



Unlocking Opportunities: Exploring the Future Potential of Indonesian Higher Education for Vietnamese Students

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ABSTRACT: As globalization continues to reshape the landscape of higher education, international student mobility has become increasingly prevalent. In this context, the potential of Indonesian higher education institutions (HEIs) in accommodating Vietnamese students still needs to be explored. This research delves into the prospects of Indonesian higher education for Vietnamese students, examining factors such as academic offerings, a strong cultural affinity between the two countries, language proficiency, and institutional collaborations. Through qualitative analysis of existing policies, student experiences, and academic partnerships, this study sheds light on the untapped opportunities and challenges in fostering educational exchanges between Indonesia and Vietnam. The findings suggest that Indonesian HEIs possess significant potential to attract Vietnamese students, offering diverse academic programs, affordable tuition, and a culturally enriching environment that resonates with Vietnamese students. However, language barriers, administrative hurdles, and limited awareness hinder realizing this potential. It is of utmost importance for policymakers, academic institutions, and stakeholders to urgently implement the recommendations provided in this research, thereby enhancing the accessibility and appeal of Indonesian higher education for Vietnamese students and fostering cross-cultural understanding and educational excellence in the region.

Keywords: Indonesia, Higher Education, Vietnamese Student, Indonesian Language



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INTRODUCTION

The rapid globalization of education has opened new avenues for cross-border academic exchanges, facilitating students' movement across international boundaries to pursue higher education. In Southeast Asia, this trend is particularly significant as countries in the region strive to enhance their educational systems and global competitiveness. Among these nations, Indonesia has emerged as a potential hub for international students, offering diverse academic programs,

relatively affordable tuition fees, and a rich cultural experience ([Sutrisno, 2019](#)). Indonesian higher education provides a unique cultural experience, with its diverse traditions, languages, and customs, which is a compelling aspect that should be considered ([Lambey et al., 2024](#)). This distinctiveness can be a significant draw for Vietnamese students, who may be seeking a unique and enriching educational experience. However, Vietnamese students remain an underrepresented group despite the growing presence of international students in Indonesian HEIs. Understanding the factors that influence their study destination choices is crucial for enhancing regional educational collaboration and optimizing the attractiveness of Indonesian universities.

With its growing economy and increasing demand for high-quality education, Vietnam represents a significant opportunity for Indonesian HEIs. Vietnamese students increasingly seek educational opportunities abroad to gain international exposure, develop global competencies, and enhance their career prospects ([Tri, 2023](#)). This study explores the future potential of Indonesian higher education for Vietnamese students, analyzing academic offerings, cultural factors, institutional collaborations, and administrative challenges. This research identifies key opportunities and obstacles affecting student mobility between Vietnam and Indonesia by examining the current landscape. While prior studies have explored student mobility trends in Southeast Asia, they have focused on well-established destinations such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Western countries. Few studies have specifically addressed the prospects of Indonesian HEIs for Vietnamese students, creating a research gap that this study aims to fill.

This research contributes to the existing literature on international student mobility by providing a focused analysis of the appeal of Indonesian higher education to Vietnamese students. Unlike previous studies that have broadly examined ASEAN student mobility, this study investigates explicitly the challenges and motivations influencing the decisions of Vietnamese students to study in Indonesia. It offers empirical insights into scholarship programs, language barriers, and institutional partnerships, delivering practical recommendations for policymakers and educational institutions. Furthermore, it broadens discussions on regional academic cooperation within ASEAN, illuminating the role of Indonesia as an emerging educational destination.

The study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing policy documents, institutional reports, and prior studies to assess the potential of Indonesian HEIs for Vietnamese students. While this method facilitates a comprehensive exploration of social, cultural, and institutional factors, the findings are context-specific and may not broadly apply to all Vietnamese students. Moreover, this research predominantly focuses on academic opportunities, affordability, and cultural factors, lacking extensive quantitative analysis of enrollment trends. Future research could enhance this work by integrating survey-based research to validate findings on a broader scale.

