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**INTERNATIONALISATION OF ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION
IN INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
OF RATIONALES, CHALLENGES, STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES**

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to document, explore, and compare rationales, strategies, and challenges, as well as identify best practices in the internationalisation of several Islamic universities in Indonesia and Malaysia. Drawing on a multiple case study approach, data are sourced by collecting pertinent documents and conducting semi-structured interviews with key informants from public and private Islamic universities in both countries. Data analysis was carried out in two stages. First, the data were analysed separately based on their characteristics. Documents were analysed using document analysis techniques, while data from interviews were examined through thematic analysis. In the second stage, all findings from the first data analysis were collated for a cross-case analysis to identify similarities and differences. The study discovered that both Indonesia and Malaysia aim to address globalisation and enhance their international standing by internationalising their higher education institutions (HEIs). In Indonesia, achieving better academic recognition through internationalisation is a major motivation for Islamic HEIs, especially those seeking a better accreditation status. Although similar motivation is shared by some of the participating Malaysian Islamic HEIs, but achieving academic global prominence has been the major objective of their internationalisation programs. The study also found that the internationalisation strategies of Islamic HEIs in both countries aligned with multiple typologies of internationalisation strategy. However, various challenges hinder the internationalisation efforts of Islamic HEIs in both contexts, including language proficiency, multicultural awareness, the implementation of sustainable and cost-effective internationalisation programs, immigration and international student regulations, as well as inadequate staffing in international offices.

Keywords: Indonesia, internationalisation, Islamic higher education, Malaysia, sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, countries are working conscientiously to internationalise their higher education (HE), dedicating substantial resources and employing a variety of strategies to attain international recognition for their academic institutions. For instance, the United States, Europe, Canada, and Australia are considered pioneer countries that have made efforts to internationalise their local universities over the last few decades (de Wit, 1995). Another example of this initiative is seen in organisations like the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), which, with a membership exceeding 500 institutions across five continents, enhances the impact of its member universities by fostering collaborative initiatives aimed at addressing global challenges (Newman, 2023). Similarly, within the Asia-Pacific context, there is a rapid emergence of higher education institutions (HEI) aspiring to achieve 'world-class' status driven by forward-thinking governments that acknowledge the importance of knowledge and skills in shaping a future that embraces influences from both the East and the West (Marginson et al., 2011).

The quest for international acknowledgement has prompted the adoption of diverse strategies, with noticeable distinctions evident among nations. Norway, for example, provides a government funding scheme for students from developing countries to study in its HEIs, in addition to the fact that most Norwegian HEIs charge no tuition fee and continuously increase the number of courses and programs offered in English (Wiers-Jenssen et al., 2021). In addition, China, through its Plan of Studying in China program, articulates its commitment to becoming a global education hub and enhancing its international influence through educational exchanges. The plan promotes the assimilative management of international students, encouraging them to live and study alongside Chinese students to foster mutual respect and understanding, thereby enriching the educational experience for all students (Tian & Liu, 2021). Furthermore, Ethiopia initiates its HE through research collaboration with European HEIs (Haley et al., 2024).

Scholarly literature reveals that the concept of internationalisation is open to diverse interpretations and influenced by the particular contexts in which it is applied. This concept is examined and contextualised within the Indonesian and Malaysian context in the following discourse.

Scholarly Purview of Internationalisation of HE

Internationalisation of HE emerges largely due to globalisation and generally signifies the action or procedure of making higher education institutions (HEI) international. Similarly, within the domain of HE, scholars have put forth diverse conceptions of the said term. For example, Arum and van der Water (1992, as cited in Knight, 2004) defined internationalisation in higher education as “the encompassing set of activities, programs, and services related to international studies, international educational exchange, and technical cooperation” (p. 9). In contrast, Kälveborn and van der Wende (1997) conceptualised it as “...a systematic, continuous effort aimed at adapting HE to meet the demands and challenges posed by the globalisation of societies, economies, and labour markets” (p.19).

Nevertheless, Knight's (2008) definition, which characterises internationalisation of HE as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, and global dimension into the purpose, functions (teaching, research, and service), and delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels.” (p, xi), is widely accepted. This definition accommodates elements that go beyond the three core activities typically associated with HEI, i.e. teaching, research, and community service, by encompassing aspects such as purpose, function, and delivery (Shaydorova, 2014). Subsequently, both de Wit and Hunter

(2015) proposed a modification to Knight's (2008) definition by incorporating a social benefit component. According to their perspective, internationalisation of HE involves:

The deliberate process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions, and delivery of post-secondary education, with the aim of enhancing the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and making a meaningful contribution to society. (p. 3)

The current study refers to this understanding of internationalisation in HE.

The internationalisation of HE is driven by several underlying reasons. Synthesising research findings at a broader scale, Knight (2004) and de Wit (2002) concluded that the motivations behind internationalisation policies in HE fell into categories of political, economic, educational, and cultural rationales, or sometimes incorporating a combination of these aspects. The political rationale is rooted in concerns related to national security, stability, peace, and the ideological influences that arise because of internationalisation. For instance, Canadian HEIs instrumentalised international students within the logic of nation-building through immigration to position themselves as valuable actors in Canada's immigration policy and justify their requests for public financial support (Brunner, 2023). Moreover, university rankings drive policy reforms and resource reallocation, impacting higher education. It highlights the rise of an international market in higher education. Driven by rankings, leading HEIs compete for students globally. This competition is fueled by political rationales as governments encourage universities to attract international students in order to enhance their global standings and to appeal to a broader student base (Robinson, 2014).

Meanwhile, the economic rationale centres on two main objectives: preparing a workforce that can compete at the international level, and augmenting an institution's revenue by enrolling international students. For example, the internationalisation of higher education in Latin America, i.e., Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru, aims to prepare a globally competitive workforce by promoting programs for vulnerable populations, including indigenous students. The initiative involves collaboration between ethnic higher education with international organisations in consolidating and training new indigenous intellectuals and leaders to foster a more diverse and globally competitive workforce in the region (Aupetit, 2015). As for augmenting an institution's revenue, García and Villarreal (2014) assert that international students contribute a significant portion to American HEI's revenues. In fact, it is among the country's top 10 service exports. In 2011, the U.S. Department of Commerce coordinated a group of 56 U.S. colleges and universities for a mission of increasing international student recruitment to American campuses.

The educational rationale seeks to improve the quality of HE through internationalisation programs. In China, for instance, the rapid expansion of higher education has necessitated the establishment of global research universities to improve educational standards and foster innovation (Kim et al., 2015). The Chinese government has actively promoted international collaborations to elevate its universities' global rankings and research output, reflecting a strategic approach to academic excellence (Hong, 2018). Similarly, in Australia, the internationalisation agenda has been linked to improving educational quality and fostering a competitive edge in the global market (Daniels, 2013). This focus on quality is not merely about attracting international students but also about enhancing the overall educational experience for all students through diverse perspectives and collaborative research opportunities (Svetlik & Lalić, 2014).

Lastly, the cultural rationale emphasises the preservation of local and national culture and counters the homogenising effects of globalisation. This is achieved through an emphasis on foreign language proficiency, cross-cultural understanding, and recognition of diversity (Shaydorova, 2014). On a more specific level, Altbach and Knight (2007) further categorised the motivations for international HE into those driven by the desire for financial gain and those motivated by non-financial objectives. In Canada, for instance, Yesufu's study on internationalisation practices at a Canadian university shows that cultural and intercultural dimensions are integral to the objectives and policies of higher education institutions, reflecting a broader trend of incorporating cultural rationales into internationalisation strategies (Yesufu, 2018).

The internationalisation of HE has been accomplished with different strategic approaches. Qiang (2003) identified four approaches to internationalisation of HE based on the focus of the strategies. First, the activity approach that focuses on curriculum internationalisation, student and faculty mobility, technical assistance, and international students. Second, the competency approach that focuses on “the development of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values in students, faculty and staff” (p. 250) through knowledge transfer and intercultural skills. Third, the ethos approach promotes the creation of an organisational environment conducive to the internationalisation agenda. Fourth, the process approach that focuses on “integration or infusion of an international/intercultural dimension into teaching, research and service through a combination of a wide range of activities, policies and procedures” (p. 251).

