

Why Choose Volunteering in an Islamic Boarding School? Documenting the Undocumented Voluntary Teaching Motives

Eddy Haryanto

Jambi University, Indonesia
eddy.haryanto@unja.ac.id

Harlina Harja

Jambi University, Indonesia
lina.harja73@gmail.com

Dery Mulia Putri

Jambi University, Indonesia
derymui@gmail.com

Supawal

Jambi University, Indonesia

Mad Amin

Jambi University, Indonesia

Abstract

This study was part of a larger study aiming at understanding what motives possessed by voluntary teachers of English to teach at one *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in Jambi, Indonesia. The research design of this study was qualitative with a case study approach. The data were collected through demographic profiles and semi-structured interviews with seven female voluntary teachers as the participants of the study to obtain in-depth information regarding implicit and explicit motives to teaching. We analyzed the demographic data descriptively and analyzed the semi-interviews data by using within-case and cross-case displays and analyses. The interview data were digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and carefully analysed. The findings indicated that seven voluntary teachers of English implicit and explicit motives to teach English were motivated by interpersonal, community service, the continuation, and non-salary motives.

Keywords: motives, Islamic boarding school, *pesantren*, volunteering, case study

Introduction

A *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in contemporary Indonesia comprises of a *pondok* (a dormitory in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools) and a *Madrasah* which is a day school where students go to this place after they spend their time in public school in the morning. Pesantren students are called *santri*. As boarding schools, pesantrens are greatly shaping children's and youths' environment and character for children and youth. While students going to Madrasah only spend from three hours to five hours a day within the

environment of family and community, santri have their 24-hour time a day of their study years (Srimulyani, 2007) to company their co-pupils, teachers, and administrators called as a total institution where various mortifications of the self happens. In addition to the daily hours for formal learning, santri must actively get involved in long hours of prayer, Koran recitation, and other religious activities. They wake up very early in the morning and go to rest lately in the middle of the night. There is limited privacy in the pondok and free time for the Santri to enjoy. Some Indonesian pesantren are not typically well-financed institution causing the environment of the Pondok is in austere conditions with strict rules (Nilan, 2007). Even though, they live in poor condition with tough discipline, Pesantren still exists up to now. One of the important contributions that might keep Pesantrens and Madrasah alive is the presence of pesantren teachers (ustad, male teachers and Ustadzah, female teachers) who remain there regardless of low or no salary with unfortunate facility (Habibi, Sofwan, & Mukminin, 2016; Sofwan & Habibi, 2016).

Most pesantrens still struggle to find skilful teachers of English despite the fact that those teachers play very significant roles in shaping the future development of the country. Furthermore, their roles in improving economy and social aspects of lives are undoubtedly important. To understand and identify concealed and explicit motives to voluntarily teaching, in particular teaching English at pesantren, is important. Recognizing the motives of teachers of English to teaching English at pesantren is undeniable because many of the pesantren have limited quality teachers of English. However, it is somehow regrettable that limited studies were conducted to contribute to teaching in Indonesian context as the world most populated Muslim country where there are more than 25,000 pesantren with more than 3.50 million Santri. This study aimed at finding out the motives of the teachers of English to teach at pondok pesantren. The investigation focused on the concealed and explicit motives to teaching and the factors keeping the commitment of the teachers of English to teaching and to stay in the profession. The guiding question of this study was: What were the motives influencing voluntary teachers of English to teach English at pondok pesantren?

Literature Review

Volunteerism

Most research on motivation has focused on work-related motivation as it is deemed to have a greater impact on the economy and thus, regarded as more important (Cuskelly & Harrington, 1997; Johnson, 2007; Munro, 2001). While some research concerning work-related motivation is applicable to volunteers, there is an essential difference: volunteers are unpaid workers and thus, are motivated by factors other than monetary compensation. However, in the past fifteen years, there has been a steady proliferation of research studies focusing on volunteer motivation. Thus volunteerism is defined as the desire to help appears to be an essential aspect of human nature. One particular type of helping behavior is volunteerism.

Every year, millions of people engage in volunteerism, whether it is providing health care in free clinics, companionship in hospices, or tutoring for the illiterate, numerous organizations. Without volunteers, many programs that are run at little or no cost to the user would cease to exist. Therefore, there is a critical need to expand our understanding of what motivates individuals to volunteer. Despite all the offered materials, still there is little agreement among researchers about volunteer motivations (Cuskelly & Harrington, 1997).

