

Cross Cutting Affiliation Moderating Ethnic Socialisation Influence Towards Social Distance Amongst Indonesian Chinese Students in Jakarta and Surabaya

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Abstract

As a multi-ethnic country, Indonesia will always face the challenge of social distance amongst its ethnicities. The multicultural setting has made each ethnicity possessing a different culture. This means that each ethnicity does not only perceive itself differently but also has a different perception towards the others. Such diversities made each ethnicity has its own 'life world'. 'Life world' includes religious cultural traditions, collective memories, relation forms, and solidarity values inheritance. One of the most common discussed social distance issues is between Indonesian Chinese (Tionghoa) and non-Indonesian Chinese. Previous studies noted the relation between social distance with ethnic identification. Ethnic identification consequently is attached with ethnic socialisation. However, the high ethnic awareness does not automatically produce ethnic bias. The circumstance resulted due to cross-cutting affiliation. Our research focuses on such issues. This study was conducted in Jakarta and Surabaya due to the multi-ethnicities' nature of the two cities. We employ confirmatory quantitative method as our research method in examining ethnic socialisation, social distance, and cross-cutting affiliation. We have 266 respondents (68.8% female and 31.2% male) who are Indonesian Chinese students and 18-23 years old for this research. Our research reveals the negative impacts of ethnic socialisation towards social distance as well as the role cross-cutting affiliation as moderator variable. The Indonesian Chinese youth respondents in this research show significant social distance towards non-Indonesian Chinese ethnicities. Such notable social distance resulted from the negative impacts of their ethnic socialisation experience. The most distinguished element from ethnic socialisation is cultural socialisation. The existence of cross cutting affiliation can lessen the negative impacts.

Keywords: *Ethnic Socialisation, Indonesian Chinese, Social Distance, Cross-Cutting Affiliation, Youth.*

Introduction

Indonesia, as an archipelagic country, owns the largest territory among other archipelagic countries. Indonesia has more than 205 ethnicities, which are located across 14,000 islands. Thus, the country is perceived as a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural country (Warnaen, 2002). The multicultural condition has caused each of the ethnicities to possess a different culture. This means, each of the ethnicity not only perceive itself differently but also the others. The circumstance consequently has established each 'life world' which is different between one ethnicity to another. 'Life world' includes religious and cultural traditions, collective memories, relational forms, and solidarity values inheritance (Sinaga, 2023).

Such differences could produce social distance. Social distance is a social barrier between individuals and groups. Social distance not only covers differences, such as social class, ethnicities/race, genders, or sexualities, but also the fact that a group member is not well integrated compared to other members of the same group (López, 2021). The wider social distance has a negative relation with an individual's closeness with other ethnic members (Suryani et al., 2019). Social distance

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is influenced by a couple of things, such as demographic factors or age, gender, or education, as well as interethnic contact (Preiss et al., 2023; Slebir & Supancic, 2024).

One of the most discussed social distance topics is between Indonesian Chinese and non-Indonesian Chinese. The social distance between Indonesian Chinese and non-Indonesian Chinese is marked by stereotypes, social prejudices, and discriminatory practices (Wibawa et al., 2022). Markali's study on Indonesian Chinese and Javanese students revealed that social distance is related to ethnic identification (Markali, 2007).

Ethnic identification, consequently, is attached to ethnic socialisation. Hughes et al (2006) outlined four dimensions of ethnic socialisation: cultural socialisation, preparation of bias, promotion of mistrust, and pluralism. Ethnic socialisation includes parents' conceptualisation of racial identity development, which is channelled from childhood, adolescence, to adulthood (Carlo et al., 2025; Glover et al., 2024; Jones & Rogers, 2023; Kim et al., 2025; Simons et al., 2025). Parents' ethnic socialisation could form beliefs and behaviour of their child regarding ethnic identity (Liejanty & Pudjiati, 2022).

However, the high level of ethnic awareness does not always produce ethnic bias. This condition occurred due to the existence of cross-cutting affiliation (Ninawati, 2024). According to Nasikun (2016), cross-cutting affiliation is an interaction between groups with different identities. Meanwhile, Crisp in Brewer (2009) labelled it as cross-cutting categories, a condition whereby an individual owns more than one social identity.

Research Question

The research question of this study is: What are the impacts of ethnic socialization on the social distance between Indonesian Chinese and non-Indonesian Chinese, with cross-cutting affiliation moderation among Indonesian Chinese youths?

