

REVERSE CULTURE SHOCK SHAPING PERSONAL TRAITS AND VIEWS: A CASE STUDY OF MALANG RETURNEES FROM SURABAYA

KEJUTAN BUDAYA TERBALIK YANG MEMBENTUK PANDANGAN DAN KEPERIBADIAN: STUDI KASUS PERANTAU MALANG DARI SURABAYA

Muhammad Iqbal Arrasyid ^{1a(*)} Edi Dwi Riyanto ^{2b} Nadya Afdholy ^{3c}

¹²³ Universitas Airlangga

^amuhammad.iqbal.arrasyid-2023@fib.unair.ac.id

^bedi-d-r@fib.unair.ac.id

^cnadyaafdholi@fib.unair.ac.id

(*) Corresponding Author

muhammad.iqbal.arrasyid-2023@fib.unair.ac.id

How to Cite: Muhammad Iqbal Arrasyid. (2025). Kejutan Budaya Terbalik Yang Membentuk Pandangan Dan Kepribadian: Studi Kasus Perantau Malang Dari Surabaya doi: 10.36526/js.v3i2.5649

Received : 28-06-2025

Revised : 28-07-2025

Accepted: 31-07-2025

Keywords:

Reverse culture shock,
Malang,
Traits,
Transformative learning

Abstract

The phenomenon of reverse culture shock (RCS) experienced by Malang returnees who previously resided in Surabaya, two Indonesian cities with contrasting urban dynamics. The objective is to examine how both culture shock and reverse culture shock influence the development of personal traits and viewpoints. Employing a qualitative research design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with participants who met specific criteria, including prior residence in Surabaya for at least three months and subsequent return to Malang. The analysis was guided by Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory, which frames cultural dissonance as a disorienting dilemma that prompts critical reflection and perspective transformation. The findings reveal that all participants experienced both culture shock in Surabaya and reverse culture shock upon returning to Malang. These experiences significantly shaped their personal traits, particularly increased gratitude, and shifted their perspectives on daily life, environmental conditions, and social interactions. The study's novelty lies in its local contextualization of RCS within intra-national migration and its theoretical application of transformative learning to interpret identity and attitudinal shifts in returnees.

INTRODUCTION

Reverse Culture Shock (RCS) is a term that emerged recently in the contemporary era. It refers to the negative impacts experienced by those who are readapting to their original or home culture after submersion in a distinctive culture (Frazier & Kasten, 2015). Being understood as the next level of culture shock phenomena, RCS presents a situation in which a group or individuals experience culture shock when they come back to their homeland after being away for a certain period of time in another location. This has brought issues regarding the impact on those returnees. Most of them are presenting similar reactions after working and/ or finishing their study abroad, which is the feeling of being strange toward their homeland (Brown, 2023), while others are struggling in re-adjusting to their origin culture (Chubb, 2023). Initially, RCS frequently happened to those who had been doing jobs or studying overseas. However, given particular conditions such as a strong asymmetry, this does not rule out that similar phenomena are experienced by those who moved out and came back home to a smaller range of areas, such as districts, by districts.

To be more specific, the phenomenon of reverse culture shock is also experienced by individuals from Malang who have spent a considerable period living in Surabaya. Although geographically close, the two cities differ significantly in cultural tempo. Surabaya is known for its fast-paced, industrial atmosphere, while Malang offers a more relaxed and slower rhythm of life. This stark contrast often leads to psychological discomfort for returnees, who may feel like strangers in

their hometown. According to Mezirow (1991), such disorienting experiences can serve as a trigger for transformative learning, where individuals engage in deep reflection and eventually reconstruct their frames of reference. In this process, returning home becomes more than just a geographical transition; it initiates an internal dialogue that influences one's identity, values, and outlook. As argued by Presbitero (2016), reverse culture shock can challenge pre-existing cultural assumptions, leading to the emergence of new, more adaptive perspectives. Therefore, understanding reverse culture shock requires us to first examine the initial cultural adjustment experienced in Surabaya, as it sets the foundation for the reflective transformation that follows upon returning to Malang.

