

THE ROLE OF MUSLIM PARENTS IN INTEGRATING JAPANESE LOCAL CULTURE TO STRENGTHEN ISLAMIC EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN IN MINORITY MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The role of Muslim parents is strategic in strengthening children's Islamic Religious Education, particularly within Muslim minority communities in Japan shaped by predominantly non-Islamic cultural values. While previous studies have discussed parental activity in Islamic education, empirical research examining how Muslim parents integrate local cultural values of non-Muslim societies into children's Islamic religious education remains limited, especially in minority contexts such as Japan. This study aims to analyze how Muslim parents integrate local Japanese cultural values to strengthen children's Islamic religious education within Muslim minority communities. This study employed a descriptive quantitative approach using a survey method. The participants consisted of 28 Muslim parents from Muslim minority communities in the Kitakyushu and Kanto regions of Japan. The sample reflects Muslim families whose children are of primary school age within a minority context. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages. The findings indicate that most respondents perceived their parental role as effective to highly effective, with success levels exceeding 80%. This success is reflected in the internalization of discipline, cleanliness, honesty, hard work, and responsibility in children's daily lives. Theoretically, this study contributes to Islamic Religious Education discourse by showing that integrating local cultural values aligned with Islamic teachings can serve as a contextual model of religious education in minority settings. However, the small sample size may limit generalizability. Nevertheless, the results highlight the importance of culturally adaptive parental strategies and provide a basis for future research in other minority contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education plays a strategic role in shaping students' personality and character in accordance with Islamic values. It functions not merely as a process of transmitting religious knowledge, but as a means of internalizing values, constructing religious identity, and cultivating moral awareness that guides individuals in engaging with their social environment. In Indonesia, Islamic education is institutionally embedded within the national education system and supported by both formal and nonformal educational settings. However, the nature and implementation of Islamic education undergo significant transformation when Muslims live within socio-cultural environments that differ from those of Muslim-majority societies, as experienced by Muslim diaspora communities in Japan (Husna, 2024).

Japan is widely recognized as a developed country characterized by a strong education system, high social discipline, and a relatively homogeneous social structure. At the same time, religion does not occupy a central institutional position within public life or the national education system. Consequently, Muslim communities in Japan experience limited access to formal Islamic education. Nevertheless, Japanese society strongly upholds cultural values such as discipline, responsibility, honesty, cleanliness, order, and respect for others. These values closely align with core Islamic moral teachings and therefore hold potential to be integrated as supportive elements in strengthening Islamic character formation among Muslim children.

Within the context of Muslim minority life in Japan, the family assumes a central role as the primary space for Islamic religious education. The limited availability of formal religious institutions positions parents as the main actors responsible for transmitting Islamic values and practices in everyday life. Previous studies have documented the challenges faced by Muslim diaspora communities, including reliance on informal mosque-based education, limited institutional support, and unequal access to religious learning opportunities, particularly outside major metropolitan areas such as Kitakyushu (Kawakami, 2013; Ito, 2012; Takeshita, 2015; Hattori, 2023). While these studies provide important insights into structural constraints, they largely focus on access and institutional limitations rather than examining parental educational strategies at the micro level.

More recent initiatives, such as the development of digital and multilingual learning platforms for Muslim diaspora communities (Widyasari et al., 2024), seek to address issues of access and continuity in Islamic education. However, existing studies and initiatives remain predominantly content-oriented and have yet to critically examine how local cultural values of non-Muslim societies are consciously integrated into family-based Islamic education practices. As a result, there remains a lack of empirical research that analyzes the role of parents as cultural mediators who integrate local cultural values into Islamic religious education within minority contexts.

This gap raises several key research questions: (1) How do Muslim parents in Japan integrate local Japanese cultural values into their children's Islamic religious education? (2) To what extent does this integration contribute to strengthening children's Islamic character in daily life? and (3) What forms of parental strategies emerge in navigating the intersection between Islamic teachings and Japanese socio-cultural norms?

This study offers a novel contribution by shifting the focus of Islamic education research in minority contexts from institutional access and curriculum content to parental strategies of cultural integration at the family level. By examining how Japanese cultural values compatible with Islamic teachings are internalized through everyday parental practices, this study advances a contextual and culturally adaptive perspective on Islamic religious education.

