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Pets: Theological Dilemmas and Spatial Accommodation Among Turkish-Speaking Migrants in the Northwest of England

Evcil Hayvanlar: İngiltere'nin Kuzeybatısında Yaşayan Türkçe Konuşan Göçmenlerde Teolojik İkilemler ve Dini Mekân Yapma Pratikleri

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Abstract

Based on individual interviews in the Northwest of England, this article examines how Turkish-speaking (TS) migrants experience pet practices. Building on approaches to space-making practices, as well as studies on everyday lived religion, this article explores how TS migrants constitute pet practices within their understanding of Islam and the context in where they live. This article shifts the emphasis from the study of texts to the study of lived practices. This study explores how texts are employed in distinctive ways by individuals in everyday life. Additionally, it has been discussed that Muslims' lives cannot be reduced to text only. Instead, the text and the context mutually reconstitute individuals' everyday lives. TS migrants established a way of life by taking seriously into account the mutual relationships between the text and the context. They lived in a certain context without excluding the text. This study explored that their everyday lives are inspired by the text. Particularly, pet practices are chosen to demonstrate the negotiation between the text and the context. Despite the increase of pet practices among Muslims in Europe, including Britain, it is less researched. Examining the stories of six men in the UK who are mixed married, this article pushes further the discussions of Islamic views on dogs, by exploring the challenges that male migrants face theologically and socially, and strategically adapting to deal with unique situations and their everyday experiences. It reveals that mixed married TS migrants come across two main strategies to deal with this practice: convincing kids to avoid dog adoption or creating religious spaces in the home sphere by not allowing dogs to enter certain rooms.

Key Words: Everyday Religion, Turkish-Speaking Migrants, Pet Practices.

Öz

Makalede, İngiltere'nin kuzeybatısındaki Türkçe Konuşan (TK) göçmenler tarafından evcil hayvan sahiplenme eylemini nasıl deneyimlediği, mülakatlardan toplanan materyaller üzerinden incelenmektedir. Mekân yapma teorisinin yanı sıra gündelik din üzerine yapılan çalışmaları temel alarak, TK göçmenlerinin İslam anlayışları ve yaşadıkları bağlam içinde evcil hayvan uygulamalarını nasıl oluşturdukları araştırılmıştır. Bu makale, odağını, metinlerin incelenmesinden yaşanmış pratiklerin incelenmesine kaydırmakta ve metinlerin günlük yaşamda bireyler tarafından farklı şekillerde nasıl uygulamaya konulduğunu araştırmaktadır. Ayrıca, Müslümanların hayatlarının sadece metne indirgenemeyeceği derinden tartışılmıştır. Metin ve bağlam karşılıklı olarak bireyin günlük yaşamını yeniden oluşturur. TK göçmenler, metin ve bağlam arasındaki karşılıklı ilişkileri (metni dışlamadan) ciddiye alarak bir yaşam biçimi oluşturmuşlardır. Özellikle evcil hayvan uygulamaları, metin ve bağlam arasındaki uzlaşmayı göstermek için seçilmiştir. İngiltere dahil olmak üzere Avrupa'daki Müslümanlar arasında evcil hayvan sahiplenmenin artmasına rağmen, günümüz dünyasında bu konu araştırmacılar tarafından yeterince araştırılmamaktadır. Bu çalışma Birleşik Krallıkta karma evli olan altı erkeğin hikayelerini araştırmış, erkek göçmenlerin teolojik ve sosyal olarak karşı karşıya kaldıkları zorlukları keşfederek onların günlük deneyimleriyle başa çıkmak için hangi tür strateji geliştirdiklerini incelenmiştir. Ayrıca, karma evli TK göçmenlerin iki ana stratejisini ortaya koymuştur. Bunlardan birincisi



çocukları köpek edinmekten vazgeçirmek, ikincisi ise köpeklerin belirli odalara girmesine izin vermeyerek ev alanında dini mekân yaratmak.

Anahtar kelimeler: Gündelik Din, Türkçe-Konuşan Göçmenler, Evde Hayvan Besleme.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to explore the negotiation of dog presence in houses among mixed-married Turkish-speaking (hereinafter referred to as TS) migrants in the context of everyday religious practices.¹ Correspondingly, this article also investigates how religion is constructed in different settings. Mixed-married TS male migrants were challenged by the demand of a dog (or a cat) at home by kids and spouses. Under the pressure of this demand, TS male migrants strategically created different everyday solutions.

In studying Muslim writings on dogs, a contradictory approach appeared. While the majority of scholars on Islam have presented dogs as unclean animals due to the saliva, modern academicians tended to present dogs at the highest level (Berglund, 2014, 545). However, the general attitude towards the dog is that Muslims do not admit dogs indoors. Keeping them as pets inside homes is not accepted in the understanding of Muslims on Islam. Despite what the text says about dogs' (un)cleanliness, there is a negative attitude toward dogs among Muslim communities. The reasons for these attitudes are attributed to the common perception. It has been believed that if a dog wanders by a praying Muslim, the prayer will be invalidated due to the dog's saliva (es-Serahsî, 2008, I, 94, 213).

Although this study's interest is not on historical or textual based, I have felt obliged to explain why Muslims are biased against dogs. It is not intended, therefore, to give critical comment on the status of dogs in Islam. This article's position is not to be judged based on the text. Instead, individuals' everyday experiences and their perception of dogs are prioritised in this article.

Despite the fact that pet practices among Muslims, particularly among mixed-married or interfaith married families are on the increase. Probably, it would be more common in the following years not only in European countries among Muslims but also in all other countries. The increase of dog adoption among Muslim families is becoming a major challenge to Muslim communities. However, scholars of Islam have largely overlooked animal practices from the lens of a social perspective. In this sense, articles and some other sources written on dogs within the Islam context in English and Turkish

¹ 'TS' refers to three ethnic groups who live in the UK: Turkish-Cypriots (Turks from Cyprus), Turks from mainland Turkey, and Kurds (Turkish passport-holders, Kurdish or Zaza-speaking from mainland Turkey) (King, et al., 2008, 425; Çoştu, 2018, 82-84).

languages are used in this study. Analysing Turkish and English articles enables me to see the gap in the literature. Therefore, initially, I provided the focus of the written sources to show the lack of individual perspective. Then, I attempted to fill the gap with this study. Therefore, this article aims to fill the gap in the literature that assesses the social perspective of pet practices from individual experiences. I place the individuals' pet practices within their social context by revealing their negotiations with families. Moreover, this article offers perhaps the first attempt in the examination of how mixed-married Muslims narrate and perform their relationships with animals at home.

