

What Changes the Youth of Southeast Sulawesi (Indonesia) after Living Abroad

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Abstract

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According to Central Bureau Statistic of Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, 24.15 % of citizens aged 7 until 24 years old decided to stop pursuing education. There have been many efforts to solve this problem, one of them is the effort of the country to send people to study abroad by scholarship or fellowship. This research tried to unveil the perspectives of people in Southeast Sulawesi who have experience studying or doing an internship abroad. The study used descriptive research providing open-ended questionnaires from fifty alumni of scholarships and fellowships from Southeast Sulawesi and it is analyzed by content analysis steps. In general, they showed positive feedback from the scholarship or fellowship experience they had. However, they perceived some critiques toward some cultures and system after returning to their homeland.

1. Introduction

With more than 270 million people inhabited the country, Indonesia has transformed into one of the most populated country in the world. The country has thirty-four provinces that connect the land and the ocean like Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and East Timor. The number of provinces has been grown from eight provinces in the early independence period to thirty-four today. This development was inseparable from the social-political issues that came along the growth of the country. This article will focus one of the provinces in Sulawesi island. One of the oldest provinces in Sulawesi which is located in the Southeastern part of the island. Southeast Sulawesi is categorized as a central region of Indonesia, but it is not a region that become the most populated country or a center of economic development. Southeast Sulawesi celebrated the fifty-fifth year of its anniversary in April. There have been many changes happening to the province, including the infrastructures and social life of the society living within the province. Ten years ago there were only two shopping centers located in two cities in Southeast Sulawesi but nowadays almost every city and regency has their own shopping center as a part of economic development. As (Jackson, 1996)

mentioned, the shopping center becomes one of a factor for the national life and the variable that measures the population of an area. This development cannot be separated from the youth development and education in Southeast Sulawesi. Educational problems definitely inevitable especially when it is talking about youth in this province. Based on data from Central Bureau Statistic, 24.15 % of citizens seven to twenty-four year old citizens in Southeast Sulawesi decided to stop pursuing education. This creates a narrative that the enrichment by national education has not been progressed as planned and hoped.

Education can be seen as one of the factors of human development in one area or community. Developing education is perceived as an element of constructing a prosperous country and competing to the international economic level. This statement is supported by Perna, Kata, & Jumakulof (2015) that the main determinant of a country's development is the how well they achieved education. Going further, the government of Indonesia has done a huge amount of cooperation to help growing educational awareness and willingness of the people. The efforts including free education for primary and secondary education and the allocation of money for the people who want to continue their education in form of scholarship, fellowship and youth exchanges. According to (Cameron, 2009) scholarships are perceived as a willingness to continue the education due to the economic crisis that Indonesia suffered in 1998. The support comes from the government or internal institution and foundation, as well as external funding from World Bank, universities and other bilateral donors. In 2012, Indonesia created a government organization called Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education. This organization has collected more than 31 trillion IDR or about 2198 million USD for education development in Indonesia. These programs aim to create a generation that could contribute to community and leaders and thereby uplift the condition of the people in their circumstances.

A decade ago, there were around 3.0 million international students from all around the world. This number has increased significantly. The data from OECD showed that the trend to study abroad has risen four times comparing to the number of students pursuing studies in 2005 (Findlay, et al., 2010). Based on the data mentioned, the increasing number of students were dominated by Asian students. The data can be seen in this following table:

Table 1. Countries with most people migrating abroad to study.

Country	Number of students
China	343,126
India	123,559
South Korea	95,885
Japan	60,424
Germany	56,410
France	53,350
Turkey	52,048
Morocco	51,503
Greece	49,631
USA	41,181

Source: OECD data compiled in (Findlay, et al., 2010)

Having a look at this data, we could draw a conclusion that two of the most populated countries such as China and India placed the first and second respectively. This data can be an argument of the question of why Indonesia as the fourth most populated country in the world had not even entered the top 10 countries who sent their students to study abroad in 2005. According to [Kompas](#) online article, in 2019, Indonesia successfully placed the 22nd in term of sending students to pursuing study international. This number was still far behind the top 5 most populated countries in the world. There must be a significant movement that the government must apply to minimize not only in the gap of number but also the quality of the students to is hopefully leading to the greater quality of Indonesian human resources in the future.