The novelty of this research resides in its concentrated focus on Indonesian-Vietnamese educational exchanges, an area that remains underexplored in the literature. While previous studies have examined Indonesian higher education in general and the study-abroad preferences of Vietnamese students, this study connects these topics by highlighting Indonesia's potential as a viable alternative destination. Additionally, the study underscores the implications of scholarship programs like the Kemitraan Negara Berkembang (KNB) and Darmasiswa schemes in promoting Vietnamese student enrollment. By addressing both the opportunities and barriers, this research

offers actionable insights to enhance cross-border academic collaboration and support student mobility in the ASEAN region.

METHOD

Qualitative research in the social field involves a range of methodological approaches that aim to generate an in-depth understanding of the social world by learning about people's circumstances, experiences, perspectives, and histories (Zermiani et al., 2021). It requires researchers to become intensely involved and often spend lengthy periods in the field (Kemparaj & Chavan, 2013, pp. 89–98). The most significant value of qualitative research is its ability to address questions of relevance to knowledge and practice that are difficult to answer using quantitative methods (Ishtiaq, 2019; Weyant, 2022). Qualitative field research involves conducting independent fieldwork, including interviews and participant observation, to gather and analyze qualitative data (Caplan & Purser, 2019). Researchers must keep field note journals, write seminar papers, and present their findings (Auriacombe & Mouton, 2007). Various qualitative research designs and approaches exist, each with strengths and weaknesses. The stages involved in qualitative field research include selecting field sites, developing research questions, conducting field research, and analyzing the data (Atkinson & Delamont, 2010).

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach to investigate the potential of Indonesian higher education for Vietnamese students. Such an approach is efficient for this inquiry, as it allows for a comprehensive understanding of the social, cultural, and institutional factors that shape the decisions and experiences of Vietnamese students within the Indonesian educational context. This study employs a qualitative research methodology because it provides an in-depth understanding of the social, cultural, and institutional factors influencing Vietnamese students' decisions to study in Indonesia.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic review of key policy documents, institutional reports, and previous studies concerning Indonesian higher education and Vietnamese student mobility. The sources reviewed include government policies, scholarship guidelines (such as the Darmasiswa and KNB programs), and academic publications to identify prevalent themes and trends. The data collected was analyzed using thematic analysis, where common patterns, challenges, and opportunities were identified and categorized to draw meaningful conclusions. Multiple measures were taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collected. First, the study relied on diverse and credible sources, including government documents, peer-reviewed journal articles, and institutional reports, to triangulate findings and reduce biases. Second, thematic coding was used to identify recurring patterns and themes within the data, ensuring consistency in analysis. This peer review process helped verify the accuracy of interpretations and conclusions. Although qualitative research inherently involves subjective analysis, the methodological rigor applied in this study enhances its credibility and trustworthiness.

Although this qualitative method yields rich and contextual insights (Lim, 2024) due to the purposive nature of the sample, the findings may not be broadly applicable to all Vietnamese students or Indonesian institutions. Future research could enhance this study by incorporating quantitative methods to validate and expand upon the findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The globalization of higher education has led to a significant increase in the movement of students across borders. According to UNESCO, the number of international students worldwide has more than doubled over the past decade, reaching approximately 5 million in recent years ([Bhandari & Blumenthal, 2011](#)). Several factors drive this trend, including the desire for high-quality education, better career opportunities, and the growing recognition of the importance of international experience in a globalized economy ([Tri, 2023](#)). Key destinations for international students include the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and, increasingly, countries in Asia such as China, Japan, and Malaysia ([Börjesson, 2017](#)).

Indonesian Higher Education Landscape

Indonesia's higher education system is one of the largest and most diverse in the world, encompassing over 4,500 institutions that cater to a vast student population ([Yusriadi et al., 2024](#)). The Indonesian education framework is complex and fragmented and contains many internal contradictions. The HEIs system has public and private universities, institutes, schools of higher learning, academies, community colleges, and polytechnics ([Lambey et al., 2024](#)). This landscape includes public, private, and specialized colleges offering various academic programs ([Azzahra & Zahra, 2023](#)). Public universities, such as the University of Indonesia (UI), Gadjah Mada University (UGM), Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB), and Padjadjaran University (UNPAD), are renowned for their research capabilities and comprehensive academic offerings. These institutions, funded and managed by the government, set the benchmark for higher education in the country. In contrast, private universities like Bina Nusantara University (BINUS) and Pelita Harapan University (UPH) provide essential alternatives, contributing significantly to the educational ecosystem by offering diverse programs and catering to different student needs. Specialized colleges and polytechnics focus on fields such as agriculture, technology, and the arts, providing practical and vocational training aligned with the job market demands.

