

I Lost My Muslim Identity: A Study of Indonesian Muslim Women Workers in Japan

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Abstract

This research reviews how Japan has become an attractive destination for migrant workers and international tourists in Asia, especially those from Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. This research aimed to explore how Indonesian female nurses maintain their religious and cultural identity amidst these challenges. The growth of migrant workers from Southeast Asia to Japan began in the 1950s after Japan joined the Colombo Plan, and accelerated following revisions to immigration control laws in the 1980s. The government-to-government (G to G) internship program has also been implemented since 1990, with Indonesian participation since 1993. Even though industry is the backbone of the Japanese economy, the population of productive human resources has experienced a significant decline, which has an impact on industrial productivity. This research used a qualitative research approach based on understanding social realities formed through the context, culture, and subjective meanings held by the informants through their experiences during migration in Japan. To overcome this, the Japanese government has taken steps to open its doors to foreign workers, including from Indonesia. Indonesia is one of the largest suppliers of migrant workers for Japan, with various types of visas such as Technical Intern Training (TITP), Specified Skilled Worker (SSW), and others. However, nursing work is often socially associated with women. In Japan, Indonesian female nurses face complex challenges, including losing their Muslim identity. Revealing uniforms and external factors such as negative stereotypes, discrimination and forced removal of the hijab complicate the situation.

Keywords: Indonesian Muslim Women Workers, Japan, Muslim Identity

INTRODUCTION

Japan, as a developed country in Asia, has become an attractive destination for migrant workers and international tourists. Migrant workers going to Japan generally come from Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia. In the 1950s, the growth of migrant workers from Southeast Asia to Japan began after Japan joined the Colombo Plan. This growth further accelerated after the Japanese government revised immigration control laws in the 1980s. Additionally, since the 1990s, Japan has established government-to-government cooperation through internship programs, and Indonesia has been part of this internship program since 1993 until now. Like other developed countries, industry is the backbone of Japan's economy. Ironically, the productive human resource population has experienced a significant decline over the past few decades, affecting industrial productivity. Thus, the Japanese government has sought solutions by opening the doors to foreign workers to be employed in Japanese industries.

With the opening of opportunities to fulfill the need for productive human resources in Japan, Indonesia plays a role as one of the largest suppliers of migrant workers in Japan, as evidenced by the significant number of young productive Indonesians from various cities in Indonesia working in Japan with various types of visas. The total number of Indonesian migrants based on data at the end of 2022 is 98,865 persons. Meanwhile, the number of Indonesian migrant workers based on residential status is 76,915 people, divided into Technical Intern Training (TITP) visa status 45,919, Specified Skilled Worker (SSW) 16,327, Engineer/Specialist in Humanities/International Services 5,195, Designated Activities (EPA) 1,450, and Nursing care 703 (ISA, 2023; Saeki, 2023, p. 3; Andini et al., 2022). One of the reasons for the influx of Indonesian migrant workers and workers from other Southeast Asian countries is that young Japanese people currently choose to leave 3K jobs (dirty, difficult, and dangerous). With the fulfillment of the labor market's needs, the Japanese government has opened several entry points from the perspective of immigration control. According to

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Rustam (2023), the Government opens three doors for foreigners to enter Japan, namely the front door, back door, and side door. The front door is intended for professional immigrants and skilled workers, the back door is for illegal immigrants, and the side door is for unskilled workers (trainees and Nikkei) and international students (Rustam, 2023, pp. 20–21). The three entry points for migrants in Japan can be seen in the diagram below:

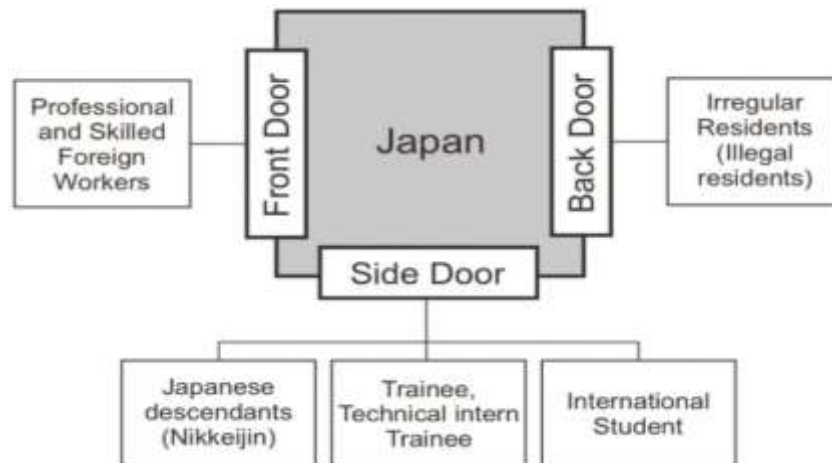


Figure 1. Entrance to Japan under immigration control

Source: (Rustam, 2023, p. 20)

According to Douglass & Roberts (2015), opening the entrance to foreign workers has resulted in a significant increase, not only in the workforce but also in tourists and students. The increasing number of foreign migrants entering Japan come not only to work temporarily, but also bring their families and form new households, and settle in various cities throughout Japan (Douglass & Roberts, 2015, p. 2). Apart from the trainee visa which is widely used as an entry point for migrant workers from Indonesia, on April 1 2019, the Japanese government launched a new program called Specific Skill Workers (Tokutei Ginou), by opening job opportunities in 14 sectors, including nursing, cleaning, agriculture, fishing industry, and others. Currently, many job seekers in Indonesia are starting to look at the Tokutei Ginou program as a very tempting work program.

Based on 2021 data, around 3000 Indonesian workers work under a special skilled worker scheme in Japan, making Indonesia the fourth largest contributor of workers after China (VOA, 2023). Apart from that, one type of work that is also in demand by migrant workers from Indonesia is elderly care workers due to the growth of Japan's elderly population which continues to increase. According to Aminah et al., (2018), the results of research conducted by エイジング総合研究センター (aging research center) stated that in 2030, it is estimated that the number of Japanese people aged over 60 years will reach 36.67 million people, contributing around 31.8 % of Japan's total population. This projection then increased to 37.64 million people in 2050 (Aminah et al., 2018, p. 94).

Currently, the proportion of Indonesian workers who work as nurses is mostly or predominantly women. This is because they are perceived as meticulous in caring for the elderly. Based on societal perceptions, nursing is constructed as a predominantly female occupation due to the nurturing nature of women, their skill in caring for and looking after others, as well as their gentleness and patience, which are traits often associated with women. When people hear the word "nurse," the image that comes to mind is typically a woman wearing a clean white uniform. Nursing is also the occupation most commonly pursued by women. Indonesian female nurses not only work and earn money, but they also carry their identities and cultures, especially as Muslim women (Efendi et al., 2022; Suma et al., 2023; Rahman & Weda, 2019).

Muslim women often wear their Islamic attributes, namely the hijab and modest clothing that covers the body, without obscuring the contours of the female form. However, it is regrettable that the nursing attire in Japan

is quite revealing, causing some Indonesian female workers to complain. However, in some elderly care facilities, there are uniforms that are sufficiently covered and neat. In addition to clothing, religious facilities are also a concern for Indonesian female nurses. Based on the issues outlined above, the author believes that Indonesian Muslim women workers have lost their identity as Muslims and that migrating to Japan presents complex and challenging struggles.

Furthermore, external factors such as negative stereotypes, discrimination, the imposition of removing the hijab, and even sexual violence are often experienced by Indonesian female nurses. Therefore, the author aims to discuss the issue of Indonesian Muslim women workers losing their identity as Muslims when working in Japan.

METHOD

This research used a methodology with a qualitative research approach based on understanding social reality which is formed through context, culture and subjective meanings held by informants through their experiences while migrating in Japan. According to Moleong (2005) Qualitative research is a study that aims to understand the experiences of research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations and actions, as a whole. Meanwhile, Saryono (2010) explains that qualitative research is used to investigate, discover, describe and explain the qualities or features of social influence that cannot be measured or explained through a quantitative approach (Nurdin & Hartati, 2019, p. 75).

