

Religious and Cultural Negotiations: Challenges of International Student Mobility in Indonesia

Sulkhan Chakim

UIN Prof. KH. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto Indonesia

Abstract

This research aims to examine international students related to the negotiation of cultural and religious differences. In the matter of management, international students have different tendencies, especially in culture and religious moderation. The approach used in this study, is interpretive. The purpose of this approach is to describe subjective behavior, the approach used in the research assumes creativity and self-willingness. The data collection technique used online interviews to interview International Office managers and international students. The results of the research on international student negotiations at several campuses of State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN). The findings are distributive, meaning that international students are still individualistic, friendships are not yet at a more intimate level. However, there are also international students who are integrative, meaning that they can blend in and participate in social activities and religious rituals.

Keywords: Mobility, International students, Negotiation, religious, and culture.

INTRODUCTION

The mobility process is an opportunity to socially encourage change that is both negative and positive for social agents interacting in a particular realm (Hoven et al., 2019). The motivational variables (expectations and incentives) of studying abroad or foreign students are very important to consider in order to improve individual knowledge and skills as an effort to explain social mobility (Gbollie & Gong, 2020). Anonymity is the power to preserve or change existing classifications in terms of gender, nation, region, age, and status, and this is through words used to designate or describe an individual, group, or institution. This knowledge is described in a new way of constructing the existing reality. Moreover, there is a situation in a country that is being hit by conflict, the social consequences of shifting, and even self-destructing from the social dumping that is actually implied by the policies, namely, mass poverty and job insecurity, the generalization of social insecurity in the midst of regained prosperity, and the increase in inequality that drives segregation, crime, and neglect of public institutions (King, Crossley & Smith 2021). The importance of gathering insights into these students' experiences lies in the premise that when students feel that their experience in college is positive, their overall satisfaction is more likely to be high or vice versa. In the Australian context, international colleges not only intensify recruitment efforts, but also explore the experience and respond to the unique needs of international students. In terms of growth in the higher education sector, it is essential to increase awareness of students' various needs, develop strategies to meet them and implement studies to strengthen understanding and strategies (Le & McKay 2018).

The growing demand among learners for improved accessibility and convenience, lower costs, and applying content directly to work settings are radically changing the environment for higher education in the United States and globally. In this rapidly changing environment, which is increasingly based in the context of a knowledge-based global economy, traditional universities are seeking to adapt their goals, structures, and programs, and new organizations are emerging in response. Organizational changes and new developments are driven by the acceleration of advances in digital communication and learning technologies that are sweeping the world. The increasing demand for learning combined with these technical advancements is actually a critical pressure point to challenge the dominant assumptions and characteristics of traditional universities that exist in the 21st century. This combination of demand, cost, content applications, and new technologies opens the door for new competitors and organizations to emerge (Hanna 2019).

Following the SDGs, the global agenda is to place the internationalization of higher education and international mobility as a strategy to achieve quality higher education globally. In this case, encouraging students' experiences will change and become acquainted with new cultures, such as their socio-religious thoughts, attitudes, and practices. Adaptation to new cultures is the most valuable in the global world (De La Torre et al., 2022; Van Treek & Alarcón, 2017). With the increasing inclusion of international, intercultural, and global dimensions in university curricula, global classrooms bring new challenges and potential opportunities among culturally diverse students (Naicker, Singh & van Genugten, 2022). The intercultural and international dimension of campus life supports an internationalization strategy that builds on the assumption that international students can expose domestic students to the world through daily contact and special events or activities. For example, international and home students in the UK see group work as an opportunity for learning and self-development. It is concluded that students' subjective experiences of culturally diverse group work vary according to the organizational and instructional patterns of the learning context. Understanding students' perceptions of group work provides a window into the internationalization experience of international and domestic students (Smithers, Amankulova & Johnstone, 2022).

Nevertheless, mobility can produce bargaining power for negotiations over different interests. Negotiations can be reviewed in certain contexts. The mutual influence of friendship and intimacy is also something important to note, such as bargaining power as a social attitude of individual experience. International students must have the ability to adapt socially and culturally abroad. However, in the context of religion, conversion often occurs and is a negotiation practice for international students (Katrin, 2020). Also, attitudes towards unfulfilled health insurance, living costs, and education servants have an effect on institutional trust and professionalism (Temkina & Rivkin-Fish, 2020). Negotiation is a technique or skill not only in the world of trade but also practiced in the world of politics, culture, and even education at various levels of educational institutions and even in all human lives (Hagmann & Péclard, 2010; Martin-Raugh et al., 2020).

