

The Integration of Islamic Family Law into Muslim Community Education in Japan: Socio-Cultural Dynamics in a Minority Context

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Abstract: This study investigates the dynamics of integrating Islamic Family Law (*Fiqh al-Usrah*) into Muslim community education within minority contexts in contemporary Japan. Positioned in the interdisciplinary intersection of Islamic Education Studies and Islamic Legal Studies, it explores how legal and ethical principles of Islamic family life are transmitted amid public misconceptions of Islam, linguistic and cultural barriers, and differing levels of individual religious commitment. Using a socio-legal qualitative design with thematic analytical techniques, the research draws on primary data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation of Muslim community activities, complemented by secondary scholarly sources. Fieldwork was conducted in Tokyo and Ibaraki between July and August 2024, involving Japanese converts, migrant Muslim families, and mosque administrators. Thematic analysis reveals two dominant patterns: first, families who experience positive religious transformation through strong community engagement; and second, those whose Islamic identity weakens due to secular environments and cultural pressures. The integration process is supported by individual agency, the active role of mosques and Muslim organizations, and culturally embedded religious expression, including arts-based initiatives. Conversely, limited access to formal Islamic education and the socio-cultural dominance of the non-Muslim majority remain persistent challenges. This study contributes to scholarly discourse on the contextual integration of Islamic law and education in minority contexts. It underscores the importance of systematic, community-based strategies to strengthen Islamic family identity and enhance Muslim minorities' constructive participation in Japanese society.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, Japan has experienced a gradual yet noticeable growth in its Muslim population, reflected in the increasing visibility of mosques, halal facilities, and family-based Muslim communities across major cities. This social development creates opportunities for exploring how Islamic family law principles can be integrated into the family education of minority Muslims in Japan. A demographic study by Waseda University (Otaki & Takai, 2023) estimates that there are approximately 350,000 Muslims living in Japan, of whom about 20% (around 50,000–60,000) are native Japanese Muslims. The emergence of Islamic centers such as Tokyo Camii in

the Yoyogi-Uehara area of Tokyo demonstrates the growing institutional presence of Islam, functioning as both a place of worship and a hub for cultural and educational exchange.

Over the past two decades, Japan has experienced a rapid trend of Islamization, marked by an increasing number of converts and the strengthening role of multi-generational Muslim families as primary spaces for transmitting Islamic values. This condition opens opportunities for integrating Islamic family law into the Islamic education of minority Muslims in Japan. According to a population study published by Waseda University last year, the number of Muslims in Japan is estimated to be around 350,000. Of this number, approximately 20%, or 50,000–60,000, are native Japanese Muslims (Otaki & Takai, 2023). Their presence has become more visible with the development of Islamic centers, one of which is Tokyo Camii in the Yoyogi-Uehara area of Tokyo. This mosque, managed by the Turkish community, is known as one of the most beautiful mosques in Japan. Its beauty makes Tokyo Camii not only a center of worship but also a popular religious tourism destination. Every month, around 20 Japanese people declare the shahada and become converts at this mosque. Of the total 50,000–60,000 Japanese Muslims, most are second- or third-generation children from international marriages or individuals who were originally foreigners and have acquired Japanese citizenship (Bogiarto, 2025). This indicates that the process of Islamization is increasingly spreading through cross-cultural family lines.

Islamic family law needs to adapt to Japan's changing demographics, especially given the rapid growth in its Muslim population—a trend set to accelerate under supportive immigration policies. In June 2023, the Kishida administration expanded its Specified Skilled Worker Type 2 visa program, enabling qualified foreign workers to bring family members and potentially attain permanent residency (Ministry of Justice Japan, 2023). Japan has signed recruitment agreements with 16 countries, including many Muslim-majority nations such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Kyrgyzstan and even India, which contributes over 200 million Muslims (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan, 2023). Consequently, a large share of incoming foreign workers is likely to be Muslim, fueling substantial growth in Muslim family presence. This demographic shift highlights the need to integrate Islamic family law into Japan's Islamic education framework. As Muslim families become more numerous, there is a greater demand for educational systems that preserve Islamic identity in a context very different from traditional Muslim-majority societies, while also responding to Japan's multicultural and regulatory environment.

Integrating Islamic family law into Islamic education in Japan requires a careful identification of various challenges facing the Muslim community. The growth in the number of Muslim families, differing views on the roles of family and offspring, and the dynamics of dawah through interfaith marriages are crucial issues that need to be analyzed in depth. These challenges not only affect the continuity of Islamic family law practices but also determine the extent to which Islamic values can be integrated into the lives of Muslim families in Japan. The first challenge relates to the increasing number of Muslim families in Japan. This trend is influenced by the growing generation

of Muslims born in Japan as well as incoming Muslim migrants (Kotani et al., 2022). In the long term, a region may experience significant demographic shifts, with the Muslim community potentially becoming one of the dominant groups. This change contrasts with trends in modern societies in developed countries, such as Japan or European nations, where birth rates have drastically declined. Many individuals, especially women, choose not to have children due to economic difficulties, the burden of childcare, or the influence of liberal thought emphasizing individual freedom (Okai & Takahashi, 2023). From a liberal perspective, happiness is often understood as living freely, without family or child-related obligations.

