

Transnational Marriage and Integration: Challenges and Adaptation Strategies of Indonesian Muslim Foreign Bride in Taiwan

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Abstract

This research examines the challenges and strategies Indonesian Muslim foreign brides face in Taiwan. Foreign brides often experience discrimination and are often classified as a social problem and the cause of the decline in the quality of Taiwan's young generation. This research uses a qualitative method by collecting data through in-depth interviews using snowball sampling to select informants. Interviews were conducted with ten informants who live in Taipei and New Taipei. This research uses integration theory to examine the relationship between four domains of integration, structural, social, cultural, political, and civil life, in the integration process of Indonesian Muslim foreign brides in Taiwan. This study found that Indonesian foreign Muslim brides face the most severe obstacles in the cultural and social fields. Muslim foreign brides use several strategies to face these obstacles: gathering social support from their closest circles, including the Muslim community at the Taipei Grand Mosque, the Indonesian Muslim community in Taiwan, and the Chinese Muslim Association. In addition, they seek assistance from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other members of civil society to integrate optimally.

Keywords: *Indonesian Foreign Bride, Integration, Muslim Foreign Bride, Taiwan, Transnational Marriage.*

INTRODUCTION

1949 was a turning point in the history of Chiang Kai Sek and his 600,000 troops, who were defeated by Mao Zedong and forced to flee to Taiwan for protection. During this migration, male soldiers predominated over female soldiers by a ratio of 4:1. The gender disparity in society poses a significant obstacle for numerous males pursuing a life partner. Thus, the government permitted Taiwanese males to seek life partners in China and Southeast Asia

beginning in the 1970s. In this region, Taiwanese men's limited familiarity with the process of locating foreign brides necessitates the use of matchmakers and agencies. Most foreign brides come from China, Vietnam, and women of Chinese descent in Singkawang, West Kalimantan, Indonesia (Edlund & Liu, 2012).

In the 1980s, Taiwan became one of the newly industrialized countries (NIC) with Japan, South Korea, and Singapore (Chen, 2016). These alterations in economic conditions have influenced Taiwanese society, particularly women. A significant number of Taiwanese women can obtain a respectable education and enter the workforce with greater ease, reducing the desire of young women to marry and raising their standards for potential spouses. Many lower middle-class Taiwanese men struggle to find a life partner. To address this problem, the government permitted women from neighboring countries to wed males from Taiwan. During this period, the Taiwanese government reversed the course of its foreign policy, which had been initially relatively amicable towards China. Concurrently with the issuance of the "turning south" policy by the government to redirect economic investment from China to Southeast Asia, opportunities for Southeast Asian foreign bride to travel to Taiwan increased (Wang, 2005).

The number of foreign brides from Southeast Asia in Taiwan was 20,000 in 1999, dominated by Chinese and Vietnamese, and continued to rise until 2015, reaching 503,255, with 91,793 from Vietnam, 28,444 from Indonesia, and the remainder from other Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines and Thailand (Yang & Chang, 2017). Since 2002, changes have occurred among Indonesian foreign brides, most of whom were of Chinese descent from Singkawang, West Kalimantan. Then, many foreign brides from Indonesia have come from East Java, West Java, and Lampung. The majority of Indonesian foreign brides in the second wave are Muslim and marry Taiwanese, of whom converted to Islam when they married. When a foreign bride from another Southeast Asian country marries a Taiwanese, she follows her husband's and extended family's faith or belief (Li & Yang, 2020). However, unlike Muslim foreign brides from Indonesia, they tend to preserve their religion, and it is their spouse who follows their religion. As a result, it frequently causes issues with the spouse and his extended family.

In Taiwan, the life of a foreign bride is not easy. They are obligated to adhere to the "ideal inheritance" (propagating hopes and traditions of their husband's family) and are also required to promptly acclimate to their new surroundings and strive to carry on the ideals and customs of their husband's family (H. F. Liang et al., 2020; L.-F. Liang, 2011). Additionally, they are

frequently expected to contribute to the family's financial well-being, as most spouses do not originate from affluent economic backgrounds (H.-C. Hsia, 2019). Nonetheless, during the process, foreign brides are frequently subjected to discrimination and even have their quality questioned. In Taiwan, cultural and linguistic differences often lead locals to believe that foreign brides are unfit to conceive and raise children (Lan, 2019). They are regarded as low-status individuals, and their presence is feared to disrupt the social order and incite moral panic in Taiwanese society. Even some of the locals believe that they are squandering social welfare funds. These numerous obstacles and challenges make their integration into Taiwanese society complex. The integration process is critical in facilitating the acceptance of foreign brides as immigrants into the local community, enabling them to attain an equivalent social and economic standing to that of the locals.

