

## EXAMINING THE RELIGIOUS AND ETHNO-CULTURAL PRACTICES OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF SOLIDARITY NETWORKS: THE CASE OF SENEGALESE MOURIDES IN İSTANBUL<sup>1</sup>

### GÖÇMENLERİN DİNİ VE ETNO-KÜLTÜREL PRATİKLERİNİN DAYANIŞMA AĞLARI ÇERÇEVESİNDE İNCELENMESİ: İSTANBUL'DAKİ SENEGALLİ MÜRİDİLER ÖRNEĞİ

Yıl 2, Sayı 2, ss.51-68.

Year 2, Issue 2, pp.51-68.

Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi

Article Type: Research Article

Geliş Tarihi: 25.06.2022

Submitted: 25.06.2022

Kabul Tarihi: 17.07.2022

Accepted: 17.07.2022

#### Atf Bilgisi / Reference Information

Koç, H. İ. & Göker, G. (2022). Examining the Religious and Ethno-Cultural Practices of Immigrants in the Framework of Solidarity Networks: The Case of Senegalese Mourides in Istanbul, *Africana-İnönü Üniversitesi Uluslararası Afrika Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 2 (2) , 51-68.

#### Halil İbrahim KOÇ

Lecturer, İnönü University, Türkiye, halil.ibrahim.koc01@gmail.com  
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9536-7627

#### Göksel GÖKER

Assoc. Prof., Fırat University Communication Faculty, Türkiye, gokselgoker@gmail.com  
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5794-1122

#### Abstract

This study discusses social networks that transform migration movements into specific experiences in terms of social, cultural, religious, and ethnocultural practices that emerge within these networks' frameworks. Social networks make these movements permanent while triggering and directing the decision to migrate. At the same time, these networks allow immigrant groups to maintain their ties with their home country and to find solutions to the problems they encounter in the receiving country within the framework of solidarity practices. In other words, these networks, which make the migration experience unique to migrant communities under the influence of various factors, reduce the disadvantages that arise in terms of the risks and costs of migration.

Additionally, social networks can be established on the axis of socio-cultural values that immigrants bring with them. In these networks, which are knitted based on relations such as family, kinship, and fellowship, religious and cultural identity are sometimes taken as a basis. It is possible to show the solidarity networks developed by the Senegalese immigrants who immigrated to Turkey for various reasons and live in Istanbul, especially within the Muridiyya tariqa, as an example of this situation. In this study, which forms part of a more comprehensive research problem, we examined how Senegalese Mourides made sense of these networks, which they developed and institutionalized in Istanbul, within the framework of their religious and ethnocultural practices.

As a result of the study, the adherence to the Muridiyya tariqa forms the basis for the solidarity, cooperation, and sense of togetherness for the Senegalese immigrants significantly; ethnocultural practices allow the continuation in the receiving country and the ties with the home country to be sustained, and it provides a significant basis for the reproduction of cultural identity by keeping the cultural memory alive. In addition, in the study, the Mouride identity and the sense of belonging allow us to establish the difference with the identification within the Senegalese immigrant community and develop the perception of micro identity. It is possible to suggest further studies that deal more comprehensively with the relation between religious

<sup>1</sup> This study uses the findings of the Ph.D. dissertation "Social Closure, Perception of Identity and Intercultural Communication in Immigration Experiences: Senegalese in Turkey" in Fırat University Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Communication Sciences.

networks and the immigration experience or that compare another African-origin religious network/community and the Senegalese Mouride tariqa in the context of migrations from sub-Saharan Africa to Turkey.

**Keywords:** Migration, Immigration, Religious Networks, Solidarity Networks, Senegal, Mouridism.

### Öz

Bu çalışmada göç hareketlerini sosyal ve kültürel açıdan özgül deneyime dönüştüren sosyal ağlar ile bu ağlar çerçevesinde ortaya çıkan dini ve etno-kültürel pratikler ele alınmıştır. Sosyal ağlar, göç etme kararını besleyerek ve yönlendirerek bu hareketlilikleri sürekli kılarken aynı zamanda göçmen grupların köken ülkeleriyle bağlarını korunmalarına ve hedef ülkede karşılaştıkları sorunlara dayanışma pratikleri çerçevesinde çözüm bulmalarına imkân tanımaktadır. Diğer bir ifadeyle çeşitli faktörlerin etkisiyle göç deneyimini göçmen topluluklara özel kılan bu ağlar, göçün taşıdığı risk ve maliyetler düzleminde ortaya çıkan dezavantajları azaltmaktadır.

Bununla beraber sosyal ağlar göçmenlerin beraberinde getirdikleri/taşıdıkları sosyo-kültürel değerler ekseninde kurulabilmektedir. Aile, akrabalık, hemşerilik vb. gibi ilişkiler temelinde örülen bu ağlarda, kimi zaman dini ve kültürel kimlik esas alınmaktadır. Çeşitli nedenlere dayalı olarak Türkiye'ye göç eden ve İstanbul'da yaşayan Senegalli göçmenlerin özellikle Müridiyye tarikatı içerisinde geliştirdikleri dayanışma ağlarını bu duruma örnek göstermek mümkündür. Biz daha kapsamlı bir araştırma problematiğinin parçasını oluşturan bu çalışmada Senegalli Müridilerin İstanbul'da geliştirdikleri ve kurumsallaştırdıkları bu ağları, dini ve etno-kültürel pratikleri çerçevesinde nasıl anlamlandırdıklarını inceledik. Ayrıca çalışmada bu dayanışma ağlarının Senegalli göçmenlerin kimlik algılarına ve köken ülkeleriyle olan ilişkilerine nasıl yansımaları belirlemeye çalıştık.

Çalışma sonucunda dini kolektivite bağlamında Müridiyye tarikatına bağlılığın Senegalli göçmenler arasında kurulan dayanışmaya, yardımlaşmaya ve birliktelik duygusuna temel oluşturduğunu; etno-kültürel pratiklerin hedef ülkede sürdürülmesine ve köken ülkeyle bağların sürekli kılınmasına olanak tanıdığını ve kültürel hafızanın canlı tutularak kültürel kimliğin yeniden üretilmesine önemli düzeyde zemin oluşturduğunu bulguladık. Ayrıca çalışmada, Müridilik kimliğinin ve aidiyet duygusunun Senegalli göçmen topluluğu içerisinde özdeşleşmeyle beraber farklılığı kurmaya olanak tanıdığını ve bu yüzden mikro kimlik algısını geliştirdiğini belirledik. Sahra altı Afrika'dan Türkiye'ye gerçekleşen göçler bağlamında dini ağlar ile göçmenlik deneyimi arasındaki ilişkililiği daha kapsamlı biçimde ele alan ya da diğer Afrika kökenli dini ağlar/topluluklar ile Senegalli Müridi tarikatı arasında karşılaştırma yapan başka çalışmalar önermek mümkündür.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Göç, Göçmenlik Deneyimi, Dini Ağlar, Dayanışma Ağları, Senegal, Müridilik.

### Extended Summary

Although the immigration experience is geographical mobility, reaching the host country turns into a social and cultural experience in the new social area and the new place. Factors such as the socio-cultural values of immigrants, a network of relations, individual characteristics, and the host society and the reflexes they developed for immigrants make this experience unique. For example, the immigration experiences of individuals who immigrated from African countries to Turkey will differ due to their ethnic, religious, and cultural identities.

One of the essential elements that differentiate the migration experience is social networks that eliminate or reduce the disadvantages of migration in different cases. Social networks make these movements permanent while triggering and directing the decision to migrate. At the same time, these networks allow immigrant groups to maintain their ties with their home country and to find solutions to the problems they encounter in the host country within the framework of solidarity practices. In other words, these networks, which make the migration experience unique to migrant communities under the influence of various factors, reduce the disadvantages that arise in terms of the risks and costs of migration. In this respect, the transnational social ties developed by immigrant individuals transform the immigration experience into a unique phenomenon.

