

Chinese Society's Views on the Importance of Higher Education as an Identity

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ABSTRACT

In Indonesia, Chinese descendants are perceived as facing less academic pressure in pursuing higher education. Historically, family enterprises have been given higher priority than formal schooling due to their ability to develop wealth at a faster pace. Gradually, social and cultural changes have caused Chinese households to divert their attention away from education. This phenomenon is seen in the growing number of intellectuals and professionals of Chinese origin in diverse domains. Higher education has emerged as a crucial element in Chinese family culture, with parents attaching great significance to education for the future possibilities of their children. This inclination leads to the establishment of a favorable identity and reputation for families of Chinese ancestry, who regard education as a crucial element in attaining success. This article seeks to evaluate the Chinese family culture surrounding higher education and explore the relationship between identity and culture, specifically among the significant population of Chinese origin students studying at universities in Jakarta. Examination through the lens of either group identification theory or cultural identity theory, using snowball sampling methodologies. This study demonstrates that Chinese descendants in Jakarta prioritize higher education as a crucial factor in directing their children towards achieving success. This is seen in the ingrained tendency to prioritize education and exert utmost effort, particularly in assuring children's success in the fiercely competitive realm of employment. This research aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the significance of education in shaping the cultural identity and heritage of Chinese people in Jakarta.

ABSTRAK

Di Indonesia, keturunan Tionghoa di satu sisi dipandang tidak terlalu menekankan pendidikan tinggi. Secara tradisional, mereka memprioritaskan bisnis keluarga dibandingkan sekolah formal karena potensi perusahaan menghasilkan kekayaan yang lebih cepat. Seiring berjalannya waktu, perkembangan sosial dan budaya telah mengalihkan fokus rumah tangga Tionghoa dari sekolah. Dinamika ini terlihat dari meningkatnya populasi intelektual dan profesional keturunan Tionghoa di berbagai bidang. Pendidikan tinggi telah menjadi komponen penting dalam budaya keluarga Tionghoa, karena orang tua menempatkan prioritas tinggi pada pendidikan untuk prospek masa depan anak-anak mereka. Kecenderungan ini berkontribusi pada terbentuknya identitas dan reputasi positif bagi keluarga keturunan Tionghoa, yang menganggap pendidikan sebagai faktor terpenting dalam mencapai kesuksesan. Menyadari banyaknya mahasiswa keturunan Tionghoa yang bersekolah di perguruan tinggi di Jakarta, artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis budaya keluarga Tionghoa terkait pendidikan tinggi serta memahami identitas terkait budaya. Dengan mengandalkan teknik *snowball sampling*, penulis menguraikan fenomena tersebut dari sudut

	<p>pandang Teori Identitas Kelompok atau Teori Identitas Budaya. Penelitian deskriptif ini menunjukkan bahwa keturunan Tionghoa di Jakarta menjadikan pendidikan tinggi sebagai elemen kunci bagi orang tua dalam membimbing anak menuju kesuksesan. Hal ini tercermin dari kebiasaan turun temurun yang mengutamakan pendidikan dan memberikan upaya maksimal, terutama menjamin keberhasilan anak dalam dunia kerja yang kompetitif. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan wawasan yang mendalam tentang pentingnya pendidikan dalam budaya identitas dan keturunan Tionghoa di Jakarta.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

In the 19th century the Dutch East Indies government did not care about the education of Chinese children. They began to know about education when the basic needs (clothing, food, and shelter) are fulfilled (Isnaeni, 2012). Then under the New Order era in Indonesia, those with Chinese ancestry did not place a great emphasis on pursuing higher education. Traditionally, they prioritized family businesses over formal schooling due to the faster wealth generation potential of enterprises. One of the cases refers to the value in previous Chinese descent. They emphasized the family entrepreneurship education model. Before, this model placed the earliest since it became a basic measure of success or failure in the Chinese family (Nugraha, 2015). Meanwhile, contrast to the cases, as one of the ethnic groups in Indonesia, Chinese Indonesians groups often face discrimination from other ethnic groups in Indonesia. Other reality shows the Chinese community of *Kampung Kapitan* assumed their villages is an ancestral heritage that must be protected not only their building but also their cultures too (Pratiwi, 2016). On the other side, another phenomenon also stresses the unique social system that has supported the Chinese ancestry to blend in with the population in Manado. With great capital, Confucian teachings, native Chinese and crossbreed Chinese have played an important role as economic drivers in Manado. It is noted that ethnic Chinese who work as traders/ business or plunge in politics and government (Rasyid, 2021).

