



The Dualistic Reality of Path to Progress for Indonesian Youths

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This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia, with over 100 million active workforces, faces unique challenges in youth progression. Path to progress, in various forms of socio-economic dimensions, is crucial for society with an enormous size of youths population. This "large demand" for progression is now colliding with two forces: the digital technology revolution and increasing trends of nepotism. Indonesia, nor other countries, have facing this unique situation. Hence, a "cookie-cutter" approach for past problems or for other societies with no similarity in terms of socio-economic settings, cultural norms and identity, and size of demography will present out-of-date solutions, or even creating new problems. This paper is part of a broader research to provide an inclusive framework in understanding and navigating social complexity. This paper is a starting point for showing a construction of social phenomenon through the lens of inclusive framework. This paper explores the dualistic reality that constrains Indonesian youth: the entrenched power of "orang dalam" (insiders) and the magnetic allure of virtual fame. Through a comprehensive literature review and synthesis, this study

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examines the co-existence and convergence of these pathways through the intercultural lense. We find that not only the dual pathways co-exist, but they also alarmingly converging. These dual pathways have become the primary, yet limited, spectrum of opportunities, overshadowing meritocracy and competency. Incorporating an intercultural understanding enabling us to construct the interplay between both pathways. An inclusive framework and approach will support an effective reform for fostering merit-based pathways to progress, without diminishing Indonesia's cultural identity.

Keywords: Indonesian youth; orang dalam; virtual fame; meritocracy; socio-cultural factors; youth progression.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, a nation rich in cultural diversity and economic potential, is home to a youthful population that represents a significant portion of its active workforce. With over 100 million individuals contributing to the labor market, the country's future hinges on the successful progression of its youth. However, the pathways to progress for Indonesian youths are often constrained by a dualistic reality characterized by the entrenched power of insiders, known locally as "orang dalam," and the magnetic allure of virtual fame. These dual realities have become the de-facto limited spectrum of opportunities available to young Indonesians, creating substantial hurdles for those aspiring to advance based on merit and competency [1-4].

The "orang dalam" phenomenon is a phenomenon where connections and insider influence often dictate access to opportunities [5,6]. This reality is not new; recent political events merely highlight the tip of the iceberg. The pervasive nature of insider connections means that even highly competent individuals may find it challenging to progress without the right networks. This entrenched system perpetuates a cycle where meritocracy is overshadowed by the need to have the right connections to succeed [7-11].

In parallel, the rise of social media has dramatically transformed societal perceptions of success. The meteoric ascent of social media personalities has redefined what it means to be successful in Indonesia. Virtual fame often triumphs over competency, with society placing a higher value on impact and visibility than on genuine skill and achievement [12-16].

This shift is evident in various sectors, where even the brightest minds feel compelled to cultivate a strong public persona to gain recognition and opportunities [17-19]. Anecdotal

evidence underscores this trend; for instance, social media personalities frequently overshadow the achievements of winners in academic competitions such as the Math Olympiads. Recent tv show featuring competition among top students from universities further validates the reality that competency needs to compete in the media show to gain further recognition [20-23].

Exposure through digital platforms has become a crucial path to success in contemporary Indonesian society. While digital technology might seem to diminish the power of insider connections by eliminating intermediaries in economic and social transactions, evidence suggests that both the "orang dalam" and "virtual exposure" pathways not only coexist but also reinforce each other. This dual path reliance poses significant risks, potentially undermining other pathways to progress that prioritize merit and competency [24-29].

As Indonesia aims to achieve its Vision 2045, which envisions the country as a developed nation, the dominance of these limited paths to progress presents significant challenges. It risks perpetuating a cycle where meritocracy and competency are sidelined, limiting the opportunities for a large active workforce to progress.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The "Orang Dalam" Phenomenon

The "orang dalam" phenomenon significantly impacts the progression of youth in the country. The reliance on personal networks often overrides merit-based criteria, making it difficult for those without connections to succeed.

