

CHAPTER II

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AMONG *BLASTERAN* (MIXED-RACE) INDIVIDUALS IN INDONESIAN SOCIETY

2.1 The overview of Mixed race people in Indonesia

Indonesia is home to approximately 1,340 recognized ethnic groups, contributing to its rich and diverse cultural and ethnic landscape (*Mengulik Data Suku Di Indonesia - Berita*, 2015). This vast ethnic variety has resulted from centuries of migration, trade, colonization, and cultural interactions, which have shaped the development of the nation's population. Among these groups, there exists a distinct community known as *blasteran* (mixed-race individuals), a term widely used to refer to people of mixed ethnic heritage in Indonesia. *Blasteran* individuals represent a population shaped by historical processes such as colonization, migration, and intermarriage, all of which have created a complex ethnic identity.

The history of *blasteran* individuals in Indonesia can be traced back to the colonial era, particularly during Dutch colonial rule. The Dutch, along with other foreign powers like the Portuguese and Japanese, introduced new cultural influences and intermarriage with local populations. Over time, this led to the emergence of a mixed-race population as native Indonesian women married colonizers. These unions were initially shaped by the socio-political circumstances of the time, where colonial laws often restricted these relationships but gradually became more common, particularly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (*The History of Mixed-Race People: Javanese-Dutch*, n.d.). The presence of foreigners in Indonesia, coupled with its strategic position as a hub of international trade, facilitated the establishment of a culturally diverse, mixed-race population that continues to grow today.

Blasteran individuals often embody a combination of foreign and Indonesian cultural elements, making them a unique and integral part of Indonesia's multicultural society. The complex nature of their identity has been shaped by not only intermarriage but also the broader history of migration and colonization, with mixed-race communities emerging from different parts of Indonesia, including major cities and more rural areas (*The Forgotten Role of Ethnicity in Indonesian History - Opinion*, 2019). This ongoing process of cultural blending continues today, with the *blasteran* population being an important part of Indonesia's evolving ethnic and cultural fabric.

2.2 Blasteran Individuals in Indonesia

Blasteran individuals in Indonesia face unique challenges related to their cultural identity and social integration. Their identity is often complex, shaped by the need to balance multiple ethnic heritages while navigating the cultural expectations and norms of Indonesian society. According to KBBI (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia) *Blasteran* itself means individuals that is the result of a mixed marriage of two different races or heritage; the result of cross-breeding of Indonesian and other country races (foreigner).

The term "*blasteran*" itself often carries both positive and negative connotations, depending on the context in which it is used. On the one hand, being of mixed heritage can be seen as a symbol of cosmopolitanism and cultural richness, reflecting the diversity and interconnectedness of Indonesian society. On the other hand, mixed-race individuals may also experience marginalization or discrimination, as their identities do not fit neatly into the traditional categories of "Indonesian" or "foreign" (Lan, 2011).

Historically, the mixed-race population in Indonesia has been shaped by the legacy of colonialism, which imposed rigid racial classifications and created hierarchies between ethnic groups. These historical divisions still resonate today, with *blasteran* individuals often struggling to assert their place in a society that tends to favor ethnic homogeneity (Lan, 2011). Many mixed-race individuals experience a sense of belonging to both their Indonesian and foreign heritages but often find it difficult to fully identify with either community due to the complexities of their identity.

Moreover, the societal expectations placed on *blasteran* individuals are often shaped by the broader national narrative of ethnic unity. While Indonesia celebrates its diversity, there is an underlying pressure for mixed-race individuals to assimilate into one dominant ethnic identity, especially in rural areas where more traditional views on ethnicity and race prevail. As a result, mixed-race individuals often find themselves navigating between different worlds by reaffirming their Indonesian identity in public spaces while simultaneously being reminded of their foreign ancestry in private and social settings.

The current population of *blasteran* individuals is growing, with many embracing their mixed identities and contributing to the nation's cultural dynamism. However, their journey toward identity acceptance remains ongoing, as they continue to navigate the challenges of belonging in a multicultural society. *Blasteran* individuals in contemporary Indonesia face a complex interplay of societal expectations, historical legacies, and personal choices that shape their evolving sense of self.

The researcher identified seven informants who are *blasteran* (mixed-race) individuals living in Indonesia and are integrated into Indonesian society. These informants range in age from 19 to 22 years old and represent a diverse cross-section of the mixed-race population in the

country. Most of the informants reside in urban areas such as Jakarta and Bekasi, which are known for their multicultural environments. Notably, two of the informants spent part of their early childhood living outside Indonesia, which has contributed to their unique perspectives on their mixed-race identity. These informants offer valuable insights into the experiences and challenges faced by *blasteran* individuals in contemporary Indonesian society. The more detailed informants' identity can be seen down below:

Table 2. 1. Informant Identity

No.	Name	Gender	Age	Occupation	Mother's Name	Father's Name	Mother's Origins	Father's Origins
1.	Areum Yoo	Female	22	Manufacturing family company wig company	Wike Widyaastuti	Yoo Seuokin	Jakarta, Indonesia	Incheon, South Korea
2.	Cherim Kim	Female	21	Student and working as a model and content creator	Rini Cuziatin	Kim Inseuk	Bandung, Indonesia	Sinchon, South Korea
3.	Aurette Julie Adhiwarni	Female	22	Working at a French school in Jakarta	Oktovina	Pierre	Jakarta, Indonesia	France
4.	Liza Nur Cita	Female	22	Project Manager of an Art Space	Liza	Andre	Jakarta, Indonesia	African American, New York
5.	Jonathan Marco Christopher	Male	22	Student	Selvia Magdalena	Joseph Hanna Makhoul	Jakarta, Indonesia	Lebanon France
6.	Iman Salma	Female	22	Working as a front desk receptionist	Sakinah Mahri	Muhammad Musodik	Indonesia (Yemen)	Syria
7.	Raisya Angelina Josephine Karreman	Female	19	Freelancer	Bob Micheal Karreman	Aliyah Akhiryani	Jakarta, Indonesia	Rotterdam, The Netherlands

The demographics of the research participants reveal a diverse range of backgrounds that shape their identity development. The informants come from various ethnic origins, including Indonesian-Europeans (Dutch, French, Lebanese), Indonesian-East Asians (South Koreans), Indonesian-Middle Easterns (Yemenis, Syrians), and one informant with Indonesian-African American background. This diversity of ethnic backgrounds is a key factor in the complexity of their mixed-race identities, as they navigate multiple cultural influences from both their Indonesian and foreign heritages. These varied ethnic origins provide a rich context for understanding how the informants relate to both their local and foreign identities.

In terms of religion, the majority of the informants practice Islam, while two identify as Christians. The religious affiliations of the informants are heavily influenced by their mothers' beliefs, which is a common pattern in the cultural transmission of religion within families. Religion plays an important role in shaping their lives, influencing their principles, norms, and how they approach cultural differences. Their religious identities are intricately linked to their understanding of self and their place within both their family structure and broader society.

Lastly, the informants' social class, most of the informants come from high socioeconomic backgrounds. They attended international schools during their childhood, where they were exposed to a diverse, multicultural environment. Growing up among international peers has significantly shaped their early self-perception and influenced how they see themselves in a globalized context. The exposure to different cultures and perspectives in these settings also played a crucial role in their identity development, contributing to their understanding of what it means to be part of a multicultural society.