

RELIGIOUS PRACTICE AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION AMONG MUSLIM DIASPORA COMMUNITIES: CASE STUDY FOREIGN IKATAN KELUARGA PONDOK (IKPM) GONTOR

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Abstract:

There are numerous challenges that Indonesian diaspora Muslims face, particularly in Europe, ranging from religious differences to inter-individual interactions influenced by liberal and secular values that might distort Islamic values. Muslims in the diaspora require a place in order to perform ibadah and preach with greater ease and safety. In response to these issues, Gontor established a group known as Ikatan Keluarga Pondok Modern, or IKPM, where Muslim diaspora actors can perform not only in their home country but also abroad. The purpose of this paper is to examine IKPM Gontor as a Muslim diaspora organization globally, particularly those in Russia, the United Kingdom, and Turkey, which have become well-known as effective teaching methods, and to examine the impact of IKPM Gontor's education. The research method used is a qualitative research method using an integration and acculturation approach to diaspora studies.

Keywords: Diaspora; IKPM Gontor; Muslim Communities; Religious Practices; Gontor Alumny

Abstrak:

Banyak tantangan yang dihadapi oleh komunitas diaspora muslim Indonesia di mancanegara khususnya di kawasan Eropa, mulai dari perbedaan budaya hingga interaksi antar individu yang dipengaruhi oleh nilai liberalisme dan sekularisme yang dapat melunturkan nilai-nilai islam. Para diaspora muslim membutuhkan wadah untuk melaksanakan ibadah dan berdakwah dengan lebih leluasa dan aman. Berkaca dari problematika tersebut, Gontor menginisiasi pembentukan suatu lembaga yang disebut dengan Ikatan Keluarga Pondok Modern atau IKPM, dimana para aktor diaspora muslim dapat melakukan dakwahnya bukan hanya di dalam negeri, namun juga di mancanegara. Paper ini bertujuan untuk membahas tentang apa saja kiprah IKPM Gontor sebagai lembaga diaspora muslim Indonesia dan mancanegara, mengulas ciri khas dan keunikan dari IKPM Gontor Mancanegara terutama yang berada di negara Rusia, UK, dan Turki yang berhasil dikenal sebagai alat dakwah yang tepat, dan meninjau dampak dari didirikannya IKPM Gontor Mancanegara terhadap para diaspora muslim dan masyarakat global. Metode penelitian yang dipakai yakni metode penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan pendekatan integrasi dan akulturasi studi diaspora.

Kata Kunci: Diaspora, IKPM Gontor, Komunitas Muslim, Praktek Kerjasama, Alumni Gontor

INTRODUCTION

Muslim diaspora has significantly contributed to the preservation and advancement of Islamic culture and religion in many countries (Wardana, 2013). They have established communities and organizations dedicated to the advancement of Islam, culture, and society. Some examples of Muslim diaspora communities include Kader Muhammadiyah, IKPM Gontor, PCI Nahdlatul Ulama community, and others (Dzuriyatun Toyibah, Eva Mustoffa, Ahmad Gifari Juniatama, Wiwi Siti Syajaroh, n.d.).

Muslim diaspora has played a crucial role in combating extremism worldwide and promoting religious moderation. They have organized conferences and declarations aimed at combating prejudice worldwide and promoting religious moderation (Wardana, 2013). The Declaration of Diaspora Network for Promoting Religious Moderation (JDPMB) is an example of a statement issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. It includes six aspects: strong belief and commitment to the Almighty, loyalty to Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, Unity in Diversity, and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, and readiness to strengthen tolerance and combat intolerance.

However, various challenges and obstacles arise for diaspora Muslims abroad. Muslim diaspora in Europe face religious challenges due to pressure from the surrounding society to change their beliefs or adapt to Western culture. Muslims have difficulty finding mosques or religious centers that are nearby and easily accessible. Muslims often do not get holidays to celebrate their religious festivals, such as Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, which can affect the celebration and family traditions of Muslims. Some countries enforce policies that restrict religious practices, such as bans on hijabs or mosque buildings (Zakaria, 2023). Challenges like these can hinder diaspora Muslims abroad.

Diaspora Muslims abroad form various organizations and global Muslim diaspora communities. One of them is IKPM Gontor, which serves as a unifying platform for diaspora Muslims abroad based on brotherhood (Rahman & Muhammad Mansur, 2016). The purpose of this research is to discuss the role of IKPM Gontor as an Indonesian and international Muslim diaspora institution, review the characteristics and uniqueness of IKPM Gontor Mancanegara especially in countries like Russia, UK, and Turkey known as effective means of Islamic propagation, and examine the impact of the establishment of IKPM Gontor Mancanegara on diaspora Muslims and global society (Zakaria, 2023).

