

Research Article

Scholarship as a Method to Enhance the Identity of Undocumented Children of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Sabah, Malaysia

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ORCIDSri Wijayanti: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0492-1582>**Abstract.**

The undocumented children of Indonesian migrant workers born and raised in Sabah have an identity problem. This is due to the absence of documents and the values, culture, customs, and experiences acquired in the receiving country. Furthermore, an emotional and physical link to the recipient country is built, which causes neglect towards their original identity. The Indonesian Government enacted a policy to revive the identity of undocumented children through the provision of repatriation scholarships. This study aimed to determine the influence of scholarships on the re-emergence of Indonesian identity. It involved a mixed method that combines quantitative and qualitative. Data collection techniques used were questionnaires, interviews, and FGD. The results showed that repatriation scholarships foster the identity of migrant workers' children as Indonesians.

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1. Introduction

A study of migration shows that those migrant workers have many problems, not only in receiving countries but also in sending countries. Muslihudin *et al.* [1]; reveal that migrant workers in Indonesia face many difficult situations in the village of their origin, the process of moving to the country of destination, in the receiving country, the process of returning to their country of origin, and in their origin country after their return [1,2,3,4]. In Malaysia, migrant workers face problems regarding the duration of their stay. Historically, Indonesian migrant workers had migrated to Malaysia since 1970 when Malaysia opened their country to migrant workers to be employed in the industries and plantations [5]. The location of East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) is not too far and can be reached by

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land, making large-scale migration from Indonesia to Malaysia [6]. Indonesian migrant workers get married and have children, and some even have grandchildren.

Migrants living overseas for a long time often feel that their identity is the same as the society where they live. The cultural identity inherited from their ancestors seems to be lost and replaced with a new identity obtained in the country. This mostly occurs in the second or even third generation. Youth from the third generation often forget their ancestors and feel part of the new country. Sheffer showed that migrants who assimilate or even fully integrate with the country they live in may lose connection with their origin country [7]. Barrat and Mbonye studied the younger generation of immigrants in Uganda [8]. It was observed that the younger generation experienced a change in identity compared to their place origin. These changes are influenced by experiences related to their economic and social life. Furthermore, studies conducted on immigrant families from Mediterranean countries living in Germany for a long time showed that the children believe that Germany is their homeland [9]. Some of these changes occurred in schools which constitute an arena for identity change. In schools, cultural interactions and communication are different from the culture in immigrant homes. The existence of the second and even third generation who do not know their ancestors and are accustomed to the environment of the country in which they live constitutes a factor that forms a new identity. Therefore, youth who do not know the identity should be recognized for their origin. This paper ascertains the effect of providing scholarships on the identity of migrant workers' children. Will their identity be revived after attending school in their country of origin?

The problem of identity is also experienced by the children of migrant workers who were born and raised in Sabah. Fz, a child of a migrant worker, stated that before studying in Indonesia, he felt that he was Malaysian. This feeling arises because he was born and raised in Malaysia, and possesses the accent, language, and customs that Malaysians generally have. His parents also gave him a name commonly used by Malaysians. Since birth, Fz does not have a document that shows his identity as an Indonesian.

Before I could study here in Indonesia, I thought I was Malaysian because I was born and raised there. I speak Malay, my accent is also Malaysian, and I wear Malaysian clothes.

Fz's feelings may be shared by the children of migrant workers born and raised in Sabah. Based on the data, there are about 30,000-40,000 children of migrant workers currently residing in Sabah, of which most are undocumented [10].

