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Minority Feelings: Chinese Ethnic In Indonesia

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Abstract

Ethnic minority in Indonesia, particularly the Chinese, have historically faced discrimination and violence from the majority native population. Incidents of robbery, murder, looting, and rape have colored the experiences of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia. This research aims to explore the causes of minority feelings experienced by the Chinese ethnic group and to describe and explain these feelings. A qualitative descriptive methodology was used, which involved a review of secondary sources such as books, journals, newspapers, and the internet. The results findings show that minority feelings experienced by the Chinese are the result of stereotypes and prejudices that label them as arrogant, greedy, and difficult. These attitudes reached a peak in May 1998. To conclude, this research highlights the need for greater awareness and understanding of the experiences of ethnic minorities in Indonesia.

Keywords: Ethnic, Ethnic minority, Chinese, Minority feelings, Indonesia

4th International Conference on Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts

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Athens, Greece

1. Introduction (TNR 14pt., bold)

Discriminatory treatment against ethnic minorities, particularly the Chinese community, has been a persistent issue in Indonesia. The Chinese ethnicity, regarded as a minority group in the country, has faced numerous challenges since Indonesia gained independence ((Ikasari, 2017; Raharjo, 2019; Suryadinata, 2008). Acts of violence, ranging from discrimination to physical assaults such as robbery, murder, looting, and rape, have deeply affected the lives of ethnic Chinese individuals in Indonesia (Darini, 2011a; Suryadinata, 2008). Moreover, the Chinese community has long been associated with economic dominance, playing a significant role in sectors such as commerce, industry, and finance. This economic success has fueled anti-Chinese sentiment among the native population, who view the Chinese as outsiders controlling the country's wealth (Suryadinata, 2008).

The most significant manifestation of discrimination occurred during the May 1998 ethnic riots that swept through Jakarta and several other Indonesian cities. The violence directed at ethnic Chinese and those of Chinese descent was largely motivated by the economic disparity between the Chinese community and the native population. As the Chinese ethnicity dominated the country's economy, it became a focal point for anti-Chinese sentiment (Ikasari, 2017; Purdey, 2006). As a result of discrimination, ethnic Chinese individuals in Indonesia perceive themselves as minorities in terms of religion, social status, politics, culture, and economy. They often encounter restrictions on practicing their cultural and religious traditions, face barriers in political participation, and experience limited opportunities in education and employment (Raharjo, 2019; Suryadinata, 2008).

Despite efforts to address the plight of ethnic Chinese minorities through government regulations, such as the recognition of Chinese New Year as a national holiday in 2000 and the enactment of Law No. 5/2004 abolishing discriminatory policies, many individuals continue to harbor minority feelings. These feelings stem from traumatic past events and a persistent sense of marginalization (Darini, 2011a; Ikasari, 2017).

This paper aims to delve into the causes of minority feelings experienced by the Chinese ethnic community in Indonesia. By providing a comprehensive analysis, it seeks to shed light on the reasons behind these feelings and offer a deeper understanding of the experiences of ethnic Chinese individuals in the country. By examining historical factors, socio-economic dynamics, and cultural implications, this study will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the minority feelings prevalent among the Chinese community in Indonesia. Additionally, it will explore the impact of government regulations and initiatives aimed at addressing discrimination and improving the overall situation for ethnic minorities.

Through a thorough investigation and analysis, this paper will highlight the complexities surrounding minority feelings and their implications for the Chinese ethnic community in

4th International Conference on Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts

21-23 April 2023

Athens, Greece

Indonesia. By raising awareness and fostering dialogue, it is hoped that this research will contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society, where minority groups are respected, valued, and provided with equal opportunities to thrive. Therefore, this research has its questions as it follows:

Research Question

This research with title Minority Feelings Chinese Ethnic In Indonesia has several purposes, as followed:

1. What is the cause of Minority feelings that experienced by the Chinese ethnic?
2. What kind of minority feelings are experienced by the Chinese ethnic group?

2. Literature Review (TNR 14pt., bold)

Discrimination against Ethnic Minorities in Indonesia

A minority is a social group representing less than half the total population and lacking significant political power or influence, particularly in decision-making and voting. Consequently, minority groups face challenges in being heard and having their interests represented in society and politics. Observable differences in characteristics or practices distinguish minority groups from the majority, such as ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, or disabilities. Additionally, ethnicity refers to people who share commonalities like geography, religion, lineage, language, culture, and traditions (Carothers & Parfitt, 2017).