Numerous researchers have studied the topic of culture shock. Athallah & Dharma (2024) explore the communication strategies used by Indonesian Migrant Workers (PMI) to overcome culture shock while working in Japan. The workers manage their culture shock by applying three strategies: active, passive, and interactive. Karadag & Almukdad (2024) investigate the negative effects of the interaction of self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and sociocultural adjustment on culture shock. It showed that various negative effects were indeed generated based on the mentioned aspects. Otuogha et al. (2024) study the challenges faced by Nigerian undergraduate students in Scotland by focusing on communication culture shock and adaptation strategies. It revealed that effective communication plays an important role in navigating cultural differences. Last, Junaid et al. (2024) explore the processes and underlying factors that lead to culture shock in the main character of the movie *Queen* (2014) by applying Sverre Lysgaard's U-curve theory of culture shock. It showed that significant differences in cultural norms, unfamiliar food, lifestyle changes, and language barriers are contributing as the main factors of culture shock. Compared to these previous studies, instead of the culture shock, this research focuses on the reverse culture shock experienced by Malang sojourners after living in Surabaya.

A number of previous studies have focused on the impact of reverse culture shock. Fanari et al. (2021) investigated the effects of reverse culture shock among students returning from studying abroad and found that they experienced struggles in disclosures during conversations with others. Laili et al. (2024) examine the reverse culture shock experienced by Indonesian students after returning from studying at Al Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt. It highlighted the emotional and psychological challenges of students' reentry. Alkhalaf et al. (2024) analyze the impact of reverse culture shock, particularly on reverse acculturative stress among Saudi students returning to their home country after studying in the USA. Many returnees stated that they are experiencing reduced life satisfaction and difficulty in adapting to societal norms in Saudi Arabia. In contrast to these studies, this research focuses on reverse culture shock that is experienced by returnees inside Indonesia, specifically by Malang sojourners returning from Surabaya.

On the other hand, previous studies focus on not only reverse culture shock but also its coping strategies. Amril Et al. (2022) investigated the international internship students' cultural intelligence in reaction to reverse culture shock. The students showed good cultural resistance as they rejected the phenomena by being intellectually in cultural understanding. Salsabilla and Keliat (2023) analyze the coping strategy Indonesian children of diplomats use to reverse culture shock. It is shown that they refused to be part of the unfamiliar and decided to end with the ability to communicate through a variety of different cultural frames and prospects. El-Asri et al. (2024) investigate the factors that cause exchange students returning to their home countries to have difficulty re-adjusting to the culture and its coping strategies. The students experienced reverse culture shock due to unhealthy comparisons as they processed and accepted it. Unlike these studies, this research focuses on the impact of reverse culture shock in influencing personal traits and views, particularly of Malang returnees after spending time in Surabaya.

In line with the research topic, the concept of transformative learning is applied to analyze the data found. This concept was proposed by Jack Mezirow in 1978. It refers to processes by which one transforms certain 'problematic frames of reference', the mentioned frames include mindsets, perspectives, etc., to make them more adaptively changeable and/or developed (Mezirow, 2018). Such new frames create and replace the previous ones as it is better because they are more likely

to generate more developed and adjusted beliefs and opinions. However, according to Mezirow, transformative learning theory is fundamentally based on the study of reasoning based on interactions and evidence. He stated that reasoning is understood as the process of advancing and assessing a belief. Therefore, transformative learning is an adult dimension of reason assessment involving validating and reformulating meaning structures. Mezirow states that transformative learning occurs when individuals encounter a "disorienting dilemma" that challenges their current beliefs and assumptions (Mezirow, 1991). This dilemma triggers a process of critical reflection, leading to a transformation in one's frame of reference. In the context of reverse culture shock, an individual's return to their home culture after an extended period abroad often presents this disorienting dilemma, prompting a reassessment of previously held beliefs and values (Presbitero, 2016). The process of transformative learning involves several stages, including critical reflection, rational discourse, and action (Mezirow, 2000). When applied to reverse culture shock, individuals may find themselves questioning aspects of their home culture that they previously took for granted. This critical reflection could lead to a deeper understanding of both their home and host cultures, potentially resulting in a more nuanced and inclusive worldview (Kartoshkina, 2015). Applying transformative learning theory to reverse culture shock suggests that this experience can profoundly impact personal traits and outlooks. Research has shown that individuals who experience reverse culture shock often report increased cultural sensitivity, improved critical thinking skills, and a more global perspective (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010). These changes are consistent with Mezirow's concept of perspective transformation, in which learners develop more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative ways of thinking (Mezirow, 1997).

