



## Islamic Religious Education through Habituation of Religious of Indonesian Muslim Children in Korea, Before and During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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### **Abstrak**

Pandemi Covid-19 berdampak besar pada berbagai aspek kehidupan, termasuk pendidikan dan ritual keagamaan di daerah minoritas. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan tentang perbandingan pembiasaan ajaran agama pada anak muslim Indonesia di Korea sebelum dan selama pandemi Covid-19. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dalam rangka mengkaji pendidikan agama dan relevansinya dengan kehidupan masyarakat. Subyek penelitian adalah keluarga Muslim Indonesia di Korea yang memiliki anak usia sekolah dan bersekolah di sekolah negeri Korea. Objek penelitian adalah tentang pembiasaan beragama terhadap agama sebelum dan selama pandemi Covid-19 yaitu pada kurun waktu 2020-2021. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terjadi peningkatan kuantitas dan kualitas pembiasaan ajaran agama pada anak muslim asal Indonesia yang tinggal di Korea. Peningkatan tersebut didapat dari perbandingan sebelum dan saat pandemi Covid-19 berlangsung. Hal ini dikarenakan kebijakan sekolah di rumah, pembatasan sosial, dan larangan memberi makan di sekolah selama pandemi Covid-19.

**Kata Kunci:** Pembiasaan Ajaran Islam, Muslim, Islam di Korea, Pendidikan, Covid-19

### **Abstract**

*The Covid-19 pandemic significantly impacted various aspects of life, including education and religious rituals in minority areas. This article compares the habituation of religious teachings to Indonesian Muslim children in Korea before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research was conducted using qualitative methods to examine religious education and its relevance to people's lives. The research subjects were*

*Indonesian Muslim families in Korea with school-aged children who attended Korean public schools. The object of research is religious habituation to religion before and during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. The results showed an increase in the quantity and quality of habituation of religious teachings in Muslim children from Indonesia living in Korea. This increase was obtained from a comparison before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is due to the home school policy, social restrictions, and the ban on feeding at school during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

**Keywords:** *Habituation of Islamic Teachings, Muslim Children, Islam in Korea, Education, Covid-19*

## INTRODUCTION

Habituation in education is intended to give children repeated opportunities to experience virtue, and thus the child can develop an appreciation and sense of what is noble and good (Kerr, 2011, p. 654). Habituation is a process of forming attitudes and behavior that automatically, if conducted repeatedly (Nadjmuddin & Aprilianty, 2020). According to one of the scholars in Islam, Abu Hamid Ghazali, moral education can also be referred to as habituation and the pillars of moral education in Islam, including habituation, causality, and God's help (Attaran, 2015). Religious education and habituation of religious teachings in children from an early age is one way of forming religious values from an early age in adherents of a religion, one of which is adherents of Islam educating their children religiously. The habituation of religious teachings in children from an early age is one way in the idea of religious education, as well as in Islam, which is one of the trends in religion-based school education in countries where most of the population is Muslim. This way can strengthen students' positive habituation can produce positive culture in the students' surroundings (Sopiah, 2020). Habituation in schools (mainly Integrated Islamic Elementary Schools) is based on the teachings of Islam since, from the entrance to the school house, students are accustomed to positive behavior such as having the character to Allah (loving Allah), behaving wholeheartedly, behaving honestly, confidently, acting empathically, forgiving, speak well, behave tolerantly, and have felt towards the environment by loving nature and keeping the environment clean (Lisnawati, 2016). However, obtaining religious habituation during public school hours in an Islamic minority country is not possible.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has significantly changed the world in various fields, has markedly occurred since early 2020, even though this disease started to spread in 2019. The crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic is referred to by the UN as a human,

economic and social crisis because this crisis not only kills people but also overturns human life in all sectors, as well as religious life and education (United-Nations, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted various areas of life, such as the distance learning system, where the majority use the online system so that their devices heavily influence learning satisfaction for students in addition to the teacher's creativity in presenting teaching materials in multimedia form (Jiang, Islam, Gu, & Spector, 2021). Changes in social behavior in children due to social restrictions, which have an impact on increasing the use of gadgets so that children have social problems, is another impact of social conditions in this pandemic (Widodo & Wartoyo, 2020). Timing for the habituation of religious education in children also has an effect due to this pandemic. This happens in traditional schools in countries with a Muslim majority and makes religion a guide for teaching. Usually, teachers can monitor students' religious habituation directly, which cannot be done optimally in distance learning.

