

CONVERGENCE OF ISLAMIC LIFE VALUES AND SOCIAL ETHICS OF JAPANESE SOCIETY: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF CLEANLINES, COLLECTIVITY, HONESTY, DELIBERATION, AND LEARNING ETHOS

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the intersection between Islamic values and social ethics practiced in Japanese society. This study is important because Japan is often perceived as a society with a low level of formal religiosity, but in its social practices demonstrates a number of strong moral values, such as cleanliness, collective responsibility, honesty, careful decision-making, and respect for knowledge. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach based on literature study. The primary data are sourced from verses of the Quran, Islamic literature, and references on Japanese culture and society, while analysis is carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results of the study indicate that Japanese social values cannot be directly described as Islamic practices, but have ethical convergence with Islamic teachings, particularly in five aspects: maintaining cleanliness and the environment, mutual assistance and group orientation, honesty in social and work life, deliberation or careful decision-making, and a spirit of seeking knowledge and continuous improvement. Thus, this article asserts that the relationship between Islam and Japanese society is better understood as a universal value alignment, rather than a claim to religious identity. This study contributes to cross-cultural studies, character education, and the understanding of Islam as a value system capable of dialogue with the social practices of non-Muslim societies.

Keywords: Islamic values; Japanese society; social ethics; cross-cultural; character education

INTRODUCTION

Life values are an important foundation in shaping human behavior and social order. Values exist not only as abstract concepts of good and bad, but also serve as guidelines that direct how people view themselves, others, their environment, work, and life together. From a cultural perspective, values often exist at a level that is not always directly visible, but they influence people's decisions, habits, and interaction patterns. Rokeach (1979) defines values as beliefs that guide choices of action, while Liliweri (2014) emphasizes that values are a hidden part of culture that influences social action. Therefore, the study of values is important for understanding how a society constructs its social ethics, including when these values are compared with the teachings of a particular religion.

This study begins with the central question of the relationship between the values of life taught in Islam and those practiced in Japanese society. The Islamic values examined include cleanliness, honesty, prudence in action, deliberation before making decisions, mutual assistance, and the drive to increase knowledge. This focus is relevant because these values are not only normative in Islamic teachings but can also be observed as social practices in certain societies, including Japanese society.

This study needs to be positioned carefully. Japanese society cannot be simply defined as a society that practices Islamic teachings, as Islam is not the majority religion in Japan. However, a number of social ethics that have developed in Japanese society demonstrate intersections with Islamic moral teachings. Therefore, a more appropriate term is not "unconscious application of Islam," but rather "value convergence," namely the encounter between normative Islamic values and Japanese social practices within the realm of universal ethics. This approach is more academically neutral because it avoids overly absolutist religious claims.

Japan has a complex religious history. Japanese religious traditions have evolved through various layers, including folk beliefs, Shinto, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Christianity, and various new religious movements (Earhart, 2014). Official Japanese statistics also indicate that the number of adherents according to religious organizations may exceed the population because individuals may be registered with more than one religious tradition or community (Statistics Bureau of Japan, 2024). In other words, Japanese religiosity is often layered, ritualistic, and cultural, and not always identical to formal faith claims as understood in Abrahamic religious traditions.

In the context of Islam in Japan, contemporary studies indicate that Islam remains a minority religion, although the Muslim community continues to grow due to migration, study, employment, marriage, and improvements in religious facilities. Tanada (2025) estimates that the Muslim population in Japan will continue to increase in 2024–2025, while Yamashita (2022) emphasizes that Islam in Japan is often accepted not only as a theologically practiced religion, but also as a foreign culture within the framework of Japanese multiculturalism. This condition shows that the relationship between Islam and Japan can be interpreted not only from the number of adherents, but also from how Japanese society understands, accepts, or frames values considered close to Islam.

One of the most prominent points of contact is the value of cleanliness and environmental concern. Islam places cleanliness, the prohibition against damaging the earth, and environmental responsibility as part of the ethics of life. This value is evident, among other things, in QS. Al-Qasas [28]:77, QS. Al-A'raf [7]:56, and QS. Ar-Rum [30]:41–42, which emphasize the prohibition against causing damage to the earth and the obligation to do good (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). On the other hand, Japanese society is known for its habit of maintaining environmental cleanliness, sorting waste, cleaning school spaces, and building public discipline in waste management. The relevance of this issue remains strong because the Japanese Ministry of the Environment reports regularly on the progress of municipal waste management as part of national environmental governance (Ministry of the Environment, Japan, 2025).

