

Indonesian public diplomacy on education in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Based on BPS RI records in 2022, the number of Vietnamese visiting Indonesia have increased but still relatively low at 68,067 people. Therefore, public diplomacy is needed by Indonesia for the Vietnamese. Public diplomacy can be carried out from various fields, to fulfill the national interests of a country. This research will explain the public diplomacy conducted by Indonesia in Vietnam. This research was written using a qualitative method with data derived from previous journals, articles, social media, data from the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC, and interviews that the author conducted with scholarship awardees from the Indonesian government, lecturers and students from the Indonesian Studies Program USSH VNU HCMC, and lecturers and students from BIPA HCMCOU. As a result, it is found that the form of public diplomacy carried out by Indonesia is in the form of scholarships from the Indonesian government for Vietnamese, Indonesian Study Program USSH VNU HCMC, and BIPA HCMCOU. The Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC has contributed to public diplomacy on education and successfully enhance Indonesia's positive image in Ho Chi Minh City.

Keywords:

diplomatic relations; public diplomacy; education; Indonesia; Vietnam

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INTRODUCTION

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is in the Eastern part of Southeast Asia. The capital of Vietnam is Hanoi, which located in the Northern part of Vietnam. Meanwhile, this research will focus on Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) which is located in the Southern part of Vietnam, as the largest city in Vietnam. In 2023, the population of Vietnam is estimated to reach 100,380,000 people. Vietnam is a country with a one-party system. Vietnam's greatest resource lies in its educated and energetic people. Vietnam's economy has experienced significant growth since the late 1990s, with tourism, manufacturing income, exports and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita increasing rapidly. This increase was followed by the opening of national markets to international market competition at the beginning of the

21st century. Not to mention, Vietnam is also part of the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Siregar et al., 2023).

In terms of education itself, Vietnamese society still adheres to the Confucian tradition of prioritizing education. In the 1990s, there was considerable restructuring in Vietnamese higher education. There was a merger between Hanoi University and other institutions and faculties which eventually became the Vietnam National University (VNU). The location of the VNU campus itself is divided into 2, namely VNU Hanoi and VNU Ho Chi Minh City. VNU itself is the largest multi-disciplinary campus for higher education in Vietnam. Apart from that, there was the construction of new universities in the 1990s, followed by an increase in the number of teachers/lecturers in Vietnam. Unfortunately this increase in the education sector was not accompanied by a comparable network expansion to improve the university's relations with external parties. The literacy level in Vietnamese society is quite high, which is accompanied by a lot of training in the fields of science and technology, and market reforms, both economic and business, and many students are starting to be sent abroad every year (Bodewig et al., 2014; Hickey et al., 2024).

Diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Vietnam have been running well for 68 years. Since the first Indonesian diplomatic representation was established in Hanoi in 1955, Indonesia and Vietnam have also become part of several international organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the East Asian Forum. Cooperation between the two countries began with bilateral cooperation, which was inaugurated in June 2003. Bilateral cooperation then escalated to a higher level, namely Strategic Partnership in May 2005 in celebration of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic cooperation between Indonesia and Vietnam (Ilham, 2019; Manurung, 2021).

The scope of this research covers the Working Area of the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Ho Chi Minh City. The following is a map of the working area of the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Ho Chi Minh City:

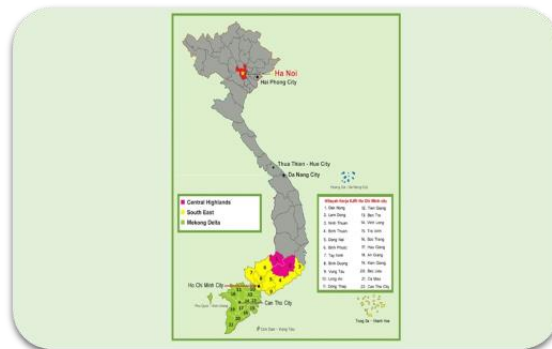


Figure 1. Map of the working area of the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC
Source: Indonesian Consulate General HCMC Working Area website

This research will discuss public diplomacy carried out by Indonesia in the field of education in the working area of the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Ho Chi Minh City in 2023. It is hoped that this research can become a media for seeing the realization of the success of public diplomacy carried out by Indonesia and providing input or suggestions for programs that will be implemented in the future.

