

THE LIFE OF MUSLIM INDONESIAN STUDENTS IN GERMANY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

KEHIDUPAN PELAJAR MUSLIM INDONESIA DI JERMAN: TANTANGAN DAN PELUANG

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ABSTRAK

Imigrasi orang-orang yang melekat pada agama tertentu di negara yang mana sebagian besar penduduknya tidak memeluk agama yang sama selalu menjadi topik yang menarik untuk dieksplor, terutama ketika menyangkut wacana mobilitas siswa di dunia pendidikan tinggi. Banyak faktor harus diperhitungkan sebelum seseorang membuat keputusan ke negara mana untuk melanjutkan studi. Sebagai umat Islam yang mematuhi nilai-nilai agamanya, setiap faktor yang mendukung kesalahan seseorang akan dipertimbangkan. Studi ini mengeksplorasi kehidupan pelajar Indonesia Muslim yang belajar di Jerman. Studi ini berangkat dari motivasi belajar, konsep push dan pull factor yang kemudian diperkaya dengan perspektif agama. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun ada tantangan yang dihadapi para siswa ini sebagai seorang Muslim, namun masih ada peluang menarik yang mereka alami ketika tinggal di Jerman yang kemudian dianggap sangat penting dalam kaitannya dengan keislaman mereka. Menyadari pentingnya wacana semacam ini bagi para imigran Indonesia, baik itu mahasiswa maupun non-pelajar, maka perlu penelitian lebih lanjut dengan topik yang sama.

Kata kunci: Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia, Jerman, push-pull factor, pendidikan tinggi, haji

ABSTRACT

Immigration of people attached to a certain religion in a country where most of the population do not embrace the same religion has always been an interesting topic to explore, especially when it is regarding the discourse of student mobility in higher education world. A lot of factors must be taken into account before one makes a decision on which country to continue the study. As Muslims adhere to certain religious values, any factor that supports one's pioucity would be ideally weighed. This study explores the life of Muslim Indonesian students studying in Germany. Departing from the study motivation, the concept of push and pull factor is then enriched with religious perspectives. The research findings show that even though there are challenges that these students face as a Muslim, there is still an interesting opportunity that they have experienced when residing in Germany and later deem most significant in relation to their Islamicity. Realizing the importance of this kind of discourse for Indonesian immigrants, be it student or non-student, a suggestion of further research under the same topic is emphasized.

Keywords: Germany, hajj, higher education, Muslim Indonesian student, push-pull factor

INTRODUCTION

Immigration has been a major factor that shapes the Muslim population in Germany today. The first Muslims to come to Germany in large numbers were the guest workers from Turkey who started to arrive in the 1960s (Keller, 2017). The peak of the migration was between 1971 and 1973 during which around half a million of Turkish labours came (Kilinc, 2014, 5). In 1973, following the economic recession, the recruitment was banned but at the same period, the government introduced family reunification law allowing Turkish immigrants to bring their spouses and non-adult children (Oner, 2014, 72). Therefore, Turkish immigrants are currently considered the largest minority group in Germany constituting 2.4% of the total population; while German makes up 91.5 % (CIA World Factbook, 2018). In terms of religion, Germany is a Muslim-minority country with only 4.4% of the total population embracing Islam— compared to the adherents of Roman Catholic that make up 29% and Protestant that have 27% (CIA World Factbook, 2018¹). In fact, 50.6% of those Muslims are of Turkey origin (Keller, 2017).

Interestingly, dating back again in the early 1970s, Indonesians were the second largest group of foreign students in Germany after the Turkish (Welcker, 2016, 9). Although 87,2% of the total population in Indonesia are Muslim (CIA World Factbook, 2018²), Welcker (2016, 16) wrote that Christians make up less than 60% of total Indonesian immigrants in Germany³. Their presence could be explained by the fact that, in the past, it is mainly Indonesians with sufficient financial means who were able to come to Germany for study and these often have been Christian Chinese-Indonesians (Welcker, 2016). In 2015, there are 3,626 Indonesian students studying in Germany (DAAD, cited from Lestari 2016). Within this number, it is believed that the disparity of the religious belief of the students

¹ Estimation in 2015

² Estimation in 2010

³ Unfortunately, Welcker does not put the exact year of the statistics in his writing. Also, there is no accurate figure. It was based on an interview with Deutsch Indonesische Gesellschaft (Indonesian Community in Germany, DIG) Cologne in 2015. However, this rather intriguing finding is still included here.

might be varied as today there are more ways to reach Germany besides self-funding scheme, i.e. scholarship⁴ – making the opportunity to study abroad becomes more open.

