

THE DOCTORAL JOURNEY OF A YEMENI STUDENT IN INDONESIA: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE EXPERIENCES OF PURSUING ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION

R Muhammad Satria Gyas Mustagis

¹English Education Program, Faculty of Social Sciences, Languages, and Literature,
Indonesian Institute of Education, Garut, Indonesia

Corresponding Author Email: satriagyasm@institutpendidikan.ac.id

Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: July 2025 Revised: August 2025 Accepted: September 2025 Published: October 2025	<i>The internationalization of higher education has generated unique opportunities for cross-cultural doctoral experiences; however, notable gaps exist in understanding the experiences of Middle Eastern students within Southeast Asian academic environments. Yemeni students pursuing advanced degrees in Indonesia, particularly in English Language Teaching programs, have been largely overlooked in international education research despite the increasing trends in educational migration. This research examines the experiences of Yemeni doctoral student enrolled in English Language Teaching programs in Indonesia, employing a narrative inquiry methodology. A qualitative narrative inquiry method was employed, using semi-structured interviews conducted with a 33-year-old Yemeni doctoral student enrolled at Universitas Negeri Malang. The analysis of data utilized the Labov framework, focusing on the components of abstract, background, key events, outcome, reflection, and closing statement. Findings indicated strategic patterns of academic mobility, wherein students utilized prior educational experiences to facilitate systematic academic advancement. Cultural identity has emerged as a catalyst for academic excellence, challenging deficit-oriented perspectives in the literature on international education. Students encountered various challenges across linguistic, temporal, and cultural domains, necessitating ongoing adaptation strategies. The study concludes that Indonesia is an effective destination for Middle Eastern doctoral candidates when comprehensive institutional support systems are in place. These findings mandate immediate policy interventions requiring universities to implement culturally responsive supervision frameworks, establish specialized support infrastructures, and develop assessment protocols measuring institutional effectiveness in fostering international doctoral success across diverse demographic populations.</i>
Keywords Cross-cultural education; Doctoral experience; International students; Narrative inquiry; Teaching English:	
How to cite: Mustagis, R. M.S.G. (2025). The Doctoral Journey of a Yemeni Student in Indonesia: A Narrative Inquiry into the Experiences of Pursuing English Language Education. <i>JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching</i> , 13(4), 1758-1772. Doi: https://doi.org/10.33394/joltt.v13i4.17020	

INTRODUCTION

The internationalization of advanced education has profoundly altered the realm of postgraduate research, fostering remarkable prospects for global academic movement and intercultural education encounters. International students pursuing advanced degrees have become essential participants in generating knowledge and international academic collaboration (Dai & Hardy, 2023). Their role is distinctive insights into academic growth. The quest for advanced academic achievement has seen a significant shift towards unconventional education settings, reflecting the dynamism and evolution in postgraduates' research (Dai et al., 2025). Learners increasingly pursue varied scholarly atmospheres that offer cognitive stimulation and cultural enhancement. In this context, Indonesia has become a compelling choice for international students pursuing advance studies, especially individuals from Middle

Eastern nations like Yemen, who are attracted by the country's rich educational legacy, reasonable tuition fees, and dynamic multicultural academic settings (Shihatud D.A. Nabilah & Nasikhin Nasikhin, 2024).

Recent academic inquiries have thoroughly investigated the global experiences of graduate students in diverse educational settings, uncovering intricate dynamics of academics adjustment, cultural assimilation, and intellectual growth. Studies carried out by global education experts have shown that students from various cultural backgrounds face complex obstacles when ongoing higher degree in unfamiliar academic environments (Aspan et al., 2025; Khawaji, 2023). Research examining international students within Asian educational settings has uncovered that challenges in academic collaboration arise from cultural and communication disparities, which have a significant impact on learning approaches and scholarly discussions (Rohman et al., 2024; Shihatud D.A. Nabilah & Nasikhin Nasikhin, 2024). This underscores the urgency of addressing these issues to ensure a learning environment that is both more equitable and conducive to effective learning. Additionally, studies on the quality of advanced academic programs have highlighted the importance of educator support, learner involvement, and institutional enabling conditions in influencing academic achievement results (Sewandono et al., 2023; Wijaya et al., 2023). The implementation of narrative inquiry techniques to investigate students' experiences in advanced academic programs has shown to be especially effective in revealing the intricate aspects of their educational paths, the formation of their identities, and their processes of adapting across cultures (J. Li & Xue, 2022; Mäkelä, 2020).