I analyse pet practices under four main sections, excluding the introduction and the conclusion sections: theoretical framework, methodological approach, dog status in Islam, and pets practices in mixed-married TS families. In the first section, I determined the theoretical framework of this article. Everyday religion was chosen as the starting theory for this study. Spatial theory (Knott, 2005) and dwelling and crossing theory (Tweed, 2006) are employed as underpinning theories. The second section is on the methodological approach. Here, I have unpacked the employed method of this study. The third section examines the status of dog practices in Islam. This section plays a crucial role for this article. This is because all existing studies lack individual perspectives. Instead, the textual lens has been employed in other studies, unlike this article. Therefore, the originality of this article has been demonstrated in this section. More importantly, I will discuss the reasons for the negative view of dogs in Muslim society, including the majority of TS male migrant participants who are considered themselves as practising Muslims. It is important to note that I am not intended to go for an in-depth discussion on the validity or misunderstanding of the Islamic sources regarding dogs (Subaşı, 2011; Tlili, 2018, 43; El Fadl, 2004; Foltz, 2006; Waldau, 2013, 174; Rahman, 2017, 3; Bardakoğlu, 2002, 252). Instead, I directly focus on the general thoughts of Muslims, including TS migrants, towards dogs.

In the fourth section, which is the main body of this article, I explored the dog practices and experiences in relation to daily prayers. I explored that there are two TS family types (within six-interviewed participants) in terms of pet culture. On the one hand, some TS male migrants did not allow dogs at home due to the individual or religious reasons. In these families, I deeply discussed how Muslim male migrants convinced their wives and kids to avoid dog adoption. On the other hand, I will explore mixed-married TS families' dog adoption practices. I will analyse how these Muslim male migrants accommodate their beliefs and prayers at home where the dog is present and their attitudes towards dogs. As we shall see, I discuss how different individuals deployed different strategies, and how religion influenced these strategies, as religion is not separated from other aspects of everyday life. Instead, religion is lived in social life. TS migrants maintained their religious identities in the dog presence homes. This section is deeply examining the inflection of



social life on religious practices. In the end, in the conclusion of this article, I provide a general overview of pet practices in TS migrants.

1. Theoretical Framework

Inspired by the works of everyday religion scholars (Ammerman, 2007; 2020; McGuire, 2008; Knibbe & Kupari, 2020), Tweed (2006) on crossing and dwelling, and Knott (2005; 2007; 2008; 2016) on spatial theory, I determined to consider how Islam was reconstituted in TS migrants' homes, in where pets are present.

As the lived religion approach abandons text studies, it explores how religion is experienced and came into practice in different environments by individuals (McGuire, 2008). The abandoning of the textual lens as a starting point of research in favour of an emphasis on the individuals' practices promoted to explore religious practices from individual's perspective. Here, I moved the lens from text-based to individual-based. Through the everyday religion lens, without excluding the text from the scope of the study, I explored the inflection of the context to the application of the text. Text and the context both are in mutual relation. Individuals negotiate different aspects of life while applying the text. I am prioritising the experiences of people by privileging the everyday. In this study, I am looking at the actual lived experiences of TS migrants. As I demonstrated elsewhere (2021), however, the *reworked everyday religion theory* reaches beyond his three empirical cases, inviting application to other transnational religious practices, which are not studied from the individuals' lens. Instead of analysing recognisably religious practices (for instance, daily prayers) or a self-contained religious field as the focus of this study, through the everyday religion lens, I examined practices that are important in the lives of individuals in social places. The study of lived religion gives more weight to ordinary people as religious subjects. In this sense, everyday religion theory enables this study to explore individual pets' practices by prioritising everyday side instead of textual perspective. It is also important to emphasize that the text (Quran or Sunnah) also shapes the world that we live in and provide descriptive models for the construction of religious spaces (Blackburn, 2012, 151). While some TS migrants take seriously the influential religious text in their religious practices, others found a variety of tactics to overcome the demand of their kids by not allowing dogs inside homes.

Employing everyday religion theory provides important insights and brings its taken-for-granted aspects to attention. By utilising *modified everyday religion theory* (Çoştu, 2021), I directly focus on how TS migrants narrate and perform their relationships with animals at home. In this logic, I am not excluding text or Quran from the scope of everyday religion because Islam interconnects with the context. My argument is that interpretations of Islam are embedded in different aspects of their lives that are not explicitly religious. Through this study, I aim to show the engagement of Islam with these aspects and to bring to life the complex decision-making involved in adopting a pet. As pet practices are closely

associated with religious and cultural values, religion plays a vital role in many aspects of our everyday life. For example, religious and ethnic identity can dwell in a practice and can be displayed through it (Jeldtoft, 2011). How some TS migrants mark their religious beliefs through pet practices is the focus of my analysis in this study. Briefly, this scholarship examines dog practices in a migration context and everyday mixed-married family lives through religious space-making practices.

More importantly, by prioritising individuals over text, I look at religion through *individual's lens*. Therefore, through an individual's perspective, I reassess the already known and studied aspects of religion. For example, the status of dogs in Islam have been studied and well examined by scholars (Koşum, 2015; Keskin, 2019; Sulaiman, 2020; Demirel, 2014; Baysa, 2021; Tlili, 2018, 43; El Fadl, 2004; Foltz, 2006; Waldau, 2013, 174; Rahman, 2017, 3; Bardakoğlu, 2002, 252). In this study, I re-evaluate pet practices within the migration context through individual's perspective. Pet practices emerged because these practices play an important role in TS migrants' everyday lives. However, at the same time, these aspects of Islamic practices have been ignored and have not been studied the way this article does. Particularly, pet practices in Islam among migration context has never been studied through an individual's lens.