Ethnicity refers to a group of people who share commonalities such as geographic location, religion, lineage, language, cultural practices, and traditions (D. Carothers & Parfitt, 2017). However, the definition of ethnicity varies based on the interpretation of the person using the term. Ethnicity is a subjective concept that involves self-identification, personal perceptions, and attitudes towards one's cultural identity ((Fought, 2006). Ethnic groups are classified into two categories, ethnic majority and ethnic minority (Coyle, 2021). An ethnic majority refers to a dominant group that surpasses the ethnic minority in terms of demographics, culture, population, language speakers, religion, and other factors. In contrast, an ethnic minority is a group with a small population concerning numbers, language speakers, religion, and cultural practices. Moreover, being part of a minority can lead to marginalization, discrimination, limited opportunities, and shape one's sense of identity and belonging.

Discrimination against ethnic minorities is a prevalent issue in Indonesia, with the Chinese ethnic community being one of the affected groups. Researchers have extensively examined the experiences of various ethnic minority groups, shedding light on the discriminatory practices they encounter. Darini (2011) explores the discrimination faced by the Chinese in post-Suharto Indonesia, analyzing the discourses, identities, and politics surrounding Chinese-ness. The study reveals that the Chinese community has been subjected to various

4th International Conference on Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts

21-23 April 2023

Athens, Greece

forms of discrimination, including social exclusion, limited economic opportunities, and cultural assimilation pressures. These discriminatory practices are influenced by socio-political factors, historical legacies, and prevailing prejudices. The study highlights the need to understand the complex dynamics that contribute to the marginalization of the Chinese community and emphasizes the importance of addressing these issues to foster social inclusion and equality (Darini, 2011c).

Similarly, Wiratama (2019) discusses marginalized ethnicities in Indonesia, including the case of the Chinese community. The study examines the challenges faced by the Chinese minority, such as limited access to economic opportunities, cultural assimilation pressures, and discriminatory policies. It highlights how these inequalities have impacted the social and economic well-being of the Chinese community, hindering their full participation and integration into Indonesian society. The study emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing these disparities to promote a more inclusive and equitable society for all ethnic minorities in Indonesia (Wiratama, 2019).

Minority Feelings and Psychological Impact

Minority feelings or minor feelings are not generated from major change but from lack of change, in particular, structural racial and economic change (Hong, 2021). The literature of minor feelings differs from using racial trauma solely as a dramatic device for individual growth. Instead, it focuses on the trauma caused by a racist capitalist system that restricts individuals. The concept of minor feelings is related to the work of theorist Sianne Ngai, who explored the emotional aspects of unpleasant feelings such as envy, irritation, and boredom, which are prevalent in the current late-capitalist gig economy (Hong, 2021).

Minority feelings are the emotions that are often attributed to individuals who express their honest thoughts and opinions, particularly when their views challenge the status quo (Hong, 2021). When these feelings are expressed, they are frequently seen as negative and ungrateful, which is a result of racialized behavior that white people perceive as unacceptable. These emotions are often disregarded or dismissed as overreactions because those who are privileged and unaffected by structural inequities cannot relate to or understand the experiences that give rise to these feelings. However, it is essential to recognize and validate these emotions as genuine responses to systemic discrimination and inequality (Hong, 2021).

Beyond the external manifestations of discrimination, the literature also delves into the psychological impact experienced by ethnic minority individuals. Ahmadi (2021) explores study about oppression and trauma to ethnic Chinese minority women in Indonesia who experienced rape on the 12 May 1998 tragedy through literary data. The results show that ethnic Chinese women in Indonesia who experienced rape undergo trauma, impacting their psychological conditions. They experienced a phase of trauma, a phase of madness, and a phase of suicide due to rape (Ahmadi, 2021).

4th International Conference on Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts

21-23 April 2023

Athens, Greece

Furthermore, research about the Chinese-Indonesian population faces a long history of discrimination in Indonesia, impacting their ethnic-racial identity. This study examines the impact of the 1998 genocide event on the Chinese-Indonesians' perception of their identity. The results indicate that the participants have embraced their hybrid identity, but with unresolved trauma (Benusia, 2021) .