The second challenge to integrating Islamic family law into Japan's legal framework arises from divergent views within Muslim communities about family and reproduction. Having numerous children is perceived not only as fulfilling religious obligations but also as part of a demographic strategy to strengthen Muslim presence in society. This belief positions procreation as both a spiritual duty and a strategic contribution to the Muslim population, thereby enabling migration to rapidly shift demographic structures in host countries (Lan & Minjeong, 2024). Such tendencies have already been observed in several European nations, where Muslim populations continue to expand significantly; current estimates show Muslims accounting for around 10–20% of the population, and projections suggest that by 2050, in countries like Sweden, one-third of the population could be Muslim, with the possibility that Muslims will become the majority within the next 20–30 years (H. Okai & Takahashi, 2023). The third challenge involves mechanisms for population growth through dawah and interfaith marriage. Dawah is viewed as a religious obligation to invite non-Muslims to Islam, while interfaith marriage sometimes labeled as “love jihad” in public discourse becomes another route for increasing the Muslim population, as Islamic law requires the non-Muslim spouse to convert and ensures that children born from such marriages are Muslim (Sari & Nasution, 2023; Katsura, 2022). These interconnected dynamics of migration, procreation, and religious conversion signal that the Muslim minority in Japan has considerable potential for continued population growth. Understanding these challenges highlights the need for a more systematic and strategic integration of Islamic family law into Islamic education in Japan, ensuring that demographic changes align with appropriate religious guidance and social adaptation.

Recent research on Islamic family law in the context of Muslim minority countries highlights three main trends. First, Islamic family law is understood as a way of thinking for individuals and communities, which not only preserves normative aspects but also serves as a strategy to foster critical awareness and Islamic family values in Muslim minority contexts (Nasohah, 2023; Okai, 2021; Ono, 2021). Second, Islamic family law is seen as a guideline and source of Islamic values that serve as principles for addressing environmental challenges and the influence of non-Muslims in minority settings (Ardilla et al., 2023; Harnowo & Habib, 2024; Silawati et al., 2024; Wahyuni, 2024). Third, Islamic family law is used as a means to meet the specific needs of minority Muslims, not only for survival but also as subjects of inclusive Islamic dawah, enabling them to internalize the values of Islamic family law and spread

positive influence within predominantly non-Muslim societies (Alnoor et al., 2024; Begum et al., 2024; Uzumor, 2021). However, to date, there has been no in-depth study examining how the principles of Islamic family law can be effectively integrated into the practical life of Muslim minority families in Japan. Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyze this issue comprehensively, with the expectation that the practice of Islamic family law can be consistently implemented within the context of the Muslim minority community in Japan.

The potential implementation of Islamic family law is crucial for Muslim minority contexts such as Japan, where opportunities reflect a dynamic socio-religious reality: although Muslim communities face structural and cultural limitations as minorities, parts of Japanese society remain open and supportive of Muslim presence, especially toward Muslim women who engage actively in public life (Maulanida & Syaf'ie, 2024). This situation shows a universal condition in which societies are always divided between those who are open-minded and willing to understand Islam beyond stereotypes and those whose views remain narrow. Within this setting, Muslim families hold a key role in maintaining *ukhuwah* through community-based activities that prevent isolation among minority believers. Japan, as a multicultural nation, hosts diverse Muslim populations from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Arab regions, Egypt, Africa, Indonesia, and Europe who contribute to various professional sectors (Alturki et al., 2022). However, for Muslims, residency in Japan should not be driven solely by economic motives; *dawah* must also be prioritized to strengthen Islamic identity and family values. Therefore, *dawah* initiatives need flexible formats, such as study circles held on weekdays or weekends to match diverse work schedules. The success of integrating Islamic family law is largely determined by internal motivation: those with strong intent will continue pursuing religious learning despite challenges, while those with weaker drive may struggle even when opportunities are available (Adegoke, 2021). Language barriers further complicate this process, as limited English or Japanese proficiency restricts outreach and often confines *dawah* to specific ethnic groups within the Muslim community (Srimulyani, 2024). Thus, identifying the opportunities and obstacles becomes essential to ensure that Islamic family law can be effectively integrated into family education among Muslim minorities in Japan.

Previous studies on Islamic family law in East Asia have mainly focused on legal adaptation and institutional recognition in Muslim-majority contexts such as Indonesia and Malaysia (Ismail et al., 2024; Lestari et al., 2024; Sarwar, 2025). By contrast, studies examining the integration of Islamic family law within Muslim family education in minority contexts—particularly Japan—remain limited, indicating the need for a deeper exploration of how Muslim families interpret, adapt, and apply Islamic family norms in daily life within a secular and multicultural society. This study, therefore, investigates the key challenges faced by Muslim families in integrating Islamic family law into their family education practices in Japan and explores the opportunities and adaptive strategies that arise from cross-cultural and minority settings to facilitate this integration. Theoretically, it contributes to the socio-legal understanding of Islamic family law by framing it as a dynamic process of value

negotiation and transmission within transnational Muslim communities, with findings expected to enrich the discourse on Islamic legal pluralism and family education in minority Muslim societies.

Method

This study employed a qualitative, descriptive-analytical method to provide an in-depth understanding of how Islamic family law is integrated into the family education of Muslim minorities in Japan. This approach was chosen because it enables detailed exploration of the ways minority Muslim families incorporate Islamic family law, including the challenges they encounter and the opportunities they use. The study utilizes both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through direct observation at NU At-Taqwa Mosque and NU At-Taqwa Islamic Boarding School in Koga, Ibaraki, Japan, conducted from July 20–29, 2024, as well as from the experiences and interviews of convert Muslim families in Japan and information obtained from podcasts and webinars available on the YouTube platform. In addition, photographic documentation of activities was used to reinforce the research findings. Secondary data include literature related to Islamic family law, gathered through an academic review of articles, books, and other scholarly sources. The combination of primary and secondary data provides a comprehensive foundation for understanding the dynamics of Islamic family law integration within the lives of Muslim minority families in Japan.

