

## UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF *MUDIK* (HOMECOMING) TRADITION: A MULTI-ETHNIC STUDY IN INDONESIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Mudik tradition in Indonesia, attracting millions of people annually, involves mass migration from urban areas to hometowns during major holidays. While traditionally a time for family reunions and cultural activities, Mudik is a complex phenomenon with profound implications for Indonesian society, especially among different ethnic groups. This study utilizes qualitative ethnography to explore the social and cultural impact of Mudik in Indonesia. Participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds, such as Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese, and Madurese, provide valuable insights. Findings show that Mudik preserves cultural traditions, strengthens family ties, and promotes group cohesion. However, modernization has led to changes in Mudik gatherings. Nonetheless, it remains a strong link connecting migrant workers with their families, positively influencing social ties and work performance. Additionally, Mudik contributes to the formation of social identity and cultural practices. Respondents' experiences highlight the diversity of Mudik traditions and the need for a nuanced understanding to address stereotypes within Indonesia's cultural landscape. This research sheds light on Mudik's significance for different ethnic groups in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** *Mudik, Social Implication, Cultural Implication, Multi-Ethnicity, Indonesia.*

### ABSTRAK

Tradisi mudik di Indonesia, yang menarik jutaan orang setiap tahunnya, melibatkan migrasi massal dari daerah perkotaan ke kampung halaman pada hari libur besar. Meskipun secara tradisional merupakan waktu berkumpulnya keluarga dan kegiatan budaya, mudik merupakan fenomena kompleks yang memiliki dampak besar bagi masyarakat Indonesia, terutama di antara kelompok etnis yang berbeda. Penelitian ini menggunakan etnografi kualitatif untuk mengeksplorasi dampak sosial dan budaya mudik di Indonesia. Peserta dari berbagai latar belakang etnis, seperti Jawa, Sunda, Bali, dan Madura, memberikan wawasan yang berharga. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa Mudik melestarikan tradisi budaya, memperkuat ikatan kekeluargaan, dan mendorong kohesi kelompok. Namun modernisasi telah membawa perubahan pada pertemuan mudik. Meskipun demikian, hal ini tetap menjadi penghubung kuat yang menghubungkan pekerja migran dengan keluarga mereka, sehingga berdampak positif terhadap ikatan sosial dan kinerja kerja. Selain itu, Mudik berkontribusi pada pembentukan identitas sosial dan praktik budaya. Pengalaman responden menyoroti keragaman tradisi Mudik dan perlunya pemahaman yang berbeda untuk mengatasi stereotip dalam lanskap budaya Indonesia. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya mudik bagi berbagai kelompok etnis di Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci:** Mudik, Implikasi Sosial, Implikasi Budaya, Multietnis, Indonesia

## Introduction

The tradition of *Mudik*, or homecoming, holds significant social and cultural implications in Indonesia. This tradition involves the mass exodus of individuals traveling to their hometowns during the festive Eid season (Prasetyo & Sofyan, 2021). The *Mudik* tradition is deeply rooted in Indonesian culture and is particularly significant for Indonesian Muslims (Kusumawati et al., 2022). However, the practice of *Mudik* has been subject to government regulations, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, raising societal responses and debates (Tantri & Waluyo, 2021). The social and economic perspectives of the homecoming tradition have been explored, shedding light on its impact from a socioeconomic standpoint (Oktavio & Lis Indrianto, 2019). Additionally, the cultural and religious dimensions of *Mudik* have been examined, emphasizing its significance within the context of Indonesian culture and Islamic teachings (Arribathi & Aini, 2018).

Furthermore, the implications of the *Mudik* tradition extend to the realm of family relationships and communal ties. The disconnect of family relationships during *Silaturahmi* in Indonesia has been noted, reflecting the impact of *Mudik* on social connections (Feldman & Wunderlich, 2022). Moreover, the tradition's influence on food practices and cultural identity has been highlighted, emphasizing its role in shaping food culture and social identity within different ethnic groups in Indonesia (Fadillah et al., 2021). This underscores the broader cultural and social significance of *Mudik*, extending beyond individual travel practices to encompass communal and societal dimensions.

