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Research Article

Beyond Stereotypes: Personal Perceptions Study of Tionghoa Ethnicity on Relations with Indonesian Society

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Abstract.
Indonesia is a country with diverse tribes, religions, ethnicities, and traditions. Although Indonesia makes a unique contribution to the life of the archipelago and its citizens, it does not rule out the risk of disputes and conflict. One of them is the existence of ethnic differences, which give rise to stereotypes of certain ethnicities, such as Tionghoa. Not all stereotypes are justified and real. Indonesian history records the existence of social conflicts born from inter-ethnic stereotypes, such as during the 1998 riots. Therefore, this research aims to explore individual lived experiences and subjective viewpoints and provide a platform for authentic voices that are often unheard in discussions of ethnicity and identity. So, this article provides insight into how ethnic Tionghoa people strengthen their perceptions of existing stereotypes. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The research data was obtained through interviews with 30 ethnic Tionghoa people accompanied by participant observation. In contrast, data analysis took a thematic approach to identify patterns and themes that emerged from the results of interviews and observations. The research findings show that an understanding of the diversity of individuals and society that has not been fully accepted reflects challenges, including political history that influences negative perceptions. Unfortunately, the complexity of social relations means that some informants feel that the Tionghoa ethnic community tends to be closed, creating the impression of a lack of unity in Indonesian society. This research is important to explore how the reality of the lives of ethnic Tionghoa people does not fully conform to the prevailing stereotype.

Keywords: stereotypes, Tionghoa, public relations

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country that is diverse, so people with different ethnicities, races, tribes, customs, and traditions can live side by side quite well. Each existing diversity has provided its own unique and distinctive contribution. So, Indonesia deserves to be recognized as a country that is harmonious with its diversity. This harmony is reflected in the daily lives of the people. This does not mean that there are no problems. Still, with

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its ideological motto, namely Indonesian Unity, which is stated in the third principle of Pancasila, Indonesia has become a country that is known for being humble, harmonious, and kind in the eyes of the world.

Indonesia, with its diversity, can provide many benefits. For example, with a diversity framework, there is one ethnic group of citizens who are called ethnic Tionghoa. It turns out that the existence of the Tionghoa ethnic group has influenced the nation's cultural, social and even economic framework. But unfortunately, even though the existence of ethnic Tionghoa also makes a positive contribution, it turns out that there are still stereotypes towards them. In fact, this stereotype has persisted in Indonesian society for a long time, perhaps even today. The existence of this stereotype apparently has an impact on the interaction of ethnic Tionghoa Indonesians with indigenous society as a whole. Factors in the presence of this stereotype include history, cultural perceptions, and socio-economic dynamics [1–3]. Revealing how ethnic Tionghoa people assess stereotypes about themselves is considered very important in order to provide an understanding of their impact on relationships between citizens (individuals/groups), community dynamics, identity formation or so on.

The research entitled "Beyond Stereotypes: Personal Perceptions Study of Ethnic Tionghoa on Relations with Indonesian Society" begins to reveal how layers of prejudice and perception can make the relationship between the ethnic Tionghoa community and Indonesian society complicated. The research aspect will explain how Tionghoa individuals subjectively explore their life experiences in society with other ethnicities. So that the perceptions conveyed can later be used as an authentic voice that is widely heard in discussions about identity and ethnicity. Although if we observe that the problems between ethnic Tionghoa and other Indonesian people can take the form of subtle prejudice to conscious and overt acts of discrimination [4].

This research article focuses on ethnic Tionghoa people's perceptions of their relationships with other Indonesian people, but this research also highlights how stereotypes attached to Tionghoa people impact interpersonal relationships, identity formation, and community dynamics. The existence of subtle prejudice and discrimination was also examined in this research. So that with the results presented there will be no bias dimension regarding how prejudice and discrimination against ethnic Tionghoa actually exist in society because they (Tionghoa) directly experience it in their lives. By eliminating existing dimensions of bias, the hope is to reveal the factors causing the gap in social harmony between Tionghoa and other Indonesian communities. So through this article the Tionghoa people are able to strengthen their perceptions of the stereotypes attached to them.