The transformative learning process triggered by reverse culture shock can lead to significant personal growth. Individuals may develop enhanced adaptability, improved intercultural communication skills, and a greater capacity for empathy (Gaw, 2000). These changes in personal traits and perspectives stem from the critical reflection and perspective transformation central to Mezirow's theory. However, it's important to recognize that this transformative learning process is not always smooth or comfortable. Individuals experiencing reverse culture shock may encounter discomfort, confusion, and even identity crises as they try to integrate their new perspectives with their existing worldviews (Presbitero, 2016). This aligns with Mezirow's assertion that transformative learning can be challenging and sometimes painful (Mezirow, 2000). Jack Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory offers a valuable framework for understanding the complex phenomenon of reverse culture shock and its effects on personal traits and perspectives. By acknowledging the potential for transformative learning in this context, educators, counselors, and individuals can better navigate the challenges and opportunities that arise from returning to cross-cultural experiences, ultimately fostering personal growth and intercultural understanding.

As previously mentioned, a study analyzing reverse culture shock at the district level, specifically focusing on Malang sojourners returning from Surabaya, has not yet been conducted. This research, therefore, aims to fill that gap by investigating the impact of reverse culture shock on the personal traits and viewpoints of Malang returnees. By examining this topic, the study seeks to contribute to academic discussions about reverse culture shock at the district level. Additionally, it explores how reverse culture shock influences the development of individual traits and perspectives. To further enrich the discourse on these subjects, the research applies Mezirow's transformative learning theory.

METHOD

This research is categorized as qualitative research since the research's objective is to aim at a deep understanding of the complexity of a social phenomenon. As Burns & Grove (2009) stated, qualitative research refers to a systematical and subjective framework to which its objective is to investigate and understand at a more complex level. This type of research design, therefore, correlates with this research objective, which is to understand and investigate in which way the reverse culture shock contributes to shaping personal traits and views experienced by Malang

sojourners after returning from Surabaya. Furthermore, in order to apply this research design, qualitative research offers several approaches such as interviews, observations, and, for some specific cases, case studies and surveys (Mohajan, 2018). In line with that, the data collection technique used in this research is interviewing participants. As Ely et al. (1991) stated, interviews are targeted at those who possess a rich understanding of the discussed topic. The participants are those who have not only experienced the reverse culture shock but are also aware of its effect on them. The data source of this research is selected people who have met the criteria. The criteria are; (1) people who were originally and were born in Malang, (2) people who then travel and stay in Surabaya for a certain period of time, a minimum of three months, (3) people who return to Malang after staying for a while in Surabaya, and (4) people who experienced and are aware of the culture shock in Surabaya and the reverse culture shock when returning to Malang. Moreover, although reverse culture shock has a distinctive discussion, this research applied phenomenology theory to analyze the research topic. Since the research objective is to investigate the influence of reverse culture shock on shaping personal traits and views, the mentioned analysis technique, therefore, correlates with the objectives. Likewise, this research also applied Mezirow's transformative learning theory as the concept mainly discusses one's learning process by facing 'problematic frames of reference' (Mezirow, 1978) to which it corresponds with this research aim, particularly in terms of traits and views creation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Culture Shock in Surabaya

Since the research topic is reverse culture shock, it is necessary to discuss the previous phenomenon of culture shock. Furthermore, after interviewing the participants, this research found that they underwent a number of similar culture shock experiences, such as severe traffic jams, temperature differences, and certainly the life pace compared between the two cities, Malang and Surabaya. Here is the statement from the participants regarding the culture shock they had experienced.

RAV: *"jadi culture shock yang saya alami itu lebih ke cuaca, iyasih, sama kondisi rame kendaraan yaa, nah jadi disana itu lebih panas lagi mas, terus disana itu banyak kendaran kek truk-truk besar gitu pengaruh banget kan ke cuaca, terus yang saya lihat juga disana itu air nya susah banget cari air yang bener-bener bersih.", "kalau suara nge-bell harusnya iya si, soalnya kan orang-orang disana kan banyak pekerja ya mas ya, otomatis mereka itu mengejar waktu gitulo buat sampe ke tempat kerjanya."*

SBP: *"... apalagi kita tahu kan, udaranya udah beda ya Malang sama Surabaya, nah itu kayak panass banget.", "(vehicles honking the horn repeatedly) nah itu yang saya alami berkali-kali ya bahkan kenapa makanya saya takut gitu mas bawa sepeda motor di Surabaya.", "Kok di Surabaya sering ini yaa, kita udah pelan, udah minggir, udah taat aturan tapi orang sana (Surabaya) gitu kek ga sabaran gitulo, kayak tin tin tin padahal gaada apa-apa.", "tapi kalau di sana (Surabaya) (if were on wrong way) kita tu kek dimaki-maki, terus di bel bel tin tin tin kek gitu."*