Accordingly, this study aims not only to describe but to analyze the role of Indonesian Muslim parents in integrating Islamic religious education values with Japanese cultural values within Muslim diaspora families in Kitakyushu. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of a contextual and sustainable model of Islamic education that strengthens religious identity while enabling positive engagement within a multicultural society.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive quantitative approach using a survey method to examine parents' roles in integrating Japanese cultural values into children's Islamic Religious Education (PAI) within Muslim minority families in Japan. The participants consisted of 28 Indonesian Muslim parents residing in the Kitakyushu and Kanto regions, selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) Muslim parents, (2) residing in Japan for at least one year, and (3) actively involved in providing Islamic religious education to their children at home.

Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire developed based on five core indicators of Islamic character education that align with Japanese local cultural values, namely cleanliness, discipline (punctuality), honesty, responsibility, and hard work. Each indicator was operationalized through observable daily practices related to children's religious activities, such as prayer preparation, punctuality in performing prayers, honesty in daily interactions, and responsibility in fulfilling religious and household obligations.

The questionnaire employed a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always), enabling parents to report the frequency and consistency of their children's behaviors. In addition, respondents identified the dominant educational approach used in the family context (parents' teaching, books, or online media), which was analyzed using percentage distribution.

Instrument validity was established through conceptual and empirical alignment between questionnaire items and observable behavioral indicators. The validity of the data was supported by parents' reports of children's consistent engagement in both Japanese cultural practices (such as cleanliness, punctuality, and responsibility) and Islamic religious practices (such as prayer, personal hygiene for worship, and ethical behavior). This consistency indicates that the questionnaire items accurately captured the integration of cultural and religious values as experienced in daily life.

Reliability was ensured through the consistency of responses across related indicators, which showed stable patterns of behavior as reported by parents. High and repeated levels of achievement across multiple indicators, including cleanliness, honesty, responsibility, and discipline, demonstrated that children's behaviors were not incidental and instead reflected sustained educational practices within the family context.

Data analysis employed descriptive statistical techniques using percentage calculations. The results were categorized into three levels of achievement: high ($\geq 76\%$), moderate (56–75%), and low ($\leq 55\%$), to assess the level of parental success in integrating Japanese cultural values into children's Islamic Religious Education. The findings were presented in tables and figures to illustrate patterns of educational practices and outcomes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Integration of Islamic Religious Education and Local Cultural Values: An Analytical Perspective

The findings indicate that Muslim parents in Japan consciously integrate local Japanese cultural values into their children's Islamic Religious Education (PAI), particularly in the domains of cleanliness, discipline, honesty, responsibility, and hard work. Rather than treating Islamic teachings and local culture as separate or competing systems, parents appear to frame culturally embedded practices as practical expressions of Islamic moral values in everyday life. For the example, cleanliness, emerges not only as a ritual requirement in Islamic worship but also as a culturally reinforced habit in Japanese society. The high level of parental success in this indicator (85%) suggests that children internalize religious values more effectively when they are reinforced by consistent social norms in their surrounding environment. This finding supports the argument that value congruence between religion and local culture facilitates moral internalization, particularly in minority contexts where formal religious instruction is limited.

Similarly, discipline and punctuality, this reflected in the practice of performing prayers on time (80%), demonstrate how religious obligations are strengthened through alignment with Japanese cultural norms emphasizing time discipline. Rather than perceiving time regulation as a purely religious command, children experience it as a shared social expectation,

which increases consistency in practice. This finding aligns with previous studies on Muslim minority education that emphasize the role of contextual reinforcement in sustaining religious behavior (Kawakami, 2013; Hattori, 2023).

Honesty shows the highest achievement level (88%), indicating that this value is particularly effective when integrated into daily interactions. Japanese cultural norms that emphasize trust, integrity, and social accountability appear to support Islamic teachings on truthful speech and ethical conduct. This result extends earlier research that focused primarily on institutional access to religious education by demonstrating that moral outcomes can be achieved through culturally embedded family practices rather than formal instruction alone.

Responsibility (82%) and hard work (78%) also fall within the high category, although with slightly lower percentages. This variation suggests that while these values are consistently taught, their practical implementation may be influenced by children’s developmental stages and the complexity of tasks involved. These findings indicate that value internalization is not uniform across domains but varies depending on contextual and behavioral demands.

