

Assessing the Academic and Social Feasibility of a Mandarin Language Education Program in Indonesian Higher Education

Kelayakan Akademik dan Sosial Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Mandarin di Perguruan Tinggi Indonesia

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Abstract

The growing global influence of China has significantly elevated the strategic importance of Mandarin across education, the economy, diplomacy, and intercultural communication. This study aims to examine the academic and social feasibility of establishing a Mandarin Language Education Program in Indonesian higher education. Employing a mixed-methods research design, the study collected quantitative data through an online survey of 150 undergraduate students and qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with lecturers and curriculum experts. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were examined thematically. The findings reveal an exceptionally high level of student interest in the proposed program, with 83.3% of respondents expressing very strong motivation to enroll should the program be offered. In addition, the overall mean score for the perceived importance of Mandarin reached 4.42 on a scale of 5 (very high), indicating strong recognition of its relevance to global communication, career opportunities, academic development, and intercultural understanding. Qualitative results further confirm strong societal demand and institutional alignment with internationalization agendas, while also identifying challenges related to human resources and the development of contextualized teaching materials. Overall, the results suggest that establishing a Mandarin Language Education Program at Indonesian universities is highly feasible and strategically relevant. This study provides empirical support for institutional decision-making, curriculum development, and educational policy related to foreign language programs in higher education, contributing to the preparation of globally competent and interculturally aware graduates.

Keywords: feasibility study, global competence, higher education, language planning, Mandarin education

Abstrak

Meningkatnya pengaruh Tiongkok di tingkat global telah menjadikan bahasa Mandarin memiliki nilai strategis yang semakin penting dalam bidang pendidikan, ekonomi, diplomasi, dan komunikasi antarbudaya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji kelayakan akademik dan sosial pendirian Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Mandarin di perguruan tinggi Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain mixed methods dengan memadukan data kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Data kuantitatif diperoleh melalui survei daring terhadap 150 mahasiswa program studi bahasa dan kependidikan, sedangkan data kualitatif dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan dosen dan pakar kurikulum. Data kuantitatif dianalisis menggunakan statistik deskriptif, sementara data kualitatif dianalisis secara tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tingkat minat mahasiswa yang sangat tinggi terhadap program yang diusulkan, dengan 83,3% responden menyatakan sangat berminat untuk mendaftar apabila program tersebut dibuka. Selain itu, skor rata-rata persepsi terhadap pentingnya bahasa Mandarin mencapai 4,42 dari skala 5 (kategori sangat tinggi), yang menunjukkan adanya pengakuan kuat terhadap relevansinya bagi komunikasi global, peluang karier, pengembangan akademik, dan pemahaman lintas budaya. Temuan kualitatif juga mengonfirmasi adanya kebutuhan sosial yang signifikan serta kesesuaian program dengan agenda internasionalisasi perguruan tinggi, meskipun masih terdapat tantangan dalam hal ketersediaan sumber daya manusia dan bahan ajar yang kontekstual. Secara keseluruhan, hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pendirian Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Mandarin di perguruan tinggi Indonesia sangat layak dan relevan secara strategis. Penelitian ini memberikan dasar empiris bagi pengambilan keputusan institusional, pengembangan kurikulum, dan kebijakan pendidikan bahasa asing di pendidikan tinggi.

Kata kunci: studi kelayakan, kompetensi global, pendidikan tinggi, perencanaan bahasa, pendidikan bahasa Mandarin

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, linguistic competence has become a strategic resource in education, employment, and international relations. Foreign language proficiency is no longer perceived merely as an academic achievement, but as a fundamental skill that strengthens global competitiveness and intercultural communication. Among the world's major languages, Mandarin Chinese has emerged as one of the most influential due to China's expanding role in the global economy, technology, politics, and higher education networks (Li & Sun, 2021; Wang, 2022). This transformation has significantly reshaped national language policies and educational priorities in many countries, including Indonesia.