The study destination becomes one of the most essential parts in this research since this factor influences not only quality of universities for example based on some research based university ranking but also to the environment that could lead to the future perspective changing of the students. There will be a different kind of atmosphere perceived by students who study in western countries and east Asian countries where the philosophy and the cultural influence are distinct between one another. [Statista](#) in one of its online articles presented top 10 countries that became a host of thousands international students.

Table 2. Host countries with the most international students.

Country	Number
United States	1.075.496
United Kingdom	551.495
Canada	503.270
Australia	463.643
France	358.000
Russia	353.331
Germany	302.157
Japan	228.403
Spain	125.675
Netherland	92.236

Source: Statista data compiled in March 30, 2021.

Going through the data, it can be seen that the most of the host destination countries for studying are mostly from American and European continents which leads to the question of how big the influence of the academic and social life in the host countries can affect the students as the future policy maker in their respected countries. This is also becoming one of the elements that would be analysed in this research.

It is widely known that the impact of this education support has been perceived positively by various elements in Indonesia. Not only raising to the quality of human education, but also as direct impact on economic growth in various regions in Indonesia. The research that Reza & Widodo (2013) reported that the average of the education per individual is positively correlated to the growth of Indonesia's economy. This also means that the goal to create a generation that could lead Indonesia to become a stronger power is not impossible.

To achieve this idea, there have been many Indonesian students have already experienced living and studying abroad to see the role of education in social lives in form of

scholarship, fellowship and exchanges. The expectation is that the people who gain this privilege could share the benefits and values to Indonesians so they will value education better. This article would especially discuss how studying and living abroad can contribute to changing the Indonesian people's mindset after return the students to their community. This changes can be both in a positive and negative responses. This article would also especially describe the experience and perception of each individual who participated in International Scholarship Alumni of Southeast Sulawesi (INSAN) after their study or work in countries such as United Kingdom, United States, Japan, Australia, and others. The discussion would also discuss the changes in social and professional value and mindset of the Alumni with the aim of seeing their take away about building a new generation in Southeast Sulawesi. This discovery had been conducted by Vivamundo (McCormack-Noonan, 2018) (<https://vivamundo.com/en>) interviewing students in Université catholique de l'Ouest in France. Taking a benchmark from this data, it is essential to dig deep into how the young people in Kendari perceived their opportunities after returning home. It is also important to analyse their cross cultural awareness both in their host country and the country of origin. By having a look a this point, researcher believes that it would be a great addition to the further study about students' or people's behavior before and after studying in a particular country.

2. Method

The descriptive research would provide a depth analysis of the participant perception after their completion in a scholarship program from abroad. In this study, the researcher used the qualitative design, which solved problem of searching for data. The participants of this study were members of International Scholarship Alumni of Southeast Sulawesi. This organization was chosen since the members are grantees from various scholarship, fellowship and exchange such as Indonesian Endowment Fund for Education Scholarship, Fulbright programs, Australia Award and other scholarship funding. In addition, among fifty members of the organization, there were only eighteen people who responded to the questionnaires.

A. Procedure of Data Collection

The procedures of data collection in this research were: first, the researcher prepared the administrative documents for the research in agreement with the organization to conduct the research. Second, the researcher recieved the data about number of participants and their contacts. Third, the researcher discussed the method of collecting the responses of the participants. Fourthly, the researcher sent the research instruments (questionnaires by google form) to the participants via email. And finally, the researcher analyzed the data based on the questionnaires responses.

