



The Exploration of The Cultural Shock Experience of Indonesian Students in Egypt

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Abstract

The decision to study abroad is driven by the desire to get a better education, expand their network, and experience different lives and cultures. All of these are expected to contribute positively to their personal and professional development in the future. Most Indonesian students study in Egypt because they are studying Religious Studies, especially Islam. However, there are actually many Indonesian students who study in Egypt not only studying religious studies. There are several key theories that are often used to understand the cross-cultural adaptation process for students abroad, including; U-Curve Theory, Stress and Adaptation Theory, and Intercultural Communication Theory. The research method used in writing this paper is secondary data analysis. Numerical data such as census data, crime statistics, sales data, or quantitative survey results. Data in the form of interviews, transcripts, documentation, or notes that have been collected previously and can be reused in new analyses. The journey of Indonesian students to study in Egypt certainly faces various challenges. The challenge was faced by him during the registration process to the selection which is known to be quite strict. The cultural differences faced by Indonesian students in Egypt are the use of everyday language for communication. Egypt as a country that uses Arabic as its national language for communication certainly requires Indonesian students to be able to communicate using Arabic. This is a cultural difference in the use of everyday language.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesian students have various reasons to continue their studies abroad, which include academic, personal, and professional aspects. Here are some of the main factors that drive them to make this decision. First, Many Indonesian students choose to study abroad to get a high-quality education at an internationally recognized university. They believe that the experience of studying in a developed country or at a renowned institution can improve their knowledge and skills.

Secondly, Studying abroad provides students with the opportunity to learn about new cultures and interact with people from different backgrounds. This can broaden their horizons and increase their understanding of diversity. Thirdly, Students often want to improve their foreign language skills, especially English, which is becoming important in today's global world. Studying in an English-speaking country helps them improve their communication skills (Amalia, 2016).

Fourthly, Studying abroad allows students to build an international network that is beneficial for their future careers. Connections with classmates and professors from different countries can open doors to job opportunities and collaborations. Fifthly, Living in a foreign country helps students develop independence, resilience, and interpersonal skills. They learn to adapt to new environments and overcome challenges, which enhances problem-solving and leadership skills (Iskandar, 2019). Sixth, Some students choose to continue their studies abroad because there are study programs or specializations that are not available in Indonesia. These include programs in science, technology, arts, or international studies (Anwar & Soetjningsih, 2011); (Rahmawati & Hartono, 2015).



Figure 1. The Reason Why Indonesian Students Studying in Foreign Countries

Source : Salsabila (2024)

Sevently, Many students get the opportunity to continue their studies abroad through scholarship programs offered by the government or educational institutions. This is a motivation for them to study abroad without having to burden their family finances. Eighty, With increasing competition in the job market, students feel that an international degree can provide a competitive advantage and increase their chances of getting a better job.

Overall, the decision to study abroad is driven by the desire to get a better education, expand their network, and experience different lives and cultures. All of these are expected to contribute positively to their personal and professional development in the future.

No exception for Indonesian students studying in Egypt. Most Indonesian students study in Egypt because they are studying Religious Studies, especially Islam. However, there are actually many Indonesian students who study in Egypt not only studying religious studies (Yusri & Hamzah, 2017). Previously in this article, we will first review the relationship between Indonesia and Egypt.

Connection Indonesia - Mesir

According to Hisyam (2015), the relationship between Indonesia and Egypt has a long and strong history, especially in the context of Indonesia's struggle for independence and solidarity in the Islamic world. The following is a summary of the history of relations between the two countries: First, Early Relations - Colonial Period. In the early 20th century, relations between Indonesia and Egypt began through interactions between Indonesian scholars and students studying in Egypt, especially at Al-Azhar University, Cairo. They not only studied religion, but also gained inspiration from the nationalist movement in the Middle East, which was then adapted to Indonesia to fight colonialism.

Second, Support for Indonesian Independence (1945-1947). After the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence on August 17, 1945, Egypt became the first country to recognize Indonesian independence in 1947. This was very important for Indonesia because recognition from Egypt paved the way for wider recognition from other Arab and Islamic countries, as well as internationally. This recognition was given after various diplomatic efforts were made by Indonesian representatives in Egypt, such as Haji Agus Salim and Mohammad Rasjidi. Support from the Arab League, which was supported by Egypt, greatly helped Indonesia in fighting for independence on the international stage.

Third, in 1947, Indonesia opened an embassy in Cairo, which was Indonesia's first embassy abroad. This marked the beginning of official diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Egypt. Egypt also opened an embassy in Jakarta, strengthening relations between the two

countries. Fourth, the Soekarno Era and the Role in the Non-Aligned Movement. During the era of President Soekarno, Indonesia and Egypt had very close relations under the leadership of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. The two countries were the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement, which was formed in 1961 as an effort to move away from the influence of the Western and Eastern blocs during the Cold War. This movement became a symbol of solidarity of developing countries in fighting imperialism and colonialism.

Many Indonesian students study in Egypt, especially at Al-Azhar University, Cairo. Egypt is a center of Islamic religious education for Indonesian students, and many Indonesian scholars are alumni of the university. Cooperation in the field of religious education strengthens cultural and intellectual relations between the two countries (Mu'arif, 2013).