In understanding the social and cultural implications of the *Mudik* tradition, it is essential to consider the multi-ethnic context of Indonesia. The diverse ethnic composition of the Indonesian population adds layers of complexity to the study of *Mudik*, as it involves various cultural practices and interpretations across different ethnic groups (Oktavio & Lis Indrianto, 2019). Therefore, a comprehensive exploration of *Mudik* necessitates a multi-ethnic study that accounts for the diverse cultural perspectives and practices prevalent in Indonesia.

Understanding the social and cultural implications of *Mudik* in a multi-ethnic setting among Malikussaleh Lecturers is crucial due to its potential impact on public health, youth cultural sensitivity, and multicultural education. The classification of race and ethnicity plays a significant role in understanding health disparities (Mays et al., 2003). This is particularly relevant in the context of *Mudik*, as it involves the movement of individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds, potentially impacting public health outcomes. Additionally, the level of cultural sensitivity among youth in a multi-ethnic society like Indonesia is essential to foster harmonious relationships and inclusive environments (Harmi et al., 2022). Understanding the implications of *Mudik* within a multi-ethnic setting can contribute to promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity among the youth participating in this tradition.

Furthermore, the implementation of instructional models for multicultural education is vital in promoting understanding and respect for diverse ethnicities (Akhiruddin et al., 2021). By comprehending the social and cultural implications of *Mudik*, educators can incorporate relevant examples and discussions into their instructional models, fostering a deeper understanding of multi-ethnic traditions and practices. Additionally, the characteristics of multi-ethnic settlements in Indonesia provide insights into the dynamics of cultural coexistence and interaction (Agustian et al., 2020). Understanding the implications of *Mudik* within a multi-ethnic context can contribute to the development of inclusive and harmonious settlements, enriching the cultural tapestry of these communities.

This study aims to a) enhances cultural understanding: The study provides a nuanced exploration of the *Mudik* tradition within a multi-ethnic context, fostering a deeper appreciation of the cultural diversity present among Malikussaleh Lecturers, and b) promotes cultural sensitivity: By delving into how the *Mudik* tradition influences individuals from diverse ethnic

backgrounds, the study contributes to fostering cultural sensitivity, crucial in educational environments.

## Literature Studies

The Mudik tradition in Indonesia holds significant historical, social, and cultural importance, shaping community bonds and individual identities. Understanding the implications of Mudik within a multi-ethnic context is crucial for fostering cultural identity, community bonding, and overall well-being. Research has shown that cultural traditions, such as music programs rooted in indigenous culture, can play a vital role in reconnecting youth with their cultural identity, thereby fostering community bonding and serving as protective factors for well-being Good et al. (2020). Additionally, the clarity of cultural identity has been linked to personal psychological well-being, providing individuals with a sense of continuity and reducing personal uncertainty (Usborne & la Sablonnière, 2014). Furthermore, the association between ethnicity and dietary patterns underscores the influence of cultural practices on lifestyle and community-level variables (Dekker et al., 2015). The exploration of culinary heritage practices among younger generations within specific ethnic groups highlights the transmission of cultural traditions and the role of the youth in reviving ethnic culinary heritage, contributing to the preservation of cultural identity and community bonding (Fikri et al., 2021). Therefore, the historical, social, and cultural aspects of the Mudik tradition play a pivotal role in shaping community bonds and individual identities, emphasizing the significance of understanding its implications within a multi-ethnic setting.

The impact of cultural traditions on the professional identities of educators, particularly in the context of Indonesia, is a multifaceted and dynamic area of study. The literature review by (Syah et al., 2020) delves into the significance of embedding the professional identity concept of accounting teachers within the Indonesian education system, emphasizing the need for a blended concept of accountant and teacher professionalism (Syah et al., 2020). This highlights the importance of cultural context in shaping the professional identities of educators, particularly in specialized fields such as accounting.

Furthermore, the study by Noviani et al. (2021) explores the perception and experience of professional identity among bachelor nursing students in Indonesia, emphasizing the role of Islamic values in shaping their professional identity within the nursing profession (Noviani et al., 2021). This underscores the influence of cultural and religious values on the professional identities of educators, particularly in the healthcare sector.

