

## Oberg's Stages of Culture Shock in the Adaptation Process of French Volunteers in Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

With increased mobility in the globalization era, more people are moving to other places. The primary objective is to seek novel intercultural experiences and challenges, as is the case with the experience of the French volunteers in Indonesia. Given that Indonesia is recognized for its collectivist culture and France for its individualistic culture, cultural differences are inevitable. According to the questionnaire data, the volunteers reported experiencing culture shock due to the host family's regulations and the neighborhood's social norms. Therefore, research on culture shock is needed to determine the four stages of Oberg's culture shock that volunteers undergo: the honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and acceptance phases. Six volunteers who worked with Dejavato and Civic Service to teach French language and culture were the subject of this quantitative descriptive study. According to Oberg's theory, the respondents did not experience the crisis phase, as indicated by the findings. The overall results were not significantly impacted by the variety of responses, particularly in topics such as shopping, transportation, and language. Additionally, most volunteers have shown good adaptability to the social environment and Indonesian culture throughout ongoing interactions. The findings indicate that interactions with the local society can support volunteers' understanding of Indonesian cultural values. This research also found that volunteers can adapt to a new cultural environment effectively.

**Keywords:** Adaptation Process; Culture Shock; French Volunteers; Indonesian Culture

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### INTRODUCTION

Globalization is an era in which cultural clashes are inevitable. Foreign cultures present new information and knowledge that a society can adapt. Steger (2021) states that globalization can be considered a process (or series of processes) that brings about transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions based on their scope, intensity, speed, and impact, resulting in flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power across continents or regions. Globalization has led to increased employment and international travel, which is also driven by technological developments. Globalization, driven by advances in science and technology, has broken down barriers of space and time, enabling people to engage in activities and move freely without restrictions (Haryono, 2017). As a result, the increasing mobility of people in the era of globalization has led to more individuals

moving to other countries and even continents. The goal is to seek new challenges in adapting to the local community's environment, norms, and culture. This is what Indonesians do when they move abroad to gain new experiences, whether for study or work. At the same time, many foreign nationals do the same thing in Indonesia and even become Indonesian citizens. Moving and living abroad has the potential to shape a person into an adaptive citizen, but it also poses various challenges. For example, not all individuals can easily adapt to a new culture. Being exposed to a foreign culture presents individuals with multiple challenges, including social adjustment, understanding unfamiliar cultures, overcoming language barriers, academic challenges, culture shock, personal confusion, and psychological disorders (Anjalin et al., 2017). The worst-case scenario is when an individual fails to cope with culture shock; they may choose to withdraw, return to their home culture, or even drop out of education (Prinarenti et al., 2024). In this study, we highlight the issue of culture shock that arises as part of the adaptation process to a new culture.

For example, there is a social program run by French volunteers in Indonesia to teach the French language and culture. This program is a collaboration between France and Indonesia. These volunteers, aged 19-28, face challenges in their daily lives while teaching in Indonesia. Cultural differences are an unavoidable challenge for volunteers, often leading to culture shock. Culture shock is the result of a process involving significant psychological and emotional adjustments when a person encounters and adapts to unfamiliar cultural norms, languages, and social behaviors (Mulyadi et al., 2024). Mulyana & Rakhmat (2006) define culture shock as an event related to an individual's work or interests that are experienced suddenly or unexpectedly when moving abroad. Culture shock is a common experience for individuals who relocate to a place with a different cultural background. Foreign volunteers often come from diverse cultural backgrounds, which can cause friction or difficulty in adapting to Indonesian culture (Subagja & Hanifah, 2020). French culture, in this case, is known for its multiculturalism, which makes France a country with significant cultural diversity. France scored 71 on the individualism index, indicating that it is a culture with high individualism, and that in its society the level of integration between people is low (G. Hofstede, 2011). An example is the culture of individualism, which Locke in Borgohain (2019) defines as a situation where individuals are given the freedom to determine their own path, as seen in French society, which prioritizes individual interests, independence, and personal freedom over group interests.

Individualism is associated with societies where relationships between individuals are loose (G. J. Hofstede, 2005). Conversely, collectivism is associated with societies where people are born into strong, cohesive groups that protect their lives in exchange

for unconditional loyalty. Unlike French society, Indonesian society tends to embrace a culture of collectivism. As explained by Novianti & Cahayani (2022) in their research findings, Indonesia has a lower level of individualism, which means that collectivism is more prevalent. This culture focuses on the interests of the group over those of the individual. Societies that embrace collectivist cultural values have strong emotional bonds between individuals; they prioritize the interests of the group, resulting in a social life characterized by mutual dependence (Izzah, 2025). Thus, Indonesian culture can pose new challenges for French volunteers. For French volunteers living in Semarang, the primary challenge they face is communicating in a language different from their own, namely Indonesian. Not only that, but most of the community also uses and adopts Javanese culture, which makes it even more difficult for French volunteers to adapt. As stated by Ngalimun (2018), foreign volunteers may find it challenging to adapt because they will use their own cultural standards to assess new cultures, norms, symbols, and languages, and they will no longer be able to rely on their own culture in their new environment.