Public diplomacy is defined as an activity built for long-term relationships, with the aim of building two-way relationships and trust through a public approach (Melissen, 2005). Hayden (2017) said that public diplomacy can take the form of exchange programs, international broadcast programs, cultural diplomacy, and messages in campaigns. And

these activities must be two-way, not only prioritizing the interests of the first party, but also considering the interests of the target. Public diplomacy itself is considered an important thing nowadays, because the public diplomacy of a government or country can get the attention or favor of the foreign public, which will also have an influence on the government. The increase in the field of communication and information is also one of the aspects that influences public opinion towards something, and the public opinion that is created can be an aspect of consideration in making public policy (Snow, 2008), and finally succeeded in influencing things in the government indirectly (Gilboa, 2008). Nye (2008) believes that exchange programs can be more effective in achieving the goal of gaining soft power than activities such as broadcasting, because exchange programs are two-way interactions, and broadcasting is a one-way activity.

Soft Power is a form of "power" in the world of international relations. According to Nye (2021) Soft power means achieving power with a gentler approach, without coercion, and like a magnet that attracts targets closer by itself. Nye (2008) mentions the definition that soft power is "The ability to influence others to obtain desired results through attraction rather than coercion and payment".

It is explained that the activities carried out to obtain soft power must be activities that attract the attention of the target, so that the changes or results of the soft power that will be obtained later occur at the will of the target itself, not under coercion from any party (Trisni et al., 2023). Soft Power which focuses on the ability to attract the attention of the target/other party. Thus, it requires the ability to analyze what they like and attract their attention. Nye himself believes that exchange programs are much more effective in achieving the goal of gaining soft power than relying on broadcasting activities, because exchange activities are considered a two-way interaction, and broadcasting is only one-way (Nye, 2008).

The author used 2 articles as references in this research. First Article i.e. *"The role of international education on public diplomacy: the case of Kosovo International Summer Academy"* (Hajdari et al., 2024). This research explains how *"Kosovo International Summer Academy (KSA)"*, was able to change the participants' perspective regarding Kosovo. In both historical and temporary contexts, countries have implemented exchanges in education as a means to promote their country globally and create *people-to-people relations*. *Student Mobility Programs (SMP)* or student exchange programs can be said to be an important element for promotional activities and as emphasized by Efsthopoulos (2015) *SMPs* It can be said to be a powerful public diplomacy tool or medium in helping to create relationships between students and their *host countries*.

According to Bettie (2020) many activities that bring people from different countries to interact directly, which also have a purpose and last for a certain period of time. Over time, the other side of this scholarship will involve a globalized world and targets, with the aim of becoming an instrument that connects "culture, attitudes and behavior, builds and manages relationships, influences thinking and acts of change that benefits their interests and values" (Gregory, 2011; Limani & Limani, 2022).

In this research there is a survey conducted on KSA alumni. Questions were prepared to determine the perceptions and attitudes of KSA participants in 3 time stages: before, during, and after participating in KSA. Some of the questions asked were: *"Was your participation in Kosovo International Summer Academy the first time you visited Kosovo?"*, *"Would you go back to Kosovo if you had the chance?"*, and *"After participating in KSA, would or would not recommend others to visit Kosovo?"*. The responses from the participants are depicted in graphical form which is divided into various answers from the respondents.

The results of this research show that international education has its own strengths that influence the behavior and attitudes of international visitors, and their desire to remain "connected" with the country concerned. The most significant impression that most of the participants from KSA felt about Kosovo was its people, history, friendliness and beauty, the connection being stronger between the image of the country of Kosovo and its people and history, rather than its language, food and nightlife. KSA participants' own perceptions changed after being associated with KSA, this suggests that *people-to-people* Diplomacy is the most effective method in changing a person's perception of a country's image, by focusing on elements such as the environment, history, and human relations.

This article contributes to the assessment of how international education programs are viewed from a public diplomacy perspective. Viewed from a public policy perspective, this article suggests that international education programs can be a useful tool or medium for small countries to not only influence the perspectives of international visitors, but also shape and improve their image.

The second article is entitled "*International student experience in Indonesia and public diplomacy consequences: Governance of Darmasiswa program*" (Sutjipto et al., 2023). This research discusses the darmasiswa program as Indonesian public diplomacy in the education sector which is run by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology. It was explained that the Ministry of Education and Culture is considering 7 pillars of public diplomacy (*public advocacy, reasons and rationale, constant, truthful, and credible, specific audiences, communication channels, alliances and partnerships, dialogue and exchange*) in carrying out its mission. The darmasiswa program itself is a program established by the state as an effort to improve international relations through positive student experiences. Various communication strategies were developed to support this program and its mission. Apart from the Ministry of Education and Culture, this program also includes: *track diplomacy* first and second as the strategy.