China's growing presence in Southeast Asia has led to stronger bilateral cooperation across trade, infrastructure, tourism, education, and technology transfer. Indonesia, as one of China's main strategic partners in the region, has experienced an increasing demand for human resources who are proficient in Mandarin and capable of mediating intercultural relations (OECD, 2021; Ministry of Trade of Indonesia, 2022). Consequently, higher education institutions are facing growing pressure to align their academic programs with the evolving needs of the global workforce. Foreign language education, particularly Mandarin, has become a crucial area for development and innovation within the Indonesian higher education system.

Despite this growing demand, specialized Mandarin Language Education programs in Indonesia remain limited. Most existing programs focus on Chinese literature, translation, or general linguistics, rather than on teacher education and pedagogical training for Mandarin as a foreign language (Nugroho, 2022). This situation creates a significant gap in the education sector, as many schools and educational institutions struggle to find qualified Mandarin teachers with strong linguistic competence and professional pedagogical skills. According to Zhang (2021), sustainable foreign language instruction requires educators who are not only language-proficient but also equipped with theoretical knowledge of second language acquisition, cross-cultural pedagogy, and modern instructional methodologies.

From an academic perspective, the establishment of a new study program in higher education must be grounded in systematic feasibility analysis. Academic feasibility involves factors such as curriculum relevance, alignment with national qualification frameworks, availability of qualified lecturers, institutional infrastructure, and access to appropriate learning resources (Knight, 2020; Altbach & de Wit, 2020a). In parallel, social feasibility is measured through indicators such as student interest, public perception, labor market demand, employability prospects, and cultural acceptability (Brown & Kurzweil, 2019). A program that is academically strong but lacks social support may fail to attract students, while a program with high social demand but insufficient academic preparation may struggle to maintain quality and accreditation.

Recent studies on language education and employability have consistently emphasized the importance of aligning academic programs with labor market needs. Graduates tend to favor study programs that offer clear career pathways, international mobility, and relevance to emerging sectors (Tomlinson, 2021; Rahman & Putri, 2020). In Southeast Asia, Mandarin has been identified as one of the most strategic foreign languages for professional development, particularly in business, education, diplomacy, tourism, and international trade (Wang & Li, 2023). Research by Sari and Hadi (2021a) also indicates that Indonesian students increasingly recognize Mandarin as a valuable skill that enhances their competitiveness in multinational and regional labor markets.

In addition to economic factors, the cultural dimension of Mandarin education also plays an important role. Language learning is inseparable from cultural understanding, and Mandarin

education offers students an opportunity to engage critically with Chinese history, philosophy, values, and communication styles (Kramsch, 2019). In a multicultural society such as Indonesia, strengthening intercultural competence through language education is essential for fostering tolerance, global awareness, and international cooperation. Therefore, the introduction of a Mandarin Language Education program also contributes to cultural diplomacy and cross-cultural dialogue, which are increasingly emphasized in contemporary educational policy (Byram, 2021).

However, despite favorable global and national trends, several challenges remain. These include the limited number of qualified Mandarin teacher educators in Indonesia, the need for localized teaching materials compatible with the Indonesian context, and the requirement to align any new program with national accreditation and quality assurance standards (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021). For this reason, a comprehensive feasibility study that integrates academic, social, and professional perspectives is essential before initiating a new Mandarin Language Education program.

In light of the issues discussed above, this study aims to investigate the academic and social feasibility of establishing a Mandarin Language Education Program in Indonesian higher education, focusing on students' perceptions, institutional readiness, and labor-market relevance.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, with a dominant quantitative descriptive approach supported by qualitative data, as recommended for feasibility studies in educational planning (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). The quantitative data provided broad patterns of perception and interest, while the qualitative data enriched the interpretation of these patterns.

The research participants were 150 undergraduate students from the faculties of language and education at several Indonesian universities. They were selected using purposive sampling, based on their exposure to language studies and potential interest in foreign language programs (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). In addition, five lecturers and two curriculum experts were interviewed to gain deeper insights into institutional and academic readiness.