Based on the direction of the internationalisation of HE, Knights (2012a) suggested two types of approach, which she termed “internationalisation at home” and “cross-border education.” The former refers to importing and integrating internal and intercultural dimensions into an HEI's purpose, functions, and delivery, while the latter refers to transnational mobility of policies, knowledge, students, staff, and services. Furthermore, Wu and Zha (2018) extended Knight's (2012) typology by accommodating changes in the direction of internationalisation of HE as a result of emerging new players in the field. They proposed a typology that categorised Internationalisation of HE directions into “inward-oriented”, which is characterised by importing foreign staff and HE models, and “outward-oriented,” which refers to exporting domestic HE to the world.

Internationalisation of HE proceeds in an incremental manner. Researchers have mapped the stages of IHE from a process perspective and an outcome perspective. De Wit (2002) suggested that internationalisation should be viewed as a cyclic process. He proposed a model consisting of eight steps that was rooted in the “integration effect.” The steps include: i) analysing the external and internal contexts, ii) promoting IHE awareness among stakeholders, iii) enlisting stakeholders' commitment, iv) planning IHE strategic plan, v) operationalising critical activities, services, factors, principles of IHE, vi) implementing programs and strategies, and vii) reviewing the progress and impact of the programs, and viii) reinforcing stakeholders. Concentrating on the outcome, Söderqvist (2007) divides HE internationalisation into five stages: i) non-activity stage; ii) student mobility stage, iii) curriculum and research internationalisation stage, iv) institutionalisation of internationalisation stage, v) commercialising the outcomes of internationalisation stage, and vi) HE services export stage (p.120).

Summarising studies on internationalisation of HE between 1997 to 2016, Bedenlier et al. (2018) noted recurring shifts of the primary foci of research in the field. During this period, four major developmental waves in research into the internationalisation of HE took place. First, from 1997 to 2001. During this course of time, researchers focused on defining and understanding what internationalisation in higher education means, establishing the basic concepts and frameworks that would guide future studies in this

area (Delineation of the Field). Second, from 2002 to 2006, the focus shifted to how institutions manage and implement internationalisation strategies, including the development of policies, administrative structures, and management practices to support international activities within universities (Institutionalisation and Management of Internationalisation). Third, from 2007 to 2011, research began to explore the impacts of internationalisation on students, particularly their needs and the support structures required to help them succeed in an increasingly globalised educational environment (Consequences of Internationalisation). Fourth, from 2012 to 2016, the latest wave, research has moved beyond individual institutions to consider the broader transnational context, examining how internationalisation extends beyond physical mobility and affects higher education on a global scale, including trends in transnational education and the student experience beyond the immediate academic context (Institutional to Transnational Context).

Indonesia and Malaysia in Context

Indonesia's commitment to bringing its HE system to a global stage has been evident for some time. The HE Long Term Strategic Plan for 2003-2010 has already emphasised the internationalisation of HE as a strategy to enhance national competitiveness (Kusumawati et al., 2020). Currently, this vision remains an integral part of the HE Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 outlined by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Indonesia (Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020). The same vision is also shared by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which oversees Islamic HE. The Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 of the Directorate General of Islamic Education enlists improving the quality of Islamic higher education institutions (IHEI) toward international reputations as among its objectives for the term (Kementerian Agama R.I., 2020). However, although the Indonesian government responded positively to globalisation (Soejatminah, 2009), well-consolidated and focused policies, foreign language competency, intercultural skills, availability of human resources with international capacity, and adequate funding are among the issues that need immediate attention (Abduh et al., 2018; Rosyidah, 2020; Nurhaeni et al., 2021).

On the institutional level, some Islamic HEIs have laid the foundation for and embarked on their internationalisation agenda. An example of the latest development that reflects the realisation of the goal is the establishment of Universitas Islam International Indonesia (UIII), which started its operation in September 2021. The establishment of the university is intended to answer the need for an international standard university that is able to carry out strategic missions. First, to be at the forefront of Islamic studies. Second, to become the world's leader in the field of Indonesian Islamic studies. Third, to become a centre for the spread of modern, tolerant and progressive Islamic culture (Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia, 2021).

It should be noted that long before the above-mentioned internationalisation program, the presence of international students and academic staff, particularly those from the neighbouring countries such as Malaysia and Thailand, at some Indonesian Islamic HEIs had been recorded. Among these HEIs included Antasari State Islamic University (Kadariyah, & Hayati, 2019), Muhammadiyah University, Malang (Nurbatra, 2018) and State Islamic University Maulana Malik Ibrahim (Detrianto et al., 2018).

Across the border, Malaysia has long embarked on its internationalisation of HE. The establishment of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in 1984 set the cornerstone for its "at home internationalization" (Knight, 2012) approach. Similarly, other universities such as Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) (Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 2016), Universiti Islam Selangor, UIS (Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor, 2014), and Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)

(Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, 2020) have adopted a similar approach as a strategic effort to advance internationalisation within their institutions.

Similar to that of Indonesia, Malaysia's HE internationalisation seeks to produce competitive graduates, attract international students, and enhance innovation through research (Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia, 2007). So far, the "at home internationalization" approach has proved to be effective in attracting international enrolment. As of 2019, over 170,000 international students from 135 countries were enrolled in Malaysian higher education institutions, and Malaysia is also now home to 10 foreign university branch campuses (Siddharta, 2024). The next target is to become an international hub of HE excellence in South East Asia with 250,000 international student enrolments by 2025 (Munusamy & Hashim, 2021). For this purpose, since 2017, Malaysia has already allocated more than 21% of its total government expenditure on education (Wahid et al., 2018).

A considerable amount of research has been conducted on the internationalisation of HE in Indonesia and Malaysia- two countries in Southeast Asia that share many similarities in terms of culture, people, and education (Abdullah et al., 2022). The pre-existing literature, furthermore, suggests that studies on internationalisation of HE in Malaysia were initiated earlier than those in Indonesia and focused on a range of related issues such as rationales, policies, and challenges. Pertaining to the rationales for internationalisation of HE in Malaysia, a study by Munusamy and Hashim (2019) identified a mixed motivation of economic and socio-cultural rationales that also accommodate political and academic missions. The study also revealed that Malaysia's HE internationalisation policy is premised on staff and student mobility, academic programs, research and development, governance and autonomy, social integration, and cultural engagement. Furthermore, research by Tham and Kam (2008) on internationalisation across four HEIs showed the existence of two types of challenges: internal challenges related to funding problems, and challenges related to policies concerning accreditation issues. Most importantly, these challenges resulted from the Malaysian identity policy that HEIs should reflect in their programs. The study also identified different views on the purposes of internationalisation among stakeholders, core activities embedded with the international dimension, the relationship between internationalisation and international HEI ranking, and the extent to which students' demands should be catered to.

Despite the availability of extensive literature on internationalisation of HE, however, only a limited number of studies focus specifically on the context of Islamic HEIs. The quantity of research work is even less when Indonesia and Malaysia are concerned. In Indonesia, such studies have been focused on internationalisation policies, strategies, and practices at the institutional level, which were conducted in prominent state Islamic HEIs. Research by Kusumaputri et al. (2021) at a state Islamic university, for example, showed that internationalisation is realised through faculty and staff capacity building, development, and implementation of international curricula and cooperation with foreign HEIs. The research also showed that inadequate funding issues are constraining the agenda. In addition, a study by Munadi (2020) on the internationalisation policies of two state Islamic universities found that the policies mainly focused on the development and implementation of foreign language curricula, provision of training on multicultural issues, and establishment of international programs. Another study by Fuadi et al. (2021) on the self-management of internationalisation at three Islamic universities showed that the management process was divided into several stages, namely: determination of the vision, mission, and objectives, development of international curricula, recruitment of foreign students and lecturers, and quality assurance.

In the Malaysian context, research by Mohd Ali (2018) on public Islamic HEIs showed the institutional-level efforts by the HEIs to sustain their existence and international orientations while maintaining their Islamic values. The efforts are organised in a strategic plan to ensure quality teaching and learning, comprehensive student development, talent management, financial stability, and good governance and research innovations. The research also reported a decline in the number of international students that affects the HEI financially, limiting its ability to maintain and recruit international scholars. The “inbreeding” strategy was then implemented to solve this problem, where Ph.D. students were employed as teaching assistants and gradually integrated into their department. However, this strategy took time, and the HEI is considering re-implementing the staff mobility strategy.

Nevertheless, research that explores and compares the internationalisation of Islamic HE in the two countries is hardly available. For example, a comparative study by Abd Wahab and Harza (2019) on Indonesia’s and Malaysia’s foreign policies to strengthen bilateral relations through IHE does not focus on Islamic HE. Similarly, Suyantiningsih et al.’s study (2023) on Indonesian and Malaysian university rankings does not specifically explore the topic in the context of Islamic HE.

