

Strengthening the Identity of Muslim Immigrants in Taiwan through Socio-Religious Activities: A Guidance and Counseling Approach and Islamic Religious Education

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Abstract

The phenomenon of global migration has encouraged Muslims to settle in various countries with non-Muslim majorities, including Taiwan. In this multicultural and secular country, immigrant Muslim communities face challenges in maintaining their Islamic values amidst the flow of cultural acculturation and pressures of social integration. In this context, Muslim communities, particularly those under the auspices of the Pingtung Branch of PCINU, play a crucial role as agents of non-formal education that strengthen religious identity. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the dynamics of non-formal education carried out by immigrant Muslim communities in Taiwan. The results show that religious activities such as regular religious study groups, quranic recitation, commemoration of Islamic holidays, skills training based on Islamic values, and social activities based on charity and mutual cooperation held at the end of each month, serve as important vehicles for the transmission of Islamic values. More than just religious rituals, these activities create participatory and contextual learning spaces for immigrant Muslims to revitalize their self-confidence as Muslims in a culturally diverse environment. This non-formal education has also successfully strengthened solidarity among community members, increased social awareness, and fostered cultural dialogue with the local community. Thus, the Muslim community in Taiwan has not only survived but also actively contributed to creating a harmonious and inclusive religious life.

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of globalization and human mobility between countries has increased the number of immigrant Muslim communities in various parts of the world, including Taiwan. The existence of immigrant Muslims abroad presents new socio-cultural dynamics and challenges in maintaining Islamic identity in a non-Muslim majority society. Islamic religious education strategies play a crucial role in shaping and maintaining Muslim identity in the era of globalization. Through education, Islamic values and teachings can be instilled in the younger generation from an early age, helping them understand and internalize their religious identity (Fikri, 2024). This is where the crucial role of informal education strategies becomes very significant through socio-religious activities. The sources of Islamic education referred to here are all references or references from which emanate knowledge and values that will be internalized in Islamic education. To formulate educational goals in the Islamic world, it must be taken into account that the arrival of Islam marked a new beginning for humanity (Suriyati, 2016).

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In immigrant communities, education often takes alternative, more contextual forms, such as through participatory and inclusive community-based socio-religious activities, not just formal settings. Such educational strategies include Quranic recitation activities, congregational prayers, celebrations of Islamic holidays, and Arabic and Quranic classes. Strategy refers to all means and resources used to address specific objectives under specific conditions to achieve maximum desired results (Hidayat et al., 2021). Strategies that can be used in immigrant communities that reflect cultural diversity include organizing extracurricular activities that promote diversity and involving parents and the community in socio-religious activities (Risa et al., 2024). Social activities such as community service and fundraising are also included. These activities reinforce the spiritual aspect. These activities also build collective awareness and solidarity among community members. This is accompanied by providing multicultural character education, which must begin with the individual. This principle emphasizes that multicultural character education begins with discovering who we are (Hayat et al., 2025). It is crucial to foster a sense of pride as Indonesians, even while living in another country as Muslim immigrants.

Socio-religious activities serve as a strategic space for immigrant Muslims in Taiwan to strengthen their Islamic identity, build social networks, and transmit Islamic values to the younger generation. Active participation in religious activities can positively impact an individual's mental well-being and quality of life (Suswandy & Thursina, 2023). This informal yet effective educational mechanism for fostering religious commitment and strengthening a sense of belonging to the global Muslim community is formed through social interactions within these activities.

Thus, this study aims to examine socio-religious activities. These activities are implemented as an educational strategy to strengthen Islamic identity among immigrant Muslims in Taiwan. This research is expected to contribute to the development of a relevant non-formal education model within the context of the Muslim diaspora by understanding the role and dynamics of these activities.

METHODS

This research was conducted with a qualitative approach using a case study method to describe in depth how socio-religious activities play a role in strengthening Islamic identity among immigrant Muslims in Taiwan. Case studies also aim to provide a detailed description of a specific environment, item, or event (Muttaqin et al., 2024). The research location focused on the immigrant Muslim community in Taiwan, specifically the Pingtung Branch of PCINU (Nahdlatul Ulama Special Branch), which is the center of Muslim community activities in Taiwan. Data were collected through participant observation in various community religious activities, in-depth interviews with religious leaders, community volunteers, and active community members. The researcher also analyzed activity documents, social media posts, and religious da'wah and training materials used by the community. The data analysis technique used was thematic analysis, supported by data triangulation from various sources to ensure the validity and depth of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Guidance, Counseling, and Islamic Religious Education

Strengthening Islamic identity is a fundamental aspect of the lives of immigrant Muslims, particularly in minority areas like Taiwan. In a society dominated by secular culture and non-Muslim beliefs, Muslim communities both migrant workers and students-face challenges in maintaining religious values, worshipping openly, and fostering social cohesion without losing their identity. Islamic identity development programs, such as those initiated

by PCINU Taiwan and its autonomous organizations, such as GP Ansor, are a key pillar in addressing these challenges.