French volunteers experiencing culture shock are volunteers participating in educational, social, and cultural programs as part of a collaboration between Dejavato and Civic Service. Dejavato is an international company that serves as a platform for foreign volunteers who will carry out their activities in the city of Semarang. The volunteers conduct volunteer activities as teachers in schools within the city of Semarang. They teach English and French, as well as French culture, to children in the schools where they are located. In their journey as teachers in schools, they encounter differences in language, culture, norms, and customs, which ultimately lead to culture shock. Based on the results of an interview with one of the French volunteers, we found that during the respondent's stay in Semarang, Indonesia, with a host family, he experienced culture shock related to the social values in the neighborhood where he lived and the rules set by the family, such as a curfew. The interview results suggest that culture shock can indeed occur in individuals who experience significant cultural differences with their place of residence, indicating that further studies on culture shock are warranted.

Culture shock is a common phenomenon for migrants, and there is a decline in social-personal adjustment with behavioral disorders or neurotic symptoms that arise when a person experiences a stressful situation (David, 1971). Adler (1975) also agrees that culture shock is a series of emotional reactions to the loss of reinforcement of one's own cultural perceptions, to new cultural stimuli that are of little or no meaning, and to misunderstandings of new and diverse experiences. Furthermore, Taft (1977) proposes six aspects of culture shock, such as:

1. Tension due to the effort required to make the necessary psychological adjustments.
2. Feelings of loss and bereavement related to friends, status, profession, and possessions.
3. Being rejected by and/or rejecting members of the new culture.
4. Confusion regarding roles, role expectations, values, feelings, and self-identity.
5. Surprise, anxiety, and even disgust and anger upon realizing cultural differences; and
6. Feelings of helplessness due to an inability to cope with the new environment.

According to Oberg (1960), culture shock occurs when an individual experiences stress or emotional strain in a new environment that is different from their native culture. Oberg also states that there are four phases of culture shock, known as the U-curve model, specifically:

1. Honeymoon phase: This stage usually lasts a few days to a few weeks, or even months, depending on everyone's circumstances. At this stage, participants are usually enchanted by their new surroundings.
2. At the crisis phase in the second stage, a person usually begins to feel frustrated, anxious, and angry. This is because they must face and overcome real-life problems, such as language barriers, accommodation, transportation, and shopping.
3. Recovery phase: This stage is characterized by a process of resolving crises and learning about the culture.
4. Adjustment phase: In this final stage, a person is in full recovery, reflecting enjoyment and adaptation to their new environment.

Research on culture shock has been conducted extensively by experts to understand the adjustment process experienced by individuals who move to a new place. One study discussing culture shock is "Culture Shock of Foreign Volunteers in Karawang Regency, West Java" in the *Journal of Scientific Communication* (Volume 1, Issue 2, October 2019) by Syamsuri et al. (2020). This study aims to understand the adjustment process of foreign volunteers from the United States and identify the strategies they use to overcome culture shock while in Indonesia, particularly in Karawang, West Java. This study involved three Americans who volunteered in Karawang Regency, West Java, with data collection using observation and interviews with the volunteers. This research is classified as a descriptive qualitative study, employing a case study method. The results of the study show that American volunteers experienced culture shock. The volunteers had difficulty adapting to the Karawang community, particularly in terms of culture, race, and weather, as most of the community identified with Sundanese culture.

Collins et al. (2021)'s "Those First Few Months Were Horrible": Cross-Cultural Adaptation and the J-Curve in the International Student Experience in the UK and Norway" is another study of a similar nature. The high number of international students residing in Norway and the UK served as the impetus for this investigation. The purpose of the study was to determine how overseas students perceived their adjustment to a new setting and the type of support they received from their universities. This qualitative study involved 36 students from 11 different countries enrolled in three universities: two in the UK and one in Norway. The interviews with participants covered three main topics: their reasons for studying abroad, their experiences while overseas, and their decisions to stay in Norway and the UK. This study uses Lysgaard (1955) U-curve hypothesis of cultural adaptation, which outlines four stages of cultural adaptation: the honeymoon stage, culture shock, adjustment, and recovery. Convenience sampling was used to select coordinators from three colleges, and semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection method in this research. According to Lysgaard (1955) U-curve theory, international students in the UK and Norway did not go through the honeymoon phase. This theory posits that there are four stages of cultural adaptation: the honeymoon stage, culture shock, acceptance, and recovery. The results of this study led to the creation of a new model, known as the J-curve, which lacks a honeymoon phase, instead featuring a direct transition to a phase of great difficulty experienced by individuals, followed by a slow rise to the adjustment phase and finally the acceptance phase.