Data collection was conducted through literature review, observation, and documentation of Muslim community activities, particularly at NU At-Taqwa Mosque and NU At-Taqwa Islamic Boarding School in Koga, Ibaraki. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis to identify, categorize, and examine recurring themes and patterns from both primary and secondary data, such as identity challenges, family education practices, and opportunities for dawah. Data validity was ensured through triangulation by comparing and confirming information from various sources to guarantee accuracy, relevance, and comprehensiveness. This analysis aims to evaluate the practice of Islamic family law integration in the education of minority Muslim families in Japan and to provide recommendations for strengthening religious education strategies for minority Muslims, based on Islamic family law that is adaptive to the Japanese social context.

Results and Discussion

Personal Spiritual Transformation as the Entry Point of Legal Integration

The integration of Islamic family law into Islamic education in Japan is largely practiced through lived experiences of Muslims, as reflected in the journey of Koichiro Sugimoto, a Japanese convert who stated that to truly understand Islam, one must first live as a Muslim. His personal transformation shows that integration often begins at the individual level rather than through formal institutional mechanisms. Sugimoto identifies himself as a “Muslim samurai,” illustrating a synthesis between Japanese cultural values such as bushidō honor, discipline, and loyalty and Islamic moral principles. This cultural adaptation enables Islamic family values to be internalized within

existing social frameworks, fostering a more harmonious model of religious integration. From an educational perspective, his experience underscores the importance of experiential learning, where daily Islamic practice instills virtues like sincerity, responsibility, and moral discipline. Sugimoto narrates, "My name is Koichiro Sugimoto. Sugimoto is my family name, and the Sugimoto clan descends from samurai. I was born in Gifu, known for its sword-making tradition. So, I can be called a 'Muslim samurai.' Because of this, I decided to embrace Islam." He converted in 1997, before the events of September 11, when Japanese society generally had limited awareness of Islam. His parents did not oppose his choice; his mother simply said, "If you want to believe, then believe." However, after the post-9/11 global shift in perceptions, they became more concerned. Sugimoto's story illustrates that integrating Islamic family law in Japan requires not only knowledge transmission but also positive family and community reception, demonstrating that Islam can be practiced as a comprehensive and culturally adaptable way of life.

The integration of Islamic family law into Muslim family education in Japan is also reflected in the experience of the Yusha Yuta Koinuma family, which demonstrates how the personal transformation of a convert can positively influence family dynamics while reinforcing Islamic values of communication and harmony. Yusha's journey began in 2018 during a visit to Morocco, where he heard a Qur'anic recitation while riding in a taxi; the beauty of the recitation touched his heart and made him feel that it was not just a song or poem but the word of Allah. This spiritual encounter led him to embrace Islam, and after converting, he conveyed his new faith to his family not only verbally but also through changes in behavior and communication. Previously experiencing difficulty in connecting with his family due to cultural pressure and stress, Yusha found that Islam taught him responsibility and affection toward family members, which gradually improved their relationship. His mother noticed these positive changes, felt happiness, and later embraced Islam, followed by his grandfather. Yusha continues to hope that his father and siblings will also be guided to Islam. Committed to his faith, he now actively engages in dawah, influencing many friends and acquaintances who subsequently converted to Islam. After four years as a Muslim, he describes experiencing profound peace and spiritual comfort. Yusha's experience shows that integrating Islamic family law in Japan does not rely solely on formal institutions but can occur through daily family interaction and the demonstration of Islamic moral values, enabling Islam to be understood as a framework that strengthens familial bonds and supports harmonious living (Daneshpour, 1998; Eidrup, 2025; Mohadi, 2023).

The practice of integrating Islamic family law into family education in Japan is increasingly finding room for development through the experiences of migrant Muslims and converts, where religious life is not limited to mosques but is rooted within the family as the primary institution for transmitting Islamic values across generations. This dynamic is reflected in the experience of Faisal, a French-Moroccan Muslim who has lived in Japan for four years and has observed the rapid growth of Muslim communities in various regions of the country. Today, halal products are widely available not only in major cities but

even in local supermarkets, sourced from countries such as Australia and Brazil as well as produced domestically in areas like Hokkaido and Nagoya. He recounts that mosque attendance continues to rise each year; during Eid al-Fitr, the congregation becomes so large that the mosque must hold four separate prayer sessions starting from 7:00 a.m. This environment provides him with a sense of belonging, as he can easily meet fellow Muslims and immediately receive warm hospitality, such as being invited to share a meal. For Faisal, the mosque and Muslim community serve as an extension of the family where Islamic values are internalized through solidarity, togetherness, and everyday interactions. Although some assume that Japanese society is highly racist or xenophobic, his personal experience suggests otherwise any negative attitudes he has encountered are no different from those found in Europe and are generally directed at foreigners rather than Muslims specifically. His experience demonstrates that the integration of Muslim families in Japan occurs not only in public spaces like mosques, markets, and community centers but also increasingly within the household, allowing Islamic family law to develop as a sustainable value system that guides daily family life.