Along with this primary theory of everyday religion, in this article dwelling and crossing theory was also employed to explore the migration context of it. For Tweed (2006, 105), religious dwelling means finding a place for its continuity. Religion dwells in something and lives through that thing. It can be people, body, religious practices, food, idea, etc. Therefore, dwelling is not a one-time action (Çoştu, 2021). Instead, it is continuous. Religion dwells in pet practices and crosses the time from generation to generation. As Tweed (2006, 75) states, religion(s) helps individuals find a place of their own. This study explored how individuals created their religious spaces through pet practices.

In this article, I am looking at the dynamism of the operation of religion. For me, religion is fixed (dog's saliva is not clean) but the implementation of religion can change from context to context or person to person (Reinhart, 2020, 5, 6). For example, while a person adopts a cat to prevent dog adoption, others adopt a dog but limit its access to other rooms in the house for religious purposes. In this sense, the new context limits migrants' everyday home lives.

Above all, the people I examine and engage with are migrants. Therefore, migrants and their migratory experiences are the context in which they practice Islam. Religion helps migrants settle in the new land; simultaneously, migration influences religious practices. While for some individuals, the impact of migration on religion can be explicitly seen. For others, the impact of religion on their migrant status in terms of religious transformation to the next generations is profound and is explored in the pet practices (Jerolmack, 2007). This study examines how religious practices undergo changes in the context of migration and



how these alterations are both an effect of migration and a way of settling and 'dwelling' in the country of immigration. In this sense, migration and religion are in a mutual relationship. Both play a vital role in TS migrants' life. This is because kids' dog demand is due to the society where they live currently. TS migrants' everyday lives are inflected by the context and inspired by religion. The negotiation between the context and religion is under examination throughout this study.

2. Methodology

A qualitative research method was chosen to examine pet practices of mixed-married TS migrants in the UK. This methodological approach allows for the exploration of individuals' experiences, challenges, and dilemmas. The ethnographic research for this study was conducted for six months between March 2019 and August 2019 in the Northwest of England among TS migrants. Quotes in this article are those from six semi-structured interviews which were conducted with individuals, who are mixed-married families (Rapley, 2007). Although I did a total of thirty-two interviews, only six of them experienced pet practices. Therefore, this article is built on these six male migrants. In this sense, the material of this article does not represent the whole TS migrants. Instead, this article examines a specific group of people.

The main purpose of using the interview as a material collection method is to obtain insiders' views (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Sands et al. (2007, 354) define interviews as purposeful social (usually face-to-face) interactions and conversations. Drawing upon this understanding, the interviews I conducted with TS migrants in the Northwest of England provide an insight into their everyday religious experiences. They were asked basic questions pertaining to their migration experiences, religious lives in the UK, family, and social interactions with other TS migrants in the surrounding cities. Normally, I did not initiate questions about pet practices. However, in time, thanks to my methodological approach, I came across this everyday practice among TS migrants. At least, to some extent, some of them experienced the demand for a pet at home from their kids. Due to the pet practices, I probed for more information on whatever they emphasised within the everyday religion framework. Therefore, the topic of pet practices was unanticipated. The more passionately they talked about their pet adoption experiences, the more I realised the centrality of this issue to their lives as migrants. Therefore, the focus of the study was informed and driven by issues and themes that the participants in the interviews emphasised (Jawad & Elmalı-Karakaya, 2020).

All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. All interviews were held in Turkish. As a Turkish male researcher, I was able to carry out the interviews in Turkish. Due to confidentiality reason, quotes from interviews are my translation. I tried to minimise the loss of meaning in translation by closely reading and cross-referencing the

Turkish and the English versions of my transcriptions several times. To protect the interviewees' identities, I used pseudonyms instead of their actual names (Çoştu, 2016).

Now, I will begin with the general view of a dog as pets at homes in the Muslim world.

3. Discussions on the place of dogs in Islam

Many of the existing studies have discussed the experiences of pet practices without taking the negotiations between religion and pet adoption into account. TS migrants' everyday pet experiences are not static or fixed objects. However, this article evaluates pet practices as contextual. The inflection of the context on the understanding of the text will be broadly explored throughout this article.

Previous academic discussions of keeping dogs as pets inside homes fall short of accounting for the social aspects of life. Instead, all Islamic written sources on dogs endeavour to reconstitute the place of dogs in Islam (Subaşı, 2011; Tlili, 2018, 43; El Fadl, 2004; Foltz, 2006; Waldau, 2013, 174; Rahman, 2017, 3; Bardakoğlu, 2002, 252; Koşum, 2015; Keskin, 2019; Sulaiman, 2020; Demirel, 2014; Baysa, 2021). While some evaluated this matter from merely an Islamic law perspective, others seek to falsify the Muslim bias against dogs.

The impurity of dogs and keeping them as pets are not discussed from the social perspective. Therefore, this study is an original contribution to the literature, by reconstituting the negotiations of keeping dogs at home from individuals' lens and therefore, from a social perspective. All existing sources endeavoured to look at this social issue from the textual lens. On the contrary, without conveying negative or positive connotations, this study stays away from the textual lens. However, the text is not fully separated from the discussion of this article. Rather, the impurity of dogs is motivated by the religious understanding of individuals. Therefore, the text is still the major influential factor. However, the point that this article looks at this debate is still from a social perspective without excluding the importance of text from the scope. This study does not build a binary between textual versus non-textual lens (Çoştu, 2021). Rather, everyday experiences are motivated and inflected by the text. This study gives more weight on the individual's everyday experiences (Ammerman, 2020; Knibbe & Kupari, 2020). Above all, this study is the first attempt to fill the gap in the literature by looking at this everyday negotiation by prioritising social perspective over the textual lens.