A detailed distribution of achievement levels across indicators, instructional methods, and behavioral outcomes is presented in Table 1, which provides the empirical basis for interpreting this effectiveness rate

Table 1. Parental Effectiveness in Integrating Japanese Local Cultural Values into Children’s Islamic Religious Education

No.	Islamic Religious Education Learning	Japanese Local Culture Engagement	Method of Education Implementation			Succeed or Achievement (%)	Indicators of Achievement
			Online Media (%)	Books (%)	Parents (%)		
1.	Cleanliness of clothing is an important concern in Islam because it is closely related to comfort and the perfection of worship, particularly prayer (ṣalāh). As stated in a ḥadīth: إِيَّاكَ أَهْتَكُمُ فِي تَوْبِهِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ فِيهِ فَإِنْ رَأَى فِيهِ أَدَى فَلْيَمْسَحْهُ، وَلَا يُصَلِّي فِيهِ. “When one of you intends to perform prayer while wearing a garment, let him examine it. If he finds any impurity on it, let him remove it and do not pray in that garment.” (Narrated by Abū Dāwūd).	In Japanese culture, cleanliness (<i>seiketsu</i>) is not merely understood as an individual habit, but as a moral and social value embedded in daily life (Benedict, 2006; Hendry, 2013).	0	3.6	96.4	85	The child is accustomed to cleaning themselves and changing clothes after outdoor activities before performing prayer.
2.	Performing prayer on time is one of the main obligations in Islam that emphasizes the value of discipline. As narrated from Abdullah ibn Mas’ūd: “أَيُّ الْعَمَلِ أَحَبُّ إِلَى اللَّهِ؟ قَالَ: الصَّلَاةُ عَلَى وَقْتِهَا The deed most beloved by Allah is prayer performed on time.” (Narrated by al-Bukhārī and Muslim).	Japanese culture highly upholds time discipline (<i>jikan genshu</i>). Punctuality is regarded as a form of moral responsibility, professionalism, and respect for others (Sugimoto, 2014; Hendry, 2013).	0	0	100	80	The child always pays attention to the prayer times so as not to miss the time for prayer.



No.	Islamic Religious Education Learning	Japanese Local Culture Engagement	Method of Education Implementation			Succed or Achieve ment (%)	Indicators of Achievemen t
			Online Media (%)	Books (%)	Parents (%)		
3.	يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَفُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٢٠﴾ يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ “O you who believe, fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice. He will amend your deeds for you.” (Qur’an, al-Aḥzāb: 70–71).	Japanese society is widely known for upholding the value of honesty (<i>shōjiki</i>). Honesty is considered the fundamental basis for building social trust and maintaining social harmony (Benedict, 2006; Sugimoto, 2014).	0	3,6	96,4	88	The child is accustomed to speaking and acting kindly and honestly in various everyday situations.
4.	Allah has commanded His servants to perform prayer as an obligation, as stated in the Qur’an: إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَوْفُورًا “Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers at prescribed times.” (Qur’an, an-Nisā’: 103).	Japanese society is known for upholding a strong sense of social responsibility and collective harmony (Sugimoto, 2014; Hendry, 2013).	0	0	100	82	The child always carries out their tasks and responsibilities.
5.	Allah commands His servants to work hard, as stated in the Qur’an: وَقُلْ أَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ: “And say, ‘Do [good], for Allah will see your deeds, and [so will] His Messenger and the believers.’” (Qur’an, at-Taubah: 105).	Japanese society is recognized for its strong work ethic, discipline, and social responsibility (Sugimoto, 2014; Hendry, 2013).	3,6	0	96,4	78	The child does not give up easily when completing tasks from school or at home.

Source: Own survey conducted by the author, 2025, with diaspora Muslims in Kitakyushu and Kanto regions, Japan.

The overall average effectiveness rate of 82.6% indicates a high level of success in integrating local cultural values into children’s Islamic Religious Education. However, this capture should not be interpreted as absolute effectiveness. Instead, it reflects perceived consistency and sustainability of parental practices within the specific socio-cultural constraints faced by

Muslim families in Japan. The remaining gap is approximately 17.4% suggests ongoing challenges, such as limited time, children's exposure to broader secular influences, and the absence of structured reinforcement beyond the family setting. Therefore, the 82.6% achievement level reflects both the strength of parental engagement and the structural limitations inherent in minority contexts. This interpretation highlights that successful religious education in diaspora settings is a negotiated and adaptive process rather than a fully controlled outcome.