Research on the internationalisation issues in Islamic HEIs is necessary. This is because of the existence of a dilemmatic tension between their responsibility to maintain Islamic values and their mission to remain relevant to globalised HE (Assegaf, 2016; Hashim, 2014). Hashim (2014) argues that, as globalisation promotes a homogenisation of cultures, there is a risk that traditional values may be overshadowed. Amidst such a situation, Islamic education faces significant challenges in adapting to modern educational demands. The traditional focus on religious knowledge and Arabic language instruction often does not equip students with the necessary skills to thrive in a globalised economy. Therefore, Islamic educational institutions must find a balance between fostering a strong religious and cultural identity and preparing students to compete in a global marketplace. It is important to sustain the relevance of Islamic education in the fast-paced globalisation. Similar concern is also highlighted by Assegaf (2016), he reminds that Islamic education should embrace globalisation wisely in order to preserve Islamic identity, basic tenets, and characters.

In brief, the earlier discussion on the internationalisation of HE covers three primary aspects. First, it examines the differences and similarities in approaches, policies, strategies, and challenges related to the internationalisation of HE worldwide, with a particular emphasis on Indonesia and Malaysia. Second, it highlights the limited availability of literature and research on the internationalisation of Islamic HEI, particularly studies that offer a comparative perspective between Indonesia and Malaysia.

Third, it underscores the inherent conflict between the mission of Islamic HEIs to preserve Islamic values and their endeavours to achieve internationalisation objectives. This tension sets apart the challenge of internationalisation for Islamic HEIs.

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY AND METHODS

Given the significance of the second and third aspects mentioned above, the current study is both relevant and timely. Specifically, this research aimed to investigate and draw comparisons among the conceptions, rationales, strategies, challenges and best practices of internationalisation implemented by selected Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia, and to identify the best practices in the context of internationalising Islamic higher education in both countries.

To achieve the aims, this study drew on a multiple case study approach (Stake, 2013). 10 participating Islamic HEIs – 6 from Indonesia and 4 from Malaysia (See Table 1), were selected based on their explicit vision and mission statements on internationalisation. Data collection involved documentation and semi-structured interviews with key informants. A total of 10 documents were collected, including relevant laws, regulations, curriculum, syllabus, and internationalisation policies and programs. The interviews involved 13 informants, including vice rectors, directors and staff of international affairs offices.

Table 1

Cases and Informants of the Study

Case/ University	Country	Status of Islamic HEI	Informant
Case 1: Universitas Islam Malang (UNISMA)	Indonesia	Private	Informant 1: Head of Office of International Affairs. Informant 2: Vice-rector for academic and collaboration affairs.
Case 2: Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang (UIN Maliki-Malang)	Indonesia	Public	Informant 3: Head Centre for International Cooperation Service
Case 3: Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah (UIN Jakarta)	Indonesia	Public	Informant 4: Head of Office of International Affairs.
Case 4: Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD)	Indonesia	Private	Informant 5: Head of Office of International Affairs.
Case 5: Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII)	Indonesia	Public	Informant 6: Vice-rector for Student Affairs, and Human Resource
Case 6: Universiti Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim (UINSUSKA)	Indonesia	Public	Informant 7: Head of Office of International Affairs. Informant 8: Staff of Office of International Affairs.
Case 7: Universiti Islam Selangor (UIS)	Malaysia	Private	Informant 9: Vice-Rector for Academic and International Affairs
Case 8: Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)	Malaysia	Public	Informant 10: Head of International Centre. Informant 11: Staff of International Centre.
Case 9: International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)	Malaysia	Public	Informant 12: Deputy Director of Office of International Affairs.
Case 10: Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM)	Malaysia	Public	Informant 13: Head of International Centre.

The documents were analysed using the Document Analysis technique (Weber, 1990); while the interview data were analysed through the procedure for Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020). The findings from the individual cases were then assembled for a cross-case analysis (Borman et al., 2012) to identify similarities and differences. Trustworthiness in this study was ensured through triangulation in terms of the use of multiple data sources and data analysis methods to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell et al., 2007) and the Member Checking technique (Candela, 2019).

FINDINGS

This research sought to investigate and compare the conceptions, rationales, strategies, challenges, and best practices of internationalisation implemented by selected Islamic HEIs in Indonesia and Malaysia, and to identify the best practices in the context of internationalising Islamic higher education in both countries. The following are the findings for those research purposes.

Conceptions of Internationalisation

Islamic higher education in Indonesia is divided into two streams. First, there are Islamic universities that are under the administration of the Ministry of Culture and Education. These HEIs are private in nature. Second, some are part of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. These include university, institute, and college-level state HEIs. As a consequence of such a dual-stream system, the strategic plans of the Islamic HEIs also refer to the ministry they are part of. Therefore, the national policy documents analysed in the present study are the Higher Education Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 of the Ministry of Culture and Education and the Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 of the Directorate General of Islamic Education of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Neither the aforementioned strategic plan documents nor do not explicitly state how internationalisation is conceptualised and understood. However, the lists of objectives the two ministries seek to achieve from 2020 to 2024 reflect the conceptualisation of Internationalisation.

In relation to internationalisation of HE, both documents enlist, first, improving the Indonesian HEIs Global ranking; second, improving the visibility of the HEIs' publications; third, increasing the number of HEIs with international accreditations; fourth, increasing international student admission; fifth, increasing staff and students' international mobility (Kementerian Agama, 2020, pp. 97-100; Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 2020, p. 49). Based on these objectives, it can be inferred that internationalisation is directed toward "international participation".

However, the objectives of internationalisation of HE in the two national policy documents, to a great extent, also reflect the understanding of internationalisation of HE proposed by Knight's (2008), i.e.:

"the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society" (p. 3).

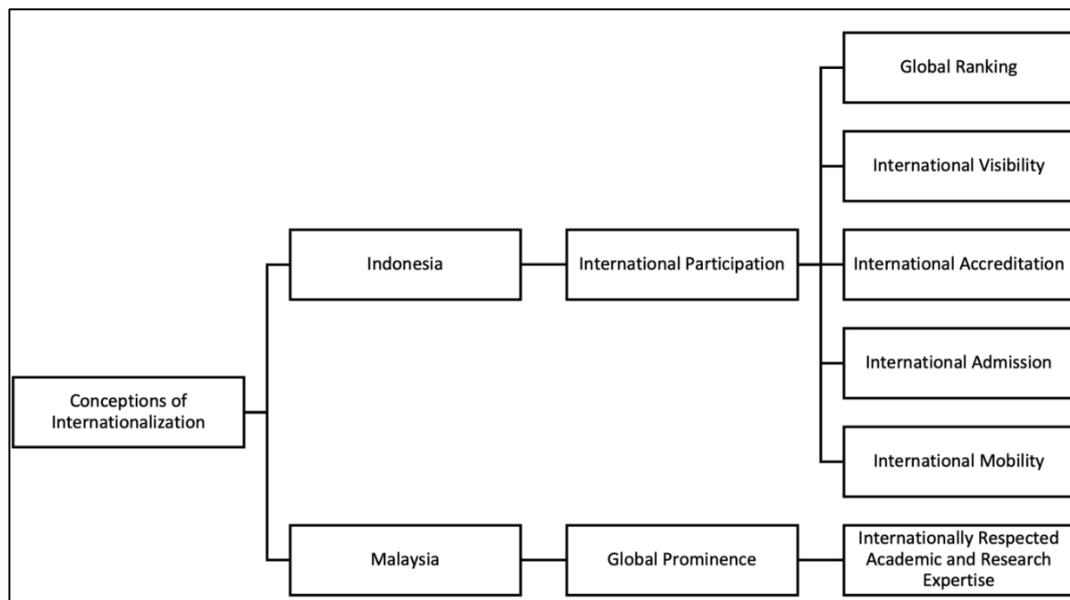
As for Malaysia, which uses a unified system in the organisation of its HE, i.e., under the Ministry of Education, the present study analysed a part of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2015) that outlines a strategic plan for the country's higher education. The

document begins with statistics in the previous ten years that show a steady increase in international student enrolment in Malaysian HEIs. This is understood as an indicator that Malaysia is becoming a top destination for international students.

