

Chinese Indonesian Youth National Identity: Description and Construction

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Submission date: 17-Nov-2022 05:23PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 1956675129

File name: tional_identity_of_Chinese_Indonesian_Youth_-_English_Final.docx (39.07K)

Word count: 5269

Character count: 29403

Chinese Indonesian Youth National Identity: Description and Construction

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Abstract. This study shows the national identity of Chinese Indonesian youth and in ways, it was constructed. The significance of this research was to minimize the stigma that Chinese Indonesian youth do not love Indonesia and do not feel as a part of Indonesia because they are considered immigrants. While Chinese Indonesian youth is actually a generation born and raised in Indonesia, by parents who were also born and raised in Indonesia, however, there is still a negative view that they are not part of Indonesia. The approach used a qualitative method using thematic analysis to analyze the data. This study used 20 participants from Chinese Indonesian youth, aged 19 to 22 years old, who are studying at Petra Christian University, Surabaya, Indonesia.

The outcomes exhibited that all participants had a national identity; none of them had a transnational identity. Their national identity came mainly from their schools and parents. Meanwhile, social media did not bring good influence, indeed it made them embarrassed to see the behavior of Indonesian netizens on social media. Additionally, friends, and religious communities did not significantly affect their national identity. This study concludes the importance of socializing national insight in a way that is appropriate for generations of Chinese Indonesian youth. In addition, it is also necessary to socialize Chinese Indonesian who have a strong national identity in order to provide positive perspectives for non-Chinese ethnicities.

Keywords: Chinese Indonesian Youth, National identity, Identity Construction

INTRODUCTION

National identity in psychology can be defined as a feeling and recognition of 'we' and 'they' (Lee, 2012). This differentiating reference between who is considered as "we" or "they" will determine a person's national identity. If this distinction is ethnic, then the national identity will be less than the ethnic identity. Unfortunately, in countries that have multiple ethnic groups, ethnic identity and national identity may be in conflict. (Woods, Robert & Kaufman, 2011). Therefore, national identity must be shared by all people regardless of their ethnicity in order to form a unified society. Chinese Indonesians are often considered to lack a national identity because they are still assumed immigrants even though they were born in Indonesia and have never lived in China. Consequently, if there is a conflict with other ethnic groups, Chinese Indonesians are often accused of being like guests who do not respect their hosts.

Many conflicts involving ethnic Chinese Indonesians occur related to economic competition. Pelu & Purwanta (2020) conducted a study on the conflict in Solo between Javanese and Chinese Indonesians stating that most of the conflicts were caused by economic competition which resulted in social disillusionment and jealousy of the Javanese against Chinese Indonesians. Accordingly, one of the common stereotypes about Chinese Indonesians is that they just want to do business and make a profit, so they don't think of loving Indonesia. Furthermore, Chinese Indonesian were assumed to put their ethnic identities much higher than their national identity. Accordingly, Chinese Indonesian can come into conflict with other ethnic groups in Indonesia who are equally defending their ethnicity firmly. Lubis & Buana (2020) who examined the prejudice between the Chinese Indonesians and Muslims in Medan found that conflicts occur because each party still retains its ethnic identity and does not want to understand the culture of other ethnic groups.

This study shows the national identity of Chinese Indonesian youth and in ways, it was constructed. The significance of this research was to minimize the stigma that Chinese Indonesian youth do not love Indonesia and do not feel as a part of Indonesia because they are considered as immigrants. While Chinese Indonesian youth is actually a generation born and raised in Indonesia, from parents who were also born and raised in Indonesia. However, there is still a negative view that they are not part of Indonesia. Therefore, the study had two research questions: (1) What is the condition of the national identity of the Chinese Indonesian youth who are Christians and Catholics? (2) How was their national identity constructed?

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a qualitative research approach where a set of open questions was presented to all participants in face-to-face meetings, in oral and written form, all questions and answers were in Indonesian. The given questions consist of two sets: national identity and how to construct it. Initially, questions gave in the written form. However, the participants stated that they could not express their opinion at length if it was in written form, so they wanted the answer to be given orally. Questions were first sent to the participants for the study. Then according to the agreed schedule, they answered verbally via face-to-face. All answers given by participants were recorded as archives.

The approach used a qualitative method using thematic analysis to analyze the data. This study involved 20 Chinese Indonesian participants with religion Christian and Catholic, aged 19 to 22 years old, who were studying

at Petra Christian University, Surabaya, Indonesia. During high school, they attended Christian and Catholic-based schools. The participants could be categorized as gender-balanced consisting of 11 women and 9 men.

