

Attitude of Tertiary Students on Multiculturalism in Indonesia

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Abstract : Present-day Indonesia maintains a narrative of a culturally plural but unified nation. At the same time, multicultural policies extend different degrees of recognition, accommodation, toleration and even discrimination towards different socio-cultural groups. In conjunction with different ethnographic landscapes across regions in Indonesia, this approach leads to a varied experience and understanding of national identity and multiculturalism among people. As a result, governments seeking to maintain national unity while practicing multiculturalism have to juggle different expectations. This situation is examined through the microcosms of university students using questionnaires followed up by focus group discussions and personal interviews. A comparison between university students across four different provinces in Indonesia (Aceh, Jakarta, West Java and the Moluccas) highlights the influence of one's surroundings on their perception of multiculturalism. Students in the more heterogeneous areas generally show more acceptance towards diversity compared to students in primarily homogenous areas who have little actual experience in dealing with diversity. Regardless of their environment, students claim to have positive feelings and a strong sense of attachment to Indonesia but hold different ideas of what constitutes an ideal Indonesian national identity.

Keywords : Indonesia, multiculturalism, national identity, nationalism

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