Multiple factors exacerbate this difficulty for Muslim foreign brides. For example, there is concern about Islamophobia, which causes them to experience double discrimination. The first form of discrimination is rooted in their low social status, while the second is motivated by their adherence to the Islamic faith. Consequently, the exclusion and discrimination they encounter will impede their job search and integration process. An additional difficulty concerns religious and cultural distinctions. Taiwanese culture remains predominantly traditional and conservative, and it is highly uncertain how Muslim foreign brides will navigate these differences. Does it facilitate the integration process, or does it impede it? Muslim foreign brides will face the difficulty of maintaining a balance between their religious and cultural identities while participating in a variety of life processes in the host country. Dress codes, language, and social conventions are a few of the issues that may be involved in the integration process (Staninger, 2005). Therefore, in-depth analysis is needed to defeat discrimination and marginalization and encourage social cohesion. For the Taiwanese government and the locals, it is important that they recognize the diversity within their community due to transnational marriage and involve foreign brides in the integration process by considering their specific needs and experiences.

The integration process requires efforts from both parties: the migrant and the government and the locals. Without understanding the existing obstacles, it is not easy to find solutions to the problems in the integration process experienced by foreign brides in Taiwan. So far, problems related to the integration of foreign brides in Taiwan focus on issues of citizenship (H. C. Hsia, 2009; Lan, 2019), racism (Tseng, 2016), mental health (Tsao et al., 2016), trafficking (Remón, 2016), foreign brides empowerment (Lin, 2018), psychological well-being

(Li & Yang, 2020), geopolitics against China (H. C. Hsia, 2021), and employment experiences (Wu, 2023). None has specifically examined the difficulties faced by foreign brides as a result of religious and cultural differences. The article written by Yang and Chang (2017), which focuses on diet, language, and spiritual problems faced by foreign brides in Taiwan, does not reflect the overall picture of foreign brides in Taiwan, primarily Muslim foreign brides. Yang and Chang's (2017) findings show no significant problems for foreign brides regarding religion because most informants in their research stated that foreign brides tend to follow their husband's religion to avoid conflict. This may be because the informants in this research come from various countries such as China, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia; therefore, the problems faced by Muslim foreign brides do not appear to be an essential problem. The Muslim foreign bride phenomenon has hardly gone unnoticed. Yang and Chang's findings are a research gap as well as a novelty from this research, which starts from the assumption that religious differences are a big problem in transnational households between Muslim and non-Muslim foreign brides. Based on the above explanations, it is hoped that this essay will be able to answer the following two essential questions: 1) What are the obstacles faced by Muslim foreign brides from Indonesia in Taiwan? 2) What strategies do they employ to ensure that the integration process runs smoothly?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

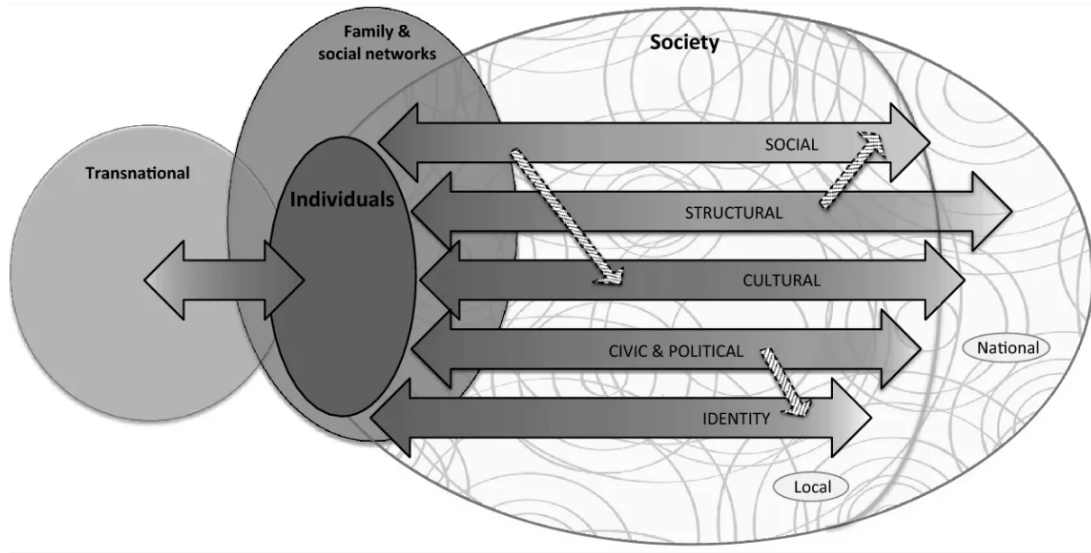
Unlike other social partnerships, marriage is a personal social relationship in which individuals choose who they wish to live with. Marriage entails choices in selecting a life partner and mutual respect for each individual's standing. Marriage, in other words, reduces symbolic borders and power disparities between partners (Nagayoshi et al., 2023). Meanwhile, a transnational marriage occurs between people from different countries or ethnicities. Transnational marriage can also happen between two people of the same ethnicity or nationality who marry outside of their home country. Partners in transnational marriages come from diverse cultural, linguistic, and geographical origins and choose to match and make a life together. This sort of marriage spans national boundaries and may involve one partner migrating to the home country of the other, both partners residing in a neutral third location, or both couples continuing a long-distance relationship.

