

EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION, ATTRIBUTIONS, AND MOTIVATIONAL GOALS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF 5 SUB-ETHNICITIES IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

The present study compares five major sub-ethnicities in Indonesia: Java, Betawi, Sunda, Batak, and Minang on educational aspiration, attributions, and motivational goals. A total of 726 high school students participated in this study. Educational aspiration has three dimensions: ambition ($\alpha = .655$), enjoyment of school life ($\alpha = .559$), and importance of school to the future ($\alpha = .845$). Attributions had three dimensions: locus of control-personal control ($\alpha = .772$), stability ($\alpha = .771$), and external control ($\alpha = .707$). The motivational goals had three dimensions: learning goals ($\alpha = .907$), performance approach goal ($\alpha = .631$), and performance avoidance goals ($\alpha = .541$). There were found statistically significant differences ($p < .01$) based on ethnicity on ambition, $F(4, 723) = 11.31$, and importance of school, $F(4, 723) = 9.88$, dimensions from the educational aspiration; on all the attribution dimensions: locus of control-personal control, $F(4, 723) = 9.43$; stability, $F(4, 723) = 4.55$; and external control, $F(4, 723) = 10.26$, and also on the three dimensions of motivational goals: learning goals, $F(4, 723) = 6.28$; performance approach goals $F(4, 723) = 5.37$; and performance avoidance goals $F(4, 723) = 3.76$.

Keywords: Culture, ethnicity, educational aspiration, attributions, and motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as the fourth most populated country in the world, has a low educational engagement especially when it comes to higher educational level. The data shows that the enrollment for Junior High School as 67.98% and decreasing to 47.81% when it comes to High school enrollment, and significantly lower to just 11.99% for university level (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2013). There are many factors that could be considered to contribute to this fact. One of them would be that this decrease might be due to beliefs of the importance of education, and thus the educational aspiration one has. One's educational aspiration is highly influenced by one's cultural values (Murniati, 1998). Culture influences its members in many ways as it provides meaning and information system to its members, which are then shared by the group and transmitted across generations (Matsumoto, 2008. As one matures within one's culture, its influence would also increase (Miller, 1984). As culture influences its members by transmitting values which would become a part of oneself, it would not be presumptuous to think that within many sub-ethnicities within the Indonesian context there could be different level of educational aspiration. This might be one of the reasons why there are differences in school enrollment among regions in Indonesia for example the enrollment for High School in North Sumatera (57.83%) is higher than in Jakarta (49.27%) (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2013).

One's educational aspiration with its subjective perception could be very much influenced by one's cultural values. In a culture which a high regard for education, it would be more likely for its members to also have a high regard for education. On the other hand, members of a

culture which that does not value education highly, would be more likely to have a low regard for education. The present study set out to examine the differences among 5 sub-ethnicities within the Indonesian context in term of their educational aspiration, attributions, and motivational goals. There have been known studies how culture affects attributions (Peng & Knowles, 2003; Yan & Gaier, 1994) and motivational goals (Witkow & Fuligni, 2007; Hau & Ho, 2008). Previous studies with Indonesian university students as participants have shown that there were differences in how students perceived the causes of their academic success and failure, and also on their motivational goals (Sutantoputri & Watt, 2012; 2013). But, the studies only differentiated between Native and Chinese Indonesian students. The present study aimed to take it further by looking into 5 sub-ethnicities in Indonesia: Java, Sunda, Betawi, Batak, and Minang. Javanese, Sundanese, and Bataknese were three of the largest sub-ethnicities in Indonesia. Javanese and Sundanese sub-ethnicities live on Java Island but due to historical relations where they had different royalties, they consider themselves to be of different ethnicity with own specific regional language and customs. The same goes for Bataknese and Minangnese sub-ethnicities where they live side by side on Sumatra Island but were based on different lineage with different customs. Betawi people are the native of Jakarta, although they are not considered as one of the largest sub-ethnicities in Indonesia, their influence cannot be overlooked due to their influence to the decision making when it comes to Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, not to mention to the inhabitants of Jakarta who came from other sub-ethnicities in Indonesia.

EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND

Aspiration refers to every goal that one has for the future (Sherwood, 1989; Quaglia & Cobb, 1996). As one sets one's goals for the future, one's aspiration could grow stronger or weaker depending on how one tackles any obstacles one might have to face in their pursuit of their set goals. In this matter, one's aspiration could work as a drive, motivating them to achieve their goals. As a member of one's culture, the cultural values in one's culture could be embedded in one's life which can manifest in one's thoughts, beliefs, and acts. These values could also manifest in students' level of educational aspiration with students who came from a cultural background that values education highly would be more likely to have a high level of educational aspiration whereas students who came from a cultural background that does not value education highly would be more likely to have a low level of educational aspiration. As such, depending on their ethnicities, there could be differences on students' aspiration between students from Java, Betawi, Sunda, Batak, and Minang ethnicities.

Java Ethnicity

Javanese culture emphasizes on a patrilineal system which values submission and deference in a hierarchical relationships with an emphasize on obligations of the people involved as a part of the society (Mulder, 1994). The noble goal for Javanese people is to become a respected member of his/her society, known as "*dadi wong*" (Triratnawati, 2005). To become a respected member of the society would involve a spiritual aspect, which is highly valued in the Javanese culture, and also a certain socio-economic status. The emphasis on social hierarchy and harmony encourages Javanese people to conform to the society's values. For children, this would imply deference to their parents, and by not bringing shame to the family by their actions. To go against their parents' wishes would be considered sacrilegious. If the parents consider education to be important, then their children would be more likely to comply with their parents' wishes regarding their education. But, if the parents consider education as important, this might also reflect in their children's aspiration.

Betawi Ethnicity: Betawi people are known as people who valued traditional and religious values (Pahlevi, 2009). As the native of Jakarta, they are known as having a low regard for education. Perhaps, this is related to the way they perceive working as only a tool for day to day provenance only (Pahlevi, 2009). This way of thinking might be reflected in students' level of aspiration, which presumably would be low.

Sunda Ethnicity

Geographically, Sundanese people live in West Java but they do not consider themselves as Javanese but as Sundanese people with their own language and customs which are different from the Javanese people (Surahman, 2010). As Sundanese people highly favored intelligence (*akal*), a good character (*budi*), effort (*semangat*) and proper behaviors (*perilaku*; Irawan, 2012). Their highly respect for knowledge to sharpen one's mind and for effort would imply they would be more likely to have a high educational aspiration level.

Batak Ethnicity

Batak people have three life principles: prosperity (*hamoraon*), offspring (*hasangapon*), and honor (*hagabean*; Simanjuntak, 2010). Prosperity is something achievable by hard work, tenacity in attaining one's goals, and by being wise and frugal. Bataknese parents are not uncommon to make sacrifice on behalf of their children, in order for their children to have a better life and to bring honor to the family. This usually in regard to their pursuit of education as they believe that education is important to be able to compete and to bring honor (Napitupulu, 2011; Pasaribu, 2012). This would seem to predict that students from Batak ethnicity would be found with a high level of educational aspiration.

Minang Ethnicity

People from Minang ethnicity are known to be tenacious and resourceful in their effort to gain material wealth as to be wealthy is considered to bring honor to their family (Navis, 1986). To them is shameful to beg or to complain as it would degrading themselves and their family. Their need to achieve material possession by their resourcefulness would imply a competitive streak which would also show in their level of educational aspiration.

ATTRIBUTION

Attribution is something people do to make sense of their world by giving reasons for their successes and failures. Students do that also in academic settings. Their perception of the causes of their academic success and failure is also known as attributions (Weiner, 1992). Students do this as an attempt to make their world more predictable and controllable (Pintrich & Schunk 2002). One's attribution governs one's behavior in predictable ways from one situation to another (McInerney & McInerney, 1998) and it can be influenced by one's ethnicity (Yan & Gaier, 1994). Considering these, than it would seem that one's attribution could act as a motivator for one's aspiration and would differ from one ethnic background to another. There are three dimensions of attribution: locus of control, stability, and controllability (Weiner, 1992). Locus of control refers to whether one perceives the causes of one's success and failure to be from oneself (internal) or someone/something else (external). Stability refers to whether students perceive the causes of their success and failure to be something permanent (stable) or something that can be changed (unstable). Students can also perceive the causes of their success and failure to be controllable by themselves (personal

control) or as something that is uncontrollable by them (external control). For example, a student who just had a bad grade might think the cause of his/her bad grade was because s/he didn't study hard the night before (internal), studying would implies changeability (unstable), and something beyond one's grasp (personal control). But, if that student who had a bad grade thought that his/her bad grade was because the teacher didn't like him/her, then that would implies external locus of control, stable as long as the teacher still teaches him/her, and beyond his/her control (external control).

