

# Ethnicity and the Encouragement to Migrant and Entrepreneurship in Batak Society: Literature Review and Call for Research

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**Abstract.** *Ethnicity is considered one of the factors that influences a person or community in entrepreneurial behavior. The Batak people are one of the largest tribes in Indonesia originating from North Sumatra. The Batak people are known as a community that tends to leave their hometown and migrate to other areas. This research is a study of ethnic entrepreneurship with a historical literature approach. The aim is to see how the Batak people and their connection with the customs they adhere to as an encouragement to migrate and become entrepreneurs. The output of the study is a starting point for conducting further research on ethnic entrepreneurship.*

**Keywords:** *Ethnic Entrepreneurship, Culture, Customs, Literature Review, Batak.*

## INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times, humans have migrated with various motives. Experts even hypothesize that Homo Sapiens migrated from Africa to Eurasia around 50-150 thousand years ago (Jennings, 2015). It could be said that every cultural progress begins with a new period of migration and population movement (Park, 1928). Migration itself is a move made by individuals or groups for a temporary or permanent period, from one geographic location to another for various reasons ranging from the possibility of better employment to avoidance of persecution (Hagen-Zanker, 2008). The location of residence before moving is called the place of origin and the location of residence after moving is called the place of destination.

Migrants in many cases are seekers of economic opportunities whose spatial choice behavior is determined by economic conditions that are more favorable in the destination area compared to the area of origin (Brunow, 2015). From a gender perspective, women's migration is not only driven by economic factors, but also for reasons of marriage (Morokvasic, 1984). This is due to avoiding social restrictions and domestic violence that are accepted in their home country. According to Nuñez, et al (2014) there are eleven reasons why people migrate, namely;

1. To avoid past or future abuse
2. to flee from conflict or violence
3. Looking for a new place due to natural disasters
4. health services
5. avoid poverty
6. Creating better opportunities for children

7. Family reunification
8. Get an education
9. Looking for work and opportunities to create a business
10. Wedding
11. For no definite reason.

Lewis (1954) argued that the cause of migration is the difference in supply and demand for labor between rural and urban areas. The initial push factors that cause people to migrate can be different from the circumstances that make migration continue (Massey, 1990). A survey conducted by Gallup in 2018 showed that 750 million people worldwide would migrate if they had the ability (Esipova et al, 2018). The survey also confirmed that the United States is still the main destination for migration. Many factors stimulated the "American fever" such as newspapers, books, pamphlets, transportation advertisements, and labor recruiting agencies, but the most influential were letters from friends and relatives in America explaining how promising the opportunities there were. (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918). In recent decades, several places in the southern United States have become destinations for immigrants from abroad (Singer et al, 2008). An estimated 46 current and 165 former heads of foreign governments are graduates of American higher education (Spilimbergo, 2006).

Broadly speaking, scholars divide migration into two types, namely internal/ domestic migration and international migration (King & Skeldon, 2010). Referring to Adepoju's (1998) statement, conceptually both types of migration originate from the same series of fundamental causes, namely; inequalities in development, employment prospects, income and living conditions between and within countries. In short, international migration is the movement of individuals or groups that cross the territorial boundaries of their country of origin. For this reason, the United Nations (UN) defines international migrants as "everyone who changes their usual country of residence" (DESA, 1998). Currently, international migration is considered an important mechanism for globalization (Hanson, 2010).

Internal migration is movement carried out by individuals, households, groups from one region to another within the geographical scope of the same country. UNDESA (2016) states that the number of people undertaking domestic migration globally is three times higher than international migration. There are about 763 million internal migrants, compared with about 244 million international migrants. Internal migration also creates a lot of diversity even though it is still within the same country. So according to King and Skeldon (2010) it is a mistake to assume that internal migrants are characteristically more homogeneous than international migrants.

In general, the majority of countries in Southeast Asia are agricultural countries whose territory is dominated by rural areas. About three-quarters of the population lives in non-urban areas and depends on the agricultural sector for their living (Leinbach and Frederick, 2018). Although the reasons for migration between countries within the region vary, there is one thing in common, namely the opportunity to work in big cities is a factor that attracts migration (Kumar et al, 2018).

In Indonesia itself the number of people who undertake internal migration is quite large. It is estimated that around 9.8 million people moved temporarily in 2010 (Sukamdi and Mujahid, 2015). This number is much greater than the number of individuals who migrate internationally, which is only around 4.5 million people (UNDESA, 2017).