Over time, social and cultural developments have shifted the focus of Chinese households away from schools. This dynamic is seen in the growing population of Chinese-descendant intellectuals and professionals across several fields. Higher education has become an essential component of Chinese family culture, since parents place a high priority on education for the future prospects of their children. This inclination has contributed to the formation of a positive identity and reputation for families of Chinese descent, who regard education as the paramount factor for achieving success. The cultural diversity in Jakarta also impacts the cultural practices of Chinese families that place a high priority on education. Higher education is essential for cultivating exceptional individuals who possess the skills and abilities to thrive in an increasingly competitive global economy. This study will focus on examining the identity and favorable perception of Chinese ancestry families in relation to higher education.

Moreover, the Chinese population in Jakarta province has shifted their primary attention towards higher education. The research in question specifically examines families of Chinese descent, with a particular emphasis on parents whose children are now enrolled in or have finished higher education. The purpose of this delimitation is to gain a more comprehensive comprehension of how cultural communication inside Chinese households impacts the significance of higher education, as well as how this process molds cultural identity. The objective of this study is to comprehend the perspectives of the Chinese community regarding the significance of higher education within the context of their culture, specifically in terms of providing higher education opportunities for their children. Additionally, the study aims to assess the level of importance placed on higher education by families of Chinese descent in Jakarta and to identify the factors that contribute to the cultural identity surrounding the value of higher education within these families.

The theoretical value of this research is to gain a comprehensive image of the culture that stems from the significance of education in Chinese families residing in Jakarta. Additionally, it aims to delineate the self-identity that arises from the relevance of education within this particular family context. Culture is transmitted

intergenerationally and undergoes evolutionary changes over time. This is achieved through the acquisition of knowledge and is a vital element of human existence as a member of a community. Meanwhile, in general, the Indonesian Chinese ethnicity appears to have unity as reflected in Chinese cultural philosophy. However, behind this unity there are differences which often make members show these differences through representations of cultural identity. These differences in cultural identity are influenced by dialect, region of residence, and clan. The ethnic cultural identity of Chinese Indonesians is also changing nowadays (Christian, 2017).

Culture encompasses a wide range of fundamental beliefs, lifestyles, and human behaviors that are systematically transmitted from one generation to another, with the aim of establishing a way of life that is well-suited to their environment. Culture encompasses the collective identity and perception of a group, and it is a paradoxical form of shared knowledge that shapes everyday existence. The functions of culture encompass the establishment of group members' identity, the promotion of stability within the social system, the cultivation of commitment that surpasses personal interests, and the formation and guidance of attitudes and behaviors influenced by cultural systems. Culture possesses dynamic, universal, selective, ethnocentric, and adaptive characteristics that delineate change, distinctiveness, constraints, advantages, and flexibility.

Hall (1990), posits that cultural identity is rooted in the cultural practices and historical experiences of previous generations, but it undergoes a continuous and dynamic transformation across time. Identity is perceived as a construct that is shaped by social and cultural factors, formed via interactions with others, and influenced by elements such as race, ethnicity, gender, class, and religion. Hall (1990) categorizes identity into three distinct groups: the enlightened subject, the sociological subject, and the postmodern subject. Cultural identification can be understood via two lenses: the first is identity as being, which pertains to an individual's common historical and genealogical heritage, and the second is identity as becoming, which pertains to the process of creating a new society based on cultural similarities. The older generation in Chinese society perceives identity as a crucial aspect that needs to be upheld in order to safeguard cultural values and traditions. Conversely, the younger generation views identity as more susceptible to influence from diverse nations. In addition to that, cultural formation variables encompass both external influences, such as physical characteristics, and internal elements, such as feelings of intimacy among individuals, which indirectly shape identity.

Next to Hidayah and Huriat (in Ndraha et al., 2021), self-identity is defined as an individual's perception of oneself and the level of self-esteem they possess, which includes recognizing their distinctiveness from others. Santoso (in Marzuki, 2021) posited that an individual or group's identity may be discerned by their speech, therefore highlighting language as not only a medium of communication but also a means of identifying individuals or groups. In this context, identity is evaluated based on one's demeanor, mannerisms, and conduct, which subsequently play a significant role in shaping both collective and individual identity. Also emphasized by Gardiner (in Azhar et al., 2021), that identity refers to an individual's self-perception as a distinct and unique person, encompassing their actions, convictions, and outlooks. In addition to personal or individual identity, identification also encompasses the collective identity of a group.