This phenomenon is not unique to Indonesia but is particularly pronounced due to the country's socio-cultural context and historical reliance on hierarchical relationships. In Hollywood, "nepo

babies”—children of famous parents—are common. The debate revolves around the fairness of the additional opportunities and safety net they receive due to their parents' fame, network, and wealth. Gwyneth Paltrow noted that family connections can be a disadvantage, as those who benefit from them must work twice as hard to prove themselves (*The Guardian*, Dec 2022). Conversely, Kaia Gerber, daughter of Cindy Crawford, acknowledged that her parents' status has certainly aided her career (*Page Six*, Feb 2024). For those without rich and famous parents, virtual fame often becomes the alternative path to success.

This nepotism phenomena went beyond the entertainment industry. A working paper done by Staiger (2023) mentioned that one third of Americans that work for the same firm as their parents earn 20% more than others. What's intriguing is that Staiger claimed that this phenomena is driven mainly by the blue collar workforce where parents help their children to get their job.

In US politics, US President Kennedy's appointment of his 35-year-old brother Robert Francis Kennedy as the attorney general of the United States was controversial. When Donald Trump was president of the US, he exemplified this by filling the White House with loyalists and unqualified family members, including his daughter Ivanka Trump and son-in-law Jared Kushner (*The Boston Globe*, 2021).

Loxton (2024) shows that political-nepo babies is a global phenomenon called by the term hereditary democracy. Loxton explains Hereditary democracy as “*the phenomenon whereby the children, spouses, or other close family members of powerful politicians are themselves elected to high office*”. This study finds that hereditary democracies today outnumber hereditary autocracies. Or in Loxton's words, The Trudeau's of the world are more numerous than the Assads.

Recent political events in Indonesia have shown similar phenomena, the pervasive influence of "orang dalam". High-profile corruption cases and nepotism scandals have brought to light the extent to which insider connections dictate political and economic outcomes. For instance, the involvement of family members in government positions has sparked public outrage and calls for greater transparency and accountability. These events underscore the

systemic nature of the "orang dalam" phenomenon and its implications for governance and development.

The impact of "orang dalam" on meritocracy is profound. In a system where connections trump competency, young Indonesians often find themselves at a disadvantage if they do not have the right networks. This can lead to a demotivated workforce and a brain drain, as talented individuals seek opportunities abroad where merit is more likely to be recognized and rewarded. The increasing number of working holiday visa influencers in social media is another example of how Indonesian youths are seeking cross-border opportunities to progress. The World Economic Forum has noted that without addressing these structural issues, Indonesia risks stifling innovation and economic growth (World Economic Forum, 2020).

In addition to its impact on the workforce, the "orang dalam" phenomenon also affects educational and career outcomes. Research indicates that students and graduates often rely on personal connections to secure internships and jobs, perpetuating a cycle where opportunities are not equally accessible to all. This creates a barrier to social mobility and exacerbates existing inequalities. UNICEF's reports highlight that marginalized youth, particularly those from rural areas, face significant challenges in accessing quality education and employment opportunities due to the lack of connections (UNICEF Indonesia, 2020).

Furthermore, the "orang dalam" system reinforces gender disparities. Women often face additional hurdles in leveraging insider connections, which are predominantly male dominated. This limits their participation in the workforce and hinders efforts to achieve gender equality. Empowering women through targeted programs that focus on building professional networks and mentorship can help address this imbalance. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) emphasizes the need for inclusive policies that promote equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender or social background (UNDP, 2022).

2.2 Popularity vs. Competency

The rise of social media has dramatically transformed how success is perceived in Indonesia, with virtual fame often overshadowing

competency. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have given rise to a new class of influencers who command significant attention and influence. This shift has led to a societal preference for visibility and impact over genuine skill and expertise. The phenomenon is evident in various sectors, including entertainment, politics, and even academia.

One striking example of this trend is the popularity of reality show champions compared to winners of academic competitions like the Math Olympiad. While reality show stars enjoy widespread recognition and lucrative endorsements, academic achievers often remain in relative obscurity. This disparity highlights the societal bias towards popularity, where the ability to attract attention is often valued more than intellectual or technical prowess. Studies suggest that this emphasis on virtual fame can discourage young people from pursuing careers that require rigorous academic training and hard work (World Economic Forum, 2020).

