

Accommodating the Vision of Diversity in Different School Contexts: Unity-in-Diversity in Indonesia

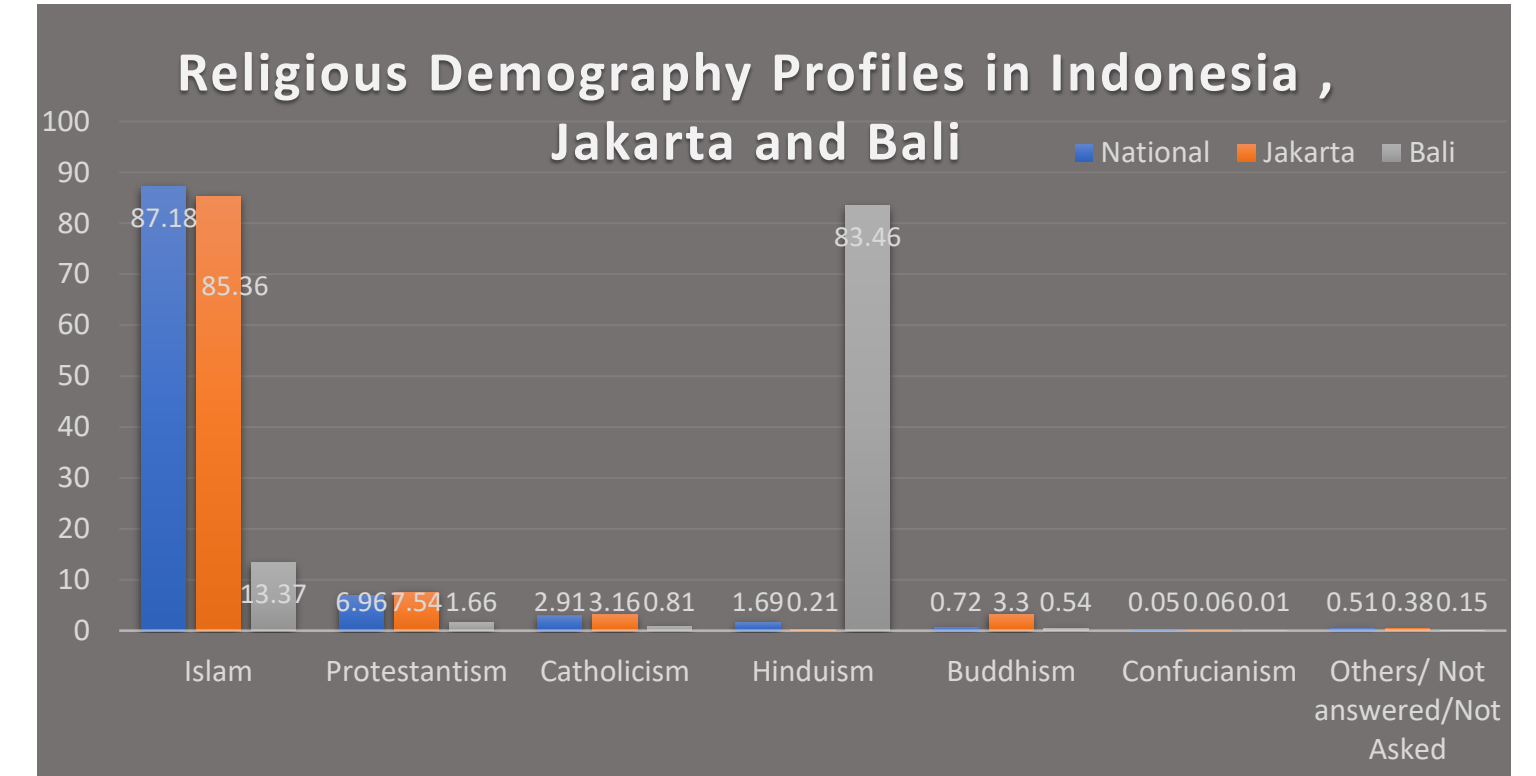
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Courtesy of SMK Sultan Iskandar Muda, Medan

INDONESIA

- It is the fourth most populous country in the world, inhabited by more than 260 million people, comprising 300 ethnic and cultural groups spread across 34 provinces.
- It has the biggest Muslim population worldwide and Islam is the largest religion in Indonesia. However, it does not implement Islamic laws nationally (except Aceh).
- It is a religious nation, but not a religious state. The state recognises other five official religions: Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism.