Many advantages and disadvantages emerge when discussing the complexities of transnational marriage. Concerns about integration and reservations about the cultural

originality produced by transnational marriages are among the contentious problems. Transnational marriages are common between women from underdeveloped countries and men from more developed countries. Many of these foreign brides come from low-income families in developing countries. These ladies can work overseas without having to spend money as migrant workers. They seek to improve their status and change their economic circumstances by marrying foreign brides. This causes many locals in the destination country to doubt the foreign bride's quality. Foreign brides are regarded as low-quality human resources, and it is feared that they will harm Taiwan's human resources. Aside from that, it raises problems when they are required to become mothers in the host country for the following generation. Some locals believe that foreign brides pose a threat to the local wedding market and social order, which leads the government to strict regulations regarding foreign brides (Lena et al., 2012). The unfavourable preconceptions developed against foreign brides make integration difficult, if not problematic.

Integration is the process of establishing connections between immigrants and the locals. This process is broader than social cohesion and is not the same as assimilation or multiculturalism (Castles et al., 2014). Spencer (2011) defines integration as an interaction process between migrants and individuals or institutions in their new place that provides economic, social, cultural, and civic participation facilities. This process also involves the emergence of inclusive feelings of mutual belonging at the national and local levels. Crul et. al conveyed a similar definition in Mu & Yeung (2022) that integration is not an end state but a developing process. Therefore, an integration model is needed to understand how the process develops and what factors influence it. By understanding differences and the factors that affect them, it is hoped that a sense of mutual understanding and tolerance will emerge. Thus, the integration process, a two-way process between immigrants and hosts, can run well. Obtaining acceptance from the locals accelerate the process of adaptation and integration.

To assess the progress of the integration, Spencer (2011) identifies five critical domains that necessitate consideration: 1) The structural domain pertains to the involvement of foreign brides in educational and training initiatives and the labor market; 2) The social domain concerns relationships and social interactions with the local community; 3) The cultural domain investigates shifts in lifestyle choices, values, behavior, and attitudes; 4) The political and civil life domain examines engagement in democratic processes and community life including the participation in democratic activities. The integration domain for migrants as follows:



Source: Spencer & Charsley (2021)

The image above illustrates how an individual's initial integration begins with establishing a connection to the host community while maintaining ties to family and social networks back home. Each interconnected domain has the potential to facilitate a seamless integration process or impede progress altogether. Furthermore, while the integration process may vary across domains, one domain will inevitably impact others. Spencer & Charsley (2021) propose that the integration process among different domains is impacted by effector factors, including policy interventions, transnational effectors, opportunity structures in society, families and social networks, and opportunity structures and social networks.

Firstly, the effectors are related to individuals associated with an individual's initial capital when migrating, such as educational background, language skills, knowledge, and other soft and hard skills. Second, related to social networks and social capital, its impact on the integration process's outcome is substantial. Third, societal opportunity structures constitute the foundation of the integration process, as this aspect is intricately linked to the employment prospects for migrants. This factor is also associated with the host society's willingness to be inclusive to prevent discrimination. The third factor supports the fourth factor, which pertains to governmental policies designed to mitigate prejudice and discrimination. In addition, policy interventions may be implemented to foster community engagement, social interaction, and employment opportunities, as well as combating illicit discrimination and negative attitudes. Finally, transnational factors pertain to the governmental policies of the country of origin of the migrant. Additionally, Heckm et al. (2006) delineated that language barriers, cultural

sensitivity, discrimination, and participation restrictions associated with immigration status impact the integration process of these domains. In this regard, to examine the process of Muslim foreign spouses from Indonesia's integration into Taiwan, this article will delineate the four domains above of the integration process.

METHODS

This study used qualitative research methods, a type of research that tries to gather and evaluate non-numerical data to understand an individual's social reality, including attitudes, beliefs, and motives. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), or observations are typically used to collect rich data in detail and context (Purhantara, 2010). This study collected primary data through in-depth interviews with ten Muslim foreign brides from Indonesia in Taiwan who live in Taipei and New Taipei City. The snowball sampling method was used to find the informants. The semi-open questions were used to understand the background of foreign brides, the significant problems they encounter as Muslim foreign bride, strategies for navigating the integration process, and their future plans.