Many countries try to fulfill their national interests through education. Indonesia itself is still experiencing difficulties in attracting international students. Based on data from ICEF Monitor, The number of international students in Indonesia is still small, which is disappointing. Because based on QS, universities in Indonesia are part of the best universities (Rosser, 2018). Indonesia also offers many other benefits, such as its natural beauty, but it is also a multi-ethnic country with more than 300 islands. Apart from that, Indonesia also has the largest economic movement in Southeast Asia, has the fourth largest population in the world, is one of the countries with an active democratic system in East Asia and the Pacific, and has a low cost of living (Shaturaev, 2021; The World Bank, 2023).

There are several reasons why Indonesia is having difficulty attracting international students. Previous research (OECD and Asian Development Bank) stated that these 2 reasons include that Indonesian higher education is not yet widely known abroad and has limited promotional access, secondly it is related to Indonesia's image in the international world. Indonesian higher education is not yet widely known and is usually known as an unsafe developing country in view of various incidents of terrorism, demonstrations and crime (Nainggolan, 2018). This is important because based on several previous studies, the image of the destination country and the perception of the risks (good and bad) that exist are considerations for most foreign students (Gardiner & Kwek, 2016; Ghazarian, 2016; Pawar et al., 2020; Rohrer & Warren, 2011).

The darmasiswa program itself was designed by the Ministry of Education and Culture as an effort to carry out public diplomacy through the education sector. A program created to attract or bring international students through a scholarship program to promote and increase their interest in Indonesian language and culture through learning experiences, at

the same time as forming their understanding of Indonesia directly. It is hoped that the darmasiswa program can change the attitude of foreign students towards the Indonesian environment by creating it based on reality, not just based on its stereotype. And they can be *ambassadors* or *actors* who spread messages and impressions about Indonesia in their home countries. This program can spark understanding, image enhancement, closer relationships, and efforts to attract more international students.

In this research, it is discussed that Indonesia has implemented the 7 pillars of public diplomacy as an effort to succeed in its national interests, namely conducting public diplomacy. In the future, it is hoped that further awareness and understanding will be created among the wider community regarding the importance of education as part of public diplomacy.

METHOD

This research method is a qualitative method. The qualitative method is by collecting data in written form from previous journals, articles, social media, as well as data from the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). This research will explain the public diplomacy carried out by Indonesia in Vietnam in 2023. The author also conducted interviews to add the necessary data. The author conducted interviews with 8 people, namely 2 Darmasiswa awardees in 2023, 1 Indonesian Language and Arts Scholarship (BSBI) awardees in 2023, 2 lecturers and 3 students from the Indonesian Study Program of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities - Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (USSH VNU HCMC), and 1 lecturer and 2 students from the Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) Ho Chi Minh City Open University (HCMCOU). All interviewees were Vietnamese, and the 3 awardees of the scholarship that the author interviewed were the same students as the Indonesian Studies Program students of USSH VNU HCMC. The author created 5 different questionnaires for the interviewees.

From the interviews that the author conducted, the author analyzed the answers from the interviewees using the narrative analysis method. Afterwards, the author chose which answers are more relevant to be used as data and discussed with the topic of this research. Choosing which data and information is needed is very important to facilitate the process of this research in the future, both in discussion and conclusions.

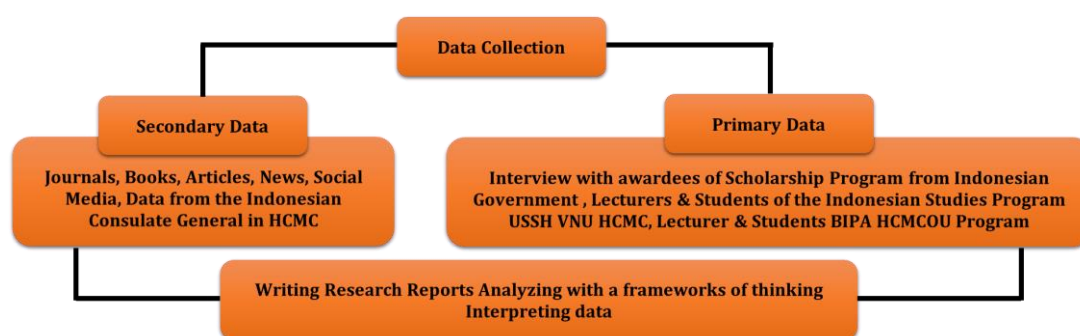


Figure 2. Research method framework
Source: Edited by author, June 3, 2024

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As Indonesia's representative in Ho Chi Minh City, the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC has a mission written in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan (RENSTRA), one of these missions is "Improving the positive image of Indonesia in the working area of the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC". The positive image of Indonesia referred to here is the positive

perception that other actors believe in towards Indonesia in international relations, which is expected to increase in the sense that it is better than before.