B. Technique data collection

The primary instrument of this research was an online questionnaire powered by google form, the researcher provides eight questions to be responded to as the data collection technique. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to get a picture of the changes in social values that they owned after returning home. In this study, the questionnaire used both open and close- ended questionnaire, the series of questions formed as multiple choice questions and essays. The questions measured opinions, attitudes, and knowledge of the participants.

C. Technique of Data Analysis

The researcher used content analysis steps according to Powell and Renner (2003) as the analysis. This analysis was used to give the study more detail information about the teachers' reflection. The following steps will describe the steps in conducting the research.

Step 1 Get to know the data.

After collecting the data through google form. Researcher tried to connect the coherence between the questions and their responses to make sure that there was no misinterpretation towards the questions.

Step 2 Focus the analysis.

In this step, researcher focused on three main data including The motivation and purpose of studying abroad, value and experience in abroad and values changed after returning home.

Step 3 Categorize information.

The researcher categorized the data based on the three main questions that were required in this research.

Step 4 Identify patterns and connections within and between categories.

As the researcher had categorized the data based on the three main questions. The researchers connect the relations between one question to the others based on the theme of the research.

Step 5 Interpretation

The last step, researcher tried to summarize and interpreted the data into a descriptive analysis.

3. Result and Findings

A. Research Process

The first thing the researcher did was to ask for the agreement to INSAN members' agreement including how this research would be used and where the responses would be presented. The communication was conducted through WhatsApp group. Most of the members agreed to give their responses and shared the response to any conference. After the agreement, the researcher prepared the instrument using google form and share the instrument link to the group. Among fifty members in the group there were only eighteen people filling out the electronic questionnaires until the deadline of the submission. However, the responses submitted could represent the various scholarships granted by different countries therefore the responses could be taken to the next step, data analysis. There were about 10 questions both open ended and close ended. The questions including their motivation to study abroad, the best and most challenging experiences they had, social and cultural values they learned in the new country, their own values that changed after returning to their communities, values they want to promote in the local communities and values they still want to hold in their lives as well as the reason why they chose to study abroad. After the deadline submission, the researcher then moved to the next research phase.

B. Discussion

Based on the findings, the researcher divided the discussion into three main categories. The motivation and purpose of studying abroad, value and experience in abroad and values changed after returning home.

a. Motivation and purpose of studying abroad.

Many Indonesian students including Southeast Sulawesi-ers dream to study abroad by scholarships or even personal funds. The perception of living and studying abroad and gaining a global network as well bargaining power became factors that influence students to

continue higher educations in abroad. These ideas were also supported by Dwyer (2004) who noted that studying abroad effecting students' values, professional significances and intellectual abilities. The research also showed related responses from the scholars including: "Studying abroad is not only a good pace to gain knowledge, but also to learn new culture, meet people globally, and expanding international network" R5.

"Curiosity to learn new cultures and to see the learning model in the university directly" R6

"To gain international education and global network" R13

"Professional development and carrier" R17

"Learn and directly involved to a different culture from the country to expand perspectives and mindset" R18

The respondents indicated that they were not only gaining international education studying abroad, but also allowed them to network globally. This fact brings the idea that one of the respondents' goals is seeking for international networking where they can meet other people to create links for their future professional and personal career. Taking these responses to an analytical context, it can be assumed that there are many reasons that become an initial motivation to study abroad. Not only networking, students from INSAN also see that getting exposure to a new culture becomes one reason students want to pursue study abroad. Living and interacting with people from different parts of the world can be an impactful experience for students to understand how lives can shape people characters. Another reason is the students want to gain international education where can be very different with the academic atmosphere that they gained from their previous studies such as undergraduate or master. Indonesia's university highest ranking is currently in above 200th which probably became a factor to experience an academic life somewhere else. Based on the data about to 10 host countries study destination above, it can also be seen that United States and United Kingdom took the first and the second rank respectively and having a look at this two countries, both have universities that placed the highest among all universities in the world. Studying in universities such as MIT, Harvard University or Cambridge University will be a great opportunity for the students not only for their future career but also to learn some new habits that could completely change their professional quality. This fact leads to the last point from the questionnaire, a professional development. The respondents are not only people who are going abroad merely for studying. They are people who also completed an exchange or fellowship program. These respondents believe that their journey through the program has brought many positive impacts throughout their career. Not only learning and applying many professional skills to the home institution, people who took fellowship or exchange programs learned many new behavior that they copy and modified to help their professional career in their institution. Hence, INSAN members' motivations were not only an initial planning that they assume in the beginning but also happened and impacted their lives after the program.

