



THE ROLE OF INDONESIAN YOUNG DIASPORA IN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY FOR STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of Indonesian youth living abroad as cultural agents in the practice of cultural diplomacy, especially in maintaining the sustainability of Indonesian cultural values, facing the challenge of cultural identity in the destination country, and utilizing cultural diplomacy as a strategy to strengthen sustainable international networks and cooperation. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method on the Indonesian Student Association (PPI) organization located in Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Austria. The results of the study show that Indonesian youth living abroad actively carry out cultural diplomacy through various cultural, academic, social, and community activities that are adapted to the socio-cultural context in the destination country. Activities such as cultural festivals, art exhibitions, traditional performances, academic forums, and the use of digital media have proven to play an important role in building cultural attraction and strengthening Indonesia's positive image at the international level. In addition, this study found that cultural diplomacy carried out by diaspora youth not only functions as a means of cultural representation, but also as a strategic mechanism in building international networks based on trust, exchange of ideas, and cross-cultural interaction. These findings confirm that Indonesian diaspora youth have a strategic position as non-state actors in supporting the strengthening of Indonesian cultural diplomacy in the era of globalization, as well as contributing to strengthening international relations through a sustainable soft power approach.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian diaspora refers to individuals or groups who originate from Indonesia and settle abroad, either temporarily or permanently. The presence of this diaspora since the colonial period has been an integral part of the history and social and economic dynamics of Indonesia until today. The diaspora is not only made up of migrant workers, but also includes students, professionals, and other individuals who go abroad to pursue education and careers [1]. In an increasingly connected global context, the diaspora is no longer understood solely as a demographic phenomenon, but rather as a strategic actor that has the potential to contribute to various dimensions of national development, including international diplomacy.

In the current of globalization, the Indonesian diaspora is increasingly seen as a strategic actor in cultural diplomacy, which is one of the main instruments of a country's soft power [2]. The concept of soft power put forward by Nye [3] emphasizing a country's ability to influence others through cultural attraction, values, and ideology, not through military or economic power alone. In this context, cultural diplomacy is an important

means of building a positive image and establishing harmonious international relations, through cultural exchanges, art festivals, language promotion, as well as culinary offerings, and traditions [4], [5].

Indonesia has great potential in cultural diplomacy thanks to its richness and cultural diversity. The universal values in Indonesian culture facilitate its acceptance at the international level, as can be seen from the global recognition of the traditional Angklung musical instrument [6]. In practice, Indonesia's cultural diplomacy is realized through cultural festivals abroad, art exhibitions, traditional dance and music performances, and the promotion of Indonesian cuisine, which also contribute to strengthening Indonesia's image and opening up opportunities for international cooperation [7], [8].

Within this framework, the Indonesian diaspora becomes a cultural agent that brings and disseminates Indonesian values in the international environment. They are understood as a group that lives abroad but still maintains a cultural identity and emotional attachment to the homeland [9]. In addition to contributing to strengthening trade relations and foreign direct investment (FDI), the diaspora also transfers social values and norms through social remittances mechanisms [10], [11]. With the shift in the paradigm of diplomacy towards people-to-people diplomacy, the position of the diaspora is getting stronger in public diplomacy and strengthening national soft power [2], [12].

Quantitatively, the involvement of the Indonesian diaspora in cultural diplomacy shows a sufficient scale of participation, although until now there is no fully integrated and final statistical data. Based on official publications and news reports from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, documentation of diaspora cultural activities, as well as the results of interviews with resource persons, the participation of the Indonesian diaspora in cultural diplomacy activities in Germany, Japan, South Korea, and Austria is estimated to reach around 5,000 people. Of these, participation in Germany is estimated to reach around 2,000 people or approximately 40%, while Japan, South Korea, and Austria are each in the range of around 1,000 people or approximately 20% per country. These numbers and percentages are estimative and reflect the intensity and scale of documented cultural activity, not the number of unique individuals who are administratively recorded. This limitation also shows that there is a gap in the diaspora data collection system in every cultural activity in the country, but it is still relevant to illustrate the great potential of the diaspora as an actor in Indonesian cultural diplomacy (Kemenlu).