Indonesia ratified The Convention on the Right of the Child/CRC dan The United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families/CRMW dan signed the ASEAN Consensus on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, ASEAN Declaration on the Rights of Children in the Context of Migration [11]. They make an obligation for Indonesia to provide access to education for children, including children of migrant workers. The Indonesian Government has made various efforts, namely the provision of scholarships for undocumented children of migrant workers to continue their senior secondary education in Indonesia. The Secondary Education Affirmation Program (*Afirmasi Pendidikan Menengah/ADEM*) and the Higher Education Affirmation Scholarship (*Afirmasi Pendidikan Tinggi/ADIK*) are some of the government's efforts through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemendikbudristek) to distribute quality education. These programs are specifically for Papuan and West Papuan children as well as 3T areas of frontier, outermost, underdeveloped, and repatriated Indonesian children whose parents are migrant workers in Sabah, Malaysia [12]. Repatriation means to return citizens to their countries of origin. Therefore, repatriation education scholarship provides opportunities for PMI children to know their country. Through the ADEM and ADIK programs, the undocumented children can continue their education in Indonesia. In 2020, the Government of Indonesia, through the Ministry of Education and Culture, distributed ADEM to 500 children of migrant workers, while 31 PMI children received ADIK in Malaysia [13]. This paper is divided into three parts. The first discusses the children's profile of migrant workers and the second observes changes in identity, and the third part consists of conclusion.

2. Method

This study involved mixed method of quantitative and qualitative. Data collection utilizing a questionnaire showed that the children of Indonesian migrant workers currently studying in Indonesia were as many as 50 people. Interviews and focus group discussions were held with students in Purwokerto for two meetings attended by 25 students. Furthermore, interviews were held with the officials from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, which manage the repatriation scholarship in Jakarta; namely the Directorate of Community Education and Special Education (PMPK) and the Center for Education Financing Service (Puslapdik). The data analysis involved interactive analysis, which includes data collection, reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions [14].

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Profile of Undocumented Children of Indonesia Migrant Workers

The undocumented children of migrant workers in Sabah have parents who have worked in Sabah for many years. Sabah is directly adjacent to Indonesia, and the similarity in language and culture made Indonesian citizens immigrate. The wave of migration to Sabah began in the 1970s when there was a New Economy Policy (NEP) to accelerate economic growth. This policy created a huge demand for workers to fill jobs in Sabah [15]. The arrival of migrant workers benefits the Malaysian state because low salaries can reduce production costs and make the local products to be more competitive in the market. The second wave occurred in the 1990s when the Sabah economy was becoming better [16]. During this period, migrant workers had the convenience of obtaining citizenship from Malaysia. They can also work there longer without a work permit, are allowed to bring their families, and also form new families.

In Sabah, the children of migrant workers are often considered as additional workers who will help their parents on the plantations. Since childhood, children have been invited to work on plantations, which causes inequalities when starting primary school. For Elementary School, the children of migrant workers attend informal schools organized by the Humana Child Aid Society, a non-governmental organization founded in 1991. Compared with the material taught by schools in Indonesia, the materials taught at Humana are only aimed at mastering reading, writing, and arithmetic. This is understandable because the Humana Child Aid Society is not a non-governmental organization from Indonesia, therefore, the material taught tends to be generic material that children of migrant workers can accept. Humana provides education for undocumented children from Indonesia as well as the Philippines. It can also be stated that the material taught tends to be universal, which can be accepted by the children of migrant workers.

Many migrant workers do not have passports, which in turn, causes the children also do not to have passports. The figure below shows that almost 80% children do not have a passport. The data also showed that their parents do not see the importance of documents that will affect their children ability to access better facilities, such as health and education. The incompleteness of documents owned by children shows that their parents tend not to pay adequate attention to document administration issues.

The ties of brotherhood to the extended family of the children of migrant workers have not significantly inspired identity. Undocumented children know that their extended