The habituation of religious teachings in children in a country that does not use religion as the basis for education, especially if Islam is a minority religion in that country? For example, Indonesian children who are Muslim living in this country. The cooperative relationship between Indonesia and South Korea in various fields, particularly education, the economy, and the exchange of human resources, has resulted in more and more Indonesians living in this country. Meanwhile, South Korea is not a country like Indonesia which does not separate education from religion. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed many habits of people around the world.

Therefore, this study was conducted to describe how the habituation of religious teachings in Muslim children in South Korea came from Indonesia. The transition to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic caused many educational losses for elementary school to higher education students, with different effects according to age (Hoofman & Secord, 2021). However, research on the habituation of religious teachings in children in minority areas does not necessarily show general results like this research. This article aims to explain the habituation of religious teachings before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in school-age Muslim children who come from Indonesia and live in South Korea. The explanation will begin with the habituation of religious teachings to school-age children before the pandemic occurs and continue with when the COVID-19 pandemic occurs; then, a comparison will be made between the two periods. The results

of this study can be used as a basis for research on religious education in elementary school children living in minority areas or in a secular state that separates religion and the nation-state.

## **METHOD**

This research was conducted using the descriptive qualitative method and an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of Islamic education in minority countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research subjects are Indonesian Muslim families in Korea with school-age children attending Korean public schools. Muslim families from Indonesia in this study are Indonesian citizens who have lived in South Korea for more than one year. Usually, they live in South Korea for reasons of education, work, and marriage with residents. The family in question also has school-age children and lives in South Korea. The children attend Kindergarten, an elementary, junior high, and high school that runs the Korean government's national curriculum. The object of research is religious habituation in children before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, namely in the 2020-2021 period.

Data were collected by observing and interviewing parents, children, and administrators of Islamic organizations in South Korea. Observation is carried out in the family by applying the applicable Health protocol. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted face-to-face offline (by applying the appropriate Health protocol) and online using teleconferencing media. Things observed and questions during the discussion were about religious habituation in children before the Covid-19 pandemic and religious habituation in children during the Covid-19 pandemic. For other supporting data, such as the situation of Islamic da'wah in Korea, data were obtained through interviews with administrators of Islamic organizations in South Korea and studies of published references.

The presentation of the results of the data analysis was carried out by explaining the habituation of religious teachings to school-age children before the pandemic occurred and continued when the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. A comparison was made between the two periods. Because this research was conducted qualitatively, explanations through statistical data were not used—except for the number of Indonesian citizens and supporting data such as Islamic organizations in Korea—but the results of

the analysis were presented by in-depth analysis of the effects of observations and interviews by comparing the results of other studies.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

As of February 2019, the number of Indonesian citizens living in South Korea reached 42,043 people, of whom 33,961 Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) were sent through the Work Permit System/EPS, 1,524 were students, while the rest have intermarried, professionals, and others (Embassy-of-the-Republic-Indonesia-in-Seoul, 2022). There are more than 90 communities of Indonesian citizens (WNI-PMI) in South Korea, such as the Indonesian Muslim Community (KMI), which coordinates 60 mosques; The Fellowship of Indonesian Churches in South Korea (PGIK), which corresponds to 21 churches; Indonesian Community Center (ICC); 32 Paguyuban (district-based communities); Daegu Indonesian Community Communication Forum (FKMID); Pumita Busan; Come on Jeju; Indonesian Student Association in South Korea (Perpika, student-based organization); Indonesian Muslim Community in Korea (Imuska); UT Korea (Indonesian Open University in Korea); PCI-NU, PCI Muhammadiyah, and other communities. To most adherents of Islam in Indonesia, the Indonesian community in Korea also consists of many Muslims, workers, students, multicultural families, and other professionals. Some Indonesian citizens who are Muslim and live in Korea Together with their families have school-age children.

