

## SECULAR CIVIC OR INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT? RECONSIDERING EDUCATIONAL VALUE ORIENTATIONS IN INDONESIA

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**Abstract:** This study examines what Indonesian adults believe education should cultivate in children and identifies the social and demographic factors that shape these beliefs. Using data from the Indonesian component of the World Values Survey Wave 7 conducted in 2018, this paper employs Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to construct two latent dimensions of educational value orientation and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression to estimate their determinants among 3,200 respondents. Contrary to Inglehart and Welzel's emancipative values theory, the PCA reveals two dimensions that do not conform to the predicted conformist-emancipatory dichotomy: a Secular Civic Orientation (SCO), capturing preferences for responsibility and diligence dissociated from religious faith, and an Individual Achievement Orientation (IAO), capturing preferences for imagination and tolerance dissociated from altruism. Education consistently increases SCO and decreases IAO, inverting the theoretical prediction. Female respondents score significantly higher on SCO, while older respondents score lower, suggesting a generational shift toward secular civic values. Interaction analyses confirm that these effects are uniform across urban-rural contexts, gender, and generational cohorts. Critically, the 2018 data provide an irreplaceable pre-reform baseline, positioning this study as the empirical starting point for evaluating the impact of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum reform and the COVID-19 pandemic on Indonesian educational values.

**Keywords:** *Educational values; emancipative values; World Values Survey*

**Abstrak:** Studi ini mengkaji apa yang diyakini oleh orang dewasa di Indonesia mengenai apa yang perlu ditanamkan oleh pendidikan kepada anak-anak, serta mengidentifikasi faktor sosial dan demografis yang membentuk keyakinan tersebut. Menggunakan data dari komponen Indonesia dalam World Values Survey Wave 7 yang dilaksanakan pada tahun 2018, penelitian ini menerapkan Principal Component Analysis (PCA) untuk membangun dua dimensi laten orientasi nilai pendidikan dan regresi Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) untuk mengestimasi determinannya pada 3.200 responden. Bertentangan dengan teori nilai emansipatoris Inglehart dan Welzel, PCA mengungkap dua dimensi yang tidak sesuai dengan dikotomi konformis-emansipatoris yang diprediksi: Orientasi Kewargaan Sekular (SCO), yang menekankan preferensi terhadap tanggung jawab dan kerja keras yang terpisah dari iman religius, dan Orientasi Pencapaian Individual (IAO), yang menekankan preferensi terhadap imajinasi dan toleransi yang terpisah dari altruisme. Pendidikan secara konsisten meningkatkan SCO dan menurunkan IAO, kontra terhadap prediksi teoretis. Analisis interaksi mengonfirmasi bahwa efek ini seragam di berbagai konteks urban-rural, gender, dan kohort generasi. Data tahun 2018 memberikan baseline pra-reformasi yang tidak tergantikan, memposisikan studi ini sebagai titik awal empiris untuk mengevaluasi dampak reformasi kurikulum

**Kata Kunci:** *Nilai pendidikan; nilai emansipatoris; World Values Survey*

## INTRODUCTION

What values do Indonesian parents want education to instill in their children? This question is important for understanding how people see the role of education, not only in schools but also in society. Many studies in Indonesia have discussed character education, moral values, and religiosity, often in relation to curriculum and teaching practices <sup>1</sup>. However, most of these studies focus on what education should teach, or they are based on small scale qualitative research. They do not fully show how these values are viewed across the wider population <sup>2</sup>. Evidence that represents the views of Indonesians at the national level is still limited. Existing research mostly reflects institutional perspectives, meaning what schools or policymakers expect education to deliver, rather than what the public believes is important for children to learn <sup>3</sup>. This difference matters, especially when education reforms aim to shape values in society. A national scale quantitative analysis is therefore needed to capture how the broader public thinks about educational values using large scale survey data.

This question has become urgent because Indonesia is in the middle of two concurrent disruptions. The Merdeka Belajar curriculum reform, launched in 2019, is the most ambitious attempt in decades to shift Indonesian education toward creativity, independence, and critical thinking <sup>4</sup>. The COVID-19 pandemic, from 2020 onward, forced an uneven shift to remote learning with consequences for value formation<sup>5</sup>. Both disruptions were expected to reshape what Indonesians want from education, but neither can be properly evaluated without knowing where educational values stood before they began.

This study addresses that gap. Using the Indonesian component of the World Values Survey (WVS) Wave 7 (2018), collected immediately before both disruptions, this paper constructs an empirically grounded baseline of Indonesian educational value orientations <sup>6</sup>. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) identifies latent value dimensions among 3,200 adults, and Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression estimates how those preferences are shaped by educational attainment, gender, age, and spatial context. The findings diverge from Inglehart and Welzel's emancipative values theory <sup>7</sup>: rather than education driving autonomy and self-expression, more educated Indonesians prioritize civic responsibility and deprioritize imagination for the next generation. This study documents that pre-disruption equilibrium and provides the analytical baseline from which the effects of Merdeka Belajar and the pandemic can eventually be measured.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

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<sup>1</sup> [Bjork](#), *Indonesian Education: Teachers, Schools, and Central Bureaucracy*; [Raihani](#), *Creating Multicultural Citizens: A Portrayal of Contemporary Indonesian Education*.

<sup>2</sup> [Sukmayadi and Yahya](#), "Indonesian Education Landscape and the 21st Century Challenges."

<sup>3</sup> [Mardapi](#), *Pengukuran Penilaian Dan Evaluasi Pendidikan*.

<sup>4</sup> [Pangestu and Rochmat](#), "Filosofi Merdeka Belajar Berdasarkan Perspektif Pendiri Bangsa"; [Hunaepi and Suharta](#), "Transforming Education in Indonesia: The Impact and Challenges of the Merdeka Belajar Curriculum."