Social networks can be established on the axis of socio-cultural values that immigrants bring with them. In these networks, which are knitted based on relations such as family, kinship, and fellowship, religious and cultural identity are sometimes taken as a basis. It is possible to show the solidarity networks developed by the Senegalese immigrants who immigrated to Turkey for various reasons and live in Istanbul, especially within the Muridiyya tariqa, as an example of this situation. In this study, which forms a part of a more comprehensive research problem, we tried to determine how the Senegalese immigrants living in Istanbul make sense of the institutionalization and solidarity networks they developed primarily within the

Muridiyya tariqa and how these solidarity networks are reflected in their perception of identity and their relations with the home country.

For this purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted with 37 Senegalese immigrants, twenty-eight men, and nine women residing in Istanbul within the scope of the study. In the field study carried out in August-October 2021, besides the in-depth interviews, the daily lives of the Senegalese immigrants and the Muridiyye meetings were examined by participant observation technique. The findings obtained during the research process were systematized and interpreted with religious and ethnocultural practices, solidarity, identity, and integration in this study.

As a result of the study, Senegalese immigrants, like many other immigrant groups, turn immigration into a group/community experience. Immigration has a devastating and isolating effect if experienced alone; for this reason, collective expertise is being built among immigrants, especially knitted with ethnocultural and religious ties. One of the most critical components of this experience is religion/religious collectivity. In addition, in the context of religious collectivity, adherence to the Muridiyya tariqa forms the basis of solidarity, cooperation, and a sense of togetherness for the Senegalese immigrants significantly. The fulfillment of religious requirements and worship/rituals in collective consciousness is a primary motivation for Senegalese immigrants; however, this collective experience is not only limited to religion but also forms the basis of social, cultural, and economic solidarity patterns. Therefore, in the context of immigration experience, religion, and religious associations correspond to more than religious feelings and practices and become a survival strategy for immigrant individuals.

According to the observations during the research process and the information from the Senegalese interviewees, ensuring the continuity of the tariqa, especially in the context of institutionalization, regardless of time and place, is vital in respect of religious -Mouridism- and maintaining a Mouride identity. Because the tariqa of the Dahira was created in the host country, while fulfilling the requirements of the followers of Cheikh Amadou Bamba, strengthening the sense of community and the awareness of being a devout Mouride, at the same time, plays a crucial role in maintaining the ties with the country of origin, keeping the cultural memory alive and building identity. The gathering of the followers on The Grand Magal celebrations or other important religious days and the continuation of the rituals they performed in Senegal in Turkey, keeping the Senegal-specific eating and drinking tradition alive seems to be very functional in keeping the religious and cultural memory alive, and in the continuity of the ties with the home country. In this context, the associations that started with religious purposes turn into a social network that expands to ethnocultural patterns, re-established relations with the home country, and solidarity strategies developed when encountering social problems.

Another result is that the Senegalese immigrants deal with their identity perceptions and ties of belonging in an intertwined manner. Accordingly, being Senegalese, being a Muslim, and being a Mouride are about a holistic collective consciousness, rather than expressing very different belongings, especially for immigrants. It shows that identity is understood by Senegalese Mouride immigrants within the framework of an interrelated pattern of belonging. From a broader perspective, the identity perceptions of the Mourides, such as being African or black, are much more in the background. While Mouridism expresses an identity based on identification, on the other hand, it also functions as a means of distinguishing itself from different Sufi tendencies such as Tijanism and emphasizing the difference. Therefore, micro-identity is an essential issue in the immigration experience regarding the perceived identity in a collectivity.

Social networks sometimes cause an ethnic, social, and cultural closure, and sometimes, they bring an effect that facilitates integration with the host society and culture. The emergence of either is not just about internal dynamics. As well as the internal dynamics of ethnic groups, the characteristics of the host society, and the criteria for evaluating immigrants determine cohesion or segregation. For example, the

perception and definition of immigrants from the Middle East in Turkey as "Syrian" or "Arab" and Senegalese immigrants often find their place in "African" or "Black" generalizations. Within the framework of the information and observations obtained from the fieldwork, the general and widespread opinion regarding the "African" immigrants is "positive" or "acceptable."

On the other hand, it is revealed by the statements of the interviewees and the observations that this community among Senegalese immigrants has functions that facilitate adaptation to the host society. In particular, the "religious" and "harmless/self-conscious" perceptions of Senegalese Mouride immigrants by the host society are effective in this situation. Considering the framework of institutionalized social networks, religious and ethnocultural networks facilitate adaptation to the host society in the example of Senegalese immigrants, in addition to many positive functions such as protecting ties with the home country, building identity, and developing solidarity patterns.

Based on the study, in the context of migrations from Sub-Saharan Africa to Turkey, other studies should be conducted that deal with the relationship between religious networks and the immigration experience in a more comprehensive way or make a comparison between other African-origin religious networks/communities and the Senegalese Mouride tariqa.

### Résumé Etendu

Bien que l'expérience d'immigration soit une mobilité géographique, l'arrivée dans le pays d'accueil se transforme en une expérience sociale et culturelle dans le nouvel espace social et le nouveau lieu. Des facteurs tels que les valeurs socioculturelles des immigrants, un réseau de relations, des caractéristiques individuelles, la société d'accueil et les réflexes qu'ils ont développés pour les immigrants rendent cette expérience unique. Par exemple, les expériences d'immigration des personnes qui ont immigré de pays africains en Turquie différeront en raison de leurs identités ethniques, religieuses et culturelles.

L'un des éléments essentiels qui différencient l'expérience migratoire est les réseaux sociaux qui éliminent ou réduisent les inconvénients de la migration dans différents cas. Les réseaux sociaux pérennisent ces déplacements tout en déclenchant et en orientant la décision de migrer. En même temps, ces réseaux permettent aux groupes d'immigrés de maintenir leurs liens avec leur pays d'origine et de trouver des solutions aux problèmes qu'ils rencontrent dans le pays d'accueil dans le cadre de pratiques de solidarité. En d'autres termes, ces réseaux, qui rendent l'expérience migratoire unique aux communautés migrantes sous l'influence de divers facteurs, réduisent les désavantages qui surviennent en termes de risques et de coûts de la migration. À cet égard, les liens sociaux transnationaux développés par les individus immigrés transforment l'expérience de l'immigration en un phénomène unique.

Les réseaux sociaux peuvent être établis sur l'axe des valeurs socioculturelles que les immigrants apportent avec eux. Dans ces réseaux tissés sur la base de relations telles que la famille, la parenté et la fraternité, l'identité religieuse et culturelle est parfois prise comme base. Il est possible de montrer les réseaux de solidarité développés par les immigrés Sénégalais qui ont immigré en Turquie pour diverses raisons et vivent à Istanbul, notamment au sein de la Secte Muridiyya, comme exemple de cette situation. Dans cette étude, qui s'inscrit dans une problématique de recherche plus globale, nous avons tenté de déterminer comment les immigrés Sénégalais vivant à Istanbul donnent un sens aux réseaux d'institutionnalisation et de solidarité qu'ils ont développé principalement au sein de la Secte Muridiyya et comment ces réseaux de solidarité se traduisent dans leur vie et leur perception de l'identité et leurs relations avec le pays d'origine.