Similarly, research conducted by Miller & El-Aidi (2008) entitled *Culture Shock: Causes and Symptoms*. The subjects of this study were 191 international students from different backgrounds studying at California State University, East Bay. Several theories were used in this study, one of which was Adler's theory, namely: Contact, Disintegration, Reintegration, Autonomy, and Independence. The data collection method consisted of a questionnaire with three main sections: symptoms of culture shock, causes of culture shock, and demographic data. This study found that almost all international students experienced culture shock, the causes of which varied and were multidimensional in nature. Variables that influence a person's experience of culture shock include age, level of education, number of visits, and experience of living in another country. Differences in the region of origin also influence perceptions of the causes of culture shock.

Of the three research areas studied, it is evident that research on culture shock has focused extensively on several fields of international mobility, including foreign volunteers, international students, and demographic variables that influence individuals' experiences. However, research gaps still exist that can be further developed.

The study by Syamsuri et al. (2020) emphasizes the process of foreign volunteer adaptation to the local context in Indonesia, focusing on cultural obstacles and strategic adaptation, but is not specifically connected to the theoretical model of cultural adaptation in the comparative study. The research of Collins et al. (2021) makes an important contribution through the J-curve model, which focuses on international students in Western countries and has not been widely studied with respect to volunteer cross-cultural experiences in developing countries, especially in direct interaction with local communities. On the other hand, Miller & El-Aidi (2008) research gives greater attention to the symptom and demographic aspects of culture shock; however, it has not deeply explored the dynamics of socio-cultural interaction in daily adaptation.

Accordingly, the novelty of this research lies in the culture shock experienced by French volunteers in Semarang regarding social interactions and cultural differences with local communities in Indonesia. This research has not only described the adaptation process but also analyzed it using the theoretical approaches of Taft and Oberg, simultaneously identifying the stages of culture shock in a more specific context. Based on the background described, this study addresses the following research question: How do the French volunteers in Indonesia experience the four stages of Oberg's culture shock model, namely the honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and acceptance phases? Furthermore, this study contributes to enriching the study of culture shock by filling a research gap regarding European volunteers in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia, which has unique socio-cultural characteristics. Although cross-cultural adaptation has been thoroughly studied in the past, these studies have mostly concentrated on international students or volunteers from English-speaking backgrounds, such as American volunteers in West Java (Syamsuri et al., 2020) or students in European environments (Collins et al., 2021). Regarding the unique experiences of French-speaking volunteers in a local Indonesian setting, like Semarang, there is still a clear empirical vacuum. The four-stage culture shock model developed by Oberg in 1960 is used in this work to close this gap. The honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and acceptance phases are all covered by Oberg's framework, which offers a highly structured, sequential lens. As such, it is the best tool for methodically mapping and characterising how these French volunteers manage different cultural transitions without being confused by outside causal factors.

## METHOD

In order to systematically describe a phenomena or population without testing particular hypotheses, this study uses a quantitative descriptive technique (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Oberg's theoretical framework is used to evaluate the data from the

questionnaires descriptively after patterns in the volunteers' answers are found using percentage distributions. Six research respondents, French volunteers from a variety of cultural backgrounds, were included in the study because it was exploratory in character. As a result, the results should not be extrapolated to the larger community of French volunteers in Indonesia because they are unique to the group under investigation. We used a questionnaire, a research instrument that measures a phenomenon through a set of questions that collect information about the study (Dewi & Sudaryanto, 2020), to analyze the culture shock experienced by each respondent. The questionnaire items were developed systematically based on the dimensions of Oberg's culture shock theory. To ensure content validity, the instrument underwent expert review by the thesis advisor before data collection. We chose this research subject due to its correlation with their field of study, specifically French language learning, which motivated them to investigate French volunteers working in Semarang, Indonesia. The environment in which the volunteers are placed usually requires them to interact directly with the local community using Indonesian. Additionally, they must be able to adapt to the local community's norms and customs. Therefore, we consider the chosen location and research subjects to be in line with the research objectives, namely, to accurately analyze the cultural shock experienced by French volunteers during their volunteer programs.

Data collection was conducted confidentially using a Likert-scale questionnaire consisting of 4 or more questions, which is combined to produce scores or grades and represents individuals' characteristics, such as knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors (Syofian et al., 2015). The questionnaire was developed based on a literature review of culture shock theory. Among the existing theories, we referred to Taft and Oberg's culture shock theory because it is the most widely cited in culture shock analysis. The data, in the form of questionnaire responses, were analyzed using quantitative descriptive statistics, including central tendency measures such as mean, median, and mode, to determine the extent of culture shock experienced by volunteers based on Oberg's four aspects of culture shock (Barus & Kadarisman, 2025). Regarding data analysis, we examined the stages of processing, visualization, and interpretation of questionnaire results to answer the research questions and concluded with descriptive findings on the level of culture shock (Barus & Kadarisman, 2025). The analysis results are presented in a tabular form to clearly present data patterns and facilitate interpretation. Data interpretation involved examining response patterns across the measured aspects to determine the level of culture shock experienced by the volunteers. The results of this analysis served as the basis for preparing descriptive conclusions on the socio-cultural adaptation experiences of French volunteers during their time in Indonesia.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the questionnaire respondents' responses regarding the culture shock they experienced, based on Oberg's theory. The results are accompanied by an analysis of the potential influences that contributed to culture shock at each stage.