This support includes regular religious study groups, practical *fiqh* education, Islamic skills training, social and spiritual activities, and faith-based counseling. These activities not only provide a normative understanding of Islam but also help individual Muslims integrate Islamic values into their daily lives amidst vastly different social contexts. According to Peek in the journal *Sociology of Religion*, religious identity in diaspora communities develops through three stages: ascribed identity (family inheritance), chosen identity (a conscious decision to practice religion), and declared identity (visible social expression) (Peek, 2005).

In Taiwan, religious activities provide space for immigrant Muslims especially young people to advance to the third stage, namely articulating their Islam through social action, public worship, and community involvement. This approach is supported by the theory of Phinney (1990) in the *Journal of Adolescent Research* (Scopus), which emphasizes that the formation of ethno-religious identity requires exploration and active involvement in the community. This means that activities such as thematic Islamic studies, *tadarus* (Islamic religious study), celebrations of Islamic holidays, and community service are not only rituals, but also arenas for identity exploration that strengthen individual beliefs (Phinney & S, 1990).

Community Counseling and Identity Resilience

From a counseling perspective, the Cultural Identity Theory model, explains that cultural identity (including religion) is constructed through social interactions and reinforced through collective narratives (Hecht, 1993). In this context, community-based mentoring activities serve as a safe space for immigrant Muslims to consciously and reflectively reconstruct their identities. Furthermore, Islamic preaching and education can serve as forms of community religious counseling. According to a study by Tanhan and Young (2021) in the *Journal of Religion and Health* (Scopus Q2), spirituality-based counseling in minority communities has a positive effect on psychological resilience, social connectedness, and life satisfaction. This is particularly relevant for Muslim migrant workers in Taiwan, who frequently experience psychosocial stress, alienation, and discrimination (Tanhan & Young, 2021).

Integrative Strategies in a Multicultural Context

Strengthening Islamic identity is not only focused on theological aspects, but also on social adaptation. Study materials are designed to suit the context of life in Taiwan, such as *minority fiqh*, ethics of working in a non-Muslim country, and cross-cultural interactions. This strategy aligns with the concept of Contextual Islamic Education developed by Niyozov & Memon in the *Comparative Education Review*, which emphasizes that Islamic education in diaspora communities must be contextual, transformative, and responsive to local challenges (Niyozov & Memon, 2011). In this activity, religious leaders and community facilitators act as cultural brokers connectors between Islamic values and local realities. They not only convey knowledge but also accompany individuals in living an Islamic life that is applicable, moderate, and open. Strengthening Islamic identity through religious activities and community mentoring in Taiwan is an integrative and transformative strategy. With a community based approach, counseling, and contextual education, this activity is able to bridge the gap between the heritage of Islamic values and the dynamics of diaspora life. In the long term, this strategy not only maintains the continuity of Islamic identity, but also creates a Muslim community that is inclusive, resilient, and able to coexist peacefully in a multicultural society.

According to Mulyadi et al., (2023) Islamic religious education contributes significantly to the formation of the religious identity of immigrant Muslims, especially for the younger

generation and pre- youth who are in the phase of searching for their identity. In Taiwan, non-formal religious activities such as regular religious studies, Al-Qur'an halaqah, discussions on Islamic moral values, and religious value-based skills training are effective media in strengthening the confidence of young Muslims in their faith. These activities also help them reinterpret Islamic values contextually in a pluralistic and secular environment.

Furthermore, this mentoring addresses not only cognitive aspects but also affective and social aspects. The existence of Muslim communities like the PCINU Pingtung Branch provides a safe space for expression, discussion, and mutual support in practicing religious life amidst varying environmental pressures. Through a community-based educational approach, this mentoring fosters strong social solidarity, strengthens cultural resilience, and enhances the resilience of Muslim identity within the diaspora.