At last, group identity serves as the foundation or framework for a group's behavior. If the group becomes aware that its habits have evolved into a distinctive characteristic, this will further distinguish their identity from other groups. Thus, in general, culture would not exist without society (humans) and there would not be a single human group, how isolated and simple would the lives of those who do not have culture be. All groups of society (humans) must have culture because humans are cultural subjects. Studying the elements contained in a culture is very important for understanding human culture (Sumarto, 2019).

Finally, education is a human effort to influence other people both individually and in groups so that they can achieve their hopes and aspirations in life. Through education, individuals can gain knowledge and skills from both formal and informal education to become quality individuals. In Indonesia, education is an important part in realizing national ideals, especially in making the nation's life intelligent with quality education and without discrimination. Based on Law No. 20 (2003)(Kemdikbud, 2004), education is carried out democratically, fairly, and respects human rights and cultural and religious values. The government's seriousness towards education is reflected in various policies and the formation of special ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. Education is also one of the realizations of the target of the "Golden Indonesia" generation in achieving extraordinary achievements since achieving independence. This aims to prepare superior and quality human resources to compete both at local and global levels in various sectors of life.

METHOD

This article stands for sociocultural tradition. Reality is a reproduction of structural relationships in every rule and role in society. Reality is formed through a construction process which is actually the reproduction of the social order itself through human interaction (Nugroho, 2019). Besides that, the employed research methodology is qualitative in nature. The research employed a qualitative methodology, focusing on the Chinese ethnic cultural group in Jakarta as the research subjects. Direct observations were conducted to gather firsthand experiences and generate qualitative data.

This study employed a descriptive approach and included three Chinese families residing in Jakarta as research participants. The eligibility requirements for research participants include having offspring or children, having children who are currently enrolled in or have completed their schooling, being a resident of Jakarta, and belonging to the Chinese ethnic group. The snowball sampling technique will be employed to gather samples due to the challenge of locating or directly accessing research subjects. This method entails leveraging pre-existing networks to suggest research participants who meet the specified requirements. The research objective is to examine the significance of children's education among the Chinese ethnic minority in Jakarta and its impact on cultural identity formation. The researchers will utilize data gathering methods such as observation, interviews, and documentation to acquire the necessary data. Analysis includes the processes of collecting, reducing, and verifying data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Chinese families residing in Jakarta prioritize education as a fundamental aspect of preserving their cultural heritage. The notion of culture, seen as a set of ideas or a system of ideas, is evident in their belief that education serves not just as a means of learning knowledge, but also as a method of structuring, regulating, and guiding familial acts, behaviors, and etiquette. The research subjects, including Mrs. Merry's family, Mr. Hendra's family, Mrs. Angelica's family, and Mr. Ricky's family, highlighted the significance of education in their children's lives. They consider education to be vital, regarding it as a fundamental basis for attaining future accomplishments. Higher education is often regarded as essential, aligning with the belief that education serves as the pathway to attaining success in the professional realm. The cultural beliefs inherited from preceding generations significantly influence the perspectives and actions of these households about schooling. The interviewees' perspectives highlight the integral role of higher education in shaping their cultural identity as Chinese individuals residing in Jakarta. The families' commitment to supporting higher education, together with their strong work ethic and unwavering dedication to continual learning, serve as the bedrock for their pursuit of higher education for their children.

Their statements are delineated as follows:

“Yes, for individuals of Chinese heritage, higher education holds great significance since it serves as a pathway to achieving prosperity. Having a strong educational foundation increases the likelihood of finding employment, and it also provides the opportunity to establish one's own business.” (interview with Mrs. Merry)

“As a parent, I view higher education as an essential requirement for my child's schooling. The question is: what? Indeed, it is imperative that my child is afforded the chance to thrive, cultivate a global perspective, and benefit from the academic and social networks they have established via their schooling and social interactions thus far.” (interview with Mrs. Angelina)

“From my perspective, higher education plays a crucial role in shaping the future of children, enabling them to make informed decisions that align with their best interests in the long run.” (interview with Mr. Hendra)

“The purpose of education is to facilitate the smooth functioning of current affairs and to impart essential knowledge that is necessary for life. Additionally, education provides us with opportunities for personal growth. In the future, we shall achieve prosperity and become individuals who are well educated and esteemed. That is our ultimate goal.” (interview with Mr. Ricky)

Higher education is perceived not only as a vehicle for learning knowledge and building connections, but also as a method to attain future prosperity.