The next point of contact is the values of collectivity, mutual assistance, and social responsibility. In Islam, the principle of ta'awun or mutual assistance in goodness is one of the foundations of social life, as reflected in QS. Al-Maidah [5]:2 and QS. Ali Imran [3]:103 (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). In Japanese culture, group orientation is one of the important characteristics of social life. De Mente (2004) explains that in the traditional Japanese context, a person is often understood first as a member of a group, while individual rights are placed second to responsibilities to the group. The practice of cooperation, group responsibility, and the tendency to prioritize social harmony are part of a strong social ethic.

Besides cleanliness and collectivity, honesty is also an important aspect in comparing Islamic values with Japanese society. Islam views honesty as a primary moral principle related to faith, trustworthiness, and integrity. In the Japanese context, the value of honesty is evident in work ethic, professional responsibility, discipline, and social norms that foster public trust. Bellah (1985) shows that the roots of Japanese work ethics cannot be separated from the configuration of Tokugawa values, including discipline, responsibility, and moral orientation in social life. Therefore, honesty in Japanese society can be read as a social ethic that parallels Islamic teachings on *sidq* and *amanah*.

Another important aspect is caution in decision-making. Islam teaches the principle of *tabayyun*, which is to carefully examine information before making a decision, as stated in QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 6 (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). This value can be compared to the practice of collective decision-making in Japanese organizational culture, for example *ringiseido*, which is a gradual approval process through consideration of various parties before a final decision is made. *Ringi* is not the same as *tabayyun* conceptually, but both have ethical similarities in terms of caution, collective consideration, and efforts to reduce errors in social actions (Sagi, 2015).

The final value of concern is the ethos of learning and continuous improvement. Islam places knowledge as the foundation of human progress, as reflected in the command to read in QS. Al-'Alaq [96]:1 and the encouragement to transcend the limits of human capabilities through knowledge in QS. Ar-Rahman [55]:33 (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). In Japanese society, the value of learning is realized through the education system, discipline, training, self-evaluation, and principles of continuous improvement such as *kaizen* and *hansei*. Imai (1986) popularized *kaizen* as the idea of continuous improvement, while in Japanese culture *hansei* is related to self-reflection to correct shortcomings.

Based on this description, this article aims to analyze the convergence of Islamic life values and Japanese social ethics through five main themes: cleanliness and environmental awareness, collectivity and mutual assistance, honesty, careful decision-making, and a learning ethos. The focus of this article is not to argue that Japanese society practices Islamic teachings, but rather to demonstrate that Islamic values have room for dialogue with the social practices of non-Muslim communities through the realm of universal ethics. With this approach, this study is expected to contribute to cross-cultural studies, character education, Japanese studies, and the understanding of Islam as a value system open to analysis within a broader social context.

METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature review method. This approach was chosen because the objects of study, namely the concept of Islamic life values and the practice of social ethics in Japanese society, are not analyzed through quantitative measurements, but rather through the interpretation of relevant texts, documents, and literature. Descriptive research aims to systematically describe a phenomenon through the process of collecting, grouping, analyzing, and interpreting data so that the relationship between phenomena can be understood more deeply (Surakhmad, 1982; Sugiyono, 2014). In the context of this article, the phenomenon being studied is the convergence between normative Islamic values and socio-cultural values that have developed in Japanese society.

The subject of this research is Islamic values, while the object of study is the values reflected in Japanese society. The research focuses on five main themes: cleanliness and environmental awareness, mutual assistance and collectivism, honesty, careful decision-making, and an ethos of learning and self-improvement. These five themes were chosen because they provide a clear basis for comparison between Islamic teachings and Japanese social practices.

The research data consists of primary and secondary data. Primary data include verses from the Quran, Islamic literature explaining Islamic moral values, and primary books discussing Japanese society, culture, and social ethics. Secondary data include journal articles, scientific references, supporting books, and other written sources relevant to the study of Japanese values, culture, religion, and society. Data collection techniques were carried out through literature review, namely tracing, reading, recording, and classifying written sources related to Islamic life values and Japanese life values.

