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The Implementation of Islamic Education in the Guidance of Converts Muallaf in East Yapen District

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Abstract:
This study aims to determine the Islamic education development program, the implementation of Islamic education, and the obstacles in the process of implementing Islamic education through the Islamic development program for converts in East Yapen District, Yapen Islands Regency. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were collected through participant observation, semi structured interviews, and documentation. The research instruments included partisipant observation, interview, and documentation. Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which include data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing, and verification. The validity was carried out using data triangulation tests. The results of this study found that the Islamic education development program for converts in East Yapen District had been implemented through various activities such as religious studies, reading and writing the Qur'an, practicing worship, and so on. This program is able to provide understanding for converts regarding Islamic education, not only as an addition to religious knowledge, but as practical guidance that helps them adapt to the demands of Islamic teachings in their daily lives. The implementation of Islamic education for converts in East Yapen District takes place through an adaptive and gradual approach according to the social, psychological conditions and level of understanding of the converts. The obstacles that occurred in the process of implementing Islamic religious education through a coaching program for converts in East Yapen District that were found in this study were the lack of preachers and mentors and limited time and work schedules.

Abstrak:
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui program pembinaan pendidikan Islam, penerapan pendidikan Islam, dan hambatan-hambatan dalam proses penerapan pendidikan Islam melalui program pembinaan Islam pada para muallaf di Distrik Yapen Timur, Kab. Kepulauan Yapen. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Metode pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Instrumen penelitian ini terdiri dari observasi partisipatif, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, penarikan kesimpulan dan verifikasi. Validitas dilakukan menggunakan uji triangulasi data. Hasil penelitian ini ditemukan bahwa program pembinaan pendidikan Islam bagi para muallaf di Distrik Yapen Timur telah dilaksanakan dengan berbagai kegiatan seperti pengajian, baca tulis Al-Qur'an, praktik ibadah, dan sebagainya. Program tersebut mampu memberikan pemahaman bagi muallaf mengenai pendidikan Islam bukan hanya sebatas penambahan pengetahuan keagamaan, tetapi sebagai bimbingan praktis yang membantu mereka menyesuaikan diri dengan tuntunan ajaran Islam dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Penerapan pendidikan islam pada para muallaf di

Distrik Yapen Timur berlangsung melalui pendekatan yang adaptif dan bertahap sesuai dengan kondisi sosial, psikologis, dan tingkat pemahaman muallaf. Hambatan yang terjadi dalam proses penerapan pendidikan agama islam melalui program pembinaan pada para muallaf di Distrik Yapen Timur yang ditemukan dalam penelitian ini adalah Kurangnya mubalig dan pembina dan Keterbatasan waktu dan kesibukan kerja.

Keywords:
Islamic Education Development Program, Implementation of Islamic Education, Development Barriers, Converts, East Yapen District.

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Introduction

Education is a fundamental pillar for individual and societal development. It serves as a key instrument for advancing civilization by preparing younger generations to contribute meaningfully to their communities while also addressing humanity's need for religious and moral guidance (Aly & Munzier, 2000). Religion provides ethical principles that promote compassion toward all living beings and guides individuals in regulating their personal and social lives. However, dissatisfaction with religion may arise from various factors, including personal experiences, social dynamics, and tensions between traditional religious beliefs and modern ways of thinking. Such conditions may lead to internal conflict, disappointment, anxiety, and a diminished sense of hope (Maulana, Sitorus, Hasan, Nasution, & Siregar, 2022).

One manifestation of religious transformation is religious conversion. According to Dzakiah Daradjat, as cited in Tumanggor (2014), the term *conversion* originates from the English word meaning "a change in direction." In a religious context, conversion refers to a change from one system of belief to another. Religious scholars have noted that individuals who embrace a new religion often experience periods of psychological stress and emotional adjustment as they adapt to new beliefs, values, and social environments (Bakar & Ismail, 2018). In Islam, converts (muallaf) occupy a special position within the Muslim community. The Qur'an recognizes them as one of the groups eligible to receive zakat, reflecting Islam's commitment not only to their material welfare but also to their spiritual development and integration into the Muslim community. Consequently, guidance and education for converts are intended to strengthen their faith, deepen their understanding of Islamic teachings, and support the consistent practice of Islamic values

in both personal and social life. The process of embracing Islam represents a profound transformation in worldview, identity, and daily practice. Such changes require continuous guidance rather than a single declaration of faith. After pronouncing the *shahada*, converts must gradually acquire knowledge of Islamic beliefs (*aqidah*), worship (*ibadah*), and Islamic law (*sharia*). Because many converts experience psychological, emotional, and social challenges during this transition, they require ongoing support from qualified mentors who can provide both religious instruction and emotional encouragement (Hakim, 2013).

Practicing a new faith is a gradual and often challenging process. Converts require sustained motivation and educational guidance to strengthen their commitment and enable them to practice Islam consistently (Awaru, Hidayat, Syukur, & Rahman, 2023). Beyond spiritual and educational support, Islam also emphasizes the social welfare of converts by recognizing them as one of the legitimate recipients of zakat and other forms of charitable assistance (Lukmanul, 2020). Motivation plays a central role in the conversion process. As a psychological force that directs individuals toward achieving desired goals, motivation enables converts to overcome the social, emotional, and spiritual challenges associated with adopting a new religious identity. When combined with appropriate religious guidance, motivation facilitates adaptation, enhances understanding of Islamic teachings, and encourages the consistent implementation of Islamic principles in everyday life (Hakim, 2013).