The Indonesian government has undertaken several initiatives to enhance the quality of its higher education system and international competitiveness. Quality assurance and accreditation are overseen by the National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT), which ensures that institutions meet established standards (Broto Legowo et al., 2020). Efforts to internationalize higher education have promoted international partnerships, collaborative research, and student exchange programs, raising the global profile of Indonesian universities ([Darmadji et al., 2018](#)). Scholarship programs financially support domestic and international students, enhancing access to higher education ([Logli, 2016](#)). Furthermore, curriculum reforms that align with international standards and incorporate modern teaching methods are designed to ensure graduates are well-prepared for the global job market ([Digdowiseiso, 2020](#)).

Indonesian universities offer a broad spectrum of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs, catering to diverse interests and career aspirations ([Asian Development Bank, 2015](#)). Engineering and technology programs, particularly at institutions like ITB and the University of Surabaya, are highly regarded and supported by strong industry links and research initiatives. Business and economics programs at universities such as UI and BINUS produce well-prepared graduates for the corporate

world, while arts and humanities programs reflect the country's rich cultural heritage. Despite these advancements, the Indonesian higher education system faces several challenges. Quality disparities exist between top-tier institutions and lesser-known universities, necessitating efforts to ensure more uniform standards across the board ([Rosser, 2023](#)). Language barriers also pose a significant challenge, as many programs are conducted in Indonesian, which can be a hurdle for international students ([Lambey et al., 2024](#)). Increasing the number of English-taught programs could enhance the appeal to international students ([Puspitasari & Ishak, 2023](#)). Moreover, while some universities have strong research capabilities, overall research funding and output remain relatively low compared to other countries in the region, highlighting the need for increased research infrastructure and funding investment ([Asian Development Bank, 2015](#)).

Indonesia's culturally rich and socially vibrant environment further enhances its appeal as a destination for higher education. The country's diverse population, friendly atmosphere, and affordable cost of living make it attractive for international students ([Dewanto & Pritasari, 2023](#)). Government and educational institutions increasingly focus on supporting international students, including orientation programs, language courses, and cultural integration activities, ensuring a smooth transition and enriching experience ([Sibawaihi & Fernandes, 2023](#)).

As a result, Indonesia's higher education landscape is characterized by a dynamic mix of institutions, supportive government policies, and a commitment to internationalization (Pannen, 2020). However, to fully realize its potential as a hub for international students, including those from Vietnam, continued efforts are needed to address existing challenges and enhance the overall quality and accessibility of education. By building on its strengths and addressing these areas, Indonesia can emerge as the region's leading destination for higher education.

Vietnamese Student Preferences and Trends

Vietnamese students have grown interested in pursuing higher education abroad ([Tri, 2023](#)). Key factors influencing their choice of destination include the quality of education, cost of living and tuition, cultural and linguistic similarities, and the potential for post-graduate employment. Traditionally, Vietnamese students have favored destinations such as the United States, Australia, Japan, and Singapore ([Do & Pham, 2016](#)). However, recent trends indicate a diversification in their choice of study destinations, with increasing interest in countries within the ASEAN region due to geographical proximity, cultural affinities, and competitive educational offerings ([Khan Eusafzai, 2024](#); [Riana & Alverina, 2018](#)).

However, affordability is pivotal in Vietnamese students' choices and academic quality. Rising tuition costs and living expenses in traditional Western destinations have led many students to explore alternatives in neighboring countries like Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia, which offer competitive educational programs at lower costs ([Do & Pham, 2016](#)). Financial considerations are further compounded by the availability of scholarships or financial aid, crucial factors that influence the feasibility of studying abroad.

