THAI OVERSEAS GRADUATES AND THEIR ADAPTATIONS TO THE THAI WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT

This thematic paper investigates Thai overseas graduates and their adaptations to the Thai workplace. The culture shock and reverse culture shock experiences, coping strategies and the impact of the degree of cultural differences of "host" and "home" country on reverse culture shock experiences were explored. Review of current literatures regarding culture shock, reverse culture shock experiences and adaptations amongst overseas graduates were analyzed.   Qualitative research was conducted via semi-structured interviews with 10 participants, who are overseas graduates from various countries (United States, United Kingdom, China, Japan, and the Philippines) currently working in Thai workplaces for a minimum of one year. It is concluded that the main challenges faced by overseas graduates are adjusting and adapting to the Thai working attitudes and hierarchy and beauraucracy of organizations. The corporate culture had the most influence on the degree of reverse culture shock experiences and the proactive coping mothods were the preferred coping methods of all participants. Recommendations to Thai overseas graduates returning home and companies recruiting overseas graduates were given to enable smooth transition into the Thai workplaces.

KEY WORDS: Overseas graduates/ Reverse culture shock/ Cross-cultural adaptations/ Cross-cultural differences/ Thai workplace
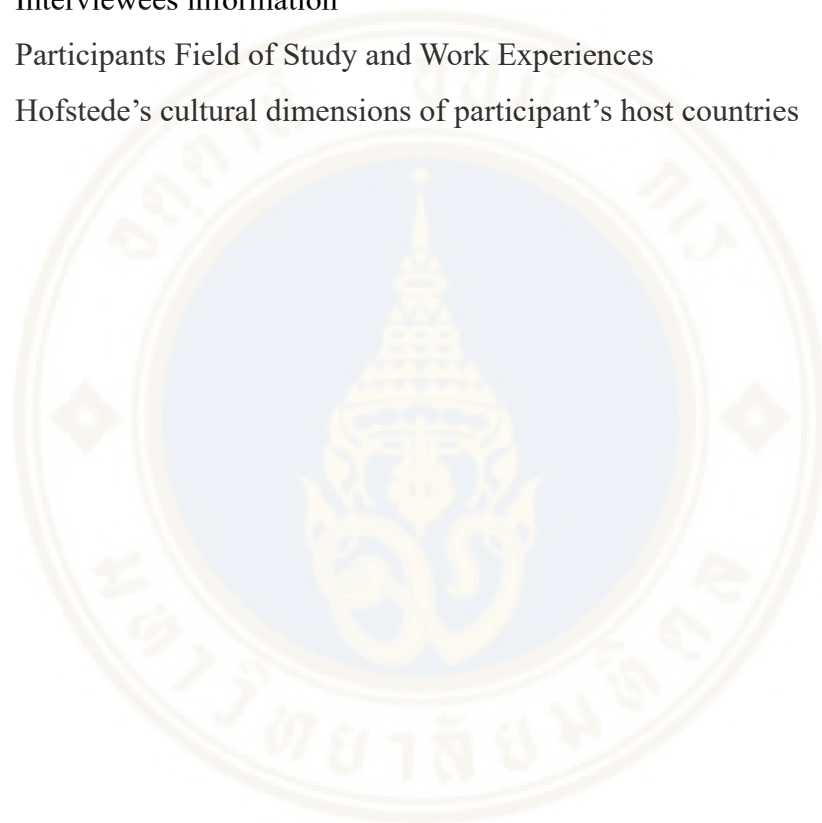

38 pages

CONTENTS

CONTENTS (cont.)

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As the development of the local economy progresses, globalization continues to shape the way of life of the people inside Thailand. In recent years, an increasing number of Thai parents are now starting to realize the importance of learning foreign languages and seek for opportunities to send their children to receive an overseas education. As published on Bangkok Post (2021), according to the British Council, there is a rising number of Thai students who are being registered in UK Boarding Schools and Universities each year. An estimate in the year 2020 showed that there are over 15,000 Thai students who went to pursue their education overseas and over 60% of those chose the UK as their destination. Additionally, the same data also showed that Thais are amongst the top 10 non-EU countries studying in the UK.

Moreover, these speculations are due to an increasing number of graduates and enrollment in international schools in Thailand. According to ISC research (2021), the report showed that the overall market for international schools in Thailand has a compound annual growth rate of 4.1%, with an important key factor being the increased migration of Thai students from public to international schools in recent years. To further elaborate, the main reason behind Thai parents choosing to send their child to international schools is for them to be more proficient in English, preparing them for an overseas education (ISAT, n.d.).

Adding to this, another important aspect when getting an overseas education is in terms of cultural emersion and adaptation. When a person settles into a new environment, this can mean that the person has been adapted and blend themselves into the respective cultures of the "host" country. As time progresses, they slowly accept ideas and think according to the social norms of the "host" country, which might contradict or have conflict

to the norms at their "home" countries. After they have finished their studies in their host countries, these individuals would then have to re-immerse themselves back at home, re-adapting to the culture and most importantly, dealing with conflicts in traditional workplaces, both Thai and Multinational companies. As there is an increasing number of overseas graduates coming back to Thailand, conflict at work regarding cultural issues might occur more often.

In this study, I would like to explore the insights regarding overseas graduates who have returned to Thailand for their careers. The questions to be explored for this study are as followed:

- What kinds of reverse culture shock have these overseas graduates faced in the Thai workplace? How did they adapt to it?
- How does the degree of cultural differences between the "host" and "home" countries impact the reverse culture shock experience? Does it have any impact on their adaptations?

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock

As there are an increasing number of Thai students who went to study abroad. After graduation, some of these students remained at the host country for work and some do return to seek for job opportunities in Thailand. Oftentimes, these student faces reverse culture shock as they settle back to their home country and new working environment.

