



Social Capital of the Indonesian Muslim Diaspora in New York City, A Case Study Waqf Graveyard Program

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Abstract

The Indonesian Muslim diaspora in New York faces challenges in providing burial plots and burial processes that comply with Islamic law in New York City. They took the initiative to create a waqf graveyard program managed by the community. This research aims to determine the factors that can create, maintain, and possibly destroy the social capital possessed by the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in New York regarding the waqf graveyard program. This research uses qualitative methods by interviewing informants who can provide information regarding factors that can influence social capital in the community. The results of this research illustrate that the factors that influence the creation of community social capital are the ideology held and the prosperity of community members. Factors that can maintain social capital are closed network factors, community stability, and ideology. Meanwhile, the factor that has the potential to destroy social capital in the implementation of the waqf graveyard program by the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community is the community stability factor which leads to the appointment of certain individuals as single actors in managing the grave waqf, namely in this case the waqf graveyard program coordinator.

Keywords: Social Capital, Diaspora Mutual Support Group, Grave Waqf, Funeral Service

1. INTRODUCTION

The acceleration of globalization and neoliberal economic policies have facilitated the rapid movement of both capital and people across the world. Large-scale migration from developing to developed countries, along with an increasing contribution of migrants to the development of the destination countries and the role played by the diaspora, have revived the importance of diaspora in international relations.

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On the other hand, diasporas face various challenges in adapting to the destination country. Diasporas are defined as communities that share an ethnic background, who have left their place of origin, but continue to preserve their group's culture and maintain ties with their place of origin (Khasan Ashari, 2020). They are faced with the desire to contribute, yet at the same time, they are differentiated ethnically and culturally. This indicates the need for support in both social activities and activities related to their place of origin to ensure their survival in their current country of residence.

New York is considerably the most favorite city among diasporas to migrate to. "The Big Apple" offers many opportunities and has supporting policies for the migrants to settle in. New York City is also the second-largest city in the United States, with the largest Indonesian diaspora is living in. Living alongside the native population and diasporas from other countries poses its own challenges for the Indonesian diaspora in their efforts to maintain the culture and ideology they adhere to.

One form of social support that is important for the Indonesian diaspora, especially the Muslim diaspora, is in the funeral process, particularly burying the deceased. This process is unique and special for Muslims and is not at par with the common funeral process in New York City. This is also relevant to the extended definition of diaspora, in which they want to continue to cultivate their group's culture and maintain ties with their place of origin. In this regard, the funeral process follows the Islamic religious rites, which certainly have to meet the religious practices.

The first requirement for the Muslim funeral process is to bury the deceased in a grave. Unlike the majority of New Yorkers who cremate the deceased, the Indonesian Muslim diaspora requires the deceased to be buried in a cemetery plot. A particular issue from this process is the skyrocketing price of the cemetery plots, particularly post COVID-19 pandemic which demands a significant number of plots. The price of a cemetery plot, which was initially around \$1,000 per plot, has become \$9,000 - \$10,000 (National Funeral Directors Association, 2023).

The second conditionality is regarding the process of handling the deceased itself. The procedures adhered to by the Indonesian Muslim diaspora according to Islamic law require the deceased to be bathed, shrouded, and have the funeral prayer performed before the burial process. This is also a series of distinct processes compared to the New York community's general practices, in which they immediately take the deceased to the funeral house for further cremation. For the Indonesian Muslim diaspora, this process requires more time and assistance as well as significant costs. The local funeral services charge an extremely high price of around \$5,000 per deceased, with additional fees if the burial exceeds the specified time limit of \$150 per 15 minutes per person.





The total required budget to prepare for the funeral will eventually reach \$14,000 to \$16,000. However, not all Indonesian Muslim diasporas have the knowledge and the capacity to bear the funeral cost, which causes financial complications when a death occurs. A recent example of this difficult situation was when an Indonesian Muslim diaspora passed away in a hospital and had neither relatives nor family in New York, so as no one took care of it then, the hospital followed the general practice and made the final decision themselves to cremate the body.

