

Identity discourse and phenomenon of reunion on West Sumatran student

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Abstract This study aims to determine the goals, motives, and discourses on the identity of the West Sumatra overseas student reunion participants in Pekanbaru. Reunions have become popular and seem to be a way of life in our society. Communicative Action Theory will be used to identify a reunion between a school in Pekanbaru. This study uses a qualitative research method with a phenomenological approach. The results showed that the meaning of reunion was divided into three, namely the meaning of the purpose of silaturahmi, the meaning of not forgetting alma mater and meeting their old friends. The motives are divided into the *Bacarito Lamak* motive, the fierce motive, and the *Kepo* motive. Furthermore, in the context of motifs consisting of motifs while diving, drinking water motives and motives provide greater benefits in the form of discussion motives and social motives. Identity discourse consists of appearance, self-actualisation, and connectivity rather than a show-off.

Keywords: reunion phenomenon; Overseas Students; Phenomenology; Pekanbaru

INTRODUCTION

Recently, the reunion phenomenon has become an increasingly popular activity in the community. Regardless of age, education level, and social status, they participate in attending reunions, where reunions seem to have become a way of life among the people. Taking pictures with old friends and sharing them on social media is one of the satisfactions for the alums. The results of previous research stated that the reunion was a forum for the existence of alums by taking selfies with old friends. Showing the photos together by publishing them on social media makes them feel like they will get recognition from the wider community (Mandal et al., 2021).

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Reunion is a phenomenon formed from the development of technology and information, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and the chat application Line or Whatsapp. Nowadays, social media makes human affairs easier, especially communication. We know humans can more easily relate to each other regardless of distance and time (Lestari et al., 2021). Even in some cases, social media can bring together people who have not seen each other for a long time.

The results of the author's interview with the lecturer of Urban Sociology at the University of Riau, Hesti Asriwandari, confirmed that reunion activities are booming and seem to be a lifestyle in our society. This happens at the high heterogeneity in society and causes them to want to look for the same thing in themselves. This is based on *Gemeinschaft's* theory which assumes that people, especially heterogeneous people, want to have relationships or relationships based on similarities. They want to find people based on similarities, the easiest to find is the similarity of residence or origin. This desire is one of the things that underlies a reunion activity (Estika & Asriwandari, 2017).

Gemeinschaft is a value-oriented concept with a role, and pure and intimate inner relationships bind its members. Paguyuban (*Gemeinschaft*) can be defined as a form of collective life in which a natural and eternal mental relationship binds its members; that underlies the establishment of a community is a sense of inner unity. Paguyuban is characterised by a comprehensive and equitable relationship, personal and exclusive (Sukamto, 2021).

According to Tonnies, *Gemeinschaft* is a value-oriented, aspirational, role-playing, and sometimes genuine habit that dominates social forces. To him, *Gemeinschaft* indirectly arises from within the individual and the desire to have a relationship or relationship based on similarities in desire and action. Individuals, in this case, are defined as the glue and support social forces connected to their friends and relatives, with whom they build emotional connections and interactions (Anggraheni et al., 2021).

Communicative Action Theory explains how communication can reconstruct an individual or group's rationality. Coordinating actions with others requires a certain rationality or understanding. Communicators must have a language adoption to reach a common understanding within the audience, resulting in a coherent action, such as school reconciliation (Azizah, 2021). Communicative action relates to subjects and how other objects affect the subject's rationality. Individuals' rationality will define how they obtain their knowledge and how they should take action from it (Coenen, 2022). In school reunion terms, a group of graduates are influenced by their past social circles, which define them as a part of the long-separated group.

A reunion is a form of reconciliation after a long separation. This phenomenon occurs around a certain group of people who once had a close relationship with each other (Midgley et al., 2021). A school reunion is one form of reconnecting an individual's social network. The

group of close individuals will often relate to being a part of their routine (Steele, 2019). This is a case with a group of individuals in the same school who have parted ways after graduation for a long time. It is an activity that unites all components separated by time and place for a long time (Fernando et al., 2019).