Table 1.1 Characteristics of Informants

Name (initial)	Age (years old)	Resident in Taiwan	The origin in Indonesia	Stay duration in Taiwan	Number of children
PA 1	45	New Taipei City	Wonosobo	15	1
PA 2	45	New Taipei City	Malang	17	2
PA 3	45	Taipei	Malang	21	2
PA 4	47	Taipei	Tuban	22	2
PA 5	43	Taipei	Nganjuk	17	2
PA 6	45	New Taipei City	Sukabumi	20	3
PA 7	40	Taipei	Bandung	10	2
PA 8	43	New Taipei City	Gresik	17	2

PA 9	51	Taipei	Bandung	20	2
PA 10	35	Taipei	Wonosobo	9	1

Source: field work

All informants examined for this study were the second-wave generation of Indonesian foreign brides in Taiwan. This second-wave generation consists of Indonesian women who, unlike their predecessors, are not of Chinese descent. In 2002, when President Megawati ceased dispatching Indonesian Migrant Workers (IMW) to Taiwan, some IMW came to Taiwan through matrimony. Some migrant workers who enter through marriage are in the form of fake marriages, in the sense that they are only a means of being able to migrate to Taiwan. Still, some of them come to work as migrant workers and marry Taiwanese people. Others entered Taiwan as IMW after relations between Indonesia and Taiwan improved; while working as IMW, they met Taiwanese males and decided to wed. The informants ranged in age from 35 to 47, had 1-3 children, and had resided in Taiwan for 9 to 22 years.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

THE EVOLVING GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE OF TAIWAN AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREIGN MUSLIM BRIDES

The Evolving Geopolitical Landscape of Taiwan and Its Implications for Foreign Muslim Brides Economic improvement in Taiwan since the 1980s has changed society's social order, especially the decline in marriage and birth rates. One of the reasons for this change is the decreasing desire of Taiwanese women to marry, which has resulted in Taiwanese men being forced to look for women from nearby countries to marry. Since this era, cross-border marriage broker agencies have also emerged, actively promoting women from Vietnam and Indonesia. Women from Vietnam and Indonesia are considered ideal for Taiwanese because of their obedient, diligent, and self-sacrificing character (Fresnoza-Flot and Ricordeau, 2017). This period was the first wave of arrival of foreign brides from Indonesia to Taiwan.

This first wave was dominated by Indonesian women of Chinese descent who lived in Singkawang, West Kalimantan. The second wave generation of Indonesian foreign brides started in 2002, during which relations between Indonesia and Taiwan were strained, and the sending of IMW was temporarily halted due to the rising number of undocumented IMW (Lan, 2019). Many migrant worker agencies are relocating migrant workers via transnational marriage routes as a result of this dismissal. While the majority arrived in Taiwan unmarried,

the vast majority later entered into matrimony and began working there. 30% of the informants in this study entered into marriage utilizing this method, specifically by working in Taiwan while posing as spouses. The remaining IMWs met and fell in love with a Taiwanese man during their interactions. Second-wave Indonesian foreign spouses differ ethnically from those of the initial wave. The preponderance of foreign brides during this second wave were Sundanese or Javanese from Lampung, East Java, Central Java, or West Java. Aside from that, Muslims comprise the majority of Indonesian foreign brides in this second generation.

In general, Muslim foreign brides from Indonesia face similar challenges to other foreign brides. For example, they may face prejudice and exclusion because of their status as foreign brides, or they may be undervalued due to their educational background. Their ability to be good mothers to their children is questionable. Hsia (2021), who has been investigating foreign brides in Taiwan for decades, believes there has been a shift in society's and the government's attitudes regarding foreign brides. Foreign brides and their children, who were once deemed a "social problem," have now become "social assets." This shift in perspective was inextricably linked to President Tsay Ying-wen's New Southbound Policy, which she executed for two consecutive terms. The Taiwanese government implemented this strategy to improve the quality of children born of transnational marriages by bringing them closer to their mother's language and culture of origin. Children of foreign brides from South East Asia are thus projected to be the "seeds of the New Southbound Policy." Tsay Ying-wen employed this policy to gain a deeper relationship with ASEAN countries. Because of the policy shift, the government has been working hard to modify Taiwanese attitudes toward foreign brides. However, according to the field data collected for this study, Taiwan's geopolitical developments have not helped or expedited the integration process of foreign brides in Taiwan.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN THE INTEGRATION PROCESS OF INDONESIAN MUSLIM FOREIGN BRIDES IN TAIWAN

Structural Domain

This domain is concerned with the migrant's interaction with the locals in terms of labor market involvement, education, and training. Participation of migrants in the host country's labor market is evidence of integration (Li & Yang, 2020). Hsia ((2019) defines the phenomenon of foreign brides in Taiwan as "the restructuring of reproduction," in which women from impoverished nations migrate to conduct labor reproduction work for more industrialized countries. These migrant women contribute to the receiving country in three ways: they perform

domestic functions (such as cooking, cleaning the house, and caring for parents and sick family members), they provide for and look after the next generation (by giving birth and raising children), and they work. Because most marriages are arranged by matchmakers (marriage agencies), foreign brides are unaware of their potential husbands' economic circumstances. Many are unemployed or work in industries that do not give adequate financial assistance. Even most men are unable to finance home expenses. Aside from the husband's low financial situation, they also refuse to financially assist the family (Liang et al., 2020). This condition forces foreign brides to work to maintain the family economy and support their family left behind in their home country. According to Wu (2022), the workforce of foreign brides in Taiwan is quite large, reaching 67.9%. This figure exceeds Taiwan's female labor force participation rate of 58.2%.