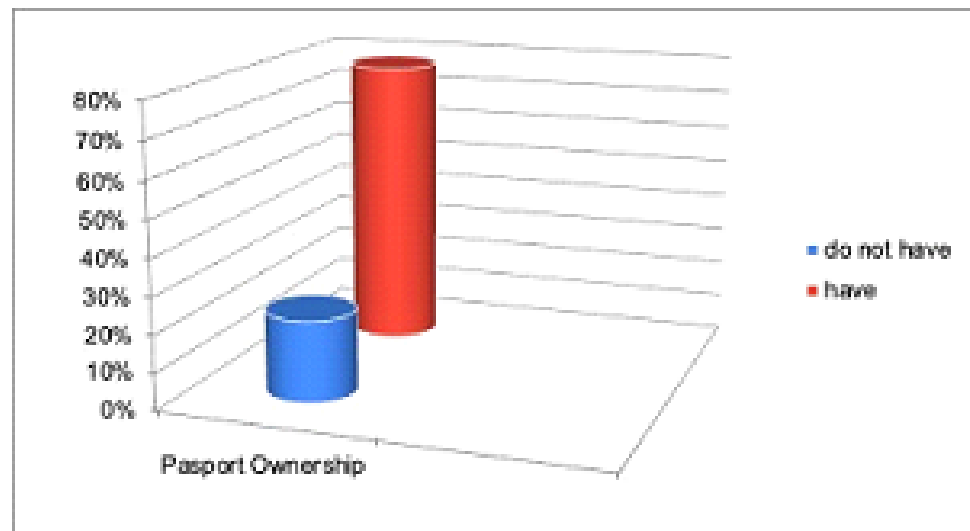


Figure 1: Passport ownership.

family still live in Indonesia. Their parents also shared that they have family living in Indonesia. The average family living includes grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. Some of the children maintain communication with extended families, although not actively. This is significant because although they know that their extended family lives in Indonesia, the children believe that their identity is not the same and that they are part of the Malay people. The children have no emotional or physical attachment to their country of origin. The attachment was built in the country where they were born. Furthermore, there has been an internalization of the recipient country's language, culture, values, and habits. An example is a habit of wearing a clothing model used on major religious holidays. The model of clothing used by Malaysians has a peculiarity, namely the tops worn to the ankles. This clothing model differs from that of Indonesians which involves wearing a sarong during major religious holidays. Another example is the role of being a supporter when a match between countries is broadcast on television. There are several children of migrant workers who are supporters of their country of residence. This partiality shown does not mean that they do not have a sense of nationalism towards their origin country, but shows a strong emotional sense of their birth place.

3.2. Scholarships as a Means to Enhance the Identity of Migrant Workers' Children

School is an arena with the potential to enhance the identity of migrant worker children. Regarding the children of Indonesian migrant workers from Sabah, the scholarships given to them are offered by the Indonesian Government through the Ministry of

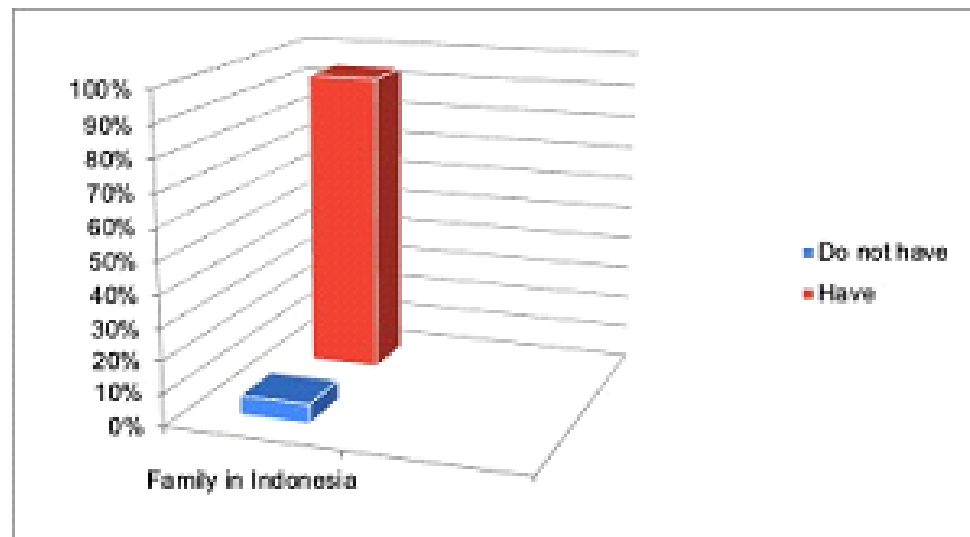


Figure 2: Family in Indonesia.