### **Volunteer Activities Through the Dejavato Foundation**

The Dejavato Foundation is a nonprofit social foundation that focuses on youth development through community-based education, volunteerism, and social service. Young people can actively participate in global social, humanitarian, and community development challenges through the foundation. In this capacity, Dejavato arranges for foreign volunteers to arrive in Indonesia, help while they are serving, and works with the institutions and local communities where they are stationed.

According to information gathered from Dejavato, the Dejavato Foundation works with a number of foundations and organizations that send volunteers from overseas, including European nations, as ICYE (International Cultural Youth Exchange) Indonesia. Cross-border volunteer mobility that is focused on social activities, cross-cultural learning, and enhancing global understanding is made possible by this partnership. As a result, the Dejavato Foundation makes sure that volunteer programs are implemented in line with the values of individual capacity growth, international solidarity, and cultural exchange.

The French volunteers in this study were a part of an international exchange program run by ICYE Indonesia and the Dejavato Foundation. In addition to reflecting formal relationships between nations, their presence in Indonesia offers a venue for close cultural exchange between volunteers and local populations. In order to facilitate adaptation, education, and the sharing of values between French volunteers and the Indonesian sociocultural setting, the Dejavato Foundation serves as an essential institutional and cultural bridge.

### **The Culture Shock Experienced by French Volunteers**

Respondents' experiences adjusting to living in Semarang were analyzed using data gathered from a questionnaire given to volunteers. The participants' hometowns were one of the crucial pieces of information examined in this study since social habits, communication styles, and individual adaptability are significantly influenced by geographic and cultural backgrounds.

The term "hometown" describes the location where an individual was born, brought up, and resided prior to relocating to another location that is regarded as their home. A person's hometown characterizes their language, social mores, and cultural heritage. This may have an impact on how someone adjusts to a new setting after

relocating. For instance, even if a person later relocates to another city, their hometown would remain Bandung if they were born and raised there. The distribution of respondents' hometowns, as shown in Table 1, is displayed in the table below.

Table 1. Respondent Identity

No	Hometown	Total Respondents
1	Lille	2
2	Marseille	1
3	Bordeaux	1
4	Dijon	1
5	Rouen	1

Source: Research data (2026)

Based on Table 1, the respondents originated from various cities in France. Lille was the city of origin for most of the respondents in this study. Two of the six volunteers came from the city of Lille, located in northern France, in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region, close to the Belgian border (Insee, 2018). The other volunteers came from cities such as Marseille, Bordeaux, Dijon, and Rouen, each represented by one volunteer. According to Insee (2018), Marseille is a city located on the southeast coast of France, with the second-largest population in the country after Paris.

Meanwhile, Bordeaux is a port city in southwestern France. In addition, the city of Dijon is in the central part of the Bourgogne Region, France, and the city of Rouen is in northern France. From northern to southern and western France, this demonstrates notable regional variation. This demonstrates how the respondents brought a variety of cultures, social backgrounds, and regional traditions with them when they relocated to a new setting. The participants' experience of culture shock is directly linked to these background variations. The intensity and features of the stages of cultural adaptation that people go through are influenced by their place of origin, which also serves as a representation of their social and cultural background. This is explained through the stages of culture shock in Oberg's theory. These stages of culture shock encompass several phases: the honeymoon phase, the frustration phase, the adjustment phase, and the adaptation phase.

During the honeymoon phase, individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to experience a more optimistic initial adjustment when entering a new environment. Conversely, those from very different cultural backgrounds may experience tension earlier, leading to a more intense phase of frustration. For example, respondents from Lille, located in northern France with a specific culture, may face different challenges than respondents from Marseille, a cosmopolitan port city with more complex cultural

interactions. These differences then have implications for the adjustment phase, in which an individual's ability to understand and internalize new norms is greatly influenced by their prior experiences and exposure to cultural diversity. Thus, the cultural background of the city of origin not only influences the initial psychological experience but also the course of the long-term adaptation process towards effective cultural integration. The geographical and cultural diversity of these respondents offers a comprehensive perspective on understanding the variations in culture shock experiences, while also confirming the relevance of Oberg's theory in explaining the process of multicultural adaptation in a contextual manner.

### 1. Honeymoon Phase

The honeymoon phase is the initial stage of culture shock when someone moves to a new environment. Individuals typically experience positive feelings, such as awe, curiosity, enthusiasm, and interest in the new culture they live in. Everything new is considered fun, engaging, and exciting. Differences in food, customs, language, social norms, and lifestyle are considered unique and interesting. In this phase, individuals still perceive the host culture through an idealized perspective, much like the honeymoon phase of a marriage, and therefore do not yet feel any significant psychological pressure. Miscommunication is still considered a common occurrence, interactions with the local community are enjoyable, and everything is seen as an adventure.

