

Research on Racial Discrimination in Indonesia and Ethnic Groups

Zhenghao Li

Zhengzhou No.11 High School-St.Marry, Road Chao Feng, District Jing Kai, No.11. Henan, China

Keywords: Ethnicity, Race, Discrimination, Labor market

Abstract: Discrimination on the basis of race is widely condemned, but on the basis of nationality it is widely accepted. Is it not odd that you may not discriminate against me for where my great-great-grandparents were born, but you may discriminate against me for where my parents were born. This article learns about racial discrimination in Indonesia and ethnic groups by studying the discrimination of TOTOK and PERANAKAN.

1. Introduction

Discrimination based on age, gender, sexual orientation, nationality is omniscient and well-known in all societies. It happens almost everywhere, especially in the labor market. Discrimination in this article refers to national discrimination and racial discrimination. The relationship between Chinese Indonesian(peranakan and totok) and local Indonesians will be assist to explain discrimination among nationality and race. Moreover, discrimination in the labor market will reflect how and why people will discriminate against you for where your parents were born. The time you stay with locals and degree of immigrants' educated level as well as vocational techniques all play an essential role in reducing discrimination and stereotypes.

2. Discrimination in the Labor Market

Discrimination in the labor market is a ubiquitous experience for immigrants for several reasons. Firstly, such discrimination is due to a resentment urged from those people who were originally born in that region for the reason that immigrants compete scarce job occupations with non-immigrants. Actually, many immigrants are usually high-skilled workers in contrast to those local employees, which assist them to be more competitive in the labor market. In a deep recession, with increased competition for scarce resources, immigrants may be especially likely to be perceived as competing with members of the host society (Esses et al., 2001). Obviously, companies are willing to recruit high-educated people so that they could solve certain technical issues, contributing to the research and development, which will definitely aid the company to be dominant in the market. As a consequence, non-immigrants will find it difficult to derive a position in a high-skill required company, which prevents them from acquiring higher paychecks. Therefore, resentment accumulates gradually and discrimination occurs.

Additionally, literacy level also plays an important role in triggering unjustified treatment. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, since immigrants are high-skilled, those 500 fortune companies are readily to recruit them. However, there raises a question about why are immigrants usually high talented? To be more specific, why these companies are willing to recruit non-native employees? Because immigrants tend to be high-educated. 'With the modification of immigration policies and global education trend, people who are non-local but achieve higher educational diploma boomed increasingly since 1900: The college-degree immigrant population increased 87 percent between 1990 and 2000, 57 percent between 2000 and 2010, and a following 38 percent between 2010 and 2018. (see Figure 1).' (Migration Policy Institute 2020, para. 3). Thus, there is a high likelihood that immigrants can acquire high salary comparing with those non-immigrants. Managing to get a well-known diploma and become skillful in certain field could add more weight in competing scarce job opportunities, to add insult to injury, getting worse in labor market discrimination. Nevertheless, there is a study shows that discrimination or stereotype towards

immigrants may significantly reduce. As the immigration wave prevails, workers could obtain more opportunities to interact with members of other minorities. ‘Non-immigrant-worker can derive information about each other whereby the interaction with other racial groups as well as exchanging personal experiences so that people who were born in that region will be less indulged in racial stereotypes and biases’ (Gillian Kingston, Frances McGinnity & Philip J O’Connell 2015, p.217)