The question drawn from the description above is what will happen to the Muslim Indonesian students that undergo the change of status from being part of the Muslim-majority society in Indonesia to become members of Muslim-minority community in Germany. How do they then make their adjustment process in the new country? What kind of challenges do they face? More importantly, what kind of experiences do they find in Germany that might not be found in Indonesia but are worthy to share? After all, to what extent will they still recommend Germany to their Muslim colleagues in Indonesia – who are in search of country destination for study – among other Muslim-minority countries?

Taking the results of interviews made with five Muslim Indonesian students as the source of empirical data, this article departs from the common motivation that they have when choosing Germany as their destination country for study. Then their life as a Muslim in Germany will be explored to see if Germany has special condition that could be another point of attraction for Muslims to decide the country as their study destination. This article attempts to contribute to existing literature on push and pull factor of a country as a study destination by employing Muslims' point of view in the discussion. The findings found in this research can serve as a reference for any Muslim Indonesian student before selecting a study destination country. Divided into three broad sections, the first section of this article contains the theoretical and methodological framework of the study providing a review of related literature and the data collection process. The second section presents the findings and discussion of the study. While the last section carries out a brief conclusion and suggestion for future study having the same topic.

⁴ DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), offers a vast number and types of funding opportunities and programs to foreign students so that they can study, research, and gain practical experience in Germany (Comp, 2010: 197). Popular scholarships given by Indonesian government are LPDP, *Beasiswa Unggulan*, and DIKTI (Arta 2016).

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical Framework

Two main concepts are highlighted in this research, those are the discourse of push-pull factor and third space. Those concepts suit the discussion about study abroad program very well since they cover both pre- and post-departure phase of the students. A lot of consideration must be taken even before a decision on where to study is made. The kind of goals that they want to achieve in the future becomes part of the reasons of why the students should study overseas and not remain in their country of origin. To elaborate the process of selecting a study destination, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002, 83) break it down into three stages. The first stage involves the identification of the students' "push" factor – referring to the condition in their country of origin that triggers them to study abroad, for instance, the lack of quality that universities in the country of origin offer (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). In the second stage, the students identify the "pull" factor within the destination country, meaning they search for the factors that make the country more attractive than another (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002). After being finished with the search stage, they choose an institution as the final step (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; 182).

Mazzarol and Soutar (2002, 83) elaborate the second stage further into six "pull" factors that could influence students' decision on selecting the study destination. The first factor deals with the students' level of *knowledge and awareness* of the destination country that is much influenced by the availability of information about the destination country (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002, 83). The second is any *personal recommendation* about the destination country received from other people; while the third is about *cost issues*, be it financial costs or social costs as in the case of racial discrimination (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002, 83). *Environment* such as physical climate or lifestyle in the destination country becomes the fourth factor to influence (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002, 83). The fifth factor is *geographic proximity* of the destination country to the country of origin; and the final factor is related to *social links* as

in whether there has been friends or families that have the experience of living or studying in the destination country (ibid). The concept of pull factor here will be applied in the discussion section to see any aspect that makes Germany more attractive as a study destination in the point of view of a Muslim.

Furthermore, once students are finally abroad, they will find exposures that might not be found in their country of origin. For Muslim students who move from a country where the religion is the majority, like Indonesia, to a Muslim-minority country, in this case Germany, the change of that status will enhance their understanding because of the new experiences they find in the new space. This kind of space is, based on Bill Ashcroft, also referred as "a transcultural space, a 'contact zone,' . . . that space in which cultural identity develops" (2009, 108, cited from Ghasemi, 2017, 25). When having such space, students can have more reflection on themselves that later allows them to have greater chance to undergo self-development process (Carlson et al., 2016). Bhabha suggested that this happened because people have the opportunity to take new positionings between themselves and the other (1994, cited from Zubair et al., 2017, 19) which later, to put it in the context of Muslim students, results in the stimulation of their intellectual and religious development (Carlson et al., 2016, 57). The post-departure phase encountered by the Muslim students is then evaluated to learn whether the experiences in the destination country are worth sharing or not. The discussion about third space will be directly related to the topic of the performance of Hajj – an experience in which all participants in this study deem as the most valuable one – by exploring the narration given by the students and see how they make meanings of the Hajj pilgrimage.

Methodological Framework

Primary and secondary data are used in this research. While the secondary data were collected from sources such as government publications, websites, journal articles and book chapters, the primary data were gathered

through a series of interviews and a utilization of simple questionnaire. Bearing the above research questions and theoretical framework in mind, open-ended and in-depth interviews were considered the most suitable approach to explore the experiences of each participant. A list of semi-structured questions was prepared before the interviews but rather as a guidance that could be visited once a question was done answered by the participants. Questions focused on the: challenges, difficulties, and positive experiences when living in Germany; the Hajj experience of the participants; and the extent of their personal recommendation for any Indonesian Muslim student intending to study abroad after taking the opportunity to perform the Hajj from Germany into consideration.