À cet effet, dans le cadre de l'étude, des entretiens approfondis ont été menés auprès de 37 immigrés Sénégalais, vingt-huit hommes et neuf femmes résidant à Istanbul. Dans l'étude de terrain réalisée en août-

octobre 2021, outre les entretiens approfondis, la vie quotidienne des immigrants Sénégalais et les réunions Muridiyya ont été examinées par la technique d'observation participante. Dans cette étude, les résultats obtenus au cours du processus de recherche ont été systématisés et interprétés avec les pratiques religieuses et ethnoculturelles, tels que la solidarité, l'identité et l'intégration.

À la suite de l'étude, il en est conclu que les immigrants Sénégalais, comme de nombreux autres groupes d'immigrants, transforment l'immigration en une expérience du groupe/communauté. L'immigration a un effet dévastateur et isolant qui peut être inexpérimenté seul; pour cette raison, une expertise collective se construit chez les immigrants, notamment tissée de liens ethnoculturels et religieux. L'une des composantes les plus critiques de cette expérience est la religion/la collectivité religieuse. De plus, dans le contexte de la collectivité religieuse, l'adhésion à la Secte Muridiyya constitue la base de la solidarité, de la coopération et d'un sentiment d'unité pour les immigrants Sénégalais de manière significative. L'accomplissement des exigences religieuses et des cultes/rituels dans la conscience collective est une motivation primaire pour les immigrants Sénégalais; cependant, cette expérience collective ne se limite pas seulement à la religion mais forme également la base de modèles de solidarité sociale, culturelle et économique. Par conséquent, dans le contexte de l'expérience d'immigration, la religion et les associations religieuses correspondent à plus que des sentiments et des pratiques religieuses et deviennent une stratégie de survie pour les personnes immigrantes.

Selon les observations au cours du processus de recherche et les informations des interviewés Sénégalais, assurer la continuité de la Secte, en particulier dans le contexte de l'institutionnalisation, quels que soient le temps et le lieu, est vital dans le respect du -Disciple- religieux et le maintien d'une identité du disciple. Parce que la Secte de la Dahira a été créée dans le pays d'accueil, tout en répondant aux exigences des fidèles de Cheikh Amadou Bamba, le renforcement du sens communautaire et de la conscience d'être disciple pieux, en même temps, joue un rôle crucial dans le maintien des liens avec le pays d'origine, en gardant vivante la mémoire culturelle et en construisant l'identité. Le rassemblement des adeptes lors des célébrations du Grand Magal ou d'autres jours religieux importants et la poursuite des rituels qu'ils ont exécutés au Sénégal en Turquie, en gardant vivante la tradition de manger et de boire spécifique au Sénégal semble être très fonctionnel pour garder la mémoire religieuse et culturelle vivante, et dans la continuité des liens avec la patrie. Dans ce contexte, les associations à l'origine à vocation religieuse se transforment en un réseau social qui s'élargit à des schémas ethnoculturels, à des relations rétablies avec le pays d'origine et à des stratégies de solidarité développées face à des problèmes sociaux.

Un autre résultat est que les immigrants sénégalais traitent de manière imbriquée leurs perceptions identitaires et leurs liens d'appartenance. En conséquence, être sénégalais, être musulman et être disciple relèvent d'une conscience collective holistique, plutôt que d'exprimer des appartenances très différentes, en particulier pour les immigrants. Elle montre que l'identité est appréhendée par les disciples immigrants Sénégalais dans le cadre d'un schéma d'appartenance interdépendant. D'un point de vue plus large, les perceptions identitaires des disciples, comme être africain ou noir, sont beaucoup plus en retrait. Si le disciple exprime une identité basée sur l'identification, d'autre part, il fonctionne également comme un moyen de se distinguer des différentes tendances soufies telles que le commercialisme (Tijaniyya) et de souligner la différence. La micro-identité est donc un enjeu essentiel dans l'expérience d'immigration quant à l'identité perçue dans une collectivité.

Les réseaux sociaux provoquent parfois une fermeture ethnique, sociale et culturelle, et parfois, ils apportent un effet qui facilite l'intégration avec la société et la culture d'accueil. L'émergence de l'un ou l'autre n'est pas seulement une question de dynamique interne. Outre la dynamique interne des groupes ethniques, les caractéristiques de la société d'accueil et les critères d'évaluation des immigrants déterminent la cohésion ou la ségrégation. Par exemple, la perception et la définition des immigrants du Moyen-Orient en Turquie comme "Syriens" ou "Arabes" et les immigrants Sénégalais trouvent souvent leur place dans des généralisations "Africaines" ou "Noires". Dans le cadre des informations et observations tirées du travail de terrain, l'opinion générale et répandue à l'égard des immigrants "Africains" est "positive" ou "acceptable".

D'autre part, il ressort des déclarations des interviewés et des observations que cette communauté parmi les immigrés Sénégalais a des fonctions qui facilitent l'adaptation à la société d'accueil. En particulier, les perceptions "religieuses" et "inoffensives/conscientes" des disciples immigrés Sénégalais par la société d'accueil sont efficaces dans cette situation. Considérant le cadre des réseaux sociaux institutionnalisés, les réseaux religieux et ethnoculturels facilitent l'adaptation à la société d'accueil dans l'exemple des immigrés Sénégalais, en plus de nombreuses fonctions positives telles que la protection des liens avec le pays d'origine, la construction identitaire et le développement de modèles de solidarité.

Sur la base de l'étude, dans le contexte des migrations de l'Afrique Subsaharienne vers la Turquie, d'autres études traitant la relation entre les réseaux religieux et l'expérience de l'immigration de manière plus complète ou faisant une comparaison avec d'autres réseaux religieux / communautés d'origine africaine et la Secte sénégalaise.

## Introduction

Immigration is geographical mobility from the beginning to the destination country and a social and cultural experience. Various factors influence this experience and transform it into a unique and different experience. The beginning of these factors are the socio-cultural values brought by the immigrants, the relations networks developed between the immigrant groups, the personal characteristics and the cultural characteristics of the host society, and the reflexes they set against the immigrants. Immigration, in which each of these factors is at work, builds the experience of immigrants as a unique experience. It is different emigrating from Senegal to Europe and Turkey within the framework of the characteristics of the host country. Or on the contrary, the immigration experiences of individuals who immigrated to Turkey from different countries will be other due to their ethnic, cultural, or religious characteristics.

One of the most critical factors that make this field of experience different and eliminates or reduces the social and economic difficulties that arise with migration is the social networks developed among immigrant groups. On the one hand, social networks feed and guide the migration tendency. In other words, the decision to migrate, on the other hand, allow both to maintain ties with the country of origin and to overcome the problems encountered in the host society through solidarity. For this reason, the transnational relations between immigrants transform the immigration experience into a unique phenomenon.

This study aims to explain the specific immigration experience of immigrants within the framework of social networks. This study determines how the Senegalese immigrants living in Istanbul make sense of the institutionalization and solidarity networks they have developed within the Mouride tariqa and how these solidarity networks are reflected in their perception of identity and their relations with the country of origin. For this purpose, in-depth interviews were conducted with thirty-seven Senegalese immigrants, twenty-eight men and nine women in Istanbul. The field study was realized in August-October 2021; besides the in-depth interviews, the daily lives of the Senegalese immigrants and the Mouride meetings were examined with the participant observation technique. The research results were systematized and interpreted with the concepts of religious practices, solidarity, identity, and adaptation. After data examination, the theory of social and religious networks regarding immigrants and Senegalese Mourides provides a theoretical basis for the research.

## 1. Social Networks and Immigration Experience

Different approaches try to explain the phenomenon of migration. Most of these approaches deal with migration's cause and formation process at the macro and micro levels. In other words, the theoretical perspective on migration concentrates on analyzing and explanations of cause and effect. On the other hand, different approaches at the mezzo (intermediate) level explain the reason, outcome, and continuity of migration movements. Social networks theory, known as immigrant relationship networks, network theory,

or transnational networks in the literature, offers a substantial expansion in this approach. According to the theory, middle-level factors such as social networks and capital, time and space elements, individual desires, and expectations influence migration movements.

