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Synthesis of Educational Aspirations of Indigenous Ethnic Groups in Indonesia: A Systematic Literature Review Based on Scopus and Google Scholar (2020–2025)

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ABSTRACT

Education for Indigenous communities in Indonesia holds profound significance, serving not only as a means of knowledge transfer but also as a medium for cultural identity preservation and social empowerment. This study synthesizes research on the educational aspirations of Indigenous peoples in Indonesia during 2020–2025 by examining trends, patterns, and scholarly contributions. Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on the PRISMA 2020 protocol, 35 articles from Scopus and Google Scholar were analyzed through thematic coding and bibliometric mapping with VOSviewer. Results show a significant increase in publications after 2020, focusing on two domains: education and policy. In education, findings reveal a shift from access-focused issues to socio-cultural dimensions of learning, highlighting the influence of social, cultural, and spiritual factors and the rise of community-based approaches integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) with modern pedagogy under an eco-cultural framework. In policy, challenges include weak regulation, limited funding, and insufficient integration of local knowledge and mother tongues into the national curriculum. Addressing these issues requires culturally equitable policies through recognition of Indigenous knowledge, multilingual education, and active community participation. This synthesis emphasizes that advancing Indigenous educational aspirations depends on the synergy between culturally grounded practices and inclusive, decentralized, epistemically diverse public policies.

1. Introduction

Education is one of the primary foundations for human development and the strengthening of national civilization. In Indonesia, recognized as a multiethnic country with high socio-cultural diversity, education serves functions that extend

far beyond mere knowledge transfer. It acts as a medium for social transformation, the reproduction of cultural values, and the reinforcement of collective identity among Indigenous peoples and local communities. In this context, educational aspirations become a key element determining the extent to which individuals and communities can direct their goals, motivation, and actions toward improving welfare and social mobility (Das et al., 2025; Gutman & Schoon, 2021). Moreover, education serves as a bridge between local cultural heritage and the demands of modernity, emphasizing the importance of balancing traditional knowledge with global competencies in shaping the future generation of Indigenous communities.

Various studies indicate that gaps in educational aspirations between Indigenous communities and the general population remain a significant structural issue. Factors such as limited economic access, geographic remoteness, insufficient educational infrastructure, and national education policies that are not adaptive to local wisdom are primary obstacles to equitable education (Hadjar et al., 2021; Gibson et al., 2022; Vetrone, 2022). These disparities are not only material but also symbolic, as modern education often fails to accommodate the epistemic values of Indigenous communities, which possess unique knowledge systems, languages, and learning methods (Bunga et al., 2025). This situation underscores the importance of in-depth studies to understand how Indigenous communities interpret and shape their educational aspirations within their specific social, cultural, and ecological contexts.

Theoretically, the concept of educational aspiration is often explained through Expectancy-Value Theory Eccles & Wigfield (2020), which posits that individual choices and motivation toward education are influenced by the value they place on education and their expectations of success within specific socio-cultural environments. However, this theory remains largely individualistic and does not fully capture the collective dynamics of Indigenous communities, where educational decisions are often made communally by extended families, traditional leaders, and guided by spiritual and ecological values (Bernaldino & Moraes-Ornellas, 2025; Bunga et al., 2025). Therefore, approaches to educational aspirations need to incorporate social, cultural, and ecological dimensions to more comprehensively reflect the aspirations of Indigenous communities within sustainable human development.

International studies show that gender (Eriksen, 2024), economic status (Hassani-Nezhad, 2021), social and familial support (Ngware et al., 2021), and academic self-efficacy (Laurell et al., 2022) significantly influence the formation of educational aspirations. Nevertheless, most of this research focuses on urban contexts and developed countries, while Indigenous communities in Indonesia such as those in Papua, Kalimantan, Nusa Tenggara, and Sumatra have received limited scholarly attention. Existing studies are mostly descriptive and have yet to integrate multi-year findings to identify patterns, trends, and conceptual directions of Indigenous educational aspirations. This represents a research gap that the present study seeks to address by providing a systematic, evidence-based synthesis.

Over the past five years, 35 studies relevant to educational aspirations have been published in various national and international journals. Most, including Fan & Chen (2023), Laurell et al. (2022), and Eriksen (2024), emphasize psychological aspects such as parental expectations, gender, and academic motivation. Others, such as Dempsey & McCoy (2025) and Zhang (2025), highlight the role of academic self-concept in improving learning outcomes. However, these studies generally do not link educational aspirations with socio-cultural factors and Indigenous community structures. In Indonesia, studies by Beruatwarin et al. (2023) on Asmat education, Desfitri et al. (2024) on community-based education, and Kusumaningrum & Muslim (2023) on inclusive policies in Papua provide initial insights, but no systematic effort has been made to synthesize and map research directions comprehensively.