The technique of simple random sampling was employed within the population of 'Muslim Indonesians who were active students enrolled at a university in Germany and have had performed the Hajj during their study'. As a result, five students are set as samples in this study, but their names are kept anonymous to give them more freedom when answering the given questions. The contacts of four participants were collected from the database of the former Hajj performers that Indonesian Hajj service provider in Germany, FORKOM⁵, has, while one was from the author's personal acquaintance. All of them are students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) fields. They are,

- Participant 1: a 24-year-old female bachelor student studying at Humboldt University of Berlin and performed Hajj in 2016.
- Participant 2: a 24-year-old female bachelor student studying at Julius Liebig University of Giessen and performed Hajj in 2016.
- Participant 3: a 26-year-old male master student studying at Hafencity University of Hamburg and performed

Hajj in 2017.

- Participant 4: a 31-year-old doctorate student studying at Goethe University of Frankfurt and performed Hajj in 2017.
- Participant 5: a 38-year-old doctorate student studying at RWTH Aachen and performed Hajj in 2016.

Four interviews were made using online phone call and one was via direct meeting. They lasted between 15 and 45 minutes, were not audio-recorded but the answers were written down during interview. To ensure that all participants approve the way the data are presented, this article was distributed to them first before being submitted.

In addition to the qualitative interviewing method above, a small portion of quantitative approach is also applied in this research in form of a simple questionnaire to enrich the collection of data. The questionnaire was developed using Google Forms with only three questions to fill. The first question is an open-ended question asking about "the students' motivation for studying in Germany"; while the second and third question are modelled after the five-point Likert scale that was used to measure the level of agreement or disagreement of the participant for the following statements: a) Living in Germany as a Muslim is not difficult and b) The easiness of performing the Hajj from Germany can be taken into consideration by any Indonesian who wants to continue their study in a Muslim-minority country. In the one-to-five scale, point 1 stands for 'strongly disagree' and point 5 is for 'strongly agree'. Quantitative element added here is only with an intention to complement the qualitative data gathered from the interviews so that the author could avoid subjectivity when assessing the degree of the attitude of the participants towards two statements above that were also asked during the interview. Although the quantitative data were not analysed statistically due to the small number of the participants involved, pointing out the attitude of the participants toward two statements above using numbers that represent their level of agreement or disagreement helps the author to come up with clearer data representation. After

⁵ FORKOM (Forum for Communication of Muslim Indonesian Community in Germany) was founded in Karlsruhe in 1994 as an initiative from some Indonesian Muslim students. Not only does it bridge communication between Islamic lectures across Germany, but it also facilitates people intending to perform Hajj and Umrah during their residency in Germany as it has cooperation with a Turkish travel agent, Balcock

all, the findings will be analysed by categorizing the given answers based on the broader theme each answer belongs to and applying the theoretical framework mentioned above. Also, it is important to realize that due to the small number of participants, the results of this study cannot be generalised.

DISCUSSION

Participants' (Common) Motivation for Studying in Germany

Almost every academic discipline in Germany has a long and outstanding tradition of success. In addition to that, Luget (2014) mentions two reasons keeping Germany attractive as a destination country for study: first, excellent higher education staff members and infrastructure, and, second, no tuition fees at public universities. Based on the data gathered, four of five participants in this study have their motivation resonated with the first reason. While Participant 2 said it as “very good education quality”, Participant 3, 4, 5 testified for the advancement of technology as the pull factor that attracts them to coming to Germany to which Participant 3 specifically praised its advancement of the field of renewable energy and modern geomatics. In this part, the pull factor mentioned is about *knowledge and awareness* of the destination country, meaning that the participants were aware of the reputation for the quality of the education in Germany (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2012, 83).

Furthermore, Participant 3, combined with the statement of Participant 4, referred Germany's economic development as another consideration when deciding it as their study destination. This is true as Germany ranks fourth in both world's rankings of Human Development Index and Gross Domestic Product (UNDP, 2018; World Bank, 2016). This strong economy guarantees the students to enjoy the free tuition fee available at the public universities. “The cost for studying in Germany is not as expensive as other [first] countries,” Participant 2 supported this after making comparison to Singapore and Australia. As presented in the first section, *cost issues* can also become another factor that

influence students' decision when selecting a study destination (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2012, 83), and in here, financial costs are taken into consideration by the three participants. Meanwhile, Participant 1 stated that she did not choose Germany but rather followed her father who had to bring his family with him by reason of continuing his study in the country. Though the pull factor might not come from the internal side of the student, but the *social links* factor, “related to whether a student has family living in the destination country” (Mazzarol and Soutar, 2012, 83), happened to be the reason of Participant 1 studying in Germany. On another occasion, Participant 2 interestingly mentioned the presence of Turkish immigrants as another factor that motivates her to choose Germany as destination country. The implication of this relates to her religious factor, which is the fourth factor according to Mazzarol and Soutar namely *environment* (2012, 83). She believed that their presence could support her religious life as a Muslim that requires her to follow the lifestyle that goes along with the Islamic values. In short, each participant in this study has their own concern when it comes to motivation for studying in Germany, be it educational, economic, social, or religious factor.

