A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF REENTRY ADJUSTMENT ISSUES: THE CASE OF INDONESIAN RETURNEES

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ABSTRACT

Returning home issues was interesting to investigate because after someone stays overseas, sojourners should be back in their home country. The critical problem for Indonesian returnees is a complex challenge for returnees and difficulty in re-adaptation when returning to the home country. The purpose of this study is to understand returnees' perception of reentry adjustment and to discover factors that may have contributed to the successful reentry adjustment process. This study uses a qualitative approach through face-to-face interviews; and qualitative descriptive design through open-ended questions that were submitted through an online survey. This study's result raises several factors related to difficulty in reentry adjustment, particularly when contextualized to Indonesian returnees. In general, the elements that appear are grouped in psychosocial factors: problem in re-adaptation, change in identity, and expectation-reality gap, and non-psychosocial factors: career, job, and skills.

Keywords: Reentry Adjustment, Qualitative Study, Indonesian Returnees



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INTRODUCTION

Globalized world and cross-border mobility have become a reality of people's daily activities. Consequently, those phenomena were derived from a need for a better understanding of the psychological, social, and practical matters associated with the transition (Szkudlarek, 2010). The challenges related to sojourns and work in a setting of cross-border mobility find a prominent place in psychology discipline fields such as cross-cultural psychology and industrial-organizational psychology.

At the same time, returning home is interesting to investigate, because after someone stays overseas, they could be back to their home country. Reentry as a transition period and some reentry theories and models developed for a better understanding of the complexity of the transition already present in many study reports. The shift on reentry phenomena is conceptualized by the feelings, emotional reactions, and mental responses of the returnees (Szkudlarek, 2010).

Some references and previous studies on reentry adjustment using three different terms to describe the difficulty of the reentry adjustment process that is reentry culture shock (Uehara, 1986), reentry shock (Seiter & Waddell, 1989), and reverse culture shock (Aamir, 2010; Francees, 2012; Frazier & Kasten, 2015; Gaw, 2000; Manzoor, 2016; Moore, Jones, & Austin, 1987; Presbitero, 2016; Sreeleakha, 2014; Tohyama, 2008; Tomlin et al., 2014; Wayland, 2015). All of the three concepts share has identical meaning, and that is how the difficulty of reentry adjustment experienced by the returnee is described after staying overseas for a certain period (Andrianto, Jianhong, Hommey, Damayanti, & Wahyuni, 2018)

Further, this study will follow the ABC (affective, behavioral, and cognitive) model proposed by Ward, Bochner, & Furnham (2001), who argued that cultural transition is a complicated phenomenon including aspects of affective, behavior, and cognition. The affective component on the context of reentry phenomenon, when back to the home-culture environment, sojourners must deal with a variety of emotions such as disorientation, anxiety, confusion, and perhaps sadness (Sit, Mak, & Neill, 2017; Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping, & Todman, 2008). Returnees must use various personal and interpersonal coping strategies to maintain their psychological wellbeing during reentry (Sit et al., 2017). Successfulness to deal with situational and social demands in a new culture in home-country determining by returnee's ability to display their behavioral skills (Szabo & Ward, 2015; C Ward et al., 2001; Wilson, Ward, & Fischer, 2013). Consequences of behavioral components, the returnees should have to relearn social skills because during their time abroad, some of the home-country behaviors are forgotten and replaced by the host-country behavior (Mao & Shen, 2015; Sit et al., 2017; Zhou et al., 2008). The perspective focus on returnee's perception of his/her self and others and relations among returnees and his/her own home culture and host culture (Szkudlarek, 2010). Further, the returnee needs to learn both cultures and integrate it into the new culture (Ward et al., 2001).

Many studies with many reasons of the returnee's experience discomforts related to their reentry adjustment (Adler, 1981; Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992; Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Forster, 1994; Furukawa, 1997; Gaw, 2000; Linehan & Scullion, 2002; Martin, 1984; Sahin, 1990; Thompson & Christofi, 2006; Uehara, 1986). Nevertheless, one study from Sussman (2007) reports that the migrants returning to Hong Kong did not show difficulty in this transition. These results indicate a need for more investigated study on both sides of the reentry adjustment process; it is a smooth or stressful transition.