Diaspora Muslims abroad are currently facing numerous challenges in practicing their religion. Lack of religious freedom prompts diaspora Muslims to form communities as a platform for practicing religion freely (Missbach, 2017). Therefore, Gontor alumni abroad establish Muslim diaspora communities commonly known as IKPM (Ikatan Keluarga Pondok Modern) abroad.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Definition of Muslim Diaspora

The term "Diaspora Muslim" refers to Muslims who live outside of primarily Muslim countries. These communities can be found throughout the world, including Europe, North America, Australia, and other locations. Diaspora Muslims frequently confront special obstacles in keeping their religious and cultural identity while adjusting to the rules and practices of their new societies. Although every action they take are based on where they reside, each of them have their own uniqueness. They may set up mosques, cultural centres, and community groups to meet their religious and social requirements. They also add to the diversity and multicultural fabric of their adoptive countries by enhancing them with their traditions, values, and perspectives.

It can also refer to a group of Muslims whose ancestors moved from long-established Muslim global regions and Muslim peoples' national homes, particularly from the Middle East and North Africa, as well as parts of South and Southeast Asia (Wardana, 2015). This diaspora has been moulded by a variety of historical and present circumstances, including migration, cultural interchange, and the encounter of Islamic principles with Western cultural standards in their host countries (Aziz, 2021; Soufi et al., 2020; Wardana, 2015).

The Muslim diaspora has had a tremendous impact on the cultural and religious landscapes of their home nations, especially in the West. In Europe, for example, the immigration of Muslim diaspora groups from the Middle East has resulted in the growth of right-wing populist forces, which frequently see these populations as a danger to their social standing and cultural identity. In response, the Muslim diaspora has devised ways for negotiating and appropriating Islamic ideals within the context of Western cultural standards, resulting in a variety of identities such as Liberal, Moderate, and Radical (Wardana, 2015).

In addition to internal dynamics, the Muslim diaspora has been shaped by global events and transnational connections. The 9/11 attacks, for example, had a significant impact on how Muslims are perceived and treated around the world, resulting in increasing xenophobia and prejudice in many countries (Wardana, 2015). As a result, the Muslim diaspora must traverse complex identities and negotiate relationships with both their ancestral homelands and host countries (Safii et al., 2023; Wardana, 2015).

Scholars have examined the Muslim diaspora in a variety of academic contexts, focusing on themes such as identity, transnationalism, and Islam's connection with Western culture. These studies highlight the Muslim diaspora's diversity and complexity, underlining the importance of nuanced understandings of their experiences and the issues they encounter in their host countries (Safii et al., 2023; Wardana, 2015).

The Concept of Integration and Acculturation

The research methodology employed in the diaspora studies is an integrative approach to qualitative research. In the context of Indonesian Islamic culture, the terms "integration" and "acculturation" refer to the process of fusing and modifying Islamic culture with pre-existing local culture. The process of fusing Islamic beliefs and ideals with Indonesian customs—such as marriage, birth, and funeral rites—is known as the integration of Islamic culture in Indonesia. The process of assimilating Islamic aspects into local culture in Indonesia also includes the creation of Islamic-based arts such as wayang performances, debus games, and Seudati dances, as well as the usage of Arabic characters in writing and carvings (Al-Amri et al., 2017; Halim & Mahyuddin, 2019; Sutrisni Putri, 2022).

Integration and acculturation are also evident in the process of creating an Islamic culture that is rooted locally in Indonesia. For instance, Islam gave rise to arts like wayang performances, debus games, and Seudati dances that are meant to disseminate Islamic principles. Islamic culture and regional cultures, such as Javanese and Malay culture, are combined in this artwork (Halim & Mahyuddin, 2019; Sutrisni Putri, 2022).

The role of Islamic academics and traders who arrived in Indonesia aided the process of Islamic culture integration and acculturation. They introduced Islamic ideals and concepts, which were then applied to the existing culture and customs of Indonesia. Sunan Bonang and Sunan Giri, for example, educated in Malacca and then returned to Java,

bringing Islamic principles with them that were later adapted to Javanese culture (Dhanur Widya, 2021).

In conclusion, the notion of Islamic culture integration and acculturation in Indonesia refers to the process of merging and adapting Islamic culture to the existing local culture in Indonesia. This process was aided by the contributions of Islamic academics and traders, who introduced Islamic ideas and concepts that were later adapted to Indonesia's existing culture and traditions.

