can lead to prejudice, stereotypes and intimidation.

These factors are indeed triggered by the anxiety that arises, as a result of having to interact to build new relationships with people who are not yet known and must be able to adapt. A person who is affected by the culture shock phenomenon can be seen in the form

of movements, facial expressions and also his speech or words (Khoirunnisa & Soemantri, 2019). Meanwhile, according to Oberg cited in Afikah (2019), the symptoms that arise from someone who experiences culture shock include: will lose his identity, always compares his original culture with the culture where he lives, always has feelings that are easily offended, so he does not want to build interactions with other people, can be disturbed by psychotic symptoms of physical illness such as headaches, stomach ulcers and diarrhea and become more sensitive to health patterns.

Apart from that, according to Nasution and Safuwan (2023), there are several phases when a person experiences culture shock. First, the optimistic phase. This phase is the initial phase that describes a person's level of excitement, euphoria and hope as a form of anticipation before entering a new cultural environment. This phase is also known as the honeymoon phase (Mufidah & Fadilah, 2022). Second, the cultural phase. In this phase, various problems related to the new cultural environment began to emerge. Such as, new learning methods, difficulties in understanding language, differences in habits and social structure systems that are applied. This phase can be said to be a critical phase of a person's culture shock. So if a person is not able to overcome everything, feelings of disappointment, frustration, increased sensitivity and irritability, even worse, can create hostility towards the new environment. Third, the recovery phase. In this phase, a person begins to understand the new culture and habits of an environmental community. So that gradually he is able to adjust to modifying a few things related to the new culture that makes him comfortable and there is no pressure on him. Fourth, the adjustment phase. The last phase that will be experienced by individuals as the peak phase is marked by the ability of an individual to understand and accept various things related to his new culture and open himself by building patterns of communication and interaction with that environment.

Seeing this, the culture shock phenomenon often occurs in the condition of an immigrant who comes to a new environment or applies to someone who is in a new cultural environment. Just like an overseas student who has to settle in the place or location of his dream campus to continue and complete his studies. Apart from the reasons for completing studies, traveling for students, according to Fitriany (2016), has several reasons, namely to get the best education from before, to find new experiences in overseas places, to get to know the new culture in the city where they study and to train themselves so that they are able to live independently, due to living away from their families.

In general, the culture hock experienced by a student in an overseas place is of course determined by two factors. First, internal factors. In this factor, the size of the level of culture shock in a person is influenced by how skillfully a person is able to adapt, how experienced a person is in cross-cultural settings and how well a person socializes with his new environment. Because, according to Devinta (2016), in general an individual who has no cross-cultural experience and lacks factual information about his new environment, will easily experience culture shock. This is because an individual with this character has not been able to prepare a strategy in communicating and adapting to his new environment, so the culture shock can spread to the wider and more complex problem of his inability and discomfort. Second, external factors. In this factor, culture shock will occur more quickly, when the new culture with one's original culture increasingly has significant differences. Both related to social differences, culture, customs, religion, climate, taste of food, language, way of dress or lifestyle, expression of body style, mastery of technology, level of education,

rules and social norms that apply in people's lives and differences in the behavior of indigenous people towards immigrants. As is the case with research conducted by Laksono (2020), which examines the social adaptation of foreign students. Culture shock experienced by foreign students studying in Indonesia is related to language, customs or habits and also food problems. In addition, according to Salmah (2016) and Jefriyanto (2020), the climate factor is also one of the culture shock experienced by overseas students. So that many overseas students experience stress in dealing with their new environment. In fact, it is surprising according to the results of research conducted by Handayani and Nirmalasari (2020), that overseas students and non-migrant students have the same level of stress due to cross-cultural differences in the campus environment.

Various strategies are carried out by students in overcoming the culture shock phenomenon they faced, one of which is by establishing a lot of communication and interactions with fellow students and the surrounding community. Apart from that, full support from friends is one of the main assets to deal with culture shock within. As according to Andre and Huwae (2022), the higher the social support given to someone who experiences culture shock, the lower the level of culture shock they will face. Vice versa, the lower the social support given to someone who experiences culture shock, the higher the level of culture shock they will face

All the culture shock described above, apply to all foreign students or native students or someone who is in a new environment. However, specifically culture shock can also occur when students enter the classroom for the first time to attend lectures. Especially for students who initially chose a major they did not want or if at the State Islamic University many students who used to be public schools (SMA/High School and SMK/Vocational High School) did not have a religious basis or pesantren (Islamic education) (Apud & Akrom, 2020) but they chose to major in religion at the university. Of course, these students have a level of culture shock which not only comes from environmental factors but also comes from obstacles in participating in learning.