Contemporary research has also highlighted the importance of advanced academic literacy development in doctoral education, particularly for international students who must navigate complex linguistic and cultural barriers on enhancing educational progress and publishing capabilities (Hidayat et al., 2024; Wahyuningsih et al., 2025). Studies examining Muslim doctoral students' experiences in various educational contexts have revealed specific challenges related to religious identity, cultural representation, and institutional support systems (Mahmud, 2025). Additionally, research on international students' healthcare access and social integration has demonstrated the broader challenges that extend beyond academic pursuits, encompassing comprehensive life adaptation strategies (Men et al., 2024). The emergence of technology-mediated learning environments has significantly complicated the doctoral experiences, necessitating students to develop new forms of academic habits that blend traditional scholarly practices with digital competencies, thereby highlighting the need for adaptation and innovation (Dai & Hardy, 2023).

The study offers a range of innovative insights into the current understanding of global doctoral education. This study primarily centers on Yemeni students pursuing advanced degrees in Indonesia. Despite the notable education migration from Yemen, this demographic has been largely overlooked in international education research (Al-Baadani & Abbas, 2020; Shihatud D.A. Nabilah & Nasikhin Nasikhin, 2024). Secondly, the focus of this study on programs for teaching English as a second language (ESL) highlights a distinctive convergence of global education and targeted instructional training that has not been thoroughly examined in current literature (Aubrey & Tsang, 2023; Jayadinata et al., 2022). Third, utilizing narrative inquiry as an approach used to investigate the experiences of Middle Eastern students in Southeast Asian contexts provides a novel viewpoint on cross-cultural education at the highest academic level (Larsen & Bruce, 2025; L. Li et al., 2024; Wenhan et al., 2024). Fourth, the study's dual focus on challenges and advantages offers a comprehensive analysis that transcends the deficit-oriented perspectives often present in the literature concerning international students (Liu et al., 2025; Pelser, 2023; Wang, 2023).

Despite the growing body of literature on international doctoral students, there are crucial gaps in the research that demand immediate attention. The literature underscores a significant

void in understanding the experiences of Yemeni students within Indonesian universities, highlighting the necessity for more focused studies in this field (Al-Baadani & Abbas, 2020; Shihatud D.A. Nabilah & Nasikhin Nasikhin, 2024). The relationship between doctoral education in English Language Teaching and the experiences of international students, particularly within non-Western educational contexts, is a critical area that has been insufficiently explored (Aubrey & Tsang, 2023; Jayadinata et al., 2022; Ying et al., 2023). Furthermore, while narrative inquiry has been a useful tool in studying diverse populations of doctoral students, its potential in exploring the experiences of Middle Eastern students in Southeast Asian contexts remains largely untapped (Larsen & Bruce, 2025; Wenhan et al., 2024). Additionally, the current literature has predominantly focused on the challenges faced by international doctoral students, often overlooking the myriad benefits and opportunities that international doctoral study can offer (Abdelghaffar & Eid, 2025; Liu et al., 2025; Pelser, 2023).