The Role of Diaspora Institutions/Networks in Preserving Culture and Religious Practices

Diaspora institutions/networks play a significant role in the preservation of culture and religious traditions, particularly in the context of migration and cultural exchange. They can help preserve cultural and religious traditions in a variety of ways, including:

Diaspora institutions/networks can train and nurture the younger generation in a variety of cultural and religious fields, including art, music, and dance. This helps to preserve ancestral traditions and cultural values (Manunggaljaya, 2024; Pelestarian Budaya Melalui Tari: Peran Penting Dalam Dunia Pendidikan, 2024; Thoriqul Huda & Khasanah, 2019).

Craft Skills Development: By cultivating culture-based craft skills, diaspora institutions/networks can promote awareness of the significance of cultural and religious preservation. For example, using natural materials in musical instruments and costumes can raise awareness about the necessity of environmental protection (Manunggaljaya, 2024).

Religious Skills Development: Diaspora institutions/networks can raise awareness of the need of cultural and religious preservation by creating culturally relevant religious skills. For example, religious activities like recitations, hauls, and torchlight parades can raise awareness about the need of cultural and religious preservation (Aisyah Putri et al., n.d.).

Educational Skills Development: Diaspora institutions/networks can raise awareness of the need of cultural and religious preservation by developing culturally relevant educational skills. For example, creating a curriculum that incorporates culture

and religion might raise awareness of the significance of cultural and religious preservation (Thoriqul Huda & Khasanah, 2019).

Diaspora institutions/networks can enhance awareness of the value of cultural and religious preservation by developing culture-specific communication skills. For example, using social media to promote cultural preservation initiatives helps raise awareness about the significance of cultural and religious preservation (Rihhadatul Aisy' & Ayu Wardani, 2022).

In conclusion, diaspora institutions/networks play a vital role in conserving cultural and religious practices by developing skills in various cultural and religious aspects while also raising awareness of the need of cultural and religious preservation through various means.

Pesantren Culture and Diaspora Muslim Identity

Pesantren religion and Muslim diaspora identity have a significant relationship in the context of migration and religious interaction. Pesantren, as a traditional Islamic educational institution in Indonesia, play an important role in religious and spiritual practice. Pesantren functions as a religious practice that orients towards cultural values and Islamic traditions, as well as a centre for religious acts that protects cultural traditions and values which were given by their ancestors [1][3].

In the context of diaspora, pesantren culture serve as important sources of identity for Muslims in the diaspora. They came from a Muslim family in Tionghoa, for example, creating an organization with the same identity as themselves, which is Muslim Tionghoa. They recreate ancestral cultures, like Imlek, and acculturate them to the local community so it became public [2].

Pesantren culture also affects diaspora Muslim's identity in a more encompassing manner. For example, in the context of Islamic education in the United States, pesantren can help students learn how Muslims understand Islam, how to develop empathy for different religions, and how to recognize similarities and differences in the context of Muslim political locations [3].

In essence, pesantren faith and Muslim diaspora identity have a significant relationship in the context of migration and religious interaction. Pesantren culture plays a role as a strong identity source for Muslim diaspora, as well as affecting their identity

in a more meaningful way through Islam education and cultural interactions in the diaspora context.

METHOD

Qualitative approach is utilized to gain a profound understanding of the experiences of IKPM Gontor members abroad in maintaining religious practices and preserving pesantren culture. The focus is on contextual understanding and the involved processes, rather than mere numbers or statistics.

Data collection methods employed in this research also include document analysis. This involves gathering, reading, and interpreting relevant documents related to IKPM Gontor and their activities abroad. These documents may encompass program agendas, official writings, activity reports, and other documentation produced by IKPM Gontor.

Through document analysis, the researcher endeavors to identify information that can provide additional insights into the role of IKPM Gontor in supporting religious practices and cultural preservation, as well as identifying challenges faced by IKPM Gontor members abroad in maintaining religious practices and preserving pesantren culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious Practices in Muslim Diaspora

Journal: Shah, F. A. (2020). Muslim diaspora: Dynamics and challenges. Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 40(1), 100-117.

The journal investigates how Muslim diaspora undergo social, political, and cultural changes, as well as the challenges faced in maintaining religious practices amidst new environments. Through qualitative data analysis, the author highlights various dynamics influencing religious identity and strategies employed by Muslim diaspora to uphold their beliefs and religious practices amid changing environments. The study also observes how factors such as cultural identity, political engagement, and interaction with the host society affect religious practices among Muslim diaspora.

The Role of Diaspora Institution in Preserving Religious a Cultural Identity

Jurnal: Khalid, A. (2023). The role of diaspora networks in preserving cultural heritage: A case study of Pakistani Muslims in the United Kingdom. Journal of Intercultural Studies, 44(3), 321-339.