The allure of virtual fame also affects career aspirations and choices among Indonesian youth. Many young people are increasingly drawn to careers in content creation and social media influence, perceiving them as more rewarding and glamorous compared to traditional professions. This trend raises concerns about the sustainability of such career paths and the potential neglect of critical fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). UNICEF's reports indicate that while digital skills are important, a balanced approach that also promotes STEM education is crucial for long-term economic growth (UNICEF Indonesia, 2020).

Moreover, the emphasis on popularity can lead to a superficial understanding of success, where the process and effort involved are often overlooked. In contrast, true competency involves dedication, continuous learning, and the ability to solve complex problems. The societal focus on instant gratification and visibility can undermine the values of perseverance and resilience that are essential for genuine achievement. The World Economic Forum emphasizes the importance of cultivating a culture that values deep learning and skill development alongside digital literacy (World Economic Forum, 2020).

The impact of this trend extends to the labor market, where employers may prioritize

candidates with strong personal brands and social media presence over those with substantive expertise. This can distort hiring practices and lead to a workforce that is not optimally skilled for the challenges of the modern economy. Addressing this issue requires a concerted effort to redefine success and promote a more holistic view that values both impact and competency. Initiatives that highlight the achievements of individuals in STEM fields and other critical areas can help shift societal perceptions and inspire young people to pursue diverse career paths (UNICEF Indonesia, 2020).

In conclusion, while virtual fame offers new opportunities for self-expression and entrepreneurship, it is essential to strike a balance that also values competency and merit. By fostering a culture that celebrates both visibility and skill, Indonesia can create a more dynamic and resilient workforce capable of driving sustainable development. Programs that integrate digital skills with traditional competencies can provide young people with the tools they need to succeed in a rapidly changing world (World Economic Forum, 2020).

2.3 The Co-existence of the Dualistic Reality

This paper utilises intercultural perspective to provide the structure in constructing how these dual pathways of progression grow and co-exist in Indonesia. A comparison of Indonesia and Australia culture map is shown in the following Culture Map from Erin Meyer.

We chose Australia for culture comparison with Indonesia as one of the countries with significant cultural differences. Nepotism itself is not illegal in Australia, but it is considered unethical. The Fair Work Act 2009 does not specifically prohibit nepotism, but it does prohibit discrimination based on family or relationship status. Under Scott Morrison's leadership, crony capitalism in Australia has escalated significantly. This government favours politically connected businesses over those competing fairly in the market. (*Sydney Morning Herald, Sept 2023*). The study, published in the Australian Journal of Public Administration found that the most common types of workplace corruption witnessed by APS employees related to favouritism – cronyism (the preferential treatment of friends), followed by nepotism (the preferential treatment of family members*). Students from private schools tend to be more successful, not because