For data analysis, this research used thematic analysis, which was defined as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke 2006). This data analysis technique has been proven effective in identifying themes that emerge from qualitative data, such as interview transcripts emphasizing the individual understanding of experiences in real-life situations (Liu et al. 2019). Data analysis was also carried out in Indonesian to ensure that the original meaning of the data was preserved. The quotes cited in this article were translated into English after the data analysis was completed.

The first step in conducting the analysis was data immersion. All data was read and understood. Then, the data was coded to mark a particular topic, for instance, code: "parent" for each data related to the parent. The second step was code design. Every time a new topic was found, a new code would be added. This process continued until all data had been read and all topics found were coded. The third step was forming and refining the theme from steps 1 and 2. After all of the data was coded, each related code was included in one pattern/theme. This process would be continued until all code was included in a theme. In the process, one theme was able to be changed into two themes, or on the other hand, two themes were combined into one theme to make it easier to conclude. To maintain confidentiality, each data was assigned a number which was used as the key to access the data instead of based on the participant's name. Each participant was assigned a code numbered #1 to #20.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion of this study are divided into two parts: a description of national identity and the construction of national identity.

National Identity Description

The description of national identity is divided into three: being proud to be Indonesian, choosing to be an Indonesian citizen, and how to show pride in Indonesia.

Being Proud to be Indonesian

Both male and female participants have the same reasons for being proud and not proud of Indonesia. However, they had different answers when asked about their pride in Indonesia. All male participants showed pride in Indonesia even though they still felt that there were shortcomings that Indonesia had to fix. On the other hand, almost all female participants only felt neutral, meaning neither proud nor ashamed. This showed that the perspective on the situation in Indonesia was different from the point of view of male and female participants. Male participants saw more positive factors from Indonesia, while female participants saw a balance between positive and negative factors. Dimitrova-Grajzl, Eastwood & Grajz (2016) stated that national pride is one of the proofs that a person has a national identity. Using this reference, the majority of male participants have a strong national identity while the majority of female participants have a moderate level.

There were three aspects that made the participants proud: unity, natural and cultural richness, also developments in Indonesia. First, the unity that is still well maintained in Indonesia. The participants were proud of the well-maintained unity in Indonesia because this condition was considered extremely difficult to do. This achievement is considered great because Indonesia has many tribes and religions, but overall unity can still be maintained well. "I feel that the Indonesian people can be categorized as having high tolerance. Only a small number of Indonesian people want to impose their own will and are intolerant." (#1). Moreover, they also admired the kinship of the community as the glue to unite the nation. "I feel that Bhinneka Tunggal Ika can unite people even though they have many differences. In my opinion, Indonesia has a higher sense of family than countries like Singapore or America." (#6). This finding was in line with the results of research from Hartanti & Ardhana (2022) which showed the importance of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika in maintaining unity and preventing attacks on national identity.

Secondly, natural beauty and cultural richness are the great capital of Indonesia to become a great nation. Consequently, some participants considered this as the basis for admiration for Indonesia. (#2, #3, #4, #5, #18). This finding was in accordance with research's result from Risda & Ririn (2017) which stated that Indonesia's natural and cultural wealth is the basis of pride in Indonesia. Thirdly, the rapid development in Indonesia can create a sense of pride as an Indonesian. "History shows that Indonesia struggled to achieve independence. Now, Indonesia also needs to work hard to develop Indonesia. I see and hear a lot of construction is being done today. This makes me proud." (#7). Moreover, Indonesia has experienced rapid development in the economic field which has given rise to pride. "Indonesia now has many outstanding economic achievements compared to a few years ago." (#2). This result was in line with research by Evans & Kelley (2002) which stated that economic achievement was one of the basics to make a country proud.

On the other hand, the degrading factors were the different treatment that Chinese Indonesians received. The participants have been treated differently because of their ethnicity. Some participants responded casually when they received different views from other ethnicities. "When I'm in a public place where the majority is of another ethnicity, they usually look a little differently. I usually just ignore it, smile, and think they are my fans." (#1, #3). However, some feel disturbed but still managed to handle it. "I once was afraid when I came home from college that night I happened to pass in an alley where many people of other ethnicities were gathering. They looked at me with sharp eyes. They didn't do anything but just stare at me but I still felt annoyed with their behavior." (#4). Different treatment from the ethnic majority is experienced by many ethnic minorities, including Chinese Indonesians. However, Chinese Indonesian were able to usually handle it well (Azaria, 2022).