The Life of Muslim Indonesia Students in Germany

Mosques and *halal* food – two things mentioned in the interviews – are the easiness that most Muslims living in Germany today can enjoy as the early immigrants already paved the way for them. As explained by Participant 4 who had the experience living in Spain, France, and the United Kingdom when doing his master, living in Germany – in this case, Frankfurt – as a Muslim is considerably easier compared to those three previous countries because of the large number of Turkish immigrants present in the city. “Back in the United Kingdom and France, I was in cities that have less access to mosques and *halal* food. I think it is not easy to find a city that is more Muslim-friendly than Frankfurt,” he added. Participant 5 supported the view that living in Germany as a Muslim is regarded easier as sometimes he still can pray five times a day at

mosque since in Aachen, there are at least five big mosques that are always busy during the prayer times. However, still, being compared to the situation that one finds in Indonesia, in Participant 4's words, "where one can spot mosques by walking (at least in the Island of Java)", finding a place to pray is somehow quite a challenge. Participant 3 also recounted that when he was at the campus and there was no mosque nearby, the students prayed under the stair. "Even when it was for the Friday prayer, Muslim students from different background would gather under the stair and then the Turkish student usually started to take the lead by giving a lecture before the prayer." As a PhD student, for Participant 4, praying when being at the campus could also mean performing the prayer in an office where he shared with his non-Muslim colleague. As he recounted, "sometimes you need to ask for permission to your colleague first before praying. Though, to my experience so far, none of my four previous colleagues ever had a problem with me praying in the office". It is also quite often to have a prayer room that is not only for Muslim as Participant 1 shared her experience of "praying in a *ruheraum* (relaxation room) that is used by all religion".

Regarding food, the participants living in big cities such as Frankfurt, Berlin, and Hamburg basically do not experience any difficulty in finding the *halal*⁶ eatery or butchery since they can easily spot many *halal* shops owned by Muslim immigrants. Kadir mentions what main features that need to be met when identifying whether a food is *halal* or not, that is "one, the *halal* animal, like chicken, sheep and cattle, has to be slaughtered in the Islamic way as prescribed by God, and, two, the food should be acquired through *halal* means" (2008, 103). Nevertheless, Participant 3 noticed that the condition in smaller cities in Germany might be different as they have less *halal* shops. Therefore, one should "make anticipatory adjustments to reduce uncertainty before actually entering the new environment" (Black et al. 1991 cited from Yijälä, 2012, 762). Anticipatory adjustment here refers to any preparation that one makes before moving to the new country (Black et al. 1991 cited from Yijälä,

⁶ Permissible under Islamic law (Kadir, 2008, 93)

2012, 762). In this occasion, Muslim Indonesian students should equip themselves with some information about the availability of *halal* food in the potential city where they are going to study. In fact, this strategy was applied by Participant 2 where she researched about the availability of the Muslim Indonesian community in Hannover first – a city where she had a test before entering the university – prior to her arrival in Germany. The community that she had contacted before the departure then helped her by showing the locations of mosques that exist in the city. In that way, she can have some knowledge on where to pray or stay active in any kind of Islamic activities and reduce the level of uncertainty to succeed her religious needs. After all, this subsection provides any Indonesian Muslim student who wants to study abroad with an information dealing with the challenges that one might face when studying in Germany and learn how the participants here handled the situation.

Hajj: A Momentous Experience

For Muslims, Mecca is the holiest spot on earth in that those, who have the means both financially and physically, receive the obligation to visit at least once for Hajj as the completion of five Pillars of Islam⁷. There stands the Ka'aba – a point on the globe towards which Muslims around the world face during all their *salat* (prayer) (Kadir, 2008, 61). The Hajj (major pilgrimage) occurs in the month of Dhul Hijjah, the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar (BBC, 2009), while the Umrah (minor pilgrimage) can be performed at any time of the year. During the Hajj period, there are more than two million Muslims gather⁸ while outside the period, thousands of Muslims perform the Umrah everyday (Kadir, 2008, 59). The importance of performing the pilgrimage for Muslims is written on Hughes's work as

Among devotees the prevalent, strongly held belief is that a pilgrimage to a sacred centre brings religious merit on the Day of

⁷ The five Pillars of Islam are Faith (witness), Prayer, Charity, Fasting, and the Hajj (Pilgrimage). See Edgar 2002.