Informant data collection was carried out using semi-structured interview techniques, by asking questions based on an outline of the research themes conducted by the author, to allow flexibility to explore emerging issues related to the research questions. The selection of informants included various backgrounds and experiences of Indonesian migrant workers in order to obtain a comprehensive picture. Apart from that, the selection of respondents also involved inclusion criteria that considered factors such as length of residence, type of work, and level of integration in Japanese society. The interview conducted by the author was conducted online between Japan and Indonesia using the zoom meeting platform.

The number of informants interviewed in this research was 5 people who came from different prefectures and cities, types of work, gender and also different types of visas. For further elucidation, please refer to the table depicted below:

Table 1. List of Indonesian Migrant Workers working in Japan

Initials	Types of Visas	Type of Work	City/Prefecture	Sex
A	SSW	Elderly nurse	Tokyo	Female
B	Trainee	Factory worker	Kochi	Female
C	SSW	Elderly nurse	Kochi	Female
D	SSW	Elderly nurse	Hiroshima	Female
E	SSW	Elderly nurse	Osaka	Female

Additionally, the researcher strives to conduct interviews in a friendly and open atmosphere to build trust between the researcher and informants. This is because data collection through interviews for migrant workers poses its own challenges, and when trust between the researcher and informants is not established, it is highly likely that the informants will not freely and openly discuss the issues they face. After the data collection is completed, the author analyzes the interview data and seeks to identify common patterns in the narratives constructed by the informants, as well as highlighting differences and similarities in their experiences.

To ensure the validity of the research, the author combines data from various sources, such as interviews and document analysis. The process in this research also adheres to strict ethical frameworks, including privacy policies, respondent anonymity, and the responsible use of data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research will outline the findings from the data collection that has been carried out, and are also the results of a document review as well as findings from interviews the researcher conducted with 4 Indonesian migrant workers in Japan.

Muslim Stereotypes in Japan

A stereotype can be conceptualized as a general perception that is simple, sometimes erroneous, and may not correspond to the reality regarding a particular group or community. It often involves generalizations based on specific characteristics, such as race, gender, religion, or cultural background, that have the potential to simplify and distort perceptions of reality. Furthermore, stereotypes are capable of having a negative psychological impact, both at the micro level individually and at the macro level within the affected community, with the potential to create prejudice, inequality and injustice as a result of wrong understanding. Unfortunately, such erroneous views can also be found in the context of Muslim migrant workers from various countries, including Indonesia, who work in Japan.

Currently, Muslims in Japan are a minority group with a small number of adherents. Even though the Muslim population in Japan continues to increase, the numbers do not show a significant increase, until now the number of Muslim communities in Japan is around 0.18% of the total Japanese population. According to research conducted by Hirofumi Tanada, a sociology professor at Waseda University in Tokyo which was reported by the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper, the growth of the Muslim population in Japan is estimated to reach 200,000 people. Indicators of this development can be observed from the increase in the construction of mosques as places of worship for the Muslim community in Japan.

Currently, there are 113 mosques throughout Japan, in contrast to the number in 1999 which was only 15 mosques (Otaki & Rikako, 2023). However, the numbers are not that large, and the media's framing of Muslims in general provides its own stereotypes for Muslim communities globally and especially Muslim migrant workers in Japan. Surveys conducted by Ulfah (2023) show that Japanese people have a negative view of Muslims and also reluctant to interact with Muslims (Ulfah, 2023, p. 31).

Some stereotypes that may be associated with Muslims in Japan involve a limited, incorrect understanding of Islam such as, the Hijab is traditional clothing, Muslims are still old-fashioned or old-fashioned, Muslims are terrorists and so on. In general, Japanese people still feel unfamiliar with the understanding of Islam, which is often accompanied by many misunderstandings, misperceptions, and even suspicion towards religion and Muslims. This is influenced by the role of the media in shaping public perception, and unfortunately, negative news about Islam and Muslims tends to be more dominant than neutral news. Therefore, their views of Muslims are largely influenced by media representations, which tend to include contexts of war, terrorism and acts of violence.

Therefore, people who have never interacted with a Muslim have misconceptions and stereotypes about them. To better understand Islam and Muslims, direct interaction with them is highly recommended. However, since they are still a minority community in Japan, opportunities to interact with them in everyday life may be limited. While changing misconceptions and stereotypes formed by the media is not an easy task, it is important for society to pay attention and visit mosques that are open to the public as a first step in better understanding the Muslim community.