Data collection was conducted through two main instruments. First, an online questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale was distributed to students to measure their perceptions of the importance of Mandarin, interest in the proposed program, and its relevance to future careers. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected lecturers and experts to explore dimensions such as curriculum feasibility, human resources, and infrastructure readiness Tarsilla, M. (2014). Guest, G., MacQueen, KM, & Namey, EE (2012).

The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, percentages, and frequency distributions), while the qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the procedures of coding, categorization, and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The integration of both data sets allowed for a comprehensive evaluation of the program's academic and social feasibility.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the study's main findings on the academic and social feasibility of establishing a Mandarin Language Education Program in Indonesian higher education. The analysis is based on quantitative data from a student perception questionnaire and qualitative data from interviews with lecturers and curriculum experts.

The discussion is focused on four main aspects, namely: (1) the level of student interest in the proposed program; (2) perceptions of the importance of Mandarin for future academic and career development, (3) social and institutional readiness, and (4) the connection between the findings and relevant theories as well as previous studies.

This approach allows for a more comprehensive interpretation, not only based on statistical figures, but also in relation to the social, academic, and global trends in foreign language education. Therefore, the findings of this study do not merely describe the current situation but also provide a rational basis for strategic decision-making in planning a new academic program.

1. Student Interest in the Mandarin Language Education Program

The quantitative findings reveal an exceptionally high level of interest among undergraduate students in the proposed Mandarin Language Education Program. As illustrated in Figure 1 (Pie Chart), 83.3% of respondents expressed very high interest, 12% reported high interest, 4.7% indicated moderate interest, and none selected low interest. This distribution demonstrates an overwhelmingly positive orientation toward establishing the program.

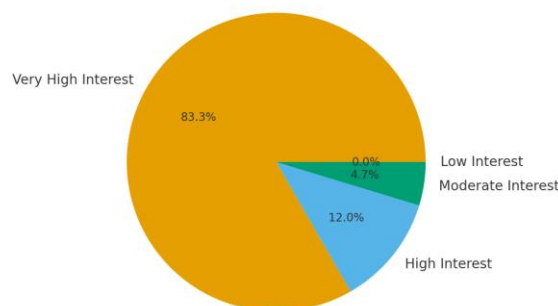


Figure 1. Distribution of Students' Interest in the Proposed Mandarin Language Education Program (%)

This strong enthusiasm is not an incidental phenomenon, but rather reflects a significant shift in students' perception of global languages and their strategic value. In the past, English was often viewed as the sole foreign language necessary for international communication. However, the present findings indicate that students increasingly recognize Mandarin as an essential linguistic resource in the contemporary global context. This shift is consistent with the work of Zhang and Beck (2022), who argue that Mandarin is no longer perceived merely as the language of a single nation but as a global language connected to economic, technological, and diplomatic networks.

Furthermore, this high interest is an important indicator of social feasibility, a critical dimension in the evaluation of any new academic program. Shin and Harman (2021) emphasize that strong student demand is a key predictor of long-term program sustainability in higher education. When students perceive a program as valuable and relevant, enrollment stability and institutional support are more likely to be sustained over time. Thus, the data here provide compelling evidence that a Mandarin Language Education Program would not suffer from low demand, but instead has a strong social foundation upon which it can be developed.

Moreover, the absence of negative or low responses (0%) is particularly significant. It suggests that resistance or indifference toward Mandarin learning among students is minimal in the sampled population. This is an important indicator when compared with other feasibility studies in language education, where new programs often face skepticism due to limited perceived relevance or career prospects (Lin, 2020). In contrast, Mandarin in the Indonesian context appears to be perceived as a future-oriented and pragmatic academic investment.

When contextualized within the broader geopolitical and economic developments in the Asia-Pacific region, this finding is highly logical. China has been one of Indonesia's largest trading partners over the past decade, with major investments in infrastructure, industry, and tourism (ASEAN Secretariat, 2022). Consequently, students are highly aware that Mandarin proficiency can provide access to concrete career pathways in both national and international contexts. This awareness is reflected in their strong intention to enroll in such a program if it were made available.