For example, as Tlili (2018, 46) deeply discussed in her work, the presence of the dog in the *Ashab al-Kahf* narrative proves the longstanding human-canine bond. Tlili (2018, 43) rediscussed the place of dogs in Islam from the perspective of *Ashab al-Kahf*. In other words, she also looked at these pet practices from the textual perspective. The common assumption is that Islam is biased against dogs. However, according to Tlili (2018, 57), this prevalent view is an unjustified cultural prejudice instead of a scriptural mandate. By bringing



scriptural evidence, for Tlili (2018), the presence of the dog among humans in the cave is not a negative attitude. Even for *al-Jahiz*, who is an important *Mutazili* figure died in 869, dog is mentioned in the Quran with a group of *pious* people. For him, the dog was the fourth member of the group. Here, from the many animals, a dog was chosen the companion of these pious people. As Tlili states, some scholars (*Mufassir al-Zamakhshari*, d.1143; *al-Jahiz*, d. 869) reinforce their views on dog status in Islam through the Quranic position from Ashab al-Kahf narrative. In brief, Tlili (2018) provided a positive attitude toward dogs.

More importantly, some Western Muslim scholars, such as El Fadl, have shown signs of positive views on dog allowance inside homes. For example, Professor Khalid Abu El-Fadl, a prominent Western Islamic scholar in the field of Islamic law at the University of California, explicitly stated that dogs are welcomed inside houses. For him, the verdicts about dog adoption are not absolute rules in Islam. Instead, they are interpretations of hadiths. Therefore, the context played a crucial role in the interpretations of the rules. While Western Islamic scholars' approach with a positive attitude towards dog allowance at homes, scholars from Muslim populated countries keep the negative attitude as the conventional way. In this sense, the impact of time also can be seen in this example. Those who heavily rely on historical sources still believe in the same way as in the past, due to the modern world and the diasporic context others are obviously more open for alterations due to challenges they face everyday. The Western context triggers the new approaches for Muslims. These debates on home dogs also show the strong impact of the context on the scholars' views on this matter. Correspondingly, scholar Reinhart (2020) has demonstrated that the way Muslims interpret Islam is context-based. Obviously, the diasporic context pushes migrants to adopt a new form of everyday life. These new everyday lives require updated *fatwas*. Therefore, it is possible to see such updated *fatwas* from western scholars than from scholars of Muslim countries.

All in all, despite the common perception of the place of dogs in Islam, an increasing number of practising Muslims are keeping dogs as companion animals. El Fadl attempted to justify dogs as pure animals. El Fadl like other Islamic pro-dog scholars also approaches this matter from a textual perspective.

Additionally, Koşum (2015) analysed the reasons for Prophet Muhammad's command to kill dogs. He stated that this command was not a permanent order and cannot be applied everywhere. He emphasised that the order of killing dogs is context-based. For him, the reasons could be the health or safety of the public, not to annihilate the dogs from the city. Similarly, Demirel (2014, 78) analysed the killing dogs from *hadith* perspective. His general view on the status of dogs in Islam is that as Prophet Muhammad did not visit houses where dogs are present, Prophet Muhammad does not lean towards dog-owning for pleasure reasons. Demirel (2014, 101) stated that killing dogs in Prophet Muhammad time is for the mad dogs. As he stated that dogs in Prophet Muhammad time used to enter

masjids and houses and eat people's foods. This is because the house conditions were not like today's houses. For example, the concept of a door is not as same as today's doors. Therefore, due to the context, killing dogs' rulings may be valid in its context but not acceptable everywhere and every time (Demirel, 2014, 80). According to Demirel (2014), verdicts can change from time to time and place to place.

Keskin (2019) also reviewed the dog's status in Islam from a textual perspective. Keskin stated that apart from guarding and hunting reasons, owning dogs is welcomed in Islam. For him, Prophet Muhammad ordered Muslims to look after dogs in the cities. Dogs lived in the cities as part of everyday life (Keskin, 2019, 111). However, Keskin (2019, 109) has not discussed the presence of dogs inside homes. For him, in certain times, dogs are ordered to be killed due to the reasons of security and health of the public (Keskin, 2019, 112).

Moreover, Sulaiman (2020) discussed the Islamic rulings on touching dogs after ablution, dog trades, killing dogs, the relation between the praying place and dogs, and the purification of saliva via soap instead of soil. He comparatively analysed the two opposing views of the anti-dogs and pro-dogs on owning a dog. He concluded that it is permissible to own a dog for the purpose of security, hunting, or farming as long as the dog does not share the house with the owner due to the dog's saliva, which is accepted as impure and may nullify the prayers. For him, as long as a person does not come into contact with the dog's saliva, it is not forbidden to own a dog in Islam. Therefore, in his work, he tried to answer the common question of 'is it permissible to keep a dog as practicing Muslims?'. He concluded that owning a dog is not haram, though keeping a dog in the house is not hygienic. Sulaiman (2020) like other scholars also provided suggestions on how to manage a dog's saliva. His suggestions are directly based on the text. For example, according to Sulaiman (2020, 46), in the view of Malik, dogs are pure, including their saliva. However, for Shaafi', the dog (even its hair) and its saliva are impure. Moreover, in the view of Hanifah, dogs' hairs are pure but not saliva. Therefore, the commonly accepted view among Muslims is that the saliva of a dog is unclean. Sulaiman (2020) does not accept Shaafi's view on this matter. This is because Prophet granted Muslims to own a dog for hunting, herding, and farming. Therefore, avoiding touching is not possible while keeping a dog for useful reasons. For example, when the dog catches the prey with his mouth, the saliva is touched the prey as well. As long as the saliva is cleaned from the prey, it can be eaten. Probably, due to the germs and other hygienic reasons, Prophet asked Muslims to wash it several times when the saliva is touched. In other words, the impurity is not in the dog, instead, it is in its saliva.

The reason for the negative attitude toward dogs is that many *hadiths* warn Muslims about touching dogs. Ironically, while pro-dog scholars brought to the fore the narratives from Prophet's companions about the habits of keeping animals for farming or fun



purposes and famous hadith on the forgiven prostitute [‘a prostitute was forgiven by Allah, because, passing by a panting dog near a well and seeing that the dog was about to die of thirst, she took off her shoe, and tying it with her head-cover she drew out some water for it so, Allah forgave her because of that’ (al-Bukhārī, 1987, Hadith, 538)], anti-dogs scholars mainly focused on *hadiths* on the impurity of dogs and the angel narrative (Jibril: we do not enter a place in which there is a picture or a dog.). This narrative establishes an understanding of angels those who do not visit a dog’s presence place.