Social networks, which are based on pre-existing or subsequently established ties between immigrant individuals, such as ethnocultural, national, religious, kinship, friendship, and social organizations, impact the decision to migrate, the continuation of mobility, and the results of immigration (Boyd, 1989, p. 639). According to this approach, pioneer immigrants will be influential in the decision-making processes of individuals who will join the migration flows after them and will guide them. In addition, immigrants who have migrated before to the destination country will help newly arrived immigrants to adapt to social life. Thus, the disadvantages of migration, including costs and risks, will be reduced.

Social networks established by immigrants will enable more immigrants to participate in these flows. The social networks based on a particular immigrant community will effectively make more individuals' decisions to migrate, thanks to the ties they create between the destination and the source country (Korukmez, 2013, p. 69). Thanks to strong networks, the migration process gains an encouraging and heartening quality (Gulerce & Demir, p. 193). As Faist stated, migrant networks reduce the risks and costs of international migration, including distance in terms of space, transforming hidden migrants into actual migrants, and adding individuals who want to live in another country to the migration chain (Faist, 2003, p. 139). Therefore, while migrant networks compensate for the disadvantages of immigration, they pave the way for chain migration, thus enabling these movements to grow even more.

Within social networks, the social capital created by the actual or potential resources obtained through peer connections and recognition (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2021, p. 169-170) may be considered an essential element that ensures the continuity and expansion of migration movements. Although immigrants participate in the migration process through their social capital, these capitals contribute to the integration and adaptation of immigrants in the places they migrated (Faist, 2000, p. 121-122). Social networks, an essential part of migration movements, become institutionalized after a certain period and become associations. These organizations allow immigrants to both integrate with the local community and assist newly arrived immigrants. In addition, institutionalized organizations establish transnational ties or lay the groundwork for the permanence of the existing relations (Faist, 2003; Adıguzel, 2017). In addition, social networks ensure the continuity of individuals' ties with family members or acquaintances in the country of origin, thus facilitating the transfer of information about the destination country to the survivors. Thus, immigrants obtain social capital that will be useful for holding on to social life in the target country. While this capital adds dynamism to migration, it transforms this mobility into chain migration (Sert, 2018, p. 40). In this respect, social networks are a significant factor for immigrants to acquire social capital by transforming into social organizations and establishing patterns of solidarity among them.

On the other hand, some approaches suggest that immigrant networks or social networks accompanying migration have opposing sides. Social networks help immigrants find jobs, shelter, socialize, and learn about legal procedures. It may cause harm, such as the abuse or exploitation of labor. Indeed, as Bartram et al. noted, many immigrant individuals use these networks to find jobs, particularly in businesses serving ethnic communities; however, these businesses that rely on family or ethnic labor for their existence may lead to the exploitation of migrant labor or conflict. Therefore, inequalities may be in migrant networks (Bartram, Poros, & Monforte, 2017, p. 209).

It summarizes the basic assumptions of social networks theory as follows, within the framework of the information given by Abadan-Unat (2017): First, immigrant networks offer a dynamic that encourages immigration. Therefore, the demand for immigration continues to increase. In addition, since the costs and risks caused by migration are reduced thanks to migrant networks, wage differences between the country



of origin and the destination country become insignificant. Developing a standardized network of immigrants brings about the development of their potential to represent themselves in the target country. For this reason, the relationship networks tend to institutionalize and often turn into solidarity networks. Migrant networks have also essential effects on preventing and controlling migration. As the network of relations develops, the control of immigration becomes more and more complicated depending on the number of immigrants. Family reunions contribute to the development of immigrant networks. In this way, both migrations gain continuity, and relationship networks develop based on the family (p. 19-20).

Immigrants feed a constantly developing and continuous migration process with the help of social networks. Institutionalized migrant networks are an essential safeguard for newly arrived migrants. On the other hand, new immigrants are an opportunity to ensure the continuity of these standardized networks and expand their solidarity practices.

## 2. Migration Movements and Religious Networks

Religion has a substantial impact on migration movements. While religious beliefs and associations are sometimes a factor that facilitates migration, sometimes they are a factor that forces people to displace themselves in masses. It can facilitate the migration of a community from one place to another; on the other hand, religion-based oppression, discrimination, and fundamentalist religious movements, etc. may force communities to migrate. In this context, it is possible to establish a relationship between religion and the phenomenon of migration in terms of its emergence process/reason. In other words, religion may be a source of motivation for migration mobility. For instance, radical religious organizations active in some parts of the country due to the war in Syria caused the forced migration of communities belonging to different religions and sects. These communities sought asylum in countries where they thought they would not be persecuted because of their religious identities. Therefore, it is possible to consider the relationship between these two phenomena in the context of religion's appearance as a push and pull factor in the emergence of migration (Kirman & Dolek, 2021, p. 259-260).

However, the relevance between migration and religion is not limited to cause-effect relationships. Religious networks and organizations not only pave the way for the beginning of the migration yet significantly impact the post-migration process. These networks have substantial effects on the adaptation and integration process of the immigrant in the country of emigration and the practices of holding on to life by acquiring social capital. Religious networks provide the immigrant with work, accommodation, and official transactions. Thanks to these solidarity networks, the immigrant may quickly adapt to his life in the context of the country of emigration, while at the same time, they may easily overcome the trauma of migration. Religious networks formed by immigrants are very important in protecting transnational identity, providing spiritual and ideological reference points to immigrants, and indirectly contributing to the unification and development of all networks, as emphasized by Riccio (2001, p. 595). Hence, while migrant individuals act within a complex web of symbolic meanings and personal connections, they keep options open and try to build a life based on them. Therefore, while immigrants develop their lives in these networks, they keep their sense of belonging alive by reproducing the transnational immigrant identity.

Religious networks cause different migration experiences and systems (Ihlamur-Oner, 2018, p. 317). The similarity and difference in religious identity between the sending country and the receiving country are the most influential factors in this context. Therefore, the first factor shaping religious networks is the religion and belief identity of the immigrant community and the local community. While the similarity of religious identity between the immigrant community and the native society plays a relatively facilitating role in the adaptation of the immigrant group to the receiving country; on the contrary, situations may develop where the sense of community among immigrants is strengthened, and thus solidarity leads to social closure.



A second important factor is the meanings religious networks have in the context of the sending country. In other words, the social, cultural, and historical characteristics of religious networks in the sending country directly affect the immigrant experience. The Mouride tariqa of Senegal origin examined in this study is a Sufi tariqa; however, some of the economic, social, cultural, and political features it has in Senegal significantly differentiate the immigration experiences of Senegalese immigrants belonging to this tariqa and make it unique. Therefore, Mouride brotherhood, which has its own historical and socio-cultural characteristics, has a special place in terms of the religious networks it created in the country of immigration and the position and practices of its members in these networks.

### 3. The Transnational Society Between Religion and Migration: Senegalese Mourides

The Mouride brotherhood, one of Senegal's three great Sufi tariqas, is a Sufism movement and understanding that emerged and spread in Senegal, unlike Qadiri and Tijani, whose origins are in North Africa and the Middle East. The movement's founder, Sheikh Amadou Bamba (Sheikh Ahmet Bamba, 1850-1927), started to spread in the country after the French colonial occupation (Ebin, 1996). The founder of the movement, Sheikh Ahmet Bamba, founded the Mouride brotherhood, which is among the most critical ethnoreligious formations of Senegal. However, he was educated in the Qadiri, Sufi understanding. This situation constitutes the most remarkable aspect of Mouride brotherhood. This religious community, which has a historically significant position as the pioneer of the passive resistance of the Senegalese people against French colonialism, has been an obstacle to religious and cultural degeneration despite colonialism. Moreover, it is possible to observe that the practices of the tariqa members/followers during various religious rituals are significantly influenced by the folkloric structure of the Senegalese people.