Method

This study employs a non-experimental confirmatory quantitative approach (Zhaugnessy et al., 2021). The subjects of this research are Indonesian Chinese students who expressed their willingness to be our study's participants. The criteria of the respondents are those who see themselves as Indonesian Chinese with both Indonesian Chinese parents, or either Indonesian Chinese mother or father. The research was conducted in Jakarta and Surabaya. We chose Surabaya and Jakarta as these two cities are the largest and second largest cities in Indonesia, respectively, and their a multiethnic nature.

Our subjects are predominantly female (68.8% female and 31.2% male). The age of the respondents is between 18-23 years old, with 19 years old (38.3%) as the largest group. Most of the respondents are in their fourth semester (43.2%). Regarding their Indonesian Chinese lineage, most of them have the heredity from both parents. See Table 1 for further information on the background of the subjects.

Table 1 Respondents' Demographic Data

		Jakarta (N = 146)		Surabaya (N = 120)		Total (N = 266)	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Gender	Female	99	67.8	84	70.0	183	68.8
	Male	47	32.2	36	30.0	83	31.2
Age	18	21	14.4	27	22.5	48	18.0
	19	47	32.2	55	45.8	102	38.3
	20	64	43.8	20	16.7	84	31.6
	21	8	5.5	12	10.0	20	7.5

	22	4	2.7	3	2.5	7	2.6
	23	2	1.4	3	2.5	5	1.9
Semester	2	36	24.7	65	54.2	101	38.0
	4	85	58.2	30	25.0	115	43.2
	6	23	15.8	18	15.0	41	15.4
	8	2	1.4	7	5.8	9	3.4
Indonesian Chinese Lineage	Father & Mother	133	91.1	107	89.2	240	90.2
	Father	9	6.2	8	6.7	17	6.4
	Mother	4	2.7	5	4.2	9	3.4

We use Hughes (2006)'s measurement tool of ethnic socialisation, of which each variable was arranged and tested to identify variable validity and reliability.

Table 2. Variable Validity and Reliability Test Result

Dimension	Before Variable Test		After Variable Test	
	Total Variable	Alpha Cronbach	Total Variable	Alpha Cronbach
Cultural Socialisation	6	0.856	6	0.856
Preparation of Bias	4	0.532	3	0.714
Promotion of Mistrust	3	0.570	3	0.570
Pluralism	5	0.378	3	0.667

This research utilises 'the Bogardus social distance scale' as the social distance scale (Wark & Galliher, 2007). This tool measures the willingness of the respondents to accept individuals from different groups with the respondents in some matters. We employ five out of seven Bogardus scales: 1. Marriage, 2. Close friend, 3. Neighbour, 4. Same work colleagues, 5. Fellow Indonesian citizens. Meanwhile, cross-cutting affiliation is determined through respondents' involvement in activities and social organisations that involve people with different ethnicities.

Result and Discussion

Table 3 shows the social distance of our respondents. It was only a small portion of the respondents who had close social distance with non-Indonesian Chinese. 59 respondents, or 22.2% of them, agree and very agree regarding marriage with non-Indonesian Chinese. Meanwhile, Table 3 indicates that a wider social distance was opted for by most respondents. There are 95.9% of respondents who agree and very agree to accept non-Indonesian Chinese as fellow Indonesian citizens.

The lion's share of our respondents possesses long social distance, which can be formed due to stereotypes, social prejudice, and remnants of discriminative practices (Verawati & Salim, 2018; Wibawa et al., 2022; Yulia & Nulhaqim, 2021).

Table 3: Respondents' Social Distance Data

		Very Agree		Not Agree		Somewhat Agree		Agree		Very Agree	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	I agree to marry a non-Indonesian Chinese.	41	15.4	92	34.6	74	27.8	45	16.9	14	5.3
2	I am open to having non-Indonesian Chinese as best friends.	1	.4	1	.4	20	7.5	102	38.3	142	53.4
3	I am willing to have non-Indonesian Chinese neighbours.	2	.8	1	.4	22	8.3	110	41.4	131	49.2
4	I accept non-Indonesian Chinese colleagues to collaborate.	0	0	0	0	16	6.0	117	44.0	133	50.0
5	I accept non-Indonesian Chinese people as fellow Indonesian citizens.	0	0	0	0	11	4.1	92	34.6	163	61.3

Table 4 describes the pattern of the respondents' ethnic socialisation. Compared to the other dimensions, the cultural socialisation dimension appears as the most dominant element in ethnic socialisation, with a 3.5426 mean. Meanwhile, others have a lower mean.