Cultural and linguistic affinity also weighs heavily in decision-making ([Do & Pham, 2016](#)). With their shared cultural similarities and increasing adoption of English-taught programs, ASEAN countries provide a comfortable environment for Vietnamese students. This familiarity eases the cultural

transition and enhances the educational experience by promoting greater integration and understanding. Proximity to home also plays a pragmatic role in decision-making, facilitating easier travel and maintaining familial connections (Tri, 2023). ASEAN countries and nearby Asian destinations are increasingly preferred for their geographical convenience, lower travel costs, and reduced cultural adjustment challenges compared to distant Western countries. This issue is especially of significant concern after the COVID-19 pandemic (Mok, 2022).

Institutional reputation and effective marketing strategies are pivotal in navigating these preferences (Beneke, 2010). Educational institutions that actively engage with prospective students through targeted outreach, participation in international education fairs, and strategic partnerships with local agents (Green & Baxter, 2023) are better positioned to attract Vietnamese students. There is often a stronger concentration of universities in Western countries than Southeast Asian countries. The perceived prestige of institutions, bolstered by alumni success stories, international rankings, and proactive recruitment efforts, significantly influences students' perceptions and decisions (Soysal et al., 2020).

Highlighted Scholarship Programs

Darmasiswa Scholarship Programs

Darmasiswa is a scholarship program offered to all international students from countries with diplomatic relations with Indonesia to study Bahasa, art, and culture (Baihaqi, 2024). Participants are allowed to select from various esteemed universities in multiple cities across Indonesia. This initiative is conducted under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). Such partnerships aim to enhance educational accessibility and foster international cooperation within the academic sphere.

The Darmasiswa program was initiated in 1974 as part of an ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) initiative, initially admitting only students from ASEAN member countries. However, in 1976, the program expanded to include students from additional countries such as Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and the USA. In the early 1990s, the program was further broadened to encompass all countries maintaining diplomatic relations with Indonesia. To this day, the Darmasiswa program has welcomed participants from over 135 countries (Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024a).

The primary aim of the Darmasiswa program is to foster and enhance interest in the Indonesian language and culture among youth from various countries. Additionally, it is designed to strengthen cultural connections and understanding among the participating nations. Each year, there is a growing interest among international students in taking part in this program. Currently, the scholarship program has attracted 9,110 students from 135 countries across 72 universities worldwide (Baihaqi, 2024; Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024a).

Kemitraan Negara Berkembang Scholarship Programs

Kemitraan Negara Berkembang Scholarship, popularly known as KNB Scholarship, is financial assistance offered by the Indonesian Government to prospective international students coming

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from developing countries to pursue their degree (Bachelor, Master, or Doctorate Degree) at one of the universities in Indonesia ([Brilyanti, 2021](#)). The scholarship was conceived at the 10th Conference of Heads of States of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) countries, held from September 1st to 6th, 1992. The Government of the Republic of Indonesia began offering scholarships to potential students from NAM member countries in the following year.

The regional exclusiveness of the scholarship was revoked in 2002 since it had developed a global interest. The scholarship was then officially renamed Kemitraan Negara Berkembang Scholarship (KNB), and the recipients were no longer limited to NAM member countries. The scholarship has been offered to other developing countries in Asia, the Pacific, South America, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Eventually, the scholarship will build the people-to-people relations between Indonesia and the recipient countries. It aims at nurturing their future leaders.

KNB offers the opportunity to study at top universities in Indonesia while living in one of the world's most diverse and vibrant societies. By getting the scholarship, students will experience quality degree programs managed by 31 (thirty-one) University partners. Their degrees will enhance their intellectual standing, develop competencies, and open wider professional opportunities, a foundation for post-college success. Indeed, they will also be able to enjoy first-hand experience of living in a multicultural and multilingual society. In 2024, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, with 31 (thirty-one) KNB Scholarship host universities in Indonesia, will accept 222 (two hundred twenty-two) KNB Scholarship applicants, consisting of 30 Bachelor awardees, 162 Master awardees, and 30 Doctoral awardees ([Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024b](#)).

Table 1. Summarize key findings related to Vietnamese student mobility in Indonesia

Factor	Key Findings
Affordability	Indonesian universities offer lower tuition fees than Western destinations, making them attractive to Vietnamese students.
Scholarship Programs	Programs like KNB and Darmasiswa help reduce financial barriers but are not widely known among Vietnamese students.
Language Barrier	The limited number of English-taught programs poses challenges for Vietnamese students despite growing efforts in internationalization.
Cultural Affinity	Shared ASEAN cultural values ease adaptation, but differences in administrative procedures create difficulties.