The data analysis procedure was carried out in three stages as modeled by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014): data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. The first stage is data reduction, which involves selecting literature directly related to Islamic values and Japanese social values. At this stage, data irrelevant to the focus of the article is eliminated to sharpen the analysis. The second stage is data presentation, which involves organizing the data into thematic categories, such as the values of cleanliness, cooperation, honesty, prudence, and learning ethos. The third stage is drawing conclusions, which involves formulating patterns of relationships between Islamic teachings and Japanese social practices based on value congruence, rather than claims of religious identity.

The analysis was conducted using a comparative-interpretive approach. The comparative approach was used to compare the values contained in Islamic teachings with those found in Japanese social practices. The interpretive approach was used to interpret the meaning of this relationship academically so that the analysis results do not fall into the generalization that Japanese society formally practices Islamic teachings. Therefore, this article uses the term "value convergence" to explain the ethical meeting point between Islam and Japanese society. This terminology provides a more neutral analysis because it positions Islam as a source of normative values and Japanese society as a socio-cultural context with specific ethical practices.

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation. Triangulation was conducted by comparing information from Islamic sources, Japanese cultural literature, and supporting academic references. In this article, source triangulation was strengthened by comparing relevant Quranic verses with literature on Japanese culture and society, then critically interpreting the relationship between the two to avoid forced interpretation.

To maintain the objectivity of the analysis, this study establishes interpretive limitations. First, the similarities in values between Islam and Japanese society are not interpreted as evidence that Japanese society implements Islam theologically. Second, Japanese social practices are understood as products of Japanese history, culture, education, social ethics, and public policy. Third, Islamic teachings in this article are positioned as a framework of moral values with universal dimensions, such as cleanliness, honesty, responsibility, deliberation, and the pursuit of knowledge. With these limitations, this article aims to produce a balanced, critical, cross-cultural reading that complies with the principles of scientific publication.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the literature analysis indicate that there are five main domains that demonstrate the convergence between Islamic life values and Japanese social ethics, namely cleanliness and environmental awareness, collectivity and mutual assistance, honesty and work ethic, carefulness in decision-making, and learning ethic and continuous improvement. These five domains are in line with the research focus that places the values of cleanliness, honesty, caution, consideration in decision-making, and the spirit of increasing knowledge as the main points of analysis.

In general, values in this study are understood as the basis of cultural orientation that influences how a society judges something as good, right, proper, clean, just, or valuable. Values can be considered hidden elements in culture that influence human decisions and actions even though they are not always explicitly apparent in everyday behavior (Rokeach, 1979; Liliweri, 2014). Therefore, this discussion not only examines the superficial similarities between Islam and Japanese society but also interprets the ethical meanings underlying these social practices.

Cleanliness, Environmental Care, and the Prohibition of Destroying the Earth

The first finding shows a strong convergence between Islamic teachings on cleanliness and the prohibition of causing damage to the earth with Japanese social practices in protecting the environment. In Islam, this value can be traced through QS. Al-Qasas [28]:77, QS. Al-A'raf [7]:56, and QS. Ar-Rum [30]:41–42 which emphasize the importance of doing good, not causing damage, and being aware of the consequences of human actions on nature (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). These values can be compared with the habits of Japanese people who maintain cleanliness of the house and surrounding environment, sorting waste, and instilling responsibility for cleanliness from school age.

In the Islamic context, cleanliness can be understood not only as a physical act but also as part of spiritual and social ethics. The prohibition against causing damage to the earth demonstrates humans' moral responsibility towards the environment. This value is ecological because it positions humans not as absolute rulers of nature but as those who must maintain the balance of life.

In Japanese society, the value of cleanliness emerges as a social culture institutionalized through daily habits, education, and public regulations. The practice of sorting waste, maintaining public spaces, taking home personal trash, cleaning classrooms, and maintaining environmental order demonstrates that cleanliness is understood as a shared responsibility. Waste management in Japan is also part of public policy; the Japanese Ministry of the Environment's report on municipal waste management indicates that waste issues are systematically monitored through annual national data (Ministry of the Environment, Japan, 2025).

The convergence between Islam and Japanese social ethics in this aspect lies in a shared moral orientation: cleanliness and environmental sustainability are human responsibilities. The difference lies in the basis of legitimacy. In Islam, these values stem from revelation and human responsibility to God. In Japanese society, these values are more developed through cultural norms, education, public

policy, and collective consciousness. Thus, the similarities found are not theological, but rather ethical congruence between Islamic teachings and Japanese social practices.