The authors are aware that a study of reunion is not the first time in this paper. Therefore, the writer has reviewed several reunion studies that have been done in the past. One such research is from Adji (2019), which explores the *Reuni Akbar* (Great Reunion) 90 Years of Pondok Gontor. He identified that reunion as a form of conveying a message after a long separation in intellectual humour. The lecturer's sense of humour made it easy for him to distribute his message to his grand reunion audience. Midgley (2021) identified school reunions as a form to boast individuals' achievements after a long separation. This generates a stigma on an individual's self-esteem, mood, and satisfaction as they watch others' bigger achievements. The stigma is more prominent towards low self-esteem individuals who tend to make unnecessary upward comparisons on social media.

A study by Allison (2021) examines how school expeditions can change the student's life experience. Allison explored how outdoor education could significantly affect the long-term benefits of participants' experience in their personal or professional lives, which they described as their life-changing expedition at school reunions. School reunions can also be used to distribute older generations' experiences to encourage new generations to take a new approach to their education. This will affect their experience in the short term and long term. Past studies have implied that school reunions are meant to distribute the older generation's experience to new generations and compare their achievements. This study will contribute to identifying how school reunions are interpreted in different parts of the world, specifically in Pekanbaru, Indonesia.

Based on the background presented in the previous paragraphs, the author posits a research idea where student reunion is more than just a reconciliation between students. Some students indicated several experiences other than a feeling of reconnection after having separated for a certain amount of time. The study is intended to identify how students interpret their school reunion after they parted ways post-graduation.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative research with a phenomenological approach, which explores the conscious experiences of informants by asking provocation questions so that informants can tell experiences related to a phenomenon, which implies an emphasis on process and meaning. Qualitative researchers attach great importance to the value-laden nature of the inquiry. They seek answers to the meaning (Sya & Marta, 2019). Researchers need to develop a framework for thinking about the

concept of the theoretical stages of research, including how many simple schemes briefly describe the problem-solving process proposed in the study. Phenomenology comes from the Greek "phainomai," which means "to appear". *Phainomenon* refers to "what appears". Phenomena are facts that are realised and entered into human understanding. Phenomenology directly reflects the human experiences that experience is intensively related to an object (Marta et al., 2021). Phenomenology is a qualitative study approach rooted in philosophy and psychology, focusing on the human experience (Fernando et al., 2020).