The center of Mouridism (Muridiyye) in Senegal is the city of Touba. Touba, a town founded by Sheikh Ahmed Bamba, is home to the Great Mosque of Touba, one of the largest mosques in Africa. This mosque is considered an essential representation of the spiritual leadership of Sheikh Ahmet Bamba. On the other side, the Mouride brotherhood is a social movement that penetrates deeply into social life. In this community, which encourages the Senegalese to cultivate the land, farming is seen as a sacred work to gain Allah's consent and the sheik's discretion. This importance given to agriculture has led to the development of solidarity networks among the farmers belonging to the cult (Ozkose, 2003, p. 161).

Visiting shrines is not a common tradition among black/African descent Muslims. The Wolofs, who comprise most of Senegal's ethnic composition, is an exception in this regard. Wolofs visit the tomb of Sheikh Ahmed Bamba, the spiritual leader of the Mouride tariqa, located in Touba, Senegal, in large crowds every year on the nineteenth and twentieth days of Muharram (Ozkose, 2003, p. 155). Therefore, visiting Touba, a symbol of Sheikh Ahmet Bamba's spiritual leadership, is an essential factor in keeping the sense of belonging to this faith movement alive for the members of the Senegalese Mouride tariqa. Nevertheless, affiliation with Sufi orders is not limited to the Wolof ethnic community. Although Wolofs are mostly Mourides, as Saul states, it is possible to encounter individuals belonging to the Mouride, Qadiri, and Tijani tariqas among the Senegalese immigrants in Turkey (Saul, 2013, p. 88). In this respect, Senegalese immigrants also maintain their membership in the religious networks in their home countries.

Sheikh Ahmet Bamba was exiled twice as he was deemed a danger by the government during the French colonial rule of Senegal. The first of these exiles is the Gabon exile covering the years between 1895 and 1903, and the second is the Mauritanian exile covering the years 1903 and 1907 (Coulon, 1999, p. 198). Every year, members of the Mouride celebrate Magal (Grand Magal) events on the anniversary of the exile of Sheikh Ahmet Bamba by the French colonialists. Magal, in other words, the anniversary of Sheikh Ahmet Bamba's exile twice, is the period when Bamba's spiritual aspect reached its peak for the followers. Therefore, in these events held yearly, eulogies by Sheikh Ahmet Bamba are read together with the recitation of the Qur'an. In addition, for these events, millions of Mouride members from Senegal and

different parts of the world collect gifts (Adiyya) to financially support both the circumstances and the development of the Touba mosque, and those who have the opportunity go to the city of Touba.

Attending Magal events is not limited to going to Touba for the disciples/talibes. Senegalese immigrating to different countries for various reasons practice their membership of Mouridism and, in this context, Magal activities and other rituals in the context of the receiving country. Senegalese Mourides, who immigrated to the developed and developing countries of the world, keep their identities alive by forming social solidarity networks on a religious basis. The Association of Hidayete Erenler Hazines (Dairetul Kanjoul Mouhtadine) and Ker Serigne Touba (Touba Sheikh's House), which is the gathering place for religious rituals (Daara or Dahira) of the members of the tariqa, ensure the continuity of the networks between them and promote the ethnocultural identity.

These religious networks created by Senegalese immigrants in the receiving countries play an important role in eliminating many disadvantages brought by immigration. The Senegalese immigrants in Italy perceive their mouride brotherhood as enabling them to avoid crises and conflicts by obtaining social capital, reaching individual economic gains easily, adapting to social life quickly, and abundance from sinful behaviors while earning money (Riccio, 2001, p. 594). In addition, this network may easily include a new immigrant who is a member of this tariqa in his own country and who has just arrived in the receiving country. This way, the migrant individual may participate in the nearby labor market, shelter, and protection (Zubrzycki, 2012, p. 91).

On the other hand, within the heterogeneous Senegalese immigrant networks, the Mouride tariqa has a unique position. Even if there is no organic relationship between this network and commercial-based migration networks, there is a symbiotic relationship. Because these networks provide direct or indirect support and contribute to each other's development, Senegalese immigrants may participate in the Mouride tariqa or other networks within the framework of their experience. In this respect, Mouridism is not a closed system or community. Although some individuals make a living as peddlers or are in the official labor market among the Senegalese immigrants within the Mouride network in Argentina, most of this population is unofficial peddlers (Zubrzycki, 2012, p. 89). The Senegalese immigrant community in Istanbul, which is discussed within the study, primarily watches jewelry. Besides those who are peddlers, some work as textile workers in the unregistered labor market. There are fewer registered employees or students in this community.

#### **4. A Study on the Mouride Community in Istanbul**

This study is based on the data obtained from interviews with individuals who emigrated from Senegal to Turkey. The sample of the research, which approaches the immigration experience of immigrants in the context of identity perception and intercultural communication, consists of Senegalese living in Istanbul. In the field study carried out between August 2021 and October 2021, a total of 37 (28 Male, 9 Female) interviewees were interviewed using the in-depth interview technique, which is included in the qualitative research method.

In the research process, a semi-structured interview form prepared in advance was used, and the interview process was recorded with a voice recorder to prevent data loss. Interviews are in Turkish with the interviewees who spoke Turkish and with the other interviewees in their mother tongue or French through an interpreter. In addition, the observation technique was used in the study. Thus, the Senegalese immigrants, who constitute the study's sample, were observed using the participant observation technique in their natural habitats. By examining the findings obtained within the scope of the research, only the interviews suitable for the study were determined. The recorded interview records were handled with an interpretative approach and analyzed thematically.

#### 4.1. Religious Practices and Perception of Ethno-Cultural Identity

Among the Senegalese immigrants living in Istanbul are followers of the Mouride and the Qadiri and Tijani tariqas. Mourides are known to be the largest Senegalese religious community in Istanbul in terms of numbers. The non-governmental organization, the association of Hidayete Erenler Hazinesi (Dairetul Kanjoul Mouhtadine), a board of directors including Turkish citizens, meets in Ker Serigne Touba in Wolof, which means "The House of the Sheikh of Touba." This place in the Kumkapi-Fatih district of Istanbul is in the region where immigrants from many countries of Africa and Asia live. Therefore, this region has a transnational character.

Senegalese immigrant Mourides meet in Ker Serigne Touba every Thursday evening to recite/sing the Odes written by Sheikh Ahmed Bamba or the hymns attributed to him. This ritual occurs when the followers sit in a ring and recite the eulogy simultaneously. However, the religious practices of the Mourides in genius are unlimited. These practices include the Qur'an recitation, prayer, the catechism, and the conversation about the problems in the followers' daily life.

Immigrants interviewed describe worship as the most basic motivation for coming together in this place. For instance, Interviewer 14 explained the question regarding the purpose of the Mouride meeting in Ker Serigne Touba with the following words:

"We are gathering there for the purpose of worship. We read the odes that Serigne Touba ordered to be read. Yes, we distribute coffee there. We distribute food. So that we may be more united or more merciful to one another. We are meeting there for that purpose." (I-14, Woman, 35)

In addition, the statements of the interviewee partially refer to the search for social bonds and networks of solidarity in migration. The expressions "unity" and "being compassionate towards one another" in the words of Interviewer 14 (Woman, 35) show the search for strong social bonds within the framework of the sense of community and compensation for the lack of solidarity. For this reason, the membership of immigrant individuals in religious networks in the context of the destination country gains continuity.