Although still in a positive mood, the honeymoon phase can also be a period during which individuals may ignore or be unaware of potential difficulties that may arise in the future. This temporary feeling of comfort enables them to engage in social interactions without any significant psychological burden. This honeymoon period, which usually lasts for the first few weeks after moving to a new place, is when people prefer to concentrate on the advantages and ignore possible difficulties. According to Barus & Kadarisman (2025), the honeymoon phase is the first stage of cultural adaptation, during which people feel enthusiastic, excited, and more interested in the new culture. Everything appears intriguing, fresh, and constructive. This phase lasts for a variable amount of time and usually ends when the reality of differences starts to set in, signaling the start of the following stage of dissatisfaction. The following is a table of questionnaire responses concentrating on respondents' experiences during the honeymoon phase:

Table 2. Honeymoon phase

No	Sub-indicator	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
1.	I am fascinated by the new environment around my new place of residence.				2(33,3%)	4(66,7%)
2.	I engaged in activities that brought me happiness during my first weeks in Indonesia.				3(50,0%)	3(50,0%)
3.	I am interested in Indonesian social culture.				2(33,3%)	4(66,7%)
4.	I am interested in learning Indonesian.			2(33,3%)	3(50,0%)	1(16,7%)
5.	I like the accommodation culture in Indonesia.			1(16,7%)	4(66,7%)	1(16,7%)
6.	I like the transportation culture in Indonesia.		1(16,7%)	3(50,0%)		2(33,7%)
7.	I enjoy shopping in Indonesia.	1(16,7%)	2(33,3%)	2(33,3%)	1(16,7%)	

Source: Research data (2026)

Based on the responses to the honeymoon phase described above, most volunteers experienced it very positively. Most responses in the “Frequently” and “Always” categories across nearly all sub-indicators indicate that all respondents had favorable experiences throughout their honeymoon period in Indonesia.

In sub-indicator 1, most respondents (66.7%) selected “Frequently,” while the remaining respondents (33.3%) selected “Always.” It is clear from this answer that the additional living space is greatly appreciated. The responses in sub-indicator 2 were split equally between “Always” (50.0%) and “Frequently” (50.0%), demonstrating that every respondent actively sought out and participated in pleasurable activities. As a site to stay for the volunteer activities, Semarang left a good impression right away. The Old Town neighborhood, colonial structures, and widely accessible cultural places are just a few examples of how Semarang offers a distinctive fusion of contemporary city vibes and historical richness, which is perhaps why this appreciation developed. Furthermore, the variety of Semarang’s culinary offerings, which include traditional foods that are easily accessible in the city center and public areas, can provide responders with a novel and delightful experience. Exploring the city, sampling local food, and engaging with the local community are examples of activities that help people positively adjust to their new surroundings. These activities not only make people feel happy but also lessen their initial anxiety, create a sense of comfort, and reinforce the idea that their time in Semarang is worthwhile and pleasurable.

Sub-indicator 3 showed a very high level of curiosity and openness to social engagement with the local population, with 66.7% responding “Always” and 33.3% “Frequently.” With 50.0% of respondents saying “Frequently,” 33.3% saying “Occasionally,” and 16.7% saying “Always,” Sub-indicator 4 is also very noticeable and shows that none of the respondents are indifferent to the local language. The intensity of respondents’ interactions with the local community is probably a factor in the high level of interest in Indonesian social culture and interest in learning the language. Additionally, the pleasant, communal, and communicative nature of Indonesian society might help respondents feel accepted and motivate them to learn more about local customs, etiquette, and social interaction patterns.

According to sub-indicator 5, most respondents (66.7%) said they “Always” enjoyed Indonesian accommodation culture. By contrast, 16.7% of respondents said they “occasionally” enjoyed it and 16.7% said they “always” loved it, demonstrating a favorable attitude toward housing services and residential patterns. 50.0% of respondents “frequently,” 33.3% “always,” and 16.7% “rarely” appreciated it in sub-indicator 6, indicating that they generally had a good experience with the transportation system. Respondents’ perceptions that Indonesian residential facilities, namely host families, are reasonably accessible, reasonably priced, and sufficiently pleasant to meet their everyday needs could be one explanation for the high positive evaluation of the accommodation culture. They may also feel less alone and more accepted in their new surroundings thanks to the housing arrangement, which allows interaction with neighbors, homeowners, and other residents.

Meanwhile, positive experiences with the transportation culture are likely influenced by the variety of transportation modes that facilitate their mobility within the city. The favorable evaluation is also influenced by accessible and reasonably priced transportation. Nonetheless, a tiny percentage of respondents still “rarely” enjoy it, which could be due to traffic jams or a lack of familiarity with regional driving customs.