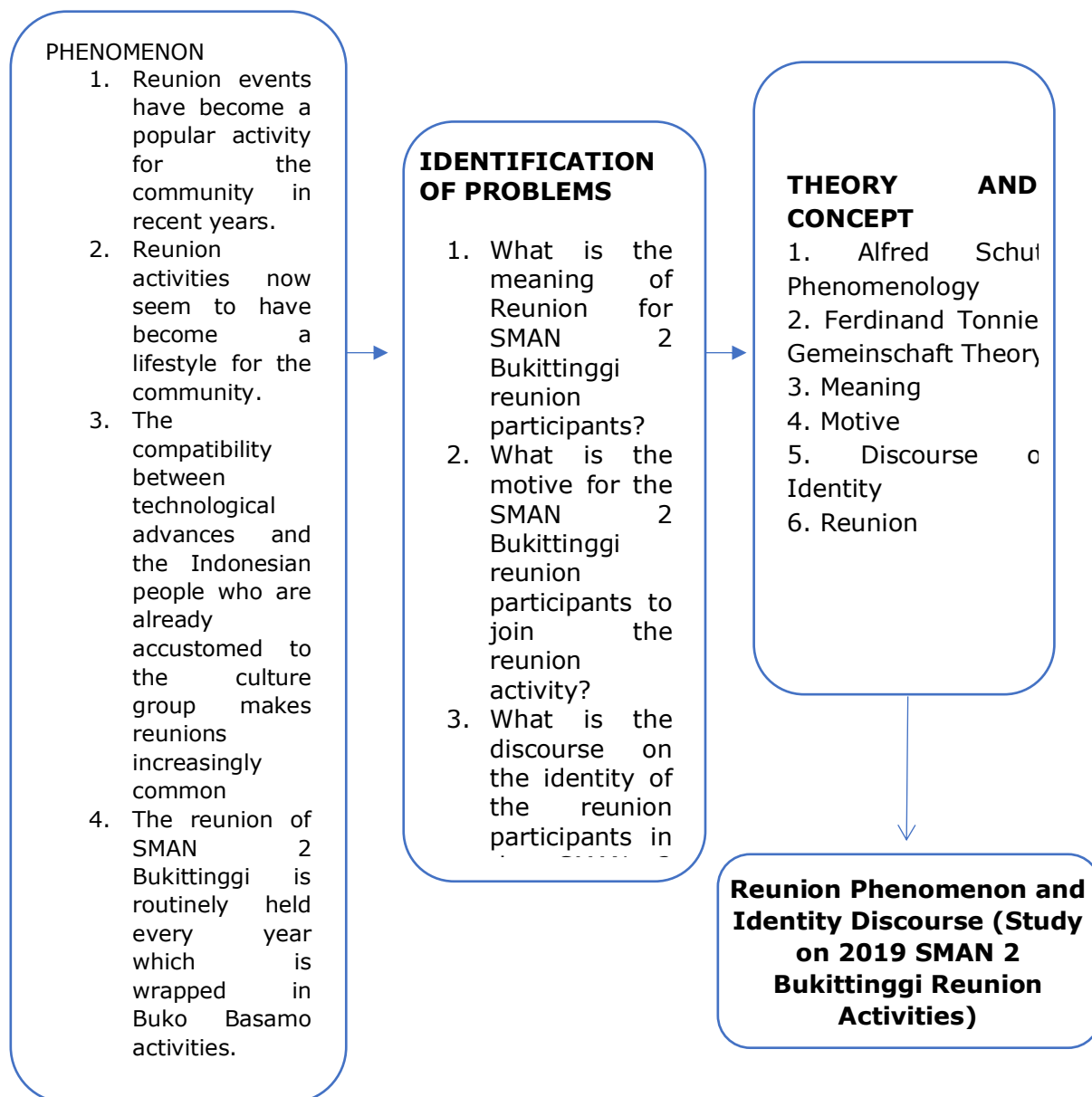


Figure 1. Theoretical framework
Source: author's compilation 2019

Phenomenology examines how a certain phenomenon dictates understanding the people within. This allows researchers to generate knowledge based on human actors to understand the world and how they should act within it (Pula, 2022). Phenomenology opposes the

ideology that human experience is irrelevant and ignored in favour of objectivity. Husserl interpreted the human experience as new knowledge, whether the novelty of experience comes from the study or within the person who experiences the phenomenon (Burns et al., 2022). In phenomenology, everything is presented as it is. This perspective tries to understand reality from the subject's point of view (Putra et al., 2021).

The framework of thought is a conceptual model of how the theory relates to various factors identified as research problems (Umar, 2002: 208). To clarify the meaning, researchers need to develop a framework for thinking about the concept of the theoretical stages of research, including how many simple schemes briefly describe the problem-solving process proposed in the study.

This research was conducted in Pekanbaru; the reason researchers chose this location is because Pekanbaru is an area that has many overseas destinations for students from West Sumatra. Pekanbaru is where many immigrants come, especially from adjacent provinces such as West Sumatra, so many qualified and developed tourist destinations exist. (SA Sinaga: 2021).

Subjects in qualitative research are called informants. The selection of informants was carried out using the snowball technique, namely finding and recruiting "hidden informants" groups that were not easily accessible by researchers through other informant-gathering strategies, namely, the determination of the group of participants who become informants per selected criteria relevant to certain research problems (Effendy et al., 2021). The author has two key informants in this study, N and TB. The total number of informants was 11, including N, AL, I, MS, RR, TB, R, MN, HT, YA and AW.

Table 1. Informant Data

No	Name	Batch	Age	Occupation	Reunion Joined
1	ND (Key Informant)	1994	43	Director of Media	5
2	AL	1983	55	Govt Enterprise Employee	5
3	IS	1984	54	Businessman	7
4	MS	2011	26	Make Up Artist	3
5	RR	1992	44	Lecturer	3
6	TB (Key Informant)	1996	40	Businessman	8
7	R	2000	36	unemployment	9
8	MN	1985	53	Govt Enterprise Employee	6
9	HT	1987	51	Housewife	8
10	YA	2015	22	Student	4
11	AW	1984	54	Civil Servant	4

Source: author's compilation 2019

To obtain the data needed in this study, the techniques used by the author are interviews, observation and documentation. In the observation technique, the writer uses non-participant observation, namely, the writer does not attend the West Sumatra Rantau Student reunion because of the different backgrounds of institutions/schools.