Guidance for New Converts and Institutional Roles in Legal Integration

In the context of integrating Islamic family law into family education in Japan, mosques play a crucial role as centers of learning as well as community development for Muslims. Observations indicate that one of the active places fulfilling this function is the Nusantara Akihabara Mosque in Tokyo. This mosque not only serves as a venue for studying Islamic family law through lessons delivered by ustadz, but also functions as a center for dynamic religious activities. In addition to congregational prayers, the mosque frequently organizes study sessions featuring Islamic figures from Indonesia. For example, on March 1, 2025, Ning Alissa Wahid attended a study session that was broadcast live on the YouTube channel of PCINU (Pengurus Cabang Istimewa Nahdlatul Ulama) Japan.

The Nusantara Akihabara Mosque also serves as a center for new converts (mualaf center), providing intensive guidance to those who have recently embraced Islam so that they can gain a deeper understanding of the teachings, including aspects of Islamic family law. In addition, there are other mosques and institutions with similar functions, such as Al-Ikhlâs Kabukicho Mosque, NU At-Ta'qwa Mosque in Koga, Ibaraki, and NU At-Ta'qwa Islamic Boarding School in Koga, Ibaraki. An important role is also played by PCI NU Japan, which actively promotes Islamic family law through educational and economic programs, aiming to strengthen community initiatives, improve welfare, and foster solidarity among Muslim families and minority Muslim communities in Japan.

Furthermore, various cultural and social activities initiated by PCI NU Japan also contribute to strengthening the integration of Islamic family law. Programs such as Osaka Bershalawat and Ibaraki Bershalawat, the organization of Friday prayers at NU At-Ta'qwa Mosque in Koga, Ibaraki, and creative economic initiatives like the launch of Bakso Koga, demonstrate how Islamic family law is practically integrated into daily life. These activities not

only reinforce religious identity but also create spaces of togetherness that strengthen the networks of Muslim families and communities in Japan. Thus, the practice of integrating Islamic family law in Japan is realized not only in formal education but also through mosque activities, guidance for new converts, and community programs based on culture and economy. This indicates that the integration of Islamic family law can serve as an important means to enhance the resilience of Muslim families while also building a positive image of Islam in Japan.

Spiritual Resilience and Mental Well-being through Islamic Family Education

One of the significant opportunities for integrating Islamic family law into Islamic education in Japan lies in Islam's ability to offer a spiritual orientation that can alleviate the pressures of Japanese society. As expressed by Sheikh Ahmad Maeno Naoki, an administrator of the Japan Muslim Association and a volunteer at Tokyo Camii Mosque, "But the reality of living in Japan often makes people feel they must always 'read the air' (kuuki o yomu), pay attention to others' opinions, or fear social judgment. Living like this burdens many people with the 'eyes of others.' However, for a Muslim, this is not the primary burden. Of course, as a member of society, a Muslim still maintains norms and etiquette. But he does not live in fear of human judgment. What matters most is only the judgment of Allah." This statement highlights a fundamental difference between the Japanese societal perspective and Islam in interpreting life. While Japanese society heavily relies on social norms, Islam provides a point of focus on the relationship with Allah, freeing individuals from excessive psychological pressure. It is unsurprising that data show that in Japan, suicide cases once exceeded 30,000 per year for more than a decade, though recently it has decreased to around 20,000 per year. This figure remains high compared to Muslim-majority countries, where suicide rates are significantly lower. As Sheikh Ahmad Maeno emphasized, "Islamic teachings almost 99.9% guarantee a life free from stress." In this context, education integrated with Islamic family law plays a strategic role as a means of internalizing mental resilience for Muslims in Japan.

Another strategic opportunity in integrating Islamic Family Law into Islamic education in Japan can be seen through the perspectives of imams and Muslim activists who deeply understand Japanese social and cultural dynamics. Ahmad (Abu Hakeem) Naoki Maeno, an imam of the Japan Muslim Association, emphasizes that debate-oriented persuasion and aggressive "street dawah" approaches are unsuitable for Japanese society, which values subtlety and harmony in social interaction. This highlights the need for a more respectful, persuasive, and culturally adaptive dawah model. However, the number of Japanese converts actively engaged in dawah remains limited, while second-generation Muslim activism is gradually increasing. Several factors contribute to this situation. First, the Japanese social mentality reflected in the proverb "the nail that sticks out gets hammered" makes converts cautious about appearing too different from their environment. Second, many converts lack strong support and accompaniment from immigrant Muslim activists. Another ongoing problem is a dawah pattern focused only on encouraging non-Muslims to recite the shahada without providing sufficient post-conversion

guidance, making the process more self-satisfying than genuinely beneficial for the convert's long-term religious development. In reality, the most challenging period in a convert's journey comes after embracing Islam, when they need continuous mentoring, community belonging, and reinforcement of Islamic family values. Therefore, the opportunity to integrate Islamic Family Law in Japan lies in strengthening holistic education and consistent support systems for Muslim families, ensuring that faith, family responsibilities, and cultural adaptation can grow harmoniously within the Japanese social context.

Experiential Learning and Moral Imitation in Islamic Family Values

The integration of Islamic family law into family education in Japan can also be seen through the firsthand experiences of converts who witness how Islamic values are practiced in daily life, as illustrated by Koichiro Sugimoto. He recalled being deeply impressed by the strong family values he observed in a Muslim community: harmony not only among parents and children but also among extended relatives such as uncles, aunts, nephews, and cousins, who remained tightly connected despite living in remote villages with limited economic resources. What amazed him even more was the warmth and hospitality they showed toward him as a foreigner inviting him into their homes, serving sweet drinks like teh tarik, and treating him with great respect and kindness. This led him to question why strangers could be so welcoming, and his reflection brought him to the understanding that such attitudes stem directly from Islamic teachings. Values such as honoring guests, mutual care, and cross-cultural brotherhood are inherent elements of Islamic family law that are demonstrated through everyday behavior. As a 19-year-old Japanese youth at the time, Sugimoto was inspired by how people who spoke different languages and came from diverse backgrounds could form such close bonds. This experience motivated him to learn more about Islam by reading the Qur'an thoroughly, page by page, to ensure he understood its teachings critically and clearly. His year-long process of inquiry and reflection eventually led him to embrace Islam. Sugimoto's journey demonstrates that integrating Islamic family law in Japan is effectively achieved through real-life examples and the embodiment of Islamic family values that strengthen social and familial relationships.