These children generally attend formal education in Korean Kindergarten, Elementary Schools, Junior High Schools, and Middle Schools, with the highest number being kindergarten and elementary school students. Apart from Indonesian children from mixed-married families (Korea-Indonesia) who are permanently settled, there are few Indonesian children of junior high and high school age. These children generally attend public schools in Korea because the cost of international schools in Korea is very high. Meanwhile, Indonesian schools do not exist at the Indonesian Embassy in Seoul, like in several other countries. Islamic religious schools such as madrasas are only available at the Seoul Central Mosque, where not everyone lives in the vicinity.

## **Overview of Religion and Religious Education in South Korea**

According to 2015 statistics, 44% of South Koreans identify with a religion, namely Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Islam, also Shamanism is a belief in Korean society (Ministry-of-Culture-Sports-and-Tourism-and-Korean-Culture-and-Information-Service, 2015). Buddhism and Confucianism influence Korean people's lives in these religions, and more than half of the country's registered cultural heritage are linked to the two beliefs. Confucianism was also adopted as the state ideology of the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910); Confucianism was more of a code of ethics that emphasized the importance of loyalty, child piety, and ancestor worship. Korean society became more religious from 1985 to 1995. Still, the change stalled from 1995 to 2005 based on the percentage of Buddhists and Protestants showing little change. Buddhism is an essential religion in Korean people's lives; only Catholics have consistently increased from 1985 to 2005 (5% to 11%). Increases in the percentage of Catholics occurred across all subgroups, regardless of age, sex, education, home ownership, and city (Kim, Lee, & Smith, 2009).

Like other secular countries, religion is not the basis of education and is not included in the curriculum except as science related to history and social science. Subjects in the Korean national curriculum include; Framework, Korean Language, Moral Education, Social Studies (Social Studies, History), Mathematics, Practical Arts (Technology and Home Economics), Science, Physical Education, Music, Fine Arts, Foreign Languages (English), Optional Activities, Extracurricular Activities, Creative Experiential Learning Activities, The Integrated Curriculum for the First and Second Graders, We are the First Graders, Disciplined Life, Intelligent Life, Pleasant Life, Areas of Kindergarten Curriculum, Physical health in daily life, Social Relationships in Daily Life, Expression in Daily Life, Language in Daily Life, Inquiry in Daily Life, Areas of Special Education Curriculum, and The Environment and Green Growth (KICE, 2022). Thus, religious practice does not exist in public schools in Korea, especially since most teachers in Korea do not embrace any religious (Seo & Clement, 2015).

Therefore, several Islamic organizations, through mosque administrators, hold religious schools at the Seoul City Central Mosque; these schools are held every day, and some are held weekly according to the student's schedules. The school is Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz Elementary School which was founded in 2009 with sponsorship from

the Saudi Government with a Korean national curriculum as well as Arabic lessons and Islamic studies (Fathil & Fathil, 2011, p. 139). Although there are no religious subjects in the curriculum in Korea, the Korean government maintains good relations with the Islamic community and Islamic countries and countries with a majority Muslim population. For establishing the central mosque and the Korea Islamic University, the Korean Government donated land to construct these facilities, supported religious festivals and bazaars, and halal tourism.