Additionally, the negative image of dogs in modern Muslim lives is discussed in the work of Berglund (2014) on dog status in Islam. For example, in Pakistan culture, dogs have been used as a provocation material (Berglund, 2014, 555). For this reason, former Pakistani president Parvez Musharraf revealed photos of holding dogs in his arms. He wanted to break Muslim taboos and show the influence of western values. Being photographed with companion dogs provoked his Muslim citizens. Being photographed with cats or other animals would not cause the same result as dogs. This is because dogs are considered as unclean and should not be kept as companion animals inside houses.

In the above-listed studies, only Baysa (2021) focused on the factors that motivate pet adoption. Therefore, his focus was elsewhere, such as socio-economic conditions of pet owners or the effect of individuality on pet adoption etc. (Baysa, 2021, 244). According to him, the significant increase of vet hospitals in Muslim countries in recent years proves the increase of pet adoptions (Baysa, 2021, 236). Therefore, research on pet practices is going to be a tempting topic in the near future. Additionally, although Baysa invites researchers to focus on this topic, he still asks new researchers to examine it from a textual perspective. Even his invitation shows that this present article is going to first in its field. This is because this article explores pet practices from a social lens instead of a textual perspective without building a binary between text versus social lens.

All in all, the general assumption is that Muslims have a negative view of dogs as home pets (Mikhail, 2022; Tlili, 2018). Muslims pray five times a day in clean places. The cleanliness of the prayer place is one of the requirements before starting the daily prayer. According to es-Serahsî (2008, I, 94, 213), a prominent well-accepted Islamic scholar, it has been accepted that a dog’s body is considered impure. It has been believed that saliva voids a Muslim’s prayer (El Fadl, 2004). In case the dog touches the prayer rug or the person with its saliva, there is the avowed that the person is required to clean the dog’s saliva due to the obligatory ritual purity (El Fadl, 2004). Moreover, because the dog is perceived as an impure animal, if a dog passes in front of prayers, it will nullify the prayer (El Fadl, 2004). Thereby, the presence of a dog in such places where Muslims pray is considered not clean enough due to the possibility of a dog’s saliva (El Fadl, 2004; Subaşı, 2011). If a dog licks a container, the container must be washed three or seven times before using. This is because dogs’ saliva is a contaminant. Therefore, this approach makes the touching of a dog an abomination. In

other words, it is perceived as haram or forbidden in the eyes of Muslims. Because of this understanding, physical contact with dogs is avoided by many practising Sunni Muslims. As a result, Muslims who pray at home usually refrained from having a dog inside their homes.

More importantly, these above-mentioned Muslims' perceptions of dogs are not different in the Turkish context. In the eyes of many participants of TS migrants, dogs are perceived as unclean animals. Its presence at home makes the place unclean. The obligatory ritual purity for prayer caused a negative attitude towards keeping a dog inside homes. Nonetheless, the belief that dogs are impure animals has been encoded in many people's religious consciousness in Turkey and the TS migrants in the UK (Subaşı, 2011). Therefore, the negative stereotype about dogs as pets influenced Turkish people to refrain from having them inside homes. In regard to this, Mehmet, a second-generation TS male who married a British, stated his concerns about religious prayers and impurity of the dog's saliva as follows:

But, now, for example, I walk in the town with my kids. My kids are really afraid of dogs. When a dog passes by me, due to obsessions, I change my jeans when I arrive home.... If a dog touches me, I have to change my clothes. I learned that in Hanefi [school of thought] ilmihal, if a dog's tongue touches, then I should renew my ablution [Wudu].

Like Mehmet, most of the TS male migrants whom I interviewed had a similarly negative view towards dogs' saliva. Having a dog inside homes causes troubles for those who believe dog's saliva nullifies prayer and cleanness of their clothes. Attributable to this notion of impurity of dog's saliva paved the way for the TS migrants to strategically find a solution on not to have a dog inside their homes, regardless of what the family members think.

Apart from the physical impurity of the dog's saliva, the negative attitudes towards dogs as *moral* impurity relies on a hadith. According to the hadith, Allah's mercy and angels do not enter a home where there is a dog in it (El Fadl, 2004). Relying on my fieldnotes, I heard many times this hadith narrative from my TS male participants. These negative attitudes towards dogs are usually referred to as Sunnah literature in Islam (El Fadl, 2004). However, drawing from El Fadl (2004), the study on dogs in the Islamic tradition, the Quran does not condemn dogs as impure or evil.

Additionally, the other cultural bias against dogs is the entrance of dogs into homes is perceived as the imitation of the Western culture in the Muslim world (Subaşı, 2011, 15). All in all, this negative view of dogs which paves the way for *not* 'wanting' to allow any dogs to enter inside homes emerged in many mixed-married TS migrant's families lives.

All in all, despite the two opposite approaches to this issue, dog adoption is dramatically increasing among Muslim families. Hence, the below part will discuss how



men cope with their unique situations in the light of the challenges they face in their everyday lives. Now, I will discuss how TS male migrants managed to keep (or kept away) a dog inside their homes.

4. The Challenges of Pet Practices: The Production of Religious Space

Zekeriya has two kids and is married to a British spouse. He believes that dogs should not live in homes where Muslim families reside. Accordingly, regardless of what his wife or son wants, he strategically convinced his son not to have a dog inside the house. Zekeriya anticipated that his son will not get the responsibility of the dog if they own one. As Zekeriya did not want a dog at the very beginning due to religious, health, and cultural reasons, he conferred to his son the dog's responsibility of taking it for a walk. To do this, before having a dog, he bought a dog leash and asked his son to take the leash for a walk for only one weak experience; then he is ready to adopt a dog for his son. Inevitably, Zekeriya knew that his son will refuse this responsibility. Therefore, Zekeriya strategically turned his son from his dog demand. Zekeriya did not insist on trying a religious explanation of why they cannot adopt a dog and live with it in the same house. Because of his son's age, he would not understand a religious explanation. Instead of a verbal explanation, Zekeriya made his son change his dog demand. Zekeriya stated his dog experience as follows:

When my son wanted to adopt a dog, I told him that according to our religion, we could not keep a dog inside our house. Later, when he increased the pressure on me, I gave him a dog leash. Every morning at 5 a.m. I asked him to take this leash for a walk for half an hour. He said no, 'I could not go'. Then I asked him 'can you take the dog every day at five-ish (p.m.) for a walk in our neighbourhood, even in the winter'. He again refused. Thus, I turned him from his dog demand. Actually, I can have a dog if I will have a big backyard. However, as it is not (religiously) permissible to keep a dog inside homes, I can't at this current (house) situation.