Regarding the way of integrating Islamic family law into the education of Muslim families in Japan, Ahmad (Abu Hakeem) Naoki Maeno, an imam from the Japan Muslim Association, explained that besides the hospitality and kindness of the Muslim families he encountered, they also engaged in direct dawah. Kindness is indeed important, but it does not stop there. They also give gifts, such as copies of the Qur'an, for study and reflection. "This is a very beautiful approach. The father of the family gave a Qur'an and said, 'Reflect on it yourself.' This method made me think more deeply." Conversely, a different experience came from the son of the same family, who approached with a persuasive style, almost like a debate. According to Maeno, that approach felt pressuring and unpleasant. From the same family, he received two different experiences: the father provided space for independent thinking, while the son emphasized argumentation. From this experience, Maeno emphasized the importance of giving individuals the opportunity to read and reflect on the

Qur'an themselves, rather than relying solely on media or people who dislike Islam. However, he also stressed that there must first be a personal relationship before delivering a message. It is inappropriate for someone to suddenly come, knock on a door, and hand out a book or brochure. Such an approach is unsuitable, especially in the context of Japanese society. Thus, this experience demonstrates that Islamic education integrated with family law can be an effective means, provided it is conducted through a wise approach that allows space for individual reflection.

The same pattern of integrating Islamic family law into family education in Japan can also be seen in the experience of Kyoichiro Sugimoto, who actively introduces Islamic family values to both his own family and the wider Japanese society. He emphasizes that the family must become the foundation of dawah, especially in the midst of Japan's demographic crisis, where many young people avoid marriage due to excessive concern over financial burdens. Islam, however, views marriage and children as blessings (rizq) from Allah, not as material liabilities, and teaches that sustenance for every child is guaranteed by Allah. Sugimoto believes this principle of Islamic family law offers a positive alternative to Japan's declining birthrate and weakening family structure. Although some non-Muslim Japanese express concerns about how Muslim children are raised, he responds with clear explanation and by setting a good example. At his dawah center, many people come to learn about Islam, and he uses a method acquired from the Islamic Education and Research Academy (iERA) known as G.O.R.P.—God's existence, Oneness of God, Revelation, and Prophethood—as a structured approach to introduce Islam. His dawah also focuses on his own family; after more than two decades of patient dialogue, persistent kindness, and navigating tensions, his parents eventually embraced Islam. Although they are now elderly and rarely attend the mosque, they have declared the shahada. Sugimoto's story demonstrates that the integration of Islamic family law in Japan can be achieved through consistent example, wisdom, and compassionate communication within the family, enabling Islamic values to take root gradually and meaningfully in the Japanese context.

Transformation and Religious Commitment in Cross-Cultural Marriage

The integration of Islamic family law into Islamic education in East Asia, particularly in Japan, encounters both challenges and opportunities in the practice of cross-cultural marriages, such as the Hussain family (Arab-Japanese). One informant shared his experience: "When I met my wife, of course we spoke in English, not Japanese. Even now, I still cannot speak Japanese. Fortunately, she studied English in college, so communication was fluent." Their marriage initially took place only in a civil form, as his wife had not yet embraced Islam (*Extracted from Zoom interview uploaded on YouTube: "EP 98 – Intercultural Marriage (Japanese & Arab), How Is That Possible?! ft. Hussein," Ameen Omar channel, August 2025* (Youtube Ameen Omar, 2021)). He added: "At that time, I was already married to my wife civilly Islamic marriage had not yet occurred. She was not yet Muslim, and I was still not very religious. The civil marriage was only for administrative purposes." The change began when he discovered seriousness in practicing religion, which in turn

inspired his wife. "She has known me for a long time and knew I was the type who was difficult to change. But when she saw me completely transform—from someone who was not very concerned about religion to someone who prays and is committed," he explained. This story underscores that Islamic family law is not merely a matter of legality but also serves as a means of instilling Islamic values within cross-cultural households.

The integration of Islamic family law into the education of Muslim families in Japan can also be manifested through Islamic cultural expression, as reflected in the experience of Yusha Yuta Koinuma, a convert who recognizes that practicing Islam in Japan is not always easy. Challenges such as the limited availability of prayer spaces, halal food, and a supportive worship environment shape a unique struggle for Muslims like him. However, Yusha manages to harmonize Islamic values with his artistic talent. Formerly a musician and songwriter before embracing Islam, he often pondered profound questions in his music about the purpose of life, human destiny after death, and the meaning of this world. After discovering Islam, he felt that the answers to such existential inquiries were clearly provided in the Qur'an, giving him both comfort and enlightenment. This spiritual transformation motivated him to continue his musical journey through nasheed, using art as a medium of dawah. He collaborates with Japanese Muslim artists and translates some of his lyrics into Japanese to reach a wider audience through social media. For Yusha, dawah does not have to rely solely on lectures or written works but can also take shape through creative expression that touches people's hearts. He realizes that Islam in Japan still lacks strong roots, which is why he hopes for support from Muslims worldwide, including Indonesia, to foster better communication with Japanese society and dispel negative stereotypes that associate Muslims with violence. Yusha Koinuma's experience demonstrates that integrating Islamic family law can take place through cultural creativity, helping strengthen social ties and deepen understanding of Islam within Japanese society.