To begin with, culture shocks are often experienced by those who entered a new culture where several adaptations and adjustments must be made regarding their daily lives and routine. Culture shock can be explained through four different phases, "Honeymoon, Crisis, Recovery, and Adjustment" (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). After settling in a new environment for years, people often experienced the similar phenomena when trying to re-adjust themselves back to their home country, in which we call "Reverse Culture Shock". The overall process of culture shock and reverse culture shock can be explained with the following table (W-curve model):
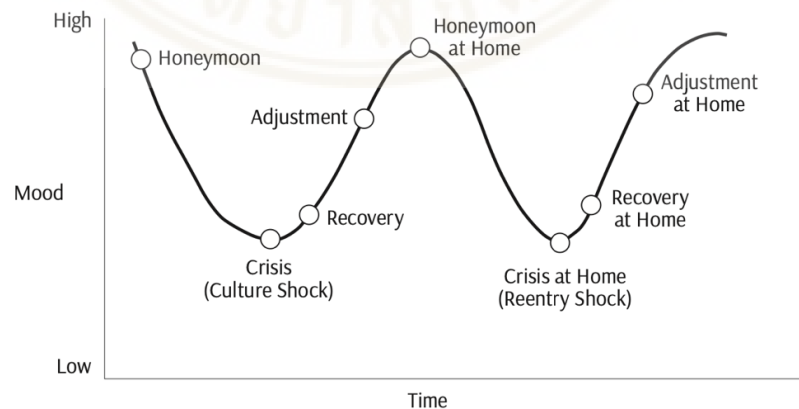
Figure 2.1 Culture shock and Reverse culture shock model, W-curve model (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963)

To further elaborate, the descriptions of the four phases of culture shock can be described via levels of mood as followed (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963):

1. **Honeymoon:** The characteristics of being excited after the initial arrival into a new country, getting the chance to see and experiencing new things for the first time.

2. **Crisis:** The most negative emotions of homesickness after realizing the hardness of adjusting into a new culture and was overwhelmed by it. This often happens soon after the honeymoon period ends.

3. **Recovery:** After time passes, the individual can start to adapt to the new environment, slowly excepting and taking in the new experiences, improving their overall mood. However, they have not yet fully settled in, some cultural misunderstandings can happen, and they might still not fully understand the reasons behind them.

4. **Adjustment:** As time progresses the individual can adjust themselves fully and have emersed themselves in the cultures of the new country, their overall mood returns to normal.

The same process also happens when these individuals spent some time abroad and goes back to their home countries. The process repeats itself, but this time referring to the individual readjustment to the culture back home.

In addition, another study by Talawanich et al. (2019) has further elaborated this issue in Thai Young adults as they return home from abroad. They explore the extent to which how much W-curve model can be applied to the Asian context, and they have proven so based on the Thai culture. The study explores in terms of changes in perceptions; both individuals and social viewpoints, and emotional aspects of the returnees, certain key points were noted. Examples of the key points are the importance of family involvement in the re-entry process. The results showed that many returnees showed negative emotions and unwillingness to return after arriving from a more developed country. Therefore, to cope with the negative emotions, they tend to look for those who understand how they feel.

Those who have supportive families would recover faster and settle faster back at home. Furthermore, this can be implied that in a collective society like Thailand, family has a huge impact on a person's thoughts and emotions. Therefore, we can also associate how a Thai person adapts back into their home country by studying more on the relationships that they have with their families.

2.2   Cultural Intelligence and Biculturalism

Another important factor that can influence the effects of culture shock and reverse culture shock is "Cultural Intelligence (CQ)". According to Harvard Business Review, cultural intelligence refers to "an outsider's seemingly natural ability to interpret someone's unfamiliar and ambiguous gestures the way that person's compatriots would" (Earley and Mosakowski, 2004). From the statement, it can be suggested that those who have more cultural intelligence will accept and adapt to a new culture faster. A study conducted by Presbitero, A. (2016), demonstrates the association between Culture shock and Reverse culture shock to Cultural intelligence by measuring two factors: psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation. The results from the study showed that cultural intelligence helps in terms of managing the negative effects of culture shock. Therefore, facilitates an individual for a faster adaptation to a new culture.

Furthermore, another term that can explained those with a high CQ who have lived in multiple culture is "bicultural". This can be applied to immigrants who have immigrated and settled in another culture while maintaining the original culture that they have come from. These individuals are equally proficient in both cultures and can switch back and forth between their cultures according to each appropriate situation. An example would be Chinese Americans who have become "westernized" after several generations. When outside, these individuals would blend in with other Americans, regardless of ethnicity. However, when being with the people inside their own ethnic group, they would behave in a different way. Inside their household they would maintain their Chinese traditions, such as using chopsticks instead of fork and knife and holds Asian values such as respecting

elders and people of older age. (Schwartz and Unger, 2010). People who are bicultural would not require any adaptation when switching between cultures and have higher understanding of those who are different from them. Therefore, when these individuals go into a new culture, they would require less time to adapt, experiencing less culture shock.

2.3   Re-entry Adaptation: Coping strategies

When returning from overseas, individuals dealt with the difficulties of re-entry differently. There are a total of four different manners; proactive, re-socialized, rebellious, and alienated, as proposed by Adler in 1981. The differences can be described by the degree of optimism and how active the person portrays.
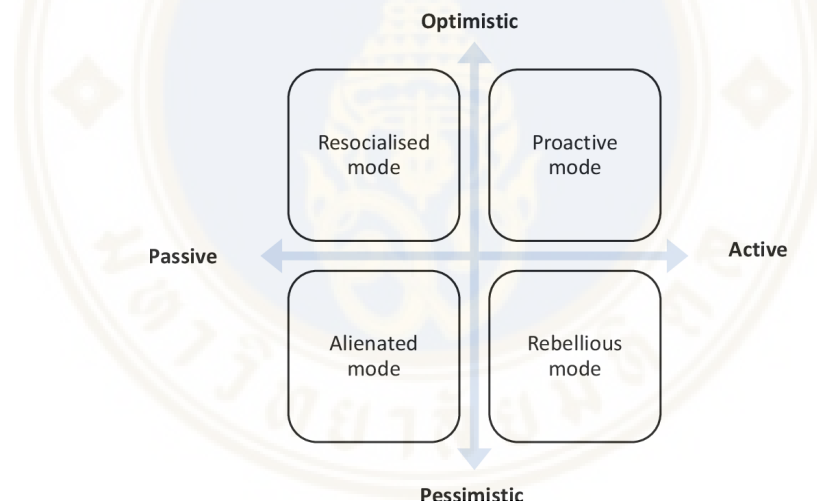
Figure 2.2 Re-entry Coping modes (Adler, 1981)

The description of the Re-entry modes can be described below:

- **Re-socialized mode**

    Individuals who have low awareness of cultural changes and immediately re-enters into their home culture, removing themselves completely from the foreign experiences. These individuals would acquire very little cross-

cultural skills and therefore, there would be no improvements at all in terms of their performances at work.

- **Proactive mode**

    Individuals who have high awareness of cultural changes and have grown from foreign experiences. This maximizes their learning and performance even after returning home.

- **Alienated mode**

    Individuals who have rejected their home country and environment. Therefore, fails to grow in terms of learning and performance after returning from foreign experiences.

- **Rebellious mode**

    Individuals who have rejected their home country and environment and tries to change or control it in unrealistic ways.