<sup>5</sup> [Azhari and Citrawati](#), "Dampak Pandemi Covid 19 Terhadap Pendidikan Di Indonesia"; [Hendriyani, Artini, and Tatyana](#), "Dampak Pandemi Covid 19 Terhadap Dunia Pendidikan"; [Sari et al.](#), "Strengthening Digital Literacy in Indonesia: Collaboration, Innovation, and Sustainability Education."

<sup>6</sup> [Haerpfer et al.](#), "World Values Survey: Round Seven - Country-Pooled Datafile Version 6.0."

<sup>7</sup> [Welzel](#), *Freedom Rising Human Empowerment and the Quest for Emancipation*; [Norris and Inglehart](#), *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian-Populism*.

Classical socialization theory emphasizes education as a mechanism for transmitting collective values to individuals<sup>8</sup>. From this perspective, schooling serves a civic function by producing citizens who share the norms necessary for social cohesion. In contrast, traditions rooted in critical pedagogy view education as a space for developing individual capacities such as autonomy, imagination, and critical thinking<sup>9</sup>. This tension between civic conformity and individual development provides an important lens for understanding educational values.

Emancipative values theory offers a dominant framework for explaining how education shapes value orientations. Drawing on cross-national evidence, it argues that increasing levels of education contribute to a shift from survival-oriented values toward self-expression values, including independence, tolerance, and creativity<sup>10</sup>. Education facilitates this process through cognitive mobilization, enabling individuals to question inherited norms and form more autonomous preferences. This framework has been extended to document the global rise of emancipative values across successive waves of the World Values Survey<sup>11</sup>, and further developed to explain cultural backlash against modernization in advanced societies<sup>12</sup>.

However, cultural lag theory suggests that such value transformation does not occur uniformly across contexts. In societies where traditional norms remain strong, changes in values may lag behind structural developments such as rising education levels<sup>13</sup>. This perspective highlights the possibility that the relationship between education and values may differ across social and cultural environments.

## 2.2. Empirical Literature Review

Building on these theoretical tensions, empirical studies have explored how value formation operates in practice, especially within non-Western and religious contexts<sup>14</sup>. The cross-national applicability of such frameworks has itself been questioned, particularly regarding whether value measures derived from Western contexts travel reliably to non-Western settings<sup>15</sup>.

Research in Muslim-majority societies finds that religiosity is often associated not only with personal piety but also with civic engagement, indicating that religious orientation does not necessarily weaken public participation<sup>16</sup>. In the Indonesian context, higher levels of religiosity have been shown to be compatible with support for democratic values, suggesting that religious commitment can coexist with civic orientations<sup>17</sup>. These findings collectively suggest that the relationship between religiosity and civic or individual values does not follow a single linear pattern, particularly in Muslim-majority contexts where religious commitment can coexist with civic engagement and democratic orientations.

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<sup>8</sup> [Durkheim](#), *Education and Sociology*. Translated, and With An Introd. by Sherwood D. Fox.

<sup>9</sup> [Dewey](#), *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*; [Nussbaum](#), *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*.

<sup>10</sup> [Inglehart and Welzel](#), *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*.

<sup>11</sup> [Welzel](#), *Freedom Rising Human Empowerment and the Quest for Emancipation*.

<sup>12</sup> [Norris and Inglehart](#), *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian-Populism*.

<sup>13</sup> [Ogburn](#), *Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature*.

<sup>14</sup> [Khodaverdian](#), "Islam and Democracy, *Kyklos*"; [Ciftci, Wuthrich, and Shamaileh](#), "Islam, Religious Outlooks, and Support for Democracy."

<sup>15</sup> [Alemán and Woods](#), "Value Orientations From the World Values Survey: How Comparable Are They Cross-Nationally?"

<sup>16</sup> [Khodaverdian](#), "Islam and Democracy, *Kyklos*"; [Ciftci, Wuthrich, and Shamaileh](#), "Islam, Religious Outlooks, and Support for Democracy."

<sup>17</sup> [Mujani and Liddle](#), "Muslim Indonesia's Secular Democracy."

While the studies above focus on individual-level value orientations, another strand of research examines how institutional structures shape these outcomes. Indonesian classrooms have been documented as largely teacher-centered, limiting opportunities for student autonomy and critical thinking<sup>18</sup>. This pedagogical structure implies that education may reinforce conformity and social order rather than fostering individual expression. Islamic education in Indonesia has similarly been found to emphasize moral development, social responsibility, and religious character, shaping value orientations toward communal and ethical commitments<sup>19</sup>. The Merdeka Belajar reform explicitly targets this institutional inertia, aiming to shift Indonesian education toward project-based learning and student agency<sup>20</sup>.

While these studies provide important insights, they tend to focus on specific dimensions of values or particular institutional settings. They do not directly examine how individuals prioritize different educational values at the national level. Moreover, much of the existing research relies on qualitative approaches or case studies, limiting its generalizability. This gap motivates the present study, which uses nationally representative data to capture public preferences regarding what education should instill in children.

## METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Data Source and Sample Selection

This study utilizes secondary data from the Indonesian component of the World Values Survey (WVS) Wave 7, conducted between June and August 2018<sup>21</sup>. The fieldwork was carried out by SurveyMeter Indonesia and the University of Melbourne using Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) to ensure data quality<sup>22</sup>. The 2018 dataset is a strategic baseline because it captures public attitudes right before the "Merdeka Belajar" reforms in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Data collected after 2019 would be affected by these major events, making it hard to see whether people's values truly changed or if they were just reacting to the crisis. Therefore, the 2018 wave provides a clear picture of Indonesian educational values in a stable, pre-disruption period. Furthermore, as WVS Wave 8 has not been released yet<sup>23</sup>, Wave 7 is the most recent nationally representative data available.