Volunteerism is the willingness of people to help others without any sort of expectations of payment or any other tangible gain. Motivation is both an internally and externally manifested construct. Internal motivations are linked to altruism and personal satisfaction, and external motivations are related more to rewards and tangible benefits (Maslow, 1954; Munro, 2001; Parker, 1997; Peach & Murrell, 1995).

Pesantren and English teaching

Islamic boarding school in Indonesia is called pesantren consisting of a pondok (a boarding school) and a madrasah (a day school) (Sofwan & Habibi, 2016; Srimulyani, 2007). The students are called "santri" whose responsibilities are to memorize the Quran, the Prophet's traditions, and Arabic classical texts or Kitab Kuning (yellow books). Santris in pesantren normally spend their 24 hours a day in their boarding school undertaking religious and daily activities. Teaching English in pesantren might be not easy to do.

There are several factors affecting teaching English including in pesantren. Common factors are the size of the class, the environment, the quality of the teachers, the time allotment for English, and the student's motivation (Hobson, Tracey, Kerr, Malderez, Pell, Simm, & Johnson, 2004; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Yong, 1995). These factors contribute to the process of teaching and learning. English teachers in pesantren may face difficulties more than their counterparts in public schools. To overcome the problems, they have to work harder to find and implement the suitable instructional strategies every day to teach English to santri and to deliver the subject in order the students have the same abilities and achievement with other students in other school at the same level.

Methodology

A qualitative design with a case study approach to investigate the concealed and explicit motives possessed by voluntary teachers of English to teach at one *pondok pesantren* was used for this research where a group of voluntary teachers of English had committed to teaching English at the research site. A case study was chosen because it eases us to explore cases to obtain multiple sources of information using in-depth data collection. Qualitative study is conducted in a natural setting without any data manipulation focusing on the participants of the study by asking questions in general and experience of the participants and providing a rich narrative description (Mukminin, Rohayati, Putra, Habibi, & Aina, 2017; Mukminin, 2012; Mukminin & McMahon, 2013; Prasojo et al., 2017). In addition, informed that a case study design involved an issue study that is explored through one or multiple cases within a bounded system. The bounded system can be limited by time and place and the case can be a program, an activity, or individuals (Mukminin, Muazza, Hustarna, & Sari, 2015).

This research was held at one pondok Pesantren in Jambi located in the Southern area of Indonesia. Permission for this study was granted by the head of the Pondok Pesantren. The names of participants involved in this study were hidden through the use of anonymous to protect their rights. In this study, we purposefully recruited all voluntary teachers of English to teach at one pondok pesantren which we contacted through our educational networking. The convenience case strategy is used as it is appropriate for collecting data to meet the purpose of this study. This strategy helped us collect the data related to the participants' concealed and explicit motives to teaching by sharing their feelings, perspectives, ideas, and thoughts. This study involved seven voluntary teachers of English as the participants.

The main data for this research were obtained through a semi-structured interview with each participant. We did two ways interviewing the participants; direct interview and online interview using video calling application. The seven participants were Lina, Cassie, Najar, Mila, Cindy, Cinta, and Tyo. The interview was conducted in the research site from 15 minutes to 20 minutes respectively. We recorded the interview, questions and responses using smartphones. We used Bahasa Indonesia in the interview as to obtain more in-depth information, the participants need to get their most comfort language to address the questions in the interview (Mukminin, Kamil, Muazza, & Haryanto, 2017; Mukminin, Ali, & Fadloan, 2015).

For the analysis of the data, we faced many challenges, such as time to transcribe every individual's talks. We did descriptive analysis to the demographic data while the interview data were transcribed for each individual. All the interview data among teachers were analyzed and reanalysed by comparing their differences and similarities (Abrar et al., 2018; Habibi et al., 2018). It is common in a qualitative study that data collection and data analysis do not process in a serial manner. However, they both have influential factors for each other. The first step conducted in the analysis was to implement "within case analysis" a theory that was proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). In detail, when we had interviewed the first participant, we recorded their responses as well as the addressed questions. Then, we transcribed verbatim each of the recording data, and meticulously analysed and put all the transcribed data into some thematic categories. This process was then to be continued until the last participant's data analysis. We carefully read each transcript sentence-by-sentence independently, highlighted relevant chunks of statements, and categorized relevant chunks of statements into themes or categories that had been designed. We translated the transcribed data from Indonesian to English.