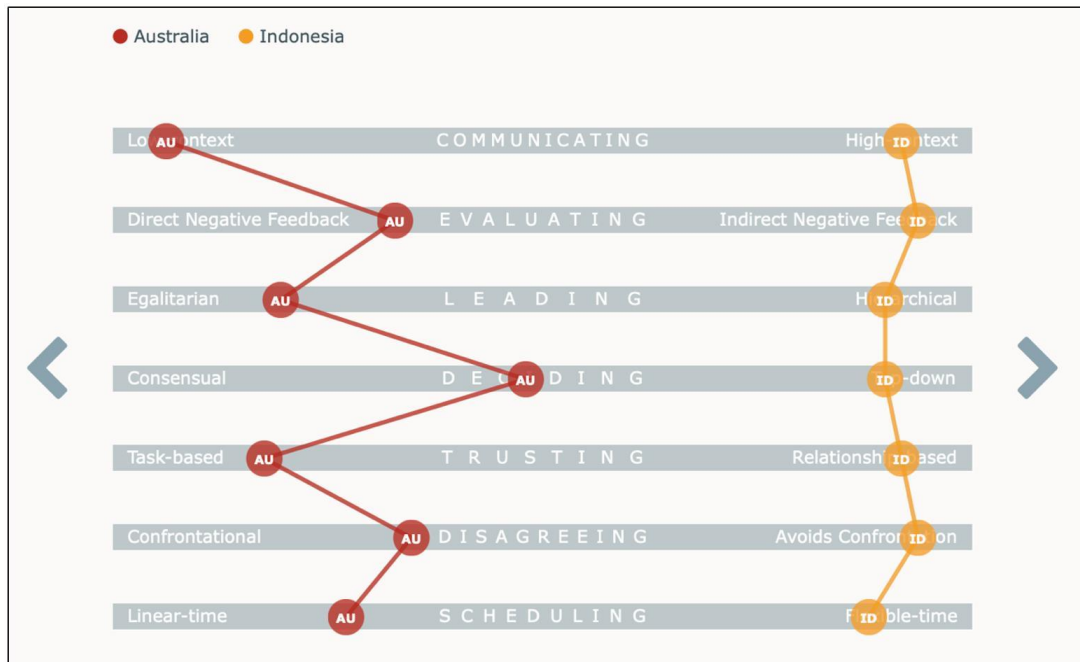


Fig. 1. Culture Map by Erin Meyer

of their quality of education, but because of nepotism after they leave school. (*Daily Mail* 25 March 2024).

As we shown earliner, nepotism or “orang dalam” phenomena is a global phenomena that occur across different culture. Hence, the intercultural comparison was done to provide the baseline for exploring socio-cultural complexities related to the orang dalam phenomena. Let’s take the Trust and Leading dimensions of the culture map as an example.

The concept of relationship-based trust provides more opportunities for the emergence of the “orang dalam” phenomenon. In a society where personal connections are paramount, trust is built through long-term relationships and loyalty rather than through formal credentials or demonstrated competence. This cultural trait can perpetuate insider connections as a primary means of accessing opportunities. Therefore, the definition of connections goes beyond immediate family members and relatives.

High power distance index is another critical factor that sustains the existence of both pathways to progress in Indonesia. In societies with high power distance index, hierarchical structures are accepted and even expected. This cultural dimension means that authority and decision-making power are often concentrated at

the top, and individuals lower in the hierarchy may have limited opportunities to influence outcomes. This can reinforce the “orang dalam” system, where those in power leverage their positions to benefit their networks.

In high-context culture where indirect communication and implicit understanding are valued, the visibility afforded by virtual fame can enhance one's social capital and influence. This explains why digital platforms, which amplify personal branding and social presence, are so effective in Indonesia. This path is seen as an alternative to people without insider access.

The revolution of digital platforms transformed the pursuit of social status, offering virtual fame as an alternative in cultures valuing hierarchical structures. The “Strava Jockey” phenomenon exemplifies the extreme lengths some individuals will go to attain online recognition, highlighting the potent influence of social media on societal values.

How about countries with low power distance index? Australian culture is often described as having low power distance, emphasizing equality and minimizing hierarchical barriers. However, elite private schools have created a hidden class system, fostering a sense of ‘snobbery’ and entitlement among their alumni. These schools, with their significant resources and prestigious

reputations, provide substantial advantages to their students, perpetuating social stratification and contributing to a class divide that contradicts Australia's broader egalitarian values. For a country that prides itself on giving everyone a fair go, it seems counterintuitive to have artificially created a caste system. (Daily Mail 25 March 2024).

The culture map comparison at this stage confirms "orang dalam" phenomena can occur in different cultural settings. What unique for Indonesia is the convergence of "orang dalam" and virtual fame paths, thus diminishing other paths to progress for Indonesian youths.

Intercultural lens can help us to construct the interplay between the "orang dalam" and virtual fame pathways. A comprehensive understanding of the interplay between the two pathways can inform the development of a multifaceted approach for mitigation and intervention.

Furthermore, the design of initiatives for improving access to progress for the youths can be designed to fit the local culture. For example, the relationship-based trust should be part of the process in developing meritocracy and competency pathways to progress.

2.4 The Convergence

These two pathways to progress: "orang dalam" and virtual fame are now converging, amplified by several factors.

In the political arena, the one person one vote principle makes popular votes crucial in determining who wields power. Hence, social media personalities with broad outreach thrive in key political events. Some are even attempting to participate in the next regional election day by the end of 2024.