We agreed with Szkudlarek (2010) proposed that returnee will be re-use their adaptation skill gain during expatriation to be successful in their reentry. Consequently, one could investigate that adaptation to cultural differences and an effective form of integration of cultural differences would be related to a successful re-adaptation on reentry adjustment process.

Presenting previous research and review of reentry adjustment (Sit et al., 2017; Szkudlarek, 2010; Zhou et al., 2008) and recommendation from Gray & Savicki (2015), we will use ABC model developed by Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, (2001) to exploring reentry adjustment process in Indonesian returnees. The ABC model grouping acculturation process into three categories: affective, behavior, and cognitive. First, the affective process of reentry adjustment is viewed psychological wellbeing of the returnees, that highlighted in the stress and coping approach; the behavioral process focuses cultural learning approach when returnees back to home country; and cognitive process emphasize on the psychological mechanism, involving social identity and their social relations processes (Presbitero, 2016; Szkudlarek, 2010; C Ward et al., 2001; Ward, 2001).

PURPOSE AND METHOD

We assume that the critical problem for Indonesian returnees is a complex challenge for returnees and difficulty in re-adaptation when returning to the home country. So, important to identify several factors related to difficulty in reentry adjustment. The purpose of this exploratory/preliminary study is to explore the phenomenon of reentry adjustment, that including (1) to understand returnees' perception about reentry adjustment, and (2) to discover factors that may have contributed to the success of reentry adjustment process. To achieve a thorough understanding of the reentry adjustment phenomena, this study involves two primary sources of information. First, a thorough semi-structured face-to-face interview with Indonesian returnees as well as their experiences during while overseas and reentry adjustment process. Second, a qualitative descriptive of the data was obtained individually and in a free-response format by an open-ended online survey.

Participants

Data was obtained from Indonesian returnees, including student returnees and employer returnees. This study involved 105 participants, consisting of 3 people through face-to-face interviews and 102 people participating through an open-ended online questionnaire. In semi-structured face-to-face interviews, 3 participants were recruited by word of mouth through a personal network then snowballing to include a broader demographic.

In a qualitative descriptive, data were obtained individually and in a free-response format by an open-ended online survey. One hundred and three online surveys were distributed through email to all potential participants, and only one potential participant was eliminated because he/she did not answer the critical question to identify he/she is a returnee. One question required to respond by potential participants to make sure that the potential respondent of this study is Indonesian returnees: *How long have you been back to Indonesia after your last overseas assignment/study?*

Socio-demographic characteristics of the participant in the qualitative descriptive design, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Profile	Groups	Frequency	Percentages
Gender	Male	38	37.3
	Female	64	62.7
Age	<u><</u> 30	76	74.5
	31 - 40	19	18.6
	> 40	7	6.9
Marital status	Single	67	65.7
	Married	35	34.3
Educational level	Bachelor's degree	1	1
	Master's degree	88	86.3
	Doctorate's degree	13	12.7
Length of stay abroad	<u><</u> 12 months	39	38.2
	13 – 24 months	46	45.1
	> 24 months	17	16.7
Length of stay back home country	≤ 12 months	73	71.6
	13 – 24 months	19	18.6
	> 24 months	10	9.8
Frequency back home	Never	42	41.2
	1-2 times	46	45.1
	3-4 times	11	10.8
	> 5 times	3	2.9

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This study is carried out in two parts of the data collection process. First, through face-to-face interviews, and the second is qualitative descriptive design, through open-ended questions that were submitted through an online survey. The individual interview is conducted with a limited number of returnees and practitioners, whereas the open-ended question via an online survey is only for returnees. Both were conducted in the Indonesian language (Bahasa), the preferred language of the participants.

Qualitative face-to-face interview procedure

Prior to the start of the interviews, participants were read an informed consent statement that emphasized the purpose of study and confidentiality, and they were asked for their verbal consent to be involved. The interview protocol began with restating the purpose of the study. All the interview process is audio recording after obtaining permission to do so from the participants. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the interviewer and then verified for accuracy. Inductive content analysis will be applied to analyze the interview data. Three Indonesian returnee volunteers (two females and one male) took part in a semi-structured interview.