Apart from that, in the section explaining the general conditions in the fields of Information, Social and Culture in the SWOT analysis, it is written that "The general perception of Vietnamese people who do not know much about Indonesia" is one of the *threats* faced by the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC. Therefore, in order to implement this mission, the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC formulated strategic goals to be achieved in the 2020-2024 period, namely reaching number 4 (scale 5) in terms of the Indonesian Image index in the working area of the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC.

Table 1. Policy and strategy direction matrix

Direction Policy by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Strategy by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Representative Strategy
Improved Indonesia's positive image in the international world	- Increasing the role of non-government actors in inclusive public diplomacy - Utilizing conventional and digital media networks to promote Indonesia's image abroad	- Increasing the role of non-government actors in inclusive public diplomacy in the working area of the Indonesian Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City - Utilizing conventional and digital media networks to promote Indonesia's image in the working area of the Indonesian Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City

Source: RENSTRA of the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC for 2020-2024

As stated in the author's findings regarding the missions of Indonesian foreign missions, the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in Ho Chi Minh City also contributed to improving the positive image of Indonesia in Ho Chi Minh City. A positive image for a country in the foreign public can be achieved by conducting public diplomacy. Public diplomacy itself is needed to promote Indonesia to the foreign public. The public diplomacy carried out must attract the target's attention without coercion from any party. The success of a country in conducting public diplomacy can fulfill and protect the national interests of the country concerned, such as the economy with export-import, tourism, etc.

The following are some of the author's findings regarding public diplomacy carried out by the Indonesian government through the education sector in the working area of the Indonesian Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City. The author will categorize the list of programs into 3, namely the Scholarship Program from the Indonesian Government, the Indonesian Study Program *University of Social Sciences and Humanities-Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City* (USSH VNU), and the Indonesian Language Program for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) *Ho Chi Minh City Open University* (HCMCOU).

In the first finding, the author found that Indonesia offers several scholarship programs to foreign students regularly every year, including Vietnam. The author also conducted interviews with the scholarship awardees. The Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC contributes to this public diplomacy effort by facilitating the necessary information for interested Vietnamese students. Apart from that, the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC also assisted in providing letters of recommendation for participants, and assisted in the selection process by conducting interviews with candidates for several scholarships. The scholarships that will be explained here are scholarships specifically for foreign citizens to study Indonesian culture and language. In the first category, there are several programs available, including:

Darmasiswa Scholarship. The Darmasiswa program is a program from the Ministry of Education and Culture (Kemdikbud) in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kemlu) of the Republic of Indonesia, and has been held since 1974. There are 72 universities

registered as partners of this scholarship program. Darmasiswa is a scholarship program that targets overseas students from countries that have diplomatic relations with Indonesia.

The initial idea for the Darmasiswa scholarship itself was created as part of an initiative *Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (ASEAN) with the aim of promoting and increasing interest in Indonesian language and culture among youth in other countries. This program currently has a total of 135 participating countries. All expenses from *awardees* will be borne by the organizer, namely the Ministry of Education and Culture, except for plane tickets for scholarship recipients going to and returning from Indonesia. (Scholarship Website)

According to information that the author obtained from the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC, there are 22 students from Vietnam who had succeeded in becoming darmasiswa scholarship awardees in 2023, and all of them come from Ho Chi Minh City. The author had the opportunity to conduct interviews with 2 awardees of the Darmasiswa scholarship program for the 2023 period *online* through *google form* on January 11, 2024.

The first awardee, Le Thi Ngoc Sang, is a student at the Indonesian Study Program USSH VNU HCMC. With her interest in Indonesia and her desire to develop her ability to communicate using Indonesian, Sang decided to enroll in this program. Sang was placed at the Language Center at Airlangga University. Sang was able to follow the lessons smoothly and did not experience any difficulties because she already had basic Indonesian in her study program.