The experience of religious practice of students abroad is generally difficult. Nevertheless, there is a religious practice in a religion teaching kindness with the opportunity for the presence of religions in a particular society and respect for differences (Asadu et al., 2020). The role of religion as a social force is to encourage order and dynamics in a particular society (Zeng et al., 2021). Differences in the background of religious beliefs are often expressed in exaggerated forms, thus causing conflicts and chaos in various fields of trade, religion, politics, and others (Ahmad et al., 2021). Religious facilities abroad are not given much attention because religious affairs are not the responsibility of foreign governments. Unlike in

Indonesia, facilities of various religions are given room to move and receive government assistance. This research aims to reveal the negotiation practices of international students in the religious and cultural environment of universities in Indonesia.

Literature review

International Student Mobility

Higher Education Institutions provide the view that the importance of lifelong learning, quality education, harmony, equality, and the provision of different resources are needed because it is an effort to prepare global citizens to face present and future challenges. They are strategically positioned to prepare for a sustainable future for all citizens, as a common goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as is the case of the European University. SDG-4 aims "to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." In particular, higher education is mentioned in target 4.3: "to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including universities." However, it is also recognized as a key element in achieving other goals set in the agenda, for example, to end poverty (SDG1) or to ensure healthy living and promote well-being (SDG3) (De La Torre et al., 2022).

At the institutional level, public higher education institutions have complete freedom to set their internal laws in a way that allows them to function more efficiently. State higher education institutions have specific rules that will enable them to effectively implement the mobility of teaching, administrative, and student staff, international projects and international cooperation programs, joint programs, and to carry out the recognition of global higher education qualifications (Markovic et al., 2021).

Various tendencies as influencing factors and motivation to study abroad for international students are the main things to understand mobility and negotiate. Studying abroad is considered important to increase the capacity of human resources (Gbollie & Gong, 2020). In addition, it is also to build experiences in terms of culture, the lecture system, and different friendships abroad. There is a face-to-face mobility experience in interactions with students from the target country, often accompanied by disagreements about stereotypical views, racism, and other forms of discrimination. These tensions and lack of communication in academic spaces foster what we call a "decolonial awakening": new or expanded critical thinking about the manifestations of power coloniality that are considered latent and intertwined in social dynamics (Educacao et al., 2022).

During the mobility experience, students need to constantly adapt to new circumstances, change their lifestyle, get acquainted with other forms of culture, and, in some cases, even change habits and attitudes to adapt to the new host culture. As a result, during their adaptation to the new international context, mobility students gain and strengthen some of the competencies that will be most valuable for their career development (De La Torre et al., 2022). These job position changes throughout the course of an individual's life are typically described as an intragenerational upward or downward mobility process and are particularly attractive because of their socially storied opportunities. Thus, changes can improve or worsen every day (Hoven et al., 2019).

However, international students who are in Indonesia are a destination country. The difficulties experienced by them are language barriers and adaptation to different cultures, and even religious obstacles also often occur. International students are also positioned as 'competitions' by local students and as objects of 'charity,' for example, as recipients of aid. In New Zealand, international students are positioned in contradictory ways as a source of income, as resources to promote 'local' student engagement

with 'differences,' and as (lacking) 'outsiders' (Anderson et al., 2022). Collectivism tends to be a cultural syndrome identified by shared attitudes, beliefs, norms, roles, and values, in which group interests are prioritized over individual interests (Le & McKay, 2018).

Social Adaptation Patterns

There are several patterns of social adaptation. Adaptation is a personal adjustment to the environment, and this adjustment can mean changing oneself according to the circumstances of the environment. It can also mean changing the environment according to personal desires (Gerungan, 1991). According to Karta Sapoeatra, adaptation has two meanings. The first adaptation is called autoplasic self-adjustment (auto means itself, plastic means form), while the second meaning is called allostatic self-adjustment. So adaptation means "passive," where personal activities are determined by the environment. The meaning of "active" affects the environment (Karta Sapoeatra, 1987).

Negotiation Concept

Negotiation is a form of communication that cannot be separated from the daily life of individuals with individuals or society. The practice of negotiation is often carried out in political activities, business activities, social activities, and even in the world of education, as well as other life activities. Everyone must have had negotiations. Both formal negotiations and informal negotiations. In this case, negotiations are carried out to achieve a goal. The negotiation course is one of the most popular courses in business schools, and it reflects the importance of negotiation not only in trade but in all areas of life, where almost any situation can be seen as negotiation. Negotiation has been studied from the perspective of not only business but also social psychology, game theory, and behavioral economics (Martin-Raugh et al., 2020). Ideas that triumph over the practice of solidarity and charity either align with or conflict with other normative systems of society under consideration, such as the legal requirements of the state or kinship norms and values (Thelen et al., 2009). The way in which social commitment is practiced in religious networks is also closely related to the presence of other religious or social solidarity providers, such as religious NGOs, churches, and international institutions. Likewise, conversions can only be understood in context. Although this is an intimate process, some aspects escape sociological concern, and others are socially determined. The logic of repentance depends as much on the individual disposition of the converts as on their social relationships and their families, which produces social effects (Hervieu-Léger 1999).