Big cities on the Island of Java, especially Jakarta, are still magnets that attract people in rural areas to move. From 2005-2010, more than 500 thousand migrants arrived on the island of Java (Sukamdi and Mujahid, 2015). The growth of the population living in cities is quite rapid. It is recorded that around 54% of Indonesia's population lives in urban areas and it is predicted that this figure will reach around 68% in 2025 (World Bank, 2016).

Currently, Java Island is still the center of Indonesia's population density. In 2019 the population of Indonesia was around 266.91 million people. Of this number, around 150 million people or more than 56% are on the island of Java (Kusnandar, 2019). The New Order government under the leadership of President Soeharto tried to equalize the population with a transmigration program. However, unfortunately, research findings from Van Lottum and Marks (2011) show that the expensive government migration program is not very successful. This actually shows that a highly centralized government encourages migration flows to the capital

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Batak people consist of members of a lineage, specifically, people who consider themselves to be descendants of the same saoppu (grandfather) (Ihromi, 1994). Referring to Britannica (2019) that the term Batak was likely coined during pre-colonial times by native outsiders (for example, Malays) and then adopted by Europeans. The groups included in this term are; Toba, Karo, Simalungun, Pak Pak, Mandailing, and Angkola. The ethnonym 'Batak' is most likely an ancient name, but no one has been able to provide a satisfactory meaning and meaning of the name (Andaya, 2002). Based on the results of the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) population census in 2010, the Batak population reached 8,466,969 people or around 3.58 percent of the national population (bps.go.id, 2012).

The West began to make contact with the Toba Batak around the 1860s with the arrival of German missionaries and Dutch government officials, although full administrative control was not achieved until 1907 (Bruner, 1972). Batak people have long practiced cannibalism to prevent the entry of foreigners. Messrs et al (1826) told the results of their adventures that the Batak people carried out cannibalism which was very disgusting for a civilized society, which shows that they were a barbaric and brave people. This was felt to be the reason why the European community arrived there quite late (Andaya, 2002).

Lineage is very important in Batak society. Genealogies can be classified into clan units, and when people identify themselves, they refer first to their clan (Ihromi, 1994). The surname is passed down from the father's family. Therefore, the family structure of the Batak community is very patrilineal where the main heir is the son. Usually women will

not inherit, even if they do, their value will not be as large as that of sons because daughters are the responsibility of their husbands

There is an expression among the Batak ethnic group, namely "*huta ni damang hatubuan, ndang marimbar tano hamateon*" which means more or less the land of birth is certain while the place where we die is still a mystery (Sihombing, 2020). This expression is a strong incentive for Batak people to go abroad, either to continue their education or work. According to Kramer (1957), the "self-esteem" complex drove the Batak tribe to migrate to establish a new kingdom (*harajoan-harajoan*). Then this "self-esteem" complex is also interpreted as the desire to be "number one".

Batak people first arrived in Batavia (the name of Jakarta during the Dutch occupation) in 1907 and then founded the Batak Church in 1922 (S.K. Bonar, 1961). Simon Hasibuan is believed to be the first Batak person to arrive in Batavia looking for work, who graduated from the Pansurnapitu Tarutung Seminary school (Sihombing, 1961). Castle (1967) explains that the Batak people had strong kinship and then migrated to Batavia. Batak families who had already lived overseas provided their homes as temporary shelter for those who had just arrived.

According to the 1930 ethnic census conducted by the Dutch, the number of Batak people in Batavia was around 1,300 people (Volkstelling, 1930). This number then increased further after the independence revolution. Castles (1967) estimated that there were around 22,000 Batak people living in Jakarta in 1963. Based on the results of the 1930 population census, Reid (2011) explained that Batak people were the largest migrant group in Indonesia. About 15.3% of Batak people live outside their native territory

In 1923 there were 45 Batak youths who took a conductor course in Bandung. They are unemployed youth in Batavia. Those who successfully passed the exam were spread to several cities such as Bogor, Bandung, Surabaya, Batavia, and various other cities.

In Central Java, it is estimated that in the 1910s there were Batak people living in the area, but the growth of the Batak population in Central Java and its surroundings was quite slow. This is believed to be because of the long distance from Tapanuli. In the 30s, Batak people began to inhabit several areas around Central Java such as Yogyakarta, Magelang and Semarang (Purba and Purba, 1997). The growth of the Batak people in Central Java increased rapidly in the early decades of Indonesian independence. Some came with the motive of earning a living and some because of military duty (Lumbantobing, 1984).