Various international studies in the last five years confirm that the diaspora plays an important role as agents of soft power and cultural diplomacy. Study [13] It shows that the diaspora can serve as a cultural bridge that strengthens bilateral ties through cultural practices and ethnic identities. Study [14] emphasizing that the diaspora is a source of soft power that has often not been optimally utilized by the country of origin. Study [15] shows that cultural diplomacy involving non-state actors, including the diaspora, is able to strengthen the position of developing countries in international relations. Meanwhile, [16] affirms that the diaspora plays a role in cultural diplomacy through formal and non-formal channels, which are often more flexible and effective in building relationships between communities.

However, most studies of the Indonesian diaspora are currently limited to one particular country or region, and have not integrated their roles in Asia and Europe simultaneously [9], [17]. In addition, research that specifically highlights the young diaspora, especially Indonesian students who study abroad through scholarship programs, is still relatively limited. In fact, this group actually has great potential as an agent of cultural diplomacy because of their multicultural experience and the international network they have built [18], [19]. Studies [20] shows that diaspora students actively introduce Indonesian culture through cultural activities, teaching, language, and social interaction, but the research has not linked this role comparatively across regions and in the context of national cultural diplomacy.

On the other hand, the young Indonesian diaspora, especially students who receive scholarships abroad, have proven to be active in introducing and preserving Indonesian culture in the country where they study. Through cultural activities, Indonesian language teaching, and cross-cultural social interaction, they act as ambassadors of Indonesian culture while facing the challenges of adaptation and integration in a multicultural environment [20].

However, the Indonesian diaspora still faces challenges in carrying out its role as agents of cultural diplomacy, such as limited resources, lack of institutional support, and obstacles to cultural integration in destination countries. This challenge has the potential to reduce the effectiveness of the diaspora's contribution in promoting national culture [2].

The novelty of this research lies in two main aspects, First, in terms of regional coverage, this study adopts a cross-regional approach by integrating the role of diaspora in Asia (South Korea and Japan) and Europe (Germany and Austria) in one comparative framework. This approach allows the analysis of the dynamics, similarities, and differences of the Indonesian diaspora as agents of cultural diplomacy in two regions with different social contexts and immigration policies. Second, in terms of research focus, this study specifically examines the Indonesian diaspora who receive any scholarship abroad, not the diaspora in general. Thus, this

study fills a gap that is still limited about how Indonesian scholarship recipients play a role as cultural agents in cultural diplomacy, both in Asia and Europe.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the role of the Indonesian diaspora, especially scholarship recipients abroad, as cultural agents in Indonesian cultural diplomacy. With a cross-regional approach to Asia (South Korea and Japan) and Europe (Germany and Austria), this research is expected to make an academic and practical contribution to the development of national cultural strategies and the strengthening of Indonesia's international relations.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to explore in depth the role of the Indonesian diaspora as an agent of cultural diplomacy in strengthening international relations. This approach allows researchers to capture the social context and meaning of the experiences of young diasporas, especially scholarship recipients abroad, in carrying out cultural diplomacy in the international environment [21].

The research subjects consisted of six purposively selected informants, two representatives from PPI South Korea, one representative from PPI Japan, one from PPI Germany, and two representatives from PPI Austria. The criteria for selecting informants include: being an active member of PPI in the destination country, being or having studied abroad through a scholarship program, and having direct involvement in cultural activities or cultural diplomacy programs with the diaspora community. The background of the informant comes from the field of education and student organizations, with direct experience in organizing cultural activities, so it is considered representative to describe the practice of cultural diplomacy of the young Indonesian diaspora.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth online interviews using Zoom with an average duration of 45-60 minutes per informant, as well as written interview questionnaires distributed through google form. The interviews were conducted online due to the limited geographical distance between researchers and informants in various countries. The interview questions focused on the speakers' experiences in maintaining cultural identity, adapting in the international environment, as well as their involvement in cultural activities in the diaspora community. In addition, the researcher collected documentation data in the form of activity reports, posters, photos, videos, and social media uploads related to cultural activities organized by PPI in each country to strengthen the empirical data obtained from the interviews.