⁸ The average of total pilgrims from 2007 to 2016 is 2,393,635 (General Authority for Statistics, KAS, 2018)

Judgement. ... It is believed that every step taken in the direction of pilgrimage to Mecca washes out a mortal sin (1975, 136, cited from Werbner, 2015, 34).

Hence, it is not surprising that all Muslims regardless of their age would try their best to afford going to pilgrimage, more specifically, the Hajj.

However, as the status of Indonesia is the largest Muslim population in the world – with a total of 222 million Muslims (Muslim Pro, 2018) – the Ministry of Religious Affairs already has its long waiting lists for any Indonesian wanting to register themselves for the Hajj. According to the website of Kemenag, the shortest waiting time for the regular Hajj found to be for the residents of the regency of Southwest Maluku in which the new registrant can depart in 2022 at the earliest (2018). The longest waiting time is for any new registrant in the Sidrap and Bantaeng regency, South Sulawesi, that needs to wait until 2054 for the departure (2018). Meanwhile, the quotas in big provinces such as DKI Jakarta, Central Java and East Java are already booked until 2035, 2038, and 2040 respectively (2018).

In contrast to the situation that Muslim Indonesians face when applying for the Hajj from the country, the findings found in this research show that these Muslim Indonesian students take the benefit of their status as student in a Muslim-minority country. “In Germany, the quota provided is still not fully filled, thus I was still able to apply for the Hajj only one month before the departure. It is impossible to have such situation in Indonesia,” said participant 4 that made the decision only a few months before the embarkation. He said that at that time the quotas at some travel agencies were already full, but he kept looking for any available option until finally he found one. “I am quite sure that as long as the requirements are complete, and the quota is available, even if it is only two weeks before the departure, the bureau would still be likely to proceed”. Different from participant 4 that organized the Hajj using Arabian Travel Agency, participant 3 used the same travel agency as the rest of the participants in 2016 but he registered only a month before the closing date

of registration from the bureau. “I registered in February 2016 and the deadline was in March.”

When asked about tips on choosing a travel agent as the Hajj organizer, participant 5 testified for the advantage of taking a bureau offering guidance in Indonesian language and compared it with the situation that his colleagues – that are also awardees of the same scholarship with him – encountered.

“My colleagues in the UK and Japan also performed the Hajj. However, I would feel insecure if I were them since they needed to organize everything by themselves. While the bureau I chose accompanied us with an Indonesian guide ready waiting for us in Saudi Arabia.”

Participant 2 also suggested any Indonesian wanting to perform the Hajj to choose the bureau she used over other agencies for two reasons. First, for the single women, it is very recommended to use the service of the bureau because they will find them the *Mahram*⁹. “I do not think that Turkish or Arabian travel agency can find an Indonesian a *mahram* for the Hajj pilgrimage.” The second is also about the language reason. She told that her colleagues – though they are spouses – they used another travel agency that did not provide them a guide with Indonesian language proficiency. As a result, when performing the Hajj, they went from one place to another by themselves. “Sure, the travel agency I used charged a little more expensive fees, but the assistance was really worth it.”

As another suggestion, Participant 3 emphasized that the Indonesian students should try to afford to perform the Hajj while they are young and able. “It was my savings from working part-time for a year.” Participant 2 also had to save the money she got from working part-time for three years. “At first I only wanted to perform the Umrah. But, a colleague asked why I did not save the money for the Hajj instead. Since the cost was reasonable¹⁰, I then chose to

⁹ A mahram is an adult of sound mind whom she is forever forbidden to marry because of blood ties or for a permissible reason. His presence is required so that he can look after and protect the woman. Otherwise, the woman is not permitted to travel without a mahram (Salih al-Munajjid 2011).

¹⁰ In 2016, the cost was around 4,800 Euros or around

wait a little longer.” Being seen from the age perspective, this is of course a matter that is worth considering since, according to Kemenag (2008), the age range of 41-50 years old is when most Indonesians apply for the Hajj; and 51-59 years old comes second. 31-40 years old, the age range where two participants of this study belong, ranks the third; while the age range of the rest of the participants, 21-30 years old, comprises only 5.3% of the total applicants. Seeing that the waiting time for these applicants ranges from five up to thirty-five years, an opportunity to perform the Hajj while studying abroad might be another pull factor to be considered for any Muslim student when digging for information about a destination country.