The above-mentioned issues have initiated the formation of a waqf graveyard program involving the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in New York. The program is designed to provide funeral assistance, particularly on cost issues, but it might as well help solve another issue regarding the individualistic environment in New York. The Indonesian diaspora still very much needs an environment that helps and supports one another, especially in times of grief and funeral arrangements.

This Indonesian Muslim diaspora community consists of the first-generation diaspora who have been residing in New York since the 1980s and are still living in New York. Most of them plan to stay in this city until their old age. They initiated the waqf graveyard program by collecting funds from fellow Muslim diasporas, which were then used to purchase cemetery plots that can be used by anyone in need, particularly for any Indonesian Muslim diaspora who will be passing away in New York.

This initiative is part of the reciprocal assistance and mutual aid among Indonesian Muslim diaspora. In local wisdom, this relationship is known as "gotong-royong" or mutual cooperation. "Gotong-royong" is defined as working together to achieve a desired outcome. It is also part of social solidarity, a state of mutual trust among group members or communities that fosters feelings of mutual respect and responsibility so that they can assist each other in meeting each other's needs. Solidarity arises when individuals feel aligned with each other and reach a collective agreement to commit to a specific goal (Alfaqi, 2015). The reciprocal assistance, mutual aid, and reciprocal relationships formed are expected to build enduring relationships among Indonesian diaspora.

According to Bourdieu (1992), this form of initiative undertaken by the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in New York represents the social capital possessed by each individual. Bourdieu (1992) defines social capital as the efforts accumulated in individuals or groups, whether from actual or virtual resources, because they have a permanent network of mutually beneficial relationships that are introduced and receive some degree of institutionalized recognition. Therefore, social capital will endure if there are efforts from the individuals or actors involved.





In contrast to Bourdieu's opinion, James Coleman explains that social capital is a set of resources inherent in family relationships and social organizations that have a productive element that can provide development for human capital (Coleman in Field, 2010). Coleman explains that the concept of social capital is a description that explains how people cooperate in creating individual or group goals. Coleman also assumes that each actor usually pursues their own interests, and if they choose to cooperate, it is because of their own interests. In rational choice theory, cooperation is a special thing for actors who are busy pursuing their own interests. Coleman also explains about social capital and human capital, the relationship is proven to form capital resources by helping to establish obligations and expectations between actors, building trust in the social environment, opening information channels, and establishing norms that support certain forms of behavior.

From the two theories above, it can be said that social capital is a form of capital that can be depreciated over time. Like human capital and physical capital, social capital will be depreciated if it is not renewed. Social relations will perish if not maintained, and expectations and obligations can fade over time, and norms depend on regular communication (Coleman in Field, 2010). Therefore, an analysis of the factors that help create or even destroy the formed social capital, which is a consequence of individual decisions, is necessary. According to Coleman (1990), there are four factors that help create, maintain, or even destroy social capital itself:

1. Closure or closed social networks; the closure of social networks gives rise to norms that can become the boundaries of social capital. Closure to a certain extent is a valuable asset for individuals who have to decide whether to trust or not. On the other hand, this closed social network can limit relationships with other social actors, which may be a control function on pre-existing networks.
2. Stability; every form of social capital, except that which comes from formal organizations with a position-based structure, depends on stability. Disturbances to social organizations or social relationships can be very damaging to social capital. The social discovery of organizations that have positions and not people as structural elements has provided one form of social capital that can maintain stability in the face of individual instability.
3. Ideology; an ideology can create social capital by imposing on the individual who holds it the demand that he act for the sake of something or someone else besides himself. This is clearly seen from the influence of religious ideology in directing people to pay attention to the interests of others. However, ideology can also have a negative impact on the creation of social capital when the ideology has caused individualism.