Unity-in-Diversity (UID) and Education

- The recognition diversity in Indonesia is engrained in the national motto 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika' (Unity-in-Diversity).
- Citizens have religious and cultural rights.
- However, recurrent issues of intolerances on the basis of ethnic and religious differences remain prevalent in Indonesia and worldwide.
- Education have dual role in promoting peaceful coexistence and contributing to conflict and perpetuating social injustices (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000)
- The demography of the school influences the outcomes (e.g. Harjatanaya & Hoon, 2018; Hayes, McAllister, & Dowds, 2013; Hoon, 2013; Raihani, 2011)

Courtesy of Yayasan Perguruan Sultan Iskandar Muda, Medan



Personal Collection, Sarasvati Celebration, Bali (January 2016)

Methodology

- Qualitative, multiple two-tier case study
- Six purposively selected schools (2 state and 1 private) in each city of Jakarta (predominantly Muslim) and Bali (predominantly Hindu)
- Involves a total of 164 education stakeholders (head teachers, teachers, students, and parents)
- Draws on multi-faceted data: school documents, observation notes, photographs and transcripts from interviews and focus group discussions.

School Demography Profiles

	City	State/Private	Demography Profiles
School 1	Jakarta	State	Muslim Majority
School 2	Jakarta	State	Muslim Majority
School 3	Jakarta	Private	Christians & Buddhists Majority
School 4	Bali	State	Hindus Majority
School 5	Bali	State	Hindus Majority
School 6	Bali	Private	Muslim Majority

1 Perceived Meanings of Unity-in-Diversity

- UID is a significant pillar of nationhood for all, but appeared to hold more sentimental meanings for ethnic and religious minority groups in Indonesia as it serves as an umbrella for equal citizenship.
- Religious diversity is the most prominent type of identity marker; hence central to achieving UID.
- Other types of diversity (ethnicity, caste system, cultural differences and belief systems) are equally important markers in certain contexts. These contextual differences influence the construction of individual's interpreted meanings of multiculturalism and approaches taken to multicultural education.

Purpose and Research Questions

- Explores how schools in Indonesia with different student cultural and religious demographic profiles teach about "Unity-in-Diversity"
- Key research questions:
 1. What does 'Unity-in-Diversity' mean in schools in contemporary Indonesia?
 2. What strategies do schools use in promoting 'Unity-in-Diversity'?
 3. What strategies do teachers use in teaching 'Unity-in-Diversity'?
 4. How do the promotion and teaching differ in response to the different cultural and religious settings?

2 Promoting Unity-in-Diversity in Schools

- Balancing between the 'Unity' and the 'Diversity' is fostered through inculcating a sense of nationalism and strengthening religiosity, promoted within the popular character education discourse
- Schools lack conscious efforts in implementing critical multicultural education. The main school concerns are raising student academic achievements, preparing them for exams and developing personal characters such as hardworking, honesty and discipline.
- Some teachers employed agency to implement critical multicultural education, but the vision of UID has largely been limited and superficially manifested in school policy and practices

4 Contextualised Findings

- Differences of findings in schools in Jakarta and Bali are heavily driven by the distinctive local cultures.
- The promotion of UID remains to be less of a priority for parents and teachers, except for teachers teaching subjects with curricular content directly related to the notions of citizenship and social relationships.
- Heavy administrative tasks and implementation of child-centred, IT-integrated 2013 curriculum and character education became the main teachers' concerns

3 Teaching Unity-in-Diversity in Classrooms

- Social science teachers focused on content justification, development of critical thinking, and balanced cultural representation.
- In Maths and Sciences, possible incompatibility between scientific inquiry and religious belief and contrived content integration of multicultural values into learning
- Language and arts teachers saw their roles in constructing national and ethnic identities and promoting cultural diversity.

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