This research delves into the details experiences of Yemeni students engaged in advanced studies in English Language education at one of university in Indonesia. The study recognizes and examines these students' challenges: language adaptation, cultural assimilation, navigating the academic system, and developing social relationships (Mulyadi et al., 2024; Shihatud D.A. Nabilah & Nasikhin Nasikhin, 2024). At the same time, the study explores the benefits and possibilities offered by Indonesian advanced education, including exposure to cultural diversity, affordable learning options, and distinctive teaching methods. Notably, the affordability of the Indonesian education system is a key factor that makes it an attractive destination for the international students (Wijaya et al., 2023). Narrative inquiry utilized in this research to capture the story of the lived experiences from one of the international student from Yemen who took the doctoral in one of universities in Indonesia. Narrative inquiry was use to underscores identity construction processes, and academic development trajectories (J. Li & Xue, 2022; Teng, 2020).

This study focuses on the insufficient comprehension regarding the experiences and navigation strategies of resilient Yemeni students pursuing advanced academic degrees within Indonesian higher education settings. The research focuses on several key issues (Chaiyasat, 2024; Dai et al., 2025; Shihatud D.A. Nabilah & Nasikhin Nasikhin, 2024) analyzing the cultural and academic obstacles encountered by Yemeni students pursuing advanced studies in Indonesia; assessing the potential benefits and opportunities offered by Indonesian programs in English Language Teaching for international students from Yemen (Aubrey & Tsang, 2023; Jayadinata et al., 2022; Ogden et al., 2024) exploring how these students interpret their experiences and formulate strategies for achieving academic success (Creely & Laletas, 2020; Kokotsaki, 2023; Larsen & Bruce, 2025) and examining the relationship between cultural identity, religious background, and academic performance in a cross-cultural educational context (Kazemian et al., 2021; Mahmud, 2025).

This research seeks to investigate and record the comprehensive experiences of Yemeni doctoral students pursuing English Language Teaching degrees in Indonesia through narrative inquiry methodology. The study seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of both challenges and benefits experienced by these students, contributing to theoretical knowledge of international doctoral education while offering practical insights for improving support systems and educational practices (Creely & Laletas, 2020; Jayadinata et al., 2022; Larsen & Bruce, 2025). The research seeks to capture the richness and complexity of these students' lived experiences by employing narrative inquiry, revealing how they navigate cultural differences, academic expectations, and personal growth throughout their doctoral journey (Parkison & Tanase, 2025). Ultimately, this study aspires to give voice to an underrepresented population in international education research, highlighting the need for more diverse perspectives, while advancing the understanding of cross-cultural doctoral education in Southeast Asia (L. Li et al., 2024). This study addresses a critical void in international education scholarship by centering

the voices of an underrepresented demographic Yemeni doctoral students—whose unique educational trajectories remain largely unexamined in contemporary higher education discourse (Kalaivani, 2021). The distinctiveness of this research lies in its exploration of how geopolitical displacement and educational migration from conflict-affected regions intersect with academic mobility patterns in Southeast Asian contexts (Oduwaye et al., 2023). Recent investigations have highlighted the necessity of examining underrepresented populations in doctoral education, particularly those from war-torn nations whose educational aspirations persist despite extraordinary circumstances (Banerjee, 2020).

Given these considerations, this study poses the following research questions: (1) How do Yemeni doctoral students navigate cultural, linguistic, and academic challenges while pursuing English Language Teaching degrees in Indonesian universities? (2) What role does cultural identity play in shaping academic resilience and success among Middle Eastern doctoral candidates? (3) How do Indonesian higher education environments facilitate or constrain the academic development of students from conflict-affected regions? (4) What institutional and personal factors contribute to successful degree completion among underrepresented international doctoral populations?

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The study adopted a narrative inquiry design as its primary research framework, which is well-established in educational research for exploring personal experiences and life stories (Colla & Kurtz, 2024; Johnson & Thacker Darrow, 2023). As a qualitative research methodology, narrative inquiry focuses on telling and re-telling life stories to co-construct knowledge and understanding (Johnson & Thacker Darrow, 2023; Karpa, 2021). Recent studies showed the effectiveness of narrative inquiry in educational contexts, particularly for examining student experiences and identity development (Cauchi & Falzon, 2023; et al., 2024). This methodology proved particularly appropriate for investigating the experiences of international students as it allowed for the exploration of their journeys, cultural adaptations, and academic transformations (Davies et al., 2025; Hodgson et al., 2024).