To ensure the credibility of the data, the researcher applied the source and method triangulation technique by comparing the results of online interviews, written interviews and documentation data. In addition, member checking is carried out by reconfirming the main findings to the informants so that the researcher's interpretation is in accordance with the experience and perspective of the source [22]. Data analysis is carried out with a thematic analysis approach combined with narrative analysis, so as to uncover general patterns as well as understand individual stories and meanings in the practice of cultural diplomacy [23].

This research is based on a philosophy that emphasizes diversity as well as unity, and is supported by the national legal framework through Law Number 37 of 1999 concerning Foreign Relations, which places cultural diplomacy as part of foreign policy. With a qualitative approach and a focus on the young diaspora of scholarship recipients, this research is expected to be able to clearly reveal how the Indonesian diaspora plays a role as cultural agents at the international level (BPK RI).

This research has methodological limitations, especially related to the relatively limited number of informants and limited access to official documents of cultural activities more broadly. Therefore, the results of this study are not intended to be generalized widely, but rather to provide a contextual understanding of the role of the young Indonesian diaspora in cultural diplomacy in the destination country.

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The Cultural Diplomacy Practice of the Indonesian Young Diaspora: Empirical and Theoretical Analysis

Based on the processing of data on written interviews, online interviews, and analysis of documentation of the activities of Indonesian young diaspora organizations in Japan, South Korea, Germany, and Austria, this study found that cultural diplomacy is carried out as an empirical practice that is contextual, adaptive, and strategic. In contrast to a purely descriptive approach, these findings show that the cultural activities of young diasporas function as instruments soft power which works through the mechanism of attraction (attraction), social interactions, and the formation of perceptions, as put forward by Joseph Nye.

In general, the young diaspora interprets cultural diplomacy not only as the preservation of cultural symbols, but as a strategy to build social relations and legitimacy in the destination country. In the framework public diplomacy, the young diaspora acts as non-state actors who bridge Indonesia's national interests with the international community through two-way cultural interactions. This confirms that cultural diplomacy carried out by the young diaspora is not top-down, but based on participation and hands-on experience [24].

In addition to qualitative data, this research is strengthened by numerical data obtained through browsing the documentation of official Instagram uploads of PPI South Korea, Japan, and Germany each hold an average of 12 cultivation activities per year, while PPI Austria organizes an average of 9 cultivation activities per year.



Figure 1. The average number of cultural activities of the young Indonesian diaspora per year based on PPI's Instagram documentation

The visualization of the graph shows that the intensity of cultural diplomacy practices is relatively high and stable in South Korea, Japan, and Germany, while Austria shows a lower but still consistent frequency. This data reinforces the claim that the cultural diplomacy of the young diaspora is not sporadic, but rather carried out in a sustainable and programmatic manner. These findings are in line with [25] which shows that the practice of diaspora cultural diplomacy contributes to the formation of positive perceptions of the country of origin through direct cultural experience, as well as by [26] which confirms that cultural diplomacy works effectively when it involves social interaction and public participation.

Comparative Analysis of Cross-Border Cultural Diplomacy Practices

Although it has the same goal, which is to introduce and maintain the sustainability of Indonesia's cultural values, the strategy of young diaspora cultural diplomacy shows significant variation between countries. This variation is influenced by the size of the diaspora community, the structure of public space opportunities, and the socio-cultural context of the destination country.