From the review of these 35 studies, three main gaps can be identified. First, thematically, existing research has not fully examined the interrelation between educational aspirations, cultural values, and local knowledge systems. Second, methodologically, no Systematic Literature Review (SLR) has explicitly mapped Indigenous educational aspirations in Indonesia using cross-regional and longitudinal data from international databases such as Scopus and Google Scholar. Third, conceptually, theories of educational aspiration still position Indigenous communities as passive recipients of education rather than as knowledge subjects with their own cultural logic and epistemology (Desfitri et al., 2024; Rwebugisa, 2020).

The 2020–2025 period was chosen strategically because it marks a significant phase in global educational transformation post-COVID-19, which reshaped learning systems and widened digital gaps between urban and Indigenous communities (Gibson et al., 2022; Ngware et al., 2021). This period also coincides with national policy implementations such as “Merdeka Belajar” and the Regional Education Master Plan (RIPD), emphasizing diversity and contextualized education based on local wisdom. Amidst these dynamics, there is an urgent need to understand how Indigenous communities negotiate their identities and cultural values within increasingly modern formal education systems.

Considering these theoretical, methodological, and empirical gaps, this study synthesizes the directions, patterns, and contributions of research on Indigenous educational aspirations in Indonesia during 2020–2025. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on the PRISMA 2020 protocol is employed to ensure transparency and accuracy in literature selection, while bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer is applied to map thematic clusters, keyword networks, and conceptual interconnections among studies. Through this synthesis, the study aims to provide a comprehensive view of how education is understood and practiced by Indigenous communities as an eco-cultural learning process that balances local and global knowledge.

This research is expected to make two major contributions. Theoretically, it expands understanding of educational aspirations by integrating individual

motivation theory (Expectancy-Value Theory) with socio-cultural and ecological knowledge perspectives rooted in Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Practically, the findings provide a foundation for formulating inclusive, decentralized, and culturally equitable education policies by recognizing local knowledge systems, using native languages, and involving Indigenous communities in curriculum design. Thus, the study not only fills gaps in academic literature but also contributes to building a national education paradigm that respects cultural plurality and sustainably empowers Indigenous communities.

2. Methodology

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). This approach was chosen to ensure transparency, traceability, and scientific replicability in the process of identifying, selecting, and synthesizing literature relevant to the topic of educational aspirations among Indigenous peoples and ethnic groups in Indonesia. The PRISMA method is considered most appropriate as it allows researchers to systematically screen literature based on rigorous methodological criteria and contextual relevance to Indigenous education issues in Indonesia.

The four main stages of PRISMA identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion were carried out sequentially to ensure the quality of the analyzed literature. The first stage, identification, was conducted using the Publish or Perish (PoP) application, utilizing two reputable international scientific databases: Scopus and Google Scholar. Based on predefined search criteria, 69 articles from Scopus (2020–2025) and 200 articles from Google Scholar were obtained, with an additional 16 articles retrieved manually (handpicked). The search keywords were constructed using Boolean operators to cover various terms related to the research topic: ("education aspiration") AND ("indigenous" OR "indigenous people" OR "ethnic group" OR "tribe" OR "native community" OR "masyarakat adat" OR "suku") AND ("Indonesia"). All search results were compiled, and their metadata were updated using Mendeley Reference Manager for detail updates and duplicate checking. After examination, duplicates were removed to ensure that no article was counted more than once. The final result of the identification stage yielded 269 initial articles, which then formed the basis for the subsequent screening process.

The second stage, screening, involved reviewing the titles and abstracts of each article to assess their relevance to the research focus. Articles that were not relevant to the Indonesian Indigenous context, did not discuss educational aspirations, or were of low publication quality were excluded. The third stage, eligibility assessment, was conducted on the articles that passed the screening by examining the availability of full text, publication language, research type, and thematic relevance to the concept of educational aspirations. Articles that did not meet any of these aspects were excluded from the final list.

The fourth stage, inclusion, resulted in 35 articles that met all criteria and were ready for further analysis. These articles were subsequently used for bibliometric analysis and narrative synthesis to develop a comprehensive understanding of educational aspirations among Indigenous communities in Indonesia. The selection process is systematically visualized using a PRISMA Diagram (Figure 1), showing the number of articles at each stage and the reasons for exclusion.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for the Literature

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	Articles written in English or Indonesian	Articles written in languages other than English or Indonesian
Full-Text Availability	Articles available in full-text form	Articles not available in full-text
Type of Literature	Indexed scientific journal articles, conference proceedings, or empirical research reports	Non-empirical literature, editorials, grey literature, and textbooks
Thematic Relevance	Discusses educational aspirations of Indigenous communities/ethnic groups in Indonesia	Not directly related to Indigenous community contexts

The criteria in Table 1 function as methodological filters to ensure that only sources that are credible, empirical, and thematically relevant are included in the analysis. The application of these criteria also ensures consistency with the principles of external validity and evidence-based review, as recommended by PRISMA. The publication language was limited to English and Indonesian to capture both international literature and local context. Furthermore, only articles with full-text availability were included to allow for comprehensive thematic analysis and narrative synthesis.