Moreover, the informants underscore the Chinese community's identity in Jakarta by highlighting the enduring customs and principles that have been transmitted across successive generations. Their community stands apart from other groups because of its distinctive habits, particularly those that emphasize the significance of advanced education. Chinese families residing in Jakarta consider higher education to be an essential component of their identity, firmly believing that it is the key to achieving success. According to informant 1 and informant 3, as mentioned below:

"It is crucial for my child to acquire accurate knowledge in their areas of interest and receive a formal education to gain a broader understanding and a fresh perspective." (interview with Mrs. Merry)

"I believe that the perspectives on education are largely similar; indeed, education provides children with an enhanced opportunity to accomplish their goals and develop a more expansive mindset." (interview with Mr. Hendra)

The Chinese group's identity is characterized by the distinctions in behavior and beliefs towards education that are passed down from parents. This group identifies themselves as individuals who highly prioritize higher education for their children, as seen by the significant emphasis on education conveyed via research sources. In addition, higher education is regarded as a duty, even in the face of evolving times and modernization. This demonstrates the enduring strength and integration of Chinese cultural values, particularly in regard to education, inside the group identity of the Chinese community in Jakarta. The Chinese population in Jakarta continually demonstrates their identity via their unwavering dedication and emphasis on higher education as a fundamental pillar for achieving future accomplishments.

However, within the cultural identity of the Chinese community in Jakarta, ancestral culture significantly influences perspectives and attitudes towards schooling. Higher education is widely seen as an essential requirement that has been transmitted from previous generations, and this is evident in the behaviors and perspectives of Chinese families today. The Chinese group's strong commitment to higher education is seen in their determination to ensure that their children receive the greatest degree of education available. This phenomenon is affected not just by the necessity for skilled personnel to confront competitiveness in the era of globalization, but also by cultural values passed down from previous generations.

The Chinese minority in Jakarta, with a strong sense of cultural identity, is dedicated to transmitting it to future generations, as evidenced by their understanding of the notion of "enlightened subjects." They recognize that higher education is a crucial component of their cultural identity, which values education. This is evident in their actions and behavioral tendencies when it comes to educating their children. From the viewpoint of an enlightened individual, higher education is seen as both a personal imperative and a cultural obligation passed down from past generations. The Chinese community in Jakarta deems it crucial to ensure their children receive the most advanced degree of education as a means of upholding their cultural values.

The subjects' replies indicate that they believe their parents influenced their decision to seek higher education, and they are committed to continuing this legacy with their own children. They acknowledge that, in an era characterized by growing globalization and intense competition, higher education is crucial for acquiring high-quality human resources. In addition, enlightened individuals also reported that their ideas aligned with those of other members of Chinese society, who collectively regarded higher education as a paramount factor in shaping their cultural identity. This demonstrates the consistency and cohesion in their perspectives regarding the significance of education within the Chinese cultural framework. Therefore, the enlightened individual demonstrates the consciousness and dedication of the Chinese community in Jakarta to preserve and perpetuate their cultural heritage through advanced education, while also acknowledging the significance of ancestral practices in this endeavor.

Meanwhile, according to the "sociological subject," individuals belonging to the Chinese cultural group in Jakarta are conscious and recognize their affiliation with that cultural group. They comprehend that their cultural identity is shaped by an inherited system and is a component of the cultural legacy transmitted by

preceding generations. From a sociological standpoint, they comprehend the impact of cultural values, social norms, and social interactions on the development of individual and collective cultural identities within society.

The informants, Mrs. Angel and Mr. Hendra, recognized the significance of higher education in Chinese group culture as sociological subjects. They acknowledge that higher education has become an essential component of their cultural identity, inherited from earlier generations. Providing higher education to their children is considered a duty that must be fulfilled as a member of that ethnic group. Chinese cultural values, such as reverence for elders and perseverance in acquiring knowledge, significantly influence the family's perspective on education. Chinese individuals prioritize the cultivation of intelligence, honesty, and perseverance through higher education, aligning with their cultural values. Therefore, the sociological participants in this study articulate their comprehension and consciousness of belonging to the Chinese cultural collective, as well as acknowledging the influence of this culture in shaping personal and collective identities within society. It demonstrates the application of a sociological methodology to comprehend the development of cultural identity within a social framework, considering the impact of norms, values, and social interactions on this process.