### **Self-Taught Learning**

Self-taught learning can be understood as the act of learning to educate students themselves. Whereas furthermore as a form of learning that is carried out independently without any assistance from other parties (teachers or lecturers or those who are qualified for sharing knowledge) directly (Ritonga, 2017). The main capital of self-taught learning is determination and a strong level of curiosity in trying to find out for themselves and determine what steps to take to be able to get something that is expected (Juliani, 2020).

Self-taught learning has various benefits in achieving the desired goals. According to Lookmedia.co.id (2022), what needs to be considered to start self-taught learning, are as follows: First, someone must set realistic goals. Setting goals to be achieved from self-taught learning is something important. However, the goals achieved must be realistic with one's abilities. So that he is able to focus on the consequences that must be done to achieve these goals. Second, develop a structured learning plan. After setting goals, arranging learning in a structured and organized manner will be able to discipline someone to continue learning. So that the way and time of study will be regular and become a habit that makes it easier to achieve the expected goals. Third, be patient and consistent. Patiently and consistently doing what has previously been prepared is the key to one's success in achieving his goals.

Although at first it was very difficult to start, over time someone will get used to it and continue to be enthusiastic about learning. Fourth, utilize resources. The point is to expedite the learning process, take advantage of the various resources you have. Because when doing self-study, it is important to find media or sources of information that are correct and accurate. So that utilizing all resources such as books, the ease of accessing information on the internet is a part that needs to be done to test how much self-taught learning steps and strategies are correctly carried out according to the procedure. The forms of self-taught learning will adapt to the pattern and learning style of a person. So that the form of learning that is done by someone will be different from what is done by others, even though they both learn the same thing.

## METHOD

This research employed qualitative research method, namely a case study. Data source came from interviews. The data in this research are presented in a narrative-descriptive way. The data were collected by using interviews with eight students of one Islamic State University in Bandung, which consisted of various majors. There were eight informants who were interviewed as listed in Table 1.

Table 1. List of Informants

No.	Student Name	Educational Background	Major
1.	FAH	SMK (Vocational High School)	Family Law
2.	HMS	SMA (High School)	Sharia Economic Law
3.	RH	SMA (High School)	Family Law
4.	JR	SMK (Vocational High School)	The Science of the Qur'an and Interpretation
5.	CN	SMA (High School)	Islamic Counseling Guidance
6.	YU	SMK (Vocational High School)	Sufism and Psychotherapy
7.	ANNM	SMA (High School)	History of Islamic Civilization
8.	MLA	SMA (High School)	The Science of the Qur'an and Interpretation

Meanwhile for the data analysis technique, data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions suggested by (Miles et al., 2014) were used.

## FINDINGS

### Challenges of Non-Religious Background Students at State Islamic University

The problems for students with a general education background majoring in religion, as previously explained, are that they must be able to adapt to their surroundings and must also be able to catch up in understanding core lecture theory in their majors. The lack of religious knowledge taught in high school became the main factor. To be able to catch other students from madrasah or pesantren, they had to learn harder. It was not easy for students who did not have a religious educational background to study in religion majors. According to the results of the interviews with the RH, JR, and HMS, not a few of their fellow students

had to fall in the middle of the semester, choosing to move to other majors. As a result of not having to adapt in understanding the learning theory of the department. Therefore, there was a double culture shock for these students, that was, apart from having to be able to adapt to the surrounding environment, they also have to be able to catch up in understanding core lecture theory in their majors.

This view is certainly one of the challenges for students with a general education background but majoring in religion, and even became one of the culture shocks they faced. This culture shock coming from outside made students have to prepare themselves and showed that they were capable of becoming what society expected. Because if this could not be done, not only would they feel ashamed, but also the institution where they studied would be questioned about its role and function in producing graduates as intellectuals with scholarly character.

Some of the obstacles experienced by students when they first learned the theory of their majors, among others: FAH (2023) was constrained by understanding Arabic, apart from being a subject, many references to the majors were taken from Arabic yellow books. HMS (2023) said that he did not have the basics regarding the major he was taking, because his educational background came from high school majoring in science. RH (2023) stated that since the beginning of entering college, he felt unable to follow the lessons because it was delivered in Arabic. But over time, only a few subjects were taught in Arabic. So that he could survive and adapt. JR (2023) stated that he felt constrained by the SKS (Semester Credit Unit) system that was new to his ears due to the demands of independent learning that could not be fully understood.