Choosing to be an Indonesian Citizen

All male participants wanted to become Indonesian citizens because they were proud of Indonesia. Surprisingly, almost all female participants were also happy to be considered Indonesian citizens even though their pride was only neutral so they were not too proud of Indonesia. All participants felt that they were part of Indonesia and had an Indonesian national identity. They were all proficient in Indonesian and understand the national flag, state symbols, and so on. Conversely, transnational identity means recognizing the multi-geographical nature of immigrants who are from one particular country but live out their lives in another (Esteban-Guitart et al. 2013). Transnational identity considers the country from which they come as more valuable than the country in which they live.

Unsurprisingly, all participants did not want to have a transnational identity. They all wanted to be considered Indonesian citizens, although for different reasons. The majority chose to become Indonesian citizens because they were born and raised in Indonesia. This condition was indeed a strong reason to become a citizen (Fatmawati, 2021). However, some actually focused not on citizens' selection but on the desire to live a quiet life. "I never thought about the issue of being a citizen. I just want to be able to live in peace in my nation right now, Indonesia." (#11, #16).

Furthermore, the reason for becoming an Indonesian citizen was the impossibility to become a Chinese citizen. "I went to other countries just for vacation so I never stay long in other countries including China. Accordingly, I also can't possibly be a Chinese citizen because I don't have any relation with this country. Therefore, I only know to be an Indonesian citizen. Hence, I learned to be a good Indonesian citizen." (#9, #19). In addition, the reason for choosing to become an Indonesian citizen was due to having no other choice. They might choose to become citizens of better countries than Indonesia if they get the opportunity. "I have no choice. If there is an option to become a citizen other than Indonesia, maybe I will consider leaving Indonesia. However, I will not be a Chinese citizen. I might become a citizen in Europe or America." (#20).

One participant preferred to be Chinese Indonesian because he still wants to maintain his ethnicity but not as a Chinese citizen. "I wanted to be an Indonesian citizen, but I did not want to lose my ethnicity, Chinese. If possible, I want to be considered as Chinese Indonesian." (#10). Even though he wanted to become Chinese Indonesian, this participant still chose to become an Indonesian citizen. This result was in line with the research conducted by Suryani et al. (2019) who examined Chinese Indonesian Students in Jakarta and stated that national identity was stronger than ethnic identities among young people. The fact that all participants chose to become Indonesian citizens was in line with research from Evans (1988) which stated that children born in a country or migrating as children were easier to choose citizenship in the country where they live than those who migrate as adults.

Showing Pride in Indonesia

To show their pride, the participants did it in four ways: maintaining the image, increasing the sense of belonging to Indonesia, providing support, and having the right response.

First, pride in the country could be shown by maintaining the image of Indonesia. For instance, by maintaining a personal image by having a good attitude and manner. "When I was in elementary and junior high school, I went to a small town where I was an ethnic minority. However, my Chinese Indonesian friends and I tried to maintain our attitude and manners. We respected teachers and elders. As a result, we were more trusted by the teachers." (#2). They realized that the focus of many people was on them so if they made a small mistake, it would make it bigger (Azaria, 2022). Therefore, they always try to maintain their image. Another way was to maintain a personal image on social media which would have a direct impact on Indonesia's image. "I feel I have to maintain my own image wherever I am, including on social media. If I write inappropriate comments, especially in Indonesian, it will damage the image of Indonesians so that they are considered a toxic society." (#1).

Second, pride for the country could be shown by increasing the sense of belonging to Indonesia. This sense of belonging might be started from small steps such as taking care of the environment itself. "A practical form of showing pride is protecting our environment. The simplest example is throwing trash in its place." (#3). Another

form was to maintain the integrity of the Indonesian state. "I will defend Indonesia if anyone spreads false news about Indonesia" (#9). Maintaining the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) as well as maintaining the unity and integrity of the nation is the responsibility of all Indonesian people (Fatmawati, 2021).