JTT: *"mungkin yang pertama, panas, karena sepanas itu Surabaya. Terus kedua, mungkin harga, apapun di Surabaya itu mesti lebih mahal. Ketiga, itu terkait arus lalu lintas nya sih, karena aku sendiri itu gabawa motor di Surabaya jadi otomatis sering (order) Gojek", "(frequent honking) dialami juga si mas, karena meskipun aku jalan, naik gojek itu orang-orang kek ga sabaran banget ya, dibanding di Malang."*

MSI: *"di Surabaya itu orang nya lebih cepet atau cenderung tergesa-gesa gitu, disana juga panas banget mas, jam 9 pagi pun sudah berarti sangat panas.", "kalau misal lampu merah atau kalau gak di perempatan mas ya, itu orang-orang kayak berebut saling cepet-cepetan gitu mas, padahal lampu ijonya baru berganti gitu."*

From the data above, it could be seen that all the participants underwent similar culture shock experiences in Surabaya. Such experiences include different temperatures, where Surabaya

is highly hotter compared to Malang, and the severe traffic jams in Surabaya, where people are frequently honking. According to RAV, she witnessed that the weather in Surabaya is already hot, let alone many trucks passing by. She also mentioned that people in Surabaya are often found honking to each other. Similar conditions are experienced as well by the rest of the participants. This indicates that all participants share the same experiences in Surabaya. They found it as a shocking matter due to the comparison of prior experience they had in Malang. Thus, these experiences come as a culture shock to them. The fact that all four participants were aware of the culture shocks they had experienced shows that they possess the knowledge and awareness of culture particularly in its diversity.

Furthermore, as Mezirow (1978) stated, transformative learning theory focuses on learning processes through the orientation of reasoning based on interactions and evidence. The participant had interacted and had witnessed such phenomena as mentioned previously. Likewise, it could be generally understood that based on the statements by all participants, such culture shock experiences are in the form of an issue. For example, the unmatched weather in Surabaya compared to previously used Malang's and the severe traffic jams where people often honk their horns compared to Malang's slow pace and uncrowded traffic. At this point, culture shock is faced as an issue by the participants, meeting the base requirement in Mezirow's transformative learning theory. In addition, it highlights the phenomena as the required conditions for participants to experience reverse culture shock.

Reverse Culture Shock in Returning to Malang

Corresponding with the previous discussion, all the participants were indeed undergoing various yet similar reverse cultures when returning to Malang after staying in Surabaya for a certain period of time. The reverse culture shock they experienced correlates with the previous discussion of culture shock including the slow-paced flows of life in Malang and the refreshing environment.

RAV: *"ternyata waktu saya ke Malang (returning) oh ya gak sepanas iniloh, misalkan saya kek apply moisturizer nih mas buat muka, kalau di Malang saya banyakan karena udaranya dingin. Ohiya di Malang ini udah enak banget ya ternyata airnya tuh dah bersih."* *"ternyata ga semua tempat itu senyaman Malang, udaranya, banyak makanan disini, wisata dimana-mana, terus airnya bersih, itu udah surga banget sih."*, *"iya itu bedaa (people in Malang doesn't like to honking)."*

SBP: *"di Surabaya itu saya terbiasa bangun pagi, kalau ga bangun pagi nanti kerja nya saya telat dong mas, ... tapi kalau di Malang ya nyantai."*, *"dulu biasa tapi sekarang kalau di Malang kedinginan."*, *"kebiasaan di Surabaya itu ritme nya cepet, gampang meluapkan emosilah, mungkin karena panas yaa."*, *"(being finally aware of situation in Malang) ya pastinya lebih tenang, lebih damai aja, terus ga ganggu pikiran . . . seenak itu di Malang"*

JTT: *"... ternyata itu Malang lumayan adem, terus orang-orangnya itu juga santai, meskipun kerjanya itu juga kek santaim meskipun tetep tahu lah ya pekerjaan tanggungjawabnya, cuman mereka lebih santai daripada Surabaya."*

MSI: *"mungkin ketika kembali ke Malang, saya itu kayak agak sedikit gregetan juga soalnya disini terlalu slow. Ternyata di Malang se slow itu. (Tapi) ya ada beberapa hal yang membuat saya tenang (in Malang) ternyata ga perlu secepat itu atau ga perlu seburu-buru itu, enaknya di Malang seperti itu ya."*

According to the transcript above, it could be seen that all four participants became more aware of their homeland culture, Malang. For instance, RAV, after returning from Surabaya, takes notice of the refreshing level of Malang, and people in Malang are less likely to honk at each other compared to those in Surabaya. SBP also stated a similar matter in terms of frequent honking, which Malang is not as frequent as in Surabaya. She even added that at some point, she received mockery along with the honking in Surabaya. Not much in difference, JTT and MSI experience a similar condition to which people in Malang are relatively slow, as in street and pace of life, compared to Surabaya.