Hijab as the Identity of Muslim Women

In Japan, Islam is a minority religion. Islamic teachings entered Japan along with the arrival of various thoughts and beliefs from western countries in 1877. At that time, it was only known as a culture. In 1890, an Ottoman Turkish ship was docked in Japan to begin diplomatic relations between the two countries and provide lessons to each other, understanding each other's culture, including Islam. In 1928 Japan's first Muslim community appeared in Kobe. In 1935, the Kobe Muslim community first established the mosque that we know today, namely the Kobe Mosque ("History of Islam in Japan," 1995). In 1952 the Japanese Muslim association was formed and the association was recognized by the Japanese government in 1968. Although initially Japan did not welcome Muslims in the past, in recent years, they have become more accepting in terms of understanding religions or cultures different from their own. Muslims in Japan come from various national, ethnic, cultural and lifestyle backgrounds ("History of Islam in Japan," 1995).

Some Muslims in Japan obediently follow orders based on the Koran and Hadith such as prayer and fasting, while others do not carry out these orders well. There are several factors that encourage the development of

the Muslim population in Japan. About half of settled Muslims are married. This shows that Japan will have more Muslims in the next generations in the future. This new generation of Muslims will be exposed to diverse cultural and social backgrounds and will be key to bridging traditional Japanese society with the Muslim community. Apart from births, the second big reason why the development of the Muslim population is concentrated in Japan is because of economic growth (Yasunori, 2007).

The increase in Muslim migrants in Japan is directly proportional to the influx of apprenticeships and several other types of visas. Apart from increasing the population, it has also resulted in an increase in the number of places of worship and also halal food throughout Japan. To better serve Muslim consumers from around the world, many restaurants have gone the extra mile to ensure that they have halal food.

The identity of Islamic society is explained as a community that is balanced between material and spiritual (immaterial) aspects of life. Furthermore, this identity emphasizes that Islamic society is cultured and has succeeded in civilizing itself, its family, society, nation and country in accordance with rational human values. This includes belief in a greater power outside oneself, namely Allah SWT, as the creator of all that exists. Ideally, Islam provides answers and guidance to human needs, both physical and spiritual. As a religion that is relevant throughout time and era, Islam provides the concept that humans are caliphs on earth, equipped with knowledge to carry out this role. This science includes social aspects and natural phenomena that have developed over time, reaching the level of modern knowledge or science.

According to Saifurrahman (2016), Muslim is also referred to as personalities. The personality of a Muslim is based on a combination of the individual's mindset and attitude towards the values of faith in Islamic teachings (Saifurrahman, 2016, pp. 2-3). A personality that is in accordance with Islamic beliefs will create individuals who also have individual piety and social piety. Individual piety is reflected in the level of spiritual intelligence, while social piety is reflected through attitudes of empathy, compassion, respect for others and a spirit of mutual help. The integration of the Muslim personality in Islam is one of Islam's goals to create universal happiness and happiness for humans, both in this world and in the afterlife (IR, 2016, p. 4).

Muslim identity is also often used when in society and also in the work environment, such as female Muslim workers. When working, most Muslim women wear the hijab as their Muslim identity. Not only as an identity, but as a means of covering the private parts and also as a form of polite and neat clothing. The hijab is typical Islamic clothing for women whose use has continued to increase in the world in the last decade, including in higher education settings, where discussions about religion are more easily spread by Islamic activists (Ramadhini, 2017, p. 1).

Those who choose to wear the hijab for reasons of religious obligation understand that wearing the hijab is an obligation that cannot be ignored. The form of hijab they choose is in accordance with sharia standards, not only covering the hair and head, but also covering the chest. Therefore, many women choose to wear a wide hijab, such as robes, dresses with skirts, and long and wide headscarves with clothes that are generally dark in color. This group often gathers with peers who have similar clothing styles. They tend not to engage in unimportant conversations, maintain modesty in speaking, and avoid overly intimate encounters with members of the opposite sex in confined environments. Some of them tend to have a monotonous attitude and prefer to keep their distance from social environments.