4. Prosperity; when the state facilitates various resources in the form of government assistance, it allows the social capital produced to be depreciated and not renewed. Although social capital has aspects of public interest, the more people who ask for help from one another, the greater the quantity of social capital produced. When due to prosperity such as government assistance or other factors, people's need for one another decreases, the social capital produced also decreases.

According to Coleman (1994), the actors do not aim to create social capital, but it arises as an unintended consequence of their efforts to pursue personal interests. Coleman further said that social capital emerges not because the actors make a carefully calculated choice to invest in it, but as a 'by-product of activities carried out for other purposes'. Coleman believes that this distinguishes social capital from human capital or physical capital, both of which arise as a result of deliberate and intentional choices. Therefore, social capital must be treated as a public good and not a private good. As mentioned above, social capital needs to be maintained by knowing the factors that can grow, maintain, and even eliminate it.

The main focus of this research is the analysis of factors that grow, maintain, and eliminate social capital itself. In contrast to previous research that has mainly discussed the typology and dimensions of social capital, this research discusses how the already formed social capital can be explained by its factors, from factors that can create it, factors that can maintain it, and factors that have the potential to destroy the previously formed social capital. Based on this research gap, there has also been no research conducted on the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in New York or the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in other cities, so this research can hopefully serve as a reference for other communities in other cities.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach to identify the factors that are consequences of individual decisions that help create, maintain or destroy social capital within the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in New York. Qualitative research begins with a concept represented through a research question that seeks to produce descriptive data, both in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior. The qualitative approach is used because it has advantages in collecting data about the experiences and problems experienced by individuals. The place and time of this investigation are deliberately chosen and arranged. The Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in New York is the target of our research. In determining the research





informants, we use the purposive sampling technique, which is a data collection technique with several considerations. For example, individuals are considered the most knowledgeable and qualified to become informants for the data we anticipate in the existing research (Sugiyono 2009). Meanwhile, data analysis in research is generally divided into three stages, namely: data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions or verification (Miles and Huberman, as well as Yin in Suprayogo and Tobroni, 2001).

In this research, the researchers choose informants according to the research objectives, namely to identify the factors that are consequences of individual decisions that help create, maintain or destroy social capital within the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in New York, based on several factors explained by the researchers. Furthermore, to know and identify what are the consequences of each of these factors. The theoretical process in selecting information is then carried out, as can be seen in the following table.

Table 1. Stakeholders List

No.	Stakeholder	Reason
1.	The program coordinator of the grave waqf for the Indonesian diaspora community in New York	The informant was chosen because the person initiated the establishment of grave waqf for the diaspora in New York and is responsible for managing the community. The person can also explain the current conditions of the community.
2.	The Indonesian Muslim diaspora in New York who are involved in the waqf graveyard program	The informant was chosen because of their roles as donors and recipients of grave waqf and because they referred to their experiences of benefiting from the formation of this community.
3.	The Funeral Coordinator	The informant was selected because they are responsible for managing the grave waqf recipients, from the pick-up at the hospital or funeral home to the bathing of the deceased, the shrouding, the funeral prayer, and the burial process.





4.	The Social and Cultural Coordinator of the Consulate General of the Republic of Indonesia in New York	The informant was chosen because they are responsible for monitoring the social and cultural situations of Indonesian citizens in their accredited working area and play a role in community development.
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(Denzin and Lincoln, 1987) explained that the methods commonly used in qualitative research are interviews, observation, and document utilization (Moleong, 2004). Furthermore, according to Mashud (2005), an interview is one of the data collection methods in research, which can be defined as a way to obtain information (data) from research subjects by directly asking questions (face-to-face). However, it does not necessarily have to be conducted face-to-face, as it can also be done using other communication means, such as telephone and the internet.

Meanwhile, according to Esterberg, as quoted by Sugiyono (2005), there are several types of interviews, namely structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, and unstructured interviews. The process of gathering information for research projects involves a question-and-answer exchange conducted face-to-face, which is referred to as an in-depth interview, namely a conversation in which both the interviewer and the subject have experienced a fairly long social life. Based on the research objectives mentioned above, a semi-structured interview is conducted. The semi-structured interview can hopefully provide more in-depth data about social capital and its role.