2. METHODOLOGY/ MATERIALS

The approach used in this research is the qualitative approach, this approach is considered the most effective for exploring the perceptions or views of Tionghoa people regarding their relationship with other Indonesian people. In implementing the research methodology, a series of in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 ethnic Tionghoa people who had diverse experiences in interacting with Indonesian society. To better understand the everyday context, participant observation was also applied. Data collection was carried out using informant selection techniques that reflect diverse backgrounds to ensure balanced representation. Testing the validity or accuracy of data is based on data certainty between researchers, participants and readers of the results. Data analysis uses a thematic approach to identify patterns and themes that emerge from the results of interviews and observations, allowing researchers to reflect on the views of ethnic Tionghoa on social and cultural relations with Indonesian society as a whole.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Response to Indonesian Tionghoa Ethnic Stereotypes

The research results provide a quite diverse picture of perceptions of Tionghoa ethnic stereotypes in Indonesia. First, there is privilege and maintenance of cultural identity: Several research informants stated that ethnic Tionghoa are often considered to have privilege. However, there is also concern about the injustices they experience, perhaps due to visible physical differences with indigenous people. Despite this, they remain steadfast in maintaining their cultural identity, which includes Tionghoa traditions, language and celebrations [5–7]. This reflects a desire to remain connected to their cultural roots.

Second, the diversity of individuals and society that has not yet accepted: There is an understanding that the Tionghoa community in Indonesia is very diverse in background, beliefs and lifestyle. However, there is still a view that some Indonesian people have not fully accepted this diversity. Regarding the history of the G30S/PKI, negative stereotypes towards ethnic Tionghoa still seem to influence their perceptions. In the context of Indonesian history, especially during the New Order era, ethnic Tionghoa were sometimes considered an "other group" that could be identified using certain criteria. These stereotypes may have emerged as a result of discriminatory

policies at the time and may have had an impact on long-term perceptions of ethnic Tionghoa.

Third, economic domination and discrimination: Several informants highlighted economic domination by ethnic Tionghoa, especially visible in the ranking of the richest people in Indonesia. However, this is also offset by experiences of discrimination, such as being considered a "foreigner." This observation reflects the tension between economic achievements and social perceptions that may still exist in society. In general, Tionghoa ethnicity is often associated with economic success in Indonesia. This stereotype emerged along with their significant participation in various economic sectors, including trade and industry. However, it should be noted that not all Tionghoa individuals are in the same economic position, and financial success varies within this community [8]. Observed inequalities in access to economic opportunities, fueled by stereotypes, can be detrimental to national economic development. The potential economic contribution of the Tionghoa community may not be fully exploited.

Fourth, stereotypes as business people: There is a positive stereotypical understanding of ethnic Tionghoa business abilities. This stereotype associates Tionghoa ethnicity with family business ownership. This view may arise from the legacy of family business traditions passed down from generation to generation. Although Tionghoa family businesses have achieved success, this stereotype does not encompass the diversity of business structures that exist within the community. However, informants also realized that these stereotypes could result in discrimination. The view that society needs to be educated to be more accepting of differences and not trapped in stereotypes shows awareness of the importance of inclusivity.

Fifth, normal and ordinary views: Some informants felt that stereotypes against ethnic Tionghoa were common or normal. However, it should be noted that these views do not necessarily reflect the absence of racism or discrimination, as several informants also noted the existence of racist views that still exist in society.

Sixth, the importance of education and direct recognition: Statements that emphasize the importance of education and direct recognition of an ethnicity provide practical direction. This reflects the need for a better understanding of Tionghoa communities in Indonesia, which can help overcome stereotypes and increase tolerance. How do ethnic Tionghoa assess stereotypes against them Shown in Table 1.