In the modern era, Indonesia and Egypt continue to improve economic relations. Indonesian products, especially textiles, palm oil, and food, are quite popular in Egypt. In return, Egypt exports products such as dates, fertilizers, and other agricultural products to Indonesia. Politically, the two countries often cooperate in various international forums, such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Non-Aligned Movement. They share the same views in supporting Palestinian rights and other issues concerning the Islamic world (Ismail, 2006).

The beginning of Indonesian students studying in Egypt began in the early 20th century, when many Indonesians from among the ulama and santri were interested in studying at Al-Azhar University, Cairo. This university has long been known as one of the world's leading centers of Islamic education, with an in-depth curriculum in theology, Islamic law, interpretation, and other Islamic sciences.

Since the colonial era, scholars and students from Indonesia, especially from Java, Sumatra, and Sulawesi, often continued their education in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt. However, in the early 20th century, Al-Azhar began to become the main destination because it was considered more moderate and influential in the Islamic world. Factors that encouraged Indonesian students to study in Egypt include:

1. In-depth Search for Religious Knowledge: Al-Azhar University is renowned for its reputation in religious knowledge and is considered one of the oldest and most credible educational institutions in the Islamic world.
2. Inspiration from the Nationalist Movement in the Middle East: The development of nationalism in the Middle East, including in Egypt, inspired Indonesian students to study not only religious knowledge, but also thoughts that motivated them to fight for independence from colonialism.

3. Support from Local Ulama: Many ulama in Indonesia encourage their students to study in Egypt so they can deepen their religious knowledge and bring that knowledge back to their homeland.

As Indonesian students' interest in studying in Egypt grew, various Islamic organizations in Indonesia, such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama, supported them in the form of financial assistance, networks, and connections in Cairo. Many early students who studied in Egypt departed with the support of individuals or religious institutions that supported their mission to deepen their religious knowledge.

During the colonial era, some Indonesian students managed to study at Al-Azhar and returned to Indonesia with the knowledge they had gained, teaching their knowledge in various Islamic boarding schools. They also brought insights into the liberation movement that later inspired the Indonesian struggle for independence.

After independence, the number of Indonesian students in Egypt increased significantly, especially after formal support from the Indonesian government. Diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Egypt also opened up wider opportunities for Indonesian students to obtain scholarships and study facilities there. To strengthen relations between Indonesian students in Egypt and support their activities, student organizations such as the Indonesian Students and College Students Association (PPMI) in Egypt were established. This organization acts as a forum to help new students, connect them with a wider network, and facilitate religious and educational activities.

Al-Azhar alumni who returned to Indonesia contributed greatly to the world of education and the development of Islamic thought in Indonesia. They established various educational institutions, Islamic boarding schools, and were active in Islamic organizations. Many of them became prominent figures, such as K.H. Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of Muhammadiyah, who had studied in Mecca and had connections with the Al-Azhar ulama network (Wahid, 2018).

Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory

This theory explains how individuals, such as international students, adjust to a new culture that is different from their home culture. This theory focuses on how a person copes with changing cultural environments and develops skills or strategies to live harmoniously in a new cultural context. According to Faturahman (2022), there are several key theories that are often used to understand the cross-cultural adaptation process for students abroad, including; U-Curve Theory, Stress and Adaptation Theory, and Intercultural Communication Theory. The following is an explanation of each theory in the context of student adaptation:

The U-Curve Theory explains that cross-cultural adaptation follows a "U" shaped emotional stage, where individuals go through four phases; Honeymoon Phase: Upon arrival, students usually feel enthusiastic and positive about the new environment. They are still in the exploration stage and are highly motivated to learn the new culture. Cultural Shock Phase: After the initial enthusiasm, students begin to feel anxious, confused, and stressed due to cultural differences. For example, they may face language difficulties, different communication styles, or customs they do not understand.

Recovery Phase: In this phase, students begin to adjust to the new culture, find ways to overcome challenges, and develop strategies to adapt. They become more accustomed to daily routines and understand local cultural values. Adjustment Phase: Students feel comfortable and have developed a stable way of life in the new environment. They are able to adjust their behavior and think more flexibly in a foreign culture.

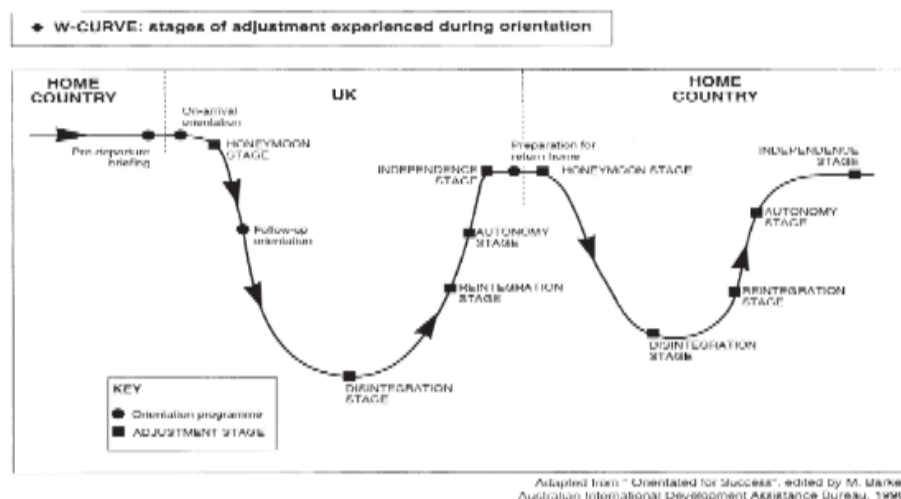


Figure 2 : U-Curve Model

Source : UKCISA (2018)