In the education sector, low literacy levels and poor performance across various educational metrics hinder merit-based progression. Positive public image significantly outweighs robust dialogues and thought leadership on public issues. The emphasis on crafting a positive public image has led to a growing reliance on social media influencers to legitimize public policy.

In practicality, we can notice the difference between the low- and high-level literacy countries when labelling/branding political candidates during elections. In a low literacy society, political

candidates are labelled based on their physical attributes that are relatively easier to remember, compared to the ideology or programs they are championing for.

The demographic and economic factors are the other two factors amplifying the convergence. Recent studies from Riefky (2024) shows that 8.5 million of Indonesian middle class is now at a lower economic status. This was not good news for Indonesia who just recently learned that there are 10 millions of Generation Z who were not in employment, education, or training. Given the economic challenges and the large volume of the working age population, pragmatism thrives. Digital device and connections are seen as the valuable ways to access opportunities.

2.5 Methodology (Literature Synthesis)

The methodology for this study involved a comprehensive literature synthesis to gather, select, and analyze existing research on the "orang dalam" phenomenon, the rise of virtual fame, and their socio-cultural underpinnings in Indonesia. The process began with an extensive search of academic databases, online repositories, and institutional reports to collect relevant literature. Key sources included peer-reviewed journals, books, policy papers, and empirical studies from reputable organizations such as the World Economic Forum, UNICEF, and the United Nations Development Programme. Keywords used in the search included "orang dalam," "virtual fame," "youth progression in Indonesia," "meritocracy," and "socio-cultural factors."

The selection process involved a systematic review of the collected literature to ensure relevance and quality. Each source was evaluated based on its focus on Indonesian youth and the dualistic pathways of insider connections and virtual fame. Studies that provided empirical data, comprehensive reviews, or significant theoretical insights were prioritized. Additionally, the selection process considered the publication date to ensure the inclusion of recent developments and trends. Duplicate studies and those lacking rigorous methodology were excluded to maintain the integrity and credibility of the synthesis. The literature review covered both qualitative and quantitative research to provide a holistic understanding of the issues.

Once the literature was selected, the synthesis process involved organizing the studies into

thematic categories corresponding to the key areas of interest: the "orang dalam" phenomenon, the rise of virtual fame, and socio-cultural dimensions. This thematic organization facilitated the identification of patterns, common findings, and contrasting perspectives across the studies. The synthesis aimed to integrate insights from multiple sources, providing a coherent narrative that highlights the coexistence and reinforcement of the dualistic pathways. Through this process, the study was able to draw comprehensive conclusions and make informed recommendations based on a wide array of evidence. The synthesis also involved identifying gaps in the existing literature, which informed the discussion on areas requiring further research.

3. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Research Analysis

This table provides an overview of the research articles relevant to the topic of youth progression in Indonesia, focusing on the dualistic pathways of "orang dalam" and virtual fame, and their socio-cultural implications.

Indonesia's youth face a unique dualistic reality in their progression paths, characterized by the entrenched power of "orang dalam" (insiders) and the allure of virtual fame. This dual reality creates a limited spectrum of opportunities, significantly impacting more than 100 million active workforce members. The influence of insider connections and the magnetic appeal of social media fame are deeply ingrained in Indonesian society, affecting various aspects of youth culture, career aspirations, and societal norms. This summary synthesizes key findings from recent research on these phenomena, highlighting their implications and potential solutions.

The relationship-based trust is deeply entrenched in Indonesia youths, especially during the transition to adulthood. Nilan and Mansfield [30] explore how this system is entrenched in youth culture, particularly within the context of Islamic moral propriety and gender separation. Their study highlights the role of technology in maintaining these social bonds, providing a secure environment for youth during their transition to adulthood.

The rise of social media has transformed societal perceptions of success, with virtual fame often overshadowing competency. Andriyana et al. [31] analyze the impact of TikTok on the linguistic behavior of Indonesian adolescents,

demonstrating how social media platforms foster a culture of self-expression and peer interaction. This shift is evident in the preference for popularity over genuine skill, where social media influencers gain significant recognition, and opportunities compared to academically accomplished individuals. The trend of valuing visibility and impact over competency can discourage youth from pursuing careers that require rigorous training and intellectual effort.