In this sense, the data do not merely reflect linguistic interest but rather signal strategic awareness among Indonesian youth about future global participation. It supports Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie's (2021) argument that language motivation today is deeply intertwined with learners' imagined future identities and professional aspirations.

Therefore, from the perspective of student motivation theory, the findings suggest that students possess a strong "ideal L2 self" regarding Mandarin, envisioning themselves as globally competent individuals who can operate in international business, education, diplomacy, and tourism contexts. This motivational readiness is a substantial asset for the prospective program and significantly strengthens its feasibility from a learner-centered perspective.

2. Perceived Importance of Mandarin for the Future

Beyond interest in the program itself, the study also examined students' perceptions of the importance of Mandarin for their future academic and professional lives. The analysis of Likert-scale responses yielded an overall mean score of 4.42, placing it in the "Very High" category on a 5-point scale.

To visualize this multidimensional perception, a pie chart is presented in Figure 2, illustrating the proportional distribution of students' views regarding the importance of Mandarin in global communication, career opportunities, academic relevance, and cultural understanding. The visual representation further reinforces the finding that all four dimensions are perceived as highly significant, with no single aspect dominating overwhelmingly over the others.

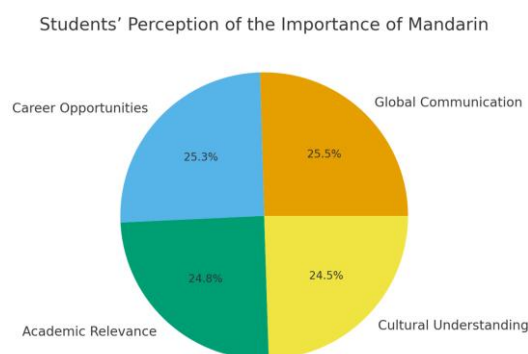


Figure 2. Pie Chart – Students' Perception of the Importance of Mandarin

These findings show that students do not associate Mandarin with a single function but perceive it as a multidimensional resource that contributes to professional mobility, academic development, global communication, and intercultural competence. This perception aligns closely with Wang and Curdt-Christiansen's (2023) conceptualization of Mandarin as a "hybrid global language", functioning not only as a national language of China but also as a medium of transnational interaction within global economic, cultural, and political domains. Similarly, the OECD (2021) has acknowledged the increasing importance of Asian languages in preparing students for emerging global economies.

The high score in global communication is particularly important from an educational policy perspective. It suggests that students are developing a broader understanding of multilingualism in the 21st century, moving beyond the traditional dominance of English. It resonates with UNESCO's (2022) call for education systems to promote linguistic diversity and intercultural dialogue as essential components of sustainable global development.

Moreover, the strong perception of Mandarin's relevance to career opportunities (4.47) reflects students' realistic evaluation of labor market trends. In Indonesia, Mandarin-speaking professionals are increasingly sought after in sectors such as tourism, trade negotiation, translation services, multinational corporations, and foreign investment agencies (Ramadhani & Sakti, 2023; Mailoor, 2025). The participants' responses, therefore, indicate alignment between educational aspirations and labor-market needs, a critical consideration in evaluating academic feasibility.

Furthermore, the high importance placed on cultural understanding (4.33) indicates that students do not view Mandarin solely as an economic tool. Rather, they recognize its role in fostering intercultural awareness and global citizenship. This dimension is strongly linked to Byram's (2021) theory of intercultural communicative competence, which asserts that language learning should cultivate not only linguistic proficiency but also cultural understanding, empathy, and critical awareness.

From an academic perspective, this reinforces the notion that a Mandarin Language Education Program would not only produce language specialists but also individuals capable of serving as cross-cultural mediators. Such a role is increasingly essential in today's interconnected world, where cultural misunderstandings can lead to conflict, while cultural competence fosters cooperation and mutual respect.