Stress and Adaptation Theory was developed by Young Yun Kim and states that cross-cultural adaptation is a continuous and dynamic process. Adaptation consists of a cycle of stress and coping, in which a person experiences tension when faced with a new cultural situation, then gradually learns to cope with it. Initially, students abroad experience cultural stress caused by differences in norms, customs, or expectations in the foreign society.

Students try to cope with stress in various ways, such as seeking social support, joining an international student community, or developing communication skills. Over time, students' ability to manage stress and develop new skills improves their adaptation. They become more confident and better able to navigate cultural differences. This theory emphasizes that adaptation

is an iterative process. When learners are faced with new challenges, they experience a new cycle of stress and adaptation until they become accustomed to the situation..

Intercultural Communication Theory explains that cross-cultural adaptation depends on an individual's ability to understand and navigate differences in communication styles. Edward T. Hall, for example, divides cross-cultural communication into high-context and low-context categories. High-context culture: Communication is based heavily on context or implied meaning rather than direct words. Japan and Middle Eastern countries, for example, fall into this category. Low-context culture: Communication is more direct and explicit.

Western countries such as the United States, Canada, and Australia tend to be more low-context. International students need to adjust their communication style to the local culture. In the process of adaptation, students will try to understand these differences and learn to use communication styles that are appropriate to the culture in which they live. This skill is very important for students who have to interact in academic, social, and professional contexts (Rahmawati & Hartono, 2015).

Social Identity Theory is also relevant to understanding international student adaptation. This theory explains that cross-cultural adaptation involves the process of forming a social identity in a new environment. Students often join communities or groups of fellow international students in an effort to feel accepted. Their identity may be tied to a particular group, be it a group of Indonesian students in the country or a group of other international students.

As they adapt, students begin to balance their home cultural identity with the new identity in the country where they are studying. In cross-cultural adaptation, students need to develop cross-cultural understanding and interpersonal skills in order to interact effectively in a new environment. These theories provide a framework that helps explain the challenges that international students face in adapting and the strategies they use to adapt to a new cultural environment.

Adaptation of Indonesian Students Abroad

Adaptation of Indonesian students abroad is often a complex challenge because they have to deal with various cultural, language, and lifestyle differences. However, with thorough preparation and community support, most students can adjust to their new environment. The following are some aspects of adaptation that are commonly faced by Indonesian students studying abroad: First, language is often a major challenge, especially for students studying in countries with different languages such as Germany, France, Japan, or Russia. This language barrier usually has an impact on daily communication, lectures, and social interactions (Rahayu & Fauzi, 2022).

Second, Many students take language courses before and upon arrival in the destination country. In some countries, universities also provide special language classes for international students. Practicing the language actively with local friends also helps speed up adaptation. Third, Culture is the most visible aspect of adaptation. Starting from clothing style, communication methods, to eating habits and activity hours, everything can be different from in Indonesia. In Western countries, for example, people are more accustomed to speaking directly, while in East Asian countries such as Japan or Korea, people tend to be more polite and polite (Rahmawati & Hartono, 2015).

Fourth, Weather is often a challenge, especially for students studying in countries with four seasons such as the United States, Europe, or Japan. Long winters or very low temperatures in these countries can be a surprise. Fifth, The education system abroad may be different from that in Indonesia, both in terms of teaching methods, value systems, and the relationship between lecturers and students. In some countries, students are more required to learn independently and critically, and are accustomed to assignments that require in-depth research (Amin & Supriyadi, 2020); (Nurdin & Supriyadi, 2018).

Sixth, Muslim students often have difficulty finding halal food or places of worship, especially in countries where the majority of the population is not Muslim. However, in many large countries, there are usually mosques or Muslim community centers that can be a place to gather and worship. Seventh, Homesickness for family and culture is common among students who are living away from Indonesia for the first time. Homesickness can affect mental health and motivation to study (Nugroho, 2018); (Rahayu & Amalia, 2020).

Eighth, Adjusting to different living costs is a big challenge for many Indonesian students. In some countries, the cost of living is much higher, especially for accommodation and food. Students usually make a budget to manage monthly expenses and look for student discounts that are often offered in European and American countries. In addition, students can also look for part-time jobs, as long as they are in accordance with the regulations for residence and study permits in the country (Setiadi & Indraswari, 2010).

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in writing this paper is secondary data analysis. The characteristics of Secondary Data Analysis are as follows; First, the researcher does not collect new data, but uses existing data and is collected for other purposes, so there is no direct interaction between the researcher and the research subject (Singarimbun & Effendy, 1995). This study re-explores the findings that have been carried out in previous studies related to the adaptation process of Indonesian students abroad.