3. RESULT

This section explains the factors that help create, maintain, or potentially destroy social capital within the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in New York during the implementation of the waqf graveyard program.

1. Closure Social Networks

As stated by Coleman (1990), closed social networks will generate norms, and this also occurs within the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in New York. They gather together, knowing each other within the same religious bond, and engage in the same religious activities at their place of worship. Most of the activities are carried out at Al-Hikmah Mosque, which is the mosque for the Indonesian community in New York. The activities include socializing among Indonesians and holding religious events to strengthen their faith, such as collective recitations, breaking the fast, Taraweeh prayers, and





celebrating religious holidays. There are also recreational activities such as sports, food bazaars, and educational activities for the children.

Each of them brings their families and interacts with one another. Adult men with other adult men, and adult women also gather and engage in activities with other adult women, often discussing matters related to faith enhancement, family values, and so forth. The children also gather with their fellows, playing together and connecting with one another. This interaction takes place in a shared forum at the Mosque, creating a closed social network that fosters strong norms of family.

This family norm becomes the boundary in their behavior, regulating many things about how children should behave towards their parents, how parents should educate their children, and many other aspects. This family norm also cultivates a sense of mutual assistance among members, such as when a family member is sick, other families want to help ease the suffering. Similarly, in relation to the waqf graveyard program, the community members help in the process of providing burial land and handling the deceased through the collectively raised funds. These funds are collected upfront for the purchase of a number of burial plots, which can then be used by any member of the community in need.

The values of family and mutual assistance are also applied in the handling of the deceased, which is carried out according to Islamic law, starting from the washing, shrouding, and praying for the deceased.

The above situation exhibits that the formation of norms, as a result of the closed network, can actually create and maintain the social capital owned by the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in New York. This is in line with Coleman (1990), who explains that norms and reputations can develop in closed networks so that the actors in the system do not impose externalities on one another.

2. Community Stability

According to Coleman (1990), community stability is when individuals within the community are assigned only to be occupants of a position, and the evaluation is on the performance of the occupants, and when those individuals have to leave the community for certain reasons, the social structure within it is not disrupted by the individual's mobility. In the case of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in New York, the individuals are Indonesians residing in New York with various backgrounds in terms of occupation and activities. In the waqf graveyard program itself, the participating diaspora are those who have been living in New York for a relatively long time, more than 10 years, and plan to continue residing in New York until their old age, even planning to pass away in New York. This makes individual mobility minimal, as they will remain domiciled in the same place.





On the other hand, in the waqf graveyard program, the individuals involved in organizational management are those appointed by the community as task executors and program coordinators. The community members have a high level of trust in the coordinator's performance, so they maintain the position and disallow other individuals to fill that position. The coordinator has provided good performance during the program implementation from 2019 until now. This may seem positive at first glance, but in the discussion of community stability, according to Coleman (1990), this can disrupt community stability, and in certain situations, when the coordinator has to leave the community, the position will be deeply embedded and cannot be replaced by other individuals, which can lead to the destruction of the social capital that has been formed.

This is in line with Coleman (1990), that disturbances to social organization or social relations can severely damage social capital. The social discovery of organizations that have positions and not people as structural elements has provided one form of social capital that can maintain stability in the face of individual instability. When individuals are reduced to mere occupants of a position, only the performance of the occupants, not the structure itself, is disrupted by individual mobility. However, for any other form of social capital, individual mobility is a potential action that will damage the structure itself - and thus also damage the social capital that depends on it (Coleman, 1990).