The interview questions focused on how returnees themselves felt they were adjusting when back to

home country (Indonesia), and how they experienced life and study in the host country. Thematic analysis was employed on all interview transcripts, focus on returnees' experience on their reentry process. The interview included questions related to returnees' reason stay in overseas (e.g., "Why you decided to study/living abroad?"); reentry experience (e.g., "After finish your study/assignment, how you feel/felt when you first time back to Indonesia?"); challenges when back to home country (e.g., "Personally, what has been the most challenging aspect of being back?"); and their future plan (e.g., "What effect do you think that experience has/will have in your future career?").

Qualitative descriptive procedure

In qualitative descriptive design, one hundred and two purposive samples of Indonesian returnees were used to elicit returnee's salient opinion regarding the difficulty of the reentry adjustment process. Data were obtained individually and in a free-response format by means of an open-ended online questionnaire. Informed consent statements were explained into separate screens appear before the participants can access the survey by click on an "I agree" button, as recommended by Schmidt (1997). The questionnaire contained seven socio-demographic items (see Table 1) and single open-ended questions: *"Based on your experience, between the process of adjustment while living overseas and recently returning to Indonesia, which one is more difficult? Why?"*.

One hundred and two Indonesian returnee volunteers (64 females and 38 males, see Table 1), all of whom also formed part of the larger quantitative online survey-sample in the next study, took part in this session. By means of manifest content analysis, meaning units were identified and abstracted to create codes. Codes were then categorized according to the overarching framework of the ABC (affective, behavior, cognitive) model and in order of frequency (Figure 2). Subsequently, subcategories were developed to describe returnees' difficulties in reentry adjustment processes (Table 3).

FINDINGS

Which difficult, entry or reentry adjustment?

Both face-to-face interviews and an open-ended online questionnaire all responses that came in the form of comparisons, which can be grouped into two patterns. First, comparing between the host country and home country, as shown in the following interview:

Adjustment is more difficult when returning to Indonesia, because the way of thinking of people abroad has advanced, especially regarding the order, care, and tolerance, so that it gives a sense of peace. Whereas the Indonesian way of thinking is still very undeveloped and lacks a sense of order, care, which causes chaos and chaos in Indonesian life.

The second pattern is to compare conditions and situations between before and after leaving the home culture, for example, in the following interview results:

Friends (in Indonesia) are still not thinking one step forward and have no discipline. This impedes progress.

The majority of participants held a 'negative' and pessimistic view of the home country, not only related to technological developments but also the behavior and values of home country citizens.

This opinion is understandable because participants compare with their experiences of living in developed countries.

Interestingly, of all the responses that appeared, there was only one participant who gave a positive opinion on the home country, while the other saw the negative side of the home country. This positive response is reflected in the following interview:

The initial period of returning to Indonesia was more difficult because I had to go back to dealing with problems related to morals, courtesy, ethics, and discipline that I usually did not meet while I live in overseas.

Furthermore, qualitative descriptive design results show that reentry adjustment is difficult by most returnees (51%), although it is not much different from those who perceive entry adjustment as more difficult (38.2%). A small percentage of returnees (10.8%) are of the opinion that they do not feel the difference or do not feel difficult in the entry or reentry adjustment process. For detail can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Distribution o	of returnees answer	ahout "Which	difficult?" a	westion
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Which difficult?	Frequency	Percentage
Home country more difficult	52	51%
Host country more difficult	39	38.2%
Same/both are not difficult	11	10.8%
Total	102	100%

Stress and coping strategy

When sojourner back to the home country, the initial reaction and many appearances are the processes of comparing between the host country and home country (n = 41). Availability of facilities, quantity, and quality of public service facilities, until differences in thought patterns, become objects of comparison (n = 13). The results they get are dominated by feelings of discomfort when back to the home country. Most participants have a negative perception about the home country (n = 32), and the conditions when in a host country are more comfortable and more profitable than in a home country.

...because, I feel comfortable while living abroad, and the culture is very different from Indonesia. I felt stressed when I recently back to Indonesia.