Thus, the data regarding perceived importance provide strong justification for the program's establishment, as they demonstrate both pragmatic and humanistic value. The results suggest that students see Mandarin as contributing to their personal development, academic growth, and social contribution, all of which align with the mission of higher education institutions.

3. Social and Institutional Readiness

In addition to quantitative data, qualitative findings from interviews with lecturers and curriculum experts shed light on the broader social and institutional context in which the proposed program would be implemented. Three dominant themes emerged from this qualitative analysis: (1) strong societal demand, (2) alignment with internationalization goals, and (3) challenges in human resources and materials.

3.1 Strong Societal Demand

Respondents consistently emphasized that demand for Mandarin proficiency is rapidly growing, particularly in urban areas, industrial centers, and tourism regions closely linked to Chinese investment. According to one academic informant, "Mandarin is no longer optional; it is becoming a strategic necessity in many sectors, especially in companies that work with Chinese partners or markets."

It confirms reporting from national economic data and aligns with Sari and Hadi's (2021b) finding that Indonesian students increasingly choose Mandarin courses due to perceived employability benefits. The societal demand, therefore, serves as a strong background factor that supports the program's relevance and sustainability.

In feasibility studies, societal demand functions as a critical external variable. A program may be academically strong, but without societal support, it may fail to attract long-term investment and interest. In this study, however, the data indicate that society – particularly the younger generation – is not only receptive to Mandarin education but is actively seeking it.

3.2 Alignment with Internationalization and Global Education Goals

The second dominant theme indicates that the proposed program is aligned with broader internationalization agendas in higher education. As Knight (2020) argues, internationalization is no longer limited to student exchange programs, but also includes curriculum internationalization and multilingual education.

Respondents stated that a Mandarin Language Education Program would contribute to:

- Strengthening international partnerships
- Supporting student and faculty exchange programs
- Enhancing institutional reputation
- Encouraging intercultural research collaboration

In this sense, the program becomes part of the university's strategic positioning within the global academic community, particularly relevant in Indonesian higher education, which is increasingly aiming to become globally competitive while maintaining local identity.

3.3 Human Resource and Curriculum Challenges

Despite strong support, respondents also acknowledged several challenges that need to be addressed. The most frequently mentioned concerns were the limited availability of qualified Mandarin educators and the scarcity of locally contextualized teaching materials. Similar challenges have been reported by Zhang and Yi (2024), who identified human resource limitations as a major barrier to the expansion of Mandarin programs in Southeast Asia.

However, rather than serving as a deterrent, these challenges were interpreted as areas requiring strategic planning. Suggestions included (1) Establishing partnerships with Chinese universities; (2) Sending lecturers for advanced training or certification; (3) Collaborating with Confucius Institutes; and (4) Developing localized curricular content based on Indonesian cultural contexts.

These recommendations demonstrate that the challenges are manageable and solvable, provided that institutional commitment and policy support are present.

From a theoretical perspective, addressing these challenges also aligns with Kramersch's (2019) view that language education must be rooted in local contexts rather than relying solely on foreign models. A contextualized Mandarin curriculum that reflects Indonesian realities would not only enhance learning effectiveness but also preserve cultural balance.

4. Integration with Theory and Previous Research

The findings of this study are consistent with multiple theoretical and empirical perspectives. From an intercultural standpoint, the program aligns with Byram's (2021) model of intercultural competence, which integrates language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and critical awareness. By introducing Mandarin education at the university level, students gain the opportunity to develop these competencies in relation to one of the world's most influential cultures.

From a global education planning perspective, the results echo the views of Altbach and de Wit (2020a), who emphasize that higher education must respond to geopolitical and economic

transformations by updating its academic offerings. The proposed program represents such a response, as it is grounded in data-driven assessment rather than solely institutional ambition.