In South Korea, the cultural diplomacy of the young diaspora is carried out through active involvement in the public sphere on a local and international scale. Activities such as the Busan Global Gathering 2025 and the presence of Indonesian booths in the Deokpo Night Market feature angklung workshops, batik, traditional Nusantara dance performances, and Indonesian culinary presentations. Analytically, this practice demonstrates a strategy of cultural diplomacy that emphasizes visibility and broad public participation. In the soft power perspective of Nye (2004), cultural attraction is built through direct experience that allows foreign audiences to interact emotionally with Indonesian culture. This approach reflects the character of two-way public diplomacy, where the diaspora not only conveys cultural messages, but opens up space for dialogue with local communities.

In addition, the International Conference by Indonesian Students in Korea (ICONIK) 2025 expands cultural diplomacy to the academic and intellectual realms. The forum demonstrates that culture serves as a gateway for diplomatic and intellectual legitimacy, while strengthening the position of the young diaspora as non-state actors in strategic public diplomacy.

In Japan, the cultural diplomacy of the young diaspora is realized through art activities and cultural festivals that are held on an ongoing basis. The Indonesian Art Fair (IAF) 2025, The Art of Batik Workshop in Kyoto, and the 2025 Kelana Nusantara Festival in Osaka are the main spaces displaying dance, regional music, batik, and Indonesian cuisine. Analytically, the sustainability of this art activity shows a strategy of cultural diplomacy that is oriented towards deepening meaning and internalizing cultural values. Within the framework of public diplomacy, art functions as a reflective and educational cross-cultural communication medium, allowing audiences not only to see, but to understand the context of Indonesian culture. This approach strengthens Indonesia's soft power through the formation of long-term positive perceptions (Kim, 2020).

In Germany, cultural diplomacy is carried out in tandem with strengthening organizational capacity and governance. Diaspora cultural and social activities are supported by social media optimization, visual identity consistency, and planned educational content management. Analytically, these findings suggest that cultural diplomacy in Germany serves as a strategy to build social credibility and the legitimacy of diaspora communities. The professionalism of the organization strengthens public trust and expands the reach of Indonesian cultural appeal.

In Austria, the practice of young diaspora cultural diplomacy is carried out through routine community activities oriented towards strengthening internal solidarity. Community meetings, national holiday celebrations, and Indonesian cultural introduction agendas in cross-community forums are the main means of maintaining cultural identity. This approach suggests that the limitations of the scale of the community do not hinder the

practice of cultural diplomacy. On the contrary, consistency of activities is a source of soft power based on social closeness and sustainability.

Young Diaspora as Agents of Culture and Production Soft Power

The findings of the study show that the young Indonesian diaspora is actively producing soft power through the cultural practices they carry out. The role as a cultural agent is not only seen in the symbolic representation of culture, but also in the process of transferring values such as mutual cooperation, openness, and togetherness that are internalized in interaction with the local community. This is in line with [3] that soft power works through value attraction and social legitimacy.

In a cross-country context, the role of cultural agents is manifested differently. In South Korea and Japan, the young diaspora is more prominent in cultural expression as a means of building a broad public positive perception. In Germany and Austria, the role of cultural agents is focused on strengthening communities and internal sustainability. This variation shows that the young diaspora does not replicate a single model of cultural diplomacy, but rather adapts it to the social and institutional context of the destination country. These findings corroborate the study [25] which affirms that diaspora diplomacy is adaptive and depends on the structure of local opportunities.

Strategies to Overcome Cultural Identity Challenges

Cultural identity challenges such as stereotypes, limited space for expression, and adaptation demands are responded to by the young diaspora through adaptive cultural diplomacy strategies. In Japan and South Korea, this challenge is overcome by packaging culture in a participatory and dialogical format so that an equal exchange of cultural meanings is created. This approach reinforces the argument that public diplomacy Modern demands two-way interaction as a prerequisite for the formation of positive perceptions [24].

In Germany and Austria, the challenge of identity is more faced through the strengthening of internal solidarity and organizational professionalism. This strategy shows that cultural diplomacy also serves as a mechanism for the protection of diaspora cultural identity in a competitive multicultural environment.