All selected articles were then analyzed using a structured data extraction form, which included variables such as study identification, geographic location of the Indigenous community, research objectives and methodology, and the dimensions of educational aspirations examined. Data analysis was conducted using thematic coding techniques to identify patterns, themes, and relationships among key concepts. The findings were then synthesized using a narrative synthesis approach, aiming to integrate diverse research results into a coherent and contextual conceptual understanding of educational aspirations among Indigenous communities in Indonesia.

By following the PRISMA procedure, this study ensures that every stage of literature selection is conducted systematically, transparently, and reproducibly. The PRISMA Diagram presented in Figure 1 illustrates how the initial identification process yielded hundreds of articles, which were gradually screened down to a set of high-quality, relevant literature. This approach not only ensures methodological rigor but also strengthens the validity of the thematic synthesis, which serves as the basis for developing the eco-cultural aspiration framework in this study.

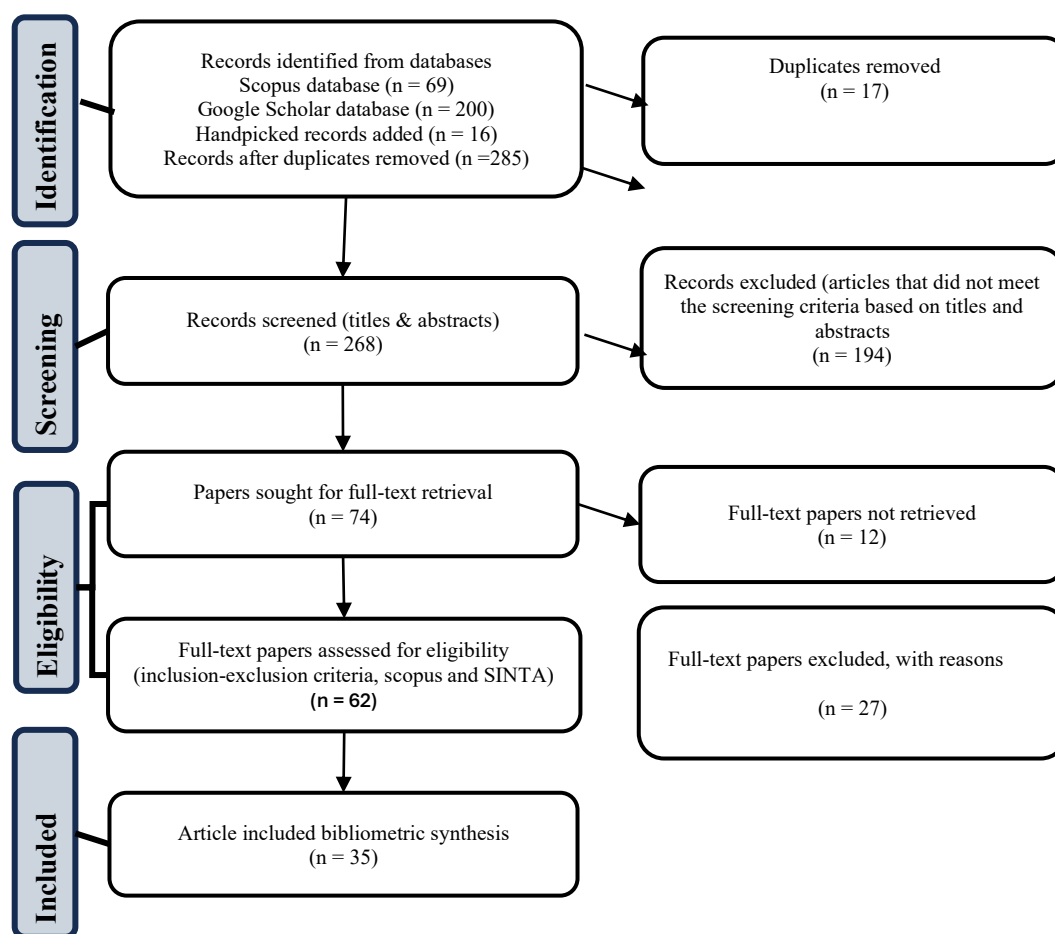


Diagram 1. Prisma Diagram

This diagram illustrates the stages of the article selection process in a systematic study on educational aspirations among Indigenous communities in Indonesia, using the PRISMA flow method. In the first stage (Identification), the researchers searched for articles through two major databases: Scopus (2020–2025, yielding 69 articles) and Google Scholar (up to 200 articles). The search keywords were: ("education aspiration") AND ("indigenous" OR "indigenous people" OR "ethnic group" OR "tribe" OR "native community" OR "masyarakat adat" OR "suku") AND ("Indonesia"). Additionally, 16 articles were added through manual selection (handpicked). All results were then combined, updated, and checked for duplicates before proceeding to the next stage.