This journal examines the role of diaspora networks in preserving cultural and religious heritage, focusing on the experiences of the Pakistani Muslim community in the United Kingdom. Through a case study approach, the research identifies various mechanisms utilized by diaspora networks to promote religious and cultural identity, such as establishing religious schools, religious organizations, and cultural celebrations. The study also highlights the role of technology and social media in facilitating communication and cultural exchange among Muslim diasporas, as well as the challenges faced in maintaining religious and cultural identity in diverse environments.

The Challenge of Integrating Pesantren Culture with Local Culture

Jurnal: Abdullah, N. (2021). Negotiating identities: Pesantren education among Indonesian Muslims in Australia. Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 52(2), 245-263.

This journal explores the challenges and strategies faced by the Indonesian Muslim community in Australia in maintaining religious and cultural pesantren practices. Through field research and in-depth interviews, the author depicts the dynamics of integrating pesantren culture with local culture and the changes in religious identity within the diaspora context. The research also highlights the role of pesantren educational institutions in preserving religious identity and traditional values among the younger generation of Indonesian Muslim diaspora. This study provides insights into how religious practices in pesantren adapt to new environments, including the challenges and opportunities in maintaining religious identity abroad.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Integration of Pesantren and Cultural Practices with Local Culture

The integration of religious and cultural practices in Islamic boarding schools with local culture is critical in the context of migration and cultural interaction. Pesantren, as traditional Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, help to nurture local culture. Islamic boarding schools' community empowerment strategy takes a comprehensive

approach, combining practical skills learning, local economic growth, and women's empowerment [1].

Pesantren culture also affects Islamic identity in a much broader aspect. For example, in the context of Islamic education throughout higher education in America, pesantren culture can help create educate their students of how to understand Islam, how to grow their empathy towards a diverse culture, and how to see similarity and differences in the context of political locations where muslims are mainly [3].

Through synthesis, religious integration practices and pesantren culture along with local culture plays a significant role in migration context and cultural interaction. Pesantren culture also plays a role as the main source for identity as a diaspora, as well as affecting their identity in a much broader way through islamic education and cultural interaction that happens in diaspora as a context.

The Primary Challenges Faced by Members of Foreign IKPM Gontor

One of the main challenges faced by members of IKPM Gontor abroad is the preservation of religious practices and the preservation of pesantren culture amidst culturally and socially different environments, such as:

1. **Cultural Integration Challenge:** Members of IKPM Gontor abroad may encounter difficulties in integrating religious practices and pesantren culture with the local culture in their host countries. This may include different understandings of values and traditions, as well as pressure to adapt to new social norms.
2. **Isolation or Lack of Resources:** In some cases, members of IKPM Gontor abroad may feel isolated from the larger community or lack access to resources or facilities that support their religious and cultural practices. This can complicate their efforts to maintain their religious and cultural identity.
3. **Globalization Influence:** The influence of globalization may introduce new values and practices that contradict the teachings of religion or pesantren cultural traditions. Members of IKPM Gontor abroad may need to confront these challenges in their efforts to preserve their religious and cultural identity.

The impact of the development of an increasingly complex and advanced society is the emergence of various institutions tasked with overseeing morality and justice. Therefore, the existence of oversight institutions has become very important and

necessary. In order for the application of Islamic values in practice to remain clean, supervisory institutions are required to have high standards, adequate capacity, competent expertise and proven credibility. This means that they must be knowledgeable in the teachings of Islam and its shari'ah.

CONCLUSION

Members of IKPM Gontor abroad encounter various challenges in maintaining religious practices and preserving pesantren culture in a new environment. These challenges include complex cultural integration, conflicting values, isolation or lack of resources, globalization influence, language and communication barriers, discrimination or stigma, social and psychological adaptation, as well as pressure from family or community.

In facing these challenges, members of IKPM Gontor abroad need to develop effective adaptation strategies and garner support from their communities and institutions. This may involve strengthening religious and cultural identities, promoting intercultural dialogue, enhancing social adaptation skills, and building robust support networks.

By understanding the challenges faced by members of IKPM Gontor abroad, we can recognize the importance of efforts to facilitate harmonious integration between religious practices and pesantren culture within the social, cultural, and political contexts of their host countries. This not only enriches the experiences of Muslim diaspora members but also supports the preservation of valuable cultural and spiritual heritage for global society. Members of IKPM Gontor abroad encounter various challenges in maintaining religious practices and preserving pesantren culture in a new environment. These challenges include complex cultural integration, conflicting values, isolation or lack of resources, globalization influence, language and communication barriers, discrimination or stigma, social and psychological adaptation, as well as pressure from family or community.

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