B. Value and experience in abroad

According to Cannon (2000) Indonesian graduates noted that pursuing education overseas gives more benefits rather than difficulties. They found out that creating professional networks and interactions became the challenge that they had through their academic and professional life in overseas. However, by studying abroad they gained greater academic skills, professional mindset and values as well as broader cultural outlook. These viewpoints were also delivered by the respondents in this research. Some of the responses are:

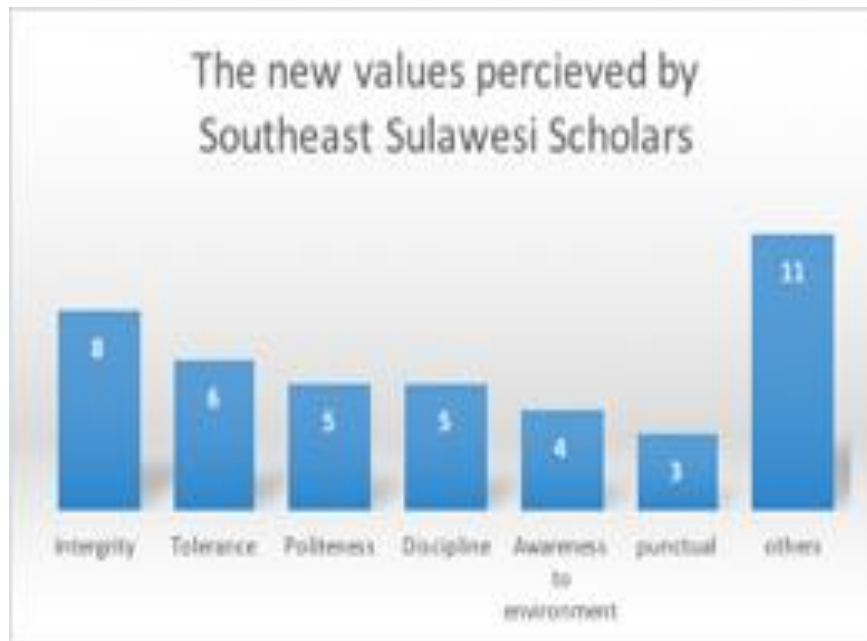
“Studying abroad allows me to meet people from different countries, to get different academic atmosphere, to have facilities supporting my learning process and travelling to other places. The challenges were I needed to spend days to work on my assignment as the educational system was different with the one in Indonesia. I also need to face the prejudice of Islam as my identity” R4

“Their advanced technologies are awesome, it helps student to do research better. The study cultures and atmosphere also in some points are quite different with one I had in my previous degree. We have to be aware of the so called culture shocks, weather shocks (from tropical to sub-tropical country) that takes some time to let our body adjusted, the intellectual ambience is also challenging. But time heals everything, we will get by at the end of the day. Despite all the potential challenges, studying abroad is very special. As we meet student from many countries, we also learn about global problem such as malnutrition or hidden hunger and how the world responds to these problems.” R5

“The biggest challenge was to deliver presentation in front of professors and international students, but through the program I could visit some local organization in states” R6

“The scholarship and the facilities were the most exciting part in my journey, however I needed to adapt with new cultures and environment” R7