Although the sub-indicators of shopping activities exhibit more varied variations, 16.7% “Rarely,” 33.3% “Occasionally,” 33.3% “Always,” and 16.7% “Frequently,” the majority of respondents still find shopping in Indonesia enjoyable. According to Oberg’s idea, the honeymoon phase is characterized by a preponderance of sentiments of wonder, excitement, and gratitude for different facets of the new environment’s culture. This pattern of responses aligns with these traits. Differences in respondents’ personal interests and lifestyles may account for variation in ratings across the sub-indicators of shopping activities. Some people use shopping as a way to unwind and learn about local culture. Others, on the other hand, do not frequently indulge in it,

since they see it as merely a functional necessity. Even though the overall trend is still positive, responses to questions about how often they enjoy shopping in Indonesia range from “Rarely” to “Always,” depending on factors such as economic ability, access to shopping centers, and comfort with interacting in traditional markets or modern stores.

Overall, the information gathered during this honeymoon period supports Oberg’s conclusions, which show that people are typically happy in their new surroundings despite certain signs of making them uncomfortable.

## 2. Crisis phase

When the new cultural reality does not match their initial expectations, people typically feel more anxious, threatened, and even angry during this crisis phase, according to several studies. This stage, which occurs after the honeymoon phase ends and can result in very severe psychological stress symptoms, is characterized by “anxiety, disorientation, and hostility” toward the new surroundings, according to Oberg. At this point, people feel shocked, irritated, perplexed, and even pressured by the different culture. Confusion and even rage have taken the place of their interest. Increased pressure might result from psychological stress associated with the process of acclimating to a new culture. Because of the various cultures they encounter, people often feel confused about their identity, values, and emotions. Misunderstandings in ordinary communication can increase pain and emotional strain due to a variety of factors, including body language, disparities in expression, and ways of expressing viewpoints.

According to additional research, recurrent negative experiences, like language barriers, social exclusion, or falling short of academic or professional expectations, can lead to feelings of loneliness, identity loss, and the development of extremely critical opinions about the host culture during the crisis phase. Culture shock, according to Irwin (2007), is a state of “being out of place in a certain place and time” that causes emotional instability and depression. Feelings of powerlessness and a loss of control over the situation might be made worse by unfamiliar social norms, professional expectations, and different routines. People may eventually start to long for their familiar surroundings, family, and home country because they feel more comfortable and predictable there. The internal struggle between the “old self” and the “adapting self” is exacerbated by this longing, which is frequently accompanied by idealization of the culture of origin and critical evaluations of the new culture. The table of questionnaire answers that focuses on the respondents’ experiences throughout the crisis phase is as follows:

Table 3. Crisis phase

No	Sub-indicator	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
1.	I was surprised after realizing the cultural differences.		1(16,7%)	1(16,7%)	3(50,0%)	1(16,7%)
2.	I felt pressure to adjust to cultural differences.		4(66,7%)	1(16,7%)		1(16,7%)
3.	I felt frustrated adjusting to cultural differences.	1(16,7%)	2(33,7%)	2(33,7%)		1(16,7%)
4.	I felt angry adjusting to cultural differences.	4(66,7%)	1(16,7%)			1(16,7%)
5.	I felt like I had lost or did not have many friends because of cultural differences.	2(33,3%)	4(66,7%)			
6.	I felt rejected because of cultural differences.	4(66,7%)	2(33,3%)			
7.	I felt confused about my values, feelings, and identity due to cultural differences.	1(16,7%)	2(33,3%)		2(33,3%)	1(16,7%)
8.	I felt powerless because I was unable to adapt to the new environment.	2(33,3%)	4(66,7%)			

Source: Research data (2026)

Based on responses to the crisis phase described above, respondents experienced symptoms, but the intensity was generally mild to moderate. There were just a few “Frequently” and “Always” responses on several sub-indicators, with the majority of responses falling into the “Rarely” and “Occasionally” categories.

50% of respondents selected “Frequently” and 16.7% selected “Always” in sub-indicator 1. In contrast, 16.7% of respondents selected “Rarely” and 16.7% selected “Occasionally,” suggesting that while surprise at the new culture is evident, not all respondents mostly experienced it. 66.7% selected “Rarely,” 16.7% selected “Occasionally,” and 16.7% selected “Always” in sub-indicator 2, suggesting that most people only infrequently experience severe pressure to adapt. Some respondents may already have gained sufficient insight through orientation, the media, or fellow citizens, so that the cultural shock they feel is not too extreme. Therefore, the pressure to adjust is only felt occasionally, which can be attributed to the existence of a social support system, such as from fellow volunteers, the local community, or a relatively

supportive work environment, allowing adaptation stress to subside before it develops into prolonged pressure.

In sub-indicator 3, the answers consisted of 16.7% "Never", 33.3% "Rarely", 33.3% "Occasionally", and 16.7% "Always", indicating that only a small proportion of respondents often feel intense frustration. In sub-indicator 4, 66.7% stated "Never", 16.7% "Rarely", and 16.7% "Always", indicating that most respondents experience anger due to cultural differences relatively rarely. The low frequency of frustration and anger among most respondents can also be explained by their tendency to interpret cultural differences as something to be understood rather than fought against, leading to reactions more akin to confusion or fatigue than to emotional outbursts. Several studies on the adaptation of international students and workers have shown that individuals with a more open attitude and a learning orientation towards the host culture tend to experience fewer aggressive or angry reactions when facing culture shock.