What makes the discourse about Hajj more interesting is because of the effect brought by the performance itself in which one could then reflect on his/her religiosity following the completion of the ritual. *Tawaf* – the act of going around the Ka’aba seven times in an anti-clockwise direction which becomes first act of the pilgrim upon arrival in Mecca and the final act before leaving it (Kadir, 2008, 67) – is one of the most notable moments referred by participants in this study when being asked about their memory of the pilgrimage. Participant 2, 4, and 5 similarly expressed that the *ta’waf* was a great reminder for them not to be arrogant at anything. Simply put, being in the middle of millions of Muslims makes Participant 5 think that he has nothing to boast about, especially recalling his status in Germany as a doctorate student. “I have a very limited knowledge about Islam, and hence, still need to learn everything from the basic including how to read the Qur’an.” While in Participant 2 and 4’s words, *ta’waf* reminds them that anything they own today is only God’s possession and human beings are only given a chance to have it temporarily in this world. Having exposure on a series of rituals performed collectively during the Hajj is another moment that the participants deemed as a reminder that they then carry the

80,000,000 Rupiahs. While in 2018, FORKOM announced the price of the Hajj that is 5,200 Euros or around 6,5 million Rupiahs more. As a comparison, the price of Hajj plus in Indonesia per 2018 is around 138 – 151 million Rupiahs with an estimated waiting time of 7-8 years after the application made (Arminareka 2018).

responsibility to become a better Muslim with the status of Hajj labelled on them. More expectation is given, as experienced by Participant 3 who is getting more invitation after returning from the pilgrimage being asked to share his knowledge for the Indonesian community in Hamburg. “Through the talks, I encourage the older people to perform the Hajj sooner.” Participant 4 echoes this view by stating that he feels relieved because he has completed all the five pillars of Islam in which the Hajj might be a special case since it starts to become obligatory for those who are financially able. Finally, an expectation to visit Mecca again is what was mentioned by Participant 2 and 3 that regard the pilgrimage as an exceptional marker in relation to their identity as a Muslim. As Participant 2 explained, “I know about the Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. before but have never felt so close to him until I visited the Mecca and really felt the loss.” While, Participant 3 keeps being reminded of the journey anytime he hears prayer call and prays in group. In short, the Hajj experience successfully leads the performers to enjoy a different level of religiosity that might imply to an inspiration where one wants to develop a new religious lifestyle afterwards (Buitelaar 2015, 17-18). Considering the huge impact of the ritual to the performers, the possibility of performing the Hajj while young and studying might be considered as value-added which one could take into consideration especially when setting up targets alongside educational agendas which then would imply to the discourse of push-pull factor of a study destination country and the country of origin of the students.

Do We Recommend Germany? Keeping the Hajj in Perspective

Before stepping into the discussion of whether these participants recommend Germany as a study destination, the responses gathered from the questionnaire will be discussed first. Three students agree with the statement saying that ‘living in Germany as a Muslim is not difficult’ – while one disagrees, and one answers neutral. Based on the interview, the challenges that the participants ever faced include topics such as, one, the struggle when one wants to

follow the commands of Allah, two, prejudice against Muslim, and, three, seasonal variation.

The first is the experience of Participant 2 in relation to her field of study that is medicine. “Due to hygienic reason, I was asked to remove my headscarf when entering the surgery room. I refused and asked them to give me a sterile cloth instead,” she recounted the moment she needed to join a practicum at her department. Also, when applying for a part-time job at a hospital, it was quite difficult for her unless she applied for a job at a Catholic hospital because they still tolerate headscarf. While for male immigrants, the challenge mentioned is about the activity they have at Friday noon that conflicts the time for obligatory Friday prayer. Unlike in Indonesia where everyone is given a pause during that specific prayer time, since Germany is not a Muslim-majority country, it is understandable that the government do not accommodate this issue in social policy (Boz et al., 2012, 99). The solution is the mosques in Germany usually have two turns for the prayer with the approximate interval of one hour. It is either due to the small size of the mosques in that they cannot accommodate all the worshipers at the same time or the time for break of the people working does not match the time for Friday prayer. “For instance, they have Friday prayer at 1 p.m. and again at 2 p.m., and we do not do this in Indonesia. There we have it only for one time,” Participant 3 said.

The second, prejudice against Muslim, is also experienced by Participant 2. Relevant with Wilamowitz-Moellendorff’s findings stating that “prejudice is more common among persons with lower educational levels” (2003, 14, cited from Rosenow-Williams, 2012, 142), she, who lives in Giessen – a considerably smaller region compared to where other participants live – was once yelled at by an adult when she was riding a bicycle. “A woman in veil riding a bicycle!” she recalled. Participant 3 believed that prejudice is felt more by the Muslim women as they wear a ‘visually identifiable’ veil (Rosenow-Williams, 2012).