### **Religious Habituation to School-Age Children from Indonesian Muslim Families in South Korea before the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Parents carried out the habituation of religious teachings in children in the family realm. Before the COVID-19 Pandemic, the sufficient time they had together was concise because the children's school hours were quite long. After all, schools in Korea have a reasonably long schedule. Generally, school time starts from 9:00 am to 15:00 or 18:00 for kindergarten, starting at 09.00 am to 13:00 for elementary school students, starting at 09.00 am to 15:00 or 16.00 for junior high school students, starting at 09.00 am to 16:00 and more (sometimes until 22.00) for students in Senior High School. After school hours, students have a different schedule of lessons at school and other activities, such as a schedule for cleaning the classroom, or students will go directly to the course according to their individual needs and interests.

Table 1. The Student Activity Before the Pandemic

Schedule	Elementary School	Junior High School	Senior High School	Location
<b>09.00-11.30</b>	Study	Study	Study	school
<b>11.30-13.00</b>	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	school
<b>13.00-15.00</b>	(non-formal education)	Study	Study	school
<b>15.00-16.00</b>	(non-formal education)	Study (irregular)	Study (irregular)	school
<b>16.00-17.00</b>	(non-formal education)	Study (irregular)	Study (irregular)	school
<b>18.00-19.00</b>	(non-formal education)	Study (irregular)	Study (irregular)	school
<b>19.00-21.00</b>	(non-formal education)	(non-formal education)	Study (irregular)	school

Notes: 1. Non-formal education at private course institutions

2. there are differences in schedules between schools but not more than 1 hour

Most of the Muslim students from Indonesia also participated in additional activities and several additional courses. Some parents require their children to go home first to perform the obligatory prayers, but some do not tell their children to go home because both parents have activities so that no one can supervise them at home. Usually, children whose parents work late into the night, in addition to the course, can also go to a childcare center in a residential area run by the government. The system and the childcare center are managed through the basics of religious education so that children do not get accustomed to Islamic teachings. So, religious habituation is the complete responsibility of parents without being able to rely on schools or other public educational institutions unless the person concerned lives near a mosque.

Moreover, some parents work late into the night, so the adequate time for habituation is only on holidays or weekends. As previously stated, on weekdays, the opportunity for direct religious habituation by parents to children is minimal, namely only at night before going to bed and in the morning after waking up. Apart from that time, children only get general habituation, not religious habituation, because of the education system in South Korea. The tight schedule of children's education, the busy activities of parents, and the absence of religious services in schools are challenges in the habituation of religion in school-age children. Meanwhile, character education in schools is essential in building children's character in addition to parental involvement (Brannon, 2008).

However, some mosques and organizations have religious activities aimed at children, but these activities are rarely compared to religious activities for adults. This is a problem for Indonesian Muslims in Korea. Madrasas that are held, such as the Central Mosque, are also not accessible to everyone because they live scattered throughout Korea. Children are difficult to control regarding the implementation of prayers and habituation of other religious teachings, such as *wudhu* (ablution) and social interaction. This is a challenge for Islamic societies in minority countries and the difficulties facing a secular education system (Al-Romi, 2000). Meanwhile, time for habituation at home is also significantly less due to the extended school schedule and busy parents.

Habituation of sunnah prayers and obligatory prayers, as well as ablution during school hours, are obstacles. Another obstacle is social interaction, especially the habituation of the association boundaries between women and men. The habit of covering the genitals for kindergarten and elementary school-age children is not a problem because



school uniforms can be adjusted because, generally, there is no uniform for this level of education. In countries with Muslims as a minority, the issue of school uniforms and Islamic attire is often debated regarding being underestimated and the potential for social harm (Gies, 2007). However, the problem is in the habituation of junior and senior high school students because junior and senior high school students must wear uniforms. This habit is difficult to apply, especially in the summer. Schools in Korea have a high tolerance for international students, but the problem is the habituation of children who sometimes don't want to look different from their friends.