The sample consists of 3,200 respondents aged 18 and older, selected through a multistage stratified random sampling design. The survey covered 20 out of 34 provinces, representing all major islands and regions across the Indonesian archipelago<sup>24</sup>. The sampling frame stratifies primary sampling units into urban and rural categories based on official government classifications<sup>25</sup>, a feature that is analytically central to this study as it enables a direct test of whether the relationship between educational attainment and value orientation differs across spatial contexts. While the exclusion of 14 provinces introduces some geographic limitation, the sampled provinces span all major island groups and include both densely urbanized and predominantly rural regions, supporting adequate national-level representativeness for the purposes of this analysis. Given this scope, findings should be interpreted as broadly

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<sup>18</sup> [Bjork](#), *Indonesian Education: Teachers, Schools, and Central Bureaucracy*.

<sup>19</sup> [Raihani](#), *Creating Multicultural Citizens: A Portrayal of Contemporary Indonesian Education*.

<sup>20</sup> [Kemendikdasmen](#), "Mendikbud Tetapkan Empat Pokok Kebijakan Pendidikan 'Merdeka Belajar.'"

<sup>21</sup> [Haerpfer et al.](#), "World Values Survey: Round Seven - Country-Pooled Datafile Version 6.0."

<sup>22</sup> [SurveyMeter](#), "Survei Nilai-Nilai Dunia Fase 7 Di Indonesia."

<sup>23</sup> [World Values Survey](#), "WVS Wave 8 Project Page." accessed 31 March 2026

<sup>24</sup> [SurveyMeter](#), "Survei Nilai-Nilai Dunia Fase 7 Di Indonesia."

<sup>25</sup> [Badan Pusat Statistik](#), "Peraturan Kepala Badan Pusat Statistik Nomor 37 Tahun 2010 Tentang Klasifikasi Perkotaan Dan Perdesaan Di Indonesia."

indicative of Indonesian public attitudes rather than as precise estimates for any individual province or region.

### 3.2. Variables and Measurement

This section describes the operationalization of the dependent and independent variables extracted from the WVS Wave 7 Indonesia dataset. Variables are organized into two groups: the latent educational value orientations serving as dependent variables, and the sociodemographic and attitudinal factors serving as independent variables.

#### 3.2.1. Dependent Variables: Educational Value Orientations

The dependent variables are derived from the childhood qualities module of the WVS Wave 7 questionnaire (items Q6 through Q13), in which respondents were asked to select up to five qualities they consider especially important for a child to learn at home. While <sup>26</sup> theorize a binary distinction between conformist and emancipatory socialization values, this study treats the eight items as empirically open, allowing the factor structure to emerge from the data rather than imposing a predetermined grouping. The items are: independence (Q6), imagination (Q7), hard work (Q8), feeling of responsibility (Q9), tolerance and respect for others (Q10), obedience (Q11), religious faith (Q12), and unselfishness (Q13). Each item was recoded as a binary dummy variable where a value of one indicates the quality was chosen and zero otherwise. These eight indicators were subsequently submitted to Principal Component Analysis to generate continuous factor scores (f1 and f2). The theoretical interpretation and labelling of each factor are determined empirically based on the pattern of rotated loadings reported in Section 4.1, rather than assumed in advance.

#### 3.2.2. Independent Variables: Social and Behavioral Determinants

The independent variables capture both structural demographic characteristics and subjective attitudinal factors. The primary structural determinant is educational attainment (Q275), originally coded using the ISCED 2011 classification into eight levels. Given the extremely small sample sizes at the upper tail of the distribution (Master: n=17; Doctoral: n=1), the variable is recoded into five analytically meaningful categories: (1) primary or below (ISCED 0-1, reference category), (2) lower secondary (ISCED 2), (3) upper secondary (ISCED 3), (4) short-cycle tertiary (ISCED 5), and (5) university and above (ISCED 6-8). This recoding prevents unstable coefficient estimates driven by near-zero cell counts while preserving the ordinal gradient of educational attainment. Demographic controls include gender (Q260, coded 1 for female), age in years (Q262), and a ten-step income scale (Q288). Spatial context is captured through a binary urban-rural domicile variable (H\_URBRURAL) derived from official government classifications. The attitudinal predictors include self-perceived social class (Q287), overall life satisfaction (Q46, measured on a ten-point scale from dissatisfied to satisfied), and confidence in the national education system (Q71), which serves as a direct measure of institutional trust in the educational domain. All variables are used in their original WVS coding unless otherwise specified.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Key Variables**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
SCO ( <i>f1</i> )	3,200	0.000	1.132	-3.404	2.030
IAO ( <i>f2</i> )	3,200	0.000	1.132	-1.690	4.869
Age (Q262)	3,200	40.03	13.54	18	87

<sup>26</sup> [Inglehart and Welzel](#), *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*.