... because I am used to a comfortable and orderly situation, and the absence of routines when back (to Indonesia) makes me less excited

The situation in the host country resulted in a positive experience for participants. Cultural differences with host countries make participants feel stressed and not excited about returning to Indonesia.

One face-to-face interview participant even feels unfamiliar with the home country and himself like an alien in his own home country:

But at the same time some things look unfamiliar, and I feel that I have changed too, so there are some of my perceptions that might be things that used to look reasonable, but then after I returned then it was like that, how come this way.

Prospective job (n = 15) and future career (n = 17) are two concerns of the returnee when they back to the home country. Even so, all of these concerns ultimately gave rise to optimism and positive behavior as one of their coping strategies.

In the early days of returning to Indonesia, I lost my job because of low oil prices and no more vacancies in oil and gas companies ...

with my growing age and unfavorable global economic conditions at the moment, it is quite challenging to get a job that fit my interests and expertise background

It seems that the factor of getting a job in Indonesia by the area of expertise is one of the stressors for participants.

Even though they back to Indonesia, which is their country's land, the number of changes that occurred in the home country made some returnees feel as if they were living in 'new' home country (n = 21). However, the coping strategy undertaken by returnees is also quite diverse, which makes them survive in their home country. A participant revealed the dynamics of how to do a negative coping strategy at first, but it finally led to optimism:

... so that the initial period of building my business was difficult, and I tried a little away from the community to not care about negative comments. ... but in the next few years, life will turn around because I believe it will be

... getting used to traffic jams and prices of necessities that are quite significant differences from before and after living abroad is a bit more surprising and takes time to get used to again.

Avoiding negative comments and getting used to the situation, being an alternative respondent for coping with stress.

Challenge in the reentry adjustment process

The challenge of returning to the home country is related to issues such as a lack of preparation for reentry, the unexpectedness of the difficulties encountered, and grief for the lost expat life (n = 25). Need the learning process of adaptation in several times to a 'new' home country environment (n = 30). The challenge of adapting to a country home is expressed by most participants, such as:

I feel more comfortable when I am abroad, and on my return to Indonesia, I have to adapt again to adjust to the surrounding environment.

... very different from Indonesians. This is what makes it difficult for me to adapt again.

It is more difficult when I return to Indonesia because I feel my thoughts are increasingly incompatible with the values in Indonesia.

Information systems, communication, and transportation are the main obstacles to the adaptation process.

Traffic congestion and lack of public transportation facilities make me feel very immobile. Resources needed to carry out the plan that has been made must be sought first, and this is a challenging thing. Different when you have just lived abroad, everything is easy to get.

Social environment, local culture, values, communication, information systems, and transportation are challenges for participants. They need several times to adjust and deal with the situation in Indonesia.

Among other challenges, in a career and job-related context, returnees report a lack of suitable career prospects available to them upon their reentry, expectation of getting a more prestigious job, intention to embed at home-country organizations, or even the desire to find a better job and leave their current position. Lack of understanding concerning new skills, experiences, and knowledge related to employment and career also a challenge for the returnee.

...having to start over completely from the beginning again. Looking for a new career and priorities between the career and the continuation of study when these two things are not in line.

less compensation in accordance with the contribution of the work and fewer rewards

Personal transformation: behavioral response and change during the transition

Returnees also have undergone a personal transformation, an effect of their experiences while overseas. This condition is potentially influencing their cultural identity and sense of belonging to their job or even home culture. Some returnees encounter transformation in their transition, especially in how they experience their home country; one of them is behavioral transformation.

The majority of participants (n = 23) cited undergoing a transformation in their daily activities, changing from conditions that are full of orderliness when in host-country and currently becoming more irregular. Participants revealed some of the behavioral responses and changes they lived on, as a form of personal transformation.

From a regular and full life routine

First time back to Indonesia, everything begins from zero

The participants admitted that they were like starting a new life when returning to their home country.