Education, Culture and Higher Education to continue their study after they graduate from junior high school, namely ADEM and ADIK scholarships. Scholarships are grants in the form of financial assistance given to individuals with the aim of continuing education. A Scholarship can be awarded by government agencies, companies, or foundations. These can also be categorized as gifts or gifts with a work bond commonly called an official bond, after completing education. The length of this service bond varies depending on the institution that provides the scholarship. According to the KBBI [16], scholarships are allowances or assistance given to students to cover study costs. Scholarships from the Government are the state's commitment that enables its citizens to continue their education to a higher level. These scholarships from companies are usually a form of providing corporate social responsibility (CSR). The efforts to improve the quality of education in Indonesia continue to be carried out by the Government through the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemendibud) in the Directorate of PMPK. ADEM is one of the Government's initiatives that has been running since 2013. Adem is an acronym for Secondary Education Affirmations. This scholarship is given to children from Papua, disadvantaged areas, and children of migrant workers. Widayanti stated that ADEM applies not only to children from the provinces of Papua and West Papua but also to Indonesian children who live in Malaysia and whose parents work in Malaysia [18]. Furthermore, the Directorate of Special Education refers to these children as the ADEM Repatriation Program.

The children of Indonesian migrant workers are also allowed to obtain scholarships. However, the highest number is from Sabah, Malaysia, because the number of migrant workers is also the largest compared to other countries. The condition of PMI in Sabah is

classified as the highest in need of attention, specifically related to children's education. The scholarship started in 2013, and according to Rika, the number of children who received scholarships is as follows:

ADEM's repatriation initially started in 2013, and they graduated in 2016. One of the first and best students got admitted into Padjadjaran University, continued his education in Australia, and graduated to become a presidential staff member. Be proud. Initially, only 20 children were facilitated to be students at the Permata Insani Foundation Senior High School. At this time, it was only for Papuan children, but PMI and Indonesian children also have the same rights. In 2016/2017, 100 children received repatriation. Eventually, this increased to 500 children, and when the pandemic was rescinded, a total of 300 children. [19]

The ADEM scholarship can be accessed by children of migrant workers schooling at the Kota Kinabalu Indonesian School (SIKK) or the Community Learning Center (CLC). They have to pass a selection test to obtain a repatriation scholarship. These children will continue their high school (SMA) in Indonesia when passed and fulfilled the requirements. They will attend schools designated and selected by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education. On average, the selected schools have dormitory facilities that will be used as a place to live for the children of migrant workers who come from Sabah. Moreover, ADEM Scholarship given is called repatriation, which is an effort to return Indonesian citizens who are abroad to their original country. KBBI [20] defines repatriation as the return of people to their homeland. Therefore, ADEM Scholarship is intended to return the children of migrant workers to Indonesia even though they were born and raised in Malaysia.

For higher education, the children of migrant workers, Papua, and 3T areas can apply for an ADIK Scholarship. The scholarship given to the children is called repatriated ADIK. It aims to return the children living abroad, specifically from Sabah, Malaysia. Kahar, Head of the Center for Financing Education Service, stated as follows:

We give this scholarship to the children of migrant workers to break the chain of poverty. This is because we know that migrant workers, specifically in Sabah, Sarawak, Malaysia, who live in oil palm plantations, are very far from access to education. When their children are not pulled out of their environment, they will continue the work of their parents as oil palm plantation workers, becoming marginalized people who are not educated. The government has to help them.[21]

The mission of the repatriation scholarship is to improve the social status of the families of migrant workers. Indonesian migrant workers in Sabah Malaysia are classified as marginalized communities due to their education. The majority have only attended