“In big cities, the people are socially better, more educated and tolerant. Some even

admire Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him I believe. Maybe it would be different if it is in (ex)-Eastern Germany. Shortly, men do not suffer much since our appearance is not so different from the society,” (personal interview with Participant 3)

This is in line with the findings of Rosenow-Williams declaring that “prejudices are more dominant in the Eastern German states, where direct contact with Muslims is much rarer in those areas” (2012, 143). Correspondingly, the statistics in 2014 also show that only “around 9% of total Indonesians in Germany residing in the Eastern part of the country” (Welcker, 2016, 12). Thus, the information that should be highlighted by any Muslim female student who wants to study in Germany is regarding to the choice of the city where the destination institution is located.

The last challenge is the seasonal variation that affects not only the prayer times but also the fasting hours during Ramadan. Different from the prayer times in Indonesia that are relatively unchanging, the Muslims living in Europe need to adjust themselves with the schedule that fluctuates as sunrise and sunset times change. Participant 5 noticed that even though Muslims can pray Fajr quite later which is at 6 a.m. or 7 a.m. during the winter but since the temperature is very low, it is still quite challenging for him personally to go outside and pray at a mosque due to the coldness. Conversely, even though it is not cold during the summer, but he has to pray around 4 in the morning that makes it a challenge again for him to wake up and go to the mosque “especially after staying up at night waiting for Isha that comes around 11 p.m.”. However, this brings these participants to experience a jurisprudence of Muslim minorities that they might not possible to apply in Indonesia with the exact same reason, namely significant change of prayer times. Participant 3 explained that since the night time in summer is shorter, there are some people that pray Isha right after finishing the Maghrib prayer because they need to have some extra hours for sleep before waking up at 3 or 4 a.m for the Fajr prayer. In winter, though people are awake during the day but due to the rush hours, they also combine the Dzuhur and ‘Asr considering that the interval is very short¹¹.

¹¹ The shortest interval of the prayer times during the day in

Another ritual that is also challenged by the seasonal variation is fasting. “When Ramadan happens to be in summer, then the Muslims will have to fast for a longer period¹²,” Participant 4 added. Here, despite the challenges above, such experiences are what Carlson et al. refers as “the advancement of [one]’s intercultural understanding and a vision of the harmonious co-existence of people” (2016, 57). In this context, the discourse on ‘third space’ is very applicable since these students were situated in a space that made them experience different cultures due to the difference of ethnic group composition within the society and geographical location. In effect, the students have more chance to undertake the self-development process by reflecting these phenomena on themselves.

Going deeper to the concept of third space, besides the Hajj, these participants also discover experiences that might not be found in Indonesia, yet in fact resulted in more religious development process. Participant 2 becomes more aware of her religion when she lives abroad. “When I was in Indonesia, I was quite ignorant. But when moving to Germany, I started to study more about Islam and get involved in Islamic activities more frequently such as becoming the committee of mosque and part of team of donation-seeker”, she recounted. This possibility to change the lifestyle that one usually has into a new one resonates the findings in Carlson and Jacobsson’s work proving that study abroad can apparently be “a reflexive emotional identity project” (2016). Not limited to internal turning point events, witnessing other people turning point is also of an amazement for Participant 3. As he informed, “in Hamburg, I saw some Germans converted to Islam. I was amazed because they were enthusiastic in learning about the religion.” Similarly, Participant 4 also said that seeing a process of conversion is one of his most impressive experiences in which, to his observation, this kind of phenomenon is

2017 happened in December with Dzuhur at 12.20, Asr at 14.06, Maghrib at 16.23 and Isha at 17.50. While in summer, the latest Isha prayer was at 23.08 – with Maghrib at 21.40 and Fajr at 03.48 (IIS, 2017).

¹² The longest in 2017 was when they had to stop eating at 03.47 and broke the fast at 21.40. Relatively shorter compared to the fasting time in Jakarta at the same date in 2017 in which the Muslims could still eat until 04.41 and had the break at 17.51.

more findable in Germany than Indonesia. In the same positive fashion, Participant 5 recalled that his participation in *lailatul qadr* events (i.e. *itikaf*¹³) was remarkable because back then in his hometown, Pekanbaru, such events were not held so often at the mosques. But in Aachen, he was in a mosque together with Muslims from various levels of age from kid to adult. “Then during the *Eid ul-Fitr* prayer, I was side by side with people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, yet as we got together, the difference was vanished,” he reminisced the series of Ramadan activities he had in Germany.

Considering all these experiences that one is much likely to acquire when living as minority, the question that arises is then how significant the discourse on Hajj would influence these participants to recommend Germany as a study destination. In the questionnaire, the statement, “The easiness of performing the Hajj from Germany can be taken into consideration by any Indonesian that wants to continue their study in a Muslim-minority country”, is included to see the level of agreement or disagreement that the participants have towards the statement. The word ‘easiness’ here refers to the facts that,

- a) There is no long waiting list required – as the Participant 4 said that he registered only a month before the embarkation,
- b) The price is somehow reasonable – compared to the waiting time and types of Hajj embarkation in Indonesia, and
- c) The availability of an Indonesian bureau cooperating with a Turkish travel agency.

