

DOES THE ORIENTATION OF OTHER GROUPS MATTER? ETHNIC IDENTITY AS A CULTURAL RESOURCE AND CAREER ORIENTATION AMONG JAVANESE STUDENTS

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Abstract. This study examines the relationship between ethnic identity, Other Group Orientation (OGO), and career orientation among Javanese students. This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design, involving 65 participants, all of whom were students. The PROCESS Macro Model 4 was used to analyze the direct and indirect effects between the variables. The results indicate that ethnic identity has a significant influence on career orientation and is positively related to OGO. However, OGO does not play a significant mediating role in the relationship between ethnic identity and career orientation. These findings emphasize the importance of ethnic identity as a psychological resource in career decision-making and suggest that its influence is direct and contextual, particularly in collectivist cultures such as Javanese society. Practical implications of the study include recommending that career counselling services in higher education institutions consider cultural identity aspects when designing more meaningful and culturally responsive interventions.

Keywords: ethnic identity, career orientation, orientation towards other groups, Javanese students, career guidance, collectivist culture

INTRODUCTION

Ethnic identity is a crucial aspect of self-concept formation and has a profound impact on an individual's psychosocial development, including their decision-making process for career choices (Phinney, 1992; Syed & Azmitia, 2008). It reflects the extent to which an individual feels connected to, understands, and values their culture, contributing to life direction and self-competence (Yip, Seaton & Sellers, 2006). In a multicultural society like Indonesia, where ethnic diversity is an integral part of everyday social dynamics, ethnic identity serves as a source of pride and a foundation for navigating life choices, including career decisions (Koentjaraningrat, 2009). Several studies on career development suggest that a positive ethnic identity can enhance self-efficacy, resilience, and clarity of career goals (Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005; Oyserman, 2008). Those with a strong ethnic identity tend to have greater internal control over their future and demonstrate greater persistence in pursuing their career aspirations (Byars-Winston et al., 2010). These findings are consistent with Erikson's (1968) theory of identity development, which posits that achieving identity is fundamental to committing to social roles in adulthood, including those in work and profession.

Conversely, the relationship between ethnic identity and career orientation is inextricably linked to the social context in which individuals interact. One important aspect is Other Group Orientation (OGO), which reflects the extent to which individuals are open to and comfortable interacting with different ethnic or cultural groups (Phinney, 1992; Barry & Grilo, 2003). Some studies suggest that individuals with high OGO possess better social skills, contributing to career

flexibility and adaptability (Berry, 2005; Chhuon & Hudley, 2008). However, other studies suggest that the influence of openness to other groups on career outcomes depends heavily on the cultural values and social structures of the society in which individuals are embedded (Leong & Serafica, 2001; Syed, 2010). The Javanese cultural context provides a unique framework for understanding the relationship between ethnic identity, orientation towards other groups, and career orientation, given that the Javanese are one of the largest ethnic groups in Indonesia. Javanese culture is known for its collectivist values, which emphasize harmony, social cohesion, and submission to communal norms (Geertz, 1961; Mulder, 2001). In such a culture, strengthening ethnic identity does not necessarily conflict with openness towards other groups; however, local values may dominate in shaping individuals' career perceptions.

However, the majority of dominant career development theories, such as Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 2000) and Identity Status Theory (Marcia, 1980), were developed within the framework of Western, more individualistic cultures. This raises questions about the relevance of these models in collectivist and multicultural societies. In other words, there is a need to explore the local dynamics of the relationship between ethnic identity and career orientation, including the possible mediating role of variables such as orientation towards other groups. Against this backdrop, the present study aims to examine the relationship between ethnic identity, orientation towards other groups, and career orientation among Javanese ethnic students in Indonesia. Specifically, the study will seek to determine whether an orientation towards other groups mediates the influence of ethnic identity on career orientation. The study is expected to expand the theoretical understanding of career development dynamics in a collective cultural context, providing practical implications for the development of responsive career guidance services.

METHODS

This study takes a quantitative, correlational approach to examine the relationship between ethnic identity, Other Group Orientation (OGO), and career orientation among Javanese students. The study's conceptual model is based on the simple mediation framework (Model 4) in the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2022). Ethnic identity is the predictor variable (X), orientation towards other groups is the mediator variable (M), and career orientation is the dependent variable (Y). The sample consisted of 65 students who participated voluntarily. A non-probability sampling technique with a purposive approach was used to select participants based on their Javanese ethnic identity.