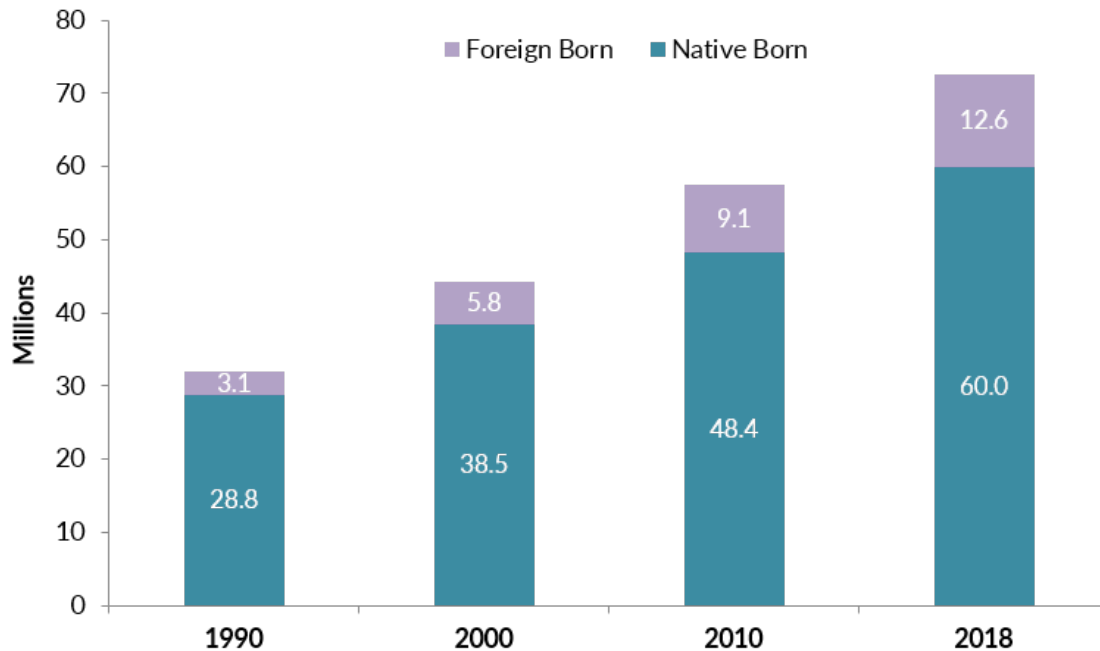


Figure1: *Number of College-Educated Adults (Ages 25 and Older) in the United States by Nativity, 1990-2018* by Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census and 2010 and 2018 American Community Survey (ACS).

People will discriminate towards you for where your parents were born because they lack the interaction with natives. Then these natives will not maintain so much information and the stereotype in their deep heart exists continuously, while your great-great-grandparents have already lived in this region for a long time that could assist them to provide information of themselves so that local people will accept them increasingly. Consequently, it is not odd that people may against you for where your parents were born rather than for where you great-great-grandparents were born.

3. Discrimination in Cultural Differences during the Immigration to the Indonesian Archipelago Period.

First off, it should be clearly claimed that discrimination is a subconscious behavior. People usually generate discrimination, owing to the unconscious self-defense. In this section, discrimination against cultural difference will be analyzed. ‘Usually but not always, groups may suffer discrimination more frequently if they are more visibly and/or culturally distinguished from those who were not culturally obvious.’ (Gillian Kingston, Frances McGinnity & Philip J O’Connell 2015, p.216)

As we all know, for your great-great-grandparents’ generation, they were perpetuated by years of colonization and oppression. A case in point, during the fifteen centuries, immigration to Indonesian archipelago peaked. Several questions and answers will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

3.1 Why They Immigrated? ---- the Century of Humiliation

During the Century of Humiliation, Ming Dynasty, the emperor signed a bunch of unjustified treaties with western colonies owing to the failure of two Opium wars. Opium is a powerful drug that will disturb people and make them be addicted. This drug was pervading among people especially officials. Then they were no longer work as efficient as before. Eventually, the

government became corrupt. Amanda Walujono (2014, p. 20) found that ‘The majority of Chinese people who could cast off what was gradually becoming a colonized, opium-wrecked country simply did. Like many first-generation immigrants, the Chinese diaspora were probably to identify as Chinese and try to save their nationalistic heritage.’

3.2 How They Immigrated? ---- the Totok and Peranakan

Totok and peranakan both were immigrants from China to Indonesia. Even though “When considering the ethnic Chinese Indonesian people, they are usually seen as the ones who are acquiescent, and also lack money and trust, even in some cases as wicked and anthropoid among the sick local Indonesian people who are compelled to depend on those Chinese Indonesian moneylenders.” (Wilmot 79), the Totok and Peranakan Chinese populations differed from one another.

