

Navigating Multicultural Challenges: A Case Study on Children's Rights Neglect in Indonesian Higher Education Major Selection

Hermansyah¹, Muhammad Aqil²

¹Institut Agama Islam Negeri Fattahul Muluk Papua, Indonesia

²Universitas Cenderawasih, Indonesia

Email: hermansyah91iainfmpapua@gmail.com¹, aqilbima57@gmail.com²

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the neglect of children's rights in the selection of university majors in Papua, Indonesia, focusing on how cultural factors influence decision-making processes and the implications for students' academic journeys. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research investigates the manifestations of rights neglect in educational environments and their impact on study completion. Data were collected through document analysis, in-depth interviews, and participant observation at higher education institutions in Papua. The findings reveal that neglect of children's rights frequently occurs within family and societal contexts, where academic major choices are often imposed without consideration of the child's interests and talents. Factors influencing major selection include parental pressure, social influence, and incompatible learning models, all of which are affected by the diverse cultural backgrounds present in Papua. The disregard for children's rights in major selection often results in academic difficulties, leading to major changes, extended study periods, and potential social stigma. This study emphasizes the importance of a multicultural approach in higher education that values cultural diversity while protecting individual student rights. The research provides insights for developing more inclusive and culturally responsive educational policies and practices in Indonesia's higher education system.

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Corresponding Author:

Hermansyah,

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Fattahul Muluk Papua, Indonesia,

Jalan Merah Putih Jl. Buper Waena, Waena, Kec. Heram, Kota Jayapura, Papua 99351

Email: hermansyah91iainfmpapua@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Child neglect refers to negligence in meeting a child's basic needs. It can take many forms, from emotional neglect by parents towards children, neglect in relationships, to social neglect in educational or friendship environments. Dvir et al. (2014) reveal that neglect is a form of child abuse with the highest prevalence. Repeated neglect can cause serious emotional and health problems in children, affecting aspects such as emotional regulation - the ability to manage and control emotions effectively.

According to Kelly and Johnston (2001), abandonment occurs when biological parents no longer fulfill their responsibilities to care for and provide for their children's basic developmental needs. The American Psychological Association associates child neglect with the refusal of attention, care, or love considered essential for the normal development of children's physical, emotional, and intellectual abilities. DePanfilis (2006), Fortson et al. (2016), and Kagan (2014), outline three goals to avoid adult neglect: keeping children away from stress, providing protection and positive nurturing, and guiding children to be independent.

Emotional neglect, as described by Duncan et al. (2009), involves a parent's failure to provide adequate attention, support, and affection to their children. This can have long-term impacts on a child's development, including self-confidence problems, difficulties in forming healthy relationships, mental disorders, and challenges in emotional self-regulation.

In the educational context, neglect of children's rights is a problem that can affect children's growth, development, and welfare. These rights include the right to quality education, to be heard, and to feel safe and respected. Research by Margareta and Jaya (2020) in the Kertapati area shows that violence against children impacts their mental and physical health. Syakhrani et al. (2023) highlight the importance of evaluating parents' authoritarian parenting styles as a basis for forming a child's character in family and community environments.

Recent research on children's rights in Indonesian higher education has focused on the impact of authoritarian parenting on child development (Abubakar et al., 2015; Kuntoro et al., 2017; Riany et al., 2017) and the effects of violence on children's mental and physical health (Margareta & Jaya, 2020). These studies have provided valuable insights into the negative consequences of neglecting children's rights in educational contexts.

While previous research has explored the impacts of neglecting children's rights, there is a gap in understanding how diverse cultural and social factors in Indonesia influence major selection in higher education. Particularly, little attention has been given to the intersection of children's rights, cultural diversity, and educational decision-making processes at the university level.

This research offers a new perspective by integrating multicultural analysis into the study of children's rights neglect in university major selection. By focusing on the culturally diverse context of Papua, this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how cultural factors influence decision-making dynamics in higher education. This approach not only fills gaps in existing literature but also provides new insights for developing more inclusive and culturally responsive educational policies and practices in Indonesia.