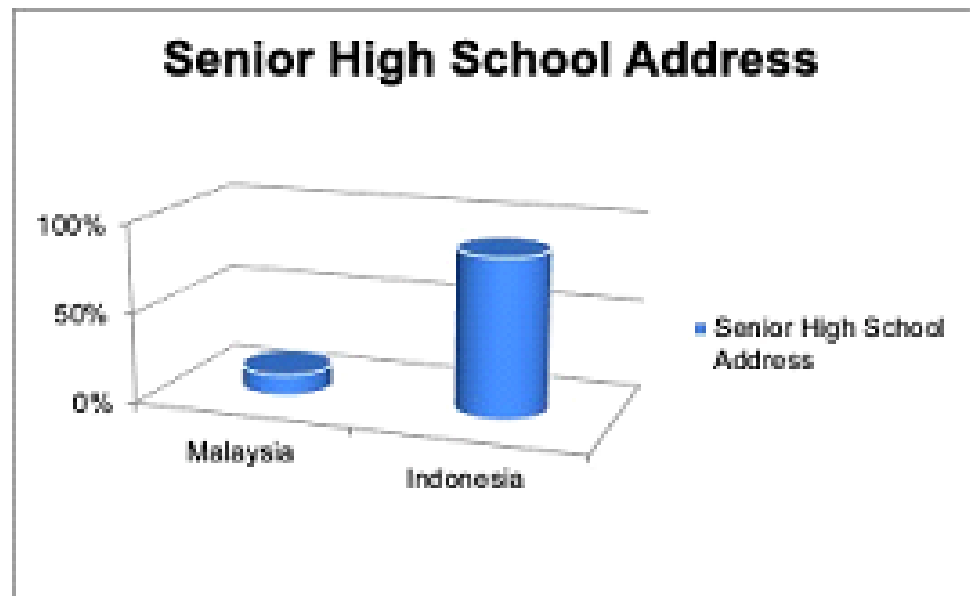


Figure 3: Senior High School Address.

Elementary School. Therefore, their children with the potential for intelligence and aspiration to study should be given the opportunity to continue the education.

After receiving a repatriation scholarship from the Indonesian Government, migrant workers' children continued their education in Indonesia. They attend schools, most of which are located in Java, where the culture, values, and experiences are different when compared to that of Sabah. The children have new experiences and start interacting with native Indonesians. These experiences and interactions gradually call for identity as Indonesians, as Ir said as follows:

Since I went to school here in Indonesia, I gradually began to feel that I was Indonesian. I had not been aware, as I used to think that I was Malay. I want to work here, and one day invite my parents to come back here.

Fz, a student and gymnastics coach, feels the same way. Fz does not deny that the language, dialect, and customs of a Malay cannot be lost, but that there is a feeling that grows as an Indonesian.

My name is not like the people here, but like Malay people, and the way I speak and the language I use are very Malay. Indeed, when I was working, I added 'Fz from Malaysia', but that was only for marketing, in my heart, I was an Indonesian.

The scholarship gives many chances for migrant workers' children to recognize their ancestral culture and to be experienced by the state to protect them. Adapting to the ancestral culture does not alienate them but creates a great feeling. The children of migrant workers realize that something has been missing for years, which turns out to be the feeling of 'coming home. They feel accepted as part of a big family. On the

other hand, the government's attention, manifested in the provision of scholarships, makes children of migrant workers feel cared for. In Indonesia, the children of migrant workers feel pleased because they are easy to study in schools with good facilities, they are able to focus more on the subjects in class, they will have the same certificate as other students in Indonesia, and they have as many as an opportunity to continue their study in university. The feeling of being treated equally by the government foster the children of migrant workers to have a sense of citizenship. The children of migrant workers gradually change their identity after study in Indonesia. Location, people and government attention are highly influential in enhancing the identity and feeling of an Indonesian.

4. Conclusion

This study concluded that the repatriation scholarships provided by the Indonesian Government for the children of migrant workers in Sabah, Malaysia, can foster their Indonesian identity. The awardee gradually realized that they are Indonesian and began to love their origin country. They also want to know the societal values, culture, and customs when they study in Indonesia. The interaction with the community makes the process of understanding more in-depth. The government's policy of paying attention to the children of migrant workers by providing access to education makes them feel that they are treated the same as other Indonesian citizens. Therefore, the ADEM and ADIK Scholarships bring them back to their origin country.

Conflict of Interest

We declare that there is no conflict of interest related to the writing or publication of this article.

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