In the second to fourth stages, the process continued with screening, eligibility, and inclusion. During the screening stage, titles and abstracts were examined to assess relevance to the research topic. The eligibility stage focused on article suitability based on criteria such as language, full-text availability, publication type, and thematic relevance to Indigenous communities and educational aspirations. Articles that did not meet these criteria were excluded. Finally, in the inclusion stage, a total of 35 articles were deemed suitable and relevant for bibliometric analysis. This

stepwise process ensures that only high-quality, contextually appropriate scholarly works are included in the final review.

3. Results and Discussion

Results

The findings indicate that the publication trend on educational aspirations among Indigenous communities in Indonesia has significantly increased since 2020, reflecting growing academic attention to culturally equitable education. Based on the literature synthesis, two interrelated domains were identified: education and policy. In the education domain, a paradigm shift is evident, moving from a narrow focus on access and participation to a broader understanding of the socio-cultural dimensions of learning aspirations. Education for Indigenous communities is now recognized not only as a means of social mobility but also as a vehicle for preserving identity, values, and cultural capital. Learning aspirations among Indigenous peoples are shaped by complex interactions of social, cultural, economic, and spiritual factors, including the role of mother tongue, customary values, and community social structures. Contextual, participatory, and community-based learning approaches are therefore key to developing relevant education. The integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) with modern pedagogical methods has led to the concept of eco-cultural learning, an approach that balances global knowledge with local wisdom while strengthening education as a tool for social empowerment and cultural preservation.

In the policy domain, the study found that Indigenous education still faces structural and institutional challenges, such as weak national regulations recognizing Indigenous education, limited funding for community-based schools, and suboptimal integration of local knowledge and mother tongue in the national curriculum. Additionally, decentralization efforts through the Merdeka Belajar program have not fully accommodated the epistemic needs of Indigenous communities. These findings highlight the need for culturally equitable education policies through three key strategies: recognition and integration of Indigenous knowledge systems in national curriculum policies, implementation of multilingual education with mother tongue as the primary medium of instruction, and increased participation of Indigenous communities in planning, implementing, and evaluating educational policies. Progress in educational aspirations among Indigenous communities in Indonesia thus depends on the synergy between culturally grounded pedagogical innovation and inclusive, decentralized public policies that respect epistemic diversity.

Following these conceptual insights, bibliometric analysis was conducted to strengthen empirical understanding of research patterns and the interconnection of key themes in studies on Indigenous educational aspirations in Indonesia. Using VOSviewer, bibliometric mapping visualized keyword distributions and relationships among research themes, revealing several main clusters, including

educational aspiration, indigenous people, equity in education, cultural identity, and access to higher education. These clusters indicate that current research increasingly emphasizes contextual understanding of cultural values, social structures, and local policies in shaping educational aspirations. Overall, the thematic map demonstrates a shift from focusing solely on educational access toward identity-based empowerment and community participation, signaling that both global and national research are increasingly attentive to the urgency of culturally rooted, socially sustainable education for Indigenous communities in Indonesia.



Diagram 2. Bibliometric Network Map

This bibliometric map illustrates the thematic relationships between the concept of “aspirations” and several other frequently occurring keywords in the related literature. The central node, aspirations, forms three main clusters representing different conceptual dimensions. The red cluster shows strong links between aspirations, peer influence, and academic outcomes, indicating that academic achievement and peer influence are dominant factors in shaping educational aspirations. The green cluster, connecting youth and media, highlights the role of media and the digital social environment in influencing the aspirations of younger generations. Meanwhile, the blue cluster, consisting of cultural factors and social context, emphasizes the importance of cultural and social context in shaping an individual’s educational orientation. Overall, this map demonstrates that educational aspirations are formed through a complex interaction of social, cultural, and environmental factors, which are interconnected within the dynamics of individual and community development.