Narrative of the Identity of Indonesian Muslim Women Workers in Japan

a. Ms A, Elderly Nurse in Tokyo City

Ms. A, who resides in Tokyo, describes that the acceptance of Islam in Japan greatly depends on how Japanese people attain guidance or enlightenment. At her workplace, she feels that Japanese people accept her presence well. In fact, during job interviews in Japan, when representatives from Japanese companies learn that she wears the hijab, the reaction from Japanese people is quite positive. This is influenced by the fact that the company where she works already has many Indonesian employees, so the presence of Muslims, including those wearing hijab, has become commonplace.

Since 2018, Ms. A has not experienced any issues regarding the use of the hijab in her workplace. In fact, she

feels that Japanese people welcome her warmly and provide facilities such as prayer rooms and other conveniences. Although the majority of Japanese people accept Islam, Ms. A realizes that their views on the hijab may differ. Some Japanese people consider wide hijabs as "troublesome," especially when dealing with the elderly. Therefore, she adjusts the way she wears her hijab to be more compact so as not to disrupt her activities and comply with workplace regulations. Ms. A also shares experiences regarding Japanese people's perceptions of Islam. They often associate Islam with terrorist events, such as the September 11, 2001 attacks in America. This view is often passed down from generation to generation in Japanese families.

In her daily life at work, Ms. A faces challenges related to non-Islamic celebrations such as Halloween and Christmas. Although she does not celebrate them, she feels the need to participate in terms of wearing attributes and accessories for these celebrations to be considered polite by her colleagues at work. Conversely, if she does not participate in these celebrations, she is considered impolite by Japanese people. Ms. A mentions that despite some difficulties related to wearing the hijab in Japan, she accepts it as part of her decision to embrace Islam. For her, the hijab is part of her personality and identity, and she is willing to face any obstacles with sincerity.

In her everyday experience, Ms. A also realizes the difference in perceptions of the hijab outside and inside the workplace. Outside of work, she is free to choose a hijab that aligns with her beliefs, while at work, there are rules governing the wearing of the hijab to ensure the comfort of the elderly clients or patients they serve. Despite facing some challenges, Ms. A sees that Islam is beginning to flourish in Japan, and she is optimistic that positive understanding of her religion will continue to increase in the future.

b. Ms B, Kochi city Elderly Nurse

An Indonesian migrant worker in Kochi, Japan, shared her experience regarding wearing the hijab. During a job interview, she confirmed permission to wear the hijab and was permitted to work outside working hours. However, in the workplace, rules are enforced not to wear the hijab because it is thought to make elderly people in rural areas shocked and even afraid.

In the past, elderly caregivers used "head coverings," but these were deemed unsterile and were phased out. For prayer, places are provided such as warehouses, although sometimes they lack privacy. Mba B explained the practice of "relay" prayer with friends. Although Japan provides prayer spaces, the use of the hijab is not permitted. Ms B believes that Japanese people may not fully understand Islam. He predicts that perhaps in 20 years, the use of the hijab will be permitted in Kochi and throughout Japan.

He said he had experienced unpleasant experiences at first, although he did not directly experience significant discrimination. One of the experiences he recalled occurred in a supermarket, where he witnessed two grandfathers, Grandpa X and Grandpa Y, who responded to him in different ways. Grandfather X openly expressed negative views towards Islam, calling Muslims evil and terrorists, and even demonstrated how to hold a gun. On the other hand, Grandpa Y showed a friendly and defensive attitude, stating that Muslims were actually good. This experience left him feeling a little shocked and perhaps a little shaken. However, the different reactions of the two grandfathers also gave him insight into the variations in attitudes towards Islam in Japanese society. However, there are also positive experiences where other grandfathers defend Islam. Another unpleasant experience occurred when Ms. B and her friends were prohibited from praying in the breastfeeding room at the shop after permission was initially given by the employee.

c. Ms C, Kochi City Elderly Nurse

A migrant living in Kochi named Ms C, shared her experience of being an elderly nurse in Japan who uniquely chose to wear the hijab. Although there was initially no prior discussion about the rules regarding the hijab, Ms C reluctantly signed the contract without knowing about the ban. In response, she decided to remove her hijab in accordance with workplace regulations.