The Korean Government provides food for students and provides good eating habits through the lunch program. The provision of school meals in South Korea is carried out with management based on a computer program with the supervision of nutritionists and supervised cooks as well as dietary arrangements for children according to relevant standards (Young-Eun, Il-Sun, Jin-A, In-Sook, & Hye-Sung, 2002). Children are taught to eat well, be disciplined and orderly, and appreciate the food provided. However, it does not get used to prayer in Islam and cannot offer halal food for Muslim students. Some students stated that they brought their lunch for halal food, kitchen utensils, and cutlery contaminated by ingredients classified as haram. Others said they still eat but do not eat the forbidden food even with the same utensils. Generally, they pray with Islamic teachings and follow the eating procedures taught in school because it is almost the same as the religious teachings they usually get when with their parents, such as not talking when eating and finishing the food on the cutlery.

### **Religious Habituation to School-Age Children from Indonesian Muslim Families in South Korea during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

The habituation of religious teachings in children when a pandemic occurs differs from before the COVID-19 pandemic happened. Since the COVID-19 pandemic occurred until early 2022, schools and most offices in South Korea have been conducted online so that children and parents can work at home. Restrictions on joint activities in closed and even open spaces allow parents and children more time to be together, thus providing opportunities for parents to habituate religious teachings to their children. During study and work at home, parents and children have more interaction time than before, so parents have more opportunities to give habituation to their children. However, religious

activities in places of worship cannot be carried out. Even so, several Islamic communities hold Islamic movements for Muslim children in Korea online, for example, the Ramadan Islamic boarding school conducted by the Rumaisa Forum (Korean Muslim) for Indonesian children of school age.

Another impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is the use of online media that is increasingly friendly to the world of education and is accustomed to being used by children and educators, resulting in many educational activities for children being held. Even though the social restriction policy during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in direct disruption to classroom learning and decreased access to educational facilities, this pandemic has increased the skills of educational institutions, educators, and students in accessing digital technology (Onyema, et al., 2020). One is Islamic religious education through parenting activities, habituation, interactive teaching, and other activities that are packaged attractively so that children become interested in following them. Some of these activities are also held in Indonesia so that children can participate while remembering the Indonesian language and culture.

So, with the implementation of the COVID-19 protocol in Korea, where schools and some works are carried out remotely online from home, the opportunity for Muslim parents to teach their children about the teachings of Islam and their habituation becomes longer so that habituation is carried out or not depending on the parents. When a school has started, even though it is not full-time, parents can also be involved in the habituation of religious teachings to children regarding habituation of eating etiquette, how to dress, and speech acts according to Islamic religious education. Muslims in minority countries have a lodging experience that protects their cultural and religious identity (Sai, 2017).

### **Comparison of Religious Habituation in School-Age Children from Indonesian Muslim Families in South Korea before and during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

The results showed an increase in the habituation of religious teachings in Muslim children from Indonesia living in Korea. This increase was obtained from the comparison before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is due to school policies at home, social distancing, and a ban on feeding in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, parents have plenty of time to do the habituation that Islamic Religious Education teachers usually do in public schools in Indonesia, such as habituation of Asmaul Husna, daily prayers,

Al-Qur'an literacy, and sunnah prayers, how to dress (Ahsanul Khaq, 2019). Based on these findings, the online distance learning system due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has encountered many obstacles, has become an opportunity for Muslim parents in minority countries to improve their habits.

In many studies on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the world of education and religion, the research results give inverse results, like two sides of a coin. Research on past epidemics shows that significant health crises with lasting impacts across time and space have profound consequences in shaping human traditions and religious beliefs (Lorea, 2022). Distance learning during the social restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in educational deprivation and social inequalities, especially for the youngest children and persons with disabilities who were neglected by particular institutions (Scarpellini, et al., 2021). The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the world of education has forced lectures to be conducted online and remotely, although there are several problems. The problems that arise depend on the local situation; for example, developing countries with online distance learning support facilities that are not evenly distributed throughout the Region will experience problems related to the internet, electricity, and devices. One of them is in several regions in Indonesia; the obstacles faced by students in taking online lectures are internet problems, electricity, online devices, the environment, personal issues, and learning which is a less exciting (Ladyanna & Aslinda, 2021).