Muslim foreign brides from Indonesia face discrimination not just because of their lower status but also because of their Muslim identity. Due to double discrimination, over 80% of the interviewees in this study worked as entrepreneurs. The major impediment is restrictive working hours, which make it difficult for them to pray five times a day. Other barriers include some working policies that prohibit Muslim workers from wearing Muslim attire and the problem with non-halal materials that make it difficult for them to pray during break time.

“I work as a cleaner in a five-star hotel restaurant in Taipei. I work after the restaurant closes. The hotel administration did not forbid me to wear hijab because I worked after all the customers had left. I cleaned from late at night to early in the morning. I have to come into contact with non-halal materials since this is a restaurant, whether I like it or not. I used to work as a cleaner in a restaurant before working here. The business hours are from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., but then I decided to resign because, during my work, I have contact with pigs, which makes praying difficult. After all, the spices and cooking splash my body and clothes. It is difficult to clean my body during break time to perform salah (praying) because my afternoon break is barely half an hour. Because of that, I decided to work in this hotel restaurant. I can pray in peace, and I can even wear the hijab. In my previous job, the owner did not allow me to wear hijab.” (PA 8, New Taipei City, 43 years old)

PA 8's explanation shows that the locals deliberately created barriers, making the integration process uneven. Foreign brides may reveal their religious identity while working as

long as it does not cause discomfort to consumers. Therefore, they are given night shifts when consumers are no longer there. There is no tolerance for religious activities because foreign brides are paid according to the agreed working hours.

Taiwan's government has attempted to address these integration barriers by assisting and supporting foreign brides (Cheng, 2018). The government recognizes that foreign brides consider working alone rather than with people or firms in Taiwan. As a result, the government developed the Entrepreneurship Accelerator for Immigrant Women initiative in 2016. For foreign brides, this program offers professional training and entrepreneurship courses. Initial finance help, operations management training, marketing strategy, and customer management are also included. However, few Indonesian foreign brides participate in this program because existing programs focus on Vietnamese foreign brides and accommodate their needs (Pawestri et al., 2023). Initially, the government devoted minimal specific attention to education and training. Third-party groups, such as NGOs or other civil organizations, work to assist foreign brides in their integration process. Since 1995, the TASAT (TransAsia Sisters Association, Taiwan) has provided Mandarin language training for foreign brides from Southeast Asia. Mandarin language training was held because being unable to speak Mandarin and read Chinese characters was highly challenging for foreign brides and exacerbated their isolation. Besides Mandarin language training, TASAT offers various activities to let foreign brides express themselves via art, such as literature, drama, and filmmaking (Hsia, 2021).

Language barriers make it difficult for Muslim foreign brides to clarify various Islamic concepts, which frequently leads to misunderstandings with their husband's extended family or the surrounding community. As PA 5's experience:

“When my father-in-law died, my mother-in-law and husband asked me to pay my last respects as in their culture (pai-pai). Holding and lighting incense, pray in front of the dead. I informed my husband's family that I was not allowed in my religion to do pai-pai, and I had paid my last respects following Islamic custom. After every prayer, I pray for him. But because my husband's family misunderstood and became enraged, I was immediately thrown out of the house. My life wandered around on the street for several days until my spouse came to take me up. However, I informed my husband that I did not wish to return to his mother's house. Finally, we rented a place near my mother-in-law's residency. My mother-in-law was sick not long after my father-in-law died. None of her children wanted to take care of

her. Finally, I informed my husband that we would look after her. My husband and I took care of my mother-in-law for years till she died in my arms as a Muslim.” (PA 5, Taipei, 43 years old).

Aside from that, language limitations make it difficult for Muslim foreign brides to teach their children about Islam. Because many faith-based terms are challenging to convey in simple Mandarin, this is also the reason many spouses who have converted to Islam eventually return to their former religion since their wives are unable to offer their husbands a good and capable Islamic education.

Social Domain

The social domain is concerned with social interactions and connections within the community. For decades, the media and even the Taiwanese government have portrayed foreign brides negatively. Children from transnational marriages are viewed as problematic, and their mother's parenting skills are inferior to those of Taiwanese mothers. The government even refers to the cause of "lower population quality." Foreign brides and their children are viewed as a threat to Taiwan's population quality. Even the term "foreign brides" implies rejection, as if they are not a part of Taiwanese (otherness) (Hsia, 2019). Even though children of transnational marriages are accorded Taiwanese citizenship at birth, they are not treated the same as other Taiwanese children due to their mother's status. As a result, children of transnational marriages lack substantive citizenship. However, the perception of foreign brides and their children has shifted in recent years due to their perceived benefits.