The second awardee is, Tran Thi Kieu Trinh. Trinh has the same background as Sang, namely a student at the Indonesian Studies Program USSH VNU HCMC. Trinh said that as a student in the Indonesian Studies Program, her biggest dream was to study in Indonesia, and see Indonesia directly through her eyes, not just from books. Trinh wants to explore the culture of Indonesia, as well as directly apply the language she studied during college with native Indonesian speakers. Trinh was placed at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang with the Indonesian Language Study Program. Trinh stated that at UMM itself, a test system was implemented for Indonesian language skills for foreign students, and Trinh was placed at the level of students who had previously studied and had basic Indonesian. Trinh admitted that it was not difficult to adapt and understand the materials explained by the lecturer.

Trinh also gave advice to students who are interested in taking part in this scholarship program, namely to do research first about Indonesia, to reduce culture shock. You also have to open your heart and take advantage of the 10 months you have to improve your knowledge of Indonesian culture and language skills.

Indonesian Arts and Culture Scholarship (BSBI). This scholarship program started in 2003 and is organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kemlu). This program is held for 2 months, during which time participants can experience studying Indonesian art, culture and local wisdom directly at several arts centers in Indonesia, which at the end of the event will be displayed at *Indonesian Channel*. To date, the BSBI program has alumni from 83 countries.

The BSBI program in 2023 limits the number of participants to 32 people to maintain the quality of the program carried out. Several things are taken into consideration, namely the background of the prospective participant, gender, regional representation, and most importantly their interest in studying Indonesian culture (BSBI Guidance 2023). In BSBI 2023, of the 32 participants, 2 participants came from Vietnam. 1 of the 2 students comes from Ho Chi Minh City. And the author succeeded in conducting interviews with these students online through *google form* on January 11, 2024.

The scholarship awardee is Mai Diep Yen Nhi (Nuri). Nuri has a background as a fourth year student majoring in Indonesian studies at USSH VNU HCMC. The 2023 BSBI Scholarship

is a fully funded scholarship for their awardees. Nuri was placed at Kutai Kartanegara University. Nuri stated that she could understand the lesson thoroughly because she had previously studied Indonesian for 3 years.

Developing Countries Partnership Scholarship (KNB). The KNB Scholarship is the result or form of program realization of Indonesia's contribution to *Non-Aligned Movement* (NAM). This scholarship was published in the 10th Conference in *Heads of States of Non-Aligned Movement* (MALE) countries. This conference was held from September 1-6, 1992. This program is a manifestation of Indonesia's efforts as one of the founders of NAM who has the desire to collaborate with other developing country partners. The government of the Republic of Indonesia began providing scholarships for students with potential from NAM member countries at that time.

However, in 2002 with a lot of interest from the global public, this program was finally not only provided to NAM member countries, but was also opened to other developing countries in Asia, the Pacific, South America, Africa and Eastern Europe. The opening of opportunities for this scholarship program was also made official by naming this scholarship program the Developing Country Partnership (KNB).

The KNB scholarship program has been running since 2006. This scholarship program is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (Kemdikbud), the program offered by the KNB Scholarship program starts from *Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral Degree*. Until 2023, there are 27 universities that have become partners in placing recipients of this scholarship program. (*Guidelines KNB Scholarship 2023*).

The author found data in one of the uploads on the website of the Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Diponegoro University, with the title "[BATCH 2] KNB 2023 Selection Results (repost from KNB Kemendikbud)" on June 20, 2023. The upload attaches a circular or announcement letter from Ministry of Education and Culture regarding KNB scholarship recipients in the 2nd period. In 2023, Vietnam succeed in sending 1 student to undertake a Master's Degree through this scholarship program. The student's name is Le Ngoc Long. It was stated in the circular that Long was accepted into the Aerospace Engineering Study Program (*Aerospace Engineering*) at Bandung University of Technology (ITB).

Indonesian Study Program-University of Social Sciences and Humanities-Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (USSH VNU HCMC)

On their Facebook page, it was explained that this Study Program has been established for 30 years from 1993 until now. Previously, Indonesian Studies Program is under the auspices Southeast Asia Study Program, but in 2016 it finally separated into 2 different study program which are Indonesian Study Program and Thailand Study Program. (Bộ môn Indonesia học - Department of Indonesian Studies, USSH, VNU)

The USSH VNU HCMC Indonesian Study Program is one of the campuses that is familiar to the scholarships mentioned above. With the scholarship requirements requiring that selected foreign students be students who have an interest in studying Indonesian language and culture, and this department specifically teaches its students these topics, students from this study program have a very big opportunity to be able to take part in the scholarship program provided by the Indonesian government.