3.2.1 Totok

As I mentioned in the last paragraph, the new immigrants from the Century of Humiliation must have sufficient money and resources so that they could sneak landing. ‘Until the end of the 19th century, the immigration of Chinese to the Indonesian archipelago was limited, which was due to the difficulties in transportation.’ (Britannica Peranakan People, para. 2). These Totoks were powerful and dominated in a relatively upper social class, whereby constructing reliable business connection, which therefore caught the Dutch colonialists’ attention. Amanda Walujono (2014, p. 21) found that ‘They regarded the Chinese Indonesian population as separate and better than the indigenous Indonesians but they still regarded the Chinese Indonesian population as lesser than Europeans.’ Consequently, local Indonesians always discriminated against with these so-called strangers as I mentioned that discrimination is a subconscious behavior that means to protect themselves. When these immigrants reached the Java island, occupying social classes even upper than local Indonesians, locals and governments quickly took into action. Under Suharto, he enacted a series of policies and unjustified policies. Chinese were forbidden to speak their mother language, and were forced to change their last name with Indonesian one. Furthermore, as shown in figure 2, the population of Totok did not increase as much as those of Peranakans. But they should have more generations due to their abundant resources and upper social classes. Why did this happen? Amanda Walujono (2014, p. 23) found that ‘Indonesian population and the domination of the Chinese Indonesian in the moneylending and credit business, the native indigenous Indonesian population perceived that they were trapped in this endless cycle of poverty.’ Under Suharto and the Dutch colonization, those laws and policies restricted the growth of Totok population.

3.2.2 Peranakan

Amanda Walujono (2014, p. 19) found that ‘The Peranakan Chinese Indonesian population were primarily rooted from the Hokkien region of China. These Hokkien Peranakan Chinese Indonesians had generally lived in Indonesia for centuries and had been relatively well fitted in the rest of Indonesian society.’ When Peranakan firstly landed on Java, they began to venture into the local workplace. Most of Peranakan workforce were consists of labors, farmers and even artisans. Gradually, they got married with Indonesian women, which triggered the sheer increase of Peranakan population as shown in Figure 2. Amanda Walujono (2014, p. 19) found that ‘These initial Peranakan Chinese Indonesians could be considered well integrated with the indigenous Indonesians and Indonesian society.’ In contrast to the Totok, Peranakans, who have already lived in Indonesia for centuries and adapted to the local custom, therefore, did not encounter so much discrimination and unjustified treatment.