Talawanich, et, al. (2019), has discussed that Thai returnees tend to use optimistic coping modes which are similar to those of other Asian countries returnee. This can also be referred in terms of cultural dimensions, as in a collectivist society, the returnees try to blend themselves back passively into the norms rather than introducing new norms from their host countries. To further elaborate, collectivist society have higher resistance to change and therefore, it would be harder for the returnees if they "rebel".

2.4   Cultural aspects of the "Host" and "Home" Countries

Cultural differences can also play a significant role in terms of adaptability and the duration that a person experiences reverse culture shock. In general, the further apart the difference, the longer and harder it takes to adapt. The Hofstede's cultural dimensions can be applied to further elaborate this issue.
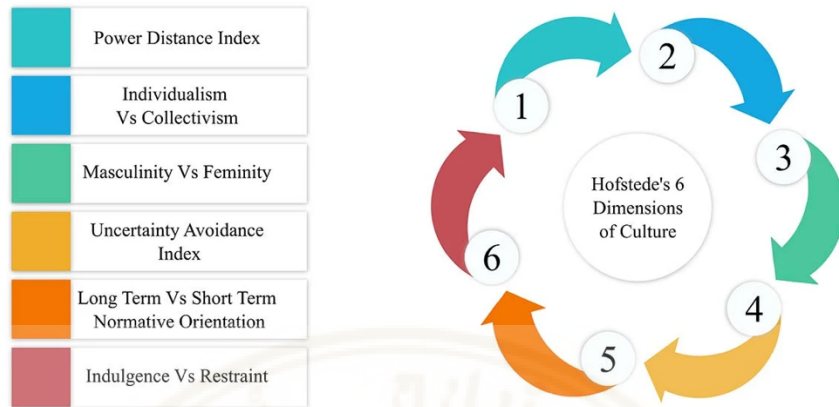
Figure 2.3 Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede et al., 2010)

A study by Morrow, G., et, al. (2013) explored the cultural dimensions on the adaptation of overseas medical graduates in the UK. They highlighted the significant differences in terms of power distance, individualism, and stronger uncertainty avoidance in the subjects' home countries, especially non-European countries, when compared to the working environment in the UK healthcare systems. For example, power distance, as stated in the study is most noticeable in overseas doctors, especially when dealing with errors during treatment. Patient in several countries, especially in Asia and Africa holds high values for doctors and healthcare workers. Therefore, there would be less conflicts, and less explanation would have to be made to the patients. On the other hand, patients in the UK and other European countries viewed themselves as equal to doctors and healthcare providers. Therefore, they would have more expectations and demand more explanations before deciding on a certain treatment. These aspects can cause certain conflicts at work, especially for those who have been trained overseas and are accustomed to the overseas traditions. Consequently, the further apart these dimensions, the harder and longer it takes to adapt to the new work environment. However, as the medical field is highly specialized and disclosed, more obvious differences between each country can be clearly identified. Therefore, the general ideas can be applied, but specific assumptions might not be as accurate and applicable in other industries.

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Study Design and Research Methodology

The study aims to analyze the reverse culture shock experiences for returning Thai overseas graduates and how they adapt to the Thai workplace. It will further explore the degree of reverse culture shock experiences in terms of cultural differences between the "host" and "home" country through the analysis of the Hofstede's cultural dimension framework.

To answer the research questions, the qualitative research method is chosen for this study to further understand the individual context of each participant.

The study focuses on the group of returning overseas graduates who have received a minimum of more than 1 year of overseas education. The study focuses mainly on those with a degree of tertiary education from overseas countries, bachelor's degree or higher. These interviewees would have to have experiences working in Thailand for a minimum of one year. The focus of this research would focus on interviewees working in both Thai and Multinational companies. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the participants.

3.2   Research Methods

Semi-structured interview methods were chosen as the main method for data collection in this study. As mentioned in according to Burgess. (1981), semi structured interviews have been described as a "conversation with a purpose". The characteristics of a semi-structured interview are described as followed (KnowHow, 2018):

- The interviewers and participants participate in a formal interview.

- The interviewer develops and uses a list of open-ended questions and ask them in a specific order.
- The questions address the topics to be covered in the study and provided room for more discussions into detail.

This mode of interview is useful in this study as it allows interesting information to be further explored. The interviews of this study are structured into three main sections, introduction, culture shock and reverse culture shock experiences, coping and adaptations. The details of the sections and probing questions are as followed:

3.2.1 Introduction and memory recall
- Please describe briefly about your educational background
  - Field of study
  - Duration of study
  - Host Country
- Did you experience any culture shock while being abroad, describe about those experiences?
- Please describe about your current workplace and relationships with your peers (your company, your job responsibility) and relationships with your peers (both Thais and Foreigners)

3.2.2 Reverse culture shock experiences at work
- What were our initial thoughts on your workplace, were there any unexpected events that surprised you during the first few months back?
- Were there any conflicts or things that you initially did not understand when you first arrived? How long does it last?

3.2.3 Coping and adaptation methods
- How did you manage the conflicts at work? What were you motivation?

o How do you currently feel about your workplace? How was reality different from your initial expectations when you first arrived?

o What helped you to adapt?

o What recommendations would you give to other Thais who come back from abroad to work in Thailand?

3.3 Sample size and Data Analysis

Data collection was collected from a total of 10 participants who have returned to Thailand after graduating from overseas universities. These participants have at least one year of work experiences in Thailand in various industries, including healthcare, finance, and law. The host countries of these participants were United States, United Kingdom, China, Japan, and the Philippines.

Results from the interviews were analyzed using the W-curve model and Coping strategies. The Hofstede's cultural dimensions were used to analyze each of the host countries of the participants. The results were than combined and to be further elaborated in the following sections of this study.

The list of interviewees and their information were listed on the table below:

Table 3.1 Interviewees information

Participant	Field of Study	Gender	Country	Age of going	Age of return	Duration of stay
A	Finance/ Business	Female	United States	21	23	2 years
B	Economics/ Finance	Male	United Kingdom	18	23	5 years
C	Medicine	Female	United Kingdom	18	24	5 years

Table 3.1 Interviewees information (cont.)

Participant	Field of Study	Gender	Country	Age of going	Age of return	Duration of stay
D	Electrical and computer engineering	Female	United States	22	24	1.5 year
E	Economics/ Finance	Female	United Kingdom	22	23	1 year
F	Medicine	Female	China	18	23	3.5 (shortened due to COVID-19)
G	Dentistry	Male	Japan	24	28	4 years
H	International Business	Female	Japan	18	21	4 years
I	Law	Female	United Kingdom	18	22	4 years
J	Medicine	Female	Philippines	20	24	4 years

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Following the qualitative research conducted via interviews with the interviewees, the summary of the findings from the interviews were analyzed. The main topics to be discussed are the general information of the interviewees, culture shock and reverse culture shock experiences, coping mechanism and methods, and cultural analysis of the host country.