During Ma Ying-Jeou's (KMT) presidency in 2012, the government established the Ministry of Home Affairs and started the National Torch for New Immigrants initiative. A variety of activities are provided through this program for foreign brides who alter their names to become new immigrants, including Chinese language classes, vocational training, counseling, and medical subsidies for migrants who marry Taiwanese citizens, particularly those from Southeast Asia. This method introduces children born of transnational marriages to their mother's language and culture. The program also aims to raise awareness of the multicultural advantages that children of transnational marriages have. Furthermore, President Tsai Ying Wen's implementation of the New South Bound Policy makes children from transnational marriages an essential asset in Taiwan's future geopolitical map.

For Muslim foreign brides from Indonesia, difficulties occur when children have to socialize with friends at school or in public. Children from transnational marriages often experience bullying in their schools. Mothers of foreign brides also rarely appear at school because they are worried that their children will become victims of bullying or be embarrassed if their friends find out that their mothers are from Southeast Asia and Muslim, too. Many children do not reveal their parents' true identities, which causes more difficulty for parents. For example, schools in Taiwan usually provide lunch with close supervision by a nutritionist. Lunch is indeed one of the main priorities of concern for the government in Taiwan. For children from Muslim migrant families, this lunch issue becomes a dilemma. Because some of them are embarrassed to admit that their mothers are Muslim foreign brides, these children have difficulty getting halal food. Some schools provide vegetarian meal options, which can be an alternative for Muslim children, but vegetarian meals are not always available in all schools.

“My child is embarrassed when I go to school. Moreover, I wear the hijab. So, he wouldn't let me take him lunch. He prefers the vegetarian catering provided by the school, even though he prefers animal protein to vegetables. I was also not allowed to pick him up directly from school. I was asked to wait for a few meters from the school, and then he would approach me. At first, I was sad. But instead of having my child bullied, I should succumb.” (PA 10, Taipei, 35 years old).

PA 10 described her and her children's experiences integrating into Taiwanese society. It is not an easy task. Sometimes, she considered taking off her hijab to better mix with Taiwanese culture. However, based on the experiences of other foreign brides, even if they do not wear the hijab, they and their children face discrimination in society. The COVID-19 pandemic paralyzed Taiwan's economy from the tourism sector, which made Taiwan launch a series of policies targeting countries in the southern part of Taiwan. One of the strategies is designating Taiwan as a Muslim-friendly country to target most Muslim populations such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei Darussalam. As a result of this policy, Islamic education has expanded substantially. Taiwan also accepts more Muslim students, which increases the emergence of women wearing hijab in the landscape of Taiwan's everyday occurrence. Policies concerning IMW are also eased, allowing them to use hijab daily. This policy change affects Muslim foreign brides in Taiwan. The locals become more friendly with women wearing hijab, including Muslim foreign brides. However, accepting hijab does not necessarily imply a successful integration process. Many Taiwanese embrace hijab as a component of the global society's diversity, but they cannot accept it as part of their culture.

Cultural Domain

Culture is associated with alterations in lifestyle, values, behavior, and attitudes. In light of historical developments spanning several centuries, Taiwan's ethnic composition primarily comprises four groups: Hokkien, Mainland Chinese, Hakka, and Taiwanese aborigines. Among the four tribes, Han Chinese descent is absent only among the indigenous peoples. The inclusion of Southeast Asian foreign spouses in Taiwan contributes to the country's ethnic and cultural diversity (Wang, 2005). Regrettably, the prevailing societal attitude in Taiwan towards foreign brides appears to be unfavorable, rendering them susceptible to prejudice and mistreatment. In certain instances, mothers are even forbidden from using their native tongue when conversing with their children.

Yang and Chang (2017) identified four cultural disparities as the most formidable obstacles for foreign brides attempting to assimilate into Taiwanese society. The initial barrier is the variation in cuisine. In contrast to Southeast Asian cuisine, renowned for its robust and fiery condiments, Taiwanese cuisine is delicately seasoned with an appropriate number of spices. This complicates the adjustment process for foreign brides to Taiwanese cuisine. In addition to culinary and halal food concerns, Muslim foreign brides encounter additional obstacles. Locating halal food sources in Taiwan can be difficult, and there is often a significant price difference between halal and non-halal poultry and beef. Without exception, the majority of Taiwanese households are unfamiliar with the term halal. According to most Taiwanese, they consider anything halal as long as it is not pork-based. Consequently, foreign brides are frequently confronted with challenging food-related decisions.

“My family looks after each other's lives. My spouse and I both work, I use my salary for my own needs and to support my family in Indonesia. My husband earns enough money to sustain himself and his mother. For our children, we share the financial requirements. With this money management, I can eat whatever I want. I always buy halal chicken and meat from the mosque and cook it at home. My husband provides daily supplies for himself and his mother, and the mother prepares his meals. Sometimes, I cook for my mother-in-law.” (PA 1, Taipei, 45 years old).