Second, Secondary data can be obtained from various sources such as government institutions, research institutions, companies, public data, or personal archives. Third, Although the data is collected for a specific purpose, researchers can re-analyze it to answer different questions or hypotheses. This paper attempts to reveal again what are the obstacles and ways of adaptation of Indonesian students abroad, especially in Egypt. Numerical data such as census data, crime statistics, sales data, or quantitative survey results. Data in the form of interviews, transcripts, documentation, or notes that have been collected previously and can be reused in new analyses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indonesian Students in Egypt

Quoting from the Hidayatullah News Portal (2022) Indonesian students in the Middle East in their efforts to fight for Indonesian independence cannot be underestimated. For example, Indonesian students in Egypt. This can be seen from the newspapers published in 1947 reporting their great role in realizing this noble ideal. In the newspaper Nasional, June 4, 1947, there was an interesting title describing the struggle of Indonesian youth, especially Muslim students, who became Indonesian students in Egypt, in an effort to pioneer the realization of the independence of the Republic of Indonesia.



Figure 3. The Tittle of News “Perdjoangan Pemoeda Indonesia di Mesir, Mahasiswa Pelopor Kemerdekaan”

Source : Setiawan (Hidayatullah.com, 2022)

Ismail Banda (1810-1951) was a man known as a diplomat, activist, cleric and also one of the founders of Al-Washiliyah. In his career, he had been an Indonesian diplomat in several

Middle Eastern countries. Indonesian students in Egypt not only fought in politics but also in the social realm. When there were 3,000 pilgrims or others who were still in Arab land, after refusing to recognize Dutch sovereignty, they suffered many difficulties.

Especially in meeting basic needs. The cause was that 15 tons of rice that were usually sent from the Netherlands were stopped from being sent. As a result, many Indonesians experienced hardship, both those who were on the hajj and those who were not. Interestingly, seeing this situation, Egyptian students moved quickly. They worked with institutions in Egypt so that they could send rice as usual. The effort was finally successful. With the help of the King of Egypt, the shipment could be resumed.

As additional information, M. Zein Hassan, a witness and historical actor at that time, in the book "Diplomasi Revolusi Indonesia di Luar Negeri" (1980: 124-127) describes how the Dutch Embassy at that time panicked with the actions of Indonesian students in Egypt. Because of that, they even contacted the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to stop the activities of Indonesian students.

The Egyptian government even supported Indonesian students in carrying out confrontation activities with the Netherlands. Even stating thus, "From this moment on, the Egyptian Government considers that Indonesian citizens in Egypt have no more relations with the Dutch Representative. All matters concerning Indonesian citizens, the Egyptian Government will contact the Committee". This committee from among the students was recognized by the Egyptian Government as having moved the Dutch Embassy. This happened on March 22, 1946. The Dutch passports that they usually used were also thrown away as a form of resistance against the Netherlands.

A very significant impact on the subsequent struggle was that the Egyptian Government finally revoked the rice export permit to Saudi Arabia for Indonesian citizens there from the Dutch Embassy and handed it over to the Central Committee in Egypt. Saudi Arabia also created a branch committee there and even allowed the sale of half of the 30 tons of rice sent by the Central Committee there every month so that the money could be distributed to Indonesian citizens who needed help there (Setiawan, 2022).

The relationship between Indonesia and Egypt is currently very close. Once the Indonesian Minister of Foreign Affairs (Menlu) Retno LP Marsudi emphasized that the relationship between Indonesia and Egypt is very close. In fact, Egypt has a very special role because it was the first country to recognize Indonesia's independence. Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi stated that Indonesia and Egypt agreed to improve (cooperation) in the education sector and greatly appreciated Egypt's commitment to increase the quota of Indonesian students in Egypt. The Minister of Foreign Affairs stated this in the Senior Officer Meeting (SOM) which is a

series of events for the 5th Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (KTT LB OIC).

At Al-Azhar University there are around 3,000 Indonesian students studying. The large number has prompted Indonesia to take the initiative to build a dormitory around the campus. Indonesia has just finished building a dormitory to accommodate 3,000 students and that is the largest number in Egypt. This dormitory is the first foreign dormitory at Al Azhar. In the last five years there has been an increase in the number of Indonesian students by around 9,000 people or 70 percent of the 13,000 Indonesian students in Egypt. This number is the largest in the region and the largest number of foreign students at Al-Azhar which currently reaches 46,000 people from 137 countries.

Egypt's Al Azhar University in Cairo is the main destination campus for Indonesian students studying in Egypt. Although, Al Azhar Cairo was only established as a university in 1961. Al Azhar University itself has been established since 970 AD. Therefore, this campus is included in the oldest universities in the world. Al Azhar Cairo Campus is a study center that focuses on learning about Islam but uses a more modern education system. According to the 2022 Best Global Universities Rankings, Al Azhar campus is listed as the 994th best in the world (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022).