Collectivity, Mutual Assistance, and Social Responsibility

The second finding relates to the values of mutual assistance and collective orientation. In Islam, this value can be traced to the principle of *ta'awun*, which refers to working together in goodness and piety. This principle is reflected in QS. Al-Maidah [5]:2 and QS. Ali Imran [3]:103, which emphasize cooperation in virtue, unity, and the prohibition of disunity (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). In Japanese society, comparable values are evident in group orientation, team responsibility, and a tendency to prioritize common interests over personal interests.

De Mente (2004) explains that in traditional Japanese contexts, individuals are often understood primarily as members of a group, with individual rights secondary. Japanese society also places more responsibility on the group than solely on the individual. This social system fosters a sense of self-effacement, prioritizing harmony, and fostering a willingness to work together.

From an Islamic perspective, mutual assistance not only means helping in a practical sense but also fostering moral solidarity. Anyone with knowledge, energy, wealth, or social skills is encouraged to use them for the common good. In Japanese society, the principle of collectivism operates through social norms that encourage individuals to act in harmony with the group, maintain harmony, and avoid harming others.

This discussion requires critical consideration. The group orientation of Japanese society is not always identical to Islamic moral ideals. Japanese collectivism can also have problematic aspects, such as high social pressure, a culture of shame, or the difficulty of individuals expressing dissenting opinions. Therefore, the convergence that can be drawn lies in its positive aspects, namely cooperation, caring, social responsibility, and a willingness to prioritize the common good. Thus, Islamic and Japanese social values converge in the realm of social ethics, but remain distinct in their historical and philosophical contexts.

Honesty, Work Ethic, and Moral Integrity

The third finding shows a similarity between the value of honesty in Islam and the work ethic of Japanese society. In Islam, this value can be linked to QS. Al-Ahzab [33]:23–24 on keeping promises and being truthful, and QS. Al-Furqan [25]:67 on moderation in spending wealth (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). These values can be compared to the Japanese work ethic, which emphasizes discipline, honesty, thrift, and moral responsibility in both social and economic life.

In Islam, honesty, or *sidq*, is a core value closely linked to faith, trustworthiness, and social responsibility. Honesty applies not only to speech but also to work, transactions, promises, wealth management, and social relationships. Therefore, honesty in Islam is comprehensive, affecting human relationships with God, oneself, and society.

In Japanese culture, honesty often manifests itself in the form of work integrity, discipline, professional responsibility, and adherence to rules. Bellah (1985) points out that Japanese moral traditions, including the Tokugawa shogunate and Confucianism, have influenced the formation of social discipline and work ethics. These values demonstrate that economic activity and work in

Japanese society are not solely understood as seeking profit, but also relate to reputation, honor, and social responsibility.

The convergence between Islam and Japanese society in this regard can be seen in the idea that economic activity and work should not be separated from morality. Islam emphasizes honesty as a spiritual and social obligation, while Japanese society places honesty as part of social trust, reputation, and professional responsibility. In this article, honesty serves as an important bridge between religious and cultural ethics. Both reject manipulative behavior, deceit, and betrayal of responsibility, despite their different normative bases.

Prudence, Tabayyun, and Consensual Decision Making

The fourth finding relates to caution in decision-making. In Islam, this principle can be linked to QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:6, which emphasizes the need to verify information before acting to avoid harm or regret due to wrong decisions (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). This value can be compared to the practice of ringiseido, or decision by consensus, in Japanese organizational culture.

Ringiseido is described as a decision-making system that involves gradual discussion from lower levels to higher management. A proposal is circulated, reviewed, considered, and approved by various parties before a final decision is reached. Sagi (2015) explains that the ringi system is a decision-making process typical of Japanese management that uses a bottom-up approach to build consensus and reduce the dominance of autocratic decisions.

In Islam, tabayyun emphasizes validating information before taking a stance. This value is crucial for preventing slander, misjudgment, and actions that harm others. Meanwhile, ringiseido emphasizes collective processes to avoid unilateral decisions and reduce organizational risk. The two are conceptually distinct, but they share ethical common ground: sound decisions must arise from clear information, careful consideration, and an awareness of their impact on others.

This value is highly relevant to the context of character education and modern management. In an era of rapid information, the principle of tabayyun and the practice of consensual decision-making teach the importance of verification, discussion, and accountability. However, this article also needs to note that excessive caution can slow down decisions. Therefore, the value to be gained is not simply the slowness of the process, but rather the quality of the considerations before making a decision.