The findings of this study are congruent with existing literature on international student mobility, especially within the ASEAN region. Research on student migration patterns underscores that factors such as affordability, cultural affinity, and availability of scholarship opportunities profoundly impact student decision-making, a conclusion reaffirmed by this investigation. Moreover, this study uncovers additional challenges pertinent to the Indonesia-Vietnam context, including the scant presence of Vietnamese students enrolled in Indonesian HEIs and the obstacles posed by language barriers.

These insights contribute to prevailing international education theories, highlighting the imperative for targeted policy interventions and comprehensive support systems to improve student mobility. For instance, Rosser addresses the fragmentation prevalent in the Indonesian higher education system, a challenge corroborated by this research regarding international students' experiences (Rosser, 2023). Likewise, Mok's emphasis on the significance of government-funded scholarship initiatives in promoting student mobility closely aligns with the findings of this study, particularly regarding the KNB and Darmasiswa programs (Mok, 2022).

This research situates these results within the broader academic discourse and offers a more intricate perspective on student mobility trends across Southeast Asia.

The results of this investigation correspond with prior studies focusing on international student mobility, especially within the ASEAN context. Research into student migration patterns underscores that factors such as cost-effectiveness, cultural affinity, and scholarship availability significantly influence students' decision-making processes, which this study corroborates. Furthermore, this research unveils additional obstacles pertinent to the Indonesia-Vietnam dynamic, notably the underrepresentation of Vietnamese students in Indonesian HEIs and linguistic challenges. These insights contribute to the existing international education frameworks by highlighting the imperative for precise policy interventions and supportive mechanisms to promote student mobility.

Potential of Indonesian Higher Education for Vietnamese Students

Academic Offerings and Programs

Indonesian HEIs offer a rich tapestry of academic programs spanning various disciplines, catering to Vietnamese students' diverse interests and career aspirations. Public universities are recognized for their robust educational offerings and research capabilities. These institutions provide comprehensive undergraduate and graduate programs in engineering, business, natural sciences, humanities, social sciences, and the arts (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Besides, private universities further enrich the educational landscape with specialized programs tailored to meet industry demands and global standards. Indonesian HEIs are increasingly expanding their repertoire of English-taught programs, addressing the needs of international students (Sadiq, 2022), including those from Vietnam, who may prefer studying a language they are more proficient in. This diversification enhances accessibility and competitiveness in attracting students from diverse backgrounds.

Affordability and Cost-Effectiveness

One of the notable benefits for Vietnamese students studying in Indonesia is the affordability of pursuing higher education in this country. Compared to study destinations in the West, Indonesian HEIs offer relatively lower tuition fees (Do & Pham, 2016), making it financially viable for Vietnamese students to access quality education. This cost advantage not only eases the economic burden on Vietnamese students and their families but also facilitates greater accessibility to higher education (Tri, 2023). Furthermore, the affordability factor extends beyond tuition fees to

encompass living expenses such as accommodation, food, and transportation, which are generally more cost-effective than many other international study destinations (Almanwari et al., 2024).

Cultural Affinity and Integration

Vietnamese students often find Indonesia culturally familiar and welcoming due to the shared ASEAN heritage and cultural affinities. Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape, encompassing various ethnicities, languages, and traditions, provides a conducive environment for cultural integration and mutual understanding (Asian Development Bank, 2015). Vietnamese students can immerse themselves in Indonesian culture, cuisine, arts, and traditions, fostering cross-cultural exchanges and friendships that enrich their educational experience. Moreover, Indonesia's warm hospitality and friendly atmosphere provide a supportive environment for international students adjusting to life abroad. Cultural integration initiatives within Indonesian HEIs, such as orientation programs, cultural workshops, and student clubs, further promote intercultural dialogue and appreciation among students from different backgrounds (Baihaqi, 2024).