Education System in Egypt

According to Qolbiyah and Rajab (2022) Egypt has the largest overall education system in the Middle East and has grown rapidly since the early 1990s. In recent years the Egyptian government has given greater priority to improving the education system. According to the Human Development Index (HDI), Egypt ranks 116th in the HDI.

Specifically for higher education, the Egyptian Higher Education System has a very extensive higher education system. Around 30% of all Egyptians in the relevant age group go to university. According to The Economist, the standard of education in Egypt's public universities is "awesome". The Ministry of Higher Education oversees the tertiary level of education.

In the current education system, there are 17 public universities, 51 public non-university institutions, 16 private universities and 89 private colleges. Of the 51 non-university institutions, 47 are two-year middle technical institutions (MTIs) and four are 4-5 year higher technical institutions]. The higher education cohort is expected to increase by nearly 6 percent (60,000) students per year especially by 2009.

The Egyptian education system has two parallel structures: the secular structure and the religious structure of Al Azhar. The secular structure is managed by the Ministry of Education. The Al Azhar structure is run by the Ministry of Al Azhar Affairs, which is often called the Ministry of Religious Affairs in other countries.

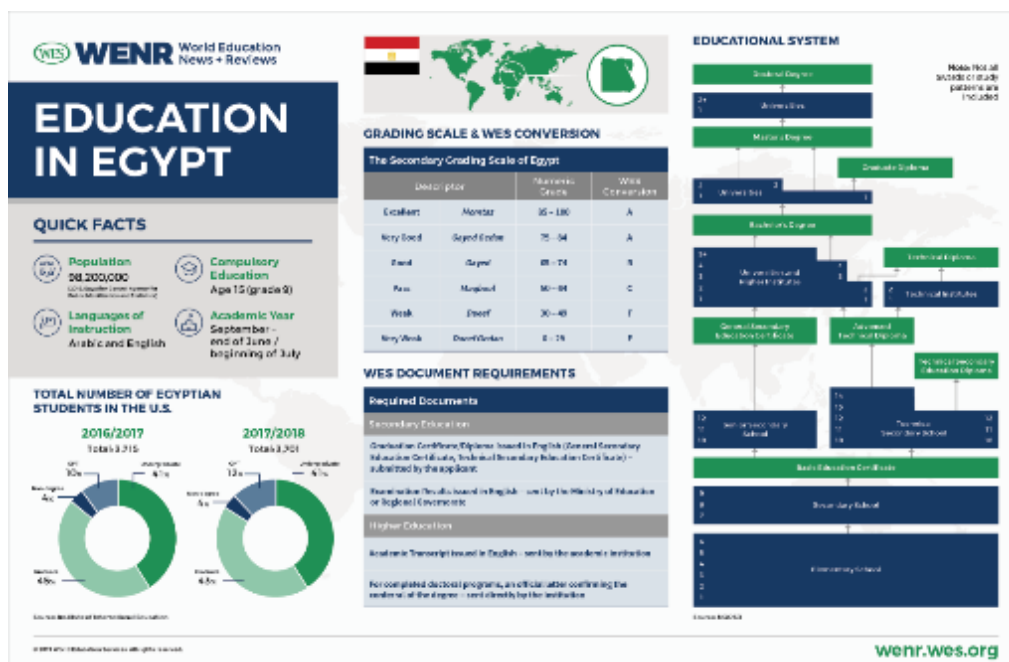


Figure 4
Education in Egypt
(Source : Ramage et all, 2019)

Here are some of the best universities in Egypt;

	Cairo University Egypt	ARWU 2023	301-400
	Ain Shams University Egypt	ARWU 2023	601-700
	Alexandria University Egypt	ARWU 2023	601-700
	Mansoura University Egypt	ARWU 2023	601-700
	Al-Azhar University Egypt	ARWU 2023	701-800
	Zagazig University Egypt	ARWU 2023	801-900
	Beni-Suef University Egypt	ARWU 2023	901-1000
	Kafrelsheikh University Egypt	ARWU 2022	901-1000

Figure 5.
Top Eight Egypt Universities
(Source : 7eNews, 2023)

Indonesian students studying in Egypt are generally concentrated in several well-known universities, including:

1. Al-Azhar University, is one of the oldest and most prominent Islamic educational institutions in the world. Many Indonesian students choose to study here because the curriculum focuses on Islamic studies and other sciences. Around 5,000 to 7,000 Indonesian students are enrolled at Al-Azhar University, making it the place with the highest concentration of Indonesian students in Egypt.
2. Cairo University, one of the largest and most famous universities in Egypt. Indonesian students study in various faculties, including law, social sciences, and sciences.
3. Ain Shams University, University is also a choice for Indonesian students, especially for study programs in medicine, engineering, and social sciences. Although the number is not as many as in Al-Azhar, there are also several hundred Indonesian students studying at Cairo and Ain Shams universities.
4. Mansoura University, Some Indonesian students choose Mansoura University because of the academic programs offered and the good facilities.
5. Alexandria University, This university also attracts Indonesian students, especially in the fields of science and technology.
6. Suez Canal University, Indonesian students can also be found at Suez Canal University, which offers a variety of academic programs in engineering and science. Overall, there are an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 Indonesian students studying at various universities in Egypt, with the majority concentrated at Al-Azhar University.