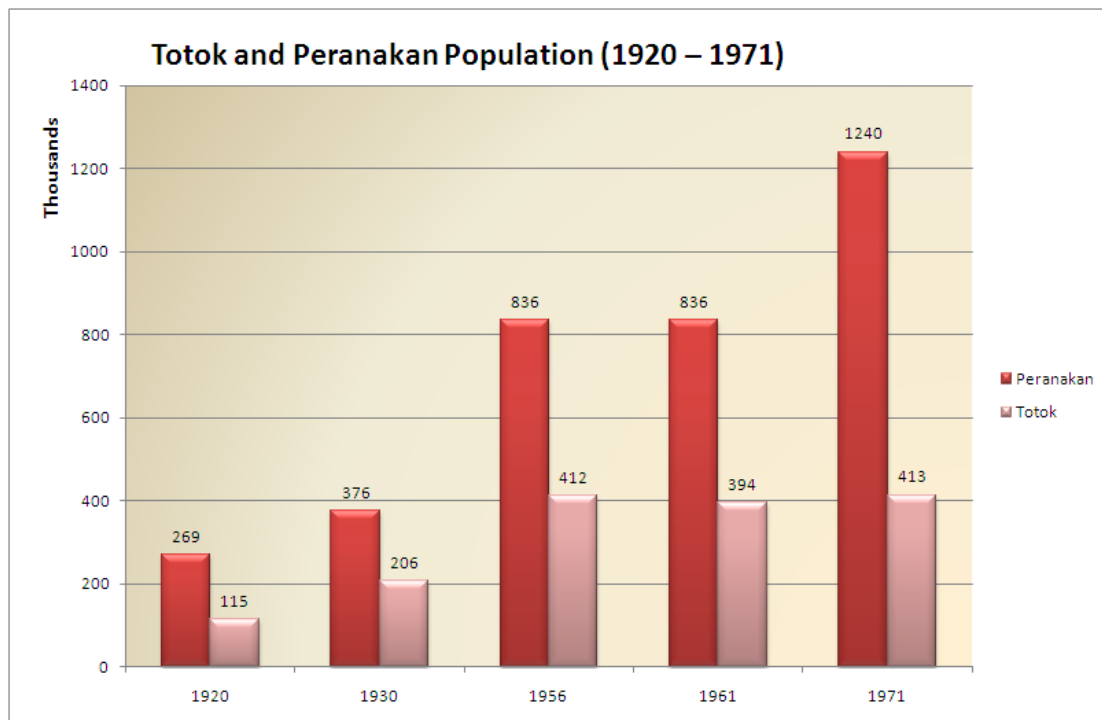


Fig.2 : Peranakan and Totok Populations by Wikimedia Commons

Regardless of age, population, treatment, Peranakan and Totok differed from each other considerably. Amanda Walujono (2014, p. 23) deemed that ‘The ethnic Chinese Indonesian population were regarded as money-hungry, conniving, untrustworthy, and in some plain cases evil and subhuman among the resentful indigenous Indonesian population who were forced to rely on these Chinese Indonesian moneylenders.’ According to this aspect, it is clearly demonstrated the reason why latter coming Totoks were not as welcome as Peranakans who have resided in Indonesia for centuries. Thus, there is a high likelihood that people will discriminate against you for where your parents were born. Because they may not be accepted by the locals and even infringe their freedom, property, political rights, which caused by your parents’ talents in economy. Then the indigenous Indonesians will take into action so as to protect themselves. Consequently, discrimination occurs without consciousness. However, precisely because your great-great-grandparents did not dominate in Indonesian economic market, they will not encroach the natives’ rights. Instead, they got along well with each other. In this way, discrimination will not occur for where you great-great-grandparents were born.

4. Conclusion

Time and talents play an essential in discrimination against you for where your parents were born. The number of immigrants with high-educated diploma and high-skilled techniques which are prerequisite for present labor market surges increasingly recently. Many of them merely devote themselves in the 500 fortune companies, deriving high wages comparing with those of non-immigrants. They resided in the country they work and study for a short time, which will neither assist them to mingle with natives nor reduces normal stereotypes. The Totoks emigrated to Java and became dominating in the local labor market, to be distinguished by the Dutch colonizer from the indigenous through different social classes. The peranakan’s situation was totally different. They could be regarded as your great-great-grandparents. After they sneak landing on the Java, they quickly got married with Indonesian women since there was an extreme shortage of Chinese Peranakan Women. (Amanda Walujono 2014.) This explains why could Peranakan easily get along with local Indonesians and avoid being discriminating by the indigenous.

References

- [1] Britannica. n.d. viewed 20 June 2021, < <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Peranakan>>
- [2] Crisco, Peranakan and Totok populations, own work, PT, Grafiti pers, viewed 21 June< https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Peranakan_and_Totok_Populations.jpg>
- [3] Esses VM, Dovidio JF, Jackson LM and Armstrong TL (2001) The immigration dilemma: the role of perceived group competition, ethnic prejudice, and national identity. *Journal of Social Issues* 57(3): 389–412.
- [4] Gillian, K, Frances, Mc& Philip, J 2015, ‘Discrimination in the labor market: nationality, ethnicity and the recession’, *Journal of Work, employment and society*, Vol. 29(2) 213–232, pp 217, para 3.
- [5] Kira Olsen-Medina and Jeanne Batalova 2020, College-Educated Immigrants in the United States, viewed 24 June 2021, < Article 2020: College-Educated Immigrants in the U.. | migrationpolicy.org>.
- [6] Number of College-Educated Adults (Ages 25 and Older) in the United States by Nativity, 1990-2018, by Migr Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 1990 and 2000 Decennial Census and 2010 and 2018 American Community Survey (ACS), viewed 24 June 2021, < Article 2020: College-Educated Immigrants in the U.. | migrationpolicy.org>.
- [7] Walujono, Amanda. (2014) The Discrimination of the Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia and Perceptions of Nationality. [Scripps Senior Theses]. Scholarship @ Claremont. http://scholarship.claremont.edu/scripps_theses/508