At this point, the participants understand that there is a comparison of culture shock they experienced in both cities, as all of them stated that they are aware of it. Compared to Surabaya, Malang is fresher and more relaxed, which is the same situation as before the participants went to Surabaya. Nevertheless, as the participants become sensible and more aware of the situation, the reverse culture shock phenomena have, therefore, impacted their views. Moreover, Mezirow (1978) stated that one of the stages in transformative learning is critical reflection on past and present beliefs. Likewise, by reflecting on past and present beliefs about the situation in Malang, the participants have created a framework of reference as they become more understanding of the reverse culture shock situations in both cities.

Reverse Culture Shock Shaping Traits and Views

The previous discussion shows each level of cultural shock experienced by the participants. The first one is the culture experienced in Surabaya, and the second one is the reverse culture shock experienced when returning to Malang. The two culture shocks provide the experiences needed for the transformative learning theory as they were an issue for the participants. The issues vary, specifically in terms of Surabaya's high temperatures and severe traffic jams compared to Malang's fresh air and calm streets. It could be seen that high temperatures and severe traffic jams are the culture shock issues experienced by all participants. The issues come as culture shock phenomena since the participants received it not only as an issue but also as a shocking phenomenon to which they have respective adaptation behavior as its responses.

Based on the statements from the participants about the culture shock in both cities, differences appear. As it is mentioned, high temperatures and severe traffic jams affect them. Departing from Malang and its fresher weather and calmer traffic jams, they stated that the hot weather in Surabaya was the first thing they noticed by the time they arrived, followed by severe traffic jams indicated by frequent honking. These issues, therefore, are perceived as an issue by the participants. Furthermore, as they returned to Malang, they experienced reverse culture shock as they took notice of Malang's fresh weather and calmer traffic jams. The underlying reason is simply because of the generated idea or belief they acquired from Surabaya's situations. In fact, all four participants stated that they have become more aware of Malang's situations, particularly at, which appears to be a surprising recognition, its fresher weather and calmer street traffic jams. At this point, via Mezirow's (1978) concept, the participants are experiencing the stage of disorientating situations and immediate reflection on past and present beliefs. The high temperatures due to asymmetry weather and frequent honking consequently provide a disorienting situation. Being aware of this, the participants then reflect on past and present beliefs. This points out the contrasts between the two cities as the idea of comparing and distinguishing them emerged from this context. Thereafter, arguments are evaluated based on logic, coherence, and factual accuracy. From this point on, as the participants become more aware of their home, Malang's situations, which they found surprisingly fresher weather and calmer traffic jams, the transformation of perspective begins to happen. More specifically, the participants take notice that Malang's weather is much fresher, and the frequency of vehicle horn usage is highly reduced compared to Surabaya's. Likewise, provided that all four participants claimed to be fond of Malang's situation compared to before they left for Surabaya. With that being said, the process of perspective reintegration has occurred. Simply in contrast with participants' prior knowledge of Malang, the new perspective is in the form of increased awareness of their homeland situations. This concludes the transformative learning process by the participants through their experience of culture shock.

As shown above, the participant's point of view or perspective has shifted primarily due to experiencing the culture shocks. The first thing to remember is the fact that all participants admitted to being fonder of Malang as the transformative learning process through reverse culture shock (RCS) influenced them to be calmer and more relaxed, which shows that reverse culture shock is indeed taking part in shaping participants' traits and views, particularly at Malang. In detail, participants' views of Malang were a normal, fresh, and enjoyable city. This perspective is shifted by

RCS as they become more aware and fonder of Malang's situation. At this point, this new perspective indicates that the participants' traits have been influenced to be more grateful, let alone the fact that they grow fonder of the city. Hence, in other words, the views of increased awareness and the trait of gratitude have been developed by the participants after experiencing the culture shock. Additionally, this research's findings support previous research in certain areas. In terms of culture shock variations, all the participants underwent various culture shock experiences. This finding supports EL-Asri et al. (2024) findings that show not only that students experience culture shock to different extents, but also that the different cultures between the home and the host have generated the idea of comparison among the participants. Further, this research's findings show that temperature differences are indeed experienced as culture shock. This aligns with Laili et al. (2024), who found that informants were surprised by the extreme temperature differences in the country where they live, compared to Indonesia, where summer and winter temperatures are much more extreme