Forms of Socio-Religious Activities Carried Out by Immigrant Muslim Communities as a Strategy for Strengthening Religious Identity in the Context of Taiwan's Multicultural Society

The research findings show that the socio-religious activities carried out by the immigrant Muslim community in Taiwan, particularly the Pingtung Branch of PCINU, are diverse and structured in an informal yet consistent manner. These activities include:

Routine Recitation and Thematic Islamic Studies

This activity is held every weekend and coordinated by religious leaders and community volunteers. The material presented covers the basics of faith, jurisprudence, worship, and Islamic values that are contextualized to life in Taiwan. These regular religious study activities and thematic Islamic studies must utilize a variety of effective strategies to create and achieve successful da'wah in all aspects of community life (Pratama, 2023). One of the challenges of da'wah itself is how to preach to a multicultural, multiethnic, and multiprofessional society, and even how to face human modernity through current contemporary issues that have penetrated both young and old.

Regular Islamic study groups and thematic Islamic studies are among the most strategic instruments in maintaining and strengthening the Islamic identity of the immigrant Muslim community in Taiwan. These activities are held every weekend and coordinated by religious leaders, community volunteers, and administrators of local Islamic organizations such as the Pingtung Branch of PCINU. The material presented covers not only the fundamentals of faith, jurisprudence, and worship, but also Islamic values contextualized within the socio-cultural context of Taiwan's multicultural and secular society.

In this context, religious study groups serve not only as a medium for transmitting Islamic teachings in a normative manner, but also as a social space for shaping the identity, solidarity, and spiritual resilience of immigrant Muslims. As Pratama (2023) emphasized, successful da'wah in the global era requires adaptive, dialogical, and contextual strategies. Da'wah cannot be merely one-way, instructive; it must be communicative and address the real needs of the target community, which comprises diverse ethnic backgrounds, professions, and religious experiences.

Thematic religious studies that address contemporary issues such as the challenges of being a Muslim in a non-Muslim country, Islamic work ethics, cross cultural family management, and interfaith relations have a unique appeal for participants. These studies not only provide religious understanding but also equip the community with practical insights for navigating everyday life. Thus, da'wah becomes an empowering, educational process.

This approach also aligns with the theory of Contextual Religious Education developed by Grimmitt (2000), which states that religious education must be adapted to the socio-cultural context of students to be more relevant and meaningful. In this regard, regular

religious study not only strengthens spiritual aspects but also builds critical awareness of the surrounding social and cultural conditions, and encourages the integration of Muslims into Taiwanese society without losing their religious identity (Grimmitt, 2000).

Furthermore, this activity serves as social and spiritual therapy for migrant workers experiencing psychological stress, high workloads, and limited access to religious services. Interactions between community members during religious study sessions create strong social support and strengthen a sense of belonging to the Muslim community. This is crucial for strengthening the resilience of Islamic identity amidst diaspora life.

Thus, regular Islamic study groups and thematic Islamic studies are not merely religious rituals, but also effective strategies for non-formal education, spiritual counseling, and cultural outreach. Through a contextual and participatory approach, these activities can address the challenges of modern outreach, strengthen Islamic integrity, and build a resilient and inclusive Muslim community within the global community.

Quran Recitation: A Spiritual Effort of Taiwanese Muslim Immigrants in Maintaining Identity and Mental Resilience

Amidst the hustle and bustle of life as migrant workers in Taiwan, the Muslim community in the Pingtung Branch of PCINU has embraced Quranic recitation as a contemplative space that keeps them connected to their spiritual roots and Islamic values. This recitation program is not simply a recitation of holy verses, but rather a collective effort to nurture their faith, strengthen their religious identity, and fill the emotional and spiritual void that often arises in diaspora life. Many of the participants are migrant workers employed in domestic work, manufacturing, or agriculture. Their long and tiring work routines confront psychological stress, limited social interaction, and cultural alienation. This is where recitation serves as a spiritual oasis, providing serenity, inner structure, and direction in life. They gather during breaks, in small prayer rooms, shared rented houses, or even online through WhatsApp and Zoom groups, to recite Quranic verses in turn. Their voices may be imperfect, but they are full of sincerity and longing.