During the transition, returnees also learn and internalize a new spectrum of behavioral responses and social skills. Both of them are expected from them in the home country. The main behavioral response when the returnees back to the home country are related to job and career. They should embed to their previous job in the home country (n = 21) and also find the career alternative (n = 13),

Back to Indonesia, because it should be settling down with a job

Choosing to start a business is considered not prestigious, so my initial period of building a business was difficult, and I tried to stay a little away from the community to not care about negative comments.

Consequently, while living overseas are some of the home-country learned behaviors are forgotten and replaced by the host-country equivalents. Furthermore, when back to home country returnees have to relearn behavior and especially social skills that often disregarded while overseas. Another possibility is they regain familiarity with a home-country norm, values, and practices.

When expectations meet the reality of the transition

Several responses on the online survey instrument addressed perceived social pressures as a factor influencing the returnee's perception that reentry adjustment is a complicated process. Indonesian society views being foreign graduates as a proud achievement and synonymous with prestigious employment. Mostly, higher expectations coming from their family members and community surround them (n = 23). This condition is perceived as a severe problem for the returnee, as shown in their response:

Because the views of the community/closest relations to "overseas graduates" must work in a classy or "prosecuted" place for the prestigious job.

Reentry adjustment is more difficult because we face a society full of hope for our abilities, and we expect people to understand our condition.

The realization of expectations about reentry leads to positive evaluations and, ultimately, to satisfactory returnees adaptation. Otherwise, violations of expectations and reality lead to a negative evaluation of the reentry and problematic adaptation

Identity changes during an international sojourn and after the return

Most of the participants indicated experiencing an identity transformation. After back to the home country, most participants feel more as a host country (n = 38). Based on the experience, knowledge, and skills now they have gained, most participants perceive a new identity as a professional in their field (n = 27). The sense of nationalism, commitment to return to home country and promise to make Indonesia much better are the primary motivation that strengthens returnee to return to the country home.

My goal is only to try to commit to what I have promised to Indonesia. It is more difficult when returning to Indonesia because there is a great desire to make Indonesia better. Because I returned to the area that I thought would not change but also changed as the changes happened to like me.

Returnees recognize that there has been a change in their identity. Home country identity has been faded by the cultural identity of the host country. The results of the analysis found two forms of identity change on returnees. First, they feel more host country, which is identical to the feeling of

less home country. In general, the emergence of this identity is due to better host-country conditions that make returnee more comfortable staying in the host country. The second change is to feel a more global or international person. This identity is the excess of the new knowledge and skills they have gained.

Table 3

Modal salient affective, behavior, and cognitive components regarding difficulties in reentry adjustment

AFFECTIVE	BEHAVIOR	COGNITIVE
 Feelings Home country more disorder Unsecure in-home country Stress about transportation in hygiene in the home country 	 Personal transformation From order to disorder daily life Become a global person Become a socio-entrepreneur 	 Expectation Family and community expectation Work in a classy place Demanding prestigious jobs
Emotional reaction	Behavioral responseShould settle down in the previous job	Identity change More feel host country

- Aware of home country change
- · Confuse with 'new' home country
- Not excitement because lose routine activities

Mental responses

- Comparing host-home country
- Negative perception of home country
- Optimism in future (new) career
- Pessimism got job in home country
- Commit to home country organization
- Mentality change

Challenge

- Adaptation in an uncomfortable zone
- · From order to disorder daily life
- Re-adaptation and survive with local resources
- Re-adaptation with IT and transportation system
- Global & home country economic situation

Search/find a new career

- Search/find new job
- Behavioral change
- Disorder life and activities
- Opening new employability

Social skills

 Well adaptation with the (new) community in home country

- More expert with new skills
- Become a new person
- Become a global person
- Nationalism

Intercultural sensitivity

- Host country better than the home country
- Culture clash



Figure 2. Frequency of salient factors difficulty in reentry adjustment

DISCUSSION

This study has provided a detailed insight into sojourners' perceptions of reentry adjustment and revealed numerous factors that may influence their difficulty during the reentry adjustment process. The process of comparing the host-home country and the conditions before and after leaving home-country indicates that most returnees feel that the reentry process is more complicated than entry adjustment. However, there is still a returnee who feels entry adjustment is more complicated. Furthermore, this study focuses on exploring factors that cause difficulty in the reentry adjustment process.