Cultural factors play a crucial role in sustaining the dualistic reality faced by Indonesian youth. Meyer's (2014) cultural dimensions, particularly relationship-based trust and high-power distance, provide insights into the persistence of the "orang dalam" system. The cultural adaptation process is further explored by Mayasari [32], who examines the hybrid cultural identity of Indonesians in the Japanese virtual world of Ameba Pigg. The study highlights how cultural adaptation, and the consumption of popular culture influence the formation of identity, demonstrating the interplay between local and global cultural elements.

Youth empowerment through cultural tourism offers a potential pathway for sustainable development and economic growth. Sormin and Sihombing [33] emphasize the transformative role of youth in preserving and promoting cultural heritage in Tipang Village. Their research underscores the importance of authentic cultural experiences and digital promotion in attracting tourists and driving economic benefits. Similarly, Tambunan et al. (2021) highlights the effectiveness of youth activities in cultural tourism development, showcasing their roles as moral forces, social controllers, and agents of change. These studies demonstrate the potential of youth to act as cultural stewards and catalysts for community development.

The influence of social media on cultural identity and social relations is a recurring theme in the research. Cohen [34] explores how traditional Javanese shadow puppet theatre adapts to the digital age, using platforms like Facebook and YouTube to sustain and expand its audience. This adaptation highlights the tension between traditional cultural practices and modern digital consumption. Masruroh et al. [35] analyze the impact of the Korean wave on Indonesian youth, demonstrating how K-pop culture influences local cultural identity and social behavior. These studies illustrate the complex relationship between digital media, cultural identity, and societal change.

Table 1. The dualistic reality of path to progress for Indonesian youths

Paper Title	Authors	Year	Journal	Abstract Summary
Youth culture and Islam in Indonesia	P. Nilan, Michelle Mansfield	2013	Wacana: Journal of the Humanities of Indonesia	Explores Indonesian youth culture through the lens of moral propriety and gender separation in Islam, highlighting how young Indonesians navigate social spaces and technology within these constraints. Provides insights into the intense social bonding among same-sex peers and the role of technology in youth culture.
TikTok Terhadap Variasi Bahasa Kolokial pada Kalangan Remaja Indonesia	Andriyana, Daroe Iswatiningsih, Jenal Mahmud, Ode Evi Yulianti, Ton Thi Thuy Trang	2021	Fon: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia	Analyzes the influence of TikTok on colloquial language variation among Indonesian adolescents, highlighting the social and situational factors contributing to linguistic diversity. Utilizes a mixed-methods approach to assess the impact of social media on language use among high school and university students.
Wayang in Jaman Now: Reflexive Traditionalization and Local, National and Global Networks of Javanese Shadow Puppet Theatre	M. Cohen	2019	Theatre Research International	Examines the adaptation of traditional Javanese shadow puppet theatre (wayang kulit) to contemporary digital media, exploring how practitioners use social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube to sustain and expand their art form. Highlights the tension between traditional cultural practices and modern digital consumption.
Identitas Budaya Orang Indonesia dalam Kota Virtual Jepang	Luh Gde Pratiwi Mayasari	2018		Investigates the cultural identity of Indonesians in the Japanese virtual world of Ameba Pigg. Using virtual ethnography, the study explores the hybrid cultural identity formed through the adaptation process and the influence of Japanese popular culture on Indonesian users.
Empowering Youth for Sustainable Cultural Tourism: A Case Study Tipang Village, Baktiraja	Amon Sormin, Hera Sihombing	2023	Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan dan Humaniora	Explores the role of youth in cultural tourism development in Tipang Village, emphasizing their contribution to preserving cultural heritage and driving economic growth. Uses mixed methods to