4.2 General Information

The interviewees were within the range between 25 to 29 years old, 8 out of 10 were female. All interviewees are currently working in Thailand, some in government organizations and some in multinational companies. The average study time abroad of the interviewees were 3.5 years and all interviewees have at least one year of working experience in Thailand, holding managerial positions or lower. Two interviewees, C and H, have experiences working abroad outside their home countries. Moreover, six participants, B, C, F, H and I went to study abroad for their bachelor's degree while the rest went to study abroad after finishing their bachelor's degree in Thailand. Participants A and H have previous study abroad experiences as an exchange student. Participant A went abroad as an exchange student while she was in her third year of bachelor's degree. Participant H went abroad as an exchange student while she was in high school (Grade 10). Adding to this, participants who are not from the medical field holds master's degree qualifications or higher, participant G holds a doctoral degree, while the rest of the participants received their medical degrees from universities outside of Thailand.

The interviewees work experiences are displayed in the following table:

Table 4.1 Participants Field of Study and Work Experiences

Participant	Field of Study	Field of Work	Duration of work
A	Finance/Business	Data Sciene/ Data Analytics Thai Banking industry	2 years
B	Economics/Finance	Government Officer Risk management	2 years
C	Medicine	Medical Doctor Public Hospital	3 years
D	Electrical and computer engineering	Civil Servant Internal trade/Strategic planning	2 years
E	Economics/Finance	Financial team member Governmental Organization	2 years
F	Medicine	Medical Doctor (Internship) Public Hospital	1 year
G	Dentistry	University Lecturer/ Dentist Public University	2 years
H	International Business	Marketing Multinational Company	7 years
I	Law	Lawyer Multinational Company	3 years
J	Medicine	Medical Doctor (Internship) Public Hospital	1 year

4.3   Culture Shock and Reverse Culture Shock Experiences (Table – See Appendix A)

4.3.1   Culture Shock experiences

Before the reverse culture shock of each participant were identified, the culture shock experiences of each participant will be explored in this section. All participants have experienced culture shock at their host countries. However, the experiences are different

depending on the countries that they went to. The most common culture shock that most interviewees who went to western countries are the punctuality and efficiency in terms of time management. Participant A stated that she was shocked that most of her peers are very punctual and on time, to the point that she had to book a strict appointment with her friends when going out together for coffee or work. In general, people who went to study abroad in the US or UK all said that everything was more punctual and well planned, and traveling was convenient. Although, the work was quite demanding but the work and leisure times was more segregated so they can relax more outside of work and school. These experiences were all described as a culture shock for them as it was different from their initial expectations and their way of life prior to going abroad. They were certain culture shocks that conflicted with the Thai culture, such as unisex toilets in the university, as mentioned by participant E. All of them said that they needed some time to understand their host country's culture and adjust to the new lifestyle, both in terms of daily activities and the different working style in school.

On the other hand, participants who have studied and worked in Japan such as Participant G and H, said that at work, people are more focused and kept socializing to a minimum. All in all, Japanese people are very punctual, maintaining the appropriate manners while at work or being outside. However, when going out after work they tend to be more socialized and loosen up their manners, especially when there is alcohol involved. Since their host country is in Asia, they have found some similarities in terms of culture and beliefs. However, as the Thai culture tends to be more relaxed, the work ethics are different, and they felt that they had to adjust themselves to the Japanese culture. They both said that initially they felt like they were isolated at work due to the minimal socializing during working times. As they settled in, they soon realize that this is a part of the Japanese culture and finally adapt themselves to it. Participant G also mentioned about the amount of mannerism present in the Japanese culture and the amount of dedication and efforts people put into their work. He mentioned that he was initially worried and felt uncomfortable by the amount of attention he had to put in to maintain his manners in public places, such as keeping quiet on the train, elevators, and outside restaurants. Adding to this, he also

mentioned about his research team in Japan was working very late in evening, often right until the very last train. Initially he felt surprised by the amount of dedication that they have, as he was not used to working overtime when he was working in Thailand.

Adding to this, participant F identified that she found less differences in terms of culture when she was in China, since she grew up with Chinese family and have already studied the language from a very young age. However, since she studied in an international program and had classmates from all around the world, she found it initially hard to work with people from other cultures, especially those countries that she was unfamiliar with (Africa, Latin America, etc.). She also said that most conflict happens when doing groupwork, since she did not understand her peer's culture all that well. Therefore, the culture shock for F was not with her host country, but with international environments at her school. This is due to her background studying in Thailand with little exposure to international cultures. She initially described that she had to adjust to her peer's cultures and understand them more. When she starts to know more about her peers, the conflicts are reduced, and their performances are improved.

On the contrary, participant J who have studied in the Philippines identified her culture shock experience as an unpleasant journey. This is because the university that she went to was not inside the city center, therefore, the infrastructure and environment was inferior to the city and obviously Bangkok, where she grew up. She said that she was afraid to walk or go out alone, especially at night, since there were a lot of homeless and crimes in the area. Therefore, she felt alienated and unsafe due to her overall negative impression of the town. She soon adapts to the environment by using more safety precautions, learn from her peers, finally adapting to the new town and the new lifestyle.

4.3.2 Reverse culture shock experiences

All participants have different reasons as to why they decided to come back and work in Thailand, the two main reasons were family and their expected future career paths. Participants A, H and I came back to Thailand due to concerns about their family members getting older, and concerns about career opportunities in their host countries in comparison

to Thailand. Participant A had job offers in the US but was looking for a change in her career path after graduation, from consulting to data analyst. She described that changing career paths in the US was much more challenging, especially when she was already offered a position inside a company.   At that time, she also did interviews with companies in Thailand and was offered a place with her desired position, so she decided to take the offer, additionally allowing her to be closer to her family with also less living expenses to care for. Participant H had already worked for some time in Japan, and she felt it was time for her to come back to Thailand to be closer to her family. She was offered a position in a multinational company stationed in Thailand and finally took the offer. Adding to this, participant I had decided to come back right after finishing her master's degree in the UK. This is due to her family already having existing business in this industry in Thailand, so it is easier for her to join the company as a part of continuing her family's legacy.

On the other hand, participants B, D, E and G were scholarship recipients from their respective organizations to study abroad, therefore they were already expected to come back to Thailand after graduation. They have all continued to work at the same organization, hoping for further career advancements within their respective career paths. For example, participant D is hoping to be promoted as a commercial diplomat, while participant G hopes to advance forward as a lecturer and researcher in the academic field.