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), developed by Phinney (1992), was examined in relation to ethnic identity and other-group orientation. Overall, it consists of 23 items and is a combination of two scale that is, ethnic identity scale, 14 item (e.g., I have spent time trying to find out more about my own ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs), and other-group orientation scale, 6 item (e.g., I like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than my own), while the other three items are sub scale to show self-identification. However, the other-group orientation scale analyzed only five items because one item is not valid, i.e., "I enjoy being around people from ethnic groups other than my own."

The statements that may agree or disagree are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 4 "Strongly agree". In the present study, ethnic identity instrument validity using product moment with score (0.328 - 0.657), and instrument reliability using Cronbach's alpha were respectively: 0.791. While the other-group orientation instrument validity score (0.116 - 0.613), and reliability score $r = 0.569$. The current research employed a back-translation procedure

prior to the data retrieval process, i.e., “I have spent time trying to find out more about my own ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs.” After the back translation analysis process became “*Saya meluangkan waktu untuk mencoba mengetahui lebih lanjut tentang kelompok etnis saya sendiri, seperti sejarah, tradisi, dan adat istiadat*”. To validate the Indonesian versions of the MEIM, the questionnaires were translated from English into Indonesian. The translated items were back-translated into English, and a comparison was made between the back-translated items and the original questionnaire to inform the final, optimized version in Indonesian.

The Career Orientation Scale (Amin, Kurniawan, Nusantara & Amin, 2021) was used to measure the level of readiness, goals, and career direction of the participants. All instruments were adapted and validated in advance, taking into account the local cultural context. Data analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro for SPSS version 4.2, employing bootstrapping mediation techniques with 5,000 samples (Hayes, 2022), to examine the direct and indirect effects between the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A descriptive analysis of the three main variables in this study — Ethnic Identity, Other Group Orientation (OGO), and Career Orientation — revealed mean values and data distributions that reflected the general tendencies of the participants. The Ethnic Identity variable ($M = 40.89$, $SD = 5.19$) indicates that most students in the sample have a relatively high and consistent level of awareness of their ethnic identity. The OGO variable ($M = 18.26$; $SD = 2.75$) shows that openness towards other groups tends to be moderate and fairly varied. Meanwhile, the career orientation variable ($M = 71.26$; $SD = 6.45$) indicates that students generally have a clear sense of career direction and goals. Correlations between the variables show that ethnic identity is significantly and positively correlated with OGO ($r = 0.43$, $p < 0.01$) and career orientation ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$). However, the relationship between OGO and career orientation is not significant ($r = 0.14$). These findings support the results of further analysis, which show that ethnic identity is a significant factor in shaping students' career orientation.

Table 1: Preliminary Results of Direct Correlation Between Variables

Variabel	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Ethnic Identity	40.89	5.19	-		
2. OGO	18.26	2.75	0.43**	-	
3. Career Orientation	71.26	6.45	0.35**	0.14	-

The results of the analysis suggest that ethnic identity has a significant influence on orientation towards other groups (Other Group Orientation, or OGO) and career orientation among Javanese students. Regression analysis shows that ethnic identity positively predicts OGO, with a β coefficient of 0.23 and a p-value of < 0.01 . This suggests that the stronger an individual's ethnic identity, the more open they are towards other ethnic groups. Furthermore, ethnic identity has a direct and significant effect on career orientation ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that students with a strong ethnic identity tend to have a clearer sense of direction and career goals.

Table 2. Specific Direct, Indirect, and Conditional Indirect Effects

Predictor	Dependent variable model (specific direct effects)			
	β	SE	t	p
Outcome: OGO				
Ethnic Identity	0.23**	0.06	3.75	0.00
Outcome: Career Orientation				
1. Ethnic Identity	0.45**	0.16	2.74	0.00
2. OGO	-0.04	0.30	-0.14	0.89
	Indirect effects			
	β	SE	Bootstrapping BC 95 % CI	
Mediator			Lower	Higher
OGO	-0.01	0.06	-0.13	0.13

Note: * ($p < 0.05$), ** ($p < 0.001$)

Conversely, there was no significant relationship between OGO and career orientation ($\beta = -0.04$, $p = 0.89$). A mediation test using bootstrapping with 5,000 samples revealed that the indirect impact of ethnic identity on career orientation via OGO was insignificant, with the 95% confidence interval encompassing zero ($CI = [-0.1284, 0.1294]$). Therefore, it can be concluded that ethnic identity directly influences career orientation, but this influence is not mediated by attitudes towards other groups.