Participants

The study focused on one male Yemeni doctoral student, aged 33, who pursued his doctoral degree at Universitas Negeri Malang. This purposive sampling approach aligned with narrative inquiry methodology, often employing small sample sizes to enable deep, detailed exploration of individual experiences (Hodgson et al., 2024). The participant represented a unique case study that provided valuable insights into the experiences of Middle Eastern students in Indonesian higher education contexts (Bayani et al., 2025). The researcher conducted interviews through telephone calls using WhatsApp to ensure convenient and accessible communication with the participants. Single-participant narrative studies were well-established in qualitative research, particularly when the goal was to deeply understand complex, culturally situated experiences (Hollowood et al., 2025). The selection of a single participant case study was strategically determined through theoretical sampling principles that prioritize depth over breadth in narrative inquiry investigations. This participant represents what methodological literature terms an "information-rich case" due to his distinctive positioning as a returning doctoral student with prior Indonesian educational experience. His unique trajectory from master's to doctoral studies within the Indonesian system provides exceptional insight into longitudinal cross-cultural adaptation processes. The case selection contributes to broader understanding by exemplifying how educational continuity influences international student success patterns. Furthermore, his dual identity as both educator and learner offers multifaceted perspectives on academic mobility strategies employed by Middle Eastern professionals seeking advanced qualifications in Southeast Asian contexts.

Research Instruments

The main data in this study were gathered through semi-structured interviews, allowing for flexibility in examining emerging themes while preserving focus on key research questions (Alhussain, 2020; Pomat, 2025). Semi-structured interviews served as an effective tool for gathering rich, detailed narratives about personal experiences and perspectives (Jundi, 2025). The semi-structured interview protocol comprised four thematic sections encompassing pre-departure motivations, academic adaptation experiences, cultural negotiation strategies, and future aspirations. Each interview session lasted approximately 90-120 minutes, conducted via secure WhatsApp video calls to accommodate geographical constraints and ensure participant comfort. The interview structure incorporated open-ended primary questions followed by targeted probing questions designed to elicit rich narrative details. Recording procedures maintained confidentiality through encrypted digital storage systems, while transcription accuracy was verified through member-checking processes with the participant. The interview protocol aimed to elicit comprehensive stories about the participant's doctoral journey, including challenges, strategies employed, and benefits gained from studying in Indonesia (Bush et al., 2020). This approach enabled an in-depth exploration of the participant's narrative while maintaining sufficient structure to ensure data collection consistency and completeness.

Data Analysis

The study employed a Narrative Analysis approach based on the Labov framework, a widely-used method in qualitative research (Bao, 2024; Labov, 1997; Prachanant & Pongpuehee, 2025; Suci, 2023). The researchers chose narrative analysis for its ability to reveal deep meanings from the personal experiences of Yemeni students who pursued doctoral studies in Indonesia. The focus was on the challenges and advantages these students faced, and the method enabled the researchers to gain a deep understanding of their experiences, thereby demonstrating their empathy and insight (Gad, 2023; Yardley et al., 2020).

The data analysis process involved six steps: abstract, orientation, complicated Action, resolution, evaluation, and coding (Yardley et al., 2020). Each component had a specific function in organizing and understanding the narrative of student experiences (Zhao, 2021). The abstract served as a summary of the entire story that was told. Orientation provided context regarding time, place, situation, and participants involved in the experience. Complicating Action identified students' main events or challenges in their doctoral study journey. Resolution explained how problems or challenges were solved or overcome. Evaluation reflected the meaning and significance of the experience for the individual, while Coda provided closure that connected the narrative to current conditions. The data analyzed consisted of semi-structured interview results conducted through the WhatsApp platform, allowing data collection flexibility while maintaining the quality of in-depth interactions (Kartal, 2024; Madiha Saeed & Dr. Muhammad Shahbaz, 2025).