MOTIVATIONAL GOALS

There are three well-known motivational goals in academic setting: learning, performance approach, and performance avoidance goals (Dweck, 1986; Grant & Dweck, 2003). Students adopt different kind of motivation goal and this would affect their approach to learning. Students with a learning goal are motivated to develop their competence by gaining new knowledge, skills, understanding and strategies. This would lead to a high level engagement in learning (Wolters, 2004).

Students with a personal approach goal motivation are motivated to show their competence to others, their intention would be to look good in front of others. It might lead them to care for achieving (Meece & Holt, 1993) without having a proper substance as they are known to employ surface approach to learning (Elliot, McGregor, & Gable, 1999). Students with a personal avoidance goal are preoccupied with not wanting to look incompetent in front of others. They are more likely to use self-handicapping strategies in their attempt to avoid looking incompetent in front of others (Urdu, 2004). Within the Indonesian context, a previous study has shown that there are differences in students' motivational goals based on ethnicity (Native and Chinese Indonesians) and gender (Sutantoputri & Watt, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants for this particular study were high school students from the five sub-ethnicities: Java (N = 127), Betawi (N = 56), Sunda (N = 285), Batak (N = 124), and Minang (N = 136). The data collection for each sub-ethnic group was done in their respective region. Betawi people are the Natives of Jakarta, but due to the migration, there were not many students from Betawi ethnicity. Out of 240 students from three schools in Jakarta area, there were only 56 students of Betawi ethnicity.

Instruments

Students' educational aspiration measurement had three dimensions: ambition ($\alpha = .655$), enjoyment of school life ($\alpha = .559$), and importance of school to the future ($\alpha = .845$). The three dimensions were parts of the Student Aspiration Survey (Plucker, 1996). Students' attribution measurement was based on the Revised Causal Dimension Scale (McAuley, Duncan, & Russell, 1992), which had four dimensions with 3 items for each dimension: locus of control ($\alpha = .747$), stability ($\alpha = .711$), personal control ($\alpha = \sim$), and external control ($\alpha = .707$). Based on factor analysis for the attribution scale, the personal control dimension was found to cross-loaded with the locus of dimension, which resulted with only one item for the respective dimension. A decision was made to include the two cross-loaded items from the dimension with the locus of control dimension, and to rename both dimensions as locus of control-personal control dimension ($\alpha = .772$), and to leave out the one item left out of the

questionnaire. Students' motivational goals measurement were taken from the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS; Midgley, Maher, Hruda, Anderman, Anderman, Freeman, Gheen, Kaplan, Kumar, Middleton, Nelson, Roeser, & Urda, 2000): learning goal ($\alpha = .907$), performance approach goal ($\alpha = .631$), and performance avoidance goals ($\alpha = .541$). All the scales in the present study were averaged with score range of 1-6.

Data Analysis

The data of the present study were analyzed using an ANOVA analysis to find out the differences based on ethnicity on students' aspiration, attributions, and motivational goals with $p < .01$. ANOVA analysis would give a comparative difference between ethnicities which was the goal of the present study.

RESULTS

Table 1: Ethnicity Differences on Aspiration, Attributions, and Motivational Goals

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables	df	F	p
Ethnicity	Aspiration:			
	Ambition	4	11.31	.00
	Enjoyment of school	4	1.87	.112
	Importance of school	4	9.88	.00
	Attribution:			
	Locus of control-Personal control	4	9.43	.00
	Stability	4	4.55	.00
	External control	4	10.26	.00
	Motivational Goals:			
	Learning goals	4	6.28	.00
	Performance approach goals	4	5.37	.00
	Performance avoidance goals	4	3.76	.00

The results showed that students' aspiration was indeed differed based on ethnicity on ambition and importance of school to the future dimensions. Students from Sunda ethnicity had the highest scores on ambition ($M = 5.72$, $SD = .50$), followed by students from Minang ($M = 5.51$, $SD = .82$), Java ($M = .5.33$, $SD = 1.40$), Batak ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.40$), and Betawi ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.61$). Students from Minang ethnic background had the highest scores on importance of school to the future ($M = 5.74$, $SD = .65$), followed by students from Sunda ethnicity ($M = 5.58$, $SD = .63$), Batak ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.27$), Betawi ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.63$), and Java ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 1.17$).