Life Satisfaction (Q46)	3,199	1.63	0.63	1	4
Confidence in Education (Q71)	3,185	1.85	0.80	1	4

Categorical Variables (frequency and percent)	
Variable	Category: N(%)
<b>Educational Attainment</b>	Primary or below: 1,153 (36.0%)   Lower secondary: 659 (20.6%)   Upper secondary: 1,067 (33.4%)   Short-cycle tertiary: 81 (2.5%)   University and above: 239 (7.5%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male: 1,446 (45.2%)   Female: 1,754 (54.8%)
<b>Urban-Rural</b>	Rural: 2,367 (74.1%)   Urban: 829 (25.9%)
<b>Self-perceived Social Class</b>	Upper: 56 (1.8%)   Upper middle: 367 (11.7%)   Lower middle: 1,120 (35.8%)   Working: 765 (24.4%)   Lower: 823 (26.3%)

Notes: SCO = Secular Civic Orientation; IAO = Individual Achievement Orientation. Both are PCA-derived factor scores with mean  $\approx 0$  and SD  $\approx 1$  by construction. Life satisfaction and confidence in education are measured on 4-point scales. Sample size varies slightly across variables due to missing values. Source: World Values Survey Wave 7 Indonesia <sup>27</sup>; own calculation.

### 3.3. Principal Component Analysis (PCA)

Principal Component Analysis is employed to reduce the eight binary childhood quality indicators into a smaller number of continuous latent dimensions. PCA is appropriate here because the individual item choices in the WVS childhood qualities module are expected to be intercorrelated: respondents who select imagination are more likely to also select tolerance, and those who select responsibility are more likely to select obedience. PCA extracts components that capture the maximum shared variance across these correlated items, consolidating them into interpretable dimensions rather than treating each item as an independent signal. This approach is preferred over a simple additive index because it accounts for the differential contribution of each item to the underlying dimension, producing factor scores that more precisely locate each respondent along each latent value dimension. Varimax rotation is applied to improve the interpretability of the solution by encouraging each original item to load substantially on one component and minimally on others. The resulting continuous factor scores ( $f_1$  and  $f_2$ ) serve as the dependent variables in the OLS regression models described in Section 3.4, with their substantive interpretation established through the rotated loading pattern reported in Section 4.1.

Prior to extraction, the suitability of the data for PCA is assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity. Components with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 are retained following the Kaiser criterion. The number of retained components and the pattern of factor loadings are reported in Section 4.1 alongside an interpretation of which items load on each dimension.

### 3.4. Econometric Model: OLS Regression

This study integrates two theoretical frameworks to justify the regression specification. First, Emancipative Values Theory <sup>28</sup> posits that rising education, income, and urbanization enhance existential security, shifting individuals from survival-oriented values toward autonomy and self-expression. Within this framework, education serves as the key driver of cognitive mobilization. Second, Cultural Lag Theory argues that value change occurs unevenly across social contexts; communities with strong normative structures, such as rural, religious

<sup>27</sup> [Haerpfer et al.](#), “World Values Survey: Round Seven - Country-Pooled Datafile Version 6.0.”

<sup>28</sup> [Inglehart and Welzel](#), *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*.

environments, tend to adopt change more slowly<sup>29</sup>. This provides the basis for incorporating the social environment (urban-rural domicile) in the model.

These theoretical concepts are operationalized using WVS Wave 7 data. Value orientation is measured through PCA-derived factor scores: responsibility-without-religiosity (SCO) and imagination-without-altruism (IAO). Educational attainment proxies' cognitive mobilization, while income and life satisfaction capture existential security. Urban-rural domicile reflects the normative environment.

The baseline OLS model is specified as:

$$f_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Education_i + \beta_2 Gender_i + \beta_3 Age_i + \beta_4 Income_i + \beta_5 Urban_i + \beta_6 SocialClass_i + \beta_7 LifeSat_i + \beta_8 ConfEdu_i + \epsilon_i \quad (1)$$

where  $f_i$  is the factor score for respondent  $i$ ,  $\alpha$  is the intercept, and  $\epsilon_i$  is the error term. Educational attainment is entered as a set of dummy variables using the five-category recoded variable, with primary education or below as the reference category. Income scale and social class are entered as categorical dummies. Heteroscedasticity-robust standard errors are used throughout, as cross-sectional survey data of this kind commonly exhibit non-constant error variance. Model fit is assessed using R-squared, and coefficient significance is evaluated at the 0.05, 0.01, and 0.001 levels.

### 3.5. Interaction Effects and Spatial Analysis

To test the cultural lag prediction that education's effect on values is stronger in urban than in rural settings, the baseline model is extended with interaction terms between educational attainment and urban-rural domicile. The idea is straightforward: if the same level of schooling produces different value shifts depending on where someone lives, then the coefficient on education alone cannot tell the full story. The interaction model captures this spatial heterogeneity directly:

$$f_i = \alpha + \beta_1 Education_i + \beta_2 Urban_i + \beta_3 (Education_i \times Urban_i) + \gamma X_i + \epsilon_i \quad (2)$$

The interaction coefficients tell us how much more or less strongly education shifts value orientation among urban respondents relative to rural ones. A positive coefficient on the education-urban interaction in the SCO model indicates that urban schooling builds secular civic responsibility faster; a negative coefficient in the IAO model indicates that urban schooling suppresses individual achievement orientation faster. Predicted marginal effects are computed and plotted separately for urban and rural subgroups. The results appear in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Constructing Educational Value Orientations: Principal Component Analysis

This study uses Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to explore how educational values are structured among respondents in Indonesia. The analysis is based on eight binary indicators from the childhood qualities module in the WVS Wave 7 dataset. Before running the PCA, the data is checked to make sure it is suitable. The Kaiser Meyer Olkin value is 0.54, slightly above the minimum threshold, and Bartlett's Test is highly significant ( $\chi^2(28) = 483.11, p < 0.001$ ). This means the variables are sufficiently related to each other and can be analysed using PCA.

The results suggest that two main dimensions can explain the data. The first component has an eigenvalue of 1.319 and explains 16.48 percent of the variation, while the second has an

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<sup>29</sup> [Ogburn](#), *Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature*.

eigenvalue of 1.246 and explains 15.57 percent. Together, they account for about 32.05 percent of the total variation. A third component is close to the cutoff but is not included. Overall, the explained variation is not very large, which is reasonable because personal values tend to be diverse and complex.