After categorising of the interview data, we did the efforts the trustworthiness of the research that features authenticity and credibility. Trustworthiness does not carry the same terminology as it does in quantitative research, validity, nor is it a companion of reliability (Mukminin, Noprival, Masbirorotni, Sutarno, Arif, & Maimunah, 2015; Mukminin, Muazza, Hustarna, & Sari, 2015). Trustworthiness is understood as strength and it is used to suggest determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account (Merriam, 1998). In developing the trustworthiness of this research, we completed some procedures including; we held the long interviews minutes that depended on the questions and the situation, we handed the interview transcripts to be checked by our research members, and we returned the fix transcripts back to the participants to make sure the originality as a system of checks and balances for the final steps before presenting the data findings (Mukminin, Kamil, Muazza, & Haryanto, 2017; Mukminin, Ali, & Fadloan, 2015; Mukminin & McMahon, 2013).

Findings

Through the long process from transcribing to categorizing data, we finally grouped the interview data to become four major categories; (1) interpersonal motives, (2) community service motives, (3) the continuation motives, and (4) non-salary motives. These categories were elaborated in these findings by the examples of statements of the participants.

Interpersonal motives

From the interview, the data emerged among the participants was interpersonal motives. All seven participants of the interview consistently stated that volunteering as their satisfaction. This motive was depicted by the participants addressing their decision to teach English at the research site could not be separated with working with the santri at the pesantren. The interpersonal motives have become very significant as they reported that they were keen to stay at the research site in order to share and spread their knowledge and skills of English for the goodness of the santri. Two of the teachers reported,

At first, right after I graduated from my college majoring in English, I kept thinking about applying jobs in English course, public schools, or private schools. I never thought that I would teach in this pesantren until one of my professors in my college asks me to teach here. I accepted the offer and began to teach. One of the main reasons why I still teach here is that because it is sort of volunteering work that always motivates me to get my santri to become better community to face their future where English is a key for globalization. (Cinta)

Everyone has motives teaching here and it is certainly not about money. We are here as we want to contribute to Islamic development especially in education. I love teaching here since I want to share, address my knowledge of English to the santri. Hope they will find that English will be important for them in their future help them to see Islam as *Rahmatan lil Alamin* (A Mercy to All creation). I do hope that they can achieve to study overseas. (Cindy)

From the interview, it is understood that the participants had enthusiasm to make their students to become better generation in the future. To contribute to the community, Islam community was the main reason why they wanted to teach at the pesantren. Another response from one participant, Mila, said that she wanted to make better Islamic education when she realised that most students at the pesantren were from poor family and hope they would bring Islam to become a better society in global.

Community service motives

In addition to interpersonal motives, community service motives were other important motives revealed by the participants in the interview. They stated that they wanted to spend their time to do useful things without thinking about the rewards because they had a better option to have if they wanted to apply for an English teacher position in other places. Some of the participants revealed,

I want to use this opportunity and experience to contribute to my community and society. Therefore, even though the *mudir* (pesantren's principal) ever asked about finding another job that has more money to earn, I still decided to volunteer here at this pesantren. There is something that I cannot get from other place since I have taught English since I was in the fourth semester. (Lina)

I started to teach voluntarily at this pesantren since I want to get involve actively to contribute to my Islam society through education. I offered myself to be a volunteer teacher. So, that it is coming from my own desire to participate in the instruction process. (Cassie)

The participants of this study were keen to get involved improving their society by being voluntary teachers to shape the future generation of the country through education. In general, the participants in this study stated that teaching English at pesantren would help them to have an opportunity to contribute to the betterment of their people and society.

The continuation motives

A personal fulfillment to keep continuing their contribution in the educational field through teaching English regardless limited financial feedback attracted the participants in this study. In other words, no parties pushed them to join the teaching activity in the research site. Two participants had their feelings and thoughts,

I think the reason why I stay teaching here because I want to continue to have contribution to this school. This duration or continuation keeps me teaching in this pesantren.” (Tyo)

Yes, I am keen to keep in touch with education and its activities. I think education provides me opportunities for the exploration on how education is connected to other aspects. I also want to keep maintaining English skill, practice makes perfect. (Cassie)

The data of the interview indicated that regardless the situation and condition of the pesantren, participants felt happy to be teachers at the research site and to teach activity voluntarily.