Indonesian students studying in Egypt often face various challenges related to cultural differences, language, and academic environment. Continuing studies to university level abroad is the hope for most people. According to many opinions, continuing education abroad is a very good opportunity because it can carry out international education.

According to overall data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, the number of students from Indonesia currently studying abroad recorded up to 2021 is 53,604 people. Based on this number, it can be seen that the interest of Indonesian students to study abroad is very high. One of the favorite destination countries for Indonesian students is Egypt. Up to 2022, the total number of Indonesian students studying in Egypt is 12,000 students. In addition, 90% of the total students take study programs in the field of religion and the rest take study programs in general fields such as pharmacy to medicine.

The journey of Indonesian students to study in Egypt certainly faces various challenges. The first challenge was faced by him during the registration process to the selection which is known to be quite strict. So it is not easy for him and other applicants to continue their education at Al Azhar University, Egypt. Things that are certainly an important concern for prospective

students are preparing 'capital' to be accepted at Al Azhar Egypt. Some of the things that need to be prepared are fluent in Arabic and English. Because the learning system in Egypt is 100% using Arabic as the language of instruction.

After being declared to have graduated from Al Azhar Egypt, he was then declared to be able to leave for Egypt and begin his study journey in Cairo, Egypt. Upon arriving in Egypt he felt some culture shock due to the cultural differences between Indonesia and Egypt. The next challenge faced by Indonesian students in Egypt is the cultural challenge. According to him, the most noticeable difference is in food and the surrounding environment. Most Indonesian students who are accustomed to eating rice and typical Indonesian cuisine feel a significant difference when they arrive in Egypt.

This is because the food he found in Egypt was mostly bread and typical Middle Eastern dishes which are certainly different from Indonesia. This was a challenge for him when he just arrived in Egypt. Another difference between life in Egypt and Indonesia is the time of the people's activities. If in Indonesia people start their activities in the morning, it is different from Egypt where most people start their daily activities in the afternoon until evening.

In addition, Indonesian students are also faced with differences in the lecture system. Universities in Egypt until now still use a manual system for administrative purposes and so on which is different from Indonesia which mostly uses an online system. Therefore, Indonesian students studying in Egypt are required to follow a very long queue when taking care of administration at the beginning of the semester when changing from the old semester to the new semester.

The lecture system in Egypt allows students to attend or not attend class during lecture time by eliminating attendance during lectures. This then creates a gap for students depending on the level of diligence of students when attending lectures. Students are only required to be able to pass the exams each semester in order to continue to the next semester until they graduate.

The cultural differences faced by Indonesian students in Egypt are the use of everyday language for communication. Egypt as a country that uses Arabic as its national language for communication certainly requires Indonesian students to be able to communicate using Arabic. This is a cultural difference in the use of everyday language.

These cultural differences are caused by various factors such as the different geographical locations between Indonesia and Egypt, this of course can affect the cultural system of a country. In addition, the different historical backgrounds between Indonesia and Egypt are a factor in cultural differences. These differences must of course be accepted by Indonesian students who are studying there. This is because Indonesian students as immigrants must of course be able to adapt to the culture where they study and live. (Kompasiana Beyond Blogging, 2023)

Challenges for Indonesian Students in Egypt

Here are some of the main challenges that Indonesian students generally face in Egypt: Egyptian culture has different values and customs from Indonesia. Students may feel confused by different social norms, customs, and ways of interacting. Differences in lifestyle, such as how to dress, behave in public spaces, and how to communicate, can make students feel uncomfortable.

Psychological factors play a crucial role in adaptation. Studies indicate that metacognition and targeted interventions can enhance cross-cultural psychological adjustment, helping students better integrate into their new environment (Dong & Xingshuai, 2024). While these factors facilitate adaptation, challenges remain, such as cultural misunderstandings and academic pressures, which can impede the overall experience of Indonesian students in Egypt.

The living conditions in Cairo significantly impact students' experiences. Al-Azhar University serves as a pivotal institution for Indonesian students, fostering cultural exchange and religious scholarship, which aids in their adaptation (Abaza, 1991). Although many Indonesian students have a background in Arabic, differences in dialect and vocabulary can be a challenge. A good command of Arabic is essential for attending lectures and interacting with the local community. In some universities, the language of instruction is English, and students may need to adapt to academic terminology and communication in that language.

Teaching methods in Egypt may differ from those in Indonesia, including assessment methods, class participation, and interaction with lecturers. Students may find differences in the quality of education and curriculum implemented at Egyptian universities compared to universities in Indonesia. Social Life. Adapting to new friends and building social networks in a new environment can be difficult, especially if there are cultural and language differences. Some students may feel isolated or lonely, especially if they are not able to communicate well with people around them. Differences in health conditions and health services, including issues with access to good medical services, can be a challenge. The political and social situation in Egypt can affect students' sense of security. Instability or protests in society can add to anxiety.

Students must manage their finances well to cover living expenses, including accommodation, food, and daily necessities. The increase in the price of certain goods can also be a problem. Sometimes, the process of sending money from Indonesia to Egypt can be delayed or costly, which can limit access to funds. Although the majority of the population of Egypt is Muslim, the way they practice their religion can be different from that in Indonesia, such as in terms of rituals, dress, and daily habits.