Data analysis is organising and sorting data into a pattern of categories and descriptions of basic units so that themes can be found and working hypotheses can be formulated (Harry et al., 2022).

In this study, the author uses three (3) stages, one being data reduction, grouping or categorising data, displaying data, that is displaying in the form of tables/graphs, and decision-making and verification. The author's conclusion is based on data regarding reunion and identity discourse, and the presentation of the conclusion is stated in precise and clear sentences.

The technique of checking the validity of the data can be carried out in research with the aim that all parties can account for research results. The techniques for checking the validity of the relevant data in this study are 1). Participation Expanded, the author's participation is very decisive in data collection. The extension of the author's participation will increase the degree of confidence. The data is collected because of the expansion of participation. It can test the untruth of the information raised by distortion from themselves and the respondent and build the subject's confidence. The expansion of participation also requires authors to go directly to the location, and it usually takes a long time to detect and calculate distortions that may contaminate the data (Magfirah & Saputra, 2021). 2). Source Triangulation. Triangulation can be done as follows: a. Comparing the observed data with interview data. b. Comparing what people say in public with what they say in private. c. Compare what people say about the research situation with what is said from time to time—comparing one's situation and perspective with other people's opinions and views. and e. Comparing the results of interviews with the contents of related documentation (Marta, Riyanti, et al., 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the research results based on the observations, in-depth interviews and documentation that the author has done in the field in accordance with the research points formulated; the meaning, motives and discourse of identity among overseas students from Indonesia, West Sumatra in Pekanbaru. The authors' observations and interviews were not completely done in a formal atmosphere but were more informal, thus allowing a more open relationship between the author and the informants to explore the information the authors needed in this study.

In this study, the author uses Schutz's phenomenological theory, which states that the main task of phenomenological analysis is to reconstruct the "real" world of human life into the form they experience. Phenomenology comes from the Greek "phainomai," which means "to appear." Phainomenon refers to "what appears." Phenomena are facts that are realised and entered into human understanding. Phenomenology directly reflects the human experience, that experience is intensively related to an object (Marta et al., 2021). Phenomenology is a qualitative study approach rooted in philosophy and

psychology, focusing on the human experience (Fernando et al., 2020). Thus, phenomenology emphasises real experience as the subject of reality. In phenomenology, everything is presented as it is. This perspective tries to understand reality from the subject's point of view (Putra et al., 2021).

In addition, the author also uses the theory of *Gemeinschaft* by Ferdinand Tönnies. According to Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft* is a situation that is value-oriented, aspirational, role-playing, and sometimes a genuine habit that dominates social forces. For him, *Gemeinschaft* indirectly arises from within the individual and the desire to have a relationship or bond based on similarities in desire and action. Individuals, in this case, are defined as the glue and supporting social forces connected to their friends and relatives, with whom they build emotional relationships and interactions with each other (König, 2021). The results of this study will first discuss the meaning of reunion for overseas students from West Sumatra in Pekanbaru. Here, the author divides the meaning of reunion into several categories.

Friendship (*Silaturrahmi*)

Silaturrahmi, or maintaining a friendship, is the main meaning of reunion for overseas students from West Sumatra. As the feeling of wanting to reconnect is created because they had not seen each other for a long time, they were more likely to join the reunion. From the results of the author's interviews with informants, all of the informants answered that the meaning of reunion for them was to stay in touch (Chinmi et al., 2021). That is due to the encouragement from self or encouragement of religion. TB stated that the reunion's purpose is to stay in touch with the Relationship to Lord God Almighty (*Hablumminallah*) and the relationship to humans (*Hablumminannas*). From the teachings of Islam, we must maintain a relationship other than the relationship with the Creator and maintain relationships with fellow human beings. This is in line with Tönnies' community theory. According to him, *Gemeinschaft* or association is included in *wesenwille*. The meaning is the form of will in a positive or negative sense rooted in humans and strengthened by religion and beliefs that apply to body parts from instinctive behaviour or activities. The informants' belief about friendship's meaning was why they attended the reunion. This friendship is instilled in the teachings of their religion, all of whom are Muslim. The informants' beliefs about the meaning of friendship made them attend the reunion.