After rotation, the pattern of results looks quite different from what existing theory would predict. The first factor shows a strong positive relationship with responsibility (Q9: 0.581) and hard work (Q8: 0.304), but a strong negative relationship with religious faith (Q12: -0.626). In simple terms, people who emphasize responsibility and hard work do not necessarily connect these values with religion. Because of this pattern, this factor is called Secular Civic Orientation (SCO).

The second factor shows a different pattern. It is positively related to imagination (Q7: 0.407), tolerance (Q10: 0.405), and hard work (Q8: 0.376), but negatively related to unselfishness (Q13: -0.644). This suggests that people who value creativity and openness tend to place less importance on self-sacrifice. Instead, they seem to focus more on personal ability and achievement. This factor is called Individual Achievement Orientation (IAO).

Not all variables fit neatly into these patterns. Independence (Q6) and obedience (Q11) do not strongly relate to either factor, which means they stand more on their own and do not cluster with the other values. Overall, these findings show that the usual distinction between conformist and emancipatory values does not fully apply in Indonesia. Religious values do not automatically go together with obedience, and openness does not necessarily come with altruism. The two dimensions identified here, SCO and IAO, provide a more realistic way to understand how educational values are shaped in this context. The scores from these two factors are then used as the main variables in the regression analysis.

#### 4.2. Social Determinants of Educational Values: OLS Regression Analysis

Establishing the two value dimensions established through PCA, the next question is: what kinds of people are more or less likely to hold these orientations? This section uses OLS regression to identify the social and demographic drivers behind each dimension. The results are read against the 2018 pre-reform baseline, not just to describe Indonesian public opinion at that moment, but to establish the starting point against which the effects of Merdeka Belajar and the pandemic can eventually be measured. Table 2 presents the full results.

**Table 2. OLS Regression Results: Secular Civic Orientation (SCO) and Individual Achievement Orientation (IAO)**

Independent Variables	SCO ( <i>f1</i> )	IAO ( <i>f2</i> )
<b>Education Level (Ref: Primary or Below)</b>		
Lower Secondary	0.214*** (0.059)	-0.127* (0.060)
Upper Secondary	0.179** (0.055)	-0.347*** (0.057)
Short-cycle Tertiary	0.311* (0.128)	-0.428** (0.126)
University and above	0.324*** (0.081)	-0.499*** (0.080)
<b>Demographics</b>		
Gender (1 = Female)	0.198*** (0.041)	-0.046 (0.041)
Age	-0.009*** (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
<b>Attitudinal and Social Factors</b>		
Confidence in Education System (Q71)	0.043 (0.026)	-0.041 (0.027)
Life Satisfaction (Q46)	-0.030 (0.034)	0.017 (0.034)
Income Scale (Ref: Step 1)	Included (non-sig.)	Included (non-sig.)

Social Class (Ref: Upper Class)	Included (non-sig.)	Included (non-sig.)
Urban (1 = Urban)	-0.000 (0.047)	-0.064 (0.046)
Constant	-0.238 (0.186)	0.502** (0.191)
<b>R-squared</b>	<b>0.049</b>	<b>0.039</b>
<b>N</b>	<b>3,109</b>	<b>3,109</b>

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. Significance levels: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . "Included (non-sig.)" indicates that income scale and social class categories were included as controls but showed no statistically significant influence at conventional levels. Urban is a binary variable recoded from H\_URBRURAL (1 = Urban, 0 = Rural). Educational attainment is recoded from Q275 (ISCED 2011) into five categories; primary or below serves as the reference category. SCO = Secular Civic Orientation (f1); IAO = Individual Achievement Orientation (f2). Source: Authors' own estimation based on World Values Survey Wave 7 Indonesia <sup>30</sup>.

The clearest story in the data is about education and it cuts in a direction that most modernization theories would not predict. The more schooling an Indonesian adult has, the more likely they are to want their children to grow up responsible and diligent, and the less likely they are to want their children to be imaginative, tolerant, and creatively expressive. In other words, education strengthens the secular civic dimension and weakens the individual achievement dimension, consistently across all levels of schooling above primary. For the secular civic dimension, coefficients range from 0.214 at lower secondary ( $p < 0.001$ ) to 0.324 among university graduates ( $p < 0.001$ ). For the individual achievement dimension, the direction reverses: from -0.127 at lower secondary ( $p = 0.033$ ) to -0.499 among university graduates ( $p < 0.001$ ), with the gap widening steadily as education rises. This is not a small or ambiguous result. It is a strong, monotonic, and statistically robust pattern that directly contradicts the prediction that schooling drives people toward autonomy and self-expression. <sup>31</sup> expected the opposite. The Indonesian data say otherwise.

Gender also matters, though only for one dimension. Women score about 0.198 points higher on the secular civic dimension than men ( $p < 0.001$ ) meaning Indonesian women are more likely than men to prioritize responsibility and hard work for their children, in a way that is not tied to religious motivation. Women entering the formal labor market increasingly navigate secular institutions where civic performance, not piety, is rewarded, and this appears to carry over into how they think about raising the next generation. Notably, this female premium does not extend to the individual achievement dimension, where gender has no significant effect. The difference between men and women is specifically about civic responsibility, not creativity or openness.