Learning Ethos, Kaizen, Hansei, and Continuous Improvement

The fifth finding relates to the ethos of learning and continuous improvement. In Islam, this value can be linked to QS. Al-'Alaq [96]:1 concerning the command to read and QS. Ar-Rahman [55]:33 concerning the encouragement to transcend the limits of ability through the power of knowledge (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). This value can be compared to Japanese society, which places education, literacy, and knowledge development as essential elements in national progress.

Japanese society is known for its strong learning culture. Reischauer (1978) emphasized the importance of education in the success of Japan's modernization. In addition to formal education,

Japanese society also embraces a culture of practice, discipline, self-evaluation, and continuous skill development. These values are further exemplified through the principles of kaizen and hansei. Kaizen is understood as continuous improvement, while hansei is understood as continuous reflection or self-improvement. Imai (1986) popularized kaizen as a principle of continuous improvement that involves multiple levels of the organization and encourages small but continuous improvements.

The convergence with Islam is evident in the view that humans must continue to learn and improve themselves. The command to read in QS. Al-'Alaq [96]:I can be interpreted not only as a basic literacy activity, but also as a symbol of the opening of human scientific and intellectual awareness. In Japanese society, the value of learning is realized through discipline, practice, self-evaluation, and an orientation towards quality improvement. Thus, Islam and Japanese culture converge on the idea that knowledge is the basis for personal and social progress.

However, this discussion must be guarded against romanticizing Japan. Japanese learning culture also has its drawbacks, such as high academic pressure and social demands. Therefore, the relevant focus in this article is on the spirit of learning, discipline, reflection, and continuous improvement, as universal values that align with Islamic teachings.

Synthesis of Findings

Based on these five themes, the research results indicate that the relationship between Islamic values and Japanese social values can be understood as ethical convergence. Islamic values are derived from revelation and have a normative-theological basis, while Japanese values develop through history, education, work culture, social norms, and public policy. Although their sources differ, the two can converge on a number of universal values, such as cleanliness, responsibility, honesty, prudence, cooperation, and the pursuit of knowledge.

Table 1. Synthesis of the convergence of Islamic values and social ethics of Japanese society

Value Domain	Values in Islam	Japanese Social Practices	Form of Convergence
Cleanliness and environment	Prohibition to destroy the earth, command to do good, responsibility towards nature	Waste sorting, environmental cleanliness, hygiene education since school	Ecological and social responsibility
Collectivity and mutual assistance	Ta'awun, unity, social concern	Group orientation, teamwork, social harmony	Solidarity and shared responsibility
Honesty and work ethic	Sidq, trustworthiness, keeping promises, living without excess	The ethos of diligence, honesty, thrift, a combination of economics and morals	Personal and professional integrity
Caution in decisions	Tabayyun, verify information before acting	Ringiseido, gradual deliberation, consensual decision	Decision making based on careful consideration

Learning ethos	The command to read, seek knowledge, increase human capacity	Education, kaizen, hansei, continuous improvement	Knowledge as the basis for progress and self-improvement
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This synthesis reinforces the position that Japanese society should not be described as "unconsciously practicing Islam," as such a term could potentially evoke apologetic overtones and lack academic neutrality. A more appropriate formulation for scholarly articles is that there is a universal correspondence between Islamic teachings and Japanese social ethics. This formulation is more robust for scholarly publications because it places Islam and Japanese culture in an equal, critical, and non-exaggerated scholarly dialogue.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study demonstrates a convergence of values between Islamic teachings and Japanese social ethics, particularly in aspects of cleanliness and environmental stewardship, mutual assistance, honesty, prudence in decision-making, and an ethos of learning and self-improvement. These values in Islam are derived from normative religious teachings, while in Japanese society they are formed through history, culture, education, social norms, and collective ethics. Therefore, the similarities found cannot be interpreted as evidence that Japanese society practices Islamic teachings theologically, but rather as a form of universal value congruence that can exist in different cultural contexts. Thus, this article confirms that Islam as a value system has ample scope for dialogue with non-Muslim cultures, including Japanese culture. This convergence demonstrates that moral values such as cleanliness, integrity, social responsibility, deliberation, and the pursuit of knowledge are humanitarian principles that can form the basis for cross-cultural character education. These findings also reinforce the importance of a critical and proportionate comparative approach in examining the relationship between religion, culture, and social practices.

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