

Challenges of Papuan Muslim Minority: A Thematic Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain the challenges and mobilisation faced by the Papuan Muslim minority in maintaining an Islamic identity in Papua. The methodology employed for data analysis is grounded in descriptive analysis. The research data was obtained through a comprehensive search of news sources in both newspapers and online magazines. In the study, keywords determined and used to filter news sources were "Papuan Muslims and (Papuan Muslims) Minorities". During data collection, news sources are not restricted to a particular time frame. After the screening and data collection process, 21 of the most relevant documents were found. This document serves as a primer material and is analysed using NVivo 12 Plus tools. This research shows that Papua's Muslim minority faces complex challenges such as discrimination, injustice, and neglect of civil rights. In addition, the ongoing conflict and violence in Papua also have a negative impact on Papua's Muslim community, resulting in limited access to public facilities. Despite the significant challenges facing the Papuan Muslim minority, they continue to mobilise the movement to fight for their rights and interests. Mobilisation efforts were carried out by organising religious groups to improve social welfare. They also engage in intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Research is limited to the use of data obtained solely from news sources. Therefore, further research using field data is needed to obtain a more comprehensive explanation of the forms of challenges faced, especially by religious groups in Indonesia.

Keywords: Papuan Muslims, Muslim minority group, religious community, Muslim group challenges

INTRODUCTION

Minority groups in Indonesia are often faced with various pressures. These groups experience pressures from two sides at the same time. On the one hand, there is strong pressure from the surrounding population due to their minority status of being among the majority group. This is experienced by Papuan Muslim minority groups, although they live in a country where the majority of the population are Muslims (Janah, N., Medias, F., & Pratiwi 2020). The condition of Muslim majority is not found throughout all Indonesian regions, as there are Muslim minority groups in some regions, like in Papua (N Viartasiwi 2013). On the other hand, Muslim minority groups even face pressures from the state in the form of regulations that restrict their

mobility and even their rights as citizens. Being a minority means facing challenges in various aspects of life, including matters pertaining to their identity, rights, and social and economic welfare (Holder, 2020). As a member of a minority group, one may face discrimination and negative stereotyping from the majority group (Kiang, L., Witkow, M. R., & Thompson 2016). Minority groups may also experience difficulties in accessing similar resources and opportunities that the majority have access to (Davoodi, T., Kelly, Y., Clegg, J. M., Yan, F. E., Payir, A., Harris, P. L., & Corriveau 2020) such as education, employment, health services, and others (Appel 2024). The underlying causes in the formation of minority groups are complex and they vary depending on assorted factors like history (Moore 2010), culture (Han & Yoon 2019), religion

(Harboun, Ben-porat, & Mizrahi 2019), and politics of a region or country (Koev 2021).

Several causal factors in the formation of minority groups are also influenced by the history of colonialism (Thembanani 2021). Additionally, religious and ethnic differences may also be a causal factor in the formation of minority groups. Cases in a number of countries show that groups with differing religious or ethnic background from the majority of the population are categorized as minority groups (Kogan, Fong, & Reitz 2020; Nandi & Platt 2015). Several other studies suggest that political conflicts among opposing groups or between the government and the opposition may also result in the formation of minority groups (Thawngmung & Noah 2021; Ullah, Hasan, Mohamad, & Chattoraj 2020). Furthermore, immigration is also considered to have an influence in forming minority groups within a country or region. These immigrants may be of different cultural or religious background to the population majority, resulting in their being categorized as a minority group (Kunst, Lefringhausen, Sam, Berry & Dovidio 2021; Vanzella, Oh, Pakosh, & Ghisi 2021;). In the case of Indonesia, terms indicating minority groups also remain to be widely discussed. As a country consisting of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, Indonesia has several different minority groups (Ardi, Tobing, Agustina, Iswahyudi, & Budiarti 2021). Some examples of minority groups in Indonesia include those of Chinese and Indian ethnic descent (Tan 2010), as well as several religious minority groups like Protestants, Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists, and Confucianists (Mu'ti & Burhani 2019).