Friendship (*Silaturrahmi*) is closely related to communication. Making friendships means building loving relationships with relatives and with other people. Establishing friendship is an effort to increase the sense of love and togetherness among each other by visiting each other and exchanging ideas to strengthen the relationship. School reunions prove that forged friendships will retain their shape even with time weathering. The groups within the friendship will reminisce about their

old school days to strengthen their friendship through their past hardships in school (Lumampauw et al., 2021).

We can see that reunions can be a place to stay in touch. Considering that every individual who attends a reunion desire to meet old friends because they have been separated by time and even a long distance so that they are rarely in touch and face to face, they consider reunions a form and way of friendship.

Back Together (*Mangumpuakan nan Taserak*)

A reunion is where we can meet old friends who rarely or have not seen after leaving an institution or school. In this reunion phenomenon, the writer finds that alums consider reunion as a way to meet old friends. Especially for alums who migrated out of town, they felt that this reunion was an opportunity to meet their old friends. Also, for alums who do not go abroad and are still living in West Sumatra, it is said that it becomes a special attraction if their friends come from abroad.

Reunion is one of the events or activities for us to meet with old friends. We can invite old friends to meet at cafes, malls, or other public places at reunions. Of course, not many people attended the reunion. This large reunion event was attended by more than 100 alums who came from within the city and outside the city due to the alums who migrated.

Due to the recent number of reunion activities and the number of successful reunion activities, which can gather up to the oldest, most successful alumni, even those rarely seen from abroad, increase the interest of other alums to join. Compared to being invited to a regular social gathering with school friends, it would be more "wow" to gather at a reunion event that has been echoed for a long time and prepared as carefully as possible. Usually, the possibility of the number of alum attending is greater because the reunion is held once a year or within a certain period of time for one reunion.

Informant MS and I feel this reunion is a place to meet old friends. Even MS feels that if it is not at the reunion, he will meet old friends, especially those who have migrated. The reunion will be more meaningful to them. As for him, he was far from his hometown. He wants to return to his hometown as well as meet old friends. Meanwhile, informants N and R assessed that the presence of their friends from abroad increased their enthusiasm for joining the reunion.

Care for Alumni (*Indak Lupo Jo Almamater*)

Do not forget that when the alma mater attends a reunion, the topics discussed are not only nostalgia about the school days. The alums also discussed school development and school progress. This means participating in reunion activities is a form of concern for alums with their alma mater. When attending the reunion, more than a handful of alums gives motivation to their younger siblings or juniors, especially those at the previous school. They talk about college motivation, college

majors, and work matters (Table 2). Through this reunion, alums can see the condition of their school. The more participants at the reunion, the more solid the fraternal relationship are, which signifies that they are proud to have been part of the alma mater.

Table 2. Answers to the Meaning of the West Sumatran Foreign Student Reunion

Not.	Means	Informant											
		N	AL	I	MISS	RR	TB	R	M N	HN	YES	Ali	
1.	Friendship	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
2.	<i>Indak Lupo jo Alma mater</i>	V	V					V	V				
3	<i>Give it up nan tasrak</i>	V		V	v				V				

