

Abstract

Living in a western culture, as sojourners, may cause Indonesian students a great deal of stress due to acculturation. It may influence their emotional general health status. This study is to identify significant factors related to acculturation of Indonesian students sojourning in Germany, and to ascertain the association between cultural orientations and symptoms related to the stress due to the acculturation.

An explorative study, employing 5 interviews, was run to identify factors related to acculturation. Followed by a cross-sectional cohort, a survey of 201 Indonesian students sojourning in Germany was compared to 89 Indonesian students living in their home country. The sojourners were grouped according to their length of stay in Germany. Their types of cultural orientations were assessed by the Suinn-Lew Asian Self Identity scale (SL-ASIA). Complementarily interviews of 5 returnees were undertaken afterwards in Indonesia.

Results:

- (1) Indonesian students shared a strong agreement in relation to the need of acknowledgment, competition, perfection and lack of a sense of belonging. They seemed to like the weather and getting together with Indonesians in Germany. Having family accompanying them in Germany revealed to be of importance. The students, however, didn't have a favorable attitude towards speaking German and being "alone" while organizing all activities of daily life. Competition and perfection was experienced highest among those who had arrived during the last 2 months and least among those who had been in Germany between 2 and 5 years.
- (2) More than half of the sojourners kept their Asian values and behaviors, regardless of the duration of stay in Germany.
- (3) There were no differences between sojourners and home country students with regard to depression, anxiety, and other major psychopathological symptoms.
- (4) There were differences between sojourners and home country students with regard to experiences of daily hassles, some aspects of psychological well-being, partly moderated by the length of sojourning. "Hostility" was maximal in the first 2 months of sojourning and declined thereafter.
- (5) The best circumstance in well-being was experienced by sojourners who had sojourned between 1 and 2 years and lasted up to 5 years.

Conclusions:

(1) Indonesian students living in Germany, as a prototype of Western culture, mostly kept their original cultural orientation. (2) They went through behavioral acculturation/cultural learning but resisted cognitive acculturation/social identification, (3) they suffer from minor problems, e.g. daily hassles, but do not suffer specifically from more severe physical and psychic disorders.