Based on several previous findings, still very few research results specifically explain about Papuan Muslim minority group, particularly studies correlating the challenges they face and the mobilization they undertake simultaneously. Nonetheless, there are some past literatures considered quite relevant in developing the current research. First, Papuan Muslim minority live in varying environment, from large cities like Jayapura and Sorong to small villages in remote hinterland areas (Wanggai 2009). Second, most of them are native Papuans who have embraced Islam from one generation to the next (Sudirman, Long, & Jubba 2022). Some of them do hail from outside of Papua, such as Javanese, Buginese, or Makassarese, who come to Papua seeking for livelihood or those who have taken up residency there (Faisal,

Mulkhan, Nurmandi, & Jubba 2019). Third, the Muslim minority in Papua is confronted by several challenges, including sentiments and conflicts. However, they continue to fight to maintain their identity and belief as Muslims amidst a diverse, and sometimes difficult, surrounding environment (Rosyid 2017). Fourth, several other studies indicate that minorities still have the opportunity to fight for their rights and build a strong and competitive community (Van Laer & Janssens 2017; Yilmaz & Soyaltin 2014).

The objective of this research is to fill in the gap of past studies by conducting an analysis on the challenges faced by Papuan Muslim minority using a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method used to identify, classify, and understand thematic patterns that emerge within texts or data. The research questions are outlined as follows: (1) What is the result of mapping out the challenges faced by Papuan Muslim minority group? (2) How does Papuan Muslim minority group fight for their rights and build their community in Papua? By finding the answers to those two questions, we can identify what challenges are faced by Papuan Muslim minority group and how they survive and build their community as a minority group in Papua. The current research contributes to enriching our understanding about the diversity of religion and culture in Indonesia, particularly religious and social dynamics in Papua.

METHODS

This research was conducted by using a qualitative approach with a focus on thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was used to maximize our analysis on the challenges and mobilization of Papuan Muslim minority. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method employed to identify and understand patterns or themes that emerge from the collected data. This method was used to analyze data in the form of texts from news sources on the internet, such as online newspapers and magazines.

In the context of news analysis on the internet, thematic analysis helped to identify the topics or issues being discussed in a news article or a group of news articles. By analyzing the main themes and subthemes found in online news, thematic analysis helped us understand the perspectives arising from these news contents. In this research, filtering news contents was initially done by using pre-determined keywords: Papuan Muslim minority and

Papuan Muslims. Data collection was subsequently done after determining these keywords. The data collection process of news sources was not limited to a certain period. Based on the filtering and data

collection process, as many as 21 relevant news sources were found. The relevant news sources that we refer to for the analysis are provided in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1. News Coverage on Papuan Muslims

No	News Topic	News Source
1	Experience of Being a Muslim Minority in West Papua	(detik.com) https://bit.ly/3mowWXc
2	The intolerant reality of Indonesia's 'religious harmony': Christians block mosque construction in Papua	(coconuts.co) https://bit.ly/400JT7e
3	Visiting a Muslim Kampong in Papua, All the Women are Used to Wearing Jilbab	(langit7.id) https://bit.ly/3mjvhlX
4	MUI (Indonesian Ulema Council) Redeploys Solemn Muslim Preachers to the Land of Papua, these are the Challenges	(mui.or.id) https://bit.ly/3o3uG8e
5	Preaching in Muslim Minority Areas Require Special Attention	(republika.co.id) https://bit.ly/3nZb2dz
6	Tolikara Muslim Figure: as a Minority for 9 Years, We are Safe Here	(detik.com) https://bit.ly/3UugWzA
7	The Face of Muslims in Raja Ampat Papua	(hidayatullah.com) https://bit.ly/3MzFEwk
8	One Hearth Three Stones: The Manifestation of Tolerance Among Religious Followers in Fakfak	(kumparan.com) https://bit.ly/3MCjR7y
9	Rejecting the Mosque Tower: How do We Understand Religious Sentiments in Papua?	(tirto.id) https://bit.ly/3GA5Weq
10	The Islamic Boarding School was Prevented from Being Burned in Papua, Proof of Gus Dur's Supernatural Wonders	(ngopibareng.id) https://bit.ly/3GvVp3S
11	Maintaining Diversity, NU's Multipurpose Ansor Front Goes to Tolikara during Idul Adha	(okezone.com) https://bit.ly/40ZFYsO
12	Jayapura City Government: Papuan Muslim Assembly contributes to regional development	(antaranews.com) https://bit.ly/3ZZ2fpk
13	Papuan Muslim Assembly continues to fight for the enforcement of human rights in the Land of Papua	(jubi.id) https://bit.ly/3o6qi8J
14	Papuan Muslim Assembly joint house to maintain peace in Papua	(jubi.id) https://bit.ly/3ZY4R6Y
15	Papuan Muslim Assembly held Conference III of 2023	(jubi.id) https://bit.ly/411VgaT
16	Dani Tribe in Wamena Jayawijaya Papua has Embraced Islam for 60 years	(suarakarya.id) https://bit.ly/3o72t09
17	Stone Burning Tradition, a Form of Tolerance among Papuan Community Leading Up to Ramadhan	(liputan6.com) https://bit.ly/43sT571
18	Results of Conference III held by the Papuan Muslim Assembly on Issues of Human Rights to Social Emancipation	(jubitv.id) https://bit.ly/3UpYnfT
19	Development of Social Preaching in Jayawijaya, Papuan Muslim Kampongs Continue to Rise	(langit7.id) https://bit.ly/3UwkTE2
20	Discrimination and Intolerance in Papua Must Soon be Ended	(jpnn.com) https://bit.ly/3nZcNYd
21	The Indonesian Military and Police Ensure Security of Papuan Communities Leading Up to the Id Holidays	(kompas.id) https://bit.ly/3KSOjsP