In both state and private universities in Indonesia, many students choose majors that do not align with their talents and interests. The Career Center Network (ICCN) reports that 87 percent of students in Indonesia admit their chosen major does not match

their interests. Chen et al. (2000) found that authoritarian attitudes from those close to the child have both motivated academic achievements and hampered emotional development.

The aim of this study is to examine the neglect of children's rights in the selection of university majors in Papua, Indonesia, focusing on how cultural factors influence decision-making processes and the implications for students' academic journeys. This research seeks to understand the forms of rights neglect in educational environments and their impact on study completion, with the goal of promoting educational practices that respect children's talents and interests in a multicultural context.

2. METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a case study method (Bliuc et al., 2007; Porter et al., 2016), focusing on higher education institutions in Papua, Indonesia. The selection of this location enables an in-depth exploration of the complex interactions between children's talents and interests from various ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds in the context of university major selection. The cultural diversity in Papua makes it an ideal location to investigate how multicultural factors influence decision-making processes in higher education.

Data collection is conducted through three primary methods (Deshefy-Longhi et al., 2009; Heap & Waters, 2019; Islam et al., 2020). First, document analysis, which includes reviewing educational policies, statistical data on major selection, and reports related to children's rights in Papua. Second, in-depth interviews are conducted with students, parents, lecturers, and university administrators, focusing on experiences in major selection and perceptions of children's rights in the context of higher education. Third, participant observation is carried out by observing career counseling processes and major orientation activities at selected universities.

Sample selection utilizes purposive sampling technique (Campbell et al., 2020), with the main criterion being students who have changed majors or experienced conflicts in major selection. The sample also includes representation from various ethnic and cultural groups in Papua to ensure diverse perspectives.

Data analysis employs a thematic analysis approach (Terry et al., 2017), encompassing data transcription and coding, identification of emerging patterns and themes, categorization of themes based on relevance to research questions, and interpretation of data within the context of multicultural theory and children's rights.

The researchers acknowledge that this case study may not be widely generalizable but aims to provide deep insights into the phenomenon studied in the specific context of Papua.

Through this method, the research aims to uncover the complexities of major selection in Papua's multicultural context, while considering aspects of children's rights and cultural influences in the higher education decision-making process. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of how cultural factors influence decision-making dynamics in higher education in a region rich in ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The educational milieu plays a crucial role in fostering children's potential and creative abilities (Davies et al., 2013). This research sheds light on two critical aspects of how children's rights are disregarded within educational settings, encompassing family, societal, and institutional contexts. Additionally, it explores the ramifications of children's rights on the trajectory of completing higher education studies.

3.1 Manifestation of Neglect of Children's Rights in the Family Environment

The implementation of children's rights remains inadequately realized, not only within family, community, and school environments but also broadly across Indonesia and globally (Livingstone & Bulger, 2014). The rights of children to express opinions and receive proper education are fundamental human rights that must be guaranteed by the state (Russo, 2010). These rights play a crucial role in children's personal and social development, as recognized internationally through the 1990 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Cohen, 1989; Detrick, 2023).

Within the family context, it is imperative for parents to actively listen to and consider their children's opinions on various matters. However, a prevalent issue arises when parents make unilateral decisions without considering the child's talents, interests, or opinions, particularly in selecting university majors at both state and private institutions in Indonesia (Sari & Wulandari, 2022).

The responsibility of parents and society in supporting and ensuring children receive education aligned with their talents and interests is paramount (Riester et al., 2002; Watters & Diezmann, 2013). Nevertheless, in numerous Indonesian universities, there has been a notable disregard for children's rights in determining academic majors. Diverse family backgrounds and social environments significantly influence children's mindsets in university selection, including major choices. The results of research conducted by (Feller, 2003), (Li et al., 2009) and Roach & Sauermann (2017) indicate that on average, students enrolled in certain study programs often experience a misalignment between their talents and interests and the chosen field of study. This phenomenon has resulted in frequent changes in study programs among students.