Qur'anic Translation and Linguistic Adaptation as Tools for Integration

There was a small but very significant moment that became the turning point in integrating Islamic values within the cross-cultural Hussain family (Arab–Japanese). The husband recalled that while they were walking in Thailand during Asr time, he found a mosque and prayed while his wife waited outside. Afterward, he noticed a shop selling Islamic items, including an Arabic–English Qur'an, which he bought and gave to his wife, simply saying, "Read this." He admitted that, despite being born Muslim, he was still very new to dawah and did not yet possess deep religious understanding, even feeling uncertain about the legal status of their marriage. All he could do was hope that she would open the Qur'an. A few days later, he witnessed an unexpected sight: his wife sitting downstairs during Fajr, reading the Qur'an. When asked what she was reading, she answered that she had begun the chapter Al-Baqarah, using the English translation. She explained that although she had previously learned about Christianity in school due to American influence, the stories she learned never made sense to her, whereas what she found in the Qur'an felt logical and coherent. Then came a statement

that struck deeply: “If this book is so important, why do most Muslims not read it?” The husband could only respond with quiet honesty, acknowledging that many Muslims do not fully live by the teachings of the Qur'an. Since that moment, her interest in Islam continued to grow, and a few months later she pronounced the shahada and officially became Muslim. This narrative shows that integrating Islamic family law in cross-cultural families does not always begin in formal education but can emerge from simple experiences and genuine daily interactions.

The story above highlights the importance of the Qur'an as a medium for dawah in conveying Islamic family law to Japanese society. In this context, Kyoichiro Sugimoto has made significant efforts by translating the Qur'an into Japanese and distributing more than 10,000 copies across Japan. Sugimoto explained that, to support dawah, he was directly involved in translating the Qur'an together with Dr. Mizutani, an Arabic language expert. For two full years, they spent approximately four hours each day after prayers to ensure the translation was both accurate and easy to understand. The goal was clear: to convey the Qur'an's message in reader-friendly language, especially for non-Muslim Japanese, in order to eliminate misunderstandings about Islam.

Previously, there had indeed been translations of the Qur'an in Japanese. However, the language used was considered too traditional and difficult for the general public to understand. Therefore, Sugimoto and his team produced a new translation under the title *Yasashii Nihongo Qur'an*, which means “The Qur'an in Easy Japanese.” In daily teaching at the dawah center, he often selects verses relevant to the context of Japanese society. One example is QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13, which explains that Allah created humans from a male and a female, then made them into nations and tribes so that they may know one another. This verse is highly universal, and when recited in Japanese with contextual adaptation, it becomes easier for the community to understand.

In the translation process, Sugimoto also took linguistic aspects into consideration. The Japanese language has three types of scripts—hiragana, katakana, and kanji (Chinese characters). Therefore, he tried to minimize the use of kanji, which is often considered difficult, to make the text simpler and more accessible for general readers. From this translation effort, more than 10,000 copies of the Qur'an have been distributed throughout Japan, from Hokkaido in the north to Kyushu in the south. Sugimoto has even visited 38 to 39 prefectures to collaborate with local Muslim communities in distributing these Qur'ans. Sugimoto's efforts demonstrate that the practice of integrating Islamic family law can be realized through the use of language media that is appropriate to the local context, allowing the Qur'an to serve as a comprehensible guide for life, especially for Muslim families in Japan.

Cross-Cultural Family Openness as a Gateway for Integration

Another important opportunity for integrating Islamic family law into Islamic education in Japan can be found within cross-cultural family spaces, where religious values can develop relatively more freely. For example, in a Japanese-Arab Muslim couple, the wife's parents did not object to the international marriage (Sari & Nasution, 2023). They are known to be very

simple and open-minded. Even when the wife decided to convert to Islam, they showed no resistance. They simply said, "That is her choice, and we have no problem with it." In Japanese culture, it is usually not easy for someone to have full freedom in making life choices, especially regarding religion. However, the wife's family demonstrated a different pattern—more flexible compared to most Japanese families. In the view of Japanese families, after turning 18, a person attains a kind of "full freedom," similar to American culture. However, this freedom essentially shifts: after leaving family rules, individuals are still expected to comply with social and workplace norms. For instance, a boss at work becomes a figure to be respected and obeyed. Thus, the structure of obedience remains, only at a different stage. This experience shows that a family's openness in accepting religious choices can serve as a gateway for integrating Islamic family law within Japanese Muslim families, even though Japanese society generally emphasizes adherence to cultural norms (Ulfah, 2023).

The Japanese are fundamentally influenced by Buddhism, particularly in holistic and spiritual practices. However, outsiders often simplify Japan as a country of Shinto followers (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2025). In reality, the religious landscape in Japan resembles that of European societies who identify as Christian but are no longer actively practicing. Many Japanese identify as Buddhists, yet most do not practice consistently. Thus, religious teachings function more as culture than as binding spiritual beliefs. Shinto itself is mostly associated with clergy or specific ceremonial events. For example, during celebrations, people visit shrines, lay flowers, and perform rituals (Kavanaugh & Jong, 2022). However, these practices do not permeate everyday religious life in the way Buddhism does; they exist more as a traditional heritage. A similar phenomenon is seen in Christmas celebrations in Japan: widely observed but understood as cultural rather than as an expression of faith. This indicates that the Japanese generally do not have religion in the sense of deep spiritual conviction (Yang, 2025). This becomes a challenge for integrating Islamic family law into education, as Islam is understood not merely as a legal system, but as a way of life uniting creed, worship, and social conduct.