Students must also adjust to differences in the way Egyptians observe fasting, including the time of breaking the fast and the atmosphere during the month of Ramadan. Academic pressure to meet the standards expected by universities can be stressful. Students must learn how to manage their time and workload.

Indonesian Students in Egypt vs Arab Countries

Indonesian students in Egypt can often overcome these challenges by joining Indonesian student communities, participating in organizations, seeking support from lecturers and friends, and strengthening their Arabic and English language skills. Involvement in social and cultural activities can also help them adapt and feel more integrated into their new environment.

The challenges faced by Indonesian students studying in Arab countries other than Egypt can vary depending on factors such as culture, language, education system, and socio-political context of each country. Here are some differences in the challenges that Indonesian students may face in other Arab countries:

1. Cultural Differences

Gulf Countries (e.g., Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates): Students may face challenges in adapting to a more conservative culture, especially in terms of gender interactions, dress codes, and social norms. For example, restrictions on interactions between men and women in public may be stricter. In contrast to Maghreb Countries (e.g., Morocco, Tunisia), students may find a more open and diverse culture, but differences in customs, traditions, and behavioral patterns can still be challenging.

2. Language

Although Arabic is the official language in all Arab countries, local dialects and pronunciations can vary. Students studying in a country with a very different dialect may find it difficult to understand everyday conversation. In some countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, English is more common in academic and business settings, while in others, students may need to adapt to more Arabic.

3. Education System

Quality and Curriculum: Academic standards and teaching methods can vary widely. In Saudi Arabia, for example, higher education has a strong reputation in some areas, while in other countries, the quality of education may not be as good. Academic Approach: In some countries, the educational approach may place more emphasis on memorization and exams than on discussion or research, which can be challenging for students who are used to more interactive methods.

4. Social Life and Interaction

Student Community: In countries with smaller international student populations, Indonesian students may struggle to find social support. In contrast, in countries with large populations such as the United Arab Emirates, there is a wider international community. Social Isolation: In countries with very different cultures, students may feel more isolated if they do not have peer support or community networks.

5. Health and Safety

Health Regulations: In some countries, access to health care may be more limited or expensive, and students should familiarize themselves with the local health system. **Security:** Political stability and security vary across the Arab world. In more stable countries, students may feel safer, while in countries with political tensions, they may face greater anxiety.

6. Differences in Religious Practices

Religious Observance: In countries like Saudi Arabia, there are strict rules about religious practice, which can be challenging for students who are used to greater religious freedom. In other countries, like Tunisia or Morocco, students may find a more liberal attitude toward religious practice. **Celebrations and Traditions:** Students may have to adapt to different ways of celebrating holidays or religious traditions held in the country.

7. Economic Aspects

Cost of Living: The cost of living varies across Arab countries. In Gulf countries, such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, the cost of living may be higher than in Maghreb countries such as Morocco or Tunisia. Students should plan their finances well to accommodate this difference.



Figure 6

The Comparison of Living Cost Between Egypt and United Arab Emirates

(Source :LivingCost.org, 2024)

Indonesian Students in Egypt vs African Countries

Indonesian students studying in African countries other than Egypt face different challenges compared to studying in Arab countries or in Egypt. These challenges can vary depending on the local culture, language, education system, and socio-economic context in each African country. Here are some of the different challenges that Indonesian students may face in African countries:

Africa is a continent with a very high cultural diversity. Students may face challenges in understanding and adapting to different traditions, customs, and values, depending on the region they are studying in. Differences in social norms and etiquette can cause confusion. For example, ways of interacting, dress codes, or respecting elders may differ from what they are used to in Indonesia.

In many African countries, there are multiple official and local languages. Students may struggle if they do not speak the official language of the country (for example, Swahili in Kenya or Tanzania) or the local language commonly used in everyday conversation. In countries where English or French are the languages of instruction, students must adapt to academic terminology that may be different from what they learned in Indonesia.

The quality of education and pedagogical approaches vary across Africa. In some countries, education systems may be less developed or lack adequate facilities, which can be a challenge for students. In some institutions, teaching methods may be more traditional and focused on memorization, as opposed to the more interactive approaches that may be more common in Indonesia.

Indonesian students may find it difficult to build social networks in countries that are culturally and linguistically different. Differences in how people socialize can make them feel isolated. In some countries, there may not be as many international students as in other countries, so the support community may be smaller. Access to healthcare may be limited in some African countries. Students should understand the local healthcare system and find out where they can get medical care if needed.

Security in some African countries may be a concern, especially if there is political instability or conflict. Students need to be vigilant and keep up to date with developments around them. The cost of living can vary significantly across Africa. Students should plan their finances carefully and understand how to manage a living budget in the country they are living in.

In some countries, facilities such as internet, electricity, and transportation may not be as reliable as in other countries, which can affect their study experience. Infrastructure and Technology. In some countries, educational and technological infrastructure may not be as good as in Indonesia, which can affect the quality of learning and access to information. Unstable or

expensive internet access can make it difficult for students to conduct research and complete assignments.