Third, providing support was a form of showing pride in Indonesia. The clearest support was given during sporting events where teams from Indonesia compete, no matter who was competing in any event regardless of ethnicity and religion. "I always support Indonesia. The sports I usually see are badminton, football, and basketball" (#4). Even so, they would still be very proud when the Indonesian team won. "I support Indonesia in the e-sport tournament. At that time Indonesia became the world champion so I felt very proud" (#6). This finding was in line with research conducted by Kelley (2002) which stated that achievement in sports was one of the bases for making a country proud.

Fourth, they were still proud of Indonesia even though they were misunderstood by many people. The majority of ethnic sometimes doubt Chinese Indonesian love for Indonesia so that it has great potential to make them hurt. Fortunately, the participants were well prepared to receive this kind of treatment.

"Everyone might have different perceptions. Hence, a negative view of Chinese Indonesian that has been trusted by the public would be very difficult to change. However, I don't care about it. I still show that I love and am proud to be Indonesian." (#3).

"I don't care about the negative perception. People who think Chinese Indonesians don't love Indonesia don't necessarily love Indonesia either. So, I don't want to think about that wrong assumption." (#6).

All participants seemed relatively ready to accept negative views directed at them related to their love for Indonesia to minimize the negative impact (Azaria, 2022).

The Construction of National Identity

National identity could be influenced by five aspects: school, parents, social media, friends, and religious community.

School

Schools became an important place in the construction of National identity because parents tended to submit to the school the process of constructing their children's national identity (Azaria 2022). Schools might influence the construction of national identity in three ways: classroom lessons, flag ceremonies, and respect for local culture in extracurricular activities. First, lessons from class could help the process of improving national identity. "I got my national identity through Civics lessons and character education." (#1, #2). Therefore, it is important to include national identity material in the curriculum. One of the subjects that could be given national identity material was English (Masita 2021, Parlindungan, Rifai & Safriani 2018).

Second, the flag ceremony could be used to increase national identity. The participants took part in the flag ceremony from elementary to high school. They felt having a great nation which was obtained from the sacrifices of the heroes. "I take part in the flag ceremony once a month and on national days, such as Heroes Day, Independence Day, and so on. At least, I feel that I have a hero who contributed to the independence of this country" (#2, #9). The flag ceremony can indeed be used to improve national identity, such as the research conducted by Finell (2019) in Finland and Chen, Panyu, Shang & Li (2020) in China.

Third, increasing respect for local cultures might increase national identity. Therefore, national identity would increase when more people participated in preserving the local cultures around them (Liu & Alley 2019). One way to improve local cultures is to require students to wear batik as a reminder of the richness of Indonesian culture. "When I was in elementary school through high school, I was asked to wear batik once a week. This was good for increasing awareness of being Indonesian. Moreover, I really loved wearing various batik patterns and kebaya" (#12).

Moreover, schools could participate in preserving traditional arts by placing them in extracurricular programs. "I studied at a Catholic school in middle and high school. Every Friday, my school held a Gamelan class which was mandatory for all students. Each child would hold one musical instrument so all students had to participate. My school had a total of 35 gamelan" (#13). "When I was in elementary school, my school held one extracurricular class to learn traditional musical instruments such as gongs, kentongan, gamelan, and so on. Many Chinese Indonesians took this class even though it was not mandatory" (#15). Additionally, schools could organize special events to develop local culture. "When I was in high school, my friends were from various ethnic groups and came from many cities. Once a year, the school holds an art performance as well as opens booths based on the

students' hometowns to showcase the uniqueness of their area. This event was designed for the public so that the public could buy the typical goods of each city and learn about diversity" (#18)

Parents

Some parents instilled national identity in their children in various ways. First, the parents emphasized the importance of developing Indonesia. "My Dad and mom suggested to me the importance of developing Indonesia after I graduated from college. Even though I will continue my studies abroad, I must still return to Indonesia" (#12). Second, the parents provided facilities for their children to learn traditional arts. "My parents encouraged my sister and I to learn traditional dance. I took a course as well as extracurricular traditional dance at school" (#13). Third, the parents took their children to visit historical places. "My parents took me to see tourist attractions that have Indonesian historical value, such as Taman Sari and Borobudur Temple in Yogyakarta" (#14).

Fourth, parents introduced and tried to be fond of traditional cuisine. "My parents taught me national identity by encouraging me to like all traditional Indonesian dishes. My parents like traditional food so my mom often cooks traditional food at home. We also often eat traditional Indonesian dishes. In my opinion, Indonesian cuisine is the best in the world" (#18). Five, parents set an example in providing support to Indonesian sports teams. Parents invited them to watch sports matches together while instilling pride in Indonesia, especially if they won the game (#2, #3, #5, #14, #19). Six, parents emphasized the importance of associating with different ethnicities and religions. "Frankly speaking, I was encouraged to continue my studies in Surabaya because my mom and dad wanted me to be friends and associate with many ethnicities and religions. My hometown is too small so the ethnicity is almost uniform" (#10).