Parental Strategies in Muslim Minority Contexts: Comparison with Previous Studies

Across all five indicators, direct parental teaching accounts for between 96.4% and 100% of instructional methods. This dominance highlights parents' central role as primary educators in Muslim minority settings, where access to structured Islamic institutions remains limited. Unlike previous studies that emphasize mosque-based or community-centered education (Ito, 2012; Takeshita, 2015), this study demonstrates that family-based education functions as the most stable and consistent medium for transmitting Islamic values in Japan. The overall pattern of parental educational approaches in integrating local cultural values into Islamic Religious Education is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

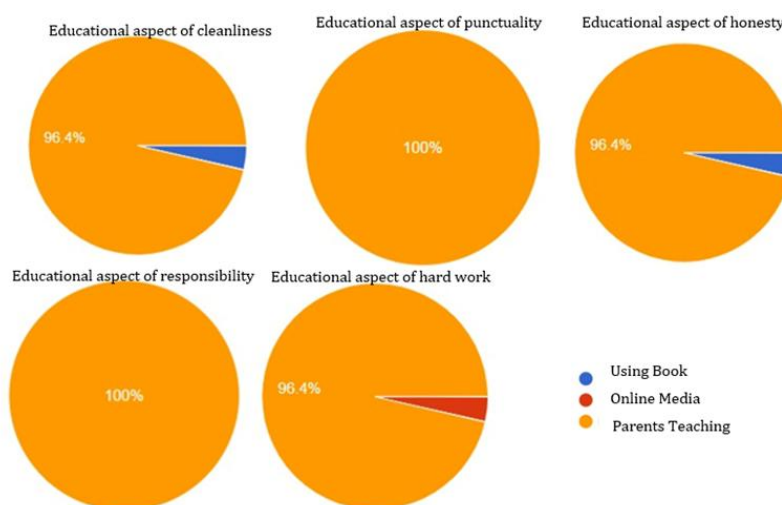


Figure 1. Parental approaches to integrating local cultural values into islamic religious education

Compared to digital or book-based learning approaches discussed by Widyasari et al. (2024), the findings suggest that mediated learning tools play only a supplementary role. Parents appear to prioritize direct interaction, allowing them to contextualize religious teachings, filter cultural influences, and model appropriate behavior. This result supports recent arguments in minority education research that emphasize parental agency over institutional dependence in cultural value-based education.

Sample Limitations (Parents of Elementary School-Aged Children) and Implications for Interpretation

It is important to note that these findings are based on a relatively small sample of 28 parents from the Kitakyushu and Kanto regions, all of whom have children at the elementary school level. While the results provide valuable insights into parental strategies within Muslim minority communities, they cannot be generalized to all Muslim families in Japan, particularly those with children at different developmental stages, or to other diaspora contexts. Additionally, the reliance on parental self-reports may reflect subjective perceptions rather than externally observed behavior.

Nevertheless, the consistency of responses across multiple indicators suggests that the patterns observed are not incidental but reflect sustained educational practices within the family context. These limitations underscore the need for

caution in interpretation while also pointing to opportunities for future research using larger samples, mixed methods, and comparative designs that include broader age groups and multiple perspectives.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the strategic role of Muslim parents as primary educators and cultural mediators in strengthening children's Islamic Religious Education within Muslim minority contexts in Japan. By integrating Japanese cultural values that are compatible with Islamic teachings into daily religious practices, parents are able to foster children's Islamic character in a contextual, adaptive, and sustainable manner. Rather than relying solely on formal religious institutions, family-based education emerges as a central space for internalizing religious values in minority settings. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the discourse on Islamic Religious Education by extending existing frameworks beyond institutional and curriculum-centered approaches. It demonstrates that culturally adaptive parental practices can function as an effective model of Islamic education in minority contexts, where religious learning is embedded in everyday social experiences. This finding positions Islamic Religious Education as a dynamic and context-sensitive process shaped by local cultural environments. Practically, the findings offer important implications for Muslim families living in non-Muslim majority societies. Parents are encouraged to actively integrate positive local cultural values such as discipline, cleanliness, honesty, responsibility, and perseverance into Islamic educational practices, thereby strengthening children's religious identity without social isolation. These insights may also inform community initiatives, religious organizations, and educators in designing family-oriented and culturally responsive Islamic education programs for diaspora communities. Despite these contributions, this study is limited by its relatively small sample size and its focus on specific regions in Japan, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the reliance on parental self-reported data may not fully capture children's behavioral development across different social settings. Future research is recommended to involve larger and more diverse samples, apply longitudinal or mixed-method designs, and incorporate children's perspectives or observational approaches. Comparative studies across different Muslim minority contexts would further enrich understanding of how culturally adaptive Islamic education practices operate in varied socio-cultural environments.

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