Paper Title	Authors	Year	Journal	Abstract Summary
District, Humbang Hasundutan Regency				highlight the transformative potential of youth as cultural stewards and the impact of digital promotion in cultural tourism.
Social-cultural capital in youth entrepreneurship ecosystem: Southeast Asia	T. R. Pillai, A. Ahamat	2018	Journal of Enterprising Communities	Compares youth entrepreneurship ecosystems in Malaysia and Laos, focusing on the role of social-cultural capital. Highlights the unifying role of social networks in stimulating youth entrepreneurship despite contextual differences. Utilizes qualitative methods including in-depth interviews and focus groups.
Analisis Google Trends: Akulturasi budaya melalui musik Kpop di Indonesia	Betty Masruroh, Ifan Deffinika, Vira Setia Ningrum, Prananda Anugrah, Fuad Maysa	2023	Jurnal Integrasi dan Harmoni Inovatif Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial	Uses Google Trends data to analyze the cultural acculturation of K-pop music in Indonesia, highlighting its impact on youth culture. Discusses the positive and negative aspects of the Korean wave trend and its implications for Indonesian cultural identity.
The Role of Youth in the Development of Cultural Tourism in Tipang Village, Baktiraja District, Humbang Hasundutan Regency	Ayu Anggraini Tambunan, R. Sibarani, Sakhyan Asmara	2021		Analyzes the effectiveness of youth activities in cultural tourism development in Tipang Village. Uses qualitative methods to explore youth roles as moral forces, social controllers, and agents of change, and their implementation of the 4ASC concept in tourism development.
Sub-budaya Muzik Rock Bawah Tanah di Kalangan Remaja Bandar	Rokiah Ismail	2004	Akademika	Explores the subculture of underground rock music among urban Malay youth in Kuala Lumpur. Uses purposive sampling and snowball technique to examine their participation in the music scene and its relationship to their urban lifestyle. Highlights the impact of information technology and media on their social relationships and development.
Harmonization of Economics and Local Culture in the Frame of Sustainable	Lita Citra Dewi, I. Maftukhah	2020	KnE Social Sciences	Examines the role of local cultural practices, specifically Ketoprak Cilik, in enhancing economic conditions and preserving cultural heritage in Kudur Village. Uses qualitative methods to

Paper Title	Authors	Year	Journal	Abstract Summary
Technological Innovation (Case Study of Ketoprak Atmodjo Budoyo in Kudur Village Pati Regency)				explore the integration of cultural activities with technological innovation.
Indonesian youth looking towards the future	P. Nilan, Lyn Parker, L. Bennett, K. Robinson	2011	Journal of Youth Studies	Presents survey data on future aspirations and expectations of young Indonesians, highlighting the impact of economic growth, education, and socio-economic factors on their life plans. Discusses the extended transition to adulthood and the role of material and non-material obstacles in achieving life dreams.
Bomb the base in the bus: Public transport as intersections of a local popular culture in Padang, Indonesia	Tod Jones	2008	Continuum	Analyzes the role of public transport in Padang as a site of popular culture for working-class Indonesians. Explores how visual and musical expressions on buses reflect the interplay between modernity and tradition, highlighting the impact of globalization on local culture.
The Prospect and Future of Youth Kroncong Group at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia in Bandung	Hery Supiarza, Cece Sobarna, Yudi Sukmayadi, R. M. Mulyadi	2018	Harmonia: Journal of Arts Research and Education	Discusses the development and future prospects of a youth Kroncong music group at the Indonesia University of Education. Highlights the group's role in the music industry and as a cultural model for other youth groups. Uses triangulation techniques to assess societal appreciation and the group's impact.
Implementasi Etnomatematika Masyarakat Suku Anak Dalam (SAD) Kabupaten Batanghari Provinsi Jambi pada Pembelajaran Matematika	Muslimahayati, Ambarsari Kusuma Wardani	2019	Jurnal Elemen	Investigates the ethnomathematical activities of the Suku Anak Dalam society in Jambi Province and their application in mathematics education. Uses qualitative methods to analyze cultural practices and their educational implications.
'Sihir' budaya massa dalam hubungan sosial warga muda moden: Satu	Abdullah Sumrahadi, R. Y. Suryandari	2012	Geografia: Malaysian journal of society and space	Reviews the impact of mass culture on the social relations of modern youth, using theoretical paradigms from the Frankfurt School. Explores