Experiencing new cultures in the new academic and social environment were the highlight of most Indonesian students abroad. They perceived that studying abroad allows them to gain access to many different resources and facilities and apply them to the social culture that supports the practice. However, adjusting to new cultures was also challenging. They had to become fast learners observing and learning the new culture in a limited amount of time. This leads to the discussion of how studying abroad has helped them achieve a new and different academic or social cultures where they can compare and contrast things as a privilege group of people who had the opportunity to do so. The next question asked about the cultures that they found different from the values in their community. The respondents mostly showed similar responses to this question. The following graph will portray the new values that the Indonesian scholars in Southeast Sulawesi see as different when they got the exposure of living abroad:



Graph 1. The new values perceived by Southeast Sulawesi Scholars in abroad

Based on the graph, it could be seen that almost half of the respondents mentioned integrity as a new culture that they learned through their time abroad. Integrity was mentioned since the respondent found that people in their social environment abroad showed a passionate professionalism in their work ethic. It could be seen in the response below:

“Integrity. I found out that people in England worked based on their passion, they uphold integrity and professional when they do their job. What I saw in southeast Sulawesi, people who work with high integrity are still less. The practice of corruption, collusion and nepotism are happened very often and people show them without any embarrassment.” R1

The second and third most frequent value mentioned by the respondents are tolerance and politeness. Talking about these values, Indonesia is well-known for its tolerance and politeness. The motto of the country is even “Bhineka Tunggal Ika” from Sanskrit which means unity in diversity. Surprisingly scholars in Southeast Sulawesi found that this value was new to them. As a national identity the unity in diversity is reflected in the symbol of the country that is Pancasila which means five principles. It is a foundation of Indonesian characters including religious, humanity, unity, power and social justice that build the characters of the responsible, strong and tolerance society (Iriani & Paciena, 2019). However, in the responses given in this research, the scholars saw integrity, tolerance and politeness as a new thing to be witnessed in their campus or workplace abroad. This sample of the respond can be seen in the following sentence:

“Good tolerance values, the way people appreciate someone’s opinion, to support each other and the culture of reading is something that we need to follow.” R6

The values that they found abroad then interfered the new character to the scholars after returning home. Some of the scholars admitted that they see a different perspective that changed their mindset and character. Some of the respondents argued the values that changed including:

“Ethic and sympathy. After living in England for more than three years, I become more aware to the ethical issues that I did not put into account previously when I was in Southeast Sulawesi like body shaming. I try to listen and empathize people rather than

judge. I also try to respect people rights in public area like not to do littering, break through the queue and also to be more punctual. I also see things in two sides fairly and try to be more honest and professional.” R1

“Confidence.” R2

“Value about mindset.” R3

“Be more punctual and direct (especially in expressing Ideas).” R5

“Be more respectful, understanding and tolerance.” R8

“I become more confident and commit to every single responsibility I have”. R9

“I use time more optimally and more effectively. And sometimes I start to focus on taking care of my business.” R16

“I appreciate something that is done or decided by others and do not need to try to find out why that person is doing it. I learned to believe that what a person does is the best thing for him/her, because the person understands more than I do. For example, a person's decision to postpone a marriage and focus on his/her work. As a family/friend, all I need is to support it and not to lash out with questions or justify the decision.” R18

Regarding to the responses given by the scholars, they inferred that being overseas change their values toward living in a social and cultural context. They consider that there are some personal values that they owned previously that needed to be changed regarding to their future lives in their community. These values meant the environment that they are going to have in the future especially when they hold a position where they can set rules shaped, at least in part, by the values they gained after living overseas. To observe this phenomenon, the researcher tried to interrogate the respondents by asking what kind of values that they want to change/have changed if they become a policy maker in their community. The respondents' answers including:

“Professionalism, integrity, humanity, empathy.” R1

“Tolerance values between tribes and different cultures because of the diversity that I met when I was an international student is similar to the diversity of Indonesia in everyday life.” R3

“To me, punctuality does matter. And thus, it has to be consistently applied in each aspect of life.” R5