Language Proficiency Requirements

Indonesian has the potential to become a popular language in the world (Lopez, 2019). In 2023, Indonesia was honored when its official language, Bahasa Indonesia, was officially recognized as an official language of UNESCO (UMS, 2023). While Bahasa Indonesia is the official language of instruction in most Indonesian HEIs, many institutions offer programs in English, particularly at the postgraduate level. This bilingual approach accommodates Vietnamese students who may not be proficient in Bahasa Indonesia, enabling them to pursue their studies effectively in a language they are more comfortable with. Institutions also provide language support services, such as intensive language courses and exchange programs, to enhance students' language skills and facilitate academic success (Fitria, 2023). Thus, we can see a huge opportunity for students from Indonesian studies or who have had previous exposure to the Indonesian language. Moreover, Indonesian HEIs offer opportunities to learn the language through elective courses, cultural immersion programs, and interaction with local students and communities for Vietnamese students interested in enhancing their Bahasa Indonesia proficiency. This linguistic diversity enriches the educational experience and equips students with valuable language skills for navigating Indonesia's multicultural society and globalized economy.

Institutional Collaborations and Partnerships

Indonesian HEIs actively foster international collaborations and partnerships with universities worldwide, including Vietnam (Sutrisno, 2019). These collaborations encompass joint research projects, faculty exchanges, and student mobility programs that enhance academic excellence and cultural exchange. Vietnam and Indonesia have exchanged activities for students, experts, and lecturers for many years to promote culture and education. For example, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities at Hanoi National University and Ho Chi Minh City National University have been closely linked with the Indonesian Embassy in Hanoi and the Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. Vietnamese students benefit from these partnerships by gaining exposure to diverse perspectives, innovative research opportunities, and global academic networks. Furthermore, institutional collaborations facilitate the recognition of academic qualifications and credits between Indonesian and Vietnamese universities, easing the transition

for students pursuing international education [\(Lee, 2007\)](#). Collaborative efforts also strengthen diplomatic ties and promote bilateral cooperation in education [\(Hoang, 2024\)](#), contributing to regional stability and sustainable development [\(Vazquez-Brust et al., 2020\)](#).

Therefore, Indonesian higher education offers substantial potential for Vietnamese students seeking quality academic programs, affordability, cultural integration opportunities, language flexibility, and international collaborations. By leveraging these strengths and addressing language barriers and awareness challenges, Indonesian HEIs can further enhance their attractiveness and accessibility to Vietnamese students. This mutually beneficial exchange enriches students' educational experiences and fosters enduring partnerships between Indonesia and Vietnam in the globalized higher education landscape.

Challenges and Barriers

Language Barriers and Communication Challenges

Language barriers remain among the most significant challenges for Vietnamese students considering higher education in Indonesia. Despite the increasing number of English-taught programs, many academic courses in Indonesian universities are still conducted in Bahasa Indonesia. This language gap can create significant communication challenges, affecting academic performance and day-to-day interactions [\(Fitria, 2023\)](#). Understanding lectures, participating in discussions, and completing assignments can be particularly daunting for students not proficient in Bahasa Indonesia. Additionally, outside the classroom, the ability to navigate daily life, engage with local communities, and access essential services might be compromised [\(Tri, 2024\)](#), further impacting the students' overall experience and comfort level in Indonesia. To overcome these challenges, universities need to offer intensive language training and support services tailored to the needs of international students.

Limited Awareness and Marketing Efforts

Despite the potential advantages of studying in Indonesia, awareness among Vietnamese students and their families about the opportunities available in Indonesian higher education institutions remains limited [\(Tri, 2023\)](#). Indonesian universities have historically been less aggressive in marketing than institutions in more traditional study destinations like the United States, Australia, or Europe [\(Sutrisno, 2019\)](#). This lack of visibility means that Indonesian universities are often overlooked by Vietnamese students, who might otherwise consider them viable options. To address this, Indonesian universities must enhance their marketing strategies by engaging in targeted campaigns, participating in international education fairs, and establishing strong partnerships [\(Green & Baxter, 2023\)](#) with Vietnamese educational agents. Additionally, leveraging social media and online platforms to share success stories and testimonials from Vietnamese alumni can help build a positive image and increase awareness.