Which debate is more difficult between entry and reentry adjustments is reflected in the results of this study. The results of this study are that most Indonesian returnees feel difficulties during the adjustment reentry process compared to when they first entered the host country. This result is in line with many previous studies that describe the reentry adjustment process as more psychological challenging (Adler, 1981; Andrianto et al., 2018; Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Furukawa, 1997; Linehan & Scullion, 2002; Martin, 1984)

Furthermore, the result of this study raises a number of factors related to difficulty in reentry adjustment, particularly when contextualized to Indonesian returnees. In general, the elements that appear are grouped in psychosocial factors: problem in re-adaptation, change in identity, and expectation-reality gap, and non-psychosocial factors: career, job, and skills. Both groups are part of the ABC framework in the process of adaptation and re-adaptation (Ward et al., 2001; Ward,

2001).

Problem with re-adaptation process

All participants almost felt the difficulty in the re-adaptation process. The form of the problem faced is based on two ways of comparison: comparing the host-home country and comparing it before leaving-when back the to home country. In general, Indonesian returnees rate host country better than the home country on the availability of facilities and orderly. Extra re-adaptation is needed to be able to accept and live with the condition in the home country. This finding is in line with the theoretical model that has been proposed by Cox (2004) that presents difficulty in re-adaptation and is categorized as disintegrated and host-favored. Culture Learning Theory assumes where a successful adaptation in host-country will be related to a successful re-adaptation upon reentry (Ward et al., 2001; Wilson et al., 2013), thus adaptation and re-adaptation are import issues in our research area.

Identity change

We agree with the previous study that the identity changes that occur during an international sojourn and after return to the home country (Francees, 2012; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Jackson, 2015; Kohonen, 2008; Sussman, 2001; Valk, Velde, Engen, & Szkudlarek, 2013). In this study, we see that Indonesian returnee has been changed both in cultural identity and perceived their professional identity. In detail, the results of the content analysis in this study indicate that cultural identity change is caused by the intensity and quantity of while in overseas interactions. Whereas perceived professional identity changes as a result of learning outcomes in theory and practice while overseas. Both cultural and perceived professional identity shifts come as a consequence of behavioral and social adaptations made while in host-country and re-adaptation made in the home-country environment.

Job and career

Challenges of reentry process are often related by a lack of commitment to the home-organization and, consequently, a higher chance intention to leave their organization (Gregersen, 1992; Gregersen & Black, 1992; Stroh, Gregersen, & Black, 1998, 2000). Some returnees reveal that work in home-country is also one of the factors of difficulty on reentry adjustment. Starting from the expectation of getting a proper and prestigious job, it ends with the opposite reality. So that it can be assumed, the mismatch between expectations and fact determines the returnee decision to survive or leave work. That assumption is in line with the research of Stroh, Gregersen, & Black (1998), who claim that while the fact matching expectations support returnees' commitment to stay in their home-country organization. Another possibility, returnees might choose to leave their home-country job in the hope match to their newly acquired skills.

CONCLUSION

This study views the reentry phenomenon from the perspective of the transformations undergone by individuals during their international experiences. Some returnees describe a change in their self, both how they experience their life paths, their host-home cultures, and related to their career future.

Indonesian returnees have undergone a profound personal transformation, influencing their cultural identity, professional identity, and sense of belonging as home country citizens. Leaving overseas means learned new affection, behavior, and cognition that potentially displace the original one from the home country. Consequently, returnees have to relearn social skills, practices, and norms when back to their home country.

We identify some crucial factors and often appear in returnee responses related to the difficulty of the reentry adjustment process. Newly acquired skills have an impact on increasing perceived professional identity. Cultural and perceived professional identity shifts come as a consequence of behavioral and social adaptations made while in host-country and re-adaptation made in the home-country environment. The experience of living abroad has more or less brought about a change in returnee's self-identity, and one of the most felt changes in cultural identity. The mismatch between expectations and facts when they return to home-country has the potential to exacerbate the returnee's psychological condition. In the end, it has an impact on the future of their careers and jobs.

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