In sub-indicator 5, respondents answered 33.3% "Never" and 66.7% "Rarely," with no answers in the higher frequency categories. A similar pattern was observed in sub-indicator 6, where 66.7% responded "Never" and 33.3% responded "Rarely," indicating that most respondents did not often feel rejected by their new social environment. The relatively inclusive social climate in the neighborhood, university, or community where the respondents live, which enables individuals to feel accepted despite their diverse cultural backgrounds, is likely associated with lower levels of feelings of rejection and friend loss. Additionally, establishing new friendships with residents and other volunteers can lessen feelings of loneliness and take the place of the social support previously provided by friends back home, thereby lessening the severity of feelings of rejection or loss.

Sub-indicator 7 showed a range of experiences from nearly nonexistent to fairly severe, with 16.7% responding "Never," 33.3% "Rarely," 33.3% "Occasionally," 16.7% "Frequently," and 16.7% "Always" (each category represented by one respondent). In contrast, "Rarely" (66.7%) and "Never" (33.3%) dominated sub-indicator eight, suggesting that respondents were typically entering a crisis phase but still at a tolerable level and not yet on the path to chronic helplessness. The degree of respondents' involvement with the local culture and the duration of their stay in Indonesia are likely to have an impact on the variation in the degree of identity confusion; individuals who engage with the community more deeply and start internalizing new values are more likely to experience a tug-of-war between their original values and the values they are learning more frequently, which makes the identity conflict feel stronger. Additionally, some respondents may view self-change

as a learning process rather than a threat to their identity, due to personal factors such as psychological maturity, cognitive flexibility, and a clear purpose for moving to Indonesia. This keeps feelings of helplessness at a manageable level and keeps them from becoming a chronic condition.

Overall, the results demonstrate that the respondents did, in fact, enter a crisis phase, but one that was controllable and of very low intensity, in line with Oberg's theory of culture shock. Although the study's participants appear to have experienced a true cultural "shock," they are still in the process of adapting and may eventually reach the adjustment stage. There are two primary reasons why the volunteers' crisis phase was not as intense: internal motivation and external assistance. This supports Oberg's hypothesis that the length and intensity of the crisis period are strongly influenced by environmental support. As a psychological buffer, prior internal motivation makes volunteers more prepared to deal with cultural variations (Bierwiazzonek & Kunst, 2021). Furthermore, acute culture shock is substantially mitigated by Dejavato's institutional support through host family placements. Through regular social interactions, living among residents lessens isolation and speeds up adaption (Tanasy et al., 2024).

### 3. Recovery phase

People no longer experience confusion, frustration, or anxiety in their new surroundings during the recovery phase. The person's emotional state progressively becomes better at this stage. Additionally, the person begins to view cultural diversity more favorably, seeing variations in social norms, communication styles, or rituals as opportunities for learning rather than threats to their identity. This mindset makes it easier for the person to modify their behavior, facilitating everyday interactions with the community and reducing the likelihood of internal conflict.

In this scenario, people start to feel like they belong to the school, workplace, or neighborhood, making the previously alien nation or city gradually feel like a "second home." Through language, the development of social ties, and the social norms set by local society, people have achieved sound and stable adaptation. When people start to feel secure, at ease, and in charge of their environment, it signifies a turning point in the process of cultural adaptation and can lead to a more stable, mature stage of adaptation. The table of questionnaire answers that focuses on the respondents' experiences throughout the Recovery phase is as follows:

Table 4. Recovery phase

No	Sub-indicator	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
1.	I accepted the new culture to begin adjusting to life in Indonesia.				3(50,0%)	3(50,0%)
2.	I began to learn and understand the new culture, which helped me adjust to life in Indonesia.				2(33,3%)	4(66,7%)
3.	I felt helped by the local community in this adjustment process.				1(16,7%)	5(83,3%)

Source: Research data (2026)

Based on responses to the recovery phase described above, all respondents were in the recovery phase and had a very positive attitude towards the new culture in Indonesia. The fact that none of the respondents selected "Never," "Rarely," or "Occasionally" for any of the sub-indicators shows how deeply and consistently the new culture was accepted and learned.

Sub-indicator 1 shows that all respondents actively incorporate Indonesian culture into their daily lives, with 50.0% choosing "Frequently" and 50.0% selecting "Always." Sub-indicator 2 was dominated by the answers "Always" (66.7%) and "Frequently" (33.3%), suggesting a conscious, continuous effort to adapt by comprehending local norms, values, and practices. Because they were more flexible and open-minded, respondents who initially came to study, serve, and work in a cross-cultural environment probably contributed to the high level of acceptance and eagerness to learn about Indonesian culture. The conviction that adapting to the local way of life enhances their comfort and productivity can also be strengthened by positive early experiences, such as the community's support, a friendly social setting, and the capacity to overcome challenges during the crisis phase. This encourages them to actively embrace and learn the norms, values, and customs of the area.