It is crucial to acknowledge that cultural differences and family backgrounds play significant roles in parental perspectives on children's education and major selection (Hill et al., 2018; Lareau, 1987). In multicultural Indonesia, various ethnicities and cultures hold distinct views on education and careers. Some cultural contexts may emphasize career options perceived as more prestigious or economically promising, such as medicine, law, or engineering. Conversely, other cultural backgrounds may be more receptive to children's choices and encourage exploration of individual interests.

This research revealed that parents from certain cultural backgrounds tend to direct their children towards majors deemed "suitable" based on local job opportunities, such as Early Childhood Islamic Education, Islamic Education Management, and Islamic Religious Education, often without considering the child's interests or talents. In contrast, families with more progressive cultural backgrounds may be more supportive of children choosing majors based on their personal interests.

These divergent cultural perspectives can create tension between children's desires and parental expectations, potentially leading to the neglect of children's rights in university major selection. The complexity of this issue is further compounded by the multicultural nature of Indonesian society, where traditional values and modern educational aspirations often intersect.

To address this challenge, it is essential to promote dialogue between parents and children, emphasizing the importance of balancing cultural expectations with individual interests and aptitudes. Educational institutions and policymakers should develop programs that educate parents about the evolving job market and the value of diverse academic paths. Additionally, career counseling services that consider both cultural sensitivities and individual student potential could play a crucial role in bridging the gap between parental expectations and children's aspirations.

In conclusion, the manifestation of neglect of children's rights in the family environment, particularly concerning educational choices, is a multifaceted issue rooted in cultural, social, and economic factors. Addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive approach that respects cultural diversity while promoting children's rights to participate in decisions that significantly impact their future.

3.2. Factors Influencing Major Selection in Indonesian Higher Education: A Multicultural Perspective

The selection of an academic major in higher education represents a critical juncture in a student's life, with far-reaching implications for their academic trajectory and future career (Altbach et al., 2019; der Zwaan, 2017; Patfield et al., 2022). In the context of Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape, this decision-making process is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including parental pressure, societal expectations, and educational environments. This study examines these factors through a multicultural lens, focusing on how they manifest in Indonesian universities and their impact on students' educational experiences and outcomes.

3.2.1. Parental and Family Influence

One of the primary factors influencing major selection is parental and family pressure. In many Indonesian families, parents exert significant influence over their children's educational choices, often directing them towards majors perceived as prestigious or economically viable, such as Early Childhood Islamic Education, Islamic Education Management, Islamic Religious Education, and Islamic Economics. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent in certain cultural contexts where parental authority is deeply ingrained.

Haimovitz & Dweck, (2016) and Merritt & Buboltz (2015) argue that this parental influence, when it overrides a child's personal interests and aptitudes, can lead to difficulties in academic performance and engagement. The research reveals instances where students, pressured into majors incongruent with their interests, struggle to assimilate course material effectively. This misalignment often results in students deciding to change majors, a decision that carries both academic and financial implications.

An illustrative case is provided by a student interview:

"Pada awalnya saya memilih masuk jurusan PIAUD atas pilihan orang tua, namun setelah saya menjalaninya, barulah saya merasa tidak cocok dengan jurusan PIAUD, Akhirnya saya memilih untuk pindah ke jurusan MPI, meskipun saya tidak tau apa itu MPI (Wawancara, 13 November 2024)".

"Initially, I chose to enter the PIAUD (Early Childhood Islamic Education) program based on my parents' preference. However, after experiencing it, I realized that I was not compatible with the PIAUD program. Ultimately, I decided to transfer to the MPI (Islamic Education Management) program, despite not knowing what MPI entailed." (Interview, November 13, 2024." (Interview, November 13, 2024)".