Age adds another layer. Older Indonesians score lower on the secular civic dimension (-0.009 per year,  $p < 0.001$ ), which points to a generational shift: younger cohorts, educated in more formally secular environments, have learned to think of civic responsibility as separate from religious obligation in a way that older generations, who came of age when faith and civic duty were more intertwined, did not. Life satisfaction and confidence in the education system do not reach significance in either model. How satisfied someone feels with life, or how much they trust the school system, does not meaningfully predict what values they want for their children. Income and social class are largely irrelevant once education is controlled for. The one exception is a marginally significant negative association between lower middle class and the individual achievement dimension (-0.326,  $p = 0.048$ ), but this lone finding should be read

<sup>30</sup> [Haerpfer et al.](#), "World Values Survey: Round Seven - Country-Pooled Datafile Version 6.0."

<sup>31</sup> [Inglehart and Welzel](#), *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*.

with caution. The broader message is clear: in Indonesia, what shapes educational value preferences is primarily how far you went in school, not how much money you have.

The R-squared values are low, 0.049 for the secular civic dimension and 0.039 for the individual achievement dimension, which is typical for large cross-sectional surveys of attitudes and values. Low R-squared here does not mean the model is wrong; it means that much of what makes any individual person prefer one set of values over another is not captured by education, gender, age, and income alone. Family socialization, community norms, and local cultural context all play a role that survey data cannot easily pin down. What the models do establish, confirmed by joint significance tests ( $F = 7.71$  and  $6.45$ , both  $p < 0.001$ ), is that the structural predictors included here collectively explain meaningful variation in both value dimensions, and that the direction and magnitude of the education effect is too consistent and too strong to be noise.

To assess whether the main findings are sensitive to the continuous nature of the PCA-derived factor scores, the analysis is replicated using ordered logistic regression on tercile-categorized versions of SCO and IAO. The direction and significance pattern of the education coefficients are fully consistent across both estimation strategies. In the ordered logit model for SCO, all education levels above primary remain positively and significantly associated with higher civic orientation (coefficients ranging from 0.337 to 0.657, all  $p \leq 0.001$ ). In the ordered logit model for IAO, upper secondary and above remain negatively and significantly associated with individual achievement orientation (coefficients ranging from -0.466 to -0.732, all  $p \leq 0.004$ ). The female and age effects in the SCO model are likewise robust. One minor difference is that confidence in the education system (Q71) reaches marginal significance in the IAO ordered logit model ( $-0.086$ ,  $p = 0.041$ ), a result not replicated in the OLS baseline; this should be interpreted with caution given the borderline  $p$ -value and the absence of a strong theoretical prior. Overall, the robustness check confirms that the core findings do not depend on the distributional assumptions of OLS.

#### 4.3. The Urban-Rural Divergence: Interaction Analysis of Education and Spatial Context

The baseline model captures what happens on average across Indonesia. This section asks whether the same level of schooling produces different value shifts depending on where someone lives. A question motivated by the cultural lag hypothesis, which predicts that modernizing influences take hold more slowly in communities with stronger traditional normative anchors. Interaction terms between educational attainment and urban-rural domicile are added to the model to test this directly. The short answer is: formally, no. None of the interaction terms reach conventional levels of statistical significance for either dimension. Joint significance tests confirm this across multiple moderators. The education-by-urban interaction is jointly insignificant for both IAO ( $F(4, 3082) = 0.76$ ,  $p = 0.552$ ) and SCO ( $F(4, 3082) = 0.76$ ,  $p = 0.552$ ). Interactions between education and gender are also jointly insignificant for both SCO ( $F(4, 3082) = 1.44$ ,  $p = 0.218$ ) and IAO ( $F(4, 3082) = 1.50$ ,  $p = 0.200$ ). Finally, interactions between education and generational cohort. Young (18–35), middle (36–55), and older (56+) are likewise jointly insignificant for both SCO ( $F(8, 3076) = 0.64$ ,  $p = 0.746$ ) and IAO ( $F(8, 3076) = 0.67$ ,  $p = 0.720$ ). Taken together, these tests indicate that education's effect on value orientation is broadly consistent across spatial context, gender, and generation. A result that itself has theoretical significance, suggesting that schooling operates as a uniform institutional force on value formation rather than one whose impact depends heavily on who is being schooled or where. However, the predicted marginal effects reveal visual patterns worth describing, even if they fall short of statistical confirmation, these are shown in Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 below.

**Table 3. Joint Significance Tests for Interaction Effects**

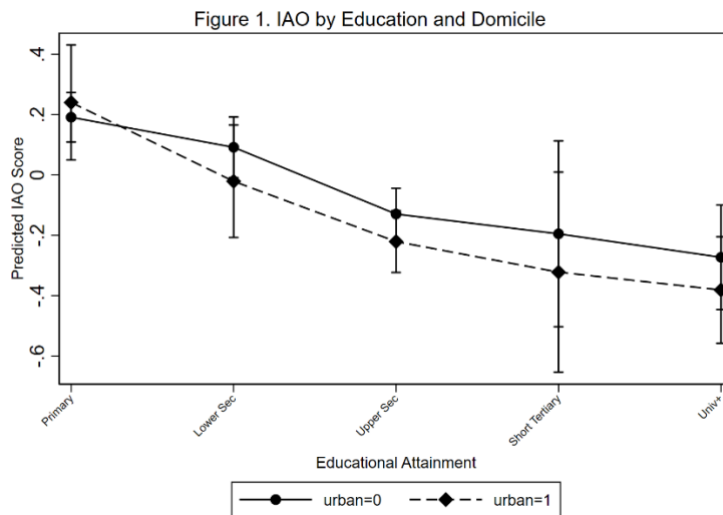
Interaction	Dimension	df	F	p
Education × Urban	SCO	(4, 3082)	0.76	0.552
Education × Urban	IAO	(4, 3082)	0.76	0.552
Education × Gender	SCO	(4, 3082)	1.44	0.218
Education × Gender	IAO	(4, 3082)	1.50	0.200
Education × Cohort	SCO	(8, 3076)	0.64	0.746
Education × Cohort	IAO	(8, 3076)	0.67	0.720

Notes: Joint F-tests are based on OLS models with robust standard errors, N = 3,109. Cohort is defined as young (18–35), middle (36–55), and older (56+). None of the interactions reach conventional significance levels ( $p > 0.10$  for all). Source: Authors’ own estimation based on World Values Survey Wave 7 Indonesia <sup>32</sup>.