In sub-indicator 3, 83.3% of respondents reported that the local community "Always" helped them with their adjustment process, compared to 16.7% who said "Frequently." This is explained by the fact that the local population is generally friendly, talkative, and welcoming to newcomers, making it easy for respondents to ask for help and build social ties. In this case, respondents received both practical aid (such knowledge, translation, or help with daily tasks) and emotional support, which lessened feelings of loneliness and worry. They consequently began to see the local community as essential to the accomplishment of their adaption process. This illustrates how social support from the surrounding environment is crucial in easing the transition from the

crisis phase to a more stable recovery phase, which is consistent with the notion that positive interpersonal relationships and environmental acceptance are essential components of successful cross-cultural adaptation.

#### 4. Adjustment phase

People can typically negotiate their two cultural systems during the acceptance phase, creating a more cohesive identity pattern. People may now move freely between two realities and no longer feel “stuck between two worlds.” Their ability to speak the local language more naturally and comprehend humor, nonverbal clues, and unspoken social norms is indicative of this pattern, which makes their interactions with the community feel more genuine and natural.

Additionally, people start to assess both their new and home cultures more impartially, critically analyzing their advantages and disadvantages rather than romanticizing or denigrating either. At this moment, experiencing culture shock becomes an opportunity to learn and grow. People feel more capable and self-sufficient, and develop a broader perspective, because they can uphold significant cultural norms while embracing new behaviors, they find harmonious. The table of questionnaire answers that focuses on the respondents’ experiences during the adjustment phase is as follows:

Table 5. Adjustment phase

No	Sub-indicator	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
1.	I have adapted to the new culture in Indonesia.				2(33,3%)	4(66,7%)
2.	I can function well within Indonesian culture.			1(16,7%)	3(50,0%)	2(33,3%)
3.	I have adapted to cultural differences in language.			2(33,7%)	3(50,0%)	1(16,7%)
4.	I have adapted to cultural differences in accommodation.				2(33,3%)	4(66,7%)
5.	I have adapted to cultural differences in transportation.			1(16,7%)	2(33,3%)	3(50,0%)
6.	I have adapted to cultural differences in shopping activities.				2(33,3%)	4(66,7%)
7.	My identity has grown since living in Indonesia.					6(100%)
8.	I am happy to be part of Indonesian culture and society.				2(33,3%)	4(66,7%)

Source: Research data (2026)

Based on the responses related to the acceptance phase described above, acceptance has been strongly achieved by all respondents, as indicated by the dominance of responses in the “Frequently” and “Always” categories across all sub-indicators, with no responses in the “Never” or “Rarely” categories. This has been consistent from sub-indicators 1–6 onward. For instance, 66.7% of respondents “Always” embrace the new culture and adjust to the accommodations, and 50.0% “Always” believe that they have acclimated to the transportation system. The length of stay and the degree of interaction respondents have with the local environment may affect these results, giving them enough time and opportunity to read social situations, practice Indonesian, and test behavioral responses deemed appropriate in various interaction contexts. They were also able to express themselves more boldly in both cultures without feeling the need to give up their original identities, thanks to the positive experiences they had during the recovery period, which helped them build confidence and a sense of belonging.

The formation of a positive hybrid identity between their culture of origin and Indonesian culture is indicated by sub-indicators 7 and 8, in which all respondents (100%) reported that their identity had grown after living in Indonesia. The majority felt content to be a part of Indonesian culture and society (66.7% “Always” and 33.3% “Frequently”). The respondents’ experiences, which included both cognitive (learning the language and factual knowledge about Indonesia) and affective and relational (feeling welcome and valued, having room to participate in the local community), may have influenced these findings. To incorporate aspects of Indonesian culture encountered in their day-to-day interactions into their self-perception, values, and way of life without severing ties to their culture of origin, they interpret the process of adaptation as an expansion of self rather than a loss of identity.

## CONCLUSION

All the analyzed respondent data indicate that respondents did not experience a crisis phase as described by Oberg in his theory of culture shock. The adjustment process tended to be positive, beginning with a honeymoon phase, as evidenced by enthusiasm and interest in Indonesia’s new environment and culture. Although some aspects received varied responses, such as shopping, transportation, and language, these did not significantly impact the overall results.

Strong personal motivation and organised environmental assistance from the host families helped to effectively handle the low-intensity crisis signs, such as mild frustration and perplexity. Respondents demonstrated increasingly developed functional and emotional adaptation capacities during the rehabilitation and acceptance phase. Their capacity to contribute to society, adjust to different facets of

everyday life, and form an identity and sense of belonging to Indonesian culture and society all demonstrated this. These results should not be extrapolated to other French volunteers in Indonesia due to the small sample size; rather, they uniquely reflect the adaptation tendencies of the studied group.

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