Furthermore, the study extends previous research by providing empirical evidence from Indonesia, a context that has been underrepresented in international studies on Mandarin education. As such, it contributes original insights to the global discourse on language planning and program feasibility.

Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative findings present a cohesive and persuasive argument for the academic and social feasibility of establishing a Mandarin Language Education Program in Indonesian higher education. Strong student interest, positive perceptions of relevance, societal demand, and alignment with global educational trends all converge to support this initiative.

Rather than simply proposing an academic addition, this program represents a strategic educational response to global change, preparing Indonesian students to participate actively in international networks while strengthening intercultural understanding. The findings also indicate that the program has the potential to serve not only as an academic specialization but also as a vehicle for cultural diplomacy, human resource development, and national competitiveness in the global arena.

Beyond the immediate findings of high interest and strong perceived importance, this study's results carry broader implications for educational planning, national development, and cultural positioning in the global arena. In an era characterized by rapid geopolitical shifts and increasing interdependence among nations, possessing diverse linguistic capital is no longer a luxury but a fundamental necessity. Mandarin, in particular, has emerged as a critical linguistic resource as China's influence expands in trade, technology, higher education, tourism, and international diplomacy. Therefore, integrating Mandarin into formal teacher education is not merely a local institutional decision; it is a strategic move aligned with global structural changes.

The overwhelmingly positive student perception revealed in this study can also be interpreted as a reflection of a broader generational shift in mindset. Indonesian youth today are more globally oriented, digitally connected, and exposed to international realities than any previous generation. Through social media, digital platforms, international news, and transnational cultural products, they witness firsthand China's growing presence in global affairs. As a result, their motivation to learn Mandarin does not stem purely from academic curiosity, but from a concrete vision of their future selves as active participants in regional and global networks. It aligns closely with the concept of "future self-guides" articulated in contemporary motivation theory (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2021), in which learners' choices are increasingly shaped by their imagined professional and social identities in a globalized world.

From an institutional perspective, establishing a Mandarin Language Education Program could catalyze broader curricular innovation. It opens the door to interdisciplinary integration with other fields such as international relations, tourism studies, international trade, translation studies, and cross-cultural communication. In other words, the program has the potential to function as an academic hub that connects multiple disciplines, encouraging collaborative research, joint projects, and innovative pedagogical practices. Such institutional synergy is often associated with higher academic visibility and stronger international recognition (Altbach & de Wit, 2020b).

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that implementing this program carries symbolic significance within the broader national discourse on multiculturalism and multilingual education.

Indonesia has long been recognized for its linguistic diversity, with hundreds of local languages coexisting alongside the national language. By adding Mandarin to the official academic offerings, the university is not undermining local languages, but rather affirming its commitment to linguistic plurality and intercultural openness. When carefully designed with a strong grounding in Indonesian values and identity, Mandarin education can become a bridge rather than a threat, enabling students to engage globally while remaining rooted in their own cultural heritage. It aligns closely with UNESCO's (2022) vision of education as a force for fostering dialogue among cultures rather than homogenization.

In addition, the program holds the potential to strengthen people-to-people diplomacy between Indonesia and Mandarin-speaking communities worldwide. Graduates of the program could play vital roles in diplomacy, business negotiations, education, cultural exchange, tourism development, and international cooperation projects. In this sense, they are not merely language teachers or translators, but cultural mediators who carry the responsibility of shaping mutual understanding between societies. Such a role is increasingly significant in a world where misunderstandings across cultures can lead to economic tension, social conflict, or political instability.

The challenges identified in this study, particularly those related to human resources and instructional materials, should therefore be viewed not as barriers but as opportunities. They highlight the need for strategic investment in lecturer training, international collaboration, curriculum localization, and the development of materials. Universities that successfully address such challenges often emerge as pioneers and reference points for similar initiatives at the national and regional levels. By committing to long-term capacity building, the institution can position itself as a national center for Mandarin language education and cross-cultural studies in Indonesia.