In contrast to the Indonesian policy documents that do not use the term “internationalisation”, the Malaysian document explicitly states internationalisation of Malaysian higher education as one of the government’s agenda. The document states that the primary aim of the internationalisation of HE is to achieve “global prominence”, that is moving from “an attractive destination known for good value for money and quality of life; to one that is also recognised, referred to, and respected internationally for its academic and research expertise.” (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2015, p. E-15). As such, Malaysia extends its concept of internationalisation from an economic perspective to a global academic expertise point of view. Overall, the themes identified for the conception of Internationalisation are summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Themes and Subthemes for the Conceptions of Internationalisation Based on National Documents



As for the institutional policy documents, document analysis showed that of 7 documents from both Indonesian and Malaysian participating Islamic HEIs, only one, i.e., Case 1, which was an Indonesian private IHEI, explicitly stated how the term “international” in its vision and missions should be understood. The document defined being international means “...having globally competitive human resources, learning process, facilities and infrastructure, research activities, and graduate competencies” (Universitas Islam Malang, 2019, p.2). The other 6 documents, although repeatedly mentioning the term, did not define it explicitly. Rather, the conception of internationalisation was reflected in their strategies that focused on boosting reputation through global rankings and accreditation, increasing visibility via international research and student enrolment, and expanding programs involving foreign participants. This conception is very similar to that of Case 1. Hence, the institutional policy documents in both contexts of the study, i.e. Indonesian and Malaysia, except for Case 1, perceived internationalisation as meeting the externally set standards and criteria, particularly for the purposes of

accreditation, recognition, visibility, and ranking, while at the same time pursuing their own values, i.e. Islamic values, and agendas. These are summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Themes for the Conceptions of Internationalisation Based on Institutional Documents



The Rationales and Objectives of the Internationalisation

Although the analysed documents showed that most strategic planning documents in the Indonesian Islamic HEIs refer to responding to global changes as the primary rationale for the internationalisation initiatives, analyses of interview data indicated that obtaining a better academic recognition is also a central rationale as well as objective of the internationalisation programs of the IHEIs. Specifically, the informants always associated the recognition with accreditation, either on the institutional level or department and unit levels. The recurring rationales mentioned have been the institutional needs to achieve a better accreditation, particularly to meet the criteria set by the new accreditation standards that require HEIs to go international if they are seeking to be accredited “Unggul” (excellent), the highest accreditation level for any HEI in Indonesia. This is particularly true in the Islamic HEIs that have not obtained such an accreditation status.

“Of course...I mean...it’s also for the accreditation purpose. You know...having international students, lecturers, other international things at our university are essential for achieving the unggul accreditation” (Informant 3 of Case 2)

In addition, the present study suggested that internationalisation in Islamic HEIs does not always develop in an incremental manner nor fit the set rationales and objectives. For example, two cases were found where the extent of internationalisation of the IHEIs was scaled down based on their own

assessment of the achievements of their previous internationalisation targets and programs. In case 6, informant 7 mentioned that the previous global vision of the Islamic HEI was scaled down to a regional one after realising that a number of factors needed to be prepared to achieve it. Similarly, in case 3, informant 4 stated that, after evaluating the practical problems arising from its international programs, the Islamic HEI's international affairs unit realised that not all Islamic HEIs should go international, or at least not all departments. Rather, they suggest that internationalisation should be made based on careful consideration in order for it to be sustainable:

“If you look at the current vision, we have changed the scope from Asia to a regional one. We have evaluated the previous vision... we think we have to go for a more feasible one.”
(Informant 4 of Case 3)

Similar to their Indonesian counterparts, the research findings also suggested that the internationalisation of Islamic HEIs in Malaysia is driven by three main rationales: responding to globalisation, meeting accreditation requirements, and achieving global visibility and recognition. Firstly, internationalisation of Islamic HEIs in Malaysia responds to globalisation by internationalising their curriculum, attracting international students and faculty, and establishing partnerships with international universities. This is done in order to prepare students for the global workforce and to remain competitive in the global education market (International Islamic University Malaysia, 2021; Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, 2016; Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, 2020).

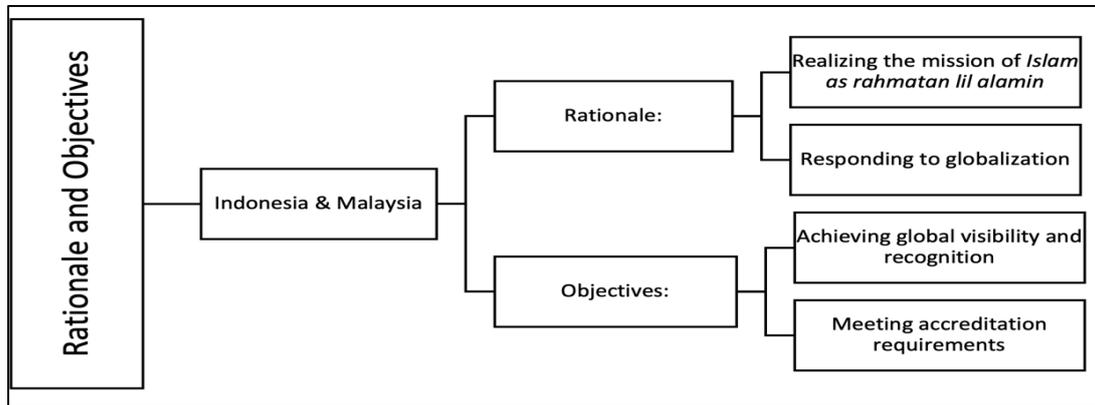
Secondly, meeting accreditation requirements is another rationale for the internationalisation of Islamic HEIs in Malaysia. Accreditation bodies such as the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and International higher education accreditation bodies require institutions to meet certain international standards in order to maintain their accreditation status (Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2021). Therefore, Islamic HEIs are internationalising their programs and curricula to meet these standards and to attract international students. Finally, Islamic HEIs in Malaysia are seeking to achieve global visibility by expanding their reach beyond national borders. By internationalising their curriculum, attracting international students and faculty, and establishing partnerships with international universities, Islamic HEIs in Malaysia seek to increase their visibility and reputation on a global scale (Informant 9 of Case 7, 10 of Case 8 & 13 of Case 10). Thus, it is argued to outline that the internationalisation of Islamic HEIs in Malaysia is driven by the need to respond to globalisation, meet accreditation requirements, and achieve global visibility. These rationales are important for IHEIs to remain competitive and relevant in the global education market.

However, document analyses on the Islamic HEIs' strategic plans of both contexts of the study also showed that the Islamic HEIs weigh their internationalisation differently in terms of how it should be perceived and endeavoured. In this respect, two groups of IHEIs were identified. On one hand, there are Islamic HEIs, such as Case 1 and Case 3, that are pursuing internationalisation as one of their main missions. As such, a considerable portion of their policies and strategic plans is set for realising the mission by meeting common international standards for the so-called “international higher education”. On the other hand, there are Islamic HEIs that view internationalisation should be an eventual result of pursuing excellence through commitments to their own values, rather than to externally set values and standards. This is made clear in the institutional policy documents of two Indonesian HEIs, i.e., Case 5 and Case 6, and one Malaysian Islamic HEI, i.e., Case 9. Coincidentally, they both believe that the fundamental value they should pursue is Islam as a mercy to all creation, which inherently encompasses an Islamic HEI's global role.

The themes for rationales and objectives of internationalisation are summarised in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Themes for Rationales and Objectives of Internationalisation



The objectives and rationales of Internationalisation of Islamic HE in Indonesia and Malaysia mostly align with the typologies identified by Knight (2004) and de Wit (2002) discussed earlier in the introduction of this report. Specifically, the rationales for internationalisation in both countries are driven by political, economic, and educational factors. In terms of the political rationale, both countries aim to respond to globalisation and increase their global visibility and recognition, which can contribute to their national security, stability, and peace.

These rationales are either explicitly or implicitly expressed in the documents analysed and by the informants of the study. The Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 of the Directorate of Islamic Education of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Kementerian Agama, 2020), for example, reminds the Islamic HEI to adapt to the increasingly globalised world and sets seeks to increase the number of Islamic HEIs that receive international recognitions as one of its objectives for the period of 2020-2024. Furthermore, at an institutional level, the vision of a state Islamic university (Case 5), for instance, seeks to realise a better world through its postgraduate education and research (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2019). This was further elaborated by Informant 6 of Case 5:

“The university’s Board of Trustees mandated that... this Islamic university plays global roles, including those related to Indonesian diplomacy”.