Simanjuntak (2009) explained that the Batak people hold the philosophy of *hamoraon* (wealth), *hagabeon* (many descendants), and *hasangapon* (honor) or what is usually called *tolu h* (three h). The cultural value system which is the goal and outlook on life is passed down from generation to generation. Schwartz and Bardi (2001) say that values are desired trans-situational goals, which are very diverse and provide principles that guide human life. The value of the three-h philosophy is believed to be the driving factor for Batak people to migrate.

The people in the village do not form a traditional community. However, once they migrate to cities, rural people become aware of the formation of urban groups or communities and easily participate in them (Bruner, 1972). Furthermore, Bruner (1972) explained that considering this association as a tool to maintain the Batak "ethnicity" was tautological. On the contrary, ethnicity is present as a factor in modern Indonesian urban life, and is used by the Batak people and by other ethnic groups as the basis for associations that carry out various functions, including economic and political.

Some of the Batak immigrants are trying to start their own businesses. Immigrants usually utilize internal community networks to develop enterprises or businesses (Portes and Zhou, 1992). Business ownership among immigrants, members of ethnic groups or both is called ethnic entrepreneurship (Valdez, 2008). Ethnic entrepreneurship is defined as a group of people bound by a common cultural heritage who move from their place of origin to their destination, as immigrants, opening a business there to improve their social and economic welfare (Indarti et al, 2020). Immigrants have certain abilities and seize available opportunities. Ethnic entrepreneurship is often identified as an important factor in the economic progress of immigrants (Sequeira and Rasheed, 2006; Choi, 2010).

In the early 1980s, entrepreneurship was a potentially promising field of scientific research for research by academics (Bygrave and Hofer, 1992). Nevertheless, the definition of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs still raises various discussions and debates among researchers (Low, 2001). Some say that entrepreneurs are those who innovate (Schumpeter, 1934) and actors who are able to coordinate resources (Say, 1816). Meanwhile, Indarti et al (2020) argue that the term "entrepreneur" refers to a person or group, while the term "entrepreneurship" refers to a process.

Some ethnicities are identified with certain professions or businesses. Some operate in the traditional culinary industry because traditional food is highly valued by consumers because they feel it brings nostalgia for the past (Autio et al, 2013). For example, Minang migrants - who come from West Sumatra - are identified with traditional culinary businesses such as nasi kapau and rendang (Annisa, 2020). The Batak ethnic group is also synonymous with culinary businesses such as lapo tuak (stalls) and pork restaurants, because the majority of them are Christians.

Apart from the culinary field, Batak migrants are also often associated with professions in the legal sector and public transportation drivers. However, there is one profession that Batak nomads are involved in but is not really understood by the general public, namely moneylenders or mobile banks. The majority of moneylenders who provide loan services to lower class people such as market traders come from the Batak ethnic group. This knowledge was obtained from phenomena obtained directly by the author in the community. Apart from that, this idea is also further strengthened by findings obtained through the search process on search engines and social media.

The author obtained information from several people and traders in various places such as Tanah Abang, Jakarta, Depok, Bogor, Pacitan, Pasar Colombo, Yogyakarta, that the majority of mobile bankers are Batak migrants. An example of news that writes about

Batak loan sharks is news from joglosemarnews.com (2019) with the title "Trauma of loan sharks, hundreds of Gondang market traders agree to reject the practice of lending under the guise of cooperatives from Batak people". Another news item entitled "Two Suspected Loan sharks Arrested by DSI Langsa" from the war site.id (2020).

Several previous studies have shown Batak people as loan sharks, namely research at Prapatan Panjalin market, Majalengka (Parlina, 2017), Ampel Market Boyolali (Astuti, 2013), and Pasar Legi Kotagede Yogyakarta (Qodarini, 2013). In language, loan shark means a person who earns a living by making money (KBBI). Other languages often used by people are usurers, moneylenders, loan sharks, bank plecit and various other local terms.

## RESEARCH METHOD

Literature review is a research method for finding, evaluating, and interpreting research results related to certain research questions, subjects, or phenomena (Kitchenham, 2004). Primary studies are individual studies, while secondary studies are literature review studies. To make the facts presented to policy makers more comprehensive and balanced, review literature will be very helpful.

There are several general reasons for using a literature review in a study (Kitchenham, 2004), including;

- To summarize empirical evidence on the benefits and limitations of specific agile methods.
- To identify gaps in current research to suggest areas for further investigation.
- To provide a framework/background for appropriately positioning new research activities.