Paper Title	Authors	Year	Journal	Abstract Summary
ulasan (The 'charm' of mass culture in social relations of modern young people: A review)				how popular culture influences youth lifestyles and consumer behavior.
CONTEMPORARY WAYANG KULIT PERFORMANCE: A CRISIS IN JAVANESE CULTURE?	S. Yosep Bambang Margono	2017	Celt: A Journal of Culture, English Language Teaching & Literature	Examines the changes in contemporary wayang kulit performances, focusing on the influence of Western culture and the shift from moral teachings to entertainment. Highlights the challenges faced by traditional arts in adapting to modern cultural consumption.
Confirmatory factor analysis of celebrity worship, digital literacy, and nostalgia: Dataset of Indonesians	Juneman Abraham, M. Ali, E. Andangsari, Lies Hartanti	2020	Data in Brief	Provides data on celebrity worship, digital literacy, and nostalgia among Indonesian youth. Uses confirmatory factor analysis to map these constructs and their implications for youth behavior and development.
Strategi Branding Indonesia Melalui Festival Music We The Fest Untuk Milenial Di Media Sosial	Lidya Wati Evelina	2022	Jurnal Public Relations (J-PR)	Analyzes the role of the We the Fest music festival in promoting Indonesia to millennials through social media. Highlights the impact of digital promotion and creative content in engaging young audiences.
PENCIPTAAN PERTUNJUKAN VIRTUAL "JOGJA RINDUNYO DENAI" REINTERPRETASI FOLKLOR YOGYAKARTA	Wahid Nurcahyono	2022	TONIL: Jurnal Kajian Sastra, Teater dan Sinema	Explores the creation of a virtual performance based on Yogyakarta folklore, highlighting the impact of digital media on cultural preservation and reinterpretation. Uses qualitative methods to analyze the interaction between performers and audience in an online setting.
Battling for Shared Culture Between Indonesia and Malaysia in The Social Media Era	L. Suhardjono	2012	Humaniora	Examines the cultural conflicts between Indonesia and Malaysia over shared intangible cultural heritage, focusing on the role of social media in these disputes. Discusses the concepts of authenticity, ownership, and the impact of digital platforms on cultural identity.

These literature reviews confirm the socio-cultural complexities behind the convergence of "orang dalam" and virtual fame pathway to progress. Addressing these converging phenomena requires comprehensive reforms to promote transparency, accountability, and meritocracy without diminishing the cultural identity.

Based on our literature review, we also found studies on how digital technology is being used to promote meritocracy and competency-based path to progress are still lacking. This may not indicate lack of effort in that space but provide early indication on vast opportunities for further research.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Indonesia, a nation with immense cultural diversity and significant economic potential, stands at a crossroads in terms of youth progression. The dualistic reality that constrains young Indonesians, characterized by the entrenched power of "orang dalam" (insiders) and the magnetic allure of virtual fame, presents both challenges and opportunities.

The convergence of these dual pathways, which have become the predominant spectrum of opportunities, significantly impact the over 100 million individuals in the active workforce, often sidelining merit and competency. This creates substantial barriers for competent individuals, leading to a demotivated workforce and a potential brain drain as talented youths seek opportunities abroad where merit is more likely to be recognized and rewarded.

Furthermore, this convergence not only limits the pathways to progress but also potentially undermines other paths that prioritize merit and competency. This shift is evident across various sectors, where even the brightest minds feel compelled to cultivate a strong public persona to gain recognition and opportunities. The societal preference for visibility and impact over genuine skill and achievement can discourage young people from pursuing careers that require rigorous academic training and hard work, further complicating the landscape of youth progression.

As Indonesia aims to achieve its Vision 2045, envisioning the country as a developed nation, a comprehensive reform is needed to provide more paths to progress for the youths. A reform that promotes meritocracy and competency, without

diminishing Indonesia's cultural identity. Hence, understanding the intercultural dimensions that sustain the dualistic reality of youth progression in Indonesia is crucial for developing effective interventions.

This study is the groundwork for future research aimed at mapping the potential opportunities for leveraging intercultural dimensions relevant for fostering merit-based pathways to progress in Indonesia.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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