On the other hand, Japan has a unique culture. Many people consider Japanese society to be highly polite, clean, and orderly. This is indeed true, partly thanks to a strong educational system. From an early age, children in schools are taught manners, cleanliness, respect for parents and elders, as well as social concern through mutual assistance (Takayama, 2020). These values, in essence, bear similarities to Islamic teachings. However, for Japanese society, all of this is understood solely as cultural norms, not as part of religion. Problems arise due to the lack of a solid spiritual foundation. These values persist more because of social pressure than religious awareness (Kacprzak & Ziemiańczyk, 2019). As a result, violations of cultural norms often lead to social ostracism. This situation is similar to what American society once experienced, where strong social values eventually eroded due to the absence of a sustainable spiritual basis, giving rise to individual freedom in determining values. Japan, although still maintaining strong cultural norms, also faces the possibility of these values eroding over time, since their main foundation is

merely social construction rather than religious teaching (Tikhomirov & Kuznetsova, 2019). This situation illustrates both challenges and opportunities in the integration of Islamic family law into Islamic education in Japan. On one hand, strong cultural norms without a spiritual basis pose the risk of a void in transcendental values within families and education. On the other hand, the similarity between Japanese cultural norms and Islamic values can serve as an entry point to strengthen the integration of Islamic family law through education.

The future challenge for the integration of Muslim family law in Japan lies in ensuring that such integration is understood and practiced as authentic Islam, rather than evolving into a mere sect or version of Islam fully adapted to local culture (Garg & Singh, 2023). There is indeed a tendency to create a “Japanese version of Islam,” which involves adapting Islamic teachings to fully align with the lifestyle of the local community. However, a dilemma arises because Islam is *syumul* (comprehensive): it does not recognize a separation between the sacred and the profane (Lee & Johnson, 2025). On the other hand, Islam is truly an international religion, with universal teachings that apply across nations and cultures. In this context, it is important to emphasize that Islam rejects racism. Racism is not only a major social challenge in America but also a real issue within Muslim families in Japan. On this basis, it is fully believed that Islamic da'wah in Japan must be delivered in the Japanese language (Fathil & Fathil, 2011). Only in this way can the message of Islam be understood authentically, without losing its comprehensive and universal nature, while remaining relevant to the socio-cultural realities of Muslim families in Japan.

Muslim families in Japan need concrete examples of Islamic lifestyle practices that can serve as direct role models. The aim is for Muslim families in Japan to realize that Islam never separates faith from daily life. This differs from most other religions, which tend to confine religion to the realm of rituals while placing daily life aspects separately (Dewi et al., 2023). Islam, on the contrary, rejects such separation. By integrating Islamic family law into everyday educational systems, Islam can be understood as a *complete way of life*—a holistic way of living (Putri, 2024). Through this approach, Muslim families in Japan can see how Islamic family law is not only practiced in mosques but also present in daily life: in the workplace, within the family, and in social interactions.

The integration of Islamic family law into Islamic education in Japan lies in the existence of a dialogical space between Islam and local culture. Islam in Japan does not aim to erase local culture but rather to filter and correct it so that it aligns with the values of *tauhid* (the oneness of God). When Muslim families live in Japan, they are required to respect existing customs (Bibik, 2025). For example, Japanese people rarely shake hands, so adjustments are made in a more polite manner according to their habits, without diminishing the essence of Islamic family law. This demonstrates that Islamic values can adapt contextually without losing their substance. In addition, many positive elements of Japanese culture can harmonize with Islamic teachings (Nakhleh et al., 2008). For instance, martial arts are regarded as a way of life rich in ethics, honor, and discipline. Ironically, many Japanese stop at these values

and feel satisfied, without pursuing a deeper search for truth. Islam, however, teaches all of these values on the foundation of *tauhid* and direct connection to the Creator (Anis, 1998). Naturally, Japanese people are inherently religious, even if many are unaware of it. They have a sense of gratitude toward their surrounding environment, an attitude that can serve as an entry point for Islamic education. However, that sense of gratitude is not yet fully connected to God (Yamashita, 2021). This situation differs from societies like the United States, which still retain a heritage of belief in the One God through Judeo-Christian traditions. Thus, the opportunity for integrating Islamic family law into education in Japan lies in the ability to bridge positive cultural values with universal Islamic principles, thereby shaping Muslim families who are steadfast in faith while remaining in harmony with their social context (Asrori et al., 2025).

The Role of Mosques in Integrating Islamic Family Law in Japan

Currently, there are around 80 to 100 mosques in Japan. Some mosques are open to the public through open house programs aimed at non-Muslims to introduce Islam, including Islamic family law. For example, Tokyo Camii not only functions as a place of worship but also serves as a tourist destination due to its beautiful architecture. The mosque regularly organizes tours and introduces Islamic teachings to the Japanese public. However, the majority of mosques in Japan remain relatively closed, focusing primarily on internal congregants. As a result, mosques have not yet fully functioned as open centers for da'wah accessible to the wider society (Mousa, 2024). An open approach is crucial in the context of integrating Islamic family law into education because it demonstrates Islam as a religion that touches all aspects of life, including the family. Nevertheless, the number of new Muslims in Japan continues to grow day by day. This indicates a significant opportunity for Islam to develop. However, the greatest challenge lies in follow-up. Guiding someone to pronounce the *shahadah* is relatively easy; many people are willing to embrace Islam (Badawi, 2023). Yet after that, continuous guidance is needed for them and their families, particularly in learning prayer, understanding the fundamentals of Islam, and internalizing the values of Islamic family law in daily life. Therefore, the integration of Islamic family law into Islamic education in Japan requires a precise da'wah strategy so that the values of Islamic family law can take root in the lives of Muslim families in Japan.