Even though her workplace environment proved to be very tolerant and even provided prayer facilities in the locker room, Ms C still faced challenges from society outside the workplace. Because the area where she lives rarely has Muslim people, her wearing of the hijab is the center of attention and may be quite a unique experience for many people around her. Mba C also expressed difficulties in carrying out prayers outside

working hours. In a situation where prayer facilities were not available, he was forced to pray in the Mall changing room, in order to face limited space to carry out his worship.

During the month of Ramadan, Ms C said that she had experienced misunderstanding from some Japanese people regarding her fasting practice. Some of them tend to misunderstand that fasting only involves the eating aspect, while drinking is considered acceptable. Although Ms C has explained several times, this misconception is still difficult for some Japanese people to accept. This reflects the challenges of communicating and sharing religious beliefs in an environment unfamiliar with certain religious practices. In addition, Ms C not only faces workplace regulations but also she tries to open Japanese people's understanding of Islam and Muslim religious practices. It can contribute to increasing awareness and mutual understanding among diverse communities.

d. Ms D, Hiroshima City Factory Worker

A Muslim migrant who has worked for 6 months in a Hiroshima cellphone factory, Japan, named Ms D, had an interesting experience regarding the use of the hijab at work. Although she is allowed to wear the hijab when not working, her workplace regulations prohibit her from wearing the hijab while working, making her the center of attention as the only one wearing the hijab among her co-workers.

Japanese people around Ms D often ask why Indonesians wear the hijab. In answering this question, Ms D explained that the hijab is a symbol of the Islamic religion. When asked whether the hijab made her feel hot, Ms D answered casually and explained that for her it was normal. Ms D also faced difficulties regarding the implementation of prayer services. There is no special place to pray at work, and living far away adds to the obstacles to praying properly. Not only Ms D, her friend at the PT next door also experienced similar difficulties without having prayer facilities.

Despite this, Ms D had no problems observing the fast, and some Japanese people even asked whether she was fasting or not. This shows the high level of tolerance and understanding among his co-workers regarding their religious practices. Ms D also highlighted the lack of knowledge about Islam in her area which seemed closed. With the various questions she received, Ms D felt that there was a need to provide further information and open up the local community's understanding of the Islamic religion. With an open and patient attitude, he strives to build bridges of intercultural understanding in his work environment.

e. Ms E, Osaka City Elderly Nurse

Indonesian Muslim migrant Ms. E recounts her first experience wearing the hijab at her workplace as an elderly nurse. Initially, when she was interviewed in Indonesia, she was allowed to wear the hijab. However, upon arriving in Japan, specifically in the city of Osaka, she actually removed her hijab. The reason being, she consistently received uncomfortable glances from the patients at her workplace. She even once was mocked by one of her patients with the term "obake" or ghost. This is because of the stereotype of ghosts ingrained in the minds of Japanese people, which are depicted as wearing white clothes and covering their entire bodies. In addition to receiving mocking remarks, Ms. E also experienced acts of seniority at her workplace. The reason for this is unclear, whether it was because she is Muslim or because she is a foreigner.

Prohibition of the use of the Hijab in the Workplace

As a Muslim woman or Muslim woman, wearing a hijab or burka is mandatory. Since everything is stated in the Quran, the holy book of Muslims. A Muslim woman is required to wear the hijab because Islam considers women as something special. Therefore, Islam orders Muslim women to cover their private parts. This action aims to maintain their honor and prevent harassment from the opposite sex. One other reason why a Muslim woman is obliged to wear the hijab is as a form of obedience to Allah SWT and Rasulallah SAW. This obedience is considered a source of happiness both in this world and in the afterlife. It is believed that those who are willing to obey all the commands of Allah SWT will experience the extraordinary beauty of faith. But what if wearing the hijab is prohibited when we work?

A care worker was forced to remove the hijab when one of the patients was afraid of the worker wearing the

hijab. Due to this incident, Indonesian nurses were forced to remove the hijab while working, whereas during interviews in Indonesia, the receiving company was willing to accept workers wearing the hijab. However, after 3 days in Japan she was asked to remove the hijab she was wearing (Tatsunori, 2023).