Discussion

The phenomenon of reverse culture shock (RCS) has received growing attention across interdisciplinary studies over the past two decades, particularly in the fields of cross-cultural psychology, international education, and intercultural communication. RCS refers to a form of cultural disorientation experienced by individuals upon returning to their home environment after spending a significant amount of time immersed in a different culture. This experience is often marked by feelings of alienation, value confusion, social rejection, and a sense of incompatibility with cultural norms that once felt familiar. While RCS is more commonly observed in individuals returning from abroad, it also exists within domestic contexts, especially in archipelagic nations like Indonesia, where regional cultural diversity is vast and deeply rooted. This study specifically highlights RCS in a local context: among individuals from Malang returning from Surabaya. Although these two cities are located on the same island, their social and cultural rhythms differ significantly. Surabaya, with its fast-paced, industrial lifestyle, contrasts starkly with Malang's more relaxed and cooler atmosphere. Such a contrast can trigger psychological discomfort for returnees and may prompt deep reflection on personal identity and values. These findings resonate with Fanari et al. (2021), who revealed that students returning from studying abroad often experience difficulties in building interpersonal communication, feeling disconnected in daily conversations, and struggling to share their cross-cultural experiences with those who have never lived abroad. Similarly, Laili et al. (2024) found that Indonesian students returning from Egypt faced emotional and psychological challenges during the reintegration process, primarily due to value misalignment between what they had internalized abroad and what they encountered back home.

In the Middle Eastern context, Alkhalaf et al. (2024) studied Saudi Arabian students who returned after studying in the United States and found high levels of reverse acculturation stress (RCS). Many respondents reported a decrease in life satisfaction and difficulty adapting to the social and cultural norms prevailing in Saudi Arabia. This study shows that the wide cultural gap between the home country and the host country exacerbates the RCS experienced by individuals.

Unlike the above study, which highlights differences between countries, this research makes an original contribution by exploring RCS experiences in the local Indonesian context, specifically among individuals from Malang who have returned from Surabaya. In this sense, returning home is not always a comforting experience; it can also become a profound journey of self-reflection, challenging one's understanding of what "home" truly means. Several studies have shown the complexity of RCS experienced by students or professionals who return to their home countries after studying or working abroad. Although the geographical distance is not significant, Surabaya, as a metropolitan city with more liberal urban cultural characteristics, language, and social norms compared to Malang, creates a fairly significant social dynamic. Therefore, the experience of returning home is not always smooth and is often accompanied by reverse culture shock that is often unnoticed because it occurs within the country.

Strategies for Overcoming Reverse Culture Shock

Some studies not only focus on the impact of RCS but also on the adjustment or readjustment strategies used by individuals who experience it. Amril et al. (2022) studied cultural intelligence among international interns and found that the ability to understand and manage cultural differences cognitively, metacognitively, and behaviorally is highly beneficial in reducing the negative impacts of RCS. These students demonstrated cultural resilience by remaining open to differences and adjusting their mindset based on cross-cultural understanding.

Meanwhile, research by Salsabilla and Keliat (2023) highlights the adjustment strategies used by Indonesian diplomatic children who frequently move between countries. This study emphasizes that their ability to flexibly shift between cultural perspectives is a key tool in overcoming RCS. They do not immediately try to return to old habits but instead create a hybrid mindset to bridge cross-cultural experiences with local culture.

In a study by El-Asri et al. (2024), it was found that RCS is often exacerbated by unhealthy comparisons between the foreign culture left behind and the home culture. Adjustment becomes more difficult when individuals continuously compare living standards, work ethics, and social interaction patterns without accepting change. Therefore, effective adaptation strategies often involve the process of accepting and re-internalizing local values.

However, this study does not specifically highlight adaptation strategies but focuses on how RCS experiences influence individual traits and perspectives. In other words, this study aims to address how psychosocial changes occur as a result of reflective processes after experiencing another culture, even though that culture remains within the Indonesian national context.

Transformative Learning Theory as an Analytical Framework

To deeply understand the psychological and cognitive transformations experienced by returnees, this study employs the Transformative Learning Theory approach, first developed by Jack Mezirow in 1978. This theory emphasizes that the deepest adult learning occurs when individuals face cognitive crises or challenges that shake their old frameworks of thinking, or what Mezirow refers to as confusing dilemmas. In the context of RCS, the experience of returning to one's home culture often.

