

CHAPTER 5

CLOSING

Chapter 5 of this research concludes the research and outlines its implications, categorized into theoretical, practical, and social aspects, along with recommendations resulting from the findings. The conclusion directly addresses the research objectives and problem identifications, specifically focusing on the identity negotiation and cultural adaptation process of Muslim students wearing hijab who study in South Korea.

5.1 Conclusion

This study aimed to understand the identity negotiation and cross-cultural adaptation processes of Muslim hijabi students who attended higher education in South Korean universities. The findings indicate that these students face complicated, multifaceted issues arising from an intersection of visible religious identification and a culturally homogeneous academic environment. In South Korean society, the hijab frequently symbolises "foreignness," as Muslim identity is primarily unfamiliar. Thus, this visibility of religious identity results in numerous identity-related stressful circumstances, including microaggressions (such as gazing or subtle avoidance), stereotyping, and perceptions of being excluded, often intensified by contrasting social norms, especially the dominance of

drinking culture in academic environments like membership training (MTs) social party.

In order to tackle these problems, Muslim hijabi students employ diverse identity negotiation techniques rooted in intercultural communication competence. The result of this study encompasses the strategies used by Muslim hijabi students which include re-adjusting hijab styles as a form of modifying fashion mode to make it seem less conservative (e.g., turban style), selectively participating in social activities to prevent disagreements over values by not joining drinking-related student occasions, and educating peers through considerate and mindful discourse. The handling of emotions rooted in faith (*iman*) and self-acceptance also enhances psychological resilience. These initiatives demonstrate elevated mindfulness, cultural awareness, and communication adaptability.

Furthermore, their adaption mechanisms encompass cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects. Cognitively, Muslim hijabi students actively seek for cultural understanding and did a pre-departure research for their life overseas in South Korea. Behaviorally, they transform their fashion style and create alternate prayer locations, such as stairwells and empty classrooms. Emotionally, they construct Muslim support networks and withdraw from inappropriate social environments as necessary. These techniques correspond with the three co-cultural orientations by Mark Orbe which are assimilation, accommodation, and separation, demonstrating adaptive, contextual adaptations to dominant cultural influences.

Therefore, the successful outcome of these strategies is profoundly affected by the surrounding environment through two way communication. Supportive responses, including inclusive peer interactions, open-minded discussions, and inclusive university policies, encourage emotions of respect, validation, and understanding, which frequently result in integration into the host culture in South Korea. On the other hand, unsupportive responses including identity rejection through ignoring others, mindless questions, and social exclusion toward Muslim hijabi students might hinder the negotiating process and cause frustration, alienation, and finally separation.

In conclusion, this research underscores the essential importance of intercultural communication competence—comprising personal attributes, communication skills, psychological adaptation, and cultural awareness—in supporting Muslim hijabi students to navigate their identities and become acquainted within a predominant non-Muslim culture. These findings enhance the theoretical frameworks of Identity Negotiation Theory, Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory, and Co-Cultural Communication Theory, providing a more profound comprehension of how minority students exercise freedom amongst cultural conflicts in foreign academic environments in South Korea.

5.2 Research Implication

This research has implications in three areas: theoretical, practical, and social. The implications in these three areas are derived from the research findings in the field:

5.2.1 Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study involves Identity Negotiation Theory, with field findings supporting its implementation and providing additional elaboration. The identity negotiation process is evident in the experiences of Muslim hijabi students in South Korea, characterized by a series of challenges, strategic responses, and resultant outcomes. The research indicates that communication skills, mindfulness, and cultural awareness are fundamental elements of intercultural communication competence, necessary for effective identity negotiation. In contrast, unsuccessful outcomes frequently arise from a lack or insufficiency of these competencies.

In addition, this study encompasses Cross-Cultural Adaptation Theory to provide insight into the cultural adaptation process experienced by the Muslim hijabi students in South Korea. This framework eventually showcase that the adaptation process consists of an initial stress phase, the application of coping strategies, and ends in intercultural transformation. The theoretical framework is further

enhanced by the integration of the concept of Minority Identity Development. In the concluding phase of cultural transformation, it is notable that individuals who adapt successfully achieve integration, while those who struggle often encounter separation from the host culture.

Therefore, the theoretical implications of this study underscore the importance of intercultural communication competence in facilitating meaningful and effective communication outcomes. For visibly identifiable Muslim minorities, such as hijabi students in non-Muslim majority contexts, intercultural competence is essential for effective identity negotiation and cultural adaptation.

5.2.2 Practical Implications

Practically, this study emphasizes the critical importance of communication in dealing with challenges such as othering, discrimination, and micro-aggression faced by Muslim hijabi students throughout their academic experiences in South Korea. This is especially important in the context of negotiating and communicating their identities as visible minorities. The results of this research identifies identity negotiation and cultural adaptation processes that provide a framework to assist the future Muslim hijabi students from Muslim-minority countries in preparing for and navigating their experiences in South Korean universities.

Therefore, the findings highlight the significance of proactive communication, self-expression, and cultural learning as essential strategies for addressing sociocultural challenges. It is crucial for hijabi students to embrace change at every stage of their journey and to develop an open-minded perspective. This adaptability enables individuals to successfully manage their academic and social lives while balancing their personal faith with the realities of studying and living in a different cultural context.

5.2.3 Social Implication

Socially, this study provides important insights for prospective Muslim hijabi students seeking higher education in culturally diverse settings like South Korea. It highlights the significance of cultivating cultural communication competence as a crucial factor in effectively negotiating identity and adapting to diverse cultural contexts. The outcomes of the research also illustrates the processes of identity negotiation and cultural adaptation, serving as a reference for Muslim student communities in South Korea, particularly in empowering Muslim hijabi students who may face challenges in navigating an unfamiliar cultural environment. Additionally, academic institutions in South Korea may utilize the findings of this research to promote more inclusive and secure environments for Muslim hijabi students. This also provides an opportunity to enhance cultural awareness among South

Korean students concerning marginalized communities, thus building a more respectful and culturally sensitive academic environment.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations for future research and practical development. Future research needs to examine the experiences of Muslim hijabi students in other non-Muslim majority countries to provide comparative insights across various cultural and sociopolitical contexts. The current research is still relatively segmented, focusing solely on South Korea, with a majority of respondents originating from Indonesia. This limitation primarily resulted from restricted access to participants from diverse national and cultural backgrounds. Expanding the scope to include students from various regions—such as the Middle East, South Asia, or North Africa—studying in non-Muslim majority contexts may enhance the discourse on identity negotiation and cultural adaptation in diverse intercultural environments.

In addition, future research should involve more people in the sample and include participants with diverse profiles, encompassing variations in religious observance, length of stay abroad, language proficiency, and academic disciplines. This would enhance the representativeness and universality of the findings, while facilitating a more nuanced understanding of how various intersectional factors—such as ethnicity, nationality, and personal background—shape the intercultural

experiences of Muslim hijabi students. The use of longitudinal or mixed-methods approaches might provide deeper insights into the evolution of identity negotiation and adaptation processes over time.