The results of this study confirm that ethnic identity has a significant influence on the career orientation of Javanese ethnic students. This finding reinforces the view that cultural identity serves as both a psychological resource and a social marker, shaping important life decisions, including career choices (Erikson, 1968; Phinney, 1992). A strong ethnic identity provides a sense of belonging, meaning, and social position clarity, encouraging individuals to have more confidence when planning and taking career steps.

There is empirical support for this in the form of a statistically significant direct relationship between ethnic identity and career orientation. This aligns with previous study findings indicating that individuals with positive ethnic identities tend to exhibit greater perseverance in the face of career challenges, stronger commitment to professional goals, and greater resistance to external pressures (Yip, Seaton & Sellers, 2006; Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005). Furthermore, ethnic identity has also been associated with higher self-efficacy and a greater sense of control over one's career future (Oyserman, 2008). Thus, ethnic identity can serve as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), offering symbolic and psychological benefits in career orientation.

Interestingly, although ethnic identity was found to be positively correlated with orientation towards other groups (Other Group Orientation/OGO), OGO did not play a significant mediating role between ethnic identity and career orientation. This suggests that openness towards other groups is not the primary mechanism through which cultural identity influences career orientation in this context. This finding can be explained in the context of Javanese culture, which is collectivist and oriented towards social harmony. In this context, ethnic identity does not inherently create distance or conflict with other groups, but rather runs parallel with values of cohesion and harmony (Mulder, 2001; Geertz, 1961).

In Javanese society, self-identity is strongly influenced by social relationships and shared values such as *unguh-ungguh*, *tepa selira*, and *rasa*. These values prioritize social integration over self-assertion within the structure of intergroup relations (Koentjaraningrat, 2009). Consequently,

while individuals are open to other groups, this openness is primarily an expression of the value of harmony rather than a strategic tool for career development. The absence of the OGO mediation effect also allows for criticism of universal career development models, which are often based on individualistic Western contexts. Models such as Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000) and Identity Status Theory (Marcia, 1980) emphasize the importance of social experience and self-exploration; however, they fail to adequately consider local socio-cultural contexts. In collectivist cultures such as Indonesia, career orientation is more influenced by the internalization of ethnic values, social expectations, and hierarchical relationships within families and communities (Nugroho & Hidayah, 2019).

Cross-cultural studies also demonstrate that career motivations and preferences are not universal. Leong and Serafica (2001) emphasize that, within Asian communities, career decisions are frequently influenced by family considerations rather than being solely the result of personal exploration. In this context, a strong ethnic identity can align personal aspirations with community norms without requiring interaction with other groups. In practice, these findings imply that career development approaches for Indonesian students, particularly those from majority ethnic groups such as the Javanese, must consider the strength of ethnic identity as a basis for intervention. Career guidance programs should develop technical skills and future planning abilities, while also fostering an understanding of cultural identity as a foundation for self-confidence and career aspirations. The culturally responsive career guidance practices developed by Pope (2000) are highly relevant in this context, as this approach values the identity factors and socio-cultural contexts that shape individual career orientations.

On the other hand, efforts to promote tolerance and multicultural attitudes remain important in the context of character education and the strengthening of social democracy. However, based on these findings, these values may have a greater impact on general social life than on individual career decisions. Therefore, career guidance policies and services need to adopt a contextual approach that considers local identity dimensions while fostering reflective thinking about diversity.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that ethnic identity has a significant influence on the career choices of Javanese students. Having a strong ethnic identity has been proven to provide psychological support, offering clarity of direction and individual commitment when planning future careers. However, orientation towards other groups (Other Group Orientation) does not mediate this relationship, suggesting that social openness is not the main way in which cultural identity influences career development in collectivist cultures.

These findings underscore the importance of considering the socio-cultural context when understanding career orientation dynamics and suggest that career models developed in individualistic societies require adaptation for use in countries such as Indonesia. In practice, these results suggest that career development interventions in higher education should incorporate cultural identity as a foundation for strengthening students' self-concept and career direction. A culture-based approach would be more effective in shaping meaningful, contextualized career orientations, particularly for ethnic groups with strong collective value systems.

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