Legal and Regulatory Constraints

Legal and regulatory constraints can pose significant barriers for Vietnamese students seeking to study in Indonesia. Stringent visa requirements, restrictions on part-time work, and limited pathways for post-graduate employment or residency can deter students from choosing Indonesia

as their study destination ([Rosser, 2023](#)). These regulatory issues are critical considerations for students who often seek opportunities to gain work experience and financially support themselves while studying ([Trianto, 2021](#)). Addressing these constraints through policy reforms and bilateral agreements between Indonesia and Vietnam could facilitate smoother student transitions and make Indonesia a more attractive destination. Such measures could include easier visa processes, more flexible work permits, and straightforward post-graduate employment or residency pathways.

Socio-Cultural Adjustment Issues

Adapting to a new socio-cultural environment is a significant aspect of the study abroad experience ([Tri, 2024](#)). Vietnamese students may face challenges adjusting to Indonesian cultural norms, social practices, and lifestyle differences. These adjustment issues can affect their overall well-being and academic success. Cultural misunderstandings or feelings of isolation may arise if there is insufficient support for international students ([Almanwari et al., 2024](#)). To mitigate these issues, Indonesian universities should offer comprehensive orientation programs that introduce students to Indonesian culture, social norms, and practical aspects of living there ([Brilyanti, 2021](#)). Cultural exchange activities and support services, such as counseling and peer mentoring programs, can also play a crucial role in helping Vietnamese students acclimate to their new surroundings and build a supportive community ([Baihaqi, 2024](#)). Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment is essential for ensuring that international students thrive academically and personally.

A multifaceted approach is required to unlock the full potential of Indonesian higher education for Vietnamese students. This approach must address policy, marketing, language support, institutional collaborations, and administrative barriers. These recommendations aim to create a more welcoming and accessible environment for Vietnamese students, fostering educational and cultural exchange between the two nations.

Policy Recommendations for Governments and Educational Institutions

Governments and educational institutions play a pivotal role in facilitating international education ([Tran et al., 2023](#)). For Vietnamese students, simplifying visa procedures and establishing more transparent and supportive immigration policies are crucial. Governments should consider bilateral agreements that allow easier visa processing and provide clear pathways for post-graduate employment or residency. These policies can significantly enhance Indonesia's attractiveness as a study destination. Educational institutions should advocate for policies supporting international students ([McDonald, 2014](#)), such as offering scholarships or financial aid for Vietnamese students. Additionally, providing resources and support for students navigating legal and regulatory processes can reduce the stress and confusion associated with studying abroad. Institutions can collaborate to harmonize academic calendars and credit transfer systems, ensuring students experience a seamless educational journey. The research underscores the need for bilateral agreements between Indonesia and Vietnam to streamline visa processes and enhance academic recognition. Policies encouraging English-taught programs and cross-border collaboration will be essential in promoting student mobility.

Strategies for Enhancing Marketing and Outreach Efforts

Effective marketing and outreach are crucial in enhancing awareness of the opportunities present in Indonesian higher education. Indonesian universities ought to fashion targeted marketing

initiatives that emphasize their distinctive strengths and the advantages of studying in Indonesia. Such campaigns may encompass success stories and testimonials from Vietnamese alumni, illustrating their favorable experiences and career trajectories. Engaging in international education fairs in Vietnam, alongside establishing a robust online and social media presence, will facilitate outreach to a broader audience. Collaborating with Vietnamese educational agents and high schools to conduct informational sessions and workshops can furnish prospective students with invaluable insights into academic life in Indonesia. Additionally, generating materials in Vietnamese and dedicated web pages can significantly improve the accessibility of information for potential students and their families. Indonesian universities should expand their outreach efforts in Vietnam, leveraging targeted marketing campaigns and partnerships with Vietnamese academic institutions. Increase the number of English-taught programs, streamline administrative procedures for international students, and improve marketing efforts targeting Vietnamese students.

Improving Language Support and Cultural Integration Programs

Language barriers can be a significant hurdle for Vietnamese students. To address this, Indonesian universities should expand their English-taught programs and provide intensive language courses in both English and Bahasa Indonesia. In this case, the students can get language training in pre-departure to reduce language shock and help student learn more quickly. Cultural integration programs are equally important for international students ([Ward et al., 2009](#)). Universities should organize orientation programs to introduce students to Indonesian culture, customs, and daily life. These programs can include cultural exchange activities, mentorship schemes with local students, and social events that encourage interaction and friendship. Providing counseling services and peer support groups can help students navigate cultural differences and cope with homesickness, ensuring a smoother transition. Establishing pre-departure orientation programs and language support initiatives can improve the academic experience for Vietnamese students.