For countries with a religion-based education system, religious habituation is also carried out during school hours and is generally carried out more during school hours because children spend more effective time studying in school. Learning with an online system during the pandemic impacts the student discipline habituation (Dzulfikar & Amrullah, 2021). Another study states that online learning affects the decline in children's character because of the difficulty in monitoring students during learning if it is only done by the teacher (Islammy, Komariah, Kurniani, Yusfiana, & Marwah, 2022). The role of parents is vital in the habituation of children. Still, the limited time for habituation of children and parents also contributes to reducing habituation time for children. The challenge of religious habituation in students in online learning requires full support from parents because teachers can only control remotely, even though it is done through teleconferencing media. Still, parents can better support habituation in the children's (Islammy, Komariah, Kurniani, Yusfiana, & Marwah, 2022).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on religious habituation in school-age children from Indonesian Muslim families in South Korea has a positive effect, namely providing more space and time for these habituation activities. For parents' awareness that religious habituation is the responsibility of parents, parents in this study—Muslim families of Indonesian citizens in South Korea—have realized since they were in South Korea—in an Islamic minority country and did not make religion a basis in the education curriculum. Unlike in Indonesia, the effects of Covid-19 have opened the minds of parents that children also need greater attention and guidance from them as parents. (Muradi, Jailani, HS, Wekke, & Noor, 2021). Before the pandemic occurred, religious habituation for children of Islamic families in South Korea was indeed carried out by parents. Still, it was limited in time due to the busyness of parents and children.

Thus, the regulations during the pandemic that require students to study from home and workers to work from home provide space and time for Muslim families in South Korea and the habituation of religious teachings to school-age children. Parents have more time than ordinary times, so they can improve the way of worship and the concept of understanding spiritual teachings in-depth, including monotheism, human-human relations, and halal food. For parents who continue to work outside the home, involving children in religious education activities carried out online by managers in Indonesia and by Islamic organizations in Korea is a solution to habituate religious activities in children.

When re-learning is carried out at school, this activity can no longer be followed, as when learning online from home. However, children and parents already have another way, namely participating in religious education activities mainly carried out online after the social restrictions caused by Covid-19. I don't mean to say that Covid-19 has had a positive impact. Still, amid the severe negative implications of this pandemic, there is a lesson for religious habituation for school-age Muslim children in South Korea, especially those from Indonesia. They get more opportunities for religious habituation in an Islamic religious minority country.

## CONCLUSION

Some Indonesian citizens who are Muslim and live in Korea Together with their families have school-age children. These children generally attend formal education in Korean Kindergarten, Elementary Schools, Junior High Schools, and Middle Schools, with the highest number being kindergarten and elementary school students. Before the COVID-19 Pandemic, parents' habituation of religious teachings in children was carried out in the family realm. Of course, the adequate time they had together was concise because the children's school hours were quite long. Habituation of sunnah prayers and obligatory prayers, as well as ablution during school hours, are obstacles. It's different from the habituation of religious teachings in children when a pandemic occurs. Since the COVID-19 pandemic occurred until early 2022, schools and most offices in South Korea have been conducted online so that children and parents can work at home. The results showed an increase in the habituation of religious teachings in Muslim children from Indonesia living in Korea.

The increase in the habituation of religious education in children is a positive impact of the imposition of social distancing restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has increased religious knowledge for Muslim children in minority countries who do not receive religious education in public schools. Based on these findings, the online distance learning system due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has encountered many obstacles, has become an opportunity for Muslim parents in minority countries to improve their habits. Without neglecting the losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, research on the impact of this pandemic on the education system must be continued from a different angle, such as the impact on character education, mainly Islamic or specific religious education in minority areas.

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