The author had the opportunity to conduct interviews with 2 lecturers from the USSH VNU HCMC Study Program directly at the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC on January 8, 2024. The first lecturer was named Ton Thi Thuy Trang (Cinta). Based on information from Mrs. Cinta, when it was first established, namely 1993-2008, this department only appeared once every 2 years, with a total of 15-20 students every time it was opened every

2 years. However, from 2010 until now this program has been opened every year, with around 25 students each year. Mrs. Cinta also said that previously, there were BIPA lecturers who were regularly sent by the Ministry of Education and Culture to become teachers in the Indonesian Studies Program. But with the emergence of *Coronavirus Disease* In 2020, this routine was stopped until now. The Study Program and University have not yet contacted the Ministry of Education and Culture to discuss this issue.

Currently, there are still BIPA teachers in Indonesia who teach through the online online zoom meeting. And sometimes there are visits from universities in Indonesia, whose lecturers give guest lectures on Indonesian culture. This Study Program has also collaborated with many universities in Indonesia, such as Gadjah Mada University, Diponegoro University, Padjadjaran University, Jenderal Soedirman University, Ngurah Rai University, Andalas University, Indonesian Education University, Muhammadiyah University of Malang, Semarang State University. Forms of collaboration between these universities are student and lecturer exchanges, joint research on culture and linguistics, and comparative studies.

Mrs. Cinta also said that the job prospects for graduates of this Study Program are quite broad because mastering a foreign language (Indonesian) is the basis for studying foreign countries such as the opportunity to work in Indonesian companies., tourism sector, marketing sales, nor telecommunication translator speak Indonesian, join a company from Vietnam that wants to expand its business to Indonesia, and become the basis or capital for researching countries in the Southeast Asia region or research about Indonesia.

Interview with the second lecturer, named Ho Ngoc Hieu. Based on Mr. Hieu's statement, this study program was founded in 1993 when Vietnam began to open cooperation with foreign countries. When the Southeast Asian Studies Program was separated into 2 different departments, the choice of Indonesia was supported by the desire to collaborate with Indonesia on sea routes. In addition, opportunities are also seen to learn Indonesian. Looking from the foreign cooperation between the two related countries, namely Vietnam and Indonesia, especially in the economic sector.

The Indonesian language learning system in the USSH Indonesian Study Program is divided into basic level (semester 1 and 2), intermediate level (semester 3 and 4), and advanced level (semester 5 and 6). At these 3 levels, learning is divided into several focuses, such as reading, listening, writing and grammar for speaking. Followed by levels 7 and 8 which are divided into various concentrations and their practices, such as tourism and offices. Learning in the Indonesian study program focuses on several areas, namely learning about economics, history, language, politics and Indonesian culture. Apart from that, there are also other courses taught in Vietnamese.

The focus of learning in this study program is language, but several other areas are also taught so that students who graduate from this study program not only understand Indonesian, but also understand other information about the country of Indonesia. In the tourism concentration, the practicum carried out is a simulation of being a tour guide in class, explaining the history of a place, answering questions related to the tour, and others. And in class, the lecturers try to use Indonesian as often as possible. Apart from that, another technique used by lecturers to make students interested and familiar with Indonesian is playing songs and films in Indonesian.

The promotional page used by the university is the website faculty page or panfage facebook USSH Indonesian study program. Indonesian study programs are usually more active on Facebook fan pages because Vietnamese people are more active on facebook than other social media. On social media, information about majors, events such as cultural

exchanges, and friendship organization also helps introduce the Indonesian Study Program to the wider community.

The author had the opportunity to conduct interviews with 3 students from the USSH VNU HCMC Study Program online via google form on January 11, 2024. The first student, Le Thi Ngoc Sang, is from the Class of 2019. Sang got information about this study program through the Indonesian Consulate General HCMC's Facebook fanpage. Sang already had previous knowledge of Indonesia and wanted to go to Indonesia to learn more directly. Sang also participated in a news reading competition at Sunan Ampel University, Surabaya, with one week of training time. Sang hopes to have a job that uses Indonesian as the main language.

Second student, Mai Diep Yen Nhi (Nuri) from the Class of 2020. Nuri decided to enroll in this study program because she had watched her alumni sister perform Indonesian dance and was interested in learning more about Indonesia from her interest in Indonesian culture. Nuri is one of the awardees of an Indonesian scholarship, namely the BSBI class of 2023. Nuri hopes to become a tour guide or Indonesian language teacher.