This is in line with the statement of one of the informants:

"Saya di Jurusan Ekonomi Syari'ah selama tiga semester. Alasan saya pindah ke Prodi PIAUD karena di suruh orang tua karena saya anak perempuan satu-satunya di dalam keluarga dan setelah saya lulus dari kampus iain saya pulang mengajar di kampung sambil menjaga orang tua". (Wawancara, 13 November 2024)

"I was enrolled in the Islamic Economics Department for three semesters. The reason I transferred to the PIAUD program was at my parents' insistence, as I am the only daughter in the family. They expected that after graduating from the Islamic institute, I would return to my village to teach while taking care of them." (Interview, November 13, 2024)".

These narratives underscore the tension between parental expectations and students' personal inclinations. While parents often have good intentions, aiming for what they perceive as the best for their children, the pressure to choose a particular major can have both positive and negative impacts on a student's development and well-being. Students who select majors due to parental pressure may lack intrinsic motivation, potentially leading to decreased academic performance and achievement. Moreover, the mismatch between personal interests and parental choices can induce stress, anxiety, and even depression in students, negatively impacting their mental and emotional health.

3.2.2. Societal and Peer Influence

The social environment, encompassing societal norms, peer groups, and educators, constitutes another significant factor in major selection. Eccles and Roeser (2015) demonstrate that when students choose majors based on societal or peer influence without genuine enthusiasm, it can impede their learning process and personal development. This often leads to students changing majors as a primary recourse.

A student's account illustrates this influence:

"Alasan saya pindah, awalnya memang saya ingin masuk Prodi PAI, namun setelah sowan kepada Guru SMA saya, beliyau menyarankan saya untuk memilih Matematika, karena menurutnya kebutuhan Guru Matematika itu peluangnya banyak. Begitu pula yang diperintahkan oleh Kyai, beliyau berpesan jika memang bisa dipenuhi keinginannya Gurunya masuk saja di Matematika. Akhirnya saya memilih masuk di prodi Matematika memiskipun saya tidak memiliki basic apapun disitu. Setelah berjalan hingga semester 2 saya pindah di prodi PAI". (Wawancara, 13 November 2024).

"Initially, I wanted to enter the PAI (Islamic Education) program, but after consulting with my high school teacher, he suggested I choose Mathematics, citing better job prospects. The Kyai (religious leader) also advised the same. So, I enrolled in

Mathematics despite lacking any background in it. After two semesters, I transferred to PAI." (Interview, November 13, 2024).

Another student emphasized the role of peer influence::

"Iya, dia mempengaruhi banget, saya disuruh pindah jurusan dan diajak untuk pindah ke jurusan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam yang sama dengan dia. Kalau kamu pindah di MPI kita bisa sama-sama ke kampus, dan dia juga bilang jurusan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam bagus loh, kita bisa kerja di kantor, dan bisa juga di sekolah" (wawancara, 29 November 2023).

"Yes, my friend heavily influenced me. They encouraged me to switch to Islamic Education Management, saying we could attend classes together and that it offers good job prospects in both office and school settings." (Interview, November 29, 2023).

These examples highlight how societal expectations and peer influences can significantly shape students' decisions, sometimes leading them away from their true interests or aptitudes.

3.2.3. Educational Environment and Learning Models

The educational environment itself, particularly the teaching methodologies and learning models employed, also plays a crucial role in students' major selection and retention (Aljohani, 2016; Kerby, 2015). Some students report difficulties in engaging with course material due to less appealing teaching methods or a mismatch between their learning style and the pedagogical approach of their chosen major.

A student's experience illustrates this point:

"Saya berhenti kuliah di PIAUD, karena di PIAUD ada menarinya, jadi saya tidak suka dengan tarian, juga di PIAUD harus memakai seragam pin, itu juga membuat saya tidak suka. Selain itu saya suka dengan MPI dari namanya saya sudah berminat, selain itu karena kaka saya mempunyai sekolah dan saya bisa kerja disana dibagian tata usaha". (Wawancara, 13 November 2023).