As seen in this narrative, Zekeriya likes dogs. However, for him keeping the dog inside his house is the problem. Zekeriya, like other Muslims believe the dog is impure. So, it should not enter the house. Zekeriya also referred to the famous 'angel or dog' hadith. According to the hadith, as mentioned earlier, angels do not enter a dog's presence place. This religious understating shaped Zekeriya's everyday religious house life. For him, if he had a big garden, he was ready to get a dog.

Zekeriya's practical approach to this matter shows that he assigns significance to his son and religion. For him, negotiation is the best method. As shown in the interview quote, Zekeriya allowed his son to decide the last decision of dog adoption. As long as his son takes responsibility for the dog care, Zekeriya was ready to adopt.

Nurullah had similar experiences in regard to the pets issue. However, he had a different solution for the demand of his kids. He stated that his kids love dogs. His mother-in-law (British family) has dogs in her house. The current popularity of dog ownership is very high in the UK. Therefore, his kids see having a dog inside the house as a very normal lifestyle. Thus, his kids also wanted the same. However, due to religious reasons, Nurullah could not accept this. This is because prayers play such a vital role in his everyday life, given that he identifies himself as a religious person. At the same time, he knew that he cannot take any longer the pressure of his kids. As Nurullah stated that he understood that he could not convince his family of their dog demand, he directly adopted a cat. The main reason for him to have the cat get his kids busy with the cat and prevented any attempt of a dog demand. He strategically succeeds and kept his house away from a dog with the help of a cat. As Nurullah said: 'We have certain rules in our house. A dog will not enter.... We do not have Christmas celebrations or keeping a dog home as pets.' Cat is considered a clean animal in the Muslim world. So, for Nurullah, due to the common pet culture in British society, he preferred a cat over a dog due to his religious belief. He prays at home, and he wants to keep his home ritually pure by avoiding dog adoption.

Through having a cat instead of a dog, a person's religious identity becomes visible. As Bender stated that 'practice can signal interest in the things religious people do' (2012, 273). For Nurullah, religion dwelled in the cat, displayed through it (Tweed, 2006). Moreover, through this cat and the reason for its adoption, Nurullah transferred his religion to the later generation. Therefore, the cat becomes a tool for Nurullah to transmit his religion to his kids. As Nurullah stated that cat adoption over a dog is for religious reasons.

The dog demand by children proves that lived religious practices do not only pertain to individuals, instead, as this demand comes from interaction with others in schools or other shared platforms, people all together construct the religious world. TS migrants do not live the religion as individuals in an untouched space. Instead, religious practices are always in mutual relations with the social context where the TS migrants live. The social context is restricting the migrants' home lives. Religion is inflected by the context, and it also impacts the social context. While social context pushes the religious space into certain places within the house, religion also reconstitutes its shape and space. Religion does not fade away. Instead, it reforms itself. Sometimes, it could be less visible, sometimes, it could be overtly visible but in different forms. However, it is always there. The important point is to ask the correct question while looking for religion in social spaces. Correspondingly, religion played a very important role in Nurullah's household. Looking at this everyday life from an outside perspective could avoid noticing this very interactive religious practice. Cat adoption in his life is strongly religiously motivated. The negotiation between religion and social aspects of life is in Nurullah's everyday life. By asking the right question during the interview, the cat adoption can show the religious side of his life. Therefore, Nurullah's



religious life is saved thanks to this cat. With this cat, he made his kids happy and kept his house religiously clean. This is because cats are accepted clean animals unlike dogs.

Additionally, the religious visibility in Nurullah's life can be seen for those who are aware of the place of dogs in Islam. Otherwise, cats in these houses can be seen merely as a pet practice. However, through this practice, religion is an ongoing practice among TS migrants' everyday lives.

On the other hand, another migrant, Cemal, convinced his wife to keep the dog away from his house. Cemal is married to a British. He does not practice daily prayers. In this sense, the notion of the impurity of a dog in terms of religious perspective does not matter for him. However, Cemal never had a dog in his life until his marriage to a British. Regardless of what religion indicates, culturally and personally, Cemal could not get along with a dog in the same house. Cemal believes that having a dog at home in British culture is a common custom. Cemal told his story about his dog experience in his home as follows:

In this country, it is normal to see people who have a dog at home and abnormal to not have a dog. My wife had a dog [before the marriage]. The first day in her house, the dog really disturbed me. The dog wanted to play with me. So, he always was around me. When my wife noticed my unhappy situation that I do not like being around dogs, she took the dog out of the house in order to not lose me.

Cemal's personal choice is to keep distance from dogs. He could not get along with the dog, regardless of the dog's friendly approach to him. Thereby, even though religion does not play crucial role in Cemal's everyday life, his personal choice led his wife to find for the dog another home. As shown in the above quote from Cemal, he did not talk about religious reasons. However, he experienced the dog presence house atmosphere and the effects of migration on his everyday life.

Another example is about how Kamil, a taxi driver, finds a practical solution in terms of the dog and his daily prayers at home. In Kamil's life, praying is important even though he does not pray five times a day, he prays when he wakes up before leaving the house. Kamil earned recognition and also recognised the demand of his family, despite the fact that in his understanding of Islam, dogs should not reside in the house.

As he stated that

I pray every day at home. My wife and my daughter (7-year-old) see me when I pray. My daughter learns the Islamic rituals by imitating me.... To be honest, I like dogs, animals. However, I did not want the dog. My daughter insisted on dog adoption. Then, we got her a dog. First two weeks she enjoyed the dog. But now my daughter does not give a flying fudge. My wife likes dogs as well. I put a gate at the stairs. I can show you the photo of the gate. When my dog goes upstairs, he can go up until the gate. But, he cannot pass from the gate. Because I pray in my house. I pray. The dog cannot pass. I paid attention to this. We

did a fight because of the prayer. The second day, my wife bought the gate. She bought it because she knew my situation. Because I pray in my bedroom. Before I leave home, yes, I do not pray five times a day, but, at least I pray before I leave my home. I have a prayer rug at home. The dog cannot enter in my bedroom. It is not possible that the dog can go upstairs.