Source: author's compilation 2019

The next discussion is the motive for joining the reunion for overseas students from West Sumatra in Pekanbaru. Here the author divides it into two categories: Because of Motives and For Motives. In Because of Motives, the author divides them into several more detailed categories, including 1). Happy to tell (*bacarito Lamak*) that one of the goals of attending the reunion was to meet friends. It is nice to tell stories to be part of a togetherness that has existed for a long time since school. The Minang term, happy to tell (*bacarito lamak*), is a sign of close and strong intimacy between each other. One of them is togetherness since school days and reunited. The meeting was decorated with nostalgic stories. Happy to tell is typical of the Minang brotherhood in meetings. When we meet at a reunion, most of the things we talk about are stories from the past. From prank stories during school, funny moments, and even love stories as a teenager. 2) Serious talk, based on the results of the author's research, the informants felt that attending the reunion refreshed their minds because they felt happy meeting friends; to fresh their minds. After being grouped, the three informants answered that the purpose of the reunion was to refresh. The result was that hanging out with friends can reduce stress due to the burden of life. 3) *Kepo* is a contemporary language which is an acronym for Knowing Every Certain Object. *Kepo* is often interpreted as a person's caring attitude towards friends, family or others. As for this caring attitude, someone will tend to find out or be curious about family or other people, and usually, these caring attitudes will lead to finding out or being curious about friends and can reduce stress due to the burden of life.

Based on the results of the author's interviews with informants, some replied that their purpose in attending the reunion was because they had a curiosity or interest in their former friend. It is natural to feel curious about the life of a friend who has not seen each other for a long time. Since friends we have not seen in a long time feel more "interesting" than friends we see often, we want to know the basics.

The next motive is For motive. The author also divides it into several categories, including 1) Providing more benefits, we will talk when we meet old friends until we lose track of time. They are told ranging from nostalgic stories from adolescence to stories about life today. Based on the results of the author's interviews with 11 informants, 4 answered the purpose of participating in reunion activities, mainly to exchange ideas or discuss with other friends. Those who attended the reunion were not only from one generation but sometimes from various generations and fields of work. From high-ranking officials, lecturers, and business people, to those who do not work. This, to them, is a moment to share experiences, ask for opinions or seek information to motivate yourself. In this motive, the author divides into two parts. Those are discussion motives and social motives. The motive for discussion is sharing stories, opinions, and experiences with others. According to the author's research, alums also aim for reunions and increasing relationships and business opportunities because they want to share stories, exchange opinions, and discuss with other alums. Furthermore, sharing in the sense of assisting in the form of material and financial, the author includes it in social motives. Their purpose for attending the reunion is to share with others. As a result of an interview with AL, he stated that his class collects zakat money every year and gives sacrificial cows to remote areas. Help each other to build a friend's business, and so on. 2) It is better to drink water while diving. The author labels drinking water while diving because various purposes are deliberately taken to do so while attending a reunion. It is undeniable that when we want to do something, we as humans want something we want to get or achieve after doing something. The goal is to improve business relations and promotions as well as the purpose of finding a mate. The author labels drinking water while diving because various purposes are deliberately carried out while attending the reunion. The goal is to improve business relations and promotions and find a mate (Marta et al., 2022).

It can be explained as follows based on the two motives above, namely because or because of the motive and for the motive (Figure 2). The results of further research that the writer will discuss are the discourse of identity. Talking about identity means talking about someone's personality. Humans live in a society with various kinds of personalities for each individual. Here we can see that each person's characteristics are different and unique. This is what distinguishes one person from another. Identity can be likened to an identification card that marks a person's presence. The identity reflects the person (Fernando, Sya, et al., 2019).

In this case, the author divides it into several categories, including 1) Appearance; physical appearance is the first thing seen when someone interacts with other people. Therefore it is not surprising that every individual is very concerned about his physical appearance. Appearance can describe the identity of the person. Sometimes appearances can be deceiving, in the sense that they do not match your

personality. Based on the interview results, the informant wanted to look attractive at the reunion. When attending the reunion, RR, MN, and MS wanted to look beautiful—looking beautiful here using the best clothes and makeup. MS even bought new clothes to wear at the reunion. They feel they must look their best because they only occasionally meet old friends. It never hurts to see more.