Discussion

Conceptually, educational aspiration refers to the ideals, hopes, and goals that an individual seeks to achieve through education, both in the short term, such as wanting to graduate with high grades, and in the long term, such as aiming to continue to a specific higher education institution. According to Gore et al. (2020), educational aspiration is a future-oriented cognitive-motivational construct, which is a system of beliefs, expectations, and motivation oriented toward the future and influenced by an individual's social, cultural, and psychological context. In other words, educational aspiration is not merely the desire to attend school, but rather

the result of social, emotional, and cognitive processes that shape an individual's view of the meaning of education in their life. Educational aspiration does not appear suddenly; it is formed through long social and psychological processes beginning in the family environment, reinforced by school experiences, and modified by culture, economics, and media surrounding the individual. Based on theoretical studies and previous research, the process of forming educational aspiration can be explained through several interconnected stages.

A. Stages of Educational Aspiration Formation

The first stage, early socialization, begins in the family environment, which serves as the main foundation for instilling values, habits, and perspectives on the importance of education. The family, especially parents, functions as the first socialization agent by introducing responsibility, ideals, and academic and moral orientations from an early age. Through Parental Expectation Theory Jacobs & Eccles (2000), it is explained that children form educational aspirations based on parental expectations and behavioral models. If parents show appreciation for education, discuss the future, and provide emotional support, children internalize these values and develop high academic aspirations. Suharti (2019) demonstrated that parental expectations and support have a direct impact on children's educational aspirations, where parents with higher education and positive views toward schooling tend to cultivate stronger academic goals. Emotional support, tutoring, and effective communication between parents and children also strengthen self-confidence and intrinsic motivation to learn (Syahrul & Wahyudi, 2022). Therefore, a child's educational aspiration reflects the family's values, beliefs, and hopes regarding education as a means to improve social status, well-being, and a better future.

The second stage is related to the family's economic condition and social status, which directly influence a child's ability to access and understand education. Human Capital Theory Becker (1964) explains that families with sufficient economic resources tend to invest more in their children's education because they view it as the primary capital for achieving future social and economic mobility. Conversely, families with limited economic resources often have lower aspirations due to perceptions that higher education is difficult to attain or irrelevant to their livelihood. Good economic conditions allow children to access more complete learning facilities, such as books, internet, tutoring, and academic support, which ultimately strengthen their aspiration for higher education. This theory is supported by Social Reproduction Theory Bourdieu (1986), which asserts that educational aspirations are influenced by three forms of family capital: economic capital, including income and assets; social capital, including support and networks; and cultural capital, including values, lifestyle, and educational habits. Therefore, educational aspiration is not only determined by individual ability but also by the social and economic context that shapes a child's perception of opportunities and the value of education in their life.

The third stage lies in school learning experiences, which become the most active space for forming educational aspiration after the family because it involves social interaction, learning, and academic identity formation. According to School Climate Theory Roeser et al. (2000), the relationship between students, teachers, and peers strongly determines how an individual develops academic self-confidence and educational goals. Schools with a positive climate, characterized by emotional support from teachers, opportunities for achievement, and an inclusive learning environment, reinforce students' aspirations for their educational future. Conversely, schools that generate stress, discrimination, or excessive competitive pressure can weaken students' motivation and aspirations. Teachers as inspirational figures play a central role in shaping students' perceptions of what they can achieve through examples, guidance, and recognition of individual potential. Research by Khairuddin (2021) and Smith & Gorard (2020) shows that school connectedness, or students' emotional attachment to school, significantly influences academic orientation and educational aspiration. Therefore, a healthy school climate, including positive interpersonal relationships, recognition of achievements, and support for individual development, plays a vital role in shaping students' beliefs, motivation, and academic aspirations sustainably.

The fourth stage is the influence of culture and local values, which function as a meaning map in understanding the role and value of education in social life. Based on Cultural Capital Theory Bourdieu (1986), every society has a system of values and norms that shapes perspectives on education and determines the extent to which individuals view it as a means for social mobility. In multicultural Indonesian society, perceptions of education vary; in communities that consider education a symbol of family honor and progress, children's educational aspirations tend to be high. Conversely, in indigenous communities that strongly preserve traditional knowledge systems, such as the Baduy or Asmat tribes, formal education is often seen as less relevant to social needs and customary values. Warsah (2020) in the *Journal of Multicultural Islamic Education* emphasizes that a community's openness to new values and its ability to adapt to modernization play a significant role in fostering educational aspirations among indigenous peoples. Thus, cultural values, social norms, and community habits constitute forms of cultural capital that influence how individuals evaluate, value, and pursue education.