Based on field interviews conducted at NU At-Taqwa Mosque in Koga Ibaraki and Nusantara Mosque in Akihabara, Tokyo, two distinct dynamics among Muslim families were identified. First, the Sinohara Michihiko family, which initially had a highly materialistic orientation, reported a transformation toward religious commitment after actively participating in mosque-based religious activities and learning to read the Qur'an independently through YouTube, despite limited access to Islamic teachers. Second, several respondents with religious backgrounds described an increase in the number of Muslim convert families who have undergone changes in their religious practices. According to Fatan Abdillah, Head of the Mualaf Center of PCINU Japan, there are approximately 10,000 converts to Islam in Japan, most of whom embraced Islam due to marriage, while around 1,000 others

converted for personal reasons unrelated to marriage. However, many converts rarely attend mosques because of language barriers and difficulties in understanding Islamic teachings findings consistent with previous studies (Agha et al., 2024; Zulfikar, 2016). These findings highlight that maintaining faith and identity among Muslim families in Japan greatly depends on community engagement, the support of religious institutions, and the availability of structured and accessible Islamic family education. Within the framework of analyzing the integration of Islamic family law into Muslim family education in Japan, two types of families with different dynamics can be identified. First, there are families that initially had a highly capitalist mindset. However, after interacting with the Muslim community in Japan, they underwent significant changes and developed into devout Muslim families. Second, there are families with a religious background, known for strongly practicing Islamic teachings, but when living in Japan, they became trapped in a non-Islamic environment. As a result, their Islamic identity experienced drastic shifts, even to the point of abandoning *shari'i* practices, such as removing the hijab (Zulfikar, 2016).

This situation shows that the greatest challenge for integrating Islamic family law is ensuring that Muslim families remain solid in maintaining their faith and identity amidst minority life. Families need to be kept within the circle of *ukhuwah* so that Islamic values can be consistently transmitted from parents to children. On one hand, living as a minority can serve as a driver for stronger faith due to the awareness of preserving one's identity. On the other hand, this situation can also lead families into the currents of secularization that weaken religious bonds. Ultimately, it depends on the choice of the Muslim family itself: whether to remain consistent in adhering fully to the principles of Islamic family law or to be swept along by environmental influences that may erode their Islamic identity (Agha et al., 2024). Thus, this analysis emphasizes that family education based on Islamic family law plays a central role in shaping the spiritual, moral, and identity resilience of Muslims in Japan.

Conclusion

This study examines has examined the integration of Islamic family law into Muslim family education in Japan, emphasizing its vital role in shaping social, spiritual, and religious identity within a minority context. The analysis demonstrates that this integration takes three interconnected forms: (i) household-based integration, where families transmit Islamic legal and ethical values through daily practices, worship routines, and communication patterns; (ii) mosque-based integration, where religious learning, da'wah programs, and family-oriented activities foster community cohesion; and (iii) network-based integration, where transnational linkages, digital platforms, and organizations such as PCI NU Japan sustain educational continuity and identity resilience among Muslims. The study further identifies enabling factors—including strong transnational networks, organizational support from PCI NU Japan, and culturally adaptive approaches through social and economic engagement—as well as inhibiting factors, such as limited mosque openness, linguistic barriers, and the secular orientation of Japanese institutions. These dynamics

indicate that integration is not a uniform process but one continuously negotiated through adaptation and collaboration. Moreover, the interaction between Islamic family law and Japan's secular legal framework emerges as a critical dimension, where Muslim families navigate marriage registration, inheritance, and child education through informal strategies that balance religious observance with civic compliance. Two developmental trajectories of Muslim families were identified: those who experienced spiritual revitalization after community engagement and those who faced identity weakening under secular pressures—both revealing that family education grounded in Islamic law functions as a key mechanism for sustaining faith and moral integrity in a non-Muslim majority context.

Despite these findings, this study acknowledges several limitations: it focuses primarily on urban Muslim communities and relies on qualitative data, which may not fully represent rural or undocumented populations. Future research could expand through longitudinal analyses of convert families, comparative studies with other minority contexts (for example, Korea or Europe), and quantitative assessments of educational impact. Building on these insights, this study recommends several operational steps to enhance the integration of Islamic family law into family education in Japan: developing mosque-based family curricula that combine Islamic legal principles with Japanese family ethics; establishing aftercare and mentorship programs for converts (*mualaf*); introducing legal-referral and counseling protocols to help Muslim families navigate Japanese civil procedures; producing bilingual educational materials (Japanese–Indonesian/Arabic) to bridge linguistic gaps; and implementing Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks to ensure program effectiveness. Ultimately, integrating Islamic family law into Muslim family education represents both a legal-cultural adaptation and a spiritual renewal process that strengthens identity resilience, reinforces moral values, and fosters constructive Muslim contributions to Japanese society—laying the foundation for a more inclusive and dialogical coexistence between faith and nation.

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