Another interviewee (I-9, Man, 40) emphasizes that in addition to the Qur'an recitation and Qasida reading activities, food is distributed similarly to Interviewee 14: "They pray until the morning, we give food, something like that." In this respect, practices like religious tariqas or lodges in Turkey are observed in the Mouride community in Istanbul. In Turkey, it is a well-known and common practice, especially in Sufi tariqa, to offer treats to members of the tariqa or their guests, in addition to religious worship and rituals.

Another immigrant Mouride (I-4, Man, 28) interviewed within the research stated that Senegalese knows well why the Mouridism genius exists and what it means. The interviewee said they greet the followers and that being on the path has a reward. Finally, "A person who works for the teacher (sheik) under the sun and serves him is rewarded with a shadow." He quoted a Mouride idiom with his words. The worldly and otherworldly reward expectations coexist in the understanding of Mouridism; in addition, Mouride immigrants are trying to carry their unique religiousness to the context of the receiving country. They do this based on their belief.

Mouridism is the most crucial indicator of religious identity for many Senegalese immigrants. In the answers on identity perception, the Muslim identity and the Mouride identity were emphasized at the same time. For instance, while describing her identity, Interviewee 15 (Woman, 19) said, "I am African, and I am very pleased with that and thank God, I am a Muslim. Besides, thank you for making me a Mouride."

used expressions. From these expressions, the Mouride tariqa has a vital place in reproducing and representing religious, ethnic, and national identity. While describing his identity, the interviewee adds Mouride brotherhood as a religious community identity and his national and religious identity. Conversely, Interviewee 10 (Man, 35) described Mouridism with the following words:

"I became a Mouride when I was born. When I die, I will die as Mouride. In answer to this question, I will tell you about Mouridism. What is a real Mouride? What does being a Mouride do to you? It makes us religious; it makes us good people. In the sense of humility, you see every person you see as yourself. When you do these things, the rest will come; even if you don't have money, the rest will come." (I-10, Man, 35)

Based on these expressions, understanding Mouridism is essential to the community's perceived personal and religious identity. In addition, Senegalese Mouride immigrants' perceptions of tariqa membership indicate their ethnocultural identity and practices that distinguish them from other religious communities. Interviewer 13 (Man, 37) stated the following while making his evaluations of the socio-political power of the Mouride' followers in Senegal:

"All power is in politics in Turkey, but they have a separate power in Senegal. They do not need the power there (meaning politics and the state). The teacher at their head said, "Why are we strong?" he said, "we Mourides"; because... Oh, by the way, the Tijanis are strong, too. They are more intellectual, more persuasive, and more logical. Mourides are more emotional, more economical, and more active. Now the man says, that is, the teacher; "Why are we strong?" says. Because we do not want anything from the state, in other words, we are stronger than our opinion. So, we don't want much; we are strong because we don't want much. Our needs are much less." (I-13, Man, 37)

Based on the interviewee's statements, there are socio-cultural differences between the Tijani and Mouride religious communities, apart from the way of belief and rituals. While the interviewee stated that the Tijanis were more assertive in the political arena in Senegal and had a more intellectual movement, he described the followers as more emotional, economical, and active. Therefore, the interviewer's description of the qualities and his emphasis on the aspects of the community he belongs to that differ from this group show practices for drawing the framework of social identity. However, while the objectivity of this view may be discussed, it has some justification in some respects. While the relations networks are established based on religion among the Qadiri and Tijanis, these networks are set on two levels, religious and commercial, among the Mourides. It may be interpreted that Sheikh Ahmet Bamba's advice to his students to participate in economic activities by farming during the emergence and expansion of the tariqa in Senegal, together with the urban life of the Mourides in the city of Touba, was effective in this regard.

In this respect, the interviewees formed a social group within the awareness and understanding of Mouridism in the receiving country and the source country. They exhibited religious, social, and cultural practices within this group.

#### 4.2. Solidarity Mechanisms and Adaptation

By the study, the most striking feature of the Senegalese Mouride community is that the community has solidarity mechanisms. During the interviews, the members of the tariqa emphasized that the formation of followers and the association are effective in activities such as helping, collecting donations, and helping newly arrived immigrants. Almost every interviewee emphasized the various cooperation activities within the Mouride community in Istanbul.

"The Senegalese here are helping each other. Senegalese here live in groups. Because there is a community of Mourides, there is a community of students, there is a community of Senegalese, and in these communities, there is something like fundraising. They help each other." (I-6, Man, 28)

“What we call that Ker Serigne is something with the aim of helping them, they have both religious things and are very active in helping them, especially in the times of corona (COVID-19), they donated, they did something to support them when people did not go out on the street, they did something to support the Senegalese here. they did.” (I-7, Man, 28)

“There is cooperation within the association; they help very well. When you look at your disease there, if the association has information, if you are sick and you do not have money, they will help you with treatment. If someone dies, they will assist in sending them back to the country. For instance, an association acted in the first days of the corona curfew; food parcels were distributed to people during the pandemic process.” (I-5, Man, 26)

Based on the statements of all three interviewees, the Mouride tariqa has a beneficial role in reducing the disadvantages and risks arising from the immigration situation. As Orsi describes, religious organizations are a "safe harbor in the storm" for immigrants who try to adapt to the context of the country of immigration (Cited by Ihlamur-Oner, 2018, p. 320). In addition to the religious and ethnocultural practices of the community, various assistance and solidarity mechanisms are formed for the problems that immigrant individuals will experience in almost every issue. During the Covid-19 pandemic, which negatively affected the practices of immigrant individuals to hold on to daily life due to the closure, the community carried out various aid and donation activities. Moreover, all Senegalese immigrants and local actors in Istanbul supported these activities, which may be considered a practice of social solidarity. The interviewees stated the bureaucracy of the Republic of Turkey, the Senegalese Embassy in Turkey, the Turkish Embassy in Dakar, Senegalese and Turkish people in business, other Senegalese immigrants who are not members of the cult, and Senegalese football players in various football teams provided serious support to these activities. Therefore, it may be determined that this community plays an essential role in creating a sense of unity and solidarity among Senegalese immigrants in various adverse situations.

The community's conversations at the weekly meeting events have content that aims to adapt to Turkish society. In these programs, which start with the recitation of eulogies, prayer, and the Holy Quran, the last part consists of conversations about religious and social life. In these conversations, the community members are informed about the content of religion and the religious views of Sheikh Ahmet Bamba and other Mouride sheiks. In addition, the problems related to the life of immigrant Mouride in Istanbul are discussed, and solutions to these problems are discussed. There are solutions to the problems Senegalese immigrants face daily, especially the legal and bureaucratic problems they experience regarding residence permits, through the community's relationship networks and social capital. This situation supports the view that religious institutions are essential for immigrants to benefit from official services in the country they migrated to (Ihlamur-Oner, 2018, p. 321). Most of the time, the most appropriate community in the context of the land of immigration is not just a religious community yet security, job opportunities, and social services. It may act as a religious network that helps immigrant individuals by working as a "bridge with the local social system" on issues (Onah & Leman, 2005, p. 522). In addition, the conflicts Senegalese immigrants have or may experience when encountering Turkish society constitute an essential part of these conversations. Interviewee 2 (Man, 26) stated that in addition to the faith-based advice given to the members of the community, the members of the community were warned that they should take care of themselves in Istanbul, and the cultural sensitivities of the Turkish society were explained and what issues they should avoid. In this context, the Mouride community actively adapts to the receiving country's local culture and tries to act as a "bridge with the local social system."