The fifth stage relates to cultural views on gender roles in society. According to Gender and Education Theory Stromquist (2018), equal access to education between males and females is a key factor in forming academic and social aspirations. In patriarchal societies, girls often have lower educational aspirations because social and cultural norms limit their roles to domestic spheres, making higher education seem less relevant. However, with increasing awareness of gender equality, especially in the past two decades, these views have significantly changed. Studies by Machmud (2013) & UNESCO (2021) reports indicate that increased access and participation of women in education not only raises their own academic aspirations but also has cross-generational effects. In this context, Stromquist (2018) emphasizes that recognizing women's potential and right to education broadens aspirations at both individual and community levels. Therefore, gender

equality not only opens wider educational access but also serves as a catalyst that strengthens motivation, independence, and educational aspiration toward a more just and equitable social transformation.

The sixth stage focuses on individual internal factors, such as personality, self-confidence, and intrinsic motivation, which play a crucial role in forming educational aspirations. According to Social Cognitive Theory Bandura (1986), educational aspirations are shaped by an individual's belief in their ability to succeed, with self-confidence influencing thinking, behavior, and how challenges are faced in the learning process. Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to set ambitious academic goals and show persistence in achieving them, while those with low self-confidence tend to limit their aspirations due to fear of failure. Research by Rahman & Mamat (2022) in the *Journal of Educational Psychology Asia* indicates that students with a growth mindset and high self-efficacy have more stable and realistic educational aspirations. This finding aligns with Goal-Setting Theory Locke & Latham (2002), which asserts that individuals with clear learning goals demonstrate high commitment and perseverance in achieving academic targets. Thus, positive personality, self-confidence, and intrinsic motivation not only determine the direction of educational aspiration but also serve as the main driver encouraging individuals to dream and work hard to achieve it.

The seventh stage is the influence of peers, which plays a significant role as a source of motivation, support, and the formation of academic behavior. According to Social Learning Theory Bandura (1986), individuals learn through observation, imitation, and social interaction with their surroundings, including peers who serve as behavioral models. Students who associate with diligent, high-achieving peers with high aspirations tend to emulate similar mindsets and enthusiasm for learning, thereby increasing their educational aspirations. Conversely, a negative peer environment can lower learning motivation and shift academic orientation toward less productive directions. Lee & Mark (2020) in *Asian Education and Development Studies* indicate that peer influence can explain up to thirty percent of variation in adolescents' academic aspirations in Asia. Therefore, peers not only function as a source of emotional support but also as an external factor shaping the direction, intensity, and sustainability of educational aspirations through social learning mechanisms in daily life.

The eighth stage, increasingly important in the modern era, is the influence of media and information technology. According to Cultivation Theory Gerbner (1998), media has a powerful role in shaping perceptions, values, and aspirations through repeated exposure to symbols of success, education, and career displayed in various digital content. Access to digital media allows students to learn about more inspirational figures, alternative educational pathways, and global career opportunities that broaden horizons and foster higher educational aspirations. Nasrullah (2020) emphasizes that digital literacy not only increases knowledge but also expands young people's thinking about the importance of education in achieving success in a global era. Meanwhile, research by Akshar & Solissa (2025) in *The Journal of Academic Science* shows that exposure to digital culture

significantly influences the formation of modern identity and aspirations among students in Southeast Asia. Therefore, media and information technology function not only as sources of information but also as new socialization agents that instill values of success and shape educational aspirations through symbolic constructions continuously reproduced in digital spaces.

The synthesis of the process of forming educational aspirations shows that educational aspirations are shaped through dynamic interactions between internal and external factors. Family serves as the primary foundation instilling educational values, while schools reinforce these values through meaningful learning experiences and social relationships. Cultural, economic, and gender factors then frame how individuals interpret the role of education in achieving social mobility. Peers and media function as additional socialization agents that broaden individual perspectives on opportunities and educational success. Meanwhile, personality and self-motivation serve as internal drivers encouraging individuals to realize their academic goals. Therefore, all these factors interact to form a psychosocial construct in which individuals not only dream but also believe that the future can be achieved through education.

B. Education Policy

Challenges in Education Policy Implementation

In education policy, the main challenge Indonesia still faces is weak regulation regarding the implementation of education based on local culture and mother tongue. Although the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation Number 63 of 2019 allows the use of regional languages in basic education, its implementation has not been well coordinated at the local level. Gunawan et al. (2025) found that multilingual policies in rural areas are often inconsistent due to the lack of technical guidance and inter-agency coordination. This results in the policy being more normative than practical. Rasidi & Istiningsih (2025) also highlight the need for a more contextual implementation model to systematically integrate cultural values into the school curriculum.