In addition, participant C, F and J are foreign trained medical doctors who are looking forward to work in the Thai healthcare industry. This is mainly because they do not wish to work permanently in their host countries and wanted to stay close to their families in Thailand. To work as a doctor at any country, a license is often required, so therefore, the inclusivity of the profession makes it harder for a person to move from country to country. The license requirements are often different and is subjective to each country's laws and regulations. Out of the three participants, participant C is the only participant who has an official Thai medical license. She is currently working at a university hospital and is expected to continue her residency training at the same hospital. Participants F and J are currently in the process of getting their Thai medical licenses, and

working as an intern is a part of the process. They are expected to work and continue further education in Thailand after receiving their medical licenses.

Based on the results from the interviews and the participant background, there is a high range of differences with the reverse culture shock experiences that each participant faced. These experiences vary depending on the type of organization that the participant worked at and the type of industry that these participants are in. All participants have mentioned that the company or the organizations culture has played a significant role in their working lives, especially their decision to join the company. Participant A, H and I have stated that studying the company's culture and working style before accepting the job offer is very important for them, especially in a situation where they can be considered as a high potential candidate when compared to their peers. Several organizations in Thailand valued those who have graduated from overseas, especially top tier universities, due to their high academic potential, overseas experiences, and efficiency at work. According to participant A, she mentioned that since her program and university was one of the most competitive in the world, she felt that her overall work application process was quite smooth. Participant A have mentioned in her interview that she has rejected her job offer in the US, partially because she wanted to come back to Thailand and because she was impressed with the company during her recruitment interview. She said that her organization, although being a subsidiary of a Thai banking company, the culture and working style was very different from its parent company, although they were in the same building. The hierarchy and bureaucracy at her level was non-existent, her boss was very approachable and understanding. The experiences from the interview can be summarize into a few key points. The key reverse culture shock experiences can be identified below:

4.3.2.1 Hierarchy, Seniority, and bureaucracy at work

To begin with, participant I who chose to work in a multinational company have said that she only felt some minor reverse culture shock at work. She has experienced less shock at her company due to the international atmosphere inside her workplace, in which she was used to as she has previously studied in an international school before going to the UK. However, she mentioned that she was

initially overwhelmed by the bureaucracy of the Thai laws and dealing with the Thai court systems. There were some parts that she did not understand and had to pay a lot of attention to, since her industry has a high risk for conflicts. She felt she had to take a lot of precautions to solve her client's legal issues and increase her understanding of the Thai legal terms.

Furthermore, the key highlights that participants who worked at government organizations experiences were hierarchy, seniority, and bureaucracy at work. Participants B, C, D, E, F and J have identified that they were struggling with this issue at work to a certain extent. Participants who worked as civil servants and government employees such as B, D, and E said that they were initially confused by the hierarchy and bureaucracy system and sometimes questions the decisions of those with higher authority. Their main problems were the overwhelming amount of paperwork and unnecessarily meetings and protocols. However, B and E also said that their organizations were surprisingly quite laid back, which were different from their initial expectations. Their peers and teammates were around similar ages (25 – 35 years old). The communication inside their organizations were quite efficient and at their level, less conflicts were present. They tend to work well with their teams, especially peers who are at the same age, and was able to avoid unnecessarily conflicts with their bosses. However, they also mentioned that there are conflicts in the management levels that can be seen, but due to their positions, they are less involved and knew very little about it. On the other hand, D have stated in her interview that she has had multiple conflicts with her boss. This is because she had to rush to submit the work to him while he was taking a while to correct her work, only for her to fixed it. The process was repeated many times, and there was always imbalance between the deadline and the amount of paperwork that she was assigned to do.

Participants C, F and J who are medical doctors face similar problems of hierarchy and seniority at work. They have identified that the seniority system, especially in the Thai healthcare industry was very distinct and pervasive, to the

point that it has affected their behaviors and decisions at work. These participants said that they tend to get overwhelmed by both the amount of workload, the hectic schedules and the seniority system that was imprinted into the Thai healthcare system. Participant C, who is currently working as a doctor in a university hospital has pointed out the strong hierarchical order at her workplace. As a junior doctor, she is more involved with her patients and must make several spontaneous decisions on her own with little communication, especially with senior team members. However, many of her decisions would have to be verified by her seniors and supervisors, several sessions are scheduled regularly to discuss the cases. During these sessions several criticisms were often made afterwards by the senior members and sometimes felt like her confidence were often challenged. She felt that this has decreased her assertiveness when making decisions and often felt she had to be more careful at work when compared to when she was working in the UK.

4.3.2.2 The Thai "laid back" attitude

The Thai "laid back" attitude was also mentioned by some of the participants. For example, participant A have mentioned about some process at work that were different from the US. Thai colleagues were more laid back and relaxed during work, working times were usually extended but was acceptable for her. Therefore, in the interview she has stated that she does feel some minor culture shock at work, but it was not as severe as her peers, who have worked in companies with a more traditional atmosphere.

Furthermore, participant G also mentioned about the different working environments when compared to when he was working as a researcher in Japan. As previously mentioned in the last section, he was used to working overtime in Japan and using his limited resources at its best ability. He mentioned that the number of staffs were much lesser in Japan, there were fewer dental assistants to help him at work. However, in Thailand there were much more dental assistants, but the workers were much more laid back. At the end of the day, the amount of work achieved were less than what he had achieved back in Japan. He initially felt

frustrated and soon realize how much the Japanese working style can maximize his potential and made him achieve more while he was there.

4.3.2.3 Thais are traditional but less reserved

This factor was raised by participants who have come back from Japan. As stated in the previous sections, the working style in Japanese culture people are more reserved and did not show many interactions during work. Most Japanese colleagues tends to hold back their thoughts and opinions at work, especially when discussing matters with their senior team members. However, when coming back to Thailand, the overall atmosphere and power distant between each team members are there, but people in the teams are less reserved, at meetings, more questions were raised, and people are more willing to speak up for themselves. This was supported by Participant H, who have stated that she has experienced several culture shocks, especially when transitioning from a company in Japan back to a multinational company in Thailand, where most of her colleagues are Thai. She has previously studied and worked in Japan and was used to their culture and working style. When transitioning back, she felt she was taken advantage of by her peers due to her mannerism and her initial inability to express her own opinions and ideas. During meetings, initially she was holding back with her opinions and feelings when being assigned to do something. This is because she was used to the Japanese way of being polite and compromise to every situation at work. Therefore, at first, she was not daring enough to say no to certain tasks or express her opinions about them. Also, she felt the level of customer services at her new company was not up to the standard she had in the previous company. Therefore, she was frustrated and did not know how to properly manage her thoughts about it.