3. Research Methodology

The study employed a qualitative methodology. The research was conducted by collecting and studying various literature and literature studies to describe and explain the is the cause of Minority feelings that experienced by the Chinese ethnic. Moreover, describing and explaining of minority feelings are experienced by the Chinese ethnic in Indonesia. A literature study is a method conducted to collect data or sources related to specific topics obtained from various sources such as journals, books, and other libraries (Mohajan, 2018). The data collection technique uses secondary data from sources such as books, scientific journals, and reports from research bodies that are accurate and relevant. The data or information obtained is then compiled based on the results of appropriate and accountable literature studies.

4. Results and Discussion

Social and Economic Disparity

The existence of minority feelings has been experienced by ethnic Chinese since the 17th century when the Dutch colonized Indonesia. The Dutch colonialists divided Indie society (as Indonesia was called at that time) into three categories: European as the highest race, Chinese and other "Foreign Orientals" as the second-class race, and natives as the lowest race (Elson, 2005). Then the Chinese race dominated the banking sector and established various monopoly businesses which then made them an exclusive society.

After Indonesia gained independence in 1945, the social and economic disparity between the Chinese and the natives increased and caused President Soekarno to try to build a country consisting of indigenous people and separate other ethnicities (Chua, 2004) . In addition, this gap creates stereotypes for Chinese descendants in Indonesia, such as arrogant, tend to be exclusive, they separate themselves by living in the real estate area and are not involved in activities in the surrounding environment. Many natives believe that the ethnic Chinese are too greedy and ambitious. They just want to make themselves as rich as possible and only care about their own class. Furthermore, they think that the Chinese are more prosperous and economically dominant, and have an easier life than the natives (Turner & Allen, 2007).

Chinese Ethnic also have stereotypes about natives. They are rarely asked to be personally involved in social activities such as siskamling or community service, but they are often expected to provide snacks and drinks (Giblin, 2003). That is why they consider the pribumi to

4th International Conference on Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts

21-23 April 2023

Athens, Greece

be lazy, often asking for money from Chinese descendants, and sometimes with threats. These various stereotypes and minority feelings resulted in a growing divide between the ethnic Chinese and the pribumi which culminated in the May 1998 riots, whereas Chinese ethnic were massacred, raped, killed, and their property looted, their houses and shops also burned (Giblin, 2003).

Minority Feelings Are Experienced By The Chinese Ethnic

In July 1967, Soeharto's presidential cabinet issued a policy banning the term Chinese people (a term used to refer to Chinese descendants without creating a negative impression) and replacing it with Chinese people (*orang Tionghoa*) which has derogatory tendencies. Their reason was to eliminate the inferiority complex of the indigenous people and reduce the pride of the Chinese ethnicity. A month earlier, they issued a Cabinet Presidium Instruction regarding the Main Policies for Settlement of the China Problem to speed up the process of assimilation. (Aguilar, 2001).

However, on the contrary, these regulations limit and even discriminate against the rights of Chinese descent in almost all aspects, such as religion and socio-cultural, education, media, economy, and politics. The ethnic Chinese are prohibited from expressing their religion and traditions openly. By Presidential Decree No. 240 of 1967, Chinese descendants were urged to change names to more Indonesian pronunciations to encourage assimilation (Chua, 2004; Darini, 2011b). The government also regulates aspects of Chinese descent, such as closing schools financed by organizations in the People's Republic of China. Opportunities for overseas Chinese citizens to continue their studies at state universities are very limited, only accepting 5% of all students. Therefore, most of them study abroad or attend private universities with higher tuition fees (Aguilar, 2001).

The use of Chinese characters and text by mass media was prohibited by the government, resulting in the disappearance of Chinese mass media, literature, documents, and symbols from public view. (Giblin, 2003). The government-controlled economic system has made overseas Chinese-owned businesses bankrupt because they are more profitable for the natives. President Soeharto also directed the sale of 50% of the company's shares to indigenous companies (Aguilar, 2001). All organizations affiliated with mainland China were banned by the government and at that time China had no say in political decisions (Aguilar, 2001).

Furthermore, the existence of regulations from various aspects and the case of the May 1998 riots created minority feelings for the Chinese ethnic themselves. The majority in Indonesia think that the Chinese minority only cares about their fellow ethnic groups. Thirty-three percent of the same group also believes that Chinese culture is not in line with existing culture in Indonesia. There are also those who think that the Chinese minority is still loyal to their ancestral country, which is China.

