

# An assessment of counseling needs among international graduate students: implications for university students' programmes and services

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**ABSTRACT:** Interest in going abroad for studies is getting higher in Indonesia. But foreign students will find it even more problematic, because they face both the normal adjustment problems of studying in university plus adjustment problems of adapting to a different culture. Comparisons study between Malaysian and Indonesian Master Students in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia used 80 students (Malaysian = 40, Indonesian = 40) showed that there is a significant difference in counseling needs between two groups ( $t = 1.954$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), but local group (Malaysian) counseling needs score was higher than Indonesian group. The well prepared mental set and social support came from Indonesian Students Organization might be potential resources that made adaptation of Indonesian students became easier. The competitive conditions in looking for jobs in Malaysian, the limitation of resources especially in social support, finance might cause the counseling needs in Malaysian students higher than Indonesian students. Both groups showed most needs for counseling in (1) finance, (2) general health, (3) study stress. These findings suggest that responsible consumerism; daily health management, time and stress management were important topics in university's programmes and services for students.

**Keywords:** *counseling needs, international graduate students.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Interest in continuing study abroad in Indonesia young populations is high. According to a survey in Surabaya around 60% respondents who asked said they were interest for continuing study abroad, most because of the facilities. (Jawa Pos, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007;p.:33). Study abroad still perceived could give professional opportunities for Indonesian students to improve their academic qualifications. Although the majority of international students have strong academic skills and high aspirations, they are likely to experience more problems. Church (1982, in Kaczmarek, Matlock, Merta, Ames, & Ross, 1994) identified the following major sources of difficulties encountered by international students: language difficulties, financial problems, homesickness, and adjustment to a new educational system and new social norms. Failures to adapt and solve all these problems will bring counseling needs among these university's students.

In the level of graduate students, the challenges in adjustments could be stronger because students in this level should be more independent, and active. The competition for getting good mark became tighter, only students with good mark could continue to master and doctoral. Adaptability in social life in this level is also getting tough, since the situations become more individually.