4.3.3 Coping mechanisms and methods

All interviewees have coped with reverse culture shock using proactive method. They were all aware of the cultural changes, having a certain expectation of the cultures at

work and have finally adapted to the new changes. There are a few factors that have helped them cope with the new environment. These are maintaining a good relationship with their colleagues, asking for guidance from senior staffs, keeping up to their life goals, wanting to be promoted at work, finding a new hobby, desire to help others, and finally try not to take complaints too personal.

From the interview results, all the participants showed willingness to adapt since were not forced to come back to work in Thailand. They have had the opportunity to choose between working at their host countries or come back. Participants who went abroad without scholarships all had job offers in their host countries but are willing to come back after finding a suitable job offer. Other participants who have taken scholarships or work in the medical field have their goals settled prior to going abroad. Therefore, all the participants in the study have shown their willingness to come back and adapt to the Thai workplaces of their choice. Examples of this include participant G, who have committed himself to working in the academic field and in the less popular specialist field in dentistry prior to going abroad. He hopes to be able to bring what he has learned from Japan to help develop dentistry and dental education in Thailand.

All interviewees have mentioned that their peers, colleagues, and seniors at work have played a significant role in helping them to adapt to their workplace. For example, participant A have stated that her boss was very understanding of her and intentionally gave her less workload for the first few months, until she became familiar with the culture of the company and got used to the processes at her workplace. She finally got used to the working style of the team and the complicated system at her workplace. In addition, participant F have also mentioned that her colleagues were very respectful of her and have helped her adapt quite well to the work. Those who were initially cold to her have been friendlier and helpful once she approached them and became familiar with them. Therefore, the distant she felt between the senior staffs and herself was reduced. Other interviewees have also mentioned similar instances where their peers and colleagues have help them adapt to the new workplace, especially when that have transferred back from overseas.

Adding to this, participant D, who have previously had conflict with her boss and felt suppressed by the hierarchy at her workplace had also used the same method. She mentioned that talking to her colleagues, especially those who are the same age as her with similar overseas experiences had helped her a lot when coping with the working style at her workplace. Moreover, participant C have also mentioned that she tried to ask for as many advice as possible from her senior doctors and take them as a guidance at work. She tried her best to maintain the harmony at her workplace, trying to make every process and decisions to be as smooth as possible to avoid conflicts at work. Although, she felt there were lack in communication amongst the senior doctors, she also realized that there are ways to approach or interact more with them. She tried to be more polite and passive to their decisions, asking questions and providing her own opinions along the way. This allows her to find harmony in her workplace and finally adjust to the healthcare system in Thailand.

Moreover, another important factors that helped these interviewees adapt to their workplace are commitments to their goals and hoping to be promoted at work. Participant D hope that she will be promoted in her career path and being able to work abroad as a commercial diplomat, representing Thailand in foreign countries. She finally learned to be more polite to her boss and conform to his working style, she tried to talk to her seniors politely and try not to raise her voice or showed negative facial expressions to them. This is because she still wishes to continue working at her organization and be promoted further at a higher level. In addition, participant B and E also used the same method of talking and discussing with peers, while keeping their goals in mind. They both wish to advance in their respective career paths and be promoted to higher levels at their organization. They also mentioned that talking to peers with similar experiences have helped them a lot in coping with the traditions inside their workplaces. Advice was shared amongst peers so that conflicts can be kept to a minimum, they finally know what to expect and what to avoid in certain situations at work.

Furthermore, participants also mentioned that finding a hobby have helped them to relax themselves from work and kept them motivated. Participant B mentioned that he has

found a new hobby that helped him cleared his mind from work. He had found his passion in dancing and had been taking classes afterwork. He stated that founding his own interests at work and outside of work has helped him adapt to the new culture, it also keeps him motivated to go to work every day. He also said that although there are things that he might dislike or not being in controlled off at work, he always looks forward to his dance classes afterwards. This have also helped him to have a positive mood to go about work every day.

Another factor that helped the participants to cope with reverse culture shock was their goal to help others. Medical interns such as participant F and J both wishes to become working doctors in Thailand. They have mentioned that their goal is to be able to help others and those in need and this is what helps them cope with their workplaces. These participants are working their way to earn their Thai medical licenses and pursuing further studies in the Thai healthcare system. Therefore, they have tried their best to avoid conflict at work, understanding their colleagues and senior, especially when they act or behaved in a bad way. They tend to overlook those who have a more negative mindset and stay focused to their initial ambitions of coming back to Thailand. They have also mentioned that being able to help others has helped them to stay motivated and tried their best to complete their hospital internships.

Lastly, the participants also said that they tried to not take negative comments too personal. Participant F mentioned that she had experienced a toxic environment in her last rotation in one of the departments in the hospital. She said that there were some colleagues who have shown some disrespectful behaviors and attitudes towards her. She initially did not understand why she was treated that way, however she soon realizes and did not take it personal. She has received a lot of help from her peers and resident doctors who have praised her for her hard work and dedication. She finally learned to let it go and tried her best to care for the patients under her care.

4.4   Cultural Analysis of the Host Country

From the interview results, we can see that different host countries do play a significant role in terms of reverse culture shock experiences when overseas graduates returned home. The comparison between the host and home countries can be identified using the Hofstede's cultural dimension model. The following table showed the comparison between the host and home countries of the participants in this study.

Table 4.2: Hofstede's cultural dimensions of participant's host countries

Dimensions	Thailand	United States	United Kingdom	China	Japan	Philippines
Power Distance	High	Low	Low	High	High	High
Individualism (I) vs. Collectivism (C)	C	I	I	C	C	I
Masculinity (M) vs. Feminity (F)	F	M	M	M	M	M
Uncertainty Avoidance Index	High	Low	Low	Low	High	Low
Long-term vs. Short-term Normative Orientation	Long-term	Short-term	Long-term	Long-term	Long-term	Short-term
Indulgence (I) vs. Restraint (R)	I	I	I	R	R	R

From the above table, the main issues that were identified by the participants were the differences between power distance at work and individualism vs. collectivism. The problems with power distant were significant with those who are currently working in governmental organizations. The power distant and hierarchy are one of the key dimensions that have caused reverse culture shock amongst the interviewees. Those who have graduated from western countries have noticed a lot of this issue. To further elaborate, the comparison of the results of three medical doctors, C, F and J, can be used to compare the

differences between the different host cultures of the participants. C who used to work as a doctor in the UK, have mentioned a lot about seniority at work in Thailand. It was so pervasive for her that it has created a lot of conflict at work, especially when it comes to making decisions regarding with her patients. F and J, on the other hand, did mentioned about the hierarchy at work, but they were aware of it, expecting it beforehand and did not have much conflict because of it. However, they did also mention that their problems were much more related to understanding, controlling, and managing their emotions, especially when being scolded by some senior staffs.