To gain a deeper understanding of the psychological and cognitive changes experienced by returnees, this study draws on Transformative Learning Theory, first introduced by Jack Mezirow in 1978. At its core, this theory suggests that adults often experience the most meaningful learning during moments of crisis, when their long-held assumptions are disrupted by unfamiliar experiences. Mezirow refers to these moments as disorienting dilemmas, where individuals are compelled to reflect deeply on what they believe and why they believe it. In the context of reverse culture shock (RCS), the very idea of "home" can become unfamiliar, even unsettling. What once felt normal now feels distant or even out of sync with one's newly formed perspectives. This mirrors findings in previous studies, such as Kartoshkina (2015), who observed that students returning from abroad often reassessed their cultural values upon realizing how much they had changed. Similarly, Wielkiewicz and Turkowski (2010) noted that such re-entry experiences could foster not only critical thinking but also a more global and inclusive worldview. Like those who have lived overseas, domestic returnees, such as those in this study who moved from Surabaya back to Malang, undergo a comparable process of internal questioning and identity renegotiation. While the geographical distance may be smaller, the psychological shift can be just as profound. Through the lens of transformative learning, this study sees RCS not merely as a challenge but as an opportunity for growth, a chance for individuals to better understand themselves and the world they live in. Mezirow (1991) suggested that the transformative learning process occurs in three primary stages: reflection, discussion, and action. A critical reflection involves a re-examination of assumptions that have not been thoroughly examined. It is my understanding that a rational discourse is one in which individuals

are able to compare new and old ideas in a logical and open way. At the same time, the next step involves the implementation of a new theoretical framework in our daily lives.

Based on the research of Presbitero (2016), RCS has the potential to encourage transformative learning because it naturally involves reflecting on one's own culture as well as other cultures. When individuals encounter a sense of unfamiliarity in a place that once felt familiar, it can be a catalyst for re-evaluating long-held beliefs and forging new interpretations that are more inclusive. It is my understanding that this has contributed to the development of a new framework for thinking that is more critical and adaptable to cultural diversity. Their research indicated that individuals who experienced RCS demonstrated a heightened capacity for critical thinking and a more expansive global perspective. It is my understanding that, with this framework, personality development is not merely a passive outcome of cultural exposure, but rather a dynamic process of active and reflective engagement with diverse cultural influences.

The potential psychological and social impacts within the local context

In the context of this study, the Mezirow theoretical approach was implemented to understand the characteristics and perspectives of individuals from Malang who have resided in Surabaya. It is interesting to note that both cities are located on the same island. While Surabaya is a modern, fast-paced, and diverse city, it can be a bit overwhelming for those used to the more traditional and community-focused atmosphere of Malang. Upon their return to Malang, the concept of feeling "foreign in one's own land" emerges as a source of internal confusion, prompting a deep reflection process.

The process in question has the potential to yield insights such as an increased capacity for empathy towards other cultures, the emergence of a more critical perspective towards local norms that were previously accepted without question, and the development of a sense of critical thinking. However, as Mezirow (2000) has noted, this process of transformation can be challenging at times. Many individuals may experience a sense of uncertainty regarding their identity, social isolation, or a sense of psychological discomfort when attempting to reconcile new experiences with their past values and beliefs.

It is important to note that the transformative learning process in the context of RCS domestik, as examined in this study, is not merely a process of adaptation. It is also a process of creating new meanings that have a significant impact on an individual's identity, thought patterns, and social interaction. Therefore, it is essential to have a comprehensive understanding of the experience.

CONSLUSION

In conclusion, the participants who spent time in both Surabaya and Malang experienced culture shock as well as reverse culture shock. The findings indicate that their return to Malang led to a heightened awareness of cultural phenomena, which influenced their traits and perspectives on gratitude. Therefore, this research addresses the objective of investigating the traits and views shaped by reverse culture shock. As a case study, this research primarily focused on the reverse culture shock experienced by participants who had spent a significant amount of time in both cities. The emphasis was on how their character traits and views were shaped, rather than exploring other areas such as the symptoms of culture shock or the coping strategies that follow it. Furthermore, the researcher recommends that future studies examine this theme more broadly, particularly regarding how cultural phenomena affect personal traits and perspectives.

DAFTAR PUSTAKA

Alkhalaf, K., Al-Krenawi, A., & Elbedour, S. (2024). Reverse Culture Shock among Saudi Students Returning from the US to Their Homeland. *Journal of International Students*, 14-4, 741-759.