PA 1 shared her experience dealing with halal meal needs. However, not all foreign brides have the same level of independence as PA 1, particularly newlywed, and do not work, leaving them financially dependent on their husbands. More efforts are needed to educate the husband's

family about the differences, particularly those that cannot be compromised, such as halal meals. Because of linguistic barriers, foreign brides may have trouble explaining their needs based on religious obligations. However, as they live together for extended periods, their Chinese language skills increase dramatically. In that sense, the integration process has occurred and there is acceptance from both parties.

The second issue is related to religious differences. Yang and Chang's (2017) study found that religious differences were not significant for foreign brides. According to their observations, many foreign brides want to learn and engage in religious activities practiced by their husband's extended family. They learn from their mother-in-law or sister-in-law how to prepare for numerous cultural or religious festivals, such as Chinese New Year, ghost festivals, dragon boat festivals, and grave cleaning festivals. However, Yang and Chang's study did not look at the perspectives of Muslim foreign brides from Indonesia. Because most of the informants in this study are Vietnamese foreign brides, significant religious variations will undoubtedly exist. Religiously and culturally, Vietnam is similar to Taiwan; some festivals in Taiwan are widely celebrated in Vietnam. The cultural festival celebrations in Taiwan become a burden and present inner conflicts for Indonesian Muslim foreign brides, if they follow what their husband's family does, they could be trapped in shirk activities, considered a major sin in Islamic teaching. If they do not follow what the husband's family believes and does, it can create conflict between Muslim foreign brides and the husband's family.

“I quarrelled with my husband because of a decision my husband's family took. The husband's family allows him to convert to Islam as long as our first son follows their ancestral beliefs. Because in Chinese tradition, a son is the future of the family's generation. Of course, I objected to it. Maintaining the family faith is essential for Muslims. I have to teach and raise my son as a Muslim. I threatened to return to Indonesia if my husband's family insisted that my son should follow the religion/faith of his ancestors.” (PA 9, Taipei, 51 years old).

In transnational marriages, religious differences cause barriers to integration between the foreign bride, her husband's family, and the surrounding community. Religious tolerance may anticipate these barriers to integration. Another example involving religious differences happened when one of the Muslim foreign wives died. There is a case where a Muslim foreign bride died. Her husband's family planned to cremate her. However, a fellow Muslim foreign bride heard the rumors and promptly informed Taipei Grant Mosque officials. They were

requesting that the husband's family hand over the body of the foreign Muslim bride to be buried and held following Islamic principles. In Islam, the dead body is not allowed to be cremated. The husband's family refused to comply and secretly cremated the body, claiming they had the right to the remains.

Another challenge related to cultural differences is language barriers. Mandarin is one of the most difficult languages to learn in the world. Making mistakes in pronunciation and tone can create different meanings. This language barrier slows down the integration process. Language limitations make it difficult for foreign brides to work, access health facilities, upgrade themselves with certain skills. Language limitations also make it difficult for them to assist their children with school tasks and blame them for the low-quality generation in Taiwan. Fortunately, many NGOs are starting to pay special attention to foreign brides by providing free Mandarin language training. However, many foreign brides are not interested in the program. Therefore, the efforts to improve the Mandarin language skills of foreign brides are not running optimally (Hsia 2009). In addition to language barriers, another language-related issue is the challenge of rearing bilingual children. The decision to raise bilingual children represents the conflict between the battle for citizenship in the host country as part of the integration process and the individuals' right to preserve their identity. The integration process requires an immigrant mother to master Mandarin to naturalize and pass on Taiwanese national culture to her children. However, as an individual, citizenship grants her the right to preserve her cultural heritage. Nevertheless, she must negotiate these cultural rights with other societal expectations developed from her multiple roles as a mother, daughter, and daughter-in-law (Cheng, 2018).

Civil and Political Domain

The political domain refers to participation in community life and democratic processes. One concern that emerges for foreign brides in this regard is citizenship. Foreign brides who become Taiwanese citizens expect to avoid discrimination and find it easier to find a job or start a business. Another reason for foreign bride to become Taiwanese citizens is that if the husband dies, the wife can continue raising the children in Taiwan. However, the Taiwanese government makes the naturalization process difficult by imposing strict requirements. In fact, by obtaining citizenship, foreign brides gain legal status and the ability to advocate for their rights. They are even allowed to vote in national elections. Therefore, this will undoubtedly hasten the integration process of foreign brides into Taiwanese society.

However, from the results of interviews in this research, it turns out that refusal to become Taiwanese citizens also occurs on the part of foreign brides themselves. 80% of them decided to continue holding Indonesian citizenship. The reason is related to future plans where many of them plan to return to Indonesia with their Taiwanese partners when they are old. Another reason is related to investment factors, where it will be difficult for them to invest in Indonesia, for example to buy land and property if they have changed citizenship. In fact, the income they earn in Taiwan and the fairly large currency difference between the Taiwan dollar and the Indonesian rupiah provide an opportunity to invest in Indonesia. Some who have changed citizenship still consider themselves Indonesians and one of the interviewees at the time this research was conducted was in the process of becoming an Indonesian citizen again. This is different from their children, the majority of whom want to be Taiwanese when they grow up.