3. Adopted Ideology

Ideology is another factor that influences the creation, maintenance, and destruction of social capital. An ideology can create social capital by imposing on the individual who holds it the demand that he act in the interest of something or someone other than himself. This is clearly seen from the influence of religious ideology in directing people to pay attention to the interests of others (Coleman, 1990). In the implementation of the waqf graveyard program by the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community in New York, Islamic law is the most important factor in the formation of community social capital. Community members have the same understanding that waqf is the release of the waqf property from the ownership of the waqif or the one who makes the waqf, where the owner of the property withholds the object from use as ownership, but allows the use of its results for the purpose of goodness, namely providing the proper use of the object while it remains the property of the waqif.

This waqf concept is an ideology that is equally believed by community members, that by contributing a certain amount of funds for waqf, they can help other members in need. In addition, the religious values that also strengthen social capital are related to the process of burying the members of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community, which must be buried





according to Islamic law. Islamic law requires the deceased to be washed, shrouded, prayed for, and buried. In its implementation, the help of other people who must also be Muslims is necessary, meaning that the need for mutual assistance is extremely important. Meanwhile, in the city of New York, the Muslim community is a minority, and most of the people in New York follow the common funeral procedure, which is the cremation process.

Another thing that is no less important in relation to ideological factors that can strengthen social capital is how community members feel that they receive social support from other members during times of grief. Both before and after the funeral process, members come to provide prayers and support to the bereaved family. This value of mutual support is very strong in Islamic religious law and this is the strength of existing social capital.

The theory about religion as a strengthener of social capital is also strengthened by Fukuyama (2010), which states that there are two other effective external sources of social capital in encouraging civil society. The first is religion. Fukuyama also explained that religion has not lost its influence in many countries, including America. Furthermore, Fukuyama also explained that culturally inspired changes driven by religion are still a way of life in many parts of the world. It is also stated that not all forms of religion are positive when viewed from the social capital lens. Historically, religion has also been one of the most important sources of culture, and it is likely to remain so in the future.

4. Prosperity of Community Members

The prosperity of community members is related to the social support provided by the state, which provides facilities to meet their living needs. In America, especially in the city of New York, government support for the funeral service needs of its citizens is very minimal. The price of burial land is very expensive, reaching \$10,000 per burial plot. Likewise, the cost of handling the deceased can reach \$5,000 per deceased. This cost is not borne by the government, so New York residents must prepare their own funeral expenses when it is needed. In addition, the purchase process is also challenging if done individually. The purchase of burial land will be easier and faster if the individual is part of a religious community. This individual's lack of prosperity ultimately drives the desire of the individual to join the community and seek a more accessible pattern in meeting their needs related to burial.

In the case of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora community involved in the waqf graveyard program, the ease of burial management becomes the creator and strengthener of the social capital currently formed. They are very well facilitated by the program, so the need for the burial of themselves and their families finds a solution.



4. DISCUSSION

Social capital is an informal norm that fosters cooperation among two or more individuals (Fukuyama, 2010). The norms constituting social capital can range from reciprocal norms between two friends to other more complex relationships. Reciprocal relationships undertaken by the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in New York in the implementation of the waqf graveyard program involve contributing funds for burial expenses for needy members of the diaspora. The amount of donated funds is not limited and is commensurate with each individual's ability. These funds are managed by the waqf coordinator to purchase cemetery plots. Additionally, they also assist each other in the process of washing, shrouding, funeral prayer, and burial of the deceased. This reciprocal assistance relationship occurs because when a family member of the diaspora passes away, other members of the diaspora or other families will assist in the process, and so forth

This reciprocal assistance and mutual aid and relationship foster solidarity among diaspora members involved in the waqf graveyard program. This solidarity fosters mutual trust and respect, leading each individual to have the willingness to take responsibility for meeting the needs of other members. Solidarity continues to be nurtured, especially when one diaspora member or their family passes away, as other diaspora members will fulfill their responsibilities in managing the funeral arrangements. This builds enduring relationships among Indonesian Muslim diaspora in New York. The process of community support in funerals for deceased diaspora can be seen from the figure below:

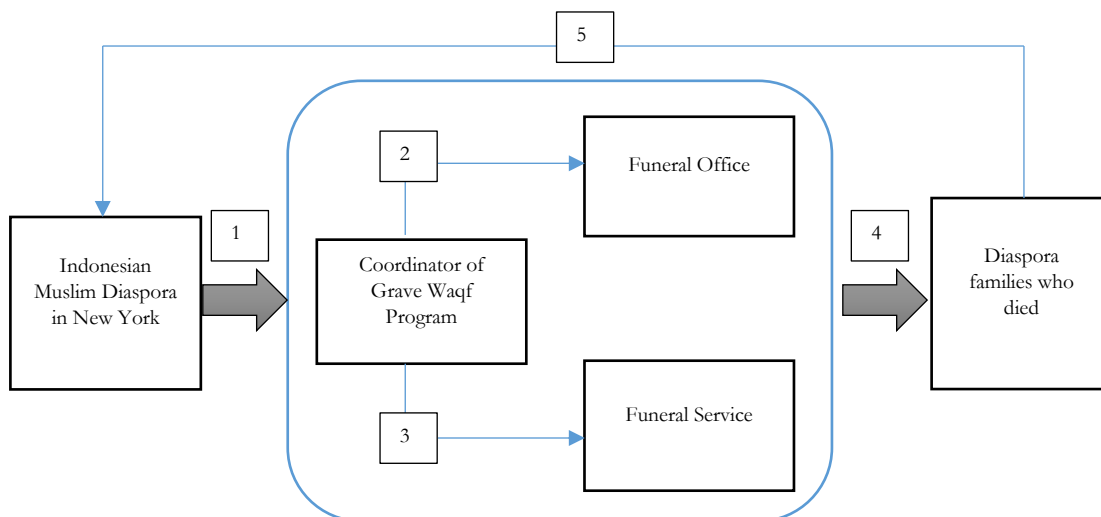


Figure 1. Community Support Process at Funeral of the Indonesian Muslim Diaspora



Figure information:

1. The Muslim diaspora donates waqf funds voluntarily in an unspecified amount to the cemetery waqf coordinator. This fund collection is based on waqf rules which are in accordance with Islamic law. The funds collected are divided into two, namely waqf funds and infaq funds. Waqf funds are used to buy burial plots, while infaq funds are channeled for funeral services and condolence money for diaspora families who have died.
2. The grave waqf coordinator purchased 110 grave plots from the Washington Memorial Park Muslim cemetery in installments. The price per burial hole is \$2000. Installment payments are made every month amounting to \$3000 which comes from the collected waqf funds.
3. If a member of the diaspora dies, the grave waqf coordinator will pay for the funeral services managed by a local resident known as Brother Omar. The fee of \$3500 covers the cost of collecting the body from the hospital, funeral home fees, and burial costs. These funds were obtained from infaq collected from the Indonesian Muslim diaspora.
4. If there is a nominal excess in the infaq funds for processing the corpse, then these funds are handed over to the family of the deceased diaspora. Apart from assistance and support related to the funeral process, diaspora families also receive assistance in the form of the infaq funds collected.

The diaspora families who receive benefits are also part of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in New York who also contribute waqf funds to the cemetery waqf coordinator. This shows that the relationship of mutual assistance is a reciprocal relationship that can perpetuate the community.

5. CONCLUSION

The research shows that the relationship of mutual assistance, mutual aid and reciprocity fosters a sense of solidarity between the diaspora who are members of the waqf graveyard program. This builds lasting relationships between the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in New York. Ideology and the welfare of community members are factors that affect the creation of Indonesian diaspora Muslim community's social capital. On the other hand, key factors to maintain social capital are closed network, community stability and ideology. The research has also been able to identify a crucial factor that can eliminate social capital in the operationalization of grave waqf by the Indonesian diaspora Muslim community, namely the community's stability as characterized by the appointment of a sole actor as the manager of the grave waqf, who is the coordinator of grave waqf himself.

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