Research methods

The approach used in this study is interpretive. The data collection method used was interviewed. Interviews were used to explore primary data, namely International Office (IO) managers and international students managed at PTKAIN. The locations of universities under the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia are Gunung Djati University Bandung, UIN Walisongo Semarang, and UIN Malang.

Results and discussion

International students and the community

Community crowd activities are related to various frenzied art entertainment events, such as the Seventeenth of August performance, Dangdut art shows, and others. For international students, it is used as an atmosphere of freedom. For example, "...XS students participated in the concert crowd, and there was an offense with other audience..." The incident became an enjoyable event, even though it was casual.

Thus, they need assistance by using academic supervisors more intensely as a window into international and domestic student experiences of internationalization, as many of their day-to-day interactions occur in a group work context (Smithers et al. 2022). At least this case can be compared to other cases, such as Professional identity is a meta-cognitive force made up of a set of meanings system, which directs teachers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to their relational and transformative professional situations. Understanding the identity of learners means investigating their experiences of cognition, emotions, and actions in their settings and embedded pedagogic systems of meaning. This helps reveal the meaning of their educational experience (Han 2016). Social relations in this "concert" attended by international students involve aspects of cognition, emotions, and actions that provide positive meaning when linked to social involvement. Generally, adaptation refers to relatively stable changes in an individual or group in response to external requirements (Berry, 1997). Cross-cultural adaptation has two fundamental dimensions—psychological (e.g., a sense of well-being) and socio-cultural (e.g., social skills for everyday intercultural life) (Ward & Kennedy, 1993). First, it is predicted by a person's personality, life-changing events, coping style, and social support; the latter is connected to behavioral competencies, such as knowledge of host culture, language skills, level of contact, and intergroup attitudes (Berry, 1997; Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

The atmosphere of their countries (Sudan, Thailand, Yemen, Nigeria, and Afghanistan) is very different, and they have different cultural and religious atmospheres. Indonesian society is full of familiarity, easy-to-joke, and social attitudes that are prioritized as inter-ethnic and religious relations and dialogical communication (Milligan, Andersen & Brym 2014). For example, Miss KYN is from Pattani, Thailand TY. Studied in the Da'wah management study program (MD) of the Faculty of Da'wah and the Faculty of Sharia UIN Walisongo Semarang. This Thai student wants to study religious science in depth, while in Thailand, Islamic religious education is very limited because the majority of religious believers in Thailand are Buddhists. Therefore, he was interested in studying in Indonesia because there are many Islamic universities there. When he came to Indonesia, "Miss KYN and NTH lived in Perum BPI Ngaliyan in a rented house with other Pattani students. He lives in a rented house while interacting with the surrounding community. He is happy to live in Indonesia because Indonesians are kind, friendly, polite, and like to greet.

Interacting with the surrounding community, according to him, the Indonesian people are friendly and kind; when they meet, they are greeted, and they also greet each other. When there is an event, he is sometimes invited to attend the event, and sometimes, he is even given something by the community. For example, during Eid al-Adha, he is invited to participate in Eid al-Adha activities and eat together with the community. When he returns home, he is given beef and goat. The community around BPI Ngaliyan pays attention so that there are no problems or conflicts within the community. In fact, they are often helped and given something; sometimes, some residents give food, and sometimes some give fruit. The interactive atmosphere that occurred in the community outside the campus was well developed, and there were no problems until now, and his interaction with the community has gone well. I am happy and adaptable because the people are kind, friendly, and polite".

These social attitudes are produced through several domains, including Knowledge a "cognitive" competence dimension. It refers to all the topics and issues that individuals know or need to know in order to do their job. It is generally associated with "head."; Skills are the dimensions of "practical" or applied competencies. This dimension refers to what an individual is capable of doing or what they need to be able to do their job. It is generally associated with "hands" Attitudes. This dimension refers to the attitudes

and values individuals must have to do their work effectively (De La Torre et al., 2022). In the context of attitudes and values, the international student experiences a negotiation process in relation to concert activities, which, of course, the environment and habits are different when they are in their country. In another study, what reinforces this is that the tendency to experience reactionary psychosis is a personality trait that correlates with a variety of phenomena, including antisocial and narcissistic personality traits and political conservatism. The latest findings are not surprising, given that conservative ideologies, compared to liberal ideologies, are highly supportive of handling international students (Taylor & Asmundson 2021). In the Indonesian context, the State Islamic University prioritizes conservatism in accompanying negotiation processes, meaning that tradition, mutual familiarity, and others are evidence of more effective and acceptable handling by most international students.