From a religious humanist perspective, *tadarus* can be understood as a continuous spiritual recovery process for individuals living far from their cultural environment. According to Unang (2018), *tadarus* plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's religious identity by internalizing the values of the Quran as a moral foundation for everyday life. In this context, *tadarus* is not merely a religious ritual but also a means of developing character, emotional resilience, and social morality. From an Islamic educational perspective, *tadarus* also serves as a form of inclusive and participatory community-based non-formal education. Participants with limitations in reading the Quran are not shunned but instead are accompanied and motivated to continue learning. There are dimensions of mentoring, deliberation, and empathy that strengthen spiritual solidarity among members. This process aligns with the principles of peer learning and spiritual companionship, providing a collective learning space without formal pressure. In addition to maintaining the ability to read the Quran, this activity also opens up space for in-depth reflection on the meaning of the holy verses in the context of their lives in Taiwan. When they read verses about patience, honesty, or justice, the meaning feels deeply relevant to the reality of living as a minority in a foreign country. Thus, *tadarus* becomes a source of moral and ethical inspiration that helps them live their days with integrity and hope.

Furthermore, *tadarus* also contributes to creating a more tolerant and harmonious society. A strong and spiritually guided Islamic identity will create inclusive Muslim individuals, open to cross cultural interactions, and upholding universal humanitarian values.

Commemorating Islamic Holidays: A Space for Expression and Strengthening the Collective Identity of Muslim Immigrants in Taiwan

Celebrating Islamic holidays such as *Eid al-Fitr*, *Eid al-Adha*, the Prophet Muhammad birthday, and *Isra Mi'raj* are not merely annual rituals performed as a form of obedience to Islamic teachings. For the immigrant Muslim community in Taiwan, particularly those under the auspices of the Pingtung Branch of PCINU, these activities are special moments rich in emotional, spiritual, and social significance. In a foreign land, the celebration of Islamic holidays serves as a spiritual bond, a space for nostalgia for one's culture of origin, and most importantly a means of strengthening an inclusive Islamic identity in a multicultural environment (Makhzuniyah et al., 2024; Yusuf, 2021; Yusuf et al., 2024).

Living far from their families and communities of origin, many immigrant Muslims experience a sense of identity isolation. Collective religious celebrations address this need by providing a warm gathering space where they can openly express their faith without feeling isolated. Activities such as congregational prayer, the recitation of the Prophet's birthday (*Maulid Nabi*), religious lectures, and the sharing of regional specialties (such as ketupat, rendang, or satay) not only create a sacred atmosphere but also alleviate homesickness.

According to Mulyadi et al (2023), Islamic holiday celebrations within diaspora communities play a strategic role in building a more inclusive and tolerant religious identity. In the multicultural context of Taiwan, dominated by non-Muslims, these celebrations serve as a medium for peaceful representation of Islam. The Muslim community demonstrates that religiosity does not have to be exclusive and rigid, but can be welcoming, open, and communicative.

From the perspective of the sociology of religion, these activities create what is known as "community rituals," collective activities that strengthen social solidarity. When individuals celebrate Islamic holidays together, they not only strengthen interpersonal relationships but also foster a collective sense of shared identity as Muslims. This sense of togetherness is crucial for building community resilience, particularly in the face of social and cultural challenges in the diaspora.

Furthermore, Islamic holiday celebrations often involve local non-Muslim residents, whether as honored guests, coworkers, or neighbors. These interactions foster intercultural dialogue that fosters mutual understanding and breaks down stereotypes. The sharing of halal food, warm smiles, and openness in explaining the meaning of worship create a positive image of Islam and its followers. Thus, these celebrations also serve a peaceful and down to earth cultural missionary function.

By integrating spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions, the commemoration of Islamic holidays in Taiwan not only preserves tradition but also creates a space for affirming a strong, tolerant, and contextual Islamic identity. This is an adaptive strategy of the diaspora Muslim community in upholding religious values while building peace amid the complexities of globalization and plurality.

Social and Religious Activities: Integrating Spirituality, Community Counseling, and Strengthening the Identity of Muslim Immigrants in Taiwan

Activities carried out by the immigrant Muslim community in the PCINU Pingtung Branch and Rijalul Ansor PAC GP Ansor Pingtung have a very rich dimension not only as a form of religious expression, but also as a mechanism for community counseling, strengthening religious identity, and sowing social values. These activities include *Istighosah* at the beginning of the month, Rijalul Ansor *dhikr* and prayer assemblies, *Yasin* and *Tahlil* recitations, *Manaqib Syaikh Abdul Qodir Jailani*, *Rotibul Al-Haddad*, and social service actions around the secretariat and public spaces such as Pingtung Station.