Strengthening Institutional Collaborations and Partnerships

Building robust institutional collaborations between Indonesian and Vietnamese universities can enhance educational opportunities and cultural exchange. Joint research initiatives, faculty exchanges, and student mobility programs can enrich the academic experience for both Indonesian and Vietnamese students. These partnerships can also facilitate mutual recognition of academic credits and qualifications, making it easier for students to transfer between institutions ([Yeh & Wetzstein, 2022](#)). Creating dual-degree programs and collaborative online courses can further integrate the educational systems of both countries ([Bogdanova et al., 2024](#); [Palermo et al., 2018](#)). These initiatives broaden academic perspectives and build long-lasting relationships between institutions, fostering greater understanding and cooperation. Programs like KNB and Darmasiswa should increase their visibility in Vietnam by collaborating with Vietnamese universities and educational agencies to provide better access to information and application support.

By addressing these recommendations, Indonesian higher education institutions can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for Vietnamese students. These efforts will not only enhance the educational experience for students but also strengthen the cultural and academic ties

between Indonesia and Vietnam, fostering a vibrant and dynamic community of learners and leaders.

CONCLUSION

The potential of Indonesian higher education for Vietnamese students is significant and diverse, providing a mix of academic excellence, cultural enrichment, and cost-effective education. The study found that Indonesian higher education institutions offer significant advantages for Vietnamese students, including affordability, diverse academic programs, and cultural affinity. However, several challenges persist, including language barriers, limited awareness of scholarship programs, and bureaucratic hurdles. Institutional collaborations and targeted marketing strategies could help mitigate these challenges, making Indonesian universities a more attractive option for Vietnamese students. The study also highlights the role of government policies in facilitating student exchanges and the importance of English-taught programs in overcoming language barriers.

However, realizing this potential requires focused efforts to overcome existing challenges and barriers. By implementing targeted policy reforms, enhancing marketing strategies, improving language support, fostering cultural integration, strengthening institutional collaborations, and streamlining administrative processes, Indonesian universities can become more appealing and accessible to Vietnamese students. Addressing language barriers through expanded English-taught programs and robust language training can significantly enhance students' academic experiences. Meanwhile, simplifying visa procedures and offering clear pathways for post-graduate employment can alleviate some legal and regulatory constraints that deter prospective students. Comprehensive marketing efforts, including sharing success stories and active participation in education fairs, can raise awareness of the unique opportunities available in Indonesia. Institutional collaborations and partnerships between Indonesian and Vietnamese universities are vital for creating a seamless educational experience. These partnerships can facilitate student exchanges, joint research projects, and dual-degree programs, enriching the academic landscape for students from both countries. Ultimately, the recommendations aim to create a supportive and welcoming environment for Vietnamese students, ensuring they can thrive academically and culturally in Indonesia. By addressing these key areas, Indonesian higher education institutions can attract more Vietnamese students and strengthen the educational and cultural ties between the two nations, fostering a future of mutual growth and understanding.

This research is pivotal in advancing international education within the ASEAN region, facilitating enhanced educational and cultural connections between Indonesia and Vietnam. By identifying critical challenges and proposing strategic solutions, this study significantly contributes to the ongoing discourse on regional student mobility and assists policymakers in improving educational exchange programs. The findings also provide practical insights for university administrators and stakeholders in international education, aiming to foster a more inclusive and accessible higher education environment.

Despite its valuable contributions, this study encounters several limitations. The qualitative approach constrains the generalizability of the findings and heavily relies on secondary data rather

than students' firsthand experiences. Future research should encompass quantitative surveys and interviews with Vietnamese students in Indonesian institutions to understand their motivations and challenges comprehensively. Furthermore, a comparative analysis between Indonesia and other ASEAN study destinations could further contextualize its position within the regional higher education landscape.

In summary, the collaborative efforts of governments, educational institutions, and other stakeholders are essential to unlocking the full potential of Indonesian higher education for Vietnamese students. With these efforts, both countries can look forward to a dynamic exchange of knowledge, culture, and innovation, benefiting students and societies in the future.

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