The third student, Tran Thi Kieu Trinh from the Class of 2019. Trinh got information about this study program from the USSH VNU (Ho Chi Minh City) Facebook Fanpage post. Trinh decided to enroll in this study program after being impressed by the welcoming event for new students class of 2019. During the learning period in this study program, Trinh felt that she really enjoyed the learning process, especially with the diversity of cultures that Indonesia has, Trinh had a desire to know about regional culture of Indonesia in more detail. Trinh is very active in this study program. Trinh is recorded as having been Chair of the Indonesian Language Department Dance Group in 2022. Trinh and her dance group have performed Indonesian dances at cultural and diplomatic exchange events between Southeast Asian countries inside and outside the campus environment. Currently, Trinh is preparing to become a translator in 3 languages, namely English, Indonesian and Vietnamese.

Indonesian for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) Ho Chi Minh City Open University (HCMCOU)

Ho Chi Minh City Open University was founded in 1990, and officially became a public university in 2006. Ho Chi Minh Open University is also one of the famous universities that provides distance of education in Vietnam. HCMCOU has succeeded in building extensive connections both domestically and internationally. (HCMCOU *Brief Explanation & Brochure*)

BIPA teaching at HCMCOU is carried out in the faculty's Southeast Asian studies program Sociology - Social Work - Southeast Asian Studies. Indonesian Language is one of the second language options that must be taken by second year students of the Southeast Asian studies program. BIPA teaching is divided into 5 levels. Currently, there is only one lecturer for BIPA learning at HCMCOU.

HCMCOU has a Club aimed at students interested in Indonesian language and culture. The club is called the Indonesian Language and Culture Club (BABUD Club). This club was founded on the own initiative of HCMCOU students. This club is a place to share knowledge about Indonesia, which helps its members to get information, learn, as well as promotional media for students who have skills in cultural knowledge, language, and job vacancies in Indonesian companies. This club also helps its members to improve their language skills, for partners to practice their Indonesian language skills. Members of this club are not only from the Southeast Asian Studies Program who study BIPA, but from other departments as well. (Ngôn ngữ và Văn hóa Indonesia-Facebook Page BABUD Club).

The author had the opportunity to conduct interviews with BIPA HCMCOU lecturer online through google form on January 11, 2024. The BIPA HCMCOU lecturer is named Nguyen Thi Thu Hang (Hany). Mrs. Hany has been teaching BIPA at HCMCOU since 2021.

Indonesian started to become one of the second foreign language focus choices in the HCMCOU Southeast Asian Studies Program in 2019. According to Mrs. Hany, there are several reasons why Indonesian was chosen as one of the foreign language focus choices secondly in the Southeast Asian Studies Program, including Indonesian which is one of the languages in the Southeast Asian region, and Indonesian has several appropriate criteria to choose as an elective subject (alphabet letters that are easy to learn, Indonesian is the basis for learning more about Indonesia, and there are teachers available in Vietnam as of 2019)

Students in the HCMCOU Southeast Asian Studies Program begin selecting a second foreign language focus in their sophomore year. According to Mrs. Hany, every year there are 30-40 students who choose Indonesian as their foreign language focus, and usually all of them do not have basic knowledge of Indonesian. Regarding the separate learning system, at HCMCOU Indonesian language courses are divided into 5 levels, but this learning is not accompanied by language skills. Learning is only carried out following the integration system. Each level has 10 meetings, with a learning time of more than 3 hours/meeting.

According to Mrs. Hany, to date HCMCOU has collaborated with more than 20 campuses in Indonesia, including Muhammadiyah University Malang, Polytechnic Nusantara Surakarta, Duta Bangsa Surakarta, Achmad Yani University Banjarmasin (UVAYA), STIE Malang, and many others. According to Mrs. Hany, job prospects that can be obtained by studying BIPA can be in the field of accounting or marketing in international companies (for example the Bosch-German Company), telesales (telesales is part of the outbound contact center, where a company's contact center makes telephone calls to customers for certain business purposes), staff at an Indonesian company office in Vietnam, participating or joining a non-governmental organization (NGO), joining a tourism company, becoming an Indonesian language teacher.

The author also had the opportunity to conduct interviews with BIPA HCMCOU students online via direct messages instagram on January 10, 2024. The first student, Lê Thị Dung (Dina) from Class of 2020 HCMCOU Southeast Asian Studies Program. Dina hopes to have the opportunity to become an Indonesian language teacher. The BIPA Open University learning system uses 5 levels, and Dina can adapt to Indonesian after completing level 1

The second student, Nhat Quynh (Pramita) from Class of 2020 HCMCOU Southeast Asian Studies Program. Pramita decided to choose Indonesian because she felt that Indonesian had many similarities with English and Vietnamese, apart from that, Pramita also liked Indonesian culture. Regarding the prospects of choosing Indonesian, Pramita feels that currently Indonesian is not as popular as Chinese, Korean or Japanese, so opportunities in the field of work are definitely higher.