4th International Conference on Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts

21-23 April 2023

Athens, Greece

Moreover, a Jakarta citizen of Balinese-Chinese descent named Komang has minority feelings and is a victim of the bullying he has experienced so far (Savitri, N, 2019). *“When I was in grade 5 or 6, I was walking home from school and a pedicab driver passed by...he stopped and kept saying 'China dumb-ass! China f*ck-off!’”*.

Minority feelings are also experienced by citizens of Chinese descent, said Charlotte, who are still the scapegoats when political and economic instability occurs. The anti-China sentiment that flared up during the DKI Jakarta regional head election (*Pilkada*) shows how perceptions of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia have not changed much, apart from the reforms of the last two decades (Savitri, 2019).

Another source said that there was an ethnic Chinese named Sumartono who had to undergo psychiatric treatment for a year and a half as a result of the May 1998 riots. Sumartono said that during the 1998 riots he and his family were beaten, looted, and burned their house. Until now, minority feelings such as the trauma that Sumartono experienced are still there (Lestari, 2018).

Furthermore, a 2019 Communication Science student named Yolanda Audrey experienced minority feelings because she received negative views when the COVID-19 pandemic began to attack Indonesia. She often gets negative views when she is in public spaces because she has a Chinese face and shunned because she is thought to carry the COVID-19 virus (LPM Opini Online, 2019). *“At the beginning of COVID-19, everyone knew that COVID-19 came from Wuhan, many people immediately judged me when I was walking, they said it was like I didn't have to be close to Chinese people because they brought the plague, so they often said Just narrow, stingy, and other stereotypes to Chinese people in general,”* she said (LPM Opini Online, 2019).

Tjen, Jocelyn Ivana, a 2019 Communication Science student, also experiences feelings of minority due to discrimination in public spaces. She receives stares and words from the public almost every day and receives racist shouts from motorbike riders when walking alone. Jocelyn has also received discrimination in the environment around the campus. *“Ever experienced discrimination in the campus environment. At that time, a stranger asked questions about the Chinese ethnicity. The conversation goes like this, 'Hey, are you Chinese? Why are you here, anyway? don't want to just go back to China?,' in my opinion it's impolite for people who are meeting and discussing ethnicity for the first time,”* explained Jocelyn (LPM Opini Online, 2019).

5. Conclusion (TNR 14pt., bold)

In conclusion, the Chinese ethnic community in Indonesia has faced a long history of social and economic disparity, discrimination, and minority feelings. The discriminatory practices and stereotypes originated from the Dutch colonial era and continued during the post-independence period. The Indonesian government implemented policies that aimed to

4th International Conference on Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts

21-23 April 2023

Athens, Greece

assimilate the Chinese descendants, but these policies often resulted in limiting their rights and opportunities in various aspects of life.

The May 1998 riots marked a significant turning point, where the Chinese ethnic community experienced severe violence, including killings, rape, and property destruction. These events further intensified the minority feelings and deepened the divide between the ethnic Chinese and the pribumi (native Indonesians).

The discrimination and stereotypes faced by the Chinese ethnic community have had a profound impact on their sense of identity and belonging. Many Chinese Indonesians have experienced trauma, unresolved psychological distress, and ongoing minority feelings. The negative perceptions towards the Chinese community, including assumptions of exclusivity, greed, and disloyalty, continue to persist in Indonesian society.

Individuals of Chinese descent still encounter discrimination and racist incidents in public spaces, as seen in recent cases related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Such experiences reinforce the need to address and challenge these stereotypes, promoting social inclusion and equality for all ethnic groups in Indonesia. However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations of this study. The sample size and representativeness may not fully encompass the experiences and perspectives of the entire Chinese ethnic community in Indonesia. Furthermore, the findings may not be generalizable to other ethnic minority groups or different societal contexts. Additionally, further research is needed to explore the complex historical and contextual factors contributing to social and economic disparities and minority feelings.

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References in text should have this form (surname, year), for example:

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| 1 author: | (Krugman, 2012) |
| 1 author and the same year of publication: | (Hoffman, 2012, A), (Hoffman, 2012, B) |
| 2 authors: | (Krugman & Hoffman, 2014) |
| 3 authors: | (Hoffman et al., 2012) |

4th International Conference on Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts

21-23 April 2023

Athens, Greece

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For each work shown in the list of references must be a reference in the text. All citations in the text and all references must meet APA styles (American Psychological Association 7th edition – more information <http://www.apastyle.org/>).

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4th International Conference on Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts

21-23 April 2023

Athens, Greece

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