In addition to regulation, the second challenge is limited funding to support the development of curricula based on local knowledge and mother tongue, especially in remote areas. Indrayadi et al. (2025) emphasize that school autonomy in developing culture-based learning is hindered by limited operational funds and a lack of teacher training support. Consequently, many schools are unable to produce contextual teaching materials suitable for the cultural and linguistic characteristics of students. This situation is exacerbated by funding allocation policies that tend to focus on physical infrastructure rather than strengthening human resource capacity and learning content. Without adequate funding, the vision of inclusive and locally wise education is difficult to achieve sustainably.

The third challenge lies in the suboptimal integration of local knowledge and mother tongue into the national curriculum. Ramli et al. (2025) in Education

Sciences found that although initiatives to integrate regional languages in higher education exist in Aceh, these efforts have not become part of the national system. Laksana et al. (2025) in the *Journal of Language Education* show that mother tongue-based learning models can improve basic literacy and numeracy but are constrained by limited resources and teacher training. Furthermore, Ortalisje (2025) notes that many schools in East Nusa Tenggara face a dilemma between using Bahasa Indonesia as the official language and preserving local languages as cultural identity. This indicates that national education policy still focuses on language homogenization rather than linguistic and cultural diversity.

Thus, it can be concluded that Indonesia's education policy still faces three main issues: weak regulation, limited funding, and suboptimal integration of local knowledge and mother tongue into the national curriculum. To address these challenges, more participatory and contextual policies are needed involving local governments, communities, and educational institutions collaboratively. Sumartana & Hudiananingsih (2025) emphasize the importance of inclusive education that balances globalization with the preservation of local languages and cultures as part of national identity. With strengthened local-based policy, Indonesian education can produce academically capable generations rooted in the nation's cultural values, language, and local wisdom.

Intervention Strategies and Contextual Education Approaches

Community-Based Education becomes an important strategy to bridge the gap between social aspirations and recognition of indigenous cultural capital. This approach views indigenous communities not as development objects but as knowledge subjects with their own value systems, traditions, and wisdom that are worthy of integration into formal curricula Joseph & Said (2020). Through active community involvement in planning, implementing, and evaluating education, the learning process becomes a dialogue between tradition and modernity. Practices such as Adat Schools and Floating Nature Schools in remote areas of Indonesia have shown positive results in increasing student interest and retention (Nurjulaiha et al., 2025). Research by Swindell (2022) and Rakuasa & Hidayatullah (2024) confirms that community-based education is not only a means of knowledge transfer but also a mechanism for social and ecological empowerment that strengthens community independence. Thus, community-based education functions as an empowerment process that values local epistemic diversity.

The success of community-based approaches heavily relies on cross-actor collaboration between government, non-governmental organizations, and indigenous communities in developing culture-based education models. The Nusantara Adat School program, a collaboration between the Directorate of Culture and the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago, demonstrates how such collaboration can enhance educational participation in Kalimantan and Sumba (Damiyana et al., 2024). International NGO support from UNICEF and Save the Children also strengthens local community capacity through culturally based teacher training and contextual literacy improvement. Tlonaen et al. (2025) note

that the Savu Raijua project in East Nusa Tenggara successfully reduced school dropout rates by fifteen percent within two years. This shows that contextual education based on community participation can address both structural and cultural challenges while fostering a sense of ownership of education among indigenous communities.

Furthermore, educational anthropology and critical education approaches enrich the conceptual framework for understanding how education operates in indigenous communities. These approaches view schools as social arenas where values, symbols, and power relations are reproduced. Larín & Bareggi (2025) emphasize that education in indigenous communities should be understood as a cultural practice, not merely a formal knowledge transfer process. This perspective aligns with Paulo Freire's critical education approach, which stresses the importance of conscientization, or critical awareness of social inequality and cultural domination in the education system. Tlonaen et al. (2025) demonstrate that dialogic and participatory indigenous education models build collective awareness to resist marginalization. Thus, education is no longer a tool for cultural assimilation but a means of social transformation that affirms indigenous cultural identity.

Overall, these approaches indicate that the success of indigenous education largely depends on the national education system's ability to accommodate existing epistemic and cultural plurality in Indonesia. The integration of customary values, cultural capital, and community support forms the main foundation for inclusive, socially just, and locally rooted education. Nevertheless, challenges remain in the form of limited human resources, infrastructure, and regulations that do not fully support culture-based education. Therefore, inclusive education policy reform should not only open formal access but also ensure recognition and redistribution of local knowledge. Truly just education respects epistemic diversity and enables indigenous communities to become knowledge subjects, contributing to social justice and cultural sustainability in Indonesia.