Additionally, the critical review by Mount et al. (2022) focuses on professional identity formation interventions in medical education, highlighting the integration of knowledge, skills, values, and behaviors with preexisting identity and values as a crucial aspect of professional identity formation (Mount et al., 2022). This review provides insights into the impact of educational interventions on the professional identities of educators, particularly in the medical field, shedding light on the dynamic nature of professional identity formation within specific cultural and educational contexts.

## Theoretical Framework:

Social Exchange Theory is a relevant theory for understanding the social and cultural implications of the *Mudik* tradition. According to this theory, social relationships are based on the exchange of resources between individuals. In the context of *Mudik*, social exchange theory can be used to understand the social and cultural implications of *Mudik* as a form of social exchange between individuals and their families and communities.

*Mudik* can be seen as a form of social exchange between individuals and their families, where participants provide social and emotional support to their families in exchange for a sense of belonging and connection to their culture and traditions. Social exchange theory can also explain the economic implications of *Mudik*, where individuals provide financial resources to their families and communities in exchange for social support and cultural traditions.

This study proposes two points of research questions, they are:

1. How do Malikussaleh Lecturers, representing diverse regions including Padang, Palembang, Java, and Aceh, perceive and experience the social implications of the *Mudik* (homecoming) tradition in Indonesia?
2. In what ways does the *Mudik* tradition influence the cultural practices and identities of Malikussaleh Lecturers hailing from different ethnic backgrounds in regions like Padang, Palembang, Java, and Aceh?

This study has significant implications for our understanding of the social and cultural dynamics of Indonesia. By examining the social and cultural implications of *mudik* across different ethnic groups, this research will shed light on how *mudik* contributes to the formation of social identity and cultural practices in Indonesia. The findings of this research can inform policy and development programs that seek to promote intercultural understanding and social cohesion in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study can contribute to the theoretical understanding of the relationship between tradition, culture, and identity.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research type, as it aims to understand the social and cultural implications of the *Mudik* tradition in Indonesia from the perspective of multiple ethnic groups. The research method used in this study is ethnography, which involves observing and interacting with the participants in their natural setting to gain a deeper understanding of their culture and social practices.

The research design is a multi-ethnic study that involves participants from different ethnic groups across Indonesia. 5 people of different ethnical and area of origin background participated in this research. They all live in Aceh but come from different region of the country, such as East Lombok, West Sumatra, West Kalimantan, Riau, and Bengkulu. This design allows for a comprehensive understanding of the *Mudik* tradition's social and cultural implications among various ethnic groups. The instrument used for data collection is a semi-structured interview guide that is developed based on the research questions and objectives.

The data collection process involves semi-structured interviews will be conducted after the *Mudik* tradition period to capture the participants' perspectives and experiences in more depth. Data Analysis: The data analysis process will use a thematic analysis approach to identify and interpret the emerging themes from the data collected. The data collected will be transcribed and organized into categories and themes. The themes will be analyzed using a deductive and inductive approach, which will involve comparing the data collected to existing theories and concepts related to the *Mudik* tradition and social and cultural practices in Indonesia.

## Results And Discussion

Research Question 1 aimed to understand how Malikussaleh Lecturers, representing diverse regions including Padang, Palembang, Java, and Aceh, perceive and experience the social implications of the *Mudik* (homecoming) tradition in Indonesia. Participants shared their

experiences, highlighting the importance of Moody's in their social and cultural identity. This tradition is a powerful means of maintaining strong family ties between urban migrants and their village or hometown relatives, thereby preserving unique cultural traditions across generations. Socially, Moodyk promotes group cohesion, brings people together, strengthens family ties and creates a sense of community. For the Minang community, 'pulang kampung' has a deeper emotional meaning that inspires the community to cooperate in the development of the village. As a semi-obligatory cultural event for immigrants.

*Mudik* strengthened family ties in a social context, confirming the importance of this tradition in their lives. When asked about the social and cultural impact of *mudik* on their ethnic group, respondents noted that bringing souvenirs or gifts (oleh-oleh) on return is considered obligatory and has cultural significance. Not taking oleh-oleh is considered a sign of negligence and incompleteness. However, despite the cultural significance of oleh-oleh, it has been observed that the way *mudik* is practiced or perceived has changed over time. A major change has to do with the number of family members participating in the return trip. In the past, extended family involvement was common, but now immediate family is often enough, resulting in smaller and more intimate gatherings within Moody's.