- Amril, O., Elfiondri, Irma, & Kartika, D. (2022). Cultural Intelligence And Resistance to Reverse Culture Shock : The Case of International Students Internship in Japan. *Jurnal Kata : Penelitian tentang Ilmu Bahasa dan Sastra*, 6-1, 88-100.
- Athallah, M. A., & Dharma, F. A. (2024). Strategi Komunikasi Pekerja Migran Indonesia dalam Mengatasi Culture Shock Selama Bekerja di Jepang. *Academic Journal of Da'wa and Communication*, 5-1, 81-104.
- Brown, C. (2023, September 6). "We Can't Live Freely In Its Current Inhospitable State": People Who Have Lived Abroad Are Sharing Their Experiences With Reverse Culture Shock When They Finally Returned Home. Retrieved from BuzzFeed Inc.: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/consheabrown1/expats-are-sharing-reverse-culture-shock-experiences>
- Burns, N., & Grove, S. K. (2009). *The Practice of Nursing Research: Appraisal, Synthesis, and Generation of Evidence* (6th Ed.). St. Louis: Saunders.
- Chubb, H. (2023, October 28). Reverse culture shock is the dark side of living abroad that no one talks about. Retrieved from Harper's Bazaar India: <https://www.harpersbazaar.in/culture/story/reverse-culture-shock-is-the-dark-side-of-living-abroad-700696-2023-10-28>
- EL-Asri, S., Karfa, A. E., & Farhane, H. (2014). Dealing with Reverse Culture Shock after Cultural Exchange: Contributing Factors and Coping Strategies. *Journal of Psychology and Behavior Studies*, 51-56.
- Ely, M., Anzul, M., Freidman, T., Garner, D., & McCormack-Steinmetz, A. (1991). *Doing Qualitative Research: Circles within Circles*. London: Falmer Press.
- Fanari, A., Liu, R. W., & Foerster, T. (2021). Homesick or Sickof-Home? Examining the Effects of Self-Disclosure on Students' Reverse Culture Shock after Studying Abroad: A Mixed-Method Study. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 1-31.
- Frazier, M. K., & Kasten, S. (2015). Reverse Culture Shock: The Purdue Kenya Partnership. *Purdue Journal of Service-Learning and International Engagement* Purdue Journal of Service-Learning and International Engagement, 2-1, 6-9.
- Gaw, K. F. (2000). Reverse culture shock in students returning from overseas. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24(1), 83-104.
- Junaid, S., Andini, C., Atsyan, N. A., & Rahmawati, A. N. (2024). Exploring Rani Mehra'S Culture Shock In Queen (2014) Movie Through theLensofSverre Lysgaard'S U-Curve Theory. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 7-3, 475-489.
- Karadag, E., & Almukdad, M. (2024). Culture Shock among International Students in Turkey: An Analysis of The Effects of Selfefficacy, Life Satisfaction and Socio-Cultural Adaptation on Culture Shock. *BMC Psychology*, 12-154, 1-12.
- Kartoshkina, Y. (2015). Bitter-sweet reentry after studying abroad. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 44, 35-45.
- Laili, N., Pawito, & Hastjarjo, S. (2024). Reverse Culture Shock Phenomenon among Al Azhar Students in Egypt. *Proceeding Ahmad Dahlan International Conference on Communication and Media*, 2-1 (pp. 467-478). Surakarta: Universitas Sebelas Maret.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1997). *Transformative learning: Theory to practice*. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 1997(74), 5-12.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (2018). *Transformative learning theory*. In K. Illeri, *Contemporary Theories of Learning* (pp. 60-68). London: Routledge.
- Mohajan, H. K. (2018). Qualitative Research Methodology in Social Sciences and Related Subjects. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 23-48.
- Otuogha, A. M., Udodo, A. J., & Ochonogor, C. I. (2024). Communication Culture Shock and Adaptation Strategies among Nigerian Undergraduate Students in Scotland, United Kingdom. *International Journal of English Language and Communication Studies*, 9-3, 17-36.
- Presbitero, A. (2016). Culture shock and reverse culture shock: The moderating role of cultural intelligence in international students' adaptation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 53, 28-38.
- Salsabilla, A. M., & Keliat, C. (2023). Overcoming The Reverse Culture Shock Experience in Indonesian Children of Diplomats From Living Overseas During Primary School Years. *Jurnal Scientia*, 12-3, 1389-1401.
- Wielkiewicz, R. M., & Turkowski, L. W. (2010). Reentry issues upon returning from study abroad programs. *Journal of College Student Development*, 51(6), 649-664.