Cultural Diplomacy and Strengthening International Networks

The study also found that the cultural diplomacy of the young diaspora contributes significantly to strengthening international networks and cooperation. Academic activities such as ICONIK 2025 show how culture functions as an entry point for intellectual diplomacy and cross-border networking. In the perspective of international relations, this practice affirms the position of the young diaspora as non-state actors capable of linking national interests with global interactions.

The use of digital media expands the reach of cultural diplomacy into the space of digital public diplomacy, allowing the promotion of Indonesian culture to reach a global audience in a sustainable manner. Thus, the cultural diplomacy of the young diaspora not only builds a positive image of Indonesia, but also forms a cross-border network that is adaptive and relevant to global dynamics.

Synthesis Analysis

Based on empirical results and cross-border comparative analysis, it can be concluded that the cultural diplomacy practice of the young Indonesian diaspora is not homogeneous, but develops according to the social context, community size, and public space opportunities in each destination country. The variety of strategies found ranging from an expansive approach based on public space, deepening meaning through art, strengthening organizations, to the consistency of community activities shows the adaptive capacity of the young diaspora in producing Indonesia's soft power contextually.

These findings also show a causal relationship between the results of the study and broader theoretical implications. The practice of cultural diplomacy of the young diaspora not only contributes to cultural preservation, but also serves as a mechanism of public diplomacy that strengthens Indonesia's positive image, builds cross-cultural trust, and opens up space for international networking and cooperation. Thus, the results of this study directly lead to the discussion of conclusions regarding the strategic position of the Indonesian young diaspora as non-state actors in contemporary cultural diplomacy.

Table 1. Comparative Summary of Cultural Diplomacy Practices of the Indonesian Young Diaspora.

Country	Dominant Practice Forms	Strategic Focus	Soft Power Function	Implications of Diplomacy
South Korea	Cultural festivals, non-formal public spaces, academic forums	Public visibility and participation	Cultural appeal and intellectual legitimacy	Formation of a positive image of Indonesia and academic-

Japan	Sustainable arts and cultural festivals, educational workshops	Deepening of meaning and internalization of values	Long-term positive perceptions	diplomatic networks Strengthening Indonesia's cultural identity and reflective image
Germany	Strengthening organizations, digital media, community activities	Professionalism and sustainability	Social credibility and public trust	Diaspora legitimacy and institutional networks
Austria	Regular community activities and internal solidarity	Consistency and social closeness	Community-based soft power	Sustainability of cultural identity on a limited scale

Overall, these results and discussions show that the cultural diplomacy of the young Indonesian diaspora is contextual, comparative, and strategic. The variation in practices between countries reflects the ability of the young diaspora to adapt soft power according to local opportunities and challenges. By utilizing culture as a medium of public diplomacy, the young diaspora not only represents Indonesia, but actively produces and distributes Indonesia's soft power in the international arena in a sustainable manner.

4. CONCLUSION

This study has limitations because it only examines the young Indonesian diaspora in four countries with a relatively limited number of participants. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be fully generalized to describe the condition of the entire Indonesian diaspora in various regions of the world. However, these findings show a pattern consistent with previous research results that place the diaspora as important actors in cultural diplomacy and soft power production through social and cultural practices in destination countries [25]. In other words, the results of this study do not stand alone, but strengthen the theoretical understanding that cultural diplomacy is not only carried out by the state, but also by the diaspora community through daily cross-cultural interactions.

In terms of policy, the findings of this study show that the role of the young diaspora in cultural diplomacy still has a large room to be optimized. The Government of Indonesia needs to provide more systematic support, particularly through strengthening international collaboration, providing training programs relevant to cultural diplomacy practices, and sustainable funding schemes for cultural projects initiated by the young diaspora. With this support, the practice of young diaspora cultural diplomacy can not only take place sporadically, but can also develop as part of Indonesia's more planned and long-term public diplomacy strategy.

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