Modernization and the absence of older family members have also created noticeable changes that have changed the traditional atmosphere, turning it from a party at the ancestral home to a vacation or excursion to a tourist attraction or restaurant. In addition, respondents expressed the impact of *mudik* on their relationships with family and friends in their hometowns, as well as in the cities where they work or study. *Mudik* acts as a strong link that strengthens relationships with family and colleagues, bridging the distance that once separated migrant workers from their families in the village. Although they meet only once a year during Eid, *mudik* has brought them closer, allowing for meaningful encounters and strengthening social ties. The positive energy and dynamism experienced after reuniting with parents and extended family during Moody's time positively influenced their work performance and social interactions with colleagues, promoting better synergy in tasks. However, the impact on relationships was not only positive, and respondents also pointed to some negative social aspects. Nevertheless, bringing oleh-oleh to family, friends, or the community during *Mudik* is considered an indirect indicator of good relations with them, emphasizing the cultural importance of gift-giving during this traditional event to strengthen social ties.

Research question 2 aims to unfold how *mudik* tradition influence the cultural practices and identities of Malikussaleh Lecturers hailing from different ethnic backgrounds in regions like Padang, Palembang, Java, and Aceh.

The respondents shared their experiences regarding how their ethnic backgrounds influenced their *mudik* journeys compared to other ethnic groups in Indonesia. One respondent mentioned a friend who preferred using a private vehicle for *mudik*, even for long distances, as they enjoyed the freedom to make stops at various places along the way. However, the other respondents stated that they had never participated in *mudik* celebrations or events organized by or involving people from different ethnic groups. Nevertheless, one respondent noted that during their *mudik*, they interacted with many members of their extended family who came from diverse ethnic backgrounds due to intermarriages. Despite the different ethnic backgrounds, the *mudik* experience was marked by warmth and togetherness. Another respondent mentioned that, to their knowledge, there were no specific celebrations or events in their area to welcome *mudik* travelers, suggesting that *mudik* celebrations might vary across regions and ethnic groups in Indonesia. Overall, the respondents' experiences highlight the diversity and



uniqueness of the *mudik* tradition across different ethnic backgrounds while underscoring the importance of family ties and unity during the homecoming journey.

The respondents' opinions shed light on the influence of their ethnic backgrounds on their *mudik* experiences compared to other ethnic groups in Indonesia. They mentioned a common tendency during *mudik* for people to strive to appear luxurious and successful, even if it involves renting a car to showcase their prosperity in their hometown. *Mudik* becomes a platform for individuals to display their "success" to their village community, and those who migrate are often perceived as always successful. Although the respondents personally haven't encountered this misconception, they acknowledged that some phenomena might occur, such as *mudik* travelers wanting to return with achievements they can take pride in, such as higher positions, prestigious titles, or wealth. The respondents emphasize that such notions should be eliminated from the *mudik* culture in society. Additionally, stereotypes may emerge among the people surrounding *mudik* travelers, where some view *mudik* as a measure of success or failure for those who migrate. These insights highlight the complexities of perceptions and misconceptions about *mudik* across different ethnic groups, emphasizing the need for a more nuanced understanding of this tradition in Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape.

## Conclusion

From the above elaboration, we can draw several conclusions.

- 1) *Mudik* tradition is culturally significant, fostering strong family ties and preserving traditions across generations.
- 2) *Mudik* strengthens social bonds within ethnic groups and creates a sense of community.
- 3) The practice of bringing 'oleh-oleh' (gifts) holds cultural importance, indicating the value of gift-giving in maintaining social connections.
- 4) Ethnic backgrounds influence *mudik* experiences, with varied preferences in transportation and interactions with diverse family members.
- 5) *Mudik* celebrations differ among regions and ethnic groups, highlighting the tradition's diversity.
- 6) Misconceptions and stereotypes about *mudik* center around notions of showcasing success, calling for a nuanced understanding of the practice.

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