As seen in Kamil's everyday life experience about having a dog at home, he also believes the presence of a dog at the place where he prays is not compatible. Simply because he believes that a dog will nullify his prayer. His saliva will disturb him. Moreover, let alone, he also does not allow the dog where he sleeps. For him, a dog is an impure pet, but for the sake of his daughter and his wife he accommodates the dog's place inside the home in certain conditions. The gate is the solution in Kamil's everyday religious practice. As Kamil says before he goes downstairs where the dog is living, he wakes up and takes his shower, and prays with his clean clothes. Because if he went to the entrance floor, the dog probably would touch his clothes. To prevent such an incident, he took his precaution by buying a gate. So, his dog cannot go upstairs. In doing so, the first-floor room (bedroom) remains clean. His dog can hang out on the ground floor. Additionally, Kamil also accepts that he also likes dogs. He adjusts his life in the dog-presence house. Even though his child kept enjoying being with the dog first two-week, at later times, Kamil did not keep the dog away from his house. He kept the dog and made his own religious space in the house. Therefore, the production of religious space in TS migrants' houses is important. Even though having a companion dog in the house may not mark them as Muslim, religious space-making practices do.

Correspondingly, Knott's spatial theory is useful here in understanding the space-making practices of TS migrants in diaspora (2016). Pet practices shape migrants' everyday religious experiences. Their local understanding of Islam guides their everyday lives. It is not only the text (Quran and Sunnah) that guides their everyday lives, but also through the context. The local understanding of Islam is inspired by the context. Therefore, many other factors influence individuals' religious lives. This is because Islam is lived within a context. The local conditions inevitably play their role while the text is applied. Even though some basic form remains stable (such as a dog's saliva is commonly accepted as unclean and nullifies the prayer), the daily worship is locally inflected. In the houses where a dog is present, TS migrants are forced to make religious spaces. These forms of religious spaces are localised expressions of Islamic identity. The solutions and practices that TS migrants created are due to the context of local circumstances, needs, and religious and social concerns. I can say that for TS migrants the content and application of the text are locally determined. Due to the pet practices, individuals built their own religious spaces.

Individuals did not just abandon the prayer or kids' dog demands. Instead, they strategically built religious spaces within the dog presence house or did not allow a dog to enter the house. Therefore, individuals practise Islam within the context. Inevitably, the



context impacted the practice. It impacted individuals' everyday life by restricting individuals' religious spaces. In other words, the new lifestyle enabled migrants to make their own religious spaces. More important, the way that individuals make their own religious spaces shows the negotiation between the text and the context. None of them are abandoned from everyday life. This is because text and the context are not two contracting entities. Religion is lived through the context even though the context may change from time to time or place to place. For example, due to the migration context, individuals accepted dog inside the house even though they still believe that dog is not a clean animal. Religion also impacted the context. Due to religious understandings, individuals did not allow dogs in certain places in the house. Therefore, religion makes borders in the household by drawing boundaries between the prayer room and the dog. So, individuals accommodated daily prayers within the same house without excluding dogs or the prayers. They situated their old habits with the new ones.

It is also important to mention that this article does not have the tendency to separate the space of religion from so-called non-religion. Instead, as it has been articulated throughout this article, space production is motivated and inflected by religion. Instead of looking at such everyday practices from the lens of religious versus non-religious space, I assert that I analysed the everyday religious practices by crossing the boundaries between religion and non-religion. While religion is lived through the context. The context or (so-called secular) non-religious space is motivated by the religion. Therefore, through these pet practices, I have shown that homes are not secular or non-religious spaces. In other words, religious spaces are not only restricted to mosques. Rather, individuals can build their own private religious spaces wherever they want. In this sense, religion moves with individuals from space to space.

Moreover, as Smith stated, 'human beings are not placed, they bring place into being' (cited in Knott 2007, 54). Here, the person, Kamil, is the producer of the space. Through the creative process, people can produce meaningful places where they live. Religion attributes a new meaning that gives the space production its character (Knott, 2007, 52).

Similarly, Metin had the same experience as Kamil. Metin has two daughters. Due to his daughters' desires, he could not resist their pressure. Although he had to accept the dog's presence in his house, he still openly articulated his negative view of dogs. For Metin likewise Kamil, the solution was 'the gate', which keeps the dog out of the room, where they perform their daily prayers.

No one can enter my house with shoes. However, we have a *dirty* dog at home but... the dog cannot enter my bedroom. Did you understand? I do not like it. I have a gate in my room's door. My children wanted the dog. I never want a dog. Homes are not for dogs... as long as the dog does not enter into my room, I acknowledged... the reason for having the dog is that they [British people] lived with dogs at home from childhood. The dog

always was in their lives. Actually, dogs are really loyal... we have a dog, it is adorable. As long as it does not come near to me whatever it does, it is free.

Metin strongly believes that dogs are not clean. Due to this belief, he had to restrict himself to pray only in his bedroom. He had to put the gate to prevent the dog's entrance into his bedroom. As Knott (2016) noted that migrants develop effective techniques to fit into the new land, in Metin's life the gate plays this role. Metin like other migrants, similarly, bought a gate for his house and kept active his religious practices in the dog presence house. However, the dog pushed Metin's prayer place in a certain room. Dog limited Metin's religious spaces. The location of religion in his place has dwelled in non-dog places (Knott, 2016). Here, the dog can be central in constituting religious space. In this sense, the limitations of the context shaped migrants' living religious practices (Knott, 2016, 17). Space is enmeshed in everyday practice (Knott, 2008, 12). Metin created a dog-free sphere where he can forge a connection with religion. He reproduced familiar structures, practices, and spaces in diaspora (Knott, 2016, 1). For him, caring for prayers require space.

Metin had to accommodate his religious prayers and his dog's presence in the same house. In this sense, people migrate and settle in the new context. Moving to a new country alters individuals' relationships with things and places. Migrants revise their perspective on things and places (Knott, 2016, 1). Building a place where Metin can pray in the house is a form of revision in migrants' everyday lives.