**4.3.1. Individual Achievement Orientation: A Uniform Decline Across Contexts**

Figure 1 shows how predicted scores on the individual achievement dimension. The preference for imagination and tolerance over self-sacrifice move as education rises, plotted separately for rural (solid line) and urban (dashed line) respondents.

**Figure 1. IAO by Education and Domicile**



Source: Authors’ own calculation based on World Values Survey Wave 7 Indonesia <sup>33</sup>.

Both lines slope downward as education rises, which is consistent with the baseline finding that more schooling is associated with lower individual achievement orientation across the board. The more interesting pattern is in how the two groups start and how fast they decline. At the primary level, urban respondents (dashed line) actually begin slightly higher than rural ones a surprising reversal of what cultural lag theory would predict. From that point, both groups decline steadily, with the urban line falling somewhat more steeply toward university level. By the time respondents reach university education, urban graduates score lower on the individual achievement dimension than their rural counterparts.

<sup>32</sup> Haerpfer et al., “World Values Survey: Round Seven - Country-Pooled Datafile Version 6.0.”

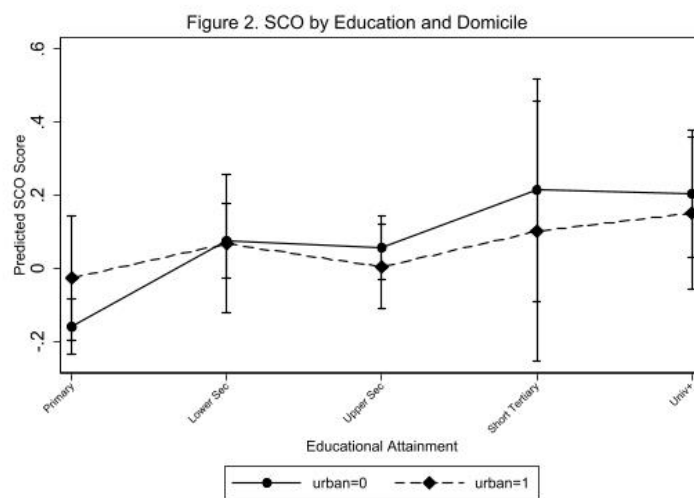
<sup>33</sup> Haerpfer et al., “World Values Survey: Round Seven - Country-Pooled Datafile Version 5.0.”

That said, the interaction terms for this dimension are all statistically insignificant ( $p > 0.10$ ), meaning the difference in slope between the two lines is not large enough to rule out sampling variation as the explanation. The visual gap between urban and rural trajectories is suggestive but not conclusive. What the figure does reinforce is the baseline finding: regardless of where someone lives, more education consistently moves people away from prioritizing imagination and creativity for their children. The question of whether cities accelerate this process more than the countryside remains open as the current data cannot resolve it with confidence.

#### 4.3.2. Secular Civic Orientation: Convergence with a Different Starting Point

Figure 2 shows predicted scores on the secular civic dimension the preference for responsibility and diligence that is structurally dissociated from religious faith by education level, separately for rural (solid line) and urban (dashed line) respondents.

**Figure 2. SCO by Education and Domicile**



Source: Authors' own calculation based on World Values Survey Wave 7 Indonesia <sup>34</sup>.

Figure 2 illustrates the predicted effect of education on Secular Civic Orientation (f1, SCO) across urban and rural settings. Here the direction flips from Figure 1: both lines slope upward, meaning more education is associated with higher secular civic orientation regardless of where someone lives. The pattern in Figure 2 is striking in a different way from Figure 1. Rural respondents (solid line) start considerably lower than urban ones at the primary education level around -0.18 versus -0.07 for urban. But by university level, the two lines have largely converged, with rural graduates actually ending up slightly higher than their urban counterparts. This crossing pattern suggests that education does more for the secular civic dimension in rural areas than in urban ones, at least in terms of total gain from baseline.

As with Figure 1, the interaction terms are statistically insignificant (all  $p > 0.10$ ), so the difference in trajectories between urban and rural respondents cannot be confidently distinguished from sampling noise. But the visual pattern is informative nonetheless. The lower rural baseline makes intuitive sense: in communities where mosques and religious institutions remain central to civic life, responsibility tends to be organized through faith rather than dissociated from it, producing lower scores on a dimension that by construction separates the two. What education appears to do even if the interaction is not formally

<sup>34</sup> [Haerpfer et al.](#), "World Values Survey: Round Seven - Country-Pooled Datafile Version 5.0."

significant is gradually shift rural respondents toward a more secular framing of civic obligation, closing the gap with their urban counterparts by the time they reach higher education levels. Whether this convergence is real or a product of small sample sizes at higher education levels in rural areas is a question that larger or more recent data would need to answer.

#### 4.4. Discussion

The findings challenge, rather than confirm, what <sup>35</sup> emancipative values theory would predict. Education is a powerful predictor of both value dimensions, but its direction is the inverse of theoretical expectations. Higher educational attainment increases Secular Civic Orientation and decreases Individual Achievement Orientation. To understand why, we need to look at how Indonesian schooling actually works, not how theory assumes it works.