In countries with small Muslim populations, Indonesian students may encounter challenges in practicing their religion. For example, the availability of places of worship, halal food, and prayer times may differ. The way local communities celebrate religious holidays may differ, and students may need to adjust to these customs.

Overall, the challenges faced by Indonesian students in African countries other than Egypt depend largely on the cultural, social, and educational context of each country. Students need to develop adaptation skills and build support networks to overcome these challenges. With a deep understanding of the new culture and environment, they can more easily adapt and succeed in their studies.

Behavior of Indonesian Students in Egypt in Using Information Technology

Indonesian students' behavior in using the internet while studying abroad reflects various aspects related to academic, social, and cultural connectedness needs. Here are some common behaviors that are often seen: Students often use the internet to access lecture materials, journals, and other learning resources that support their studies. Many universities provide online portals that allow students to download lecture materials and conduct online discussions.

The internet has become a primary tool for conducting research. Students utilize academic databases and digital libraries to search for relevant references for their assignments and theses. Students actively use social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram to stay connected with friends and family in Indonesia. This helps them feel more connected to their home culture even though they are far from home. They often join groups or forums consisting of Indonesian students abroad to share experiences, information, and support.

Several previous studies explain how Indonesian students behave in using the internet, including the following; Fitriani, A. & Hasyim, M. (2020) discussed how Indonesian students in Egypt use digital media to communicate with family and friends in Indonesia, as well as to build new social networks in Egypt. This study also identified the challenges they face in using communication technology. Nuraini, D. & Yuniar, S. (2019) explored how social media is used by Indonesian students to support their academic activities in Arab countries. The findings show that social media functions as a platform for sharing information, academic discussions, and access to educational resources.

Sulaiman, R. & Anwar, M. (2021) analyzed the relationship between internet use for academic purposes and the performance of Indonesian students at Al-Azhar University, Egypt. The results showed that effective internet use contributed positively to students' academic performance. Pramudito, E. & Mardiana, N. (2020) explored how the internet and social media

help Indonesian students adapt to life in Egypt. The results show that students use the internet to search for cultural information, get social support, and interact with local communities.

Hidayati, S. & Alamsyah, R. (2022) examined the impact of internet use on the mental health of Indonesian students in Arab countries, including feelings of loneliness and anxiety. This study provides insight into how the internet can be a source of support or stress for students. Amin, A. & Khairunnisa, S. (2021) examined the coping strategies used by Indonesian students in Egypt in dealing with the challenges of study and daily life, and how digital communication plays a role in this process.

Students can participate in seminars, webinars, or panel discussions held online, either from their university or from other institutions. This allows them to continue learning and interacting with people from various backgrounds. Many students are active in online-based student organizations or communities, where they can collaborate on projects and activities related to their interests and expertise.

Students often use online learning platforms to take classes, either organized by their university or additional courses offered online. This is especially important during emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the e-learning platform, they participate in group discussions and forums to exchange ideas and thoughts with classmates.

Students also use the internet to watch movies, listen to music, and play online games as a means of entertainment and relaxation after studying. They may also share their experiences while studying abroad through personal blogs, vlogs, or content on social media. The internet is used to manage finances, including paying tuition fees, rent, and sending money to family in Indonesia. Students may use financial applications to monitor their spending.

Students may face challenges in terms of internet connection speed and stability in the country where they are studying, which can affect their ability to study effectively. In some countries, they may also experience restrictions on access to certain content that may be important to them, both for academic and social connections.

Indonesian students' behaviors in using the internet while studying abroad vary widely, depending on their academic, social, and cultural needs. The internet serves as an important tool that helps them navigate academic and social life in a new environment, as well as maintain connections with their home culture and community.

The adaptation of Indonesian students in Egypt, particularly in Cairo, involves navigating cultural, social, and academic challenges. Research highlights the significance of communication, living conditions, and psychological adjustment in this process. Indonesian students often rely on technology to maintain connections with family and friends back home, which can both support and hinder their integration. While these connections provide emotional support, they may also limit interactions with local Egyptians, creating cultural silos (Lim & Pham, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The relationship between Indonesia and Egypt was built on the basis of solidarity in the struggle for independence, religious equality, and cooperation in various fields. Egypt's early support for Indonesian independence has a special place in the history of both countries. To this day, Egypt and Indonesia continue to have close relations, both in political, economic, and cultural contexts.

These studies provide valuable insights into how Indonesian students in Egypt and other Arab countries use the internet to support their academic and social lives. The internet serves as an important tool that helps students adapt, build networks, and manage their mental health in a new environment.

Since the early 20th century, Egypt, especially Al-Azhar University, has been a primary destination for Indonesian students who want to deepen their religious knowledge and become important figures in the country. This educational relationship continues to this day, and many Indonesian students receive scholarships or study independently in Egypt as part of an effort to strengthen Islamic knowledge in Indonesia.

The adaptation of Indonesian students abroad requires flexibility, openness, and patience in adjusting to a new environment. Factors such as language, culture, and education systems require special attention. However, the international student community, support from the local community, and campus activities greatly help in speeding up this adaptation process.

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