Community Guidance and Counseling Approach

This activity can be analyzed using the Community-Based Counseling Model approach developed, which emphasizes that counseling in a community context must be based on collective strengths, cultural values, and active community participation. These routine religious activities serve as both a preventative and curative approach to psychosocial problems faced by immigrants, such as work stress, cultural alienation, and identity crises.

In activities such as collective istighosah and dhikr, participants not only gain spiritual strengthening but also emotional release through shared experiences that build hope and peace of mind. This aligns with the Existential Counseling Theory approach, which emphasizes the importance of meaning in life, interpersonal connections, and spirituality in navigating the stressful realities of life.

Spirituality as a Social Resilience Strategy

From a religious psychology perspective, in *The Psychology of Religion and Coping* explain that religious coping the use of religious practices to cope with stress and life's difficulties is a strategy proven effective in increasing psychological resilience, particularly among minority or diaspora groups. Activities such as reciting Yasin, Tahlil, and Manaqib act as spiritual coping tools, allowing migrant workers to soothe their inner selves and strengthen their religious identity through sacred collective rituals.

Character Building through Socio-Religious Experiences

In line with the study by Hakam et al. (2019) and UNESCO Intercultural Competence Framework, socio-religious activities also shape global ethical values such as empathy, social responsibility, and justice (Mufid, 2023; Yusuf, Makhzuniyah, 2024; Yusuf, 2019). Community service activities, such as cleaning the station area or community office, provide concrete learning in instilling the value of khidmah (service) as a down-to-earth Islamic practice that touches on social aspects (Hakam et al., 2019). Through these activities, values such as honesty, simplicity, and mutual cooperation are not taught merely verbally, but are experienced directly by the participants. This is what is called transformative religious education an approach to religious learning that shapes character change through experience and active involvement. The socio-religious activities carried out by the immigrant Muslim community in Taiwan are a concrete form of integration between spirituality, community counseling, and character education. Through collective rituals and social engagement, they not only maintain their Islamic identity amidst cultural pluralism but also build strong psychosocial resilience. This model should serve as inspiration for the development of community-based Islamic da'wah and education in the global era (Muttaqin et al., 2024; Poljarevic, 2015; Yusuf et al., 2025).

These activities create a participatory and community-based learning environment, emphasizing affective (Islamic feelings), cognitive (understanding of teachings), and social (interaction within the community) approaches. Islamic identity is built not only through memorizing teachings, but through active involvement in a vibrant and dynamic community. Providing an understanding of multicultural concepts in these activities is a policy in educational practices that recognizes, accepts, and affirms human differences and similarities related to gender, race, social class, and religion (Handayani & Wulandari, 2017).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study on the role of Islamic counseling and religious education, as well as the forms of socio-religious activities carried out by the immigrant Muslim community in Taiwan, the following conclusions can be drawn: First, Islamic counseling and religious education play a central role in strengthening the Islamic identity of

immigrant Muslims living in Taiwan predominantly non-Muslim and multicultural society. Through a community-based counseling approach and contextual Islamic education, Muslim individuals are guided to understand, internalize, and express Islamic values in their daily lives in a moderate and adaptive manner. These activities not only have an impact on strengthening personal faith but also increase psychosocial resilience, self-confidence, and the firmness of religious identity in a pluralistic social environment. Second, various forms of socio-religious activities, such as regular religious study groups, Quranic recitation, commemoration of Islamic holidays, *dhikr* and *istighosah*, and community service, have proven to be effective strategies in building a collective religious identity among immigrant Muslims. These activities not only serve as a means of transmitting spiritual values, but also strengthen internal social cohesion and connectedness with the surrounding community. In the context of Taiwan multicultural society, this activity serves as a bridge of harmony between Islam and cultural diversity, while simultaneously strengthening the positive contribution of the Muslim community as part of an inclusive Taiwanese society. Thus, the combination of Islamic religious education, guidance and counseling approaches, and socio-religious practices has formed a solid foundation for strengthening the Islamic identity of immigrant Muslims. This approach can serve as a strategic model for fostering other Muslim diaspora communities in various Muslim minority countries around the world.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscripts.

COMPETING OF INTEREST

The authors declare no competing of interest.

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