"I quit studying in PIAUD because it involved dancing, which I don't like, and required wearing a uniform with a pin. I preferred MPI from its name alone, and also because my sibling owns a school where I could work in administration." (Interview, November 13, 2023)

This account reveals how the lack of alignment between a student's expectations and the actual content and methodology of a program can lead to dissatisfaction and, ultimately, a change in major. It also highlights the importance of comprehensive program information being available to students and parents before making decisions.

3.2.4. Multicultural Considerations

In the multicultural context of Indonesia, understanding and appreciating cultural diversity in the educational environment is paramount (Sidi, 2019). This diversity extends beyond ethnicity and religion to encompass variations in cultural values and social perspectives (Bazzi et al., 2017; Laksana & Wood, 2019; Sidi, 2019). Educators and peers from diverse cultural backgrounds can significantly influence a student's choice of major. For instance, a teacher from a particular ethnic background may hold different views regarding the value and career prospects of certain majors, potentially influencing the advice given to students.

The diversity of cultural backgrounds among students and faculty in Indonesian universities has the potential to provide a broader perspective in major selection. However, if not managed effectively, this diversity can also lead to conflict or confusion for students in their decision-making process. It is therefore crucial for educational institutions to foster an inclusive environment and promote cross-cultural dialogue to assist students in making informed decisions aligned with their interests and potential, free from the influence of cultural stereotypes or irrelevant social pressures.

The factors influencing major selection in Indonesian higher education - parental pressure, societal influence, and educational environment - have become deeply entrenched ideologies in Indonesian society. These factors, interacting within the country's multicultural context, significantly impact students' educational trajectories and personal development.

To address these challenges, several recommendations can be proposed: (1) Enhanced Career Counseling: Universities should implement comprehensive career counseling programs that consider students' interests, aptitudes, and cultural backgrounds. These programs should provide students with accurate information about various majors and their career prospects; (2) Parental Education Programs: Institutions should develop programs to educate parents about the importance of aligning major selection with students' interests and aptitudes, as well as the evolving nature of the job market; (3) Culturally Sensitive Pedagogy: Educational institutions should adopt teaching methodologies that are sensitive to diverse learning styles and cultural backgrounds, ensuring that students from all cultures feel engaged and represented in their learning experiences; (4) Flexible Curriculum Design: Universities could consider implementing more flexible curricula that allow students to explore different fields before committing to a major, potentially reducing the need for major changes later in their academic careers; (5) Cross-Cultural Dialogue Platforms: Creating platforms for cross-cultural dialogue among students, parents, and educators can help bridge cultural gaps and promote understanding of diverse perspectives on education and career choices; (6) Research on Cultural Influences: Continued research into how cultural factors influence educational choices in Indonesia's multicultural context is essential for developing effective, culturally sensitive policies and practices in higher education.

The process of major selection in Indonesian higher education is a complex interplay of personal, familial, societal, and cultural factors. While parental and societal influences play significant roles, it is crucial to recognize the importance of aligning educational choices with students' personal interests and aptitudes. The multicultural nature of Indonesian society adds another layer of complexity to this process, necessitating approaches that are sensitive to cultural diversity while promoting individual agency in educational decision-making.

By addressing these challenges through culturally informed policies and practices, Indonesian higher education institutions can better support students in making decisions that align with their personal goals and cultural values. This approach not only benefits individual students but also contributes to the development of a more diverse, skilled, and satisfied workforce, ultimately benefiting Indonesian society as a whole.

3.3. Implications in the Study Completion Process: A Multicultural Perspective on Major Changes in Indonesian Higher Education

The lack of comprehensive support from families, communities, and educational institutions for students' autonomous decision-making in selecting majors aligned with their talents and interests has significant implications for the study completion process in Indonesian higher education. This neglect of students' educational autonomy often results in negative outcomes, particularly affecting academic achievement and overall educational experience.

Students who find themselves in majors incongruent with their aptitudes and interests frequently encounter difficulties in attaining optimal academic performance. The mismatch between personal inclinations and chosen fields of study can lead to diminished motivation and engagement in the learning process. Furthermore, inadequate access to necessary educational resources and suboptimal learning environments may exacerbate these challenges, contributing to a lack of academic rigor and commitment among students.