Besides religious formations belonging to Senegalese in Turkey, there are other associations. The Senegalese immigrant community in Turkey is not a homogeneous group. Some belong to no religious community, as well as the group formed by the students and the federation formation that tries to represent all Senegalese immigrants. Conflicts may arise between this federation formation and religious tariqas on some issues. Interviewee 13 (Man, 37) stated that Mouride and other religious organizations could reach results faster in aid collection activities among Senegalese immigrants. They could collect the targeted

monetary amount in a shorter time. However, the federation could not be that fast. In addition, the same interviewer emphasized that no Mouride community came to a concert organized by the union and that the federation officials reacted to it. However, the interviewee stated that due to the more secular nature of the federation, he could not understand the Mourides, so such disagreements were inevitable.

### 4.3. Diaspora or Reproduction of Ethno-cultural Identity

In addition to their religious practices, the Senegalese immigrant Mouride community organizes Magal events that have become an ethnocultural practice or tradition for Senegalese. These events, which are held by the followers every year on the 18th day of the month of Sefer according to the Hijri calendar to commemorate the return of Sheikh Ahmet Bamba from the exile to which the French colonial administration sent him, are celebrated in other countries with Senegalese immigrants, especially in the city of Touba in Senegal.

Mourides in Turkey accomplish these activities every year. These events, organized by The Association of Hidayete Erenler Hazinesi (Dairetul Kanjoul Mouhtadine), are prepared with the support and contributions of the tariqa members. During the research process, it was observed that the young people of Bay Fall, who are in the Mouridism and have a different status, collect donations from Senegalese members of the tariqa for the upcoming Magal events. These donations, which the members of the tariqa called “*âdiyya*” (meaning gift), are perceived as supporting the development of the Great Mosque of Touba and contributing financially to Magal activities. While an institutional structure called Touba Ca Kanam (Touba Development Movement) organized these donations within the tariqa, giving *âdiyya* was perceived as very valuable for every follower within the Mouride tariqa. Because, in the observations made during the research process, Mr. Fall's youth visited every Mouride to give *âdiyya* for the upcoming Magal events, and the members of the tariqa certainly gave something during the visit; In addition, in informal interviews, immigrants perceive this as a precious and highly spiritual behavior. In addition, the association's relations with public institutions and organizations and leading Senegalese people in business are very important in providing severe support to these events. Interviewer 1 (Male, 31) described Magal activities with these words:

"When there is Magal, the Qur'an is recited, dhikr is recited, and food is distributed. This is done in Touba. They read the whole of the Qur'an hundreds of times (Hatim). It is even made in Istanbul. We also do it in Turkey; we rent a hall. In Senegal, it is made in Touba; everyone goes here. Here, dhikr (*zikr*) is made, and the Qur'an is recited."

Based on the statements of interviewee 1, the Senegalese Mouride immigrants are trying to carry the traditions and beliefs of their own country to the context of the land of immigration. The ethnocultural and religious practices of the Mouride tariqa, a religious community in this respect, have brought a transnational quality to these practices by carrying them to different countries.

During these events, members of the Senegalese Mouride community exhibit practices unique to Senegalese culture. For instance, dishes specific to the culture of Senegalese are served during the events. Among these threats are the Thieboudienne dish, which stands out in Senegalese cuisine, Touba coffee (Coffee Touba), and Ataya (a Senegalese tea) with its inventor, Sheikh Ahmet Bamba, which is almost a national drink in Senegal. In other respects, all Senegalese immigrants participate in these activities, even if they are not members of the Mouride community. These individuals, who attend the events with the local clothes unique to Senegal, may thus experience a public space where their ethnic and cultural identities are reproduced in case of migration.

Conversely, immigrant Mourides from different regions broadcast events such as Magal and genius via YouTube. In addition to the Magal events held every year, the weekly gatherings are prepared by the digital media officers in the community and shared on social media. In this respect, the community's display

of diasporic practices and their representations through social media may be considered to reproduce ethnocultural identity and Mouride discourse in virtual space.

## Conclusion

Contrary to the trends, as Akbas (2018, p. 339) emphasizes, the problem is now based on understanding the immigration situation. Migration will continue as an ongoing flow on a global scale. According to Hardt and Negri, even if an operation is with the alliance of the old world against the specter of migration circulating, the movement seems to be unstoppable (2008, p. 227). Therefore, the known reasons for this are not eliminated, and nothing will change regarding the existence and continuity of migration. Therefore, migrations continue, and the main issue that needs to be understood and explained is immigration as a situation, an experience, and a field of identity. No doubt, considering the individual and collective dimensions of immigration, it is necessary to examine it from an economic, political, social, and cultural perspective.

This study was developed within the framework of such a perspective. Like many other immigrant groups, Senegalese immigrants have turned immigration into a group experience. Because immigration has such a destructive and isolating effect that it may not be experienced alone, a collective experience area is built among immigrants, especially with ethnocultural and religious ties. One of the most critical components of this construction area is religion/religious collectivity. For instance, the arguments of Castles and Miller (2008, p. 305) or Kastoryano (2000, p. 137) that religion ascribe a central role or a fundamental function in community formation and that religion is an essential structure in establishing social cohesion and networks. In Kastoryano's words, "religion emerges as a response to the loss of reference and establishes social bonds when entering a new society" (2000, p. 136), or "religion has become another form of reappropriation of identity" (2000, p. 138). Within the framework of the interviews with the Senegalese immigrants living in Istanbul, religion and loyalty to the Mouride tariqa constitute an adequate basis for the solidarity, cooperation, and sense of togetherness established among the immigrants. Mouridism, as a religious formation, opens a critical area in practicing common spiritual values and the realization of their rituals.

For this reason, as stated by the participants, first, uniting around Mouridism allows the fulfillment of religious requirements within a particular community. However, these opportunities are not limited to religion and gradually open a space for social, cultural, and economic solidarity patterns. Therefore, religious associations are not only seen as religious feelings and practices for immigrants. Primarily when the subject is evaluated as an immigration experience, the importance of religious associations as a structure that establishes and expands solidarity networks emerges. In fact, for immigrants, being in a spiritual community is an important survival strategy. Castles and Miller (2008, p. 306) consider this a plan to cope with social negativities and protect against racism.

On the contrary, religious communication expresses a kind of organized structure, a standardized unity, and being in this unity opens a safe social space for immigrants. Akgonul (2008, p. 99) states that taking part in an institutionalization has three essential functions for individuals who feel like a minority. Accordingly, individuals constantly think that they are not alone, so they observe that their experience is not individual and that people like themselves likewise experience similar incidents. However, it ensures the group's continuity and takes a stance against other groups and individuals thought to threaten the group. The group's continuity is vital for the individual who draws strength from them. Institutionalization is essential to convey a message of power and legitimacy to the majority. The Senegalese immigrants and the practices observed in the context of the Mouride tariqa exhibit a feature that overlaps with these functions. However, in addition to these functions, the Mouride tariqa and its affiliation, as a standardized religious organization, fulfill an essential role in maintaining the ties with the country of origin, keeping the cultural memory alive, and building identity. It looks functional for the participants to come together on important religious days, to continue the rituals they performed in Senegal in Turkey, to keep the food and drink



tradition unique to Senegal alive, to keep the religious and cultural memory alive, and to maintain the ties with the country of origin. Thus, the associations that started with religious purposes turn into a social network that expands to ethnocultural patterns, re-established bonds with the country of origin, and solidarity strategies developed in the face of social problems.

One of the crucial dimensions of the subject is identity. On the one hand, identity is a social phenomenon understood in the identity/difference dilemma and should be considered within the framework of various belonging relations. Regarding immigrant identity, identification and construction come to the fore with the identity/difference dilemma, often referring to the ethnic and cultural differences that arise between the country of origin and the country of residence. Here, ethnic, cultural, national, and religious affiliations are the elements that build the identity. One of the main reasons immigrants are considered together with an identity problem is their differences in belonging. The interviews with Senegalese immigrants reveal that identity perceptions and ties of belonging are intertwined. Being a Senegalese, a Muslim, and Mouridism show that identity is understood within an interrelated pattern of belonging.