Although much has been done, parents were still considered to have little influence on the national identity of their children (Azaria 2022). The results were in line with the study by Supratiknya (2021) who stated that the majority of participants acknowledged the parents and the extended family as their source of identity, but seemed to fail as the main contributor to the formation of their children's national identity.

Social Media

Social media should be a good tool to help the process of constructing a national identity for young people. Chen, Panyu, Shang & Li (2020) stated that young people prefer to form a national identity from the media than others. Unfortunately, social media has not been taken seriously to help develop Indonesia's national identity. The participants saw social media as a reference because social media could not be separated from their lives. Unfortunately, the majority of participants felt that social media did not have a positive impact on national identity construction because they did not find the greatness of Indonesia on social media. "I don't find any news that makes Indonesia proud. Maybe I should explore more about Indonesia. So far, those who have been exposed are Indonesian netizens who are outrageous. In fact, Indonesia is currently good and great, but I don't get any news about this." (#16).

In fact, the behavior of Indonesian netizens was a degrading aspect of pride in Indonesia. These were some negative opinions about the behavior of Indonesian netizens.

"Indonesian seem to only be able to think shortly or indeed tend not to think before they act. They talk arbitrarily on social media. As a consequence, Indonesia has been awarded as the most toxic netizen" (#2)

"Indonesian are easily provoked. If there is viral news, they never check the truth first. They immediately participated in sharing the news even though it was not necessarily true" (#5, #6)

"Indonesian netizens are too loud. If something went wrong, it was immediately highlighted and made viral" (#12).

"I feel embarrassed by netizens' comments that are not clear and even go viral in other countries" (#14, #17).

Actually, not all Indonesian netizens gave a lot of negative comments, however, social media users tended to pay more attention to the negative. Segesten, Bosetta, Holberg & Niehorster (2022) stated that negative news on Facebook would affect users more. Even though the research was done for Facebook, the behavior looked no different on other social media platforms. Therefore, the negative comments seemed to affect the participants more than the positive comments. Accordingly, social media should be optimized as a tool to build a National identity for young people. (Gündüz 2017). Especially for Chinese Indonesian, there needs to be an expose about Chinese Indonesian who have a strong national identity and are proven to be fighting for Indonesia. "The government should be open to Chinese Indonesian and present nationalist figures from this ethnicity" (#1, #2).

Friends and Religious Community

Friends played an important role in national identity construction (Umana-Taylor, Kornienko, McDermott & Motti 2020). However, the participants felt that the influence of their friends was not significant during the process of constructing national identity. On the other hand, currently, they have relatively identical friends in terms of national identity. Consequently, the majority of male participants have many friends who were also proud of Indonesia while the majority of female participants have neutral friends. Furthermore, religious communities also influenced national identity construction (Zhang, et al, 2021). The religious community of some participants did have several events related to Indonesia such as singing folk songs and traditional dances at church (#11), and also holding prayers for Indonesia every week (#12).

Additionally, some churches that have activities outside of worship to make the congregation mingle with other ethnicities and religions. "Youths in my church have activities to familiarize themselves with the local communities. The last program was the Surabaya tour riding together to Surabaya. This activity allowed us to mingle with people of different ethnicities and religions." (#10). Although some have held activities with Indonesian nuances, this study found that the influence of the religious community was not significant on national identity construction.

CONCLUSION

The outcomes exhibited that all participants had a national identity; none of them had a transnational identity. Their national identity came mainly from their schools and parents. Meanwhile, social media did not bring good influence, indeed it made them embarrassed to see the behavior of Indonesian netizens on social media. Additionally, friends and religious communities did not significantly affect their national identity.

This study concludes the importance of socializing national insight in a way that is appropriate for generations of Chinese Indonesian youth. In addition, it is also necessary to socialize Chinese Indonesian who have a strong national identity in order to provide positive perspectives for non-Chinese ethnicities. However, this study did not explore the causes of all of the above aspects, so further researches are needed. This research can be continued by taking participants from different ethnicities, different age ranges, different backgrounds, and in different cities.

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