Overall, the research results illustrate the complexity of views towards ethnic Tionghoa in Indonesia, reflecting the challenges faced by this community in achieving acceptance and recognition among a diverse society. However, there is still a perception that social relations tend to be closed among ethnic Tionghoa, especially in efforts

TABLE 1: How do ethnic Tionghoa assess stereotypes against them?

No	Perception	Reason	Defence
1	Privilege	Strength and determination in maintaining identity, culture and traditions.	That physical similarities in social communities do not reflect absolute classification, but all types of differences and actions are carried out only as a form of maintaining cultural roots
2	Community Acceptance	The variety of communities and historical factors of the G30SPKI have a long-lasting impact	Various backgrounds, beliefs, politics and lifestyles only need to be addressed with understanding between the majority and minorities
3	Economic Domination	The difference in economic status is too significant and the large number of ethnic Tionghoa who occupy the top 50 richest people in Indonesia	Tionghoa have a similar economic position, and financial success varies. Some of them inherited, and some because of entrepreneurship training since childhood
4	Business Ruler	Diversity of business structures influencing native opportunities	Family businesses are still dominated by the legacy of family business traditions passed down from generation to generation
5	Normal and Ordinary	It is too commonplace to accept stereotypes and consider racism to be normal	Not rejecting racism, ethnic Tionghoa consider the absence of racism or discrimination even though it exists.
6	Lack of Education	Minimal understanding of Tionghoa ethnicity	Ethnic Tionghoa are the same as other citizens who have the same rights and obligations, but the lack of education is less able to overcome existing stereotypes

to maintain Tionghoa culture and traditions [9]. These stereotypes can create the impression that the Tionghoa community is less united with Indonesian society in general, even though many Tionghoa individuals are active in Indonesian social and cultural life.

Meanwhile, it relates to the association of ethnic Tionghoa with certain political and economic activities. Indonesian history records the involvement of Tionghoa figures in politics and economics, but such generalizations can undermine the diversity of views and involvement of individual Tionghoa. Unfortunately, the perceived image of Tionghoa society is more focused on personal economic interests than the interests of the nation [10, 11]. Understanding these stereotypes requires an in-depth look at the attitudes and actions of individual Tionghoa within a broader historical context.

Maintaining a positive perception of the Tionghoa ethnicity requires various involvement, both by humans as citizens or other supporting tools such as the media. Once the role of the media is effective in providing information, the role of the media also needs to be taken into account in forming ethnic stereotypes of Tionghoa in Indonesia [12, 13]. Various narratives and representations in the media can influence people's perceptions of ethnic Tionghoa, both positively and negatively. Additionally, in order to

counter ethnic Tionghoa stereotypes, there are efforts within the community to build better understanding and overcome prejudice. These initiatives involve a dialogue and education approach to promote diversity and change society's view of ethnic Tionghoa.

The issue of analyzing Tionghoa ethnic stereotypes in Indonesia needs to be acknowledged that the reality on the ground is very complex. Individuals in this community have a variety of backgrounds, views, and contributions that cannot be reduced to a single stereotype. Therefore, a holistic and historically informed approach is also needed to understand the diversity of Tionghoa ethnicities in Indonesia [14, 15].

3.2. The Risks of Stereotypes on Public Relations

Stereotypes have a serious impact on the dynamics of society's social relations because they tend to create narrow and often inaccurate views of certain groups. One significant risk is the emergence of discrimination, where individuals associated with specific stereotypes may experience unfair treatment in various aspects of their lives. Apart from that, stereotypes can also produce negative perceptions of the group, hinder communication and cooperation between groups [16]. The possibility of conflict between groups may also increase, creating tension when one group feels unrecognized or treated unfairly based on stereotypes. Other impacts involve inequality and injustice in terms of opportunities and human rights, which often limit individuals' potential based on stereotypes attached to them.

Miscommunication and the creation of social walls between groups can also arise as a consequence of stereotypes, hindering cross-cultural understanding and reducing the potential for positive cooperation in society. To reduce these risks, inclusive approaches, education that raises awareness and encourages open dialogue, as well as efforts to understand the diversity of society, are key to building better and fairer relationships between diverse groups.