Source: Processed from various news coverages, 2023

Data collection was done by using Ncapture on Google Chrome. The collected data was subsequently put into the analytical tool for data coding. The process of data coding was done using Nvivo 12 Plus by maximizing the existing analysis features, namely: identify themes, cases and attribute classifications, and theme mapping (Project Map Tools). Identify themes helped to

identify information available in official government documents. Cases and attribute classifications were useful for categorizing the collected data. Meanwhile, theme mapping was used to map out the entire data coding results that had already been categorized. The results of data collection and coding were then analyzed and described to address the research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

CHALLENGES OF MUSLIM MINORITY GROUPS

Being a minority group in a population may bring about numerous challenges, particularly in terms of

maintaining identity, rights, and security. Several challenges faced by Papuan Muslim minority include, among others, conflict, security, economic disparity, and limited access to various opportunities.

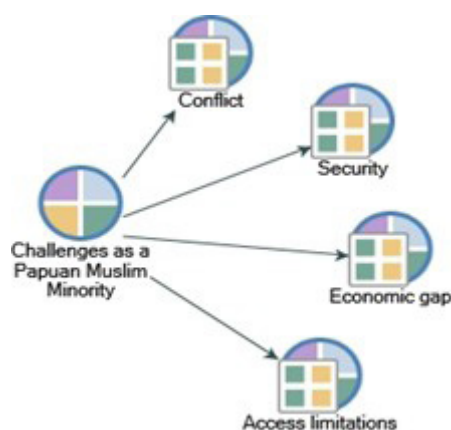


FIGURE 1. Challenges as a Muslim minority group
 Source: Processed using Nvivo 12 Plus, 2023

Figure 1 shows that there are still several challenges faced by Papuan Muslims as a minority group. The challenges they experience, among others, include conflict, security, economic disparity, and limited access to education and health. Papuan Muslim minority deals with complex and varying challenges in relation to conflict in Papua. One of the key challenges Papuan Muslim minority faces in the context of conflict is discrimination. Papuan Muslim minority is considered an unrecognized minority group in the Papuan population. They still suffer from discrimination and unequal access to resources (Rosyid 2017).

Papuan Muslim minority still experiences conflict of identity and culture within the context of multicultural Papua. Some people see Islam as a foreign religion that does not align with the Papuan tradition and culture (Hamid 2013). Such conflict of identity and culture often triggers tension and conflict among different Papuan groups. It would subsequently lead to acts of violence, which may also occur because of religious, cultural, or political differences. In addition, Papuan Muslim minority are prone to violence and persecution by other groups in Papua. Violence and conflict may have negative impacts on the welfare and security of Papuan Muslim minority groups (Hamid 2013; Rosyid 2017). This phenomenon is different from the case of Muslim and Buddhist relations which actually show relationships that tend to be

harmonious (Awang 2022). The same phenomenon is also shown in the relationship between Muslims and Hindus which is more harmonious compared to conflict (Jubba 2019).

Aside from issues of conflict and violence, Papuan Muslim minority also suffer from economic disparity. Papuan Muslim minority often have trouble in accessing economic resources. This is due to competition against the majority group in the area. Moreover, Papuan Muslim minority frequently has difficulty in finding the right employment that suits their skill and education background. This is caused by the limited number of job opportunities available to them in the area (Hamid 2013). To address the challenge of economic disparity, it is important to improve Papuan Muslim minority's access to economic resources such as land and other natural resources. The government should also promote policies supporting fair and equitable work opportunity for all groups (Hartati 2022), including Papuan Muslim minority. In addition, conflict can also be triggered by the absence of understanding and acceptance of other religions (Ismail 2018).