In the second and third findings, the existence of the Indonesian Studies Department at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities - Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (USSH VNU HCMC) and Indonesian Language learning for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) at the Ho Chi Minh City Open University (HCMCOU). Based on the results of the author's interviews with lecturers from both universities. It can be concluded that the existence of the Department of Studies and BIPA originates from the USSH and HCMCOU initiatives themselves. And Indonesia, through its representative the Indonesian Consulate General HCMC, was indirectly helped by the existence of the Department of Studies and BIPA. The Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC contributes to improving public diplomacy by fully supporting all activities held by the Department of Indonesian Studies USSH VNU HCMC and BIPA HCMCOU.

The forms of support provided by the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC are also varied, such as lending costumes and props for performances about Indonesia, helping by providing books in Indonesian, both textbooks and storybooks and financially supporting

their programs. The Indonesian Consulate General also acts as an intermediary in sending BIPA teachers to the Department of Indonesian Studies, by sending letters to the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture, and becomes an intermediary if there are universities from Indonesia that want to collaborate with USSH. Meanwhile, for HCMCOU, the Indonesian Consulate General has never sent a BIPA teacher, because the BIPA focus at HCMCOU is also relatively new. Apart from that, the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC also holds traditional dance classes every semester for students of the Indonesian Study Program of USSH and BIPA HCMCOU.

The provision of traditional dance classes came from the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC's own initiative, and was fully facilitated by providing dance instructors and providing food after they finished the class. This dance class is held every 2x / week for 1 semester. With the system, students will be divided into several groups and they or their trainer will discuss what dance they want to learn each group. This dance group will perform at major Indonesian events as well as local Vietnamese government events.

The existence of the Indonesian Study Program USSH and BIPA HCMCOU is very helpful for Indonesia. Because the chances of them passing the scholarship program from the Indonesian government are getting higher, with those who already have knowledge about Indonesia, history, culture and language, it will make them look superior to other candidates who don't have knowledge about Indonesia. 5 out of 5 students the author interviewed said they were interested in Indonesia, wanted to see and learn Indonesian culture and language directly.

In the Performance Report of the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC for 2023, one of its missions is "Improving the positive image of Indonesia in the working area of the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC". The Indonesian Image Index was obtained based on a survey that considered 3 dimensions, namely tourism and socio-culture, economy, governance and rule of law. It was noted that the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC succeeded in exceeding its target figure, and achieved 104.30% success in carrying out its mission.

Table 2. Indonesian image index in the accredited country of the Indonesian Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City

Key Performance Indicators	Performance Information	Amount
Indonesian Image Index in the Accredited Country of the Indonesian Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City	Total average index of all respondents	4.12 (scale 5)
	Total number of respondents	112 people
	Realization	4.12 (scale 5)
	Target	3.9 (scale 5)
	Achievements	104,30%

Source: e-Kinerja 2.0AKSI Application – LKJ KJRI HCMC 2023

Based on the author's interview, 3 out of 3 lecturers from USSH and HCMCOU said that they felt they had full support from the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC for their programs. In addition, 3 out of 3 awardees from the scholarship of Indonesian government said that they enjoyed their time in Indonesia, and would recommend each scholarship program they underwent to others. Based on the author's interviews, 7 out of 8 respondents said there were no specific suggestions or input for the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC regarding things that could be improved or anything like that.

CONCLUSION

With all the findings described above, it can be concluded that Indonesia has succeeded in carrying out public diplomacy in Vietnam. As the author stated previously, public diplomacy activities can help other national interests, from the economy, tourism and others. For example, BPS RI recorded that there was an increase in visits based on citizenship in

Indonesia. For Vietnam, in 2022 it will be at 68,067 people, increasing to 121,879 people in 2023 (BPS RI). This is of course related to the public diplomacy that Indonesia is carrying out throughout 2023 which ultimately resulted the strengthening of Indonesia's soft power in the form of an improved image of Indonesia among the Vietnamese people so that many people wanted to travel to our country. For the suggestion, one of the Vietnamese students that author interviewed from the HCMCOU BIPA program, suggested that in the future the Indonesian Consulate General in HCMC could coordinate other classes such as workshops, on how to process and learn to make Indonesian objects such as batik, or organize traditional Indonesian ceremonies (festivals and celebrations) because they are curious about festivals and celebrations in Indonesia.

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