On the other hand, identity perceptions such as being African or black remain in the background from a broader perspective. While Mouridism expresses an identity based on identity, on the one hand, it functions as a means of distinguishing itself and emphasizing difference from different Sufi tendencies such as Tijanism. For this reason, when we look more closely at the perceived identity in a collectivity, micro-identity areas have an important place in the immigration experience.

The "ethnic colony" conceptualization used by Yalcin-Heckmann, and Unbehaun describes social structures with specific organizations. In summary, ethnic colonies are structures where the ethnic group establishes and develops its own religious, cultural and social ties. Within these structures, various identities (ethnic, religious, cultural) are reproduced, and processes create that will enable or prevent adaptation to their society (1999, p. 80). Senegalese immigrants may be considered an "ethnic colony" because they have unique religious, cultural, and social ties and efforts to develop them. One of the issues that should be noted here is the effectiveness of social networks, as an area where identities are produced and social networks are developed, as well as where the reflexes developed regarding the country and society of immigration gain direction. Social networks sometimes cause an ethnic, social, and cultural closure.

In some cases, they bring an effect that facilitates integration with the host society and culture. The emergence of either is not just about internal dynamics. As well as the internal dynamics of ethnic groups, the characteristics of the host society, and the criteria for evaluating immigrants determine cohesion or segregation. For instance, as immigrants from the Middle East are perceived and defined as "Syrian" or "Arab" in Turkey, Senegalese immigrants often find their place in "Africa" or "Black" generalizations. Within the framework of the information and observations from the fieldwork, the general and widespread opinion regarding the "African" immigrants is "positive" and "acceptable".

In conclusion, it is revealed by the statements of the interviewees and the observations that this unity of the Senegalese immigrants gathered around the Mouridism has functions that facilitate adaptation to the host society. In particular, the "religious" and "harmless/self-conscious" perceptions of Senegalese Mouride immigrants by the host society are effective in this situation. It is considered within the framework of institutionalized social networks, the protection of ties with the country of origin, the construction of identity, and the development of solidarity patterns. Besides many positive functions, religious and ethnocultural networks facilitate integration into the host society in the example of Senegalese immigrants.

## References

- Abadan-Unat, N. (2017). *Bitmeyen göç: Konuk işçilikten ulus-ötesi yurttaşlığa*. İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Adıgüzel, Y. (2017). *Göç sosyolojisi*. Nobel Yayınları.
- Akbaş, E. (2018). Göçmenler arasındaki dayanışmacı ağların dönüşümü: Göçmen sivil toplum örgütlerinin yeni misyonu. In S. İhlamur-Öner, & N. Şirin Öner (Eds.), *Küreselleşme çağında göç - Kavramlar, tartışmalar* (pp. 335-351). İletişim Yayınları.
- Akgönül, S. (2008). Din, çok bağımlılık ve kimlik korkusu ekseninde Fransa Türkleri. In D. Daniş, & V. İrtis (Eds.), *Entegrasyonun ötesinde Türkiye'den Fransa'ya göç ve göçmenlik halleri* (pp. 91-119). İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Bartram, D., Poros, M. & Monforte, P. (2017). *Göç meselesinde temel kavramlar*. (I. A. Tuncay, Trans.). Hece Yayınları.
- Bourdieu, P. & Wacquant, L. (2021). *Düşünsel sosyolojiye davet*. (N. Ökten, Trans.). İletişim Yayınları.
- Boyd, M. (1989). Family and personal networks in international migration: Recent developments and new agendas. *International Migration Review*, 23(3), 638-670. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2546433>
- Castles, S. & Miller, M. J. (2008). *Göçler çağı - modern dünyada uluslararası göç hareketleri*. (B. Bal, & I. Akbulut, Trans.). İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları.
- Coulon, C. (1999). The Grand Magal in Touba: A religious festival of the Mouride brotherhood of Senegal. *African Affairs*, 98(391), 195-210. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/723626>
- Ebin, V. (1996). Making room versus creating space: The construction of spatial categories by itinerant Mouride traders. In B. Metcalf (Ed.), *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe* (pp. 92-109). University of California Press.
- Faist, T. (2000). The volumes and dynamics of international migration and transnational social spaces. Oxford University Press.
- Faist, T. (2003). *Uluslararası göç ve uluslararası toplumsal alanlar*. (A. Z. Gündoğan, Trans.). Bağlam Yayınları.
- Fomunyan, B. (2014). *Brotherhood solidarity and the (re)negotiation of identity amongs Senegalese migrants in Durban* [Doctoral dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal]. ResearchSpace. <http://hdl.handle.net/10413/12519>
- Gülerce, H. & Demir, E. (2021). Zorunlu göç sürecinde sosyal ağlar; Şanlıurfa'daki Suriyeli sığınmacılar. *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları Dergisi* (81), 185-211. <https://doi.org/10.26650/jspc.2021.81.973727>
- Hardt, M. & Negri, A. (2008). *İmparatorluk* (A. Yılmaz, Trans.). Ayrıntı Yayınları.
- İhlamur-Öner, S. G. (2018). Ulus-ötesi göç sürecinde dini ağlar ve örgütler. In S. G. İhlamur-Öner, & N. Şirin Öner (Eds.), *Küreselleşme çağında göç - Kavramlar, tartışmalar* (pp. 309-334). İletişim Yayınları.
- Kastoryano, R. (2000). *Kimlik pazarlığı - Fransa ve Almanya'da devlet ve göçmen ilişkileri* (A. Berktaş, Trans.). İletişim Yayınları.
- Kirman, M. & Dölek, I. (2021). Din ve göç. In A. Özkan, & G. Taşçı (Eds.), *Disiplinlerarası Bakış açısıyla göç* (pp. 255-274). Nobel Kitabevi.

- Körükmez, L. (2013). Öncesi ve sonrası: Ermenistan'dan Türkiye'ye işgücü göçünün nedenleri ve göçmen ilişki ağları. *Sosyoloji Dergisi* (29), 67-91. <https://dergipark.org.tr/pub/sosder/issue/41004/495485>
- Onah, S. & Leman, J. (2005). Cosmological and religious fundamentals among Igbo immigrants in Belgium: The way out of segregation. *Social Compass*, 52(4), 513-527. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768605058187>
- Özköse, K. (2003). Batı Afrika'da tasavvuf akımlarının etkisi. *Dinbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi*, 3(3), 153-168. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/daad/issue/4523/62231>
- Riccio, B. (2001). From 'ethnic group' to 'transnational community'? Senegalese migrants' ambivalent experiences and multiple trajectories. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27(4), 583-599. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830120090395>
- Sert, D. S. (2018). Uluslararası göç yazınında bütünlüyci bir kurama doğru. In S. İhlamur-Oner, & N. Şirin Öner (Eds.), *Küreselleşme çağında göç - Kavramlar, tartışmalar* (pp. 29-48). İletişim Yayınları.
- Şaul, M. (2013). Sahra altı Afrika ülkelerinden Türkiye'ye iş göçü. *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi*, 68(1), 83-121. [https://doi.org/10.1501/SBFder\\_0000002274](https://doi.org/10.1501/SBFder_0000002274)
- Yalçın-Heckmann, L. & Unbehaun, H. (1999). Fransa ve Almanya'da göçmen Türk toplulukları: İki orta büyüklükteki şehirde dernekleşme ve cemaatleşme süreçleri. *Toplum ve Bilim* (82), 78-89.
- Zubrzycki, B. (2012). Recent Afrimay migration to South America: The case of Senegalese in Argentina. *Centre for Promoting Ideas; International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 2(22), 86-94. <http://www.ijhssnet.com/journal/index/1424>