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research Findings

The narrative analysis of the Yemeni doctoral student's educational journey revealed four fundamental dimensions that collectively illustrate the complexity of cross-cultural academic mobility in Southeast Asian higher education contexts. The investigation uncovered strategic academic planning as the foundational element driving international educational decisions, wherein prior academic exposure functioned as a catalyst for sustained cross-cultural engagement. The participant's experience demonstrated systematic navigation of multifaceted challenges encompassing linguistic, temporal, and cultural adaptation processes that required continuous adjustment strategies throughout the doctoral trajectory. Cultural identity emerged as a transformative asset rather than an impediment, fundamentally reshaping conventional deficit-oriented perspectives regarding international student experiences. The resolution of

academic challenges occurred through comprehensive support system utilization, personal resilience development, and institutional accommodation mechanisms that facilitated successful program completion. These findings collectively illuminate Indonesia's evolving capacity to accommodate Middle Eastern doctoral candidates while simultaneously revealing the sophisticated adaptation strategies employed by students from underrepresented populations in international higher education environments.

The Abstract Findings: Foundation of Academic Pursuit

The participant's doctoral journey was a continuation of his previous educational experience in Indonesia, showcasing strategic academic planning and international educational mobility. His narrative revealed that his initial master's degree at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta laid the groundwork for his subsequent doctoral pursuit at Universitas Negeri Malang. The participant established clear connections between his past educational experience and his current academic trajectory, showing how his previous work as a lecturer at the University of Aden motivated his return to Indonesia for further studies. His narrative demonstrated a clear progression from undergraduate teaching to advanced research aspirations, highlighting Indonesia's growing reputation in academic research as a key motivational factor.

The participant articulated that his doctoral storyline was fundamentally centered on comprehensive growth across multiple dimensions of his academic and personal identity. He emphasized the transformative nature of cross-cultural academic engagement, portraying his journey as one of adaptation and skill development within the Indonesian higher education system. He structured his narrative around building relationships with experienced professors and developing research competencies specifically geared toward contributions to English Language Education. His narrative revealed his deliberate effort to frame his doctoral experience as an investment in his professional capabilities and potential contributions to his home institution and the broader academic field.

Participant's Statements

The main storyline is about growth — both academic and personal. Coming from Yemen to Indonesia, adapting to a new academic system, learning from experienced professors, building relationships, and developing my research skills to add to the field of English language teaching and learning.

Orientation Providing: Contextual Foundation and Strategic Decision-Making

The orientation phase revealed the contextual basis for the participant's decision to pursue doctoral studies abroad, emphasizing the limitations he encountered in the academic environment of his home country. He portrayed his pre-doctoral life in Yemen as professionally fulfilling but academically limiting. He served as a lecturer at the University of Aden, aiming to grow professionally while helping his students do the same. He identified significant limitations in research opportunities, available resources, and academic development possibilities within the Yemeni higher education system. These limitations created a compelling rationale for seeking advanced academic training elsewhere. He positioned his decision to study abroad as a professional necessity rather than a mere aspiration. His narrative showed his clear understanding of the gap between his current capabilities and his desired academic achievements.

A combination of familiarity, institutional assessment, and cultural considerations influenced his decision to pursue his doctorate in Indonesia. His previous experience with a master's degree in Indonesia provided him with familiarity with the system and confidence in navigating Indonesian higher education structures. He recognized Indonesia's rapid

advancement in scientific research and higher education and aligned his choice with emerging academic opportunities. The cultural compatibility and interpersonal warmth he experienced during his previous stay influenced his decision to return to Indonesia. His support system, which included family members and professional colleagues, encouraged his plans to study abroad and provided emotional and professional backing for his academic journey.

Participant's Statements

I had already studied in Indonesia before, so I was familiar with the system. Also, I saw that Indonesia is moving forward quickly in scientific research and higher education. Besides, the cultural closeness and the kindness of people made my decision easier.