The rise in secular civic orientation with education reflects the institutional logic of Indonesian schooling. Since the New Order, the national education system has been designed around civic formation: producing graduates who are disciplined, responsible, and productive members of a bureaucratic society <sup>36</sup>. The dominant pedagogy remains teacher-centered and exam-driven, rewarding correct answers over open inquiry. Students who spend more years in this system are not becoming more free-thinking; they are becoming more thoroughly socialized into a secular civic framework where responsibility and diligence are professional virtues, entirely independent of religious motivation. This explains both why SCO rises with education and why religious faith loads negatively on the same dimension. The Indonesian school system and the religious community are parallel socialization channels that rarely converge: someone can be deeply devout through their mosque while becoming more civic and secular through formal schooling, and these two tracks do not reinforce each other.

The decline in individual achievement orientation with education is harder to accept but equally explainable. As Indonesians ascend the educational ladder, they enter increasingly formalized institutional environments: competitive universities, credential-based job markets, and hierarchical workplaces where conformity to standards matters more than creative divergence. Imagination and tolerance are valuable in the abstract, but they are not what the Indonesian professional system rewards. A university graduate who has navigated competitive entrance exams and hierarchical lecture halls has been trained, implicitly, to deprioritize the very qualities that IAO measures. The negative loading of unselfishness on IAO reinforces this: higher-educated Indonesians want children who achieve individually, not those who sacrifice themselves for the collective. This is not Western individualism; it is achievement-orientation in a credential-driven institutional context where the self must perform.

The spatial analysis finds no significant moderation of these effects by urban-rural context, gender, or generational cohort. This uniform institutional effect suggests that the content of schooling, not its setting, is the active ingredient. Urban and rural graduates follow the same value trajectory; they simply start from different normative baselines. Rural communities organize civic obligations through religious frameworks, producing lower SCO at the primary level, while urban environments already expose less-educated residents to secular institutional norms. Education then pulls both groups in the same direction.

These findings gain their fullest significance from their temporal position. The 2018 data represent a pre-shock equilibrium: Indonesian educational values before two concurrent

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<sup>35</sup> [Inglehart and Welzel](#), *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*.

<sup>36</sup> [Bjork](#), *Indonesian Education: Teachers, Schools, and Central Bureaucracy*.

disruptions reshaped the landscape. The COVID-19 pandemic likely pushed toward communal and religious coping, potentially reversing some of the secular civic gains that education produces. The Merdeka Belajar reform explicitly targets IAO qualities: creativity, independence, and critical thinking. Both forces were operating simultaneously from 2020, and their value effects run in partially opposite directions. The pandemic may suppress IAO; Merdeka Belajar may be trying to raise it. Without the 2018 baseline, any post-2020 measurement of these dimensions would be a compound signal impossible to attribute to either shock. This study provides that baseline.

## CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1. Conclusion

This study examines what Indonesian adults believe education should cultivate in children and identifies the social determinants of these preferences using the Indonesian component of the World Values Survey Wave 7 (2018). Employing Principal Component Analysis and OLS regression, the study constructs two latent dimensions of educational value orientation and estimates their predictors. The 2018 dataset provides a critical pre-reform and pre-pandemic baseline, capturing public attitudes prior to the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar curriculum and the disruption of COVID-19.

The findings depart from the conformist–emancipatory framework proposed by Inglehart and Welzel. Two distinct dimensions emerge. Secular Civic Orientation (SCO) reflects a preference for responsibility and hard work detached from religiosity, while Individual Achievement Orientation (IAO) captures imagination and tolerance separated from altruism. These configurations suggest that the relationship between civic norms, religiosity, and individual aspiration in Indonesia follows a distinct institutional and cultural trajectory.

The regression results reinforce this divergence. Education increases SCO while decreasing IAO, contradicting standard modernization expectations. More educated individuals prioritize civic responsibility over individual creativity, a pattern robust across controls. Women exhibit higher SCO, and younger cohorts show stronger secular civic orientation, indicating generational change.

Interaction analysis shows no statistically significant differences between urban and rural areas. However, baseline differences persist: rural respondents begin with lower SCO, while urban respondents show slightly higher IAO. These gaps narrow as education increases, suggesting that schooling functions as a standardizing force across spatial contexts, even when initial value structures differ.

As Wave 7 remains the latest available nationally representative dataset for Indonesia, these findings establish an empirical benchmark. The SCO and IAO distributions documented here provide a reference point for assessing the long-term impact of Merdeka Belajar, pandemic-era schooling, and subsequent educational reforms.

### 5.2. Policy Recommendations

The findings yield three policy implications. First, educational attainment emerges as the primary determinant of value orientation, exceeding the role of income or class. Expanding access to secondary and tertiary education, particularly in rural areas, is therefore not only an economic investment but also a mechanism shaping intergenerational value formation.

Second, although interaction effects are not statistically significant, baseline differences between urban and rural communities remain substantively relevant. Rural areas exhibit lower secular civic orientation, suggesting that civic norms are more closely embedded in religious frameworks. This implies that uniform curriculum reforms may generate uneven value outcomes. The contextual flexibility promoted by Merdeka Belajar should therefore be evaluated in terms of its ability to accommodate local normative environments.

Third, women play a significant role in shaping civic-oriented values, as indicated by their consistently higher SCO scores. Strengthening women's access to higher education and formal employment may generate spillover effects in household-level value transmission. This also highlights the importance of gender-disaggregated analysis in educational research.

Future research using World Values Survey Wave 8 data will be essential to assess whether these patterns persist or shift in the post-reform and post-pandemic context. This study provides the baseline against which such changes can be measured.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declares that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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