Adding to this, the issues relating to individualism and collectivism are also present in the results from the interview. This can be further elaborated into two different scenarios, participants who went to a more collective society and those who went to a more individualistic society. Those who have studied in a more individualistic society such as the UK and US have mentioned that they sometimes struggle with decision making inside their Thai workplaces. Although, there are instances where they can express their own opinions, but at the end of the day, the decisions of their team and organization matters the most and had to eventually go with the flow to avoid conflicts. Participant who works in government organizations said that their team's job is to complete projects decided upon by the management levels. Every decision is made as a team and the progress is also measured as a team. Therefore, their individual performances and opinions were often overlooked. On the other hand, participants who went to study in a more collectivist society such as Japan, have faced issues on the other side. This can be seen from participant H who have transitioned to a multinational company in Thailand, and initially felt reluctant to speak up for herself at meetings. Therefore, at the end of the day she felt she was taken advantage off by being too passive with her colleagues' decisions.

From the results of this research and the Hofstede's analysis we can say that the differences between the host and home country have some impact on the reverse culture shock experiences. However, the amount of reverse culture shock experiences also varies depending on the industry and the culture of the workplaces of the participants. The adaptation of the individuals also varies depending on the type of industry and workplaces

that they are in. For example, participant A and D who have both studied in the US have faced a different degree of reverse culture shock at work. From the Hofstede analysis, we can see that USA had a lower power distance and is more individualistic when compared to Thailand. A, who chose to work in a company with a much more laid back and modern working style have experienced much lesser conflict at her workplace in Thailand than D, who works as a government officer. Due to a higher bureaucracy and hierarchy at her organization, D took much more time to adapt to her workplace and tried her best to be passive to her boss's decisions and avoid conflicts at work. On the other hand, A have also mentioned in her interviews that she chooses her company because she was impressed with the working style that they had, which is quite different from other Thai workplaces. She intentionally chose a company with a low power distance working style because she knew that she can easily adapt to it.

In addition, participants B, C, E and I who have studied in the United Kingdom have experienced varying degree of reverse culture shock at their workplaces. From the Hofstede's analysis, UK is like the US with a lower power distance and is more individualistic compared to Thailand. Participant I who works in a multinational company have experienced less conflict inside her own workplace. However, she mentioned her reverse culture shock experiences in terms of dealing and negotiating with Thai clients and the Thai laws which was different from the UK. She did not mention about the hierarchy at work due to the international environments at her company, therefore the power distance at her company were lesser than other participants. Participant B and E have experienced similar reverse culture shock experiences due to working at a government organization. They have mentioned about the bureaucracy and hierarchy at work, but they were able to avoid the conflicts due to the help from peers and their current position in the organization. They have mentioned that the power distance in their organizations is there, but they were not yet involved in them. On the other hand, C have experienced a lot of reverse culture shock experiences in the Thai healthcare industry. She has mentioned that the hierarchy and seniority at her workplace have a lot of influences on her decisions. Therefore, due to

the high-power distance in her organization, C have taken the longest to adapt to her workplace and adjust to the seniority system of the Thai medical industry.

On the other hand, G and H who have studied in Japan have also experienced varying degree of reverse culture shock at their respective workplaces, but on a reverse manner. Like Thailand, Japan is also a collective society with a high-power distance. However, as Japanese are more reserved, their society tend to even be more collective and has a higher power distance than Thailand, which is also present in the results from this study. Due to being accustomed to the Japanese cultures and work ethics, H have experienced more reverse culture shock at her workplace, due to working at a multinational company in Thailand with an international atmosphere. With a dramatic change in power distance and being less reserved, she has mentioned that she was initially reluctant to express her ideas and opinions and was taken advantage off by her colleagues at work. Therefore, the reverse culture shock that H felt was reverse from others, coming out of a collective society and learning to be more individualistic at work. Similarly, G who was quite impressed by the Japanese work ethics, having found his current workplace to be much more relaxed than Japan with other aspects being very similar. Therefore, due to being used to the Thai dental industry, he has found the transition to be much smoother, and requires lesser time to adapt to his workplace than H.

4.5   Factor that influences participants to feel less culture shock inside their workplaces

From the results of the interview, there were some participants who have experienced less culture shock than others when coming back to work in Thailand. These participants include participants who went to study in countries with culture aspects similar to Thailand, such as China, Japan, and the Philippines. These participants tend to experience less culture shock when coming back to work in traditional Thai workplaces, such as public hospitals or government organizations. They have noticed and adapt to the power distance quickly and passively when comparing to participants who have come back

from western countries. In addition, those who went to study in the US or UK and choose to work in organizations with less power distance and more individualism tends to also experience less culture shock at work. These examples include participant A and I, who reported more similarities at their workplaces to their host countries, therefore experiencing less culture shock at work. On the other hand, participant H who also worked in a multinational company has reported a lot of struggles at her workplace after coming back from Japan. Therefore, we can speculate that the factors that influence participants to feel less culture shock at work is how similar the participant's organization is to their host countries. In conclusion, we can say that those who went to study in western countries such as the US and UK are more easily adapted to organizations with an international and relaxed atmosphere when compared to traditional workplaces. While those who went to study in Asian countries can easily adapt to a more traditional workplaces and might have more struggles adapting to an international working environment.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This paper explores the adaptations of overseas graduates as they adapt back to their respective workplaces in Thailand. The investigations were based on exploring individual's reverse culture shock experiences and the coping strategies that each person used. The participants in this study include 10 overseas graduates who have studied in various countries, United States, United Kingdom, China, Japan, and the Philippines. These participants have already returned and work in organizations in Thailand for a minimum of one year. It is concluded that there are some common reverse culture shock experiences that were experienced by the participants, especially those working in similar workplaces. The main challenges were adjusting and adapting to the hierarchy of the organization, understanding the working attitudes of Thai colleagues, and having a positive relationship with colleagues and peers. In addition, this study has also found out that although the cultural differences between the host and home countries of the participants have a certain impact on the reverse culture shock experiences. However, these experiences still vary depending on the industry and workplaces of the participants. The adaptations and coping mechanisms were also influenced by the participant's respective workplaces.