Complicating Actions: Navigating Academic and Personal Challenges

The participant faced significant time management challenges throughout his doctoral journey, which created tension between his academic responsibilities and the demands on his personal life. His narrative revealed that he balanced research activities, coursework requirements, and personal responsibilities as a central struggle throughout his program. He identified his initial difficulty in comprehending new research methodologies as a specific academic challenge that required sustained effort and adaptation. His description of these challenges revealed the multifaceted nature of doctoral education, where academic, personal, and methodological demands converged, creating periods of significant stress and uncertainty.

Language-related challenges emerged as a persistent complicating factor, particularly in the specialized domain of academic English that was required for reading and writing research papers. His narrative showed how these linguistic challenges affected his academic performance and confidence when he engaged with scholarly literature. He described the gradual improvement process that happened through sustained practice and supervisory support, showing resilience and adaptive learning strategies. His acknowledgment of these challenges shed light on the additional layers of complexity faced by non-native English speakers who pursued advanced degrees in English language education.

Participant's Statements

Sometimes academic English, especially in reading and writing research papers, was challenging. But with practice and help from my supervisors, I improved a lot.

Evaluation: Meaningful and Significance Changes on Pursuing Doctoral Studies in Indonesia

The participant identified patience and perseverance as the most important things he learned from his doctoral experience. This evaluation reflects his deep understanding of the time-consuming and psychologically demanding nature of advanced research. His narrative emphasized the time-intensive nature of research work and the necessity of maintaining commitment despite setbacks and periods of slow progress. He considered these qualities essential not only for completing his doctorate but also for ongoing academic and professional development. His reflection revealed his understanding that doctoral education involves continuous learning and adaptation rather than merely acquiring specific knowledge or techniques.

His Yemeni identity served as a motivational force, intensifying his determination to succeed and to positively represent his country within the Indonesian academic community. His narrative revealed how his cultural identity became integrated with his expectations for academic performance, creating additional motivation for excellence and professional conduct. He described his efforts to showcase the capabilities and work ethic of Yemeni students, suggesting that his academic success had representational significance beyond personal

achievement. This experience demonstrated how international students often navigate complex identity negotiations, where their performance reflects broader cultural perceptions of them.

Participant's Statements

It made me more determined to represent my country in a good way. I always tried to show that Yemenis can work hard and succeed.

Resolution: Achievement Through Persistence and Support

The resolution phase documented the participant's successful navigation of doctoral challenges through strategic approaches and strong support systems that facilitated his academic achievement. He identified key turning points in his doctoral journey, notably when he completed his data analysis and received positive feedback from his supervisors, which provided confidence in his research direction. His problem-solving approach included maintaining patience, seeking advice from supervisors and peers, and breaking complex tasks into manageable components. The participant used available support systems effectively, including supervisory guidance, family encouragement, and peer networks within his Indonesian academic community. His resolution strategies reflected personal resilience and effective institutional support structures that enabled his success.

Participant's Statements

The defense was a mixture of stress and excitement. But after presenting my research and answering questions, I felt very happy and proud.

Coda: Transformative Impact and Future Aspiration

The participant positioned his doctoral journey as a transformative chapter in his life, one that fundamentally altered his professional capabilities and personal identity. His narrative emphasized the comprehensive nature of change he experienced through his doctoral program, which extended beyond academic knowledge acquisition to encompass broader professional and personal development. He acquired skills that enabled him to make meaningful contributions to his home university and country, demonstrating how his academic achievements were connected to broader service and contribution goals. The participant reflected on his understanding of doctoral education as preparation for expanded professional responsibilities and leadership roles. The participant's advice demonstrated his transition from a student to a mentor's perspective, reflecting his readiness to guide others through similar journeys.