In the context of education, Papua still suffers from educational inequality, including Papuan Muslim minority. Several regions in Papua, particularly in remote hinterland areas, have very limited education infrastructure (Hasan & Nugroho 2022; Kusuma & Muta'ali 2019). This makes it difficult for Papuans, specifically Papuan Muslim

minority, to have adequate access to schools, especially in hard-to-reach areas. Papuan regions are also facing shortages of teachers and education personnel, particularly for certain subjects like Islamic teachings (Muhamad, Nawir, Muhandy, & Mafiroh 2021). Such shortages may result in reduced education quality of Papuan Muslim minority in the area. Some Papuan Muslim minority families also face financial difficulties making it difficult for them to pay for the children's school tuition, particularly for those living far from the city center. Such limited access to education may cause difficulties in acquiring the skills necessary for entering the highly competitive job market.

Aside from the limited access to education, Papuans also find it difficult to have adequate access to health services (Irab, Tingginehe, & Ruru 2022), including Papuan Muslim minority groups. This may consequently have an effect in Papuan Muslims' health and limit their ability to work and contribute to regional economy. Some Papuan and Muslim Papuan groups often experience difficulties in accessing health facilities such as hospitals and community health centers. This is due to the long distance that needs to be covered from their home to the health centers, especially in remote areas. Some regions in Papua, particularly those in the hinterlands, also have a limited number of

health workers (Situmorang 2020). This makes it difficult to provide adequate health services. Improving access of Papuan Muslim minority to health facility by building health facilities in remote areas and increasing the number of health workers in the area are key points for addressing the challenge of limited access to health services. Furthermore, health resources such as medicine and health equipment should also be made available and improved to ensure the provision of adequate health services. Because of the several challenges still faced by Papuan Muslim minority, mobilization and collaboration of various relevant parties are required to address these challenges.

MOBILIZATION OF PAPUAN MUSLIMS

The mobilization of minority groups may serve as an effective strategy in addressing the various challenges faced by Papuan Muslim minority, such as conflict, security, economic disparity, and limited access to education and health. One of the measures that can be implemented to mobilize minority groups is establishing or strengthening organizations and networks. Papuan Muslim minority groups can create organizations and networks to garner mutual support and advocate their rights.

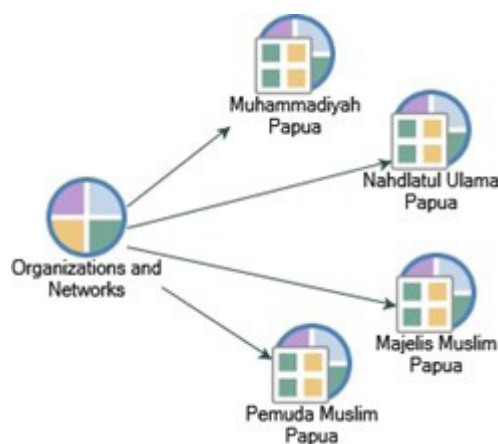


FIGURE 2. Papuan Muslim Organizations and Networks
Source: Processed using Nvivo 12 Plus, 2023

Figure 2 shows that there are still several Papuan Muslim organizations and networks that play a substantial role in supporting the interests of Papuan Muslim minority groups. The organizations and networks sampled here are merely a part of the others. Organizations like Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama play a role in the social religious life of Papuan Muslim community

(Ridwan 2020; Wekke, Arif, Zubair, & Wardi 2019). Both organizations have extensive networks and experience in building strong and healthy religious communities. In the context of Papua, where most of its population are Christians, there is minimal presence of Muslim communities.

Yet, regardless of its small population, Papuan Muslims are also entitled to live and worship

in accordance with their belief. Under such circumstances, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama function as a forum to facilitate social and religious activities for Papuan Muslim communities (Ridwan 2020; Wekke et al. 2019). These organizations contribute to the construction of mosques and other places of worship, as well as provision of quality religious training and education for Papuan Muslim communities. Additionally, both organizations also facilitate social programs assisting Papuan Muslims in need, including education, health, and economic assistance programs (Akib, Hartanti, & Suaib 2020; Murdadlo 2018; Ridwan 2020; Wekke et al. 2019).