“To appreciate and to respect.” R7

“The value of performance is taken into consideration and the value of discipline to the responsibility.” R9

“Changing work behavior (discipline, hard work and responsibility) because these factors can increase productivity in a work unit.” R12

“Discipline and tolerance, because people in my area have problems with discipline and lack respect for differences.” R13

“Stereotype. I observe that Indonesian people in general are easy to believe the label given to a person / group is only based on information from the media or certain people. Especially if it's negative news, it will very quickly become a trending topic especially in the era of social media like today. If we do not know directly and only hear it from the media, we must be careful in receiving information and not confuse the atmosphere by spreading uncertain information about an issue.” R18

That being said, scholars considered that changing values in their community as something that they are willing to do or they are doing now. Some of the values they exposed from the campus/ professional experiences made them believe that change was needed to make a better community. This finding leaves the question of why values such as tolerance, humanity, integrity or discipline were not seen in previous societies by the scholars? Whereas the common idea was that Indonesians prioritized tolerance between communities and love to help each other which is an important element in their humanity.

C. Values changed after returning home.

To go further, when the researcher asked about what values that the community still need to hold, the respondents mentioned several values that they perceived vital to be conserved still. The values including:

““respect, etiquette, and tolerance” those are key factors of living in this very global era. Smart people need to be accomplished with good attitude to keep the positivity.” R5

“Courtesy, respect for elders because it is a universal value that will determine success in social relations.” R7

“Mutual cooperation.” R9

“Mutual cooperation and empathy for others.” R10

“Moral and religious values because globalization needs filters so that inappropriate cultures are not adapted by our society.” R13

“Associated with attitude, care for others, mutual cooperation, tolerance and respect among fellow citizens. Because this is also not much we find in other countries. Especially the attitude of caring for others and mutual cooperation. When abroad, in some countries tend not to care about the people around them and tend to be apathetic.” R15

“Mutual cooperation or hand in hand in working on or overcoming public problems seems to have begun to disappear in our social life today. Mutual cooperation is now only seen in certain events. It would be nice if maintaining cleanliness, repairing

damaged public facilities such as roads, helping homeless people can be done in cooperation with their own awareness as part of the culture of the nation and state entities.” R16

“Mutual cooperation. In the era of globalization, mutual cooperation must be firmly held. Because there are so many benefits to be gained such as growing empathy, the attitude of helping to each other.” R17

To highlight the responses from the respondents, the word “Mutual Cooperation” is the most frequent answer by the scholars. They perceive that mutual cooperation is something that needs to be preserved as Southeast Sulawesi people.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, most of the scholars in Southeast Sulawesi, one of the developing cities in Indonesia, experienced some changes in their social values. These values will likely influence the personal and professional lives of the scholars after returning the country. This influence appeared as the result of diversity of people or students’ characters and mindset they brought to campus or work place and contribute to their perspective about global issues and intellectual growth (Deloach, Saliba, Smith, & Tiemann, 2008). The after-program influence can be seen from the way of scholars see their lives and have adjusted their character and mindset from the previous lives they had. They also made significant adjustments and reported to be willing in change the situation in their homeland by changing some of the treatment of the people in their community. The purpose of the new agendas are to change “ineffective” behavior of their subordinates and bringing better global mindset to the communities or organizations (Levy, Taylor, Cigiiler, & Beechler, 2007). However, what is the achievement after the successfully spreading this intervention? The cultural values are essential to lead the member of the community toward their future life and to see their identity from many cultural interventions (Wan, Chi, Tam, Lee, & Peng, 2007). It is important that seeing the cultural as the aspect of future lives becomes a part of a new generation and with cultural intelligence people are able to see what should be preserved in both common and different multi-social characters in a community (Cohen, 2010). Finally, the research needs more depth analysis point with regard to how far the scholars made the intervention to the society and what impact they have made to the future policies in their community. Future research is expected to have this insight to enlighten the people who are interested to preserve the traditional cultures and mindset of a community.

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