Discussion

The analysis of the research findings reveals a significant correlation between the notion of group identification or cultural identity and the data obtained from the interview and observation procedures. This theory encompasses the notions of the enlightened subject, sociological subject, postmodern subject, identity as being, and identity as becoming, all of which are intricately linked to research discoveries. The respondent experienced a sense of enlightenment due to the cultural values and advanced education system prevalent in Chinese society. They acknowledge that seeking admission to higher education is a means of embodying and perpetuating collective values that have been transmitted across successive generations. Their perspectives on the significance of higher education originate from a recognition of Chinese familial identity that places education as a primary means to achieve success. They conform to social norms and structures prevalent in their cultural community.

Interviewees perceived higher education as a pathway that provides broader prospects for their children to reach their utmost potential as individuals of high caliber. They perceive higher education as a method of cultivating a strong and high-caliber sense of self in contemporary society. The interviewees perceived a strong connection between their identity and a collective perspective on higher education as a pathway to realizing their fullest potential and showcasing their unique talents. They perceive higher education as a means to achieve personal growth and increased achievement. Interviewees perceived higher education as a pathway for their children to grow into more accomplished and prosperous people, who can make a beneficial impact on society. They perceive higher education as a continuous and ongoing evolutionary process that spans beyond one's entire lifespan. This investigation demonstrates that group identification theory provides insight into the interconnectedness of cultural values, family identity, and higher education in shaping individual identity within the Chinese community in Jakarta. This theory offers a robust framework for comprehending the evolution of cultural identity and the significance of higher education in attaining success amidst social and economic transformations.

Moreover, cultural identity can be comprehended as a collective entity that is mutually shared or as a fundamental manifestation of an individual that is present among numerous individuals who possess a shared history and ancestral heritage. The concept of "identity as being" highlights that an individual's cultural identity encompasses more than just outward characteristics like language, customs, or apparent cultural symbols. It also encompasses the fundamental essence and content of the person's existence. It represents an individual's understanding and interpretation of the world based on their cultural viewpoint. According to all sources, providing their children with higher education was a priority and explicit instruction from their parents. They uphold this culture by considering not just the commonly understood aspects of language, tradition, and religion, but also by considering inherited customs and the distinctiveness and variety of individuals within their cultural system. This implies a more comprehensive and intricate comprehension of cultural identity, one that surpasses assessments or generalizations made just on the basis of outward, observable characteristics. Cultural identity is influenced by an individual's unique experiences, values, beliefs, feelings, and perceptions, which become an integral part of their identity.

Ultimately, cultural identity is perceived as an ongoing process of development ("identity as becoming"), in which individuals undergo transformation and maturation throughout their lifetimes. An individual's cultural identity is not immutable or inert, but rather emerges from intricate interplays between

individuals and their social and cultural milieu. The transmission of Chinese cultural values, such as diligence, perseverance, and reverence for the elderly, over successive generations has had a significant role in shaping the choice to prioritize the provision of higher education for their offspring. The respondents unanimously concurred that higher education is vital and a pivotal component of Chinese cultural identity. They recognized that these cultural values impacted their family's perspectives on education, emphasizing achievement, expanding knowledge, and adjusting to evolving circumstances. The continuous development of this cultural identity illustrates the ambition to achieve greater success and adjust to shifting circumstances. The speakers are dedicated to ensuring that the succeeding generation attains a superior education compared to the preceding generation, with the expectation that they will accomplish higher levels of achievement.

Hence, the aforementioned elucidations on various manifestations of cultural identity can be succinctly condensed into Table 1.

Table 1. Forms of Cultural Identity

Informants	Cultural group	Enlightened subject	Cultural identity as being	Identity as becoming
1	√	√	√	√
2	√	√	√	√
3	√	√	√	√
4	√	√	√	√

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significance of tertiary education in shaping the cultural identity of the Chinese population residing in Jakarta. Chinese parents saw higher education as a means to equip their children for a progressively competitive global industry. Higher education is regarded as an inherent duty that has become a fundamental aspect of the customs and principles of Chinese families in Jakarta. The cultural identity shaped by the practice of offering higher education is not fixed but rather evolves in response to changing circumstances. While cultural foundations remain intact, the expression and manifestation of this identity can adapt to meet the requirements of the surroundings.

The research findings emphasize that the Chinese minority in Jakarta views higher education as a crucial element in preserving their cultural identity. This further affirms that higher education is not only a top priority but also a notable distinguishing characteristic within the Chinese population in Jakarta. In addition, it demonstrates a noticeable shift in the Chinese community in Jakarta, with a growing emphasis on the significance of higher education in response to the demands and transformations in the global landscape.

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