CN (2023) stated that from the start the learning process basically went normally. But he experienced difficulties when taking Arabic courses. YU (2023) stated that the obstacle he faced was because his basic background was not from an MA (Madrasah Aliyah) or pesantren, he found it difficult to follow all of his religion courses. ANNM (2023) said that he did not find it difficult to understand the course material, but found it difficult in the Arabic language course as a general subject in each department. Meanwhile, according to the MLA (2023), he felt weak and slow in understanding the material for his major due to many theories in Arabic, especially in the Uloom Al-Qur'an and Uloom al-Hadith courses

Based on these data, students with a general education background found it difficult to understand lecture material in Arabic courses. Arabic at PTKI is a general subject that is usually presented and studied in the early semester for each department, both for religious majors and non-religious majors along with other general courses. However, for each religion-based department, Arabic will be an advanced subject and even a reference for every theoretical subject taken from the classic books of the scholars (*al-kutub al-mu'tabarah*).

### **Students' Self-taught Learning Management Efforts at State Islamic University**

Based on the explanation above, the culture shock experienced by many students with general education backgrounds majoring in religion at PTKI was having to catch up in understanding the core theories of their majors. As for catching up, students had their own way of dealing with it, which is adapted to the learning style of each student. Although recognizing a person's learning style will not necessarily make him smarter, understanding his own learning style will certainly be able to determine an effective and quality learning

style. Learning management carried out would also determine the desired level of achievement and become a goal.

Based on the results of interviews with the respondents, some ways of self-taught learning they did were study in their free time, study hard and study outside class hours, namely by reading books from various literacy. They did that by observing and searching for various literature to get different points of view and also deepen understanding of lecture theory. Apart from that, there were a lot of repetitions by reading and remembering what was understood during group study and lectures in classes. Based on the results of the interviews with the respondents above, there were several ways for them to understand lecture theory derived from the yellow book (the leading book of the ulama/ *al-kutub al-mu'tabarah*). Apart from studying in their spare time, they learned a lot in various ways. First, they learnt to understand with the help of translated books. Second, they asked friends or ustadz who understand Arabic. Third, they discussed with friends who understand Arabic. Fourth, they tried to understand the materials by getting them explained by friends or from internet sources. Fourth, they read a lot of references from various literature and discuss them with friends and lecturers.

Therefore, surviving and adapting were the ways to deal with the obstacles. Learning to catch up was a challenge in a very positive way of adjusting. Utilizing the convenience of technology in accessing various sources and supporting literacy in catching up was a way of mobilizing resources in the learning process. While learning through discussion with friends and lecturers was the best way to establish relationships and social interaction. In other words, all the processes and adjustments faced by students with a general education background majoring in religion at PTKI were the best ways to control the culture shock phenomenon they face on campus, especially in understanding core lecture theory in their respective majors.

## DISCUSSION

Obstacles in understanding the Arabic language in the yellow book are a distinct challenge experienced by students who previously came from a general education background. As according to Wahdah and Wulandari (2017), there was a significant difference between students with a general education background and students with a religious education background in choosing Arabic learning strategies. Where students with a general education background must have additional study hours to understand the theories of their Arabic-language courses.

Based on the findings stated above, the forms of self-taught learning that many respondents do to catch up in understanding lecture theories were observing and searching for various literature to get different points of view and also deepen understanding of lecture theory. They also did a lot of repetitions by reading and remembering what was understood during group study and lectures in classes. Apart from studying in their spare time, they learned a lot in various ways. Setting learning management by utilizing free time by reading and doing other activities is a form of managing effective study time management. So that students are able to optimize the time they have to study and do activities productively. Because good study time management will affect good results too. So with that, a student will appreciate time and use it well and productively (Putri & Dewi, 2022). The basic functions of management are divided into planning, organizing, actuating and controlling

(Berlian, 2022). A student has his or her own way of managing their study time. So that between one student and another student will have different study time management. However, usually student study time management is heavily influenced by several things, both from within the students themselves and from outside influences, such as the learning environment, technological sophistication and social influences (Rahmatullah & Sutama, 2021). Study time management arrangements vary according to the work priorities of each student. However, every student is required to have study time management, so that students can spend their time according to what they have planned and of course students can achieve what they hope to achieve the targets that have been planned.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion above, students with general education backgrounds who major in religion at PTKI experienced culture shock when participating in learning. The culture shock was in the form of being left behind in understanding the core theories of their department, due to their educational background coming from public schools. So that they had to start from zero compared to students with religious education backgrounds (MA and Islamic Boarding Schools) who could directly participate in learning and deepen the knowledge in their respective majors. The forms of adjustment made by students were reading a lot of literature and discussing with friends and lecturers. This article is still limited to one Islamic tertiary institution in looking at the culture shock experienced by students from non-religious backgrounds when facing learning. Therefore, it is very urgent to have further research that focuses on several state Islamic universities to be able to look at the culture shock phenomenon more deeply and broadly.

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