Moreover, there are workers who work in Osaka who experience difficulties when deciding to wear the hijab at their workplace in Osaka, Japan. Although she was allowed to wear the hijab during interviews in Indonesia, she chose to remove it after receiving uncomfortable looks and even teasing from her patients. His experience reflects the challenges faced by Muslim migrants at work in countries with different cultures and norms, where they must adapt to local expectations and perceptions of their religion and culture. In Japan, the hijab is perhaps a strange thing, even more like a ninja.

Prohibition of Fasting

The Muslim minority in Japan observes fasting during the month of Ramadan. In the book (Hasanudin, 2013), it explains that Ramadan in Japan has a peaceful atmosphere. This is because during the night, there is no hustle and bustle from mosques. There is no pre-dawn meal ritual as commonly practiced in Indonesia. Each Muslim individual sets their own schedule for prayer, pre-dawn meal (sahur), and breaking the fast based on information they obtain through the internet. Muslims in Japan do not feel "protected" by the Japanese government. This can be interpreted as there being no encouragement to respect Muslims who are fasting, as the majority of Japanese society is not familiar with the concept of fasting, and may not even be aware if someone is fasting.

One challenge of fasting in Japan is abstaining from drinking Sake, an alcoholic beverage that holds significant importance in Japanese culture and business. Especially for Muslims whose daily work involves environments where Sake is commonly consumed. It is known that Japan holds the tradition of drinking Sake as a means of communication after work or during introductions with new people. However, in Islam, alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

As Sake is deeply ingrained in Japanese culture, eliminating the habit of drinking Sake from their daily lives becomes difficult, if not seemingly impossible. As an alcoholic beverage, Sake is often consumed to the point of intoxication. Sake-drinking events are not just moments to enjoy the beverage, but also serve as crucial avenues for communication and social interaction among Japanese people. They use these occasions to share stories, exchange thoughts, and build closer relationships with those around them. Due to the relaxed atmosphere during Sake drinking, Japanese people tend to feel more liberated to communicate without the usual constraints or barriers they experience in everyday situations. Therefore, it is easy to find places selling Sake throughout Japan. All eateries and entertainment venues remain open as usual, even during Ramadan. This is because Japan, in general, is not familiar with Islam, and there are no rules requiring businesses to cease operations as a sign of respect for those fasting.

Nevertheless, the Muslim minorities in Japan persistently observe their fasting with dedication. Essentially, they are not disturbed by the eating and drinking activities of Japanese people in public places, as they rarely interact with such activities. In other words, they can worship devoutly without the need for special arrangements. This is different from Indonesia, where restrictions on trading in some places become common during Ramadan.

Besides Sake, a challenge faced by Muslim minorities and Muslim workers is the prohibition of fasting during Ramadan issued by workplaces. Fasting is prohibited out of fear that it may cause dehydration and have fatal consequences for work safety. Furthermore, companies impose strict control over fasting workers, symbolically forcing them to eat during lunch breaks in Ramadan (Rustam, 2021, pp. 140–141).

Prohibition of Praying

In the Islamic religion, worship is an obligation that must be carried out by Muslims throughout the world, without exception. One very important form of worship is prayer, which is a ritual of worship that must be carried out by Muslims wherever they are, including while working. Things are different when Muslim workers find a workplace that prohibits prayer.

One of them was a case in Aichi (Tatsunori, 2023), where workers were prohibited from praying. Likewise, oyster workers in Hiroshima are also prohibited from praying except during breaks. The reason from the company owner in Hiroshima was that worship was a personal matter and not the company's responsibility "that is not my business, that is your business with your god" (Rustam, 2021, p. 139). This decision shows the need to pay attention to workers' religious rights in the work environment. Even though superiors may view worship as a private matter, the right to practice worship should still be respected and protected, in accordance with the principles of religious freedom and human rights. Apart from the case in Hiroshima, there was a case in the Kochi area, when an immigrant wanted to pray at a mall in the Kochi area. At first he was allowed by one of the mall employees but suddenly through the employee the manager said that there was a prohibition on using the changing rooms in the mall for prayer. As we know, Japan has now introduced Halal tourism, where many Muslim tourists come to Japan and definitely need infrastructure and facilities for Muslim tourists, one of which is prayer.