Non-salary motives

The voluntary teachers of English in the interview revealed in pride that non-financial motives were also the main reasons why they taught at the pesantren. They reflected that it was more about a moral responsibility to help santri's development. The quotes reflect some of their feelings,

Teaching English at the pesantren needs responsibility. It is not about money or salaries but more about our task to make Santri become better people in the future. (Mila)

Certainly yes, when I believe to one thing, I will keep doing it. Therefore I stay teaching English at this Pesantren since the reward was not about money or other material factors rather than getting my own satisfaction. (Cindy)

It is important to highlight that the sample of the data above indicated that the participants in teaching English at the pesantren expressed that salary in teaching was not the key motive to participating in becoming voluntary teachers.

Discussion

Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) are typically poor and disadvantaged. However, most of the students (santri) survive in that deprived conditions. Additionally, santri also learn and live under strict rules (Nilan, 2007). The thought-provoking question emerged on why some community namely teachers and fresh graduates participate in active ways to develop this institution through teaching? What sorts of motives that attract them to teach at pesantrens? This study aimed at finding out the motives of the teachers of English to teach at pondok pesantren. The findings provided clear empirical evidence of data which showed that the participants of this study, seven female voluntary teachers of English implicit and explicit motives to teach English at the pesantren was triggered by (1) interpersonal motives, (2) community service motives, (3) the continuation motives, and (4) non-salary motives. Lortie (1975) stated that interpersonal motives elaborated the reasons for someone why he/she enters the teaching profession because it involves working and socializing with other people, particularly young people related to the spread of knowledge, information, and skills. Even though all previous related studies have not centred on voluntary teachers, their findings are in line with this study. The findings of this study is in correspondence with Yong's (1995) study exploring teacher trainees' motives for entering teaching career in Brunei Darussalam was triggered by the intention to share their knowledge and skills with others. Hobson, Tracey, Kerr, Malderez, Pell, Simm, and Johnson's (2004) and Mukminin, et al. (2017) also reported that 'helping young people to learn' and 'working with children' were two of ten features motivating the highest numbers of trainees to teach. Additionally, the finding of this study agrees with the findings of the earlier studies (e.g., Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Muazza et al., 2016; Mukminin, et al., 2017) who discussed that the decision to teach since their personal aspirations to work with young people aimed at making difference with the students' lives.

Regarding social service, Lortie (1975) said that the resources of service are in relation to the teaching as a valuable service of moral value, the core of its mission. In addition, Clary, Snyder, and Stukas (1996) stated that one of the six broad motivational functions motivating people to volunteer was social or interpersonal factor. Our study results indicated that the participants who had not sufficient work yet informed that their desire and motivation to teach English voluntarily at the research site was to give significant contribution to their community and society. All the teachers said that they wanted to own an opportunity to help their society future to be better through education, particularly English teaching.

This study has provided clear empirical evidence that one of the motives motivating seven voluntary teachers of English to teach at pesantren was due to their wish to stay in touch with education or school. Lortie (1975) argued that connection to education and school had get people to keep teaching in schools or other educational institutions. Another finding in our study was that the teachers reported that they kept joining the program regardless no salary they earned from the pesantren. They needed English teachers and they were keen to keep teaching at the pesantren after understanding the situation and condition, the pesantren as a disadvantaged and poor institution. Nilan (2007) said that Indonesian pesantrens were typically disadvantaged.

Conclusion

This study intended to explore what motives possessed by voluntary teachers of English to teach at one *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in Jambi, Indonesia. The investigation focused on the implicit and explicit motives to teaching and the motives keeping the commitment of the teachers of English to teaching and to stay in the profession. The findings of this study indicated that seven female voluntary teachers of English implicit and explicit motives to teach English at the *pesantren* were triggered by (1) interpersonal motives, (2) community service motives, (3) the continuation motives, and (4) non-salary motives. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that while *pesantrens* are characteristically disadvantaged and santri live in a disciplined condition, they remain exist up to now and santri with the support of their family still trust *pesantren* as a countable and inexpensive educational institution. One of the main and important elements that might keep *pesantrens* active is the presence of voluntary teachers who still teach despite the fact that there is low or no salary as well as a bad facility. Additionally, many people including fresh graduates might voluntarily participate and contribute to the establishment of *pesantren*, especially in rural and remote as well as poor areas.

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