Based on the results of interviews, research shows that there is inequality and discrimination, especially in rural areas, where lack of exposure to diversity can increase inequality. This problem is considered complex and requires careful understanding. In addition, the data also shows variations in perceptions and prejudices towards ethnic Tionghoa, influenced by individual factors such as personal experience, level of education, and cultural background [17, 18]. Some informants acknowledged the existence of incompatibility between Tionghoa and native ethnicities, but emphasized that not all natives shared the same views.

There is awareness of the importance of improvement, especially in line with adaptation to the era of globalization. This is considered a step to reduce traditional thinking regarding the Tionghoa ethnicity. Nevertheless, several informants expressed a positive view of the assimilation of ethnic Tionghoa and natives in Indonesia, reflecting confidence in the community's ability to integrate. However, challenges primarily arise in the lack of tolerance and education, contributing factors to prejudice [19, 20]. Several informants also noted the diversity in relations between ethnic Tionghoa and Indonesian communities, where although there are disputes, these relations are not static and can change over time.

Awareness of the dangers of generalizations and stereotypes is considered to be especially important given the presence of prejudice as the root of stereotypes and complex historical experiences. There are also records of bad views originating from history, especially related to the G30S/PKI incident, and prejudice related to economic domination by ethnic Tionghoa [21].

The importance of maintaining good relations between ethnic Tionghoa and Indonesian communities was emphasized by several informants, with reminders that, despite being ethnic Tionghoa, they remained an integral part of Indonesian society. Prejudice against the Tionghoa community's ability to pursue a career in politics and stereotypes linking them to the merchant profession were also highlighted. Finally, changes in views over time, where more educated people tend to be more open to diversity, are an important note [22]. These data reflect the complexity and variation in views regarding relations between ethnic Tionghoa and Indonesian communities, and underscore the need for a deeper understanding of the factors that influence these perceptions and prejudices.
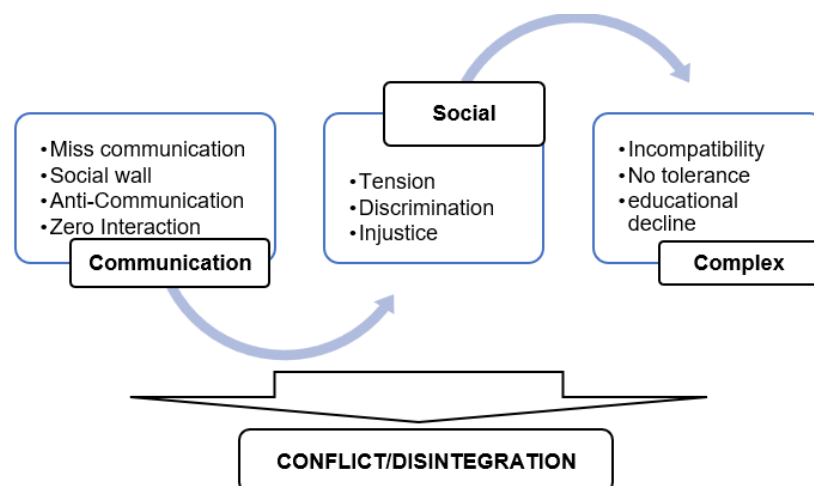

Figure 1: The impact of ethnic Tionghoa on stereotypes.

In fact, stereotypes against ethnic Tionghoa in Indonesia have the potential to have a substantial impact on relations between communities in this country. This is as shown in Figure 1. Although the origins of stereotypes may stem from inaccurate perceptions or unfair generalizations, their impact often extends into social, economic, and political dynamics. Some concrete risks that arise from stereotypes against ethnic Tionghoa and have an impact on relations between communities in Indonesia can be described as follows: Stereotypes can strengthen separation between ethnic groups, creating polarization in society [23, 24]. Distorted understanding of Tionghoa ethnicity can give rise to social tensions, narrow shared understanding, and make it difficult to form cross-ethnic solidarity.