Table 4. Respondents' Data on Ethnic Socialisation Dimension

Dimension	Mean	Std. Deviation	Information
<i>Cultural socialization</i>	3.5426	0.64741	Tends to be high
<i>Preparation of bias</i>	3.1140	0.84622	Around mean
<i>Promotion of mistrust</i>	3.1779	0.80465	Around mean
<i>Pluralism</i>	3.3521	0.64107	Tends to be high

Dominant cultural socialisation in ethnic socialisation was also discovered in Houston-Dial et al. (2025) and Gonzales et al. (2025) studies. Their studies showed that cultural socialisation is related to racial centrality.

Table 5: Respondents' Data on Cross-Cutting Affiliation

		Yes, Indonesian Chinese Members Only		Yes, Multiethnic Members		No	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	Are you a member of a religious group on campus?	15	5.6	78	29.3	173	65.0
2	Are you a member of a religious group outside campus?	0	0	99	37.2	167	62.8
3	Are you a member of an art/ culture organisation (choir, dance, theatre, drama, etc) on campus?	3	1.1	62	23.3	201	75.6
4	Are you a member of an art/culture organisation (choir, dance, theatre, drama, etc) outside campus?	4	1.5	30	11.3	232	87.2
5	Are you a member of a sports organisation on campus?	3	1.1	64	24.1	199	74.8
6	Are you a member of a sports organisation outside campus?	4	1.5	50	18.8	212	79.7
7	Are you a member of a student organisation (executive student body, legislative student body, etc.) on campus?	5	1.9	146	54.9	115	43.2
8	Are you a member of a civil society organisation (youth organisation, CSO, etc.) outside campus?	0	0	27	10.2	239	89.8

Table 5 demonstrates respondents' data on their participation in various organisations. We look at those activities to examine cross-cutting affiliation indicators. We include the information on whether the organisation includes only Indonesian Chinese or a multiethnic one. Most of our respondents do not join any campus or outside organisations. For those subjects who participate in organisations, they join multiethnic member organisations. Next is the test result between ethnic socialisation towards social distance that is moderated by cross-cutting affiliation amongst Indonesian Chinese students.

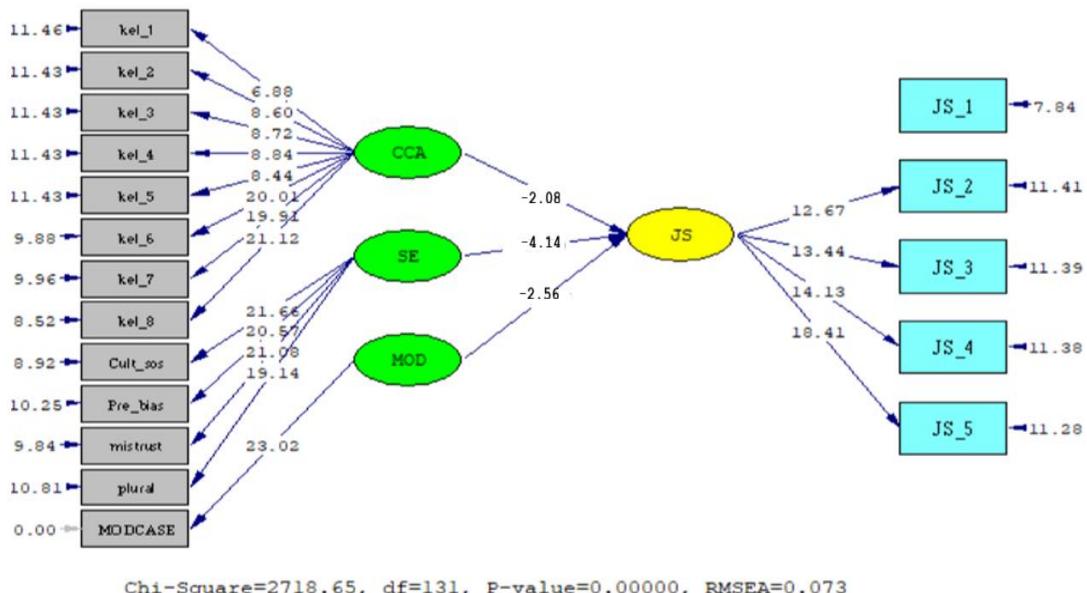


Diagram I: Test Result Using T-Value

Based on the T Values Output, this is the result:

ROLE TEST	t Values	R ²	INFORMATION
CCA→ JS	-2.08 > -1.96	0.82	Negative and significant role
SE→ JS	-4.14 > -1.96		Negative and significant role
MOD→ JS	-2.56 > -1.96		Negative and significant role (MODERATOR CCA x SE)

Information: CCA: Cross-Cutting Affiliation

SE: Ethnic Socialisation

JS: Social Distance

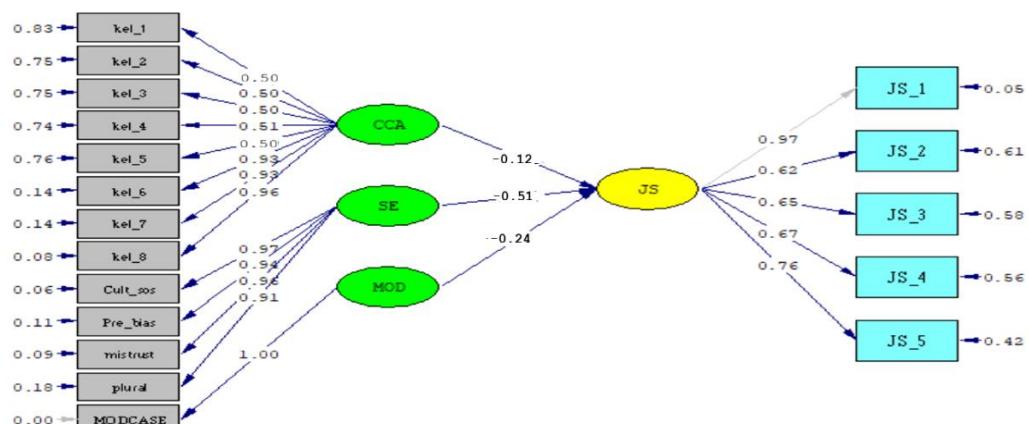


Diagram 2: Test Result with Standardised

The test result reveals cross-cutting affiliation (CCA)'s function as a moderator variable, as the CCA variable can increase and decrease the influence value occurring between the independent variable (ethnic socialisation / SE) and dependent variable (social distance / JS). The next result from the CFA process is a fit test model based on the measure result (the output can be seen in Goodness of Fit). Based on several fit model indicators, it can be said that the measurement tool is fit, as 10 out of 11 indicators fulfilled. This is the result:

GOF Measurement	Fit Target	Information
Normal Theory Weighted Least Squares Chi-Square = 2718.65 (P = 0.000)	P Value > 0.05	No Fit
RMSEA = 0.073	< 0.05 atau $0.05 \leq \text{RMSEA} < 0.08$	Medium Fit
NFI = 0.93	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
NNFI = 0.92	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
CFI = 0.94	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
IFI = 0.94	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
RFI = 0.94	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
RMR = 0.049	≤ 0.10	Good Fit
Standardised RMR = 0.017	≤ 0.10	Good Fit
GFI = 0.91	≥ 0.90	Good Fit
AGFI = 0.90	≥ 0.90	Good Fit

Based on the test result, SE negatively influences JS with a -0.51 value, existing in a moderate range. The influence of SE on JS is decreased if the CC moderator is included. Meanwhile, CCA is negatively impacting JS.

The negative impact of SE on JS also appeared in Yin et al. (2019)'s study. However, this contrasts with what Hai et al (2025) revealed in their research. Hai et al (2025) noted that strong ethnic identity is related to short social distance.

The negative impact of CCA on JS in this research also appeared in Williamson et al. (2024)'s research. Williamson et al. (2024) discovered that reducing social distance can be done through improving contacts and cooperation between groups.

Conclusion

Amongst Indonesian Chinese youth respondents in this research, most of them have a long social distance towards non-Indonesian Chinese. Such social distance resulted from the negative impact of ethnic socialisation that they experienced. In such ethnic socialisation, the most dominant dimension is cultural socialisation. Cultural socialisation seems to have strengthened private matters related to Indonesian Chinese culture, such as marriage, friendship, and neighbourliness.

Such negative impact will be decreased by cross-cutting affiliation, notably respondents' participation in organisations or activities that involve non-Indonesian Chinese. Thus, Indonesian Chinese youths must be involved in those actions. Ethnic socialisation in a multicultural society cannot be treated as the sole factor in determining social harmony.

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