Cross-cultural communication

This cross-cultural communication is communication that emphasizes differences in family backgrounds, geographical, religious, political, educational, nationality, and others that cause tension, or vice versa. For example, when international students interact with local students on campus, TY said, "I interacted on campus at first, and I was not familiar with friends who have different cultures, especially in communicating. I was shocked or experienced shock culture because I saw that my friends and fellow students spoke mostly in Javanese. I didn't understand". In addition, "there are different habits that occur on campus when I am not allowed to hang out with men in Pattani. In contrast, the interaction between students and female students on campus is wide open and freer. I was able to solve the problem slowly; when a friend talked to me, I told him to use Indonesian, not Javanese, because I didn't understand Javanese, and I was not Javanese or Indonesian. Alhamdulillah, over time, my fellow students were able to understand me, and now I am relieved and comfortable when interacting with my fellow students at UIN Malang".

On the other hand, it is sometimes considered important and ideological. It is usually related to one's religious beliefs: "... my habit that used to be when in Thailand was not allowed to interact with the opposite sex or men has now begun to get used to and adapt to the conditions that exist at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung where female students and students are the same in teaching and learning activities". This phenomenon can be understood as a negotiation process for international students not to question same-sex relationships (Katrin 2020). However, there are several cases where it is undeniable that there is a relationship between international students and Indonesian students, such as having free relations with fellow students. Some of the solutions that are done are to marry them. Western free culture is not an easy problem for foreign student managers.

Several University Steps, such as those carried out by the International Office of UIN Malik Ibrahim, can be used as anticipatory steps. Institutional steps that establish cooperation with Islamic boarding schools, parents, or foster parents. These foster parents are university lecturers or religious and community leaders. The function of this master is to guide them. This practice is an effort of service and anticipatory measures to control new problems based on individual freedom. This situation for international students is the incorporation of power or negotiation processes involving the role of external agents. In terms of the concept of empowerment as an education-empowering-advocacy strategy. The role of community participation is to take responsibility in the social education process (Sahrasad & Chaidar 2018; Aidarov, Kamalov & Tangkish 2020).

How important is the role of external agents that function as monitoring instruments? In addition, it acts

as a place to complain about the role of foster parents as a solution in the adaptation process and negotiation of international students in the form of distributive, integrative, and compatible (Martin-Raugh et al. 2020). In other cases, sometimes the negotiations are distributive, meaning that international students as agents live and associate only as part of the community who are domiciled as the problem of TY often missing information is one of the causes of not being familiar with students' friends. But there are also international students; he plays a role and joins his community, hangs out and makes friends, and participates in social activities. The problem of TY naturally often missing information is one of the causes of not being familiar with fellow students.

Conclusion

The involvement of the International Office in the management of international students is strategic for the university in developing the national accreditation position of BAN-PT in obtaining "Excellent" accreditation and international-level accreditation. The positioning is based on the role of building good cooperation with various universities, high schools, communities, and international funding institutions (Southeast Asia, Asia, Europe, America, Australia, TimTeng, and others). International students are activated to support the ranking of world-class universities. However, the problems and challenges include several things: Policymakers in budgeting have not endorsed the direction of internationalization development based on the achievement of the university's strategic plan; The leading financial and planning sectors have not been able to perceive the direction of the development of internationalization of universities; The International Office team's multi-lingual proficiency is very strategic.

The involvement of international students has not been maximized, meaning that international students have not grown their awareness to be involved in UKM/UKK institutions. In addition, no Indonesian standardization, such as TOFEL or IELT standardization, must be mastered. There are not many international students who are able to collaborate with the surrounding community. The collaboration draws attention to the importance of preparing KKN-PPL for international collaboration. However, international students on the Indonesian campus have not been able to adapt to the culture of Indonesian society. The International Office, as the spearhead of the university in the development of internationalization, has held various meetings at the national level aimed at sharing ideas in the formulation of international strategies and cooperation. However, it is necessary to benchmark world-class universities in the management of international students at various campuses abroad.

The form of negotiation of international students on several campuses is still distributive, meaning that international students are still individualistic, and friendships are not yet at a more familiar level. However, there are also international students who are integrative, meaning that they can blend in and participate in community social activities; for example, Middle Eastern students participate in tahlilan, istighasah, al Barjanji, and others. This study has a weakness, namely the very subjective interpretation of various events experienced by international students. This study will contribute more in terms of power relations and institutions when studied with a critical approach.

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