Furthermore, incorrect stereotypes can trigger discrimination against Tionghoa individuals or ethnic groups [25]. The impacts include limited access to economic opportunities, education, and health services, creating disparities that harm the social and economic development of Tionghoa communities. The existence of stereotypes that link Tionghoa ethnicity exclusively with economic success can create obstacles to healthy and mutually beneficial economic cooperation between ethnic groups. Society may not see the potential positive contributions that ethnic diversity can bring.

Stereotypes also often reduce Tionghoa ethnic identity and cultural heritage to clichés or narrow images [26, 27]. The impact is not only detrimental to the Tionghoa community in maintaining their identity, but can also hinder deeper understanding between ethnic groups in Indonesia. Stereotypes about regional identity in the Tionghoa community have a long history in various regions of Indonesia. Although each group may have a unique cultural identity, this stereotype can equate all Tionghoa people with certain regional characteristics when in fact each region in Indonesia all has its own characteristics [28].

Distrust between ethnic groups can also arise as a result of inaccurate stereotypes. Misinterpretations or negative assumptions about Tionghoa ethnicity can trigger social conflict, either on a small scale in local communities or on a larger scale at the national level. The impact of stereotypes can also be seen in the political participation of ethnic Tionghoa [29]. If perceived as an "other group" or identified with certain stereotypes, this can hinder active engagement and fair representation in the political arena. Stereotypes that make it difficult to integrate Tionghoa society into Indonesian society in general can result in a lack of social engagement. This can be detrimental to shared social and cultural development and hinder the achievement of inter-ethnic harmony [30]. This is also due to the lack of awareness of multiculturalism in society, which is triggered by

stereotypes, which can make it difficult to form a society that is inclusive and respects differences.

In the end, negative treatment of ethnic Tionghoa can have a negative impact on Indonesia's image internationally. The international community may view countries that are unable to manage ethnic diversity well. So overcoming the risk of ethnic Tionghoa stereotypes requires cooperation across Indonesian society. Efforts include better education, promotion of cross-ethnic dialogue, and paradigm shifts in media and popular culture. Only through deeper understanding and efforts to overcome stereotypes can Indonesian society build a solid foundation for inter-ethnic harmony and inclusive development. Thus, the results of this research can be used as material for the government in making policies that are able to create harmony between citizens, so that the realization of the 3rd (three) Pancasila value "Indonesian unity" can be achieved well.

4. CONCLUSION

Responses to ethnic Tionghoa stereotypes in Indonesia reflect the complexity of society's views, which have been formed through a long history of this group's interactions with the majority of society. Aspects such as economics, culture, history and politics are an integral part of forming this stereotype. The research findings highlight several key aspects, ranging from variations in perceptions of stereotypes to the complexity of social relations, including the economic dominance of ethnic Tionghoa coupled with experiences of discrimination. First, there are varying understandings of Tionghoa ethnic stereotypes. Some acknowledged the existence of privilege and the maintenance of cultural identity, while others noted the injustices that still affect them, especially after historical events such as the G30S/PKI. Second, the economic dominance of ethnic Tionghoa is in the spotlight, but is balanced by experiences of discrimination, showing the complexity of economic roles and social perceptions. Third, an understanding of the diversity of individuals and society that has not been fully accepted reflects challenges, including political history that influences negative perceptions. Awareness of positive stereotypes regarding ethnic Tionghoa business abilities and the risk of discrimination were also highlighted as important aspects. Some informants considered stereotypes against ethnic Tionghoa to be normal, but it should be noted that this view does not necessarily reflect the absence of racism or discrimination.

The research results confirmed the complexity of social relations, with several informants feeling that ethnic Tionghoa communities tended to be closed, creating the

impression of a lack of unity with Indonesian society in general. The risks of stereotyping to public relations involve division between ethnic groups, polarization, and difficulties in forming cross-ethnic solidarity. To address these risks, inclusive measures, awareness-raising education and the promotion of cross-ethnic dialogue are key in building a solid foundation for inter-ethnic harmony and inclusive development in Indonesia.

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