The interesting findings of the research can be highlighted below:

- Hierarchy and Bureaucracy are one of the common struggles that overseas graduates faced when joining a traditional Thai workplace, especially governmental organizations and those who are in the healthcare industry.

- The preparations and research before joining an organization are very crucial and is one of the main concerns of graduates when returning from overseas.

- Maintaining good relationships with colleagues, especially supervisors at work, is the key to adapting and coping with culture shock, regardless of any situations and field of work.

- The proactive coping mechanism tend to be a preferred method to cope with reverse culture shock amongst Thai overseas graduates, regardless of their host countries.

- All participants have mentioned that choosing a suitable workplace is very important, especially for overseas graduates. If they were asked to choose, they tend to prefer workplaces that are more relaxed, with less hierarchy and bureaucracy in the organization.

- The cultural differences between the host countries and the corporate culture of the participants' Thai workplaces had the most influence on the degree of reverse culture shock that each participant's faced. Meanwhile, the cultural differences between the host and home countries plays a minor role in terms of reverse culture shock at work.

- Overseas graduates in this study had high awareness of being in a new culture. They quickly found ways to adapt to a new place, while maintaining their original experiences and values that they have gain from overseas.

Even though the result from this study complies with the findings from the previous literature, the results were limited to a sample size of only 10 interviewees. More research can be done with a bigger sample size, on each specific groups of overseas graduates. In addition, the research can also focus more on a specific target group such as overseas medical graduates, Thai scholars, or graduates from the same host country. Moreover, in this study, the participants have different duration of overseas education and experience it at different times of their lives. Therefore, further research can focus more on the level of maturity when experiencing overseas education and how it affects their adaptations as these graduates returned from overseas.

5.2   Recommendations

The recommendations to overseas graduates returning home can be summarized below:

- Pay attention to the interviews before joining a company, ask questions about the workplace and see if the organization will be a best fit for you.
- It is very crucial to ask for advice and look for people who have the insights of the organization that you are joining, be prepared for the changes and think of ways to adapt to it.
- Having a good mentor or supervisor is very important for a smooth transition into a new culture and workplace, especially those with similar experiences.
- Try to be respectful to everyone, especially on the first day.
- Try to stay calm as possible, even if you did not understand the other people's action.
- Try to avoid asserting your own emotions when dealing with conflicts at work, try to take a step back and think of new ways to approach the situation. Try to be as professional as possible.

The recommendations for companies looking to recruit overseas graduates in their organizations can be listed below:

- It is very crucial to identify the cultures of an overseas graduates, value their past experiences and let them use it for the benefit of the company.
- Assigning the proper supervisor, preferably someone with similar experiences is very important to help these graduates adapt very quickly to the company.
- Promote communication inside the teams, allow opportunities for collaborations and networking.
- Overseas graduates from different countries are not the same, they are influenced by the host countries cultures and beliefs. Therefore, the culture shock that they faced, and how they adapt to it can be different.

- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of these graduates, provide guidance and training as necessarily.

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Appendix   A

Participant No.	Honeymoon Duration	Honeymoon Details	Reverse Culture Shock Duration	Reverse Culture Shock Details	Adjustment Duration	Adjustment Details	Coping types
A	2 weeks	Work appreciations, initial enjoyment of coming back to Thailand	1 month	Working styles at the company, employees are more laid back, less punctual. (was expected) Problems with the company's security systems	1 month	Her boss and colleagues helped her adjust to her job. She was initially assigned less work so she can settled in. The team was very understanding and provided guidance for her.	Proactive
B	2 weeks	Work appreciation, joining a prestige organization	2 weeks	Questioning the overall hierarchical structure of the organization	2 weeks	Talked and interacted with his peers, discovered a new hobby that he was interested	Proactive
C	2 weeks	Work appreciation, getting to work in a field related to her interest	2 month	Shocked by the seniority system and how much pervasive it was, to the extent that it effects her decisions at work	1 month	Asking for colleagues and senior advice, interacted with her peers and as them for guidance.	Proactive
D	2 weeks	Work appreciation after studying abroad through a scholarship	2 months	Having multiple arguments with her boss due to imbalance between, paperwork, deadlines and work approval, there are multiple instances where she had to correct her work multiple time and re-submit them to meet with the deadline	2 months	Asking peers that are off the same age for advice, letting go on the things that she knew she can't change. Try to be as polite as possible and not showing negative emotions at work.	Proactive
E	2 weeks	Work appreciation, joining a prestige organization	1 month	Confused by the bereucratic system inside the organization, her boss were not free enough to help her to settle in	1 month	Asking advices from her boss and peers, had more interactions with her colleagues at work. Therefore, after a month she started to settle in and become more familiar to her workplace.	Proactive
F	2 weeks	Initial joy of finally graduating and starting her internship back in Thailand.	1 month	Overwhelmed by the amount of pressure and workload in Thailand, when in comparison to hospitals in China. Some people at work can become emotionally unstable when things start to get out of hand.	1 month	Getting closer to her colleagues at work, asking them for advices, being polite and respectful towards eachother.	Proactive
G	2 weeks	Initial joy of finally graduating and starting his job back in Thailand	2 weeks	Environment was much more laid back, less punctuality at work, he was tbeing overly polite to everyone. Did not have much shock on other aspects due to past working experiences at the same hospital before going abroad.	2 weeks	Getting use to the environment, with the support of other team members. Try to be polite and compromise to everyone.	Proactive
H	2 weeks	Work appreciations, being a part of a multinational company (American Company with Thai colleagues)	1 month	She was acting too humble due to being used to the Japanese culture, always caring for others before caring for herself. Therefore, it was initially hard for her to raise her voice and express her own ideas and opinions. She was caring about every detail that other people missed, and got frustrated by it.	1 month	Being open minded and trying to put herself in other people's shoes. Finding a voice of her own when it is time for her to express her opinions.	Proactive
I	2 weeks	Work appreciations, being a part of a multinational company	1 month	Familiarized herself to the work environment in her industry, understanding thai legal terms and possible ways to talk to clients	1 month	Discussing with supervisors and co-workers, as well as seniors.	Proactive
J	2 weeks	Work appreciation, finally getting to return to Thailand, which is more developed, both in terms of infrastructure and the medical industry	1 month	The overall work experiences was not a surprise for her, as she have already asked for advice from her senior. However, there were a lot of adjustments in the working style, especially working with colleagues who are graduates of Thai medical schools. There are some terminology that she did not initially understand, she felt her skills were lacking when compared to her peers.	1 month	Thinking about her personal goals, interacting with peers and seniors at work. Asking for adviced from her seniors who have experienced similar situations.	Proactive