Participant's Statement

I would tell them: don't be afraid to take the step. Yes, it's not easy, but with determination, support, and hard work, you can achieve great things

Discussion

The findings suggest that international doctoral students employ strategic academic planning in their educational mobility decisions, particularly when building upon prior academic experiences in their host countries (Dai & Hardy, 2023). This strategic continuity aligns with research indicating that international students pursuing doctoral studies in emerging knowledge hubs often leverage their previous educational experiences to navigate complex academic systems (Aubrey & Tsang, 2023). The participant's transition from master's to doctoral studies in Indonesia exemplifies what contemporary research describes as the capitalization of international educational experiences to promote sustained cross-cultural learning (J. Li & Xue, 2022). These findings contribute to our understanding of how international students construct coherent academic narratives that connect their past educational investments with their future professional aspirations. These findings support the notion that academic mobility involves deliberate strategic planning rather than opportunistic decision-

making (Creely & Laletas, 2020). The research demonstrates that international doctoral education represents a transformative journey that fundamentally alters students' professional capabilities and personal identities through systematic academic progression (Teng, 2020).

The study sheds light on how perceived academic limitations in home countries serve as primary motivators for pursuing international doctoral studies, revealing complex relationships between local educational constraints and global academic mobility (Khawaji, 2023). This finding resonates with documented patterns among Middle Eastern students in international higher education programs, where domestic educational limitations prompted international academic-seeking behavior (Al-Baadani & Abbas, 2020). The participant's experience of professional fulfillment yet academic limitation in Yemen mirrors challenges documented in explorations of how international students navigate educational opportunities in response to systemic constraints (L. Li et al., 2024). These results suggest that international doctoral students often pursue overseas education not merely for prestige or opportunity but as a necessary response to structural academic limitations that impede their intellectual and professional development aspirations (Mahmud, 2025). The research extends the understanding of educational migration by demonstrating how contextual limitations create compelling rationales for seeking advanced academic training in international settings (Chaiyasat, 2024).

The research revealed that international doctoral students faced complex, interconnected challenges spanning linguistic, temporal, and cultural domains, necessitating sustained adaptation strategies throughout their academic journey (Kokotsaki, 2023). These challenges aligned with findings that explored similar experiences among international students in diverse higher education contexts, revealing how language barriers intersected with cultural and religious identity negotiations (Mahmud, 2025). The participant struggled with academic English and time management, reflecting broader patterns identified in studies of doctoral student resilience, where students developed coping strategies to navigate multiple competing demands (Wang, 2023). The findings extended existing literature by showing how these challenges compounded rather than existed in isolation, requiring international students to develop integrated adaptation approaches that addressed linguistic, cultural, and academic demands simultaneously (Wijaya et al., 2023). Contemporary research supports the notion that successful navigation of cross-cultural doctoral education necessitates comprehensive support systems that address both academic and personal adaptation challenges (Abdelghaffar & Eid, 2025).

The study revealed that international doctoral students experienced profound identity integration processes where cultural background became a source of motivation and academic excellence rather than a barrier to overcome (Teng, 2020). This transformative aspect of international doctoral education supported research that examined identity construction in academic communities of practice, finding that cultural identity catalyzed academic achievement. The participant experienced representing his Yemeni identity in a positive light within the Indonesian academic community. These discussions aligned with findings about how international students navigated identity development while pursuing sustainable graduate education. These results contributed to an understanding of international doctoral education as a space for identity affirmation and cultural pride, challenging deficit-oriented perspectives that viewed cultural differences as obstacles rather than assets in academic achievement. The research revealed that successful international doctoral students developed integrated approaches to identity negotiation, leveraging their cultural backgrounds as sources of academic strength and professional distinction (Yardley et al., 2020).