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES OF INDONESIAN MUSLIM FOREIGN BRIDES IN TAIWAN

The primary obstacles encountered by Indonesian Muslim foreign brides in Taiwan pertain to the integration process, particularly the social and cultural aspects. The social domain concerns the local community's reaction to the presence of foreign brides. In the early 1990s, the presence of foreign brides and their children was viewed as a societal issue due to the prevailing notion that these brides had lower quality and did not meet the standards of Taiwanese society. This perspective remained unchanged until 2002, as an increasing number of Muslim foreign brides from Indonesia migrated to Taiwan. The integration process is becoming more challenging due to the dual discrimination faced by Muslim foreign brides. From 2002 to 2008, the Taiwanese government implemented the New Southbound Policy to foster economic collaboration with Southeast Asian nations. Nevertheless, despite ongoing efforts, negative preconceptions continued to exist. Moreover, the government implemented a policy in 2003 aimed at restricting the number of children born to transnational married couples.

The government policy lacks adequate attention and instead relies on the expectation that the number of foreign brides will diminish and eventually vanish. Considering the demographic circumstances and trends in Taiwanese society, characterized by a high aging population, low birth rate, and a growing number of LGBT individuals, the presence of foreign brides has become increasingly essential to ensure the continuity of the Taiwanese generation. In 2012, the Taiwanese government initiated the Nation-Wide Torch Initiative for New

Immigrants, which aimed to embrace multiculturalism by recognizing foreign brides and their children as integral to shaping Taiwan's future. The derogatory term used to refer to foreign brides has been replaced with the word "new immigrants.". In 2016, implementing the New Southbound Policy resulted in a shift in perception regarding foreign brides and their children, transforming them from being seen as a societal problem to a social benefit. Nevertheless, the integration process for foreign brides seeking Taiwanese citizenship is progressively becoming more challenging (Hsia, 2021).

The social obstacles faced by foreign brides, mainly Muslim foreign brides, when their cultural and life values conflict with the locals' values, put them in a disadvantageous situation. Foreign wives are expected to surrender because their position is perceived as subordinate. Consequently, foreign brides encounter challenges in fully embracing their lives as devout Muslims. From the difficulties of accessing halal food and performing daily prayers to the struggle of maintaining modesty and lacking the autonomy to instil Islamic ideals in their children. Educational constraints hinder Islamic education for the children of Muslim foreign brides. Nevertheless, Muslim youngsters in Taiwan lack access to school amenities. A practical approach is regularly bringing children to the mosque on Saturdays and Sundays. Regardless, the mosque is not consistently situated near the foreign bride's location. Occasionally, foreign brides may be required to work on Saturdays and Sundays, leaving them with no one available time to bring their children to the mosque.

Most husbands who wed foreign Muslim brides undergo conversion to Islam before their marriage. Frequently, switching religions is primarily motivated by the marriage requirement, and many husbands revert to their religious doctrines after marriage. Or, they still maintain their Muslim identity while abstaining from the regular practice of Islamic rituals. This leads to Muslim foreign brides encountering challenges while dealing with their husbands' families in situations involving religious and cultural disagreements. Additionally, wives face challenges in providing education for their children due to the absence of a dependable husband. The approach fosters collaboration with the Indonesian community in Taiwan to enlist their support as educational mentors for children. Approximately 30% of respondents reported enrolling their children in Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia to ensure they have a proper education about Islam. In addition to the Indonesian community residing in Taiwan, Indonesian Muslim foreign brides are also active participants in the Chinese Muslim Association (CMA), which has representation in all mosques throughout Taiwan. By becoming a member, individuals can avail themselves of complimentary Islamic educational courses for their children and spouses.

Indonesian Muslim foreign brides also receive assistance from non-governmental organizations and individuals concerned about their ability to adjust, endure, and gradually assimilate into Taiwanese society as Muslims.

CONCLUSION

The integration process of Indonesian Muslim foreign brides into Taiwanese society is a challenging endeavor. Since the 1970s, foreign brides and their children have continued to face persistent unfavorable perceptions, suggesting that the process of integration has not been ideal. The New Southbound Policy has altered Taiwan's geopolitical landscape, leading to a somewhat more optimistic outlook. However, the situation for foreign brides, particularly those of Muslim background, remains unfavorable. The shift towards a favorable discussion about foreign brides occurred at the same time as the implementation of stricter immigration regulations that restrict the marriage of migrants from Southeast Asia. Foreigners employed in Taiwan are afforded more excellent naturalization prospects than married migrants, who predominantly hail from the lower socioeconomic strata. This demonstrates that foreign brides, particularly those who are Muslim, are considered essential for the preservation of Taiwan's future generations despite not being fully embraced by the locals. Sosial support from Muslim community in Taiwan assist Muslim foreign bride to address several challenges and problems they face during the integration process with Taiwanese society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research is supported by Directorate General of Higher Education (DIKTI) grant for National Competitive Research - Novice Lecturer Research 2023.

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