In the Malaysian context, the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2015-2025 for Higher Education (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2015) also stresses the need for responding to the globalisation and specifically aims that at least one Malaysian HEI will in the top 25 university in Asia, two universities in the top 100 universities in the world, and an enrolment of 250.000 international students by 2025. The plan argues that such a global mission will help place Malaysia as an international education hub, which will also benefit local students and Malaysian citizens in general. Relating the mission of the plan to his university’s readiness as an Islamic institution to embrace the diversity in the market of international education, Informant 12 of Case 9 stated, *“When we go out into true international arena, we have to be able to shift through many scenarios and ideologies”.*

The economic rationale is also present as internationalisation can increase institutions' revenue through international student enrolment and partnerships with international universities. The Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 of the Directorate of Islamic Education of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (Kementerian Agama, 2020) targets a 0.95 % increase in the international student enrolment and a 4.5% increase in the number of Islamic HEIs' international collaboration (pp. 97-99) by 2024. These are parts of a strategy to improve Indonesia's Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (p.10). Such an economic rationale was also mentioned by the informants. For example, Informant 2 of Case 1. When asked about the economic aspect of the internationalisation program at his university, he replied *"Of course, there is...the university's income. Student enrolment, be it local or international...eventually, our strategies also aim on that"*.

Although the economic rationale also drives the internationalisation of Malaysian Islamic HEIs, the ultimate objective, i.e. Malaysian HE global prominence, is further-reaching than their Indonesian counterparts. Education Development Plan 2015-2025 for Higher Education (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2015) sets achieving Malaysian HE global prominence as one of its 10 objectives. The plan stresses that the HE education sector is one of the country's sources of income, and it needs to continue strengthening its global competitiveness by offering quality education through academic and research excellence in order for it to become a major destination for international students (p. E-15). Reflecting on the economic side of internationalisation in terms of revenue, Informant 13 of Case 10 stated that such an economic benefit will materialise in the medium or long term.

Furthermore, the educational rationale is evident as internationalisation allows institutions to meet international standards for teaching, research, and service.

Informant 5 of Case 4, for example, described:

"There is a demand for graduates with an international outlook...having international exposure. International experiences will be good for them when they graduate...as alumni or graduates who have international experiences during their study here. That's why we consider internationalisation as an important aspect of the process learning".

The view that internationalisation will allow an institution to meet international standards was also shared by Informant 6 of Case 5, who said:

"The characteristic of internationally competitive campuses, namely research and teaching, two things that cannot be separated. Therefore, the emphasis is given to lecturers, their research role, this is more open... and several centres will be established. Centres are the characteristic of a university that is scientifically highly recognized".

The educational rationale was also mentioned by the Malaysian informants in the study. Informant 10 of Case 4, for example, describes:

"We look at internationalisation as a way to... first, to improve the quality of students and the second is to improve the expertise, competencies for our staff... staff in the sense of teaching staff... yes, in various fields. For example, in research, in publishing and also international relations."

However, it should be noted that the objective of achieving better academic recognition through internationalisation is a central rationale for the Indonesian Islamic HEIs, particularly those seeking to meet new accreditation standards. This objective seems to align more closely with the non-financial profit motivation identified by Altbach and Knight (2007).

Informant 5 of Case 4, for example, said:

“What I can infer from the university management’s direction is the accreditation status. The accreditation requires it...we should have international students. So, the current drive is to have international students. We are trying out some strategies to make them come, either online or offline”.

The same objective was also mentioned by Informant 1 of Case 1:

“Our target is the excellent accreditation status, and to achieve it there are some criteria to meet. The number of international students, community services, inbound programs, the number of international conferences, the number of departments that has got international accreditation”.

Overall, while the internationalisation of Islamic HE in Indonesia and Malaysia primarily aligns with the typologies identified by Knight (2004) and de Wit (2002), it is important to recognise that multiple factors may drive internationalisation, and these factors may vary across different institutions and contexts.

Internationalisation Strategies

The present study found that the participating Islamic HEIs use both *outbound* and *inbound* strategies in their internationalisation programs, both for students and faculty members. For students, the outbound strategies take the form of student mobility programs, which include international student exchange, participation in summer courses, and overseas internship programs. At Case 4, for example, the outbound strategy is realised in the form of an international student exchange program, which is facilitated by the university’s international credit transfer policy. This program is funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia through Indonesian International Student Mobility Awards (IISMA). They also send their student overseas to join summer courses. The inbound strategy is realised through joint degree programs in which international students spend part of their study trajectory at the Indonesian Islamic HEI. A similar outbound strategy is also implemented in Case 1. Interestingly, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the university strived to maintain its outbound strategy by shifting to the online mode in the form of an online internship.

For faculty members, the strategies take the form of staff mobility, which includes mainly visiting lecturers and staff exchange programs. Case 5, for instance, in July 2023, sent a delegation of 25 lecturers to several universities in Australia for a two-week study visit under the auspices of the Australian universities. During the visit, the lecturers conducted a series of academic lectures and talks. Following up on this program, the Australian universities’ faculty members also visited the Indonesian university for similar activities. The same program was also conducted by Case 4 in a collaboration with a university in the Philippines, where the Indonesian Islamic university sent its lecturers for a one-month academic visit program.

In addition, in the area of research, the outbound strategies were also realised in the forms of joint research, visiting researcher, and joint conferences. In terms of joint research and visiting researcher programs, they were mostly carried out under a *matching grant* scheme where the research was co-funded by the collaborating universities. Researchers from Case 1, for example, conducted an international collaborative research on radicalism with their counterparts from an Australian university. Similarly, joint international conferences were also conducted on a shared-cost basis. This form of activity was mentioned by all the informants of the study as a part of their internationalisation programs.

However, data from documents and interviews revealed that the area of community service has received comparatively less attention from internationalisation programs in all participating Indonesian Islamic HEIs, in contrast to programs focusing on teaching, learning, and research. Only one such program, Kukerta Serumpun (a collaborative community service program involving students from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei), was identified and highlighted by Informant 5.

“So, ...if you talk about the number of lecturer’s international community service programs, ...yes it’s very small. As a temporary solution, we include it in the student’s international community’s service programs” (Informant 5 of Case 4).

Regarding the inbound strategy, in addition to student and staff mobility, the internationalisation programs also took the form of recruitment of foreign lecturers and establishing international programs, such as recruiting adjunct professors such as in Cases 3 and 5.

To address the language and cross-cultural understanding issues, the Indonesian Islamic HEIs provided Indonesian language courses for foreigners (Case 1 and Case 3), foreign students’ cultural visits (Case 1 and Case 4), and hosted international students’ sports events (Case 1). The last two forms of programs are also found as parts of some Malaysian Islamic HEIs’ programs (Case 8 and Case 9). However, the main difference is in the language issue. As most international programs in Malaysia are carried out in English, the Islamic HEIs require prospective international students to obtain a certificate of English language mastery as one of the requirements for admission, for instance MUET, IELTS, TOEFL iBT and Linguskill (Case 7 and Case 8). Furthermore, as all of its programs are conducted either in English or Arabic, one of the Malaysian Islamic HEIs provided an English for Academic Purposes course for international students who do not possess such a certificate before they can begin their academic programs (Case 9). All information related to admission is normally made accessible on their website.

International students in the Indonesian Islamic HEIs are mostly under a scholarship scheme, be it from internal sources such as at Case 1, Case 2, Case 3, Case 5 and Case 6 or external sources such as at Case 4 and Case 1. Regarding Internal scholarships, Informant 1 of Case 1, for example, described that *“Every year we provide scholarships for 42 international students, those are the university scholarships”*. While for external scholarships, Informant 5 of Case 4 explained: *“Basically, we get our international students through the government scholarship called Dharmasiswa, which is... for international students to learn Indonesian language and Indonesian culture.”* And Informant 2 of Case 1 added: *“We also have joint scholarship program with our international partner universities.”* In contrast, most international students in the participating Malaysian Islamic HEIs are self-funded as described by informant 10 of Case 8 and informant 12 of Case 9. Informant 10 of Case 8, for instance, said: *“The only country we provide scholarship is Palestine”*.

From the interviews, it was found that in the past, the Malaysian Islamic HEIs used to provide scholarships for international students as a strategy to attract international admissions. Informant 11 of Case 8 described:

“In 2015 there was a little scholarship cut..., it’s no longer fully provided for students from some countries. But, now we only provide a partial scholarship for one country”.

