


Chapter 8

Lived Experiences of a Muslim Indonesian Woman in Australia's Academic Spaces

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ABSTRACT

This chapter employs an autoethnographic methodology to explore the complex negotiation of identity experienced by a Muslim Indonesian woman within Australian academic institutions. It examines the dual positionality of being an academic insider while simultaneously occupying the role of a cultural and religious outsider. The analysis delves into the liminal space this creates, investigating how cultural norms, religious practices, and institutional structures in Australian academia shape this experience. Through a reflective analysis of personal narrative, this chapter highlights the tensions and adaptations inherent in navigating these intersecting identities. Ultimately, it argues that such lived experience provides critical insight into the unspoken cultural dynamics, challenges of inclusion, and the nuanced process of knowledge production in international higher education. The findings contribute to broader discussions on diversity and intersectionality of academic spaces.

1. INTRODUCTION

Related to global mobility, there has been an increasing trend of mobility of women from Muslim countries to Western countries for further studies including

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Indonesia to Australia. It is the variety and complexity of ways of being an “Indonesian Muslim woman” from the conservative to the progressive that shapes the way individuals respond to the diaspora experience. Muslim women, especially those who are seen from their hijab in the eyes of the global West, especially Australia, are often faced with stereotypes both in media representations and in educational institutions (Dunn et al., 2009). Teichler (2015) defines mobility as the movement of individuals across national borders, which in this context refers to the mobility of international students studying abroad. The international movement of academics such as lecturers, researchers, and other staff in higher education and research institutions is considered important not only for personal and institutional academic advancement, but also for strengthening international understanding by facilitating comparative analysis and countering narrow and parochial thinking. This has a strong and positive foundation, such as improvements in the quality of research and teaching, collaboration, technological innovation, and economic growth. It also includes personal development, such as communication skills, comparative reasoning, and international competence. LPDP (Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education) data (2024), for example, which is a scholarship, research, and cultural initiative program under the Indonesian Minister of Finance, shows that there were 8,592 scholarship recipients in 2024, most of whom were master's degree recipients who chose to continue their studies abroad. The 52.5% percentage of female scholarship recipients reflects LPDP's special focus on increasing access to higher education for women. With 4,737 LPDP scholarship recipients by the end of 2024, Australia is one of the countries with the highest number of scholarship recipients. Official data shows that there were 730,914 international students studying in Australia between January and May 2025, an increase of 2% compared to the same period last year (Australian Government Department of Education, 2025). Of this total, 21,480 were students from Indonesia, which recorded the highest growth of 7%.

The latest data from the 2021 Census shows that Islam is practiced by 813,392 people in Australia, representing 3.2% of the national population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022), and this number is expected to continue to grow over time. From the perspective of the Muslim community, Australia can be considered a fairly “Muslim-friendly” place, coupled with the availability of mosques in several suburbs where many Muslims live, as well as the availability of halal food. However, for women, the reality is that they experience a more complex daily life. They are at a crossroads between facing positive daily experiences that can expand opportunities for participation and empower communities but also facing experiences that demand adaptation. A number of studies have examined this dynamic. Boz et al. (2025) highlight the field of sports participated in by Muslim women, describing cultural and structural barriers. On the other hand, collaboration between Islamic schools, communities, and the government influences mutual trust and inclusive

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