Through these practices, Islam becomes a visible practice. Kids can learn Islam through the dog-free zones inside houses. At least, the way that fathers organise the house also shows that something different is going on in the house. Fathers' reactions towards dogs create an image of religion in kids' minds. Religion is dwelled in the dog-free room. For migrants, this religious space enables them to claim a connection to their homeland. It is the space that TS migrants dwelled in and find a familiar place. In order to not to become out of place at homes, migrants reproduced their own familiar religious places. These religious practices clearly demonstrate that space makings are constantly negotiated rather than fixed. With new environments, religious spaces can move and alter.

All in all, the quotidian home-making practices in homes are informed by religious beliefs, norms, and values. Individuals cope with their condition in religious place-making practices. Ostensibly, it is reflected and informed 'by religious beliefs, norms, and values' (Knott, 2016, 2). Religious 'practices constitute and shape private and public spaces, as well as themselves, being informed by the contexts and places in which they are enacted' (Knott, 2016, 3). This shows the mutual relationship between practices and their places. Individuals have the agency to reshape the place in favour of religious practices.

Practising religion and engagement with dogs in the same house are complementary rather than contradictory from the lens of individuals. Through this approach, TS migrants



feel more comfortable being Muslim in the home. Engaging their religious practices with the places where they live enabled TS migrants to create a new place of belonging. Through religious space-making practices, TS migrants are also 'placing' their identities by dwelling in space (Ehrkamp, 2005, 346). This is because religion travels through migrants and dwells in them in their places of settlement (Knott, 2016, 6). TS migrants look for recognition and a space where they can express their religious identity. As Ehrkamp stated that transnational practices facilitate new places of belonging that enable migrants to engage with the new complexity (2005). The attachments are not fixed nor static. Instead, it is very much dynamic and open for alteration through the new consequences.

Briefly, religious practices assist TS migrants to make sense of their resettlement, force them to create new and alternative spaces. These religious space-making practices show that my participants are capable of adapting to new contexts and conditions (Knott, 2016, 17). Despite the limitation of the context, they develop effective tactics by challenging the context.

Conclusion

This research has focused on pet practices among mixed-married Turkish-speaking migrants in the Northwest of England. This present study has assessed the Islamic view on pet practices. Despite the negative attitude toward dogs among Muslims, some mixed-married TS migrants adopted dogs. However, this dog adoption put them in a theological dilemma. In addition to the long theological debates and discussions, it is always important to look at this social everyday practice to understand their everyday lives, to examine the social and religious challenges they face at home, as well as the techniques migrants created to overcome the religious dilemma. Those who owned a dog in the same house where they live remained practising daily prayers. Thus, the negotiation between daily prayers and dog presence in the same place among TS migrants is explored.

This study has revealed that pet practices are overlooked and have not been studied from the social lens. Rather, it has been widely studied from a textual perspective. Therefore, the object of this article is taken for granted in the existing studies. Further, Muslim scholars should not act as if these practices are not happening. Instead, despite Muslims' negative attitude about dog adoption, it is in practice even among Muslim families.

The present study also reveals that throughout this variety of examples I found the influential connections between texts and religious practice in everyday life. Their understandings of dogs are always religiously mediated. Examining their relations with dogs provide a window into how people implement their Islamic understanding. Their attitude towards dogs is obviously religiously constituted. Another main conclusion of this article is also about the influence of hadith on TS migrants' everyday lives. Despite being

outside the Quran, practices that rely on hadith are found in everyday lived Islam. While in the attempt to justify their everyday actions, TS migrants directly keep the reference to hadith. From these interview quotes, I can say that these TS migrants were instructed by reference to a second scriptural source of authority, namely *hadith*.

While these pet practices have generated rich data, the findings from the everyday lives of mixed-married TS males cannot be taken to be representative of the experience of all mixed-married Muslim or TS migrants. The core intention of this article was to document the pet experiences of the TS males in relation to dogs. Dogs are considered religiously impure and dirty animals in Muslim societies. Specifically, the sight of a dog during the daily prayers is viewed as nullifying supplications. Therefore, the general understanding among Muslims is that the issues of the impurity of dogs and having them as pets inside homes are incompatible. This pre-existing bias against dogs is not a new phenomenon in the Muslim world, including TS migrants. This notion of impurity of dogs positioned TS migrants with a prejudice standpoint towards dogs at home. Accordingly, while some TS male migrants strategically keep the dog away from their homes even though what their kids wanted, on the other hand, others had to own a dog for the sake of their kids but in certain conditions. The main condition is that they restricted dogs in certain places in the house. As long as, the dog does not enter where the male TS migrants perform the prayers, the dog can stay inside the home but in restricted rooms. To overcome the dilemma of having a dog and praying in the same house, they relocate their prayer places within this restriction. Therefore, in addition to making private spaces to acquire rituals, such dog-free places provided an opportunity to mark Islam and transmit embodied religion to later generations through such restrictions. Moreover, TS migrants employ tools (leash) to challenge the dog demands, or by building alternative options (cat adoption). Migrants negotiate spatial religious production in everyday life. Religious practices contribute the settlement process by overcoming some struggles that TS migrants came across. Through such demand of religious practices, TS migrants claim for recognition and create tactical approach by religious space-making.

Examining animal practices and attitudes can thus be a window into how migrants reconstitute their practices. The examples of this article show that in the diaspora, TS migrants sustain and transmit practices of the homeland, involving the construction of religious spaces. Religion exists and expresses itself through religious space-making practices. It generates, alters, and reproduces the space by converting it from a social place to a religious space. Religion crosses borders and dwells itself in the new context. In the lives of my participants, prayer generates a new space production. Lived Islam is displayed to later generations through religious space-making practices. By banning dogs from certain places where TS migrants locate them as prayer room, a dog-free room, transmit Islam to kids. Even though dogs are believed to be not belonged to homes, the way that TS



migrants organise the house for dog and for the prayer place demonstrates the influence of Islam in the lives of TS migrants. It also shows the negotiations of the application of Islam and the context (diaspora).

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