Similarly, Informant 12 of Case 9 stated:

“Yes, In the early periods of our university, we used to give scholarships to international students. Our current scholarship policy targets only students from muslim countries that are in need of such a scholarship such as Palestine, Afghanistan...”

A similar strategy is also implemented by some of the Indonesian Islamic HEIs. Informant 6 of Case 5, for instance, mentioned:

“When we started the university last year, we also received a lot of applications from overseas, although we felt that we had not done extensive international promotions. But, prospective students from tens of other countries applied, and we offered them scholarships.”

In addition, some of the Malaysian Islamic HEIs also used to pay private education agencies for promotion and recruitment of international students. Informant 10 of Case 8 highlighted:

“We have implemented ..., we call it an agent policy. It's just where we give a cash incentive to individuals only, not to companies. So it's usually our students and alumni, but it could be anybody, that can recruit international students. They will get paid a small cash token”

A similar strategy was also mentioned by Informant 9 of Case 7:

“Through agencies, we can also get students. We appointed some agencies. For example, if we target students from Indonesia, we appoints Indonesian agencies.”

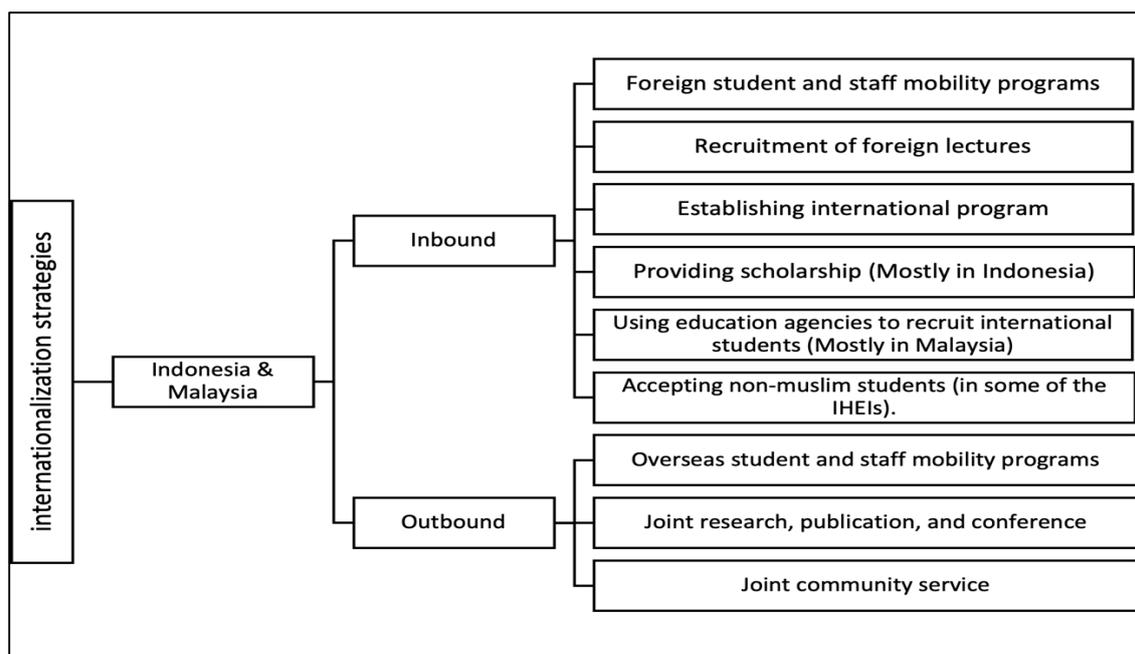
In terms of research, internationalisation efforts were realised in joint research and publications, and the establishment of research centres in particular areas that were of interest to the global academic community. Most of the efforts were initiated through academic staff and alumni’s personal network. Realisation of the strategies mentioned above, both inbound and outbound, was facilitated by either institutional and national policies or intergovernmental cooperation programs. For example, to increase international admission, some of the Islamic HEIs offered rector scholarships, which are considered as institutional policy. Some student and staff mobility programs were based on university-to-university collaboration agreements, such as ones realised by Case 1 that collaborate with universities in Australia, the US, and Taiwan, while participation in programs such as *Erasmus Mundus* in Indonesian Islamic HEIs was based on government-to-government policies, such as in Case 4. Pertaining to the program, informant 5 mentioned that the university had received 3 Erasmus Mundus grants for capacity building, disaster management, and leadership receptively. In total, the grants amounted to 1.2 million Rupiah. In addition, there were also Islamic HEIs, such as Case 1 and Case 3, that established university-to-government collaboration initiatives to facilitate their internationalisation agendas through foreign embassies in Indonesia. Informant 2 of Case 1 described: *“We provide scholarships for masters and*

Ph.D programs...the rector's scholarship under a partnership scheme with foreign embassies". Others reached out through collaboration with industries, especially for the international internship programs such as Case 3 and Case 4. Furthermore, some of the Islamic HEIs also collaborated with Muslim communities in foreign countries to assist them in spreading information and recruiting international students. Informant 2 of Case 1, for example, mentioned that they sought such assistance from Muslim communities in Thailand and Japan. A similar story was also mentioned by Informant 5 of Case 4, that the university established ties with the Muslim community in southern Thailand.

Overall, the themes and sub-themes for internationalisation strategies are summarised in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Themes and Subthemes for Internationalisation Strategies



The internationalisation strategies of the participating IHEIs in Indonesia and Malaysia reflect multiple typologies (de Wit, 2002; Knights, 2012; Qiang, 2003; Wu & Zha, 2018) discussed earlier in the purview section of this paper. The outbound and inbound strategies for students and faculty members, as well as the joint research and publication efforts, align with Qiang's (2003) activity and process approaches. These approaches focus on curriculum internationalisation, student and faculty mobility, technical assistance, international student recruitment, and the integration of an international/intercultural dimension into teaching, research, and service.

The recruitment of foreign lecturers and establishment of international programs align with Knight's (2012) cross-border education approach, which emphasises the transnational mobility policies, knowledge, students, staff, and services. The foci on the establishment of research centres and collaborations with alumni and personal networks also align with the ethos approach, which promotes the creation of an organisational environment conducive to the internationalisation agenda. The Islamic HEIs' efforts to attract international students through scholarships and private education agencies align with Wu and Zha's (2018) inward-oriented approach, which involves importing foreign staff and HE models. Similarly, the Islamic HEIs' collaborations with industries, foreign embassies, and Muslim

communities, as well as their focus on joint research and publication in areas of interest to the global academic community, align with Wu and Zha's (2018) outward-oriented approach, which involves exporting domestic HE to the world. In summary, the internationalisation strategies of the Islamic HEIs in Indonesia and Malaysia reflect multiple typologies of internationalisation and multifaceted approach to internationalisation.

Challenges and Opportunities

The first challenge faced in the internationalisation programs that were mostly mentioned by the research informants is related to mastery of foreign languages, particularly English. They stressed that the success of the internationalisation programs was heavily determined by the extent to which those involved could understand each other well. Language barrier has an impact on the acceleration of the programs, as more time is spent on establishing a good understanding of what is being communicated than on acting out the program. Informant 1 of Case 1 argued: *"Language is of paramount importance. How would we go international if we have issues pertaining to language mastery? Even though we have good programs to offer. That's...the problem in, for example, go to international forums. Language constrains..."*. Furthermore, Informant 5 of Case 4 revealed: *"Yes, so far, I have to say that language mastery, especially English, is the main challenge. And...it affects the internationalisation programs we had planned. We have to deal with it. And it takes time...sometimes rescheduling or replanning"*

Therefore, they suggested that Islamic HEIs invest in language preparation programs first before embarking on internationalisation initiatives. For example, Case 1 and Case 4 provided English language training programs for their students and lecturers before they participated in international programs, and only those who fulfil the required TOEFL or IELTS scores can proceed.

"Internationalisation programs rely on your mastery of foreign languages. Especially, English. Sometimes, we planned good programs, but they did not work well because of the language problem. I think you have to address the language issue first". (Informant 1 of Case 1)

The second challenge is multicultural awareness and understanding. The informants, especially those who directly interacted with foreign students, mentioned that such awareness and understanding were essential in the execution of their job. They recalled that it is a two-way issue in that they had to have such a quality in themselves, and it helped develop the home culture among the international students. Failures in this respect often led to other problems that would eventually cause international students to drop out. These problems included misunderstanding in cross-communication between international students and their local supervisors, breach of social norms and laws by international students that caused them to face legal prosecutions, culture shock and others. Therefore, they stressed on the importance of the orientation period for international students, during which they learn the home culture before starting their study programs.