Ultimately, the findings of this research suggest that the proposed Mandarin Language Education Program is not only feasible, but timely and necessary. It responds directly to students' aspirations, aligns with labor-market realities, supports national and regional development, and reflects the evolving demands of global citizenship in the 21st century. Rather than an isolated academic initiative, the program represents a visionary response to contemporary challenges, integrating linguistic competence, intercultural awareness, and strategic foresight.

If implemented with careful planning, strong leadership, and sustained institutional commitment, the program has the potential to become a transformative force in Indonesian higher education. It can empower a new generation of students to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries with confidence, competence, and critical awareness, thus contributing not only to their individual success but also to the broader advancement of Indonesian society in the global community.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the academic and social feasibility of establishing a Mandarin Language Education Program in Indonesian higher education by analyzing students' perceptions, institutional readiness, and broader socio-cultural dynamics. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative data, the findings present a coherent and compelling case for establishing the proposed program.

The quantitative data revealed an exceptionally high level of student interest, with more than 95% of respondents indicating high to very high enthusiasm toward enrolling in a Mandarin Language Education Program. This overwhelming positivity indicates that the program would be met with strong initial and sustained demand. The absence of low-interest responses further reinforces the

conclusion that resistance or indifference toward Mandarin learning among the student population is minimal.

In addition, students' perception of the importance of Mandarin was consistently rated "very high" across multiple dimensions: global communication, career opportunities, academic relevance, and cultural understanding. This multidimensional valuation demonstrates that students do not see Mandarin merely as a foreign language subject, but as a strategic competence that supports their future academic and professional trajectories. These perceptions are aligned with contemporary theories of language motivation, which emphasize the role of learners' imagined future identities and global orientation (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2021), as well as with global education trends that position Asian languages as increasingly vital for international engagement (OECD, 2021; UNESCO, 2022).

From a qualitative perspective, interviews with lecturers and curriculum experts revealed a strong awareness of the growing societal and economic demand for Mandarin proficiency in Indonesia. Respondents highlighted the relevance of Mandarin in sectors such as tourism, trade, foreign investment, diplomacy, and intercultural mediation. The proposed program was also viewed as consistent with the university's broader goals of internationalization, global competitiveness, and academic diversification. These perspectives confirm that the initiative is not only desired by students but also supported by informed academic stakeholders.

Although challenges related to human resources and limited locally contextualized teaching materials were identified, these challenges are not unique to this institution and have been documented in similar contexts throughout Southeast Asia (Zhang & Yi, 2024). Importantly, such challenges are manageable through strategic planning, professional development programs, international partnerships, and curriculum innovation. Rather than undermining the program's feasibility, these challenges highlight key areas for institutional investment and long-term capacity building.

Taken together, the findings of this research indicate that establishing a Mandarin Language Education Program in Indonesian higher education is both academically justified and socially relevant. It responds directly to students' aspirations, aligns with labor-market realities, and supports national and regional development strategies in an increasingly interconnected Asia-Pacific environment. More broadly, it represents an educational response to global change and confirms the growing importance of multilingual and intercultural competence in the 21st century.

Therefore, this study concludes that the proposed program is not only feasible, but strategically urgent. It has the potential to become a transformative academic initiative that equips Indonesian students with the linguistic, cultural, and cognitive tools necessary to participate actively and ethically in global society.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that higher education institutions in Indonesia seriously consider establishing a Mandarin Language Education Program as part of a strategic effort to strengthen global competitiveness and internationalize the curriculum. The program should be designed through a contextualized approach that integrates linguistic competence, intercultural understanding, and the real needs of both domestic and international labor markets. In addition, the development of human resource capacity through intensive lecturer training, partnerships with overseas institutions, and the creation of locally grounded teaching materials is essential. Strong institutional policy support and cross-sector collaboration are also crucial to ensure that the program not only meets students' academic interests but also contributes meaningfully to

human resource development, cultural diplomacy, and Indonesia's readiness to engage more actively in the increasingly interconnected Asia-Pacific and global arenas.

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