Students from the five ethnicities were found to differ on all the attribution dimensions. Students from Batak ethnicity were found to have the highest scores on locus of control-personal control dimension ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.49$), followed by students from Minang ethnicity ($M = 1.92$, $SD = .91$), Java ($M = 1.86$, $SD = .92$), Sunda ($M = 1.85$, $SD = .06$), and Betawi ($M = 1.77$, $SD = 1.19$). Students with a high score on this dimension perceived that the causes of their success and/or to be internally controlled. Students from Sunda ethnicity found the causes of their academic success and/or failure to be something permanent ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 1.78$), followed by students from Batak ethnicity ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.93$), Java ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.60$), Minang ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.95$), and Betawi ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 2.13$). Students from Minang ethnicity were found to perceive that the causes of their success and/or failure to be externally controlled ($M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.42$), followed by students from Sunda ethnicity ($M =$

5.40, SD = 1.61), Java (M = 5.08, SD = 1.61), Batak (M = 4.58, SD = 1.81), and Betawi (M = 4.21, SD = 2.33).

Sundanese students were found to have the highest scores on learning goals (M = 5.42, SD = .77), followed by students from Minang ethnicity (M = 5.07, SD = 1.27), Java (M = 4.96, SD = 1.32), Batak (M = 4.95, SD = 1.34), and Betawi (M = 4.92, SD = 1.47). Students with a high score on learning goals were motivated to develop their competence and skills. As for performance approach goals, students of Betawi ethnicity were found to have the highest scores on performance approach goals (M = 3.94, SD = 1.53), followed by students from Batak ethnicity (M = 3.47, SD = 1.64), Sunda (M = 3.37, SD = 1.39), Java (M = 3.19, SD = 1.44), and Minang (M = 2.94, SD = 1.43). Students with a high score on performance approach goals were motivated to demonstrate their competence in front of others. Students from Sunda ethnicity had the highest scores on performance avoidance goals (M = 3.81, SD = 1.40), followed by Batak (M = 3.67, SD = 1.76), Java (M = 3.51, SD = 1.25), Betawi (M = 3.46, SD = 1.71), and Minang (M = 3.23, SD = 1.46). Students with a high score on performance avoidance goals were motivated to avoid looking incompetent.

DISCUSSION

The data showed interesting findings with students from Sunda ethnic group to be found to have the most ambition for their education, the most who perceived the causes of their academic success and failure to be stable, and were more likely to have learning goals as well as performance avoidance goals motivation than students from the other ethnic groups. Sundanese people were known to highly favored intelligence, a good character, effort, and proper behaviors (Surahman, 2010). These four values intertwined in social harmony, with being a good and useful person as something that is desirable from each person. As education can be perceived as something that can be useful to broaden one's mind, it is no wonder that students from this ethnic group had the highest score on ambition from the educational aspiration dimensions. Perhaps, as they perceive effort as something to be work on, they consider that this is something stable within them. Sundanese participants in the study had the highest score for learning goals and performance avoidance goals. Although this finding might seem to be contradictory, in reality this might actually show the complexity of cultural background. Favoring intelligence would imply wanting to develop one's competence (learning goals) but within the society that favored wittiness and sharpness of mind, one might not be perceived as not up to par, thus they might prefer to avoid looking incompetent in front of others to avoid any social repercussion for being not sharp enough. This might also related to their deep respect for social harmony where they would avoid anything that might disrupt their group harmony, as they were more likely to be group-oriented.

The findings for Minang ethnic group showed that students from this ethnic background were the most likely to perceive that school is important to their future and to perceive the causes of their academic success and failure to be externally controlled. Students from Minang ethnicity were also found to be the least likely to have performance approach and performance avoidance goals motivation. Minang people are known to be motivated toward material wealth to bring honor to their family. They value hard work and effort in their attempt to achieve their goal. As education can be perceived as a tool to better oneself in terms of gaining a better job and income, it is no surprise that students from Minang ethnic background were more likely to perceive how important school is to their future. This also supported by how they also had high ambition for their education, and their leaning toward a

learning goal motivation which show their tendency to better themselves for the future. As Minang people were also known to be highly religious, it might explain their tendency to have externally controlled attribution to their academic failure and/success, by no means diminishing their valued opinion toward hard work and material possessions. To Minang people, begging and complaining are considered to be shameful, something degrading. This could explain why they were the least likely to have performance goals (approach and avoidance). They would rather to choose to develop their competence for their future than demonstrating their competence for a short time plan (the measurement for the goals were conducted for one subject at one given time).