The third challenge identified is preparing excellent, cost-effective, and sustainable internationalisation programs. Informant 3 of Case 2, for example, stated that reaching out to the global academic community is a competitive endeavour in nature. Therefore, they had to offer programs that were attractive to prospective international counterparts. Furthermore, they also described internationalisation as expensive. Hence, the ability to design cost-effective programs that can be maintained for a long term is important. For example, by focusing on inbound strategies rather than outbound. Informant 9 of Case 7 mentioned *"Realising internationalisation programs involves high*

costs... if you want to realise them out there. So, you have to consider the financial aspects of the programs". Similarly, Informant 2 of Case 1 asserted, *"Our targeting is also based on cost analysis. When we target some universities of similar quality to work with, we prioritise going to one that will cost less, or offering inbound programs"*.

Fourth, most Indonesian participants mentioned the absence of some regulations related to immigration and international students' and their dependants' status issues as another challenge. They mentioned that these had caused some problems which were beyond their capability and responsibility to solve. Informant 6 of Case 5, for example, revealed:

"There some administrative issues that Indonesia is not yet ready with...for example, we don't have international student visa category for students or other visa category for their dependants. We're surprised of this fact. Therefore, it's not easy to make our university international".

The same issue was also raised by Informant 4 of Case 3. He mentioned that the unavailability of regulations and policies, and the lack of coordination among relevant government agencies made their internationalisation mission challenging. The problems have contributed to prospective international students' decision to come to Indonesian Islamic HEIs. They called for relevant responsible bodies to help address the issue.

In addition, they also suggested that the availability of supporting facilities and infrastructure, such as international schools for international students' dependents near the Islamic HEI is important. Informant 6 of Case 5, for instance, described that they had to provide adequate accommodations that were close to the university for foreign lecturers, but finding such accommodations was not easy. In addition, some lecturers and international postgraduate students who came with their families needed an international school for their children, which was not available around the university. Such challenges were also mentioned by a Malaysian informant, i.e. Informant 9 of Case 7. She mentioned that they had to provide facilities that meet the needs of international students, including accommodation.

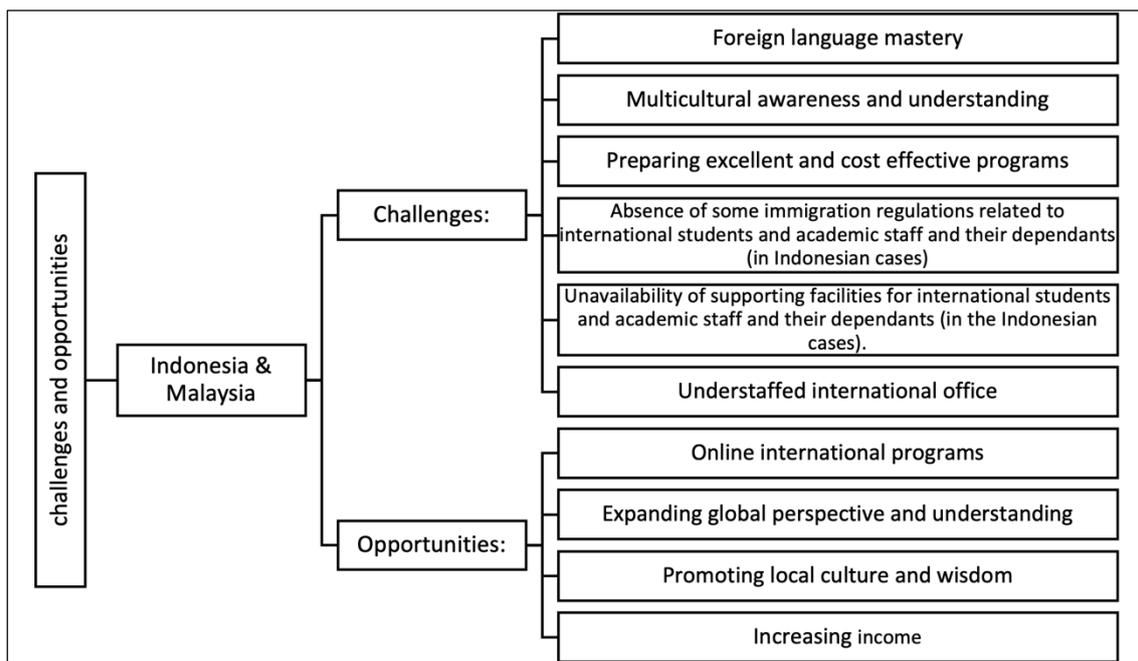
Fifth, almost all participants from the international office of the Indonesian and Malaysian Islamic HEIs voiced their concern about the fact that their office was understaffed, as they had to handle various issues related to international students and programs. Informant 4 of Case 3 described that their international affairs office was only a unit under the university's Centre for Research and Community Service, with a limited number of staff. Such a staff shortage was also found at Case 2. In fact, Informant 3 of Case 2 said that, even though there were a few part-time staff assisting him, he was the only personnel who was officially assigned by the university to manage international affairs. A similar situation was also voiced by Informant 11 of Case 8. He said, *"We are very weak at setting the targets for ourselves partially because our staffing is minimal. We struggle every day to keep up the workload"*. In addition, most of the staff's designation at the office was not on a full-time basis, but rather as an additional responsibility in nature because most of them were lecturers who also had to fulfil their academic responsibilities. For instance, Informant 5 of Case 4, Informant 7 of Case 6, Informant 10 and Informant 11 of Case 8, and Informant 9 of Case 9 described that they were lecturers who had academic workloads, like teaching, supervising, and research that they had to do. At the same time, they had to manage the international affairs of their universities. They found it was difficult to balance the two tasks.

Despite all the challenges they mentioned, the informants also identified some opportunities that can be pursued even in the challenging situation. For example, they recalled that the COVID-19 pandemic had made them realise of the possibility for international collaborations and programs being conducted online. They saw that this mode of collaboration was more cost-effective than the offline ones. Online programs provided more flexibility in terms of space and time. Informant 11 of Case 8, for example, said, “*So, during COVID-19, we changed our policy. We had more programs conducted online, and it turned out to be more cost-efficient and more flexible*”. The realisation of online internationalisation programs ranged from online courses and internships, such as ones conducted by Case 4 and Case 8, to community services conducted by Case 1. In addition, internationalisation programs provided them with opportunities to learn a number of things from their international counterparts and expand their global perspective and understanding.

Informant 8 of Case 6 said that being involved in internationalisation programs, where she had to interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, had made her learned a lot in terms of intercultural knowledge and communication. In the same tone, Informant 3 of Case 2 revealed that one of the benefits of working with the international office was having the opportunity to learn and embrace a global perspective on higher education. Overall, the themes and sub-themes for challenges and opportunities are summarised in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Themes for Challenges and Opportunities



Best Practices in Internationalisation of Islamic HE

In general, the present study noted four best practices recommended by most of the informants. First, they believed that establishing a unit in a university system which is dedicated solely to international affairs is a must for a university with a global outlook. All the Islamic HEIs that participated in this study had established such a unit. This unit mainly works on the practical undertaking of the

internationalisation programs and comes with different names, and is positioned under different designations in the participating Islamic HEIs. However, its responsibility is essentially the same in all of the Islamic HEIs, i.e. managing the international affairs of the university. The names of the unit and its direct superordinate are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

Internationalisation Unit

Case	Name of the Unit	Direct Superordinate
Case 1	Office of International Affairs	Vice-rector for academic and collaboration affairs.
Case 2	Office of International Affairs	Bureau of academic, student, and collaboration affairs
Case 3	Centre for International Cooperation Service	Institute for Research and Community Service
Case 4	Office of International Affairs	Rector
Case 5	Office of Student Affairs and International Service	Vice-rector for Student Affairs, and Human Resource.
Case 6	Centre for International Affairs	Institute for Research and Community Service
Case 7	Centre for Internationalization and Mobility	Vice-rector for Academic and International Affairs
Case 8	International Centre	Deputy Vice-chancellor for Academic and International Affairs
Case 9	Office of International Affairs	Deputy Rector for Academic and Internationalization
Case 10	International Centre	Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Academic and International Affairs

The second-best practice recommended by the informants is comprehensive institutional support. Their experiences have shown that internationalisation must be comprehensively understood and supported by all members of a university system in a synergistic manner. Informant 5 of Case 4, Informant 7 of Case 6, and Informant 10 of Case 8, for example, stressed the importance of a shared understanding of the vision, mission and commitment to internationalisation from top management of the university, faculty members, and all other stakeholders. This will ensure that all the parties move toward the same direction in realising their internationalisation agenda. They, furthermore, suggested that internationalisation should be part of the Islamic HEIs' visions and missions and translated into strategies and policies, and acted out by the members within their designated jobs and responsibilities. Partial understanding and support will lead to unsuccessful attainments. Informant 5 of Case 4, for instance, suggested, "*Here, we make internationalisation as part of our missions. It's clearly stated. And... it's followed up by policies, strategies. For example, the financial aspect of it*". In addition, Informant 10 of Case 8, described "*Another thing that we have done ...I think successfully is we have let the other parties at the university know their responsibilities and handle them that are within their control themselves. That's important for a successful internationalisation program*".