As a result, three participants ‘strongly agree’ with the statement; while one agrees, and the other one disagrees. According to the interview, the one who disagrees did not recommend Germany because of the situation in the country that she does not think everyone can deal with. She knew that a lot of Indonesians

¹³ *Itikaf* is to stay in a mosque for a particular time period in the worship of Allah. In the state of *I’tikaf*, a person can stand, sit, sleep, etc; and there is not one particular ‘form’ that this retreat must be carried out in (unlike the *salat* which has a specific form to it). What is important in this period is to obey the commandments of Allah, to refrain from the things which He has prohibited and to be in the service of Him (Bhimji n.d)

leave Germany with failure to get a degree. She added,

“Not everyone can juggle between study and work. If someone wants to study here because of the affordable cost for study, that is fine. But, if it is only for the Hajj, I do not think that it is worth the risk. I would suggest Egypt or Saudi Arabia over Germany.”

Taking a different viewpoint, Participant 2 thought Germany as an ideal place to study because of its affordable cost of living, free tuition fee policy, and complete facilities. In connection with the Hajj, she remembered that her colleague in New Zealand told her that the price for Hajj package there¹⁴ is way more expensive than in Germany in which she believed that the distance between New Zealand and Saudi Arabia also counts. An interesting thing to notice here is that *geographic proximity* which is the fifth factor in Mazzarol and Soutar’s pull factor discourse (2002, 83), is mentioned as a point for consideration not to the country of origin of the student, but to Mecca.

Meanwhile, Participant 3 believed that the large number of Turkish immigrants¹⁵ in Germany has somehow paved the way for the easiness of Muslim life inclusive to the Hajj bureaucracy; so that it becomes more attractive compared to other countries such as the United Kingdom or Australia. In a slightly different manner, Participant 4 suggested that even though performing the Hajj from Germany has been proven easy, but the Muslim Indonesian student – who has not chosen a destination country – should look up any information on the price and requirement in other Muslim-minority countries, such as Japan, South Korea and the United Kingdom. He argued that a requirement of visa that should be valid for at least a year in Germany is of an obstacle itself for some

¹⁴ In 2018, the price for Hajj package from New Zealand is 10,560 New Zealand Dollars or equals to 104,195,520 Rupiahs; while in Germany it is 5,200 Euros or equals to 87,360,000 Rupiahs (Almarwah 2018; Forkom 2018; Currency on 19 March 2018)

¹⁵ See for example Yurdakul (2009) to learn how Turkish immigrant associations strive for the rights and needs of the Muslim society

students. Most of the times, students fail to meet this requirement due to the shorter amount of time they have for the study program. This suggestion accords with an information displayed on the website of British Haj Travel stating that the applicant only needs to provide a proof of their United Kingdom residency without any minimum duration of validity needed. To sum up, although the opportunity to perform the Hajj from Germany seems wide open – especially due to the long tradition of Turkish immigrants in the country – information on Hajj in other country might be of an important knowledge to collect before someone decides the destination country for study.

CONCLUSION

This article aims to explore the life of Muslim Indonesian students in Germany covering their motivation for coming to the country, challenges faced as a Muslim, and opportunities that they can get when residing in the country. After conducting interviews with five participants and analysing the interview result, it is concluded that push and pull factor has been a useful concept to uncover the reasons making Germany more attractive than other study destination countries. Reasons such as the good reputation of the universities and the low cost of studying are the pull factors highlighted earlier by the participants. Environment is another pull factor mentioned in the findings referring to the presence of Turkish immigrants in the country. It is found that their presence has made these Muslim Indonesian students experience a much easier life as a Muslim – ranging from the easiness in finding Mosques, buying *halal* food, and performing the Hajj. Interestingly, the latter one is deemed as the most valuable experience for the participants as they compared the relatively easy situation in performing the Hajj from Germany with the current situation in Indonesia regarding to Hajj embarkation. The Hajj experience has also been a factor that leads the participants to undergo religious development phase often offered in third space. Moreover, the availability of an Indonesian beruau cooperating with a Turkish travel agent in Germany is also said as another thing that could be taken into consideration by any prospective

student who wants to continue their study in Germany. In short, though Germany, as a Muslim-minority country might not offer the same ease of performing the Islamic religion as other Muslim-majority countries – Indonesia in particular – but the opportunity of performing the Hajj and having predominantly Turkish immigrants within the Muslim population might be the niche that Germany appeals to prospective Muslim Indonesian students, or Muslim students in general. After all, it is highly suggested for future researchers to work under the same topic yet explore different study objects in order to enrich the references of Indonesian students who are in search of a study destination country.

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