This investigation reveals profound systemic implications that extend beyond individual experiences to illuminate structural dynamics within international higher education frameworks. The participant's journey exemplifies how emerging knowledge economies in Southeast Asia are repositioning themselves as viable alternatives to traditional Western

academic destinations, challenging established hierarchies in global education markets. The findings suggest that successful cross-cultural doctoral education requires paradigmatic shifts from deficit-based approaches toward asset-oriented frameworks that recognize cultural diversity as intellectual capital rather than remedial concern.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in its demonstration that educational resilience among underrepresented populations emerges through identity affirmation rather than cultural assimilation processes. This challenges prevailing acculturation theories that emphasize adaptation through cultural minimization, proposing instead a model of multiplicative identity integration where cultural distinctiveness amplifies academic performance. Such findings have transformative implications for international student support services, suggesting that institutional interventions should cultivate cultural pride rather than promote homogenization.

Comparative longitudinal investigations examining multiple Middle Eastern doctoral cohorts across different Southeast Asian institutions would illuminate whether these findings represent isolated phenomena or systematic patterns. Cross-national comparative studies involving similar demographic groups in various regional contexts could reveal how different educational systems accommodate underrepresented international populations. Multi-generational research tracking the professional trajectories of graduated participants would demonstrate long-term impacts of cross-cultural doctoral education on home country development. Gender-focused investigations examining female Middle Eastern doctoral experiences would address critical gaps in understanding intersectional challenges within international education contexts. This study fundamentally reframes international doctoral education from a narrative of challenge-overcome to one of strength-leveraged, positioning cultural identity as academic catalyst rather than obstacle to be surmounted.

CONCLUSIONS

This narrative investigation explored the comprehensive doctoral experience of a Yemeni student in English Language Education within the Indonesian academic context, providing meaningful perspectives on the interactions of diverse cultures higher education. The research revealed that international doctoral candidates employed strategic educational mobility, leveraging their prior academic experiences to navigate complex university systems effectively. The study confirmed that academic constraints in students' home nations functioned as fundamental drivers for pursuing international education, with Yemen's limited research infrastructure serving as a key motivator for the participant's educational journey to Indonesia. Additionally, the investigation revealed that cross-cultural doctoral education encompassed complex challenges across linguistic, temporal, and cultural dimensions, necessitated continuous adaptation throughout the academic process.

The findings showed that cultural identity acted as a catalyst for academic excellence and motivation rather than an obstacle to scholarly success, challenging traditional deficit-based viewpoints in international education literature. The participant's journey illustrated profound processes of identity synthesis. Yemeni cultural heritage became essential for achieving academic distinction and positive cultural representation within Indonesia's academic environment. This research made a significant contribution to international doctoral education scholarship by amplifying the voices of underrepresented populations and providing comprehensive insights into both the obstacles and advantages within Southeast Asian higher education frameworks. The study's outcomes reinforced Indonesia's emerging status as an effective and supportive destination for Middle Eastern doctoral candidates, particularly in English Language Teaching disciplines, where cultural alignment and institutional assistance promoted both academic accomplishment and personal development.

These research outcomes necessitate transformative institutional policy reforms that prioritize culturally-responsive pedagogical frameworks within doctoral supervision protocols.

Universities must establish specialized mentoring paradigms that leverage supervisors trained in cross-cultural competencies, implementing structured peer-support networks alongside mandatory intercultural orientation programs. Policy interventions should mandate institutional assessment mechanisms evaluating support system effectiveness through standardized international student retention metrics. Furthermore, doctoral supervision practices require systematic restructuring to accommodate diverse epistemological perspectives, incorporating flexible research methodologies that honor students' cultural knowledge systems. These evidence-based recommendations establish foundational principles for developing comprehensive institutional frameworks that transform international doctoral education from accommodation-based approaches toward asset-oriented educational environments that maximize academic potential across diverse cultural contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors extend their heartfelt appreciation to the Institut Pendidikan Indonesia, Garut, for its institutional support and the opportunity to conduct this research work. Our deepest appreciation is extended to the Yemeni PhD student who selflessly experiences, enabling this narrative research via his invaluable insights and views. Gratitude is extended to all those who contributed to the seamless completion of this work, including supervisors, colleagues, and administrative personnel who supported various aspects of the research process. The authors recognize that this work is subject to development and invite constructive criticism and recommendations for future improvement.

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