Students of Batak ethnic background were the more likely to perceive the causes of their academic success and failure as something that internally controlled. They were also more likely to perceive the causes to be something permanent and to have performance approach and performance goals. Batak people were known to value prosperity, offspring, and honor with parents known to willingly sacrifice for the betterment of their offspring which will lead to the honor of the family. This sacrifice would usually be seen in the pursuit of their offspring education. As these values are instilled and being internalized in their children, it is not surprising to see that their children would have an internally controlled perception of the causes for their academic success and failure as they were raised with such expectation and responsibility. This, coupled with hard work and determination inspired by their parents' sacrifice for their education would lead to hard work, which would explain why they perceive the causes of their success and failure to be something permanent. Unlike Minang students who also valued education highly, students from Batak ethnicity were found to favor performance goals, both approach and avoidance goals, rather than learning goals. This could be related to the differences between how the values in both cultures affect them to perceive and act differently. Perhaps for the Batak culture, demonstrating one's competence is valued to be the better way to be known, to bring honor to the family by showing one's competence and avoiding incompetency.

Students from Betawi ethnicity were found to be the most likely to have performance approach goals, and the least likely to have ambition for their education and learning goals. Perhaps, as they were stereotyped and also known as having a low regard for education, this was internalized by means of self-fulfilling prophecy. Also, the prevalent value regarding education was transmitted and being believed and held fast. Then, it would not a wonder to find that these students were the least likely to have the ambition for education or the motivation to develop their competence. Their choosing to adopt a stance where they prefer to demonstrate their competence might be cultural bound as Betawi people are known to be a proud people which might be related to concept of "face" in the Eastern society. As students from Betawi ethnicity did not have the ambition for education, with a heavy emphasize on traditional and religious values, it seems self-explanatory why they did not perceive the causes of their academic success and failure to be internally controlled and stable. As they did not have the ambition for education, they might not be paying a lot of consideration on how they can play an important part in causing their academic success or failure. The intriguing finding is why they also perceive the causes of their academic success and failure to be the least likely controlled by any external agent. Again, a plausible explanation might be related to the possibility that they did not have a lot of consideration on their academic success and failure. But, due to the small number of participants from this ethnic group, it is highly recommendable to take a deeper look into this matter. Especially as attribution concept might not be familiar in the Indonesian context (Sutantoputri & Watt, 2012).

The findings for the Javanese students showed that they were mostly in the middle position among the five ethnic groups studied in the present study: on ambition, attributions (locus of control-personal control, stability, and external control), learning goals, and performance avoidance goals. They were also the least likely to consider that school is important to their future. The noteworthy findings seem to be culturally bound with the emphasis on “*Dadi Wong*” which including spiritual aspect as well as social aspect. Spirituality plays an important part in Javanese culture, where being one with the Divine, also known as *Kawula Manunggal Gusti* (Zoetmoelder in Muluk & Murniati, 2007) is something every Javanese should strive for. This spiritual concept also highly values social harmony, where being one with the society is encouraged. As the vertical and horizontal harmony being highly endorsed and instilled within the society, it could explain why students from Javanese background were found to mostly in the middle position among the other ethnic groups. To have sufficient ambition on education and a balance perception of the causes of their academic success and failure, also on their motivation would be in line with the social harmony concept encouraged in the society.

CONCLUSION

The present study with five major ethnicities in the Indonesian context shows that there are ethnic based differences on students’ educational aspiration, attributions, and motivational goals. Each culture seems to affect its members on their approach to education based on the values shared within the culture. It is highly advisable to take cultural values into consideration when studying of educational variables as the interpretation of the data might be culturally bound, especially in countries where there are many sub-ethnicities such as Indonesia. Another caution would be in the comprehension of some terms which might not be as familiar due to different cultural background such as the concept of attribution which is not something easily recognizable in the Indonesian context. The lack of sufficient data for Betawi ethnic group needs to be taken into consideration on the interpretation of the results of the present study. It is recommendable to pursue a deeper look into Betawi ethnicity as this ethnic group has interesting background of being the native of Jakarta but seems to be a rare finding in their native land as Jakarta as the capital city of Indonesia seems to have more migrants from other areas in Indonesia than Betawi people.

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