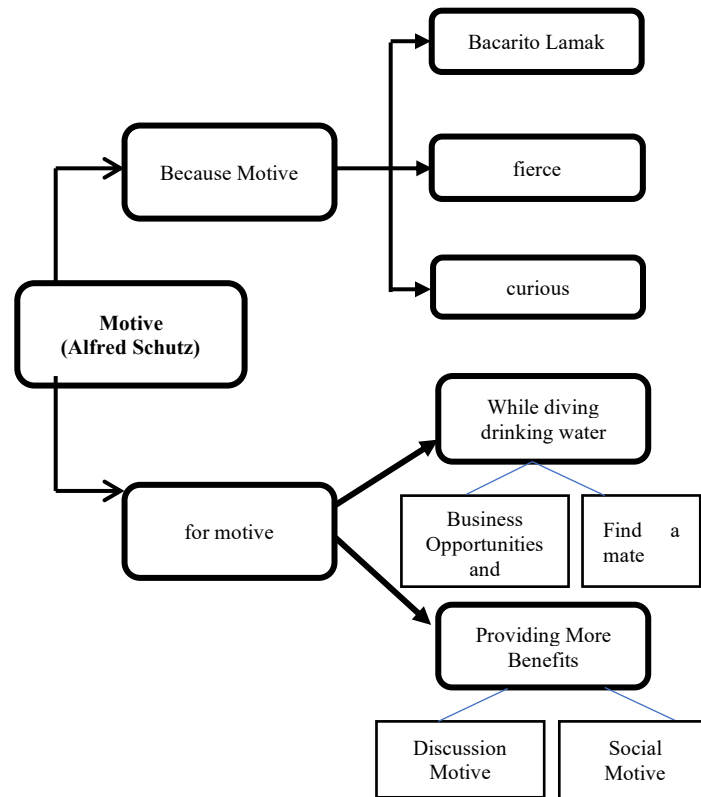


Figure 2. The Motives of Foreign Students Joining Reunions
 Source: Author's work 2019

In contrast to MS, RR wants to look beautiful by taking care of her before coming to the reunion. Unlike the case with female informants, male informants answered that for appearance problems, they only wanted to appear clean and tidy. 2) Self-actualisation; is the highest need in Maslow's hierarchy, in the form of the need to contribute to others/the environment and reach its full potential (Tripathi & Moakumla, 2018). AL stated that by attending the reunion, he could actualise himself by helping each other and solving social problems, which is satisfaction. According to Maslow, this need for self-actualisation does not require balance or homeostasis. Once obtained, it will always be felt. This need includes the desire to continue to realise your potential and "be what you can be." Here AL has the desire to help others which gives satisfaction. Likewise, RR said that by sharing his experiences abroad, he hopes to provide motivation for his friends and younger siblings. He considers it a form of self-actualisation for himself. 3) A reunion is not a show-off. Based on the rumours, many consider the reunion a show-off for successful alums. After the authors conducted research and observations, the issue was disputed. As of the eleven

research informants, ten answered incorrectly. They even regret it when many friends feel inferior or reluctant to attend the reunion. However, that is where we can share stories, experiences, and solutions. Also, like the results of the author's research, the alums who attended also had a goal to help others; in this paper, the author mentioned the title of social mission. Those who have been successful want to help their friends who are not as lucky as them. Other informants also felt this.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study, which describe the phenomenon of reunion among West Sumatran overseas students in Pekanbaru City, the following conclusions were obtained. Overseas students interpreted the reunion as a gathering place which essentially aims to maintain good relations with fellow human beings based on religious advice. Furthermore, the reunion is interpreted as a form of alums' concern for their alma mater, and the reunion is considered a medium to gather with friends who have not seen each other for a long time because they are separated by distance.

The motives of overseas students to attend the reunion vary. Starting from the desire to reminisce, tell stories, and get happiness from reminiscing as well as curiosity about the condition of friends who have not seen each other for a long time, they have other goals, namely to improve relations and promote business, to the act of matching them. In addition, these alumni aim to share with others by discussing and exchanging ideas and sharing in finance. In the discourse of identity, different results are obtained in terms of gender and occupation. Regarding gender, female sources pay more attention to appearance than male informants. In terms of work, male informants who do not work are not too concerned with appearance, unlike male sources, which are clean and tidy. Moreover, helping others and providing motivation and input to friends and juniors becomes self-actualisation oneself as well as negative assumptions about reunion activities were rejected outright from the results of the author's research. From the results obtained, ten of the eleven informant said that the reunion was not an exhibition for alums who had been successful. They said that this was a wrong assumption about the reunion.

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