CONCLUSION

The importance of redefining identity as a Muslim in a modern context cannot be overlooked. Education, interfaith dialogue, and the development of a deep understanding of religion can be crucial steps in rediscovering and strengthening Islamic identity. Through the appreciation of religious values and the cultivation of a strong sense of identity, individuals can embrace the diversity of the world while remaining rooted in their Islamic values. Alongside this, society needs to collaborate to create an inclusive and supportive environment for Muslim individuals, ensuring that their rights to proudly practice their Islamic identity are recognized and respected.

As the most advanced country in Asia, Japan has attracted the interest of the global community and has currently opened doors of opportunities for other countries to enter and come to Japan. Coming as tourists, workers, and students. Although Japan is known globally as an advanced country, on the other hand, it is currently experiencing a human resource crisis, which is predicted to shrink further in the coming years, nearing extinction. Japanese society is known to prioritize work over building a family, resulting in Japan having more elderly people (elderly) than its young population. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as Super Aging. As a strategy to maintain its human resources and reduce the Super Aging phenomenon, Japan is making various efforts to attract new human resources by opening its doors for foreign communities to come to their country.

With the opening of these doors, it becomes easier for foreign communities to come to Japan. Foreign communities coming to Japan include those who work and even those who build families there. This has led to an increase in the number of foreign human resources in Japan. Indonesia is the most prominent country, ranked number 4 after China, among those coming to Japan. Indonesia and Japan have established economic partnership cooperation, resulting in the Indonesian-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (IJEPA) through bilateral cooperation in the economic sector. Through this IJEPA, Japan hopes to address its shortage of human resources. Furthermore, the two countries have launched the Tokutei Ginou and SSW programs for Indonesian communities interested in working in Japan. Through the Tokutei Ginou program, the Japanese government opens up job opportunities in 14 sectors, including nursing, sanitation, agriculture, and the fishing industry. This program has attracted the interest of Indonesian communities, especially young people interested in working in Japan. On average, those working in Japan are high school graduates up to bachelor's degree holders. The most sought-after job sector by Indonesian communities at present is elderly nursing, considering that there is a considerable number of elderly people in Japan, leading to a high demand for workers in this field.

The majority of Indonesian workers who become nurses are women. This is because they are considered diligent in caring for the elderly. From community opinions, it can be said that the nursing profession is constructed as a female job, because women are perceived as nurturing, skilled in caring for others, gentle, and patient, making nursing highly synonymous with women. When hearing the word "nurse," what comes to mind for the community is a woman wearing a clean white uniform. Nursing is also the most common profession among women.

Indonesian female nurses not only work and earn money, but they also carry their identity and culture, especially Muslim women. Most Muslim women indeed wear their Islamic attributes, namely the Hijab and long clothes that cover the aura or vital areas for women. Seeing nurses' attire being quite revealing, Indonesian female workers have

some complaints, but for some elderly nursing facilities, some wear uniforms that are quite covered and neat. Besides clothing, prayer facilities also become a separate note for Indonesian female nurses. Additionally, there are also Indonesian Muslims who do not mind whether or not the Hijab is worn in the workplace because they did not wear the Hijab from the beginning. However, what is most important for most Muslims is to perform their worship, namely fasting during Ramadan and praying five times a day.

Currently, it needs to be remembered that the majority of foreign migrants coming to Japan are Muslims; Japan must be ready to serve its guests well, as they always apply the concept of *omotenashi*. However, Muslim residents in Japan are still not far from radicalization and discrimination against ethnic minorities. Compared to Christianity in Japan, Islam is less known. Even for places of worship for Muslim communities, Japan is still lacking. Furthermore, Japan prioritizes "work" over wasting time on things they don't even know about. Most workers who request prayer breaks are always considered "lazy," and there is even a workplace in Japan that prohibits Muslims from fasting for fear that it may reduce work performance. If Japan indeed wants and needs human resources from outside to improve its economy, Japan must also be prepared for the risks and obstacles it faces.

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