Consequently, many students opt for major changes, a decision that, while potentially beneficial in the long term, often impedes the timely completion of their studies. This transition necessitates the repetition or addition of courses to align with the requirements of the new major.

As one student articulated:

"Ada beberapa mata kuliah yang harus saya program ulang, namun itu sudah jadi konsekuensi yang saya terima, meskipun belum bisa memulainya satu persatu namun saya tetap akan mencoba semuanya demi memenuhi cita-cita saya" (Wawancara, 14 November 2023).

"There are several courses I need to retake, but I accept this as a consequence. Although I cannot start everything at once, I am determined to try everything to fulfill my aspirations." (Interview, November 14, 2023).

This statement underscores the resilience and determination of students in pursuing their academic goals, despite the challenges posed by major changes. The implications of changing majors are multifaceted and significant. Primarily, it often results in an extended study period. Students are required to complete additional coursework specific to their new major, which not only increases their academic workload but also prolongs the time needed to obtain their degree. This extension has financial ramifications, as it entails increased educational costs for tuition, materials, and living expenses over a longer period.

Moreover, students who change majors may face social stigma within their communities. There is often a misconception that such changes indicate a lack of academic

seriousness or commitment. This perception can be particularly pronounced in religious communities, where educational choices may be closely tied to cultural and spiritual expectations. Banks & Smyth, (2015) and Prabu (2015) note that many students experience frustration and psychological stress due to societal pressure and questioning about their academic progress and choices.

The diversity of cultural perspectives on education in Indonesia further complicates this issue. Different societal norms and expectations regarding education often overshadow individual students' viewpoints and aspirations. This cultural complexity contributes to the neglect of students' rights in educational decision-making, ultimately impacting their academic trajectories and study completion timelines.

Students enrolled in specific academic programs frequently experience misalignment between their talents and interests and their chosen field of study. This phenomenon often results in frequent changes of academic majors among students. Based on my observations, four key factors hinder the timely completion of studies for students who change majors: (1) the necessity to repeat courses or take additional courses tailored to the new major; (2) increased educational costs associated with an extended study period; (3) the prolonged duration required to complete a degree; and (4) negative social stigma from the community. I believe these factors significantly contribute to the challenges faced by students in completing their studies after changing their academic programs. These factors collectively represent the challenges faced by students navigating major changes in Indonesian higher education. They highlight the need for a more flexible and supportive educational system that can accommodate diverse student needs and aspirations within a multicultural context.

To address these challenges, it is crucial for educational institutions, families, and communities to adopt a more holistic and culturally sensitive approach to higher education. This approach should prioritize students' individual talents and interests while considering the diverse cultural expectations present in Indonesian society. Implementing comprehensive career counseling, flexible curriculum structures, and programs to educate families and communities about the evolving nature of education and career paths could significantly mitigate the negative implications of major changes on study completion.

The process of changing majors in Indonesian higher education, while sometimes necessary for aligning academic pursuits with personal aspirations, carries substantial implications for study completion. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders to create a more supportive and flexible educational environment that respects both individual choices and cultural diversity.

4. CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the neglect of children's rights frequently occurs within family and societal contexts, where the choice of academic majors is often imposed without consideration of the child's interests and talents. Factors influencing major selection include parental pressure, social influence, and incompatible learning models, all of which are affected by the diverse cultural backgrounds present in Papua. The primary findings indicate that differing cultural perspectives on education and careers have a significant impact on the decision-making process. The disregard for children's rights in major selection often results in academic difficulties, leading to major changes, extended study periods, and potential social stigma. This study emphasizes the

importance of a multicultural approach in higher education that values cultural diversity while protecting individual student rights. In conclusion, this research successfully identifies the complexities of educational decision-making in the multicultural context of Papua, highlighting the importance of balancing respect for children's rights with consideration of cultural influences in higher education. These findings provide a foundation for developing more inclusive and culturally responsive educational policies and practices in Indonesia.

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