In this research, data was obtained from the electronic document search process for scientific articles. Google Scholar database was optimized as a source for obtaining data and material about previous studies. Apart from scientific articles, news articles are also used as an additional support. To get relevant results, search using keywords related to the research.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One important factor in ethnic entrepreneurship is the ethnic and diasporic networks that immigrant entrepreneurs have, and the way these are formed and used to manage their businesses (Chand and Ghorbani, 2011). Immigrants who hold certain cultural norms and values find it easier to create mutual trust and create cooperative "contracts" between themselves (Isenberg, 2008) and become a source of community social capital. Coleman (1988) provides an example of how strong social capital was among Brooklyn Jews who sold diamonds. They send diamonds to each other to test the quality of the diamonds to be sold. The sending process is carried out without agreements and guarantees, only based on a high sense of trust between them.

Social capital is the ability of actors to gain benefits based on membership in social networks or other social structures (Portes, 1995). Social capital consists of obligations and expectations, channels of information or information that facilitate action, and effective norms and sanctions that reinforce certain types of behavior (Coleman, 1988). Social capital alone does not increase entrepreneurial opportunities, but social capital combined with individuals of a certain type and with the right type of social relationships can increase the likelihood of new venture creation (De Carolis et al 2009).

The Batak ethnic group establish the "*dalihan na tolu*" kinship system. In general, *dalihan na tolu* is interpreted as a *tataring* or hearth which is arranged on three stones (Rajamarpodang, 1992). These three pillars are; *Hula-Hula* (wife giver), *Boru* (wife) and *Dongan Tubu* (direct lineage of *Hula-Hula* and *Boru*) (Sianipar, 1991). This kinship system becomes social capital to strengthen unity by bridging differences, including religious differences between Christian Batak and Islamic Batak (Sianipar, 2011). Kinship unity in the Batak community is reflected in the terms *sisada sipanganon* (eating the same food), *sisada sinamot* (together in prosperity), *sisada hasangapon* (equal dignity) and *sisada hailaon* (having the same disgrace) (Vergouwen, 2004).

In Batak community communication, the term *martarombo* is known. *Martarombo* is a tradition of communicating between Batak people when they first meet. In language *tarombo* means genealogy while *mar* denotes a verb. So it can be concluded that *martarombo* is pedigree. The aim is to look for clan genealogy and brotherhood, both from father and mother, so that at a certain point the Batak people will know what speech or greetings are appropriate to use towards their interlocutors based on the *dalihan na tolu* system.

Ethnic communities help maintain subcultural values, attitudes and customs, and strengthen a strong family orientation (Parrillo, 1991) so that migrants form communities or associations. In the 50s, Batak residents in Bandung formed a community called *Pardomuan* (meeting) which was open to all Batak communities, both Muslims and Christians (Bruner, 1972). The organization aims to guide newly arrived Batak immigrants to be able to adapt to the new environment. Another aim is to help the economy of fellow Batak migrants so that they both have economic prosperity.

Even though Batak migrants easily adapt and mingle with new environments, the memory of traditions, such as: the use of their mother tongue, worship rules, customs and so on is not something that is easy to forget (hkbpjogja.org). Therefore, Batak migrants also carry cultural missions to their destination. This mission is reflected in the large number of Huria Kristen Batak Protestant (HKBP) churches and has become one of the largest church networks in Southeast Asia (pgi.or.id). Apart from Indonesia, HKBP also has several churches abroad, such as in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Los Angeles, New York, and in the state of Colorado (stthkbp.ac.id). Religion-based social capital also has a positive impact on immigrants' business development through social networks and capital accumulation (Choi, 2010).

## CONCLUSIONS

The research attempts to capture how Batak moneylenders build relationships with their customers, especially traditional market traders. Another aim is to see the role of religious organizations such as HKBP and regional organizations founded by Batak people as social capital and networks in forming money lending businesses. From the findings of the literature review, it appears that there is a correlation between culture and customs and the spirit of wandering of the Batak people. Furthermore, Batak migrants who have spread across various regions, especially in cities on the island of Java, have given rise to stereotypes that they have certain professions in the land of the nomads. This cannot be separated from the behavior of Batak migrants who tend to live communally and form their communities overseas. This is reinforced by the habit of the Batak people, especially Christians, to build their houses of worship and form religious organizations.

Future research should seek to explore previous literature to investigate how Batak immigrants initially formed businesses and lending institutions in their destination. Apart from that, the research tries to describe how Batak moneylenders build relationships with their customers, especially traditional market traders. Another aim is to see the role of religious organizations such as HKBP and regional organizations founded by Batak people as social capital and networks in forming joint ventures, as well as the spirit of Calvinism as an encouragement to continue to grow.

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