To expand their scope and influence, these organizations may collaborate with local organizations that share a common vision and mission of advocating the rights of Papuan Muslim communities and advancing their social religious life. The Papuan Muslim Assembly holds quite a significant role in the socio-political life of Papuans (Jubba 2022). This organization was initially founded as an assembly forum for Muslim groups that actively fight for the interests of Muslim communities in Papua. The organization succeeded in proclaiming themselves to be an organization that serves as a “house for all” Muslim groups coming from various backgrounds. Meanwhile, in terms of the highly vibrant Papuan political dynamics, this organization succeeded in positioning itself as a “bridge” between Muslim groups and other actors such as regional governments, political parties, customary figures, religious figures, and others (Pamungkas 2011; Rumbaru, Jubba, Surwandono & Al-Hamdi 2018; Nino Viartasiwi 2013).

Other organizations like Papuan Muslim Youths also plays a key role in the life dynamics of Papuan Muslim communities. Papuan Muslim Youths is frequently involved in campaigns for peace and tolerance, such as involvement in securing religious worship activities from the majority group in Papua. Some of the efforts undertaken by these organizations include intergroup dialog, law enforcement against violence and persecution, and education and economic empowerment for Papuan Muslim minority, including campaigning issues of tolerance and diversity. Everyone should be responsible for promoting tolerance and diversity, not only religious organizations. This is most crucial for developing an inclusive and harmonious society in which each individual and group are respected and accepted without discrimination or

prejudice (Donnelly 2004; Verkuyten & Killen 2021; Verkuyten, Yogeewaran, & Adelman 2019). Accordingly, effective mobilization of minority groups is expected to minimize the challenges they face and provide better access to public services as well as create more stable and safer conditions for the people of Papua as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Papuan Muslim minority faces many complex challenges such as discrimination, injustice, and neglect. Additionally, conflict of violence in Papua also has negative impacts on Papuan Muslim communities, both directly and indirectly. This subsequently leads to economic disparity and limited public access. Despite of the severe challenges Muslim minority groups face, they continue to mobilize their communities to fight for their rights and interests. Some of these mobilization efforts include organizing religious groups, establishing social and education institutions to improve social welfare, and participating in intercultural and interreligious dialogs. These efforts, aside from indicating their struggle to survive, also serve as a strategy to show their existence amidst the tremendous pressures they experience.

This article suggests that minority groups, particularly Papuan Muslims, deal with pressures from two sides simultaneously. On the one hand, there is strong social pressure (from most of the population) caused by differences in religious identity. In Papua, tensions involving religious groups are nothing new, but it is a reality that continues to haunt movements and activities of social groups in the region. Several factors trigger such tension to constantly occur, one of them is religious identity and regional sentiments. On the other hand, the pressure experienced by Muslim groups is exerted by the state. In this case, differential treatment by the state is evident in relation to the fulfillment of civil rights. Examples include frequent difficulty to exercise freedom of worship, to build house of worship, and to develop religious education facilities due to the lack of state’s attention. Nevertheless, these two kinds of pressures are confronted by maintaining their stance as citizens with inalienable rights and obligations, hence the measures undertaken thus far have relatively been the best way.

This article was constructed by using limited data. The sources of data used in this research did not entirely cover a sufficiently extensive understanding of the subject matter, such as the direct experiences of Papuan Muslims. To address such limitation, efforts to acquire more extensive sources of data are necessary by listening to and involving the subjects of the research, by considering varying perspectives. Accordingly, further research is required to gain a more comprehensive understanding in observing existing dynamics among, particularly, Papuan Muslims.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This article cannot be separated from the contribution of each author. The authors discussed designing the research and determining the output. Muhammad Rifai Darus specifically conducted data collection under the direction of the guidance team. Hasse Jubba, coordinates the data collection process and completes the required references. He is also looking for the best journals for the publication of this article. Irwan Abdullah, directs conceptually and methodologically and helps interpret the data. Zuly Qodir completed the results section and discussion of the article by strengthening the stoned literature accessed from the Reputable International Journals (Indexed by Web of Science and Scopus). Adil Hassan Ibrahim Mohamed helped finalize the article and improve the structure of the language. He is also involved in data processing. The authors

are involved in the article revision process after obtaining comments and direction from reviewers.

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