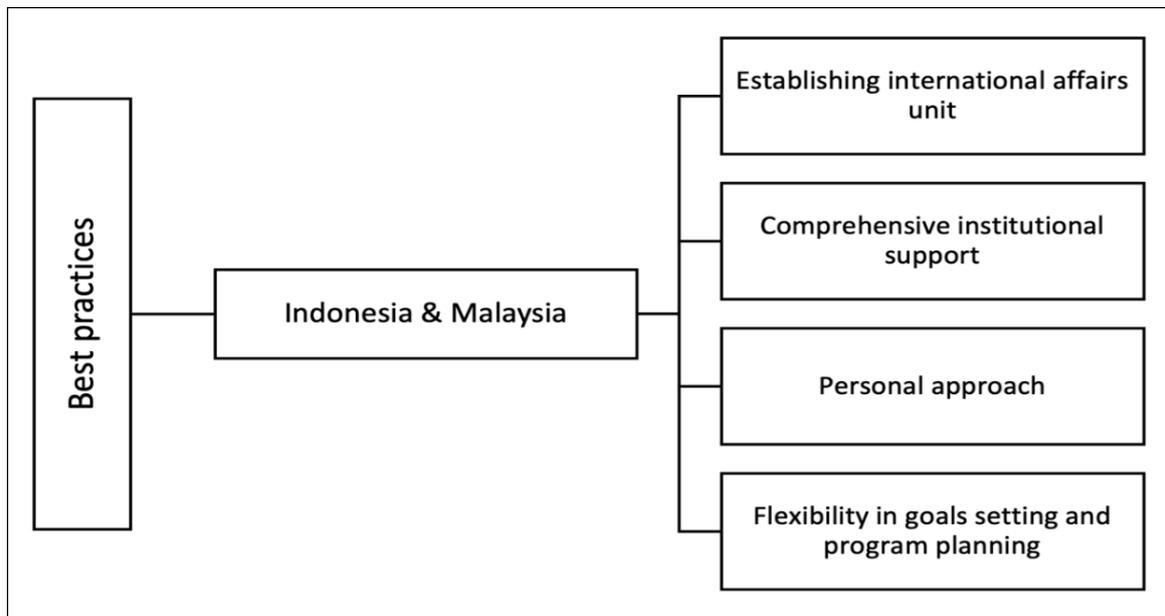
Third, most of the informants shared their success stories of initiating international collaborations through what they called “personal approach” or people-to-people contact. Within this approach, the first steps towards such collaborations developed from a network of friends, colleagues, and alumni. They associated such a phenomenon with their belief that successful collaborations stand on the foundation of mutual trust, and mutual trust is an interpersonal quality. Informant 4 of Case 3 mentioned “So, we mostly initiate through personal links. For example, through lecturers and alumni”. In addition, informant 10 of Case 8 described that 75% of their international initiatives came by word of mouth. He, furthermore added, “It’s not by going to education fairs or anything. Our students and alumni recommend their friends...say it as a personalised matter or human touch, it’s about trust...an interpersonal one.”

Fourth, most of the informants believed that flexibility in goal settings and program planning is a must. This is because internationalisation is mostly a multi-way reciprocal affair. Islamic HEIs may set their internationalisation targets and agendas, but may not be able to fully schedule and control how and when their international counterparts respond, or how many and whose offers of international collaboration they will receive in a particular period of time. Informant 11 of Case 8, for instance, suggested, “When you’re dealing with internationalisation, you’re dealing with so many parameters on the side you cannot can plan but expect those plans to change and don’t get upset by.” The same perspective was also shared by Informant 7 of Case 6, who mentioned that “I think that’s one lesson I’ve learned working on internationalisation you cannot be so rigid and worried about things because things will shift and delay”. Therefore, they need to be flexible in their internationalisation goal settings and program planning.

Overall, the themes and sub-themes for best practices are summarised in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Themes for Best Practices of Internalisation of IHE



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study showed that, to some extent, the Islamic HEIs in Indonesia and Malaysia share some similarities as well as having a number of differences in their conceptions, rationales, strategies, and challenges in the internationalisation of HE. Specifically, the present study found that the Indonesian national policy documents perceived internationalisation as international participation that is concerned with global ranking, international visibility, international accreditation, international admission, and international mobility. While the Malaysian national policy documents perceived internationalisation as a global prominence that stresses on becoming internationally respected academic and research expertise. However, the institutional policy documents of both the Indonesian and Malaysian Islamic HEIs perceived internationalisation as a concept that encompasses international accreditation, recognition, visibility, and ranking.

In terms of rationales and objectives of internationalisation, all the institutional policy documents of the participating Islamic HEIs in both contexts argued for the need to respond to globalisation and sought to achieve global visibility and recognition, meet accreditation requirements, and realise the mission of *Islam as a mercy to all creation*. All the participating Islamic HEIs employed inbound and outbound internationalisation strategies.

Both the Malaysian and Indonesian informants were facing similar challenges that related to foreign language mastery, multicultural understanding, designing cost-effective and sustainable internationalisation programs, lack of relevant immigration regulations and supporting facilities for international students and academic staff, and inadequate staffing of the unit that manages international affairs.

The Islamic HEIs in both contexts found internationalisation activities offered opportunities for pursuing online programs, expanding global perspectives and understanding, promoting local culture and wisdom, and increasing HEIs' income; and establishment of an international affairs unit, comprehensive institutional support, personal approach, and flexibility in goal-setting and program planning were best practices in internationalisation of the Islamic HEIs.

Although the literature demonstrates that the similarities and differences found among the Indonesian and Malaysian HEIs are also shared by HEIs in general in their internationalisation endeavours, findings from some individual cases of this research indicated the existence of specific issues related to the religious characteristics of the Islamic HEIs that have either facilitated or limited their internationalisation missions. However, this study also showed that the Islamic HEIs have always tried to find solutions for the issues that match their contexts and situations in order to realise their internationalisation programs.

The present study also highlighted the complexity of internationalisation of Islamic HE. It showed a web of interdependent aspects and stakeholders that determine the success of internationalisation of Islamic HE. As such, any Islamic HEI with an internationalisation agenda should be well informed of them and be able to connect with and gain support from them for a successful internationalisation program.

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommended that Governments of Indonesia and Malaysia should provide policies and funding that will help promote internationalisation of Islamic HEIs. These could be in the form of creating bilateral agreements with other countries to recognise

academic qualifications and facilitating student and staff mobility, and establishing dedicated grants and scholarships to support international student and faculty exchange programs.

Islamic HEIs should prioritise foreign language competency, intercultural skills, and human resources with international capacities, such as by providing regular foreign language and intercultural competency trainings and workshops for students and staff.

Islamic HEIs should develop sustainable and cost-effective internationalisation programs. For example, by establishing virtual joint degree programs with international universities to reduce operational costs while expanding student options, and by creating a shared resource hub for Islamic HEIs in the region to pool resources for internationalisation initiatives.

Finally, Islamic HEIs also need to engage in collaborative initiatives with industries, foreign embassies, and other Muslim communities to enhance their internationalisation efforts. The HEIs and industries' collaboration can be focused on internships and research opportunities for international students in the sector of mutual interest. Partnership with foreign embassies can be centred on cultural exchange programs and academic collaborations. While collaboration with global Muslim communities aims to promote the Islamic HEIs among the members of the community, and to help establish global alumni networks.

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