C. Publication Trends and Research Developments 2020-2025

Literature reviews show that research on educational aspirations among indigenous communities in Indonesia has increased significantly from 2021 to 2024, driven by rising awareness of the importance of equitable and inclusive education. Recent studies such as Fiharsono et al. (2024) highlight the importance of culturally based learning in Papua and Nusa Tenggara as a response to unequal access to education. Other publications emphasize the shift in research focus from mere access to the meaning of education for indigenous communities as a means of preserving identity and achieving social mobility (Desfitri et al., 2024). In general, recent research positions educational aspiration as a collective reflection of indigenous communities in pursuing dignity and independence through education (Syafii et al., 2025). Additionally, several international studies show that educational aspiration in indigenous communities strongly correlates with psychosocial factors such as sense of belonging and recognition of local knowledge (Eriksen, 2024; Gore et al., 2020). These findings reinforce the view that contextual and culture-based

education not only increases learning participation but also serves as a transformative means to sustain indigenous identity and knowledge (Ngware et al., 2021). These findings provide a strong conceptual foundation for formulating more contextual educational strategies that prioritize indigenous communities as main actors in forming culturally just educational aspirations.

Based on the analysis of 35 reviewed articles, several strategic solutions can be proposed to address social, cultural, and structural challenges in shaping educational aspirations of indigenous communities in Indonesia. The first solution is strengthening community-based education approaches, positioning indigenous communities as active subjects in the educational process. Programs such as Nusantara Adat Schools, Floating Nature Schools, and Dayak Nature Schools have proven effective in increasing participation and motivation by integrating local values into the curriculum (Joseph & Said, 2020; Nurjulaiha et al., 2025). This approach allows education to serve dual functions as both a knowledge transfer medium and a tool for social empowerment and cultural preservation. By involving communities in planning and evaluation, schools become part of the social and spiritual life of indigenous people.

The second solution focuses on integrating cultural values, local languages, and indigenous knowledge into the national education system. Mother tongue and local wisdom play a key role in fostering students' emotional attachment to education. Studies by Noor (2020) and Tlonaen et al. (2025) show that multilingual and culture-based education can increase learning participation by up to twenty-five percent because students feel their identities are recognized during the learning process. Moreover, spirituality and indigenous traditions should be acknowledged as legitimate cultural capital Bourdieu (1986) within formal education. Integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems, such as traditional agricultural practices, ecological rituals, or conservation knowledge, into contextual curricula supports Education for Sustainable Development. This integration not only enhances ecological and social literacy but also strengthens the relevance of education to the daily life of indigenous communities.

The third solution emphasizes improving teacher capacity and strengthening educational infrastructure in indigenous areas. Many studies (Rudianto et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2025) highlight the importance of intercultural teacher training to enable teachers to understand the social context, language, and value systems of the communities they serve. Teachers are expected to act not only as educators but also as cultural mediators bridging modern knowledge with local wisdom. On the other hand, the government must strengthen physical and digital infrastructure in indigenous areas by providing environmentally friendly schools, accessible transportation, and renewable energy-based internet networks (Featherstone et al., 2022; Kusumaningrum & Muslim, 2023). These efforts will reduce spatial disparities and expand learning opportunities for children in remote areas who have long been marginalized within the formal education system.

The fourth solution emphasizes the reform of education policy to be inclusive, decentralized, and collaborative. Education for Indigenous communities cannot be managed uniformly through centralistic policies; instead, it must create space for community participation in the planning and implementation of programs. Studies by Singh (2022) and Rangkuti et al. (2025) stress that a paradigm of transformative inclusion should be applied, meaning policies that not only provide access to education but also recognize epistemic diversity and local cultural values as part of educational justice. Central and regional governments need to collaborate with non-governmental organizations, universities, and Indigenous organizations in developing region-based curricula, certifying Indigenous teachers, and providing dedicated funding for community-based schools. Through this reform, education no longer serves merely as a means of social mobility, but becomes an instrument of empowerment and cultural recognition, ultimately strengthening the educational aspirations of Indigenous communities in a sustainable and dignified manner.

4. Conclusion

The conceptual synthesis of educational aspirations among Indigenous communities in Indonesia emphasizes that education is not merely an instrument of social mobility, but a medium for cultural, spiritual, and ecological transformation that reflects the collective identity of Indigenous communities. Educational aspirations are shaped through dynamic interactions among family, school, cultural, economic, gender, media, and local knowledge systems, forming a psychosocial construct oriented toward the future. Key findings indicate that the success of Indigenous education relies heavily on the synergy between community-based pedagogical innovations, the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), and inclusive public policies that respect cultural justice. The implications of this research highlight the need to reorient the national education paradigm toward an eco-cultural learning model, where education serves as a space for dialogue between tradition and modernity. Education that acknowledges epistemic diversity not only strengthens participation and learning outcomes among Indigenous communities, but also ensures the sustainability of local knowledge as an integral part of building a just, culturally rooted, and globally aware Indonesian society.

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