A growing body of research has examined Islamic educational guidance for converts in various regions of Indonesia. Previous studies have primarily focused on religious instruction, strengthening faith, *da'wah* activities, and the role of Islamic institutions in assisting converts (Salsabila, Rahman, & Setiawan, 2019; Siregar, Nor, & Hajrullah, 2020; Susanto, Setiaji, & Sulastri, 2022). Although these studies have contributed valuable insights, most were conducted in areas with relatively well-developed educational facilities and infrastructure. Consequently, little is known about how Islamic educational guidance is implemented in geographically remote and culturally diverse regions such as East Yapen District, Papua. The Papuan context presents distinctive social, cultural, and geographical characteristics that may influence both the implementation and effectiveness of educational programs for converts. Understanding these contextual factors is essential for developing educational approaches that are responsive to local needs and circumstances.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the forms of Islamic educational guidance provided to converts in East Yapen District, the educational content delivered by mentors, and the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting the implementation of these programs. By examining these issues, the study seeks to contribute to the development of more context-sensitive and culturally responsive strategies for guiding converts in geographically remote and culturally diverse regions of Indonesia (Susanto, Setiaji, & Sulastri, 2022).

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of Islamic educational guidance for converts (muallaf), including the educational activities provided, the learning process, and the challenges encountered in its implementation. A case study design was selected because it enables an intensive exploration of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. The research was conducted in East Yapen District, Yapen Islands Regency, Papua, Indonesia, from November 5 to November 12, 2025. This site was selected purposively because it regularly implements Islamic educational guidance programs for converts under the supervision of local Islamic leaders and mosque administrators. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the guidance program. Eight informants participated in this study, comprising Islamic religious leaders, mosque administrators, and converts. Their diverse roles provided multiple perspectives on the implementation and effectiveness of the educational guidance program.

Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Participant observation was conducted during educational sessions at Al-Istiqomah Dawai Mosque to examine the learning process, interactions between mentors and converts, and participants' engagement in religious practices. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide developed according to the research objectives, allowing participants to describe their experiences, perceptions, and the challenges they encountered during the implementation of Islamic educational guidance. Documentation included field notes, photographs of educational activities, and relevant institutional documents that supported the interpretation of the findings.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process, enabling emerging themes to be refined as additional data were collected. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the researchers applied source triangulation, method triangulation, and time triangulation to verify the consistency and credibility of the data.

Result and Discussion

Islamic Education Development Program for Converts to Islam in East Yapen District

Islamic education is generally understood as a process of teaching and learning that develops individuals' understanding, practice, and internalization of Islamic values (A'yun & Anan, 2019). In the context of convert guidance, this educational process extends beyond the transmission of religious knowledge to include the gradual formation of religious identity, attitudes, and daily religious practices. Accordingly, Islamic educational guidance serves as a continuous process that strengthens converts' understanding of Islamic beliefs and supports their integration into the Muslim community (Suriadi, 2017). The findings indicate that the Al-Istiqomah Dawai Mosque functions as the primary center for Islamic

educational guidance for converts in East Yapen District. Guidance activities are conducted regularly under the supervision of Islamic religious leaders and mosque administrators, making the mosque not only a place of worship but also the main institution for religious learning and mentoring. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing the central role of mosques in fostering religious education and strengthening the spiritual development of converts (Bustomi, Suprapti, Ngisti, Khairani, Nurhalimah, Fadzlullah, & Norlita, 2022).

Participant observations revealed that educational activities combined theoretical instruction with practical religious training. Mentors delivered lessons on fundamental Islamic beliefs (aqidah), guided participants in performing ablution (wudu) and the five daily prayers (salat), and provided individualized assistance whenever converts encountered difficulties in understanding the material or practicing religious rituals. Rather than relying solely on classroom-style instruction, the guidance emphasized demonstration, repeated practice, and direct mentoring, allowing converts to gradually develop confidence in performing essential acts of worship. Also, interview data further indicated that this educational approach enabled converts to ask questions freely and receive immediate clarification from their mentors. Such interactions created a supportive learning environment in which religious knowledge was acquired through continuous guidance, practical experience, and personal engagement. These findings suggest that effective Islamic educational guidance for converts requires not only systematic religious instruction but also sustained interpersonal support that facilitates both cognitive understanding and spiritual development.



Figure 1. Muallaf Development Activities at the Al-Istiqomah Dawai Mosque



Figure 2. Ablution Practice of Converts

These observational findings were consistent with the interview data, which identified the mosque as the principal center for religious learning and guidance for converts in East Yapen District. As one mosque administrator explained:

> "We have no other place besides this mosque where converts can learn how to pray and read the Qur'an. We adjust our teaching to each learner's circumstances and abilities so they do not feel overwhelmed." (Jafar, 2025)

This statement demonstrates that the mosque functions not only as a place of worship but also as an inclusive educational institution that accommodates the diverse educational backgrounds and learning needs of converts.

Interviews with converts further revealed that they perceived Islamic education as a comprehensive process of learning the fundamental principles of Islam, including faith (*aqidah)*, worship (*ibadah*), and moral conduct (*akhlaq*). Participants reported that the guidance program enabled them to understand the pillars of Islam, the pillars of faith, and appropriate social and religious conduct in accordance with Islamic teachings (Rahmah & Alam, 2024; Usman, 2015). These findings reinforce the view that Islamic education for converts extends beyond knowledge acquisition to encompass the development of religious identity and everyday religious practice (Siregar, Nor, & Hajrullah, 2020). One participant, Mr. Haji Reba, described the significance of the guidance program as follows:

> "At first, I did not know how to pray or read the Qur'an. Now, although I am not yet fluent and still have much to learn, I understand much more through these activities. I am very grateful because it would be impossible for me to learn everything alone at home." (Haji Reba, 2025)

This testimony illustrates that the guidance program provides an accessible learning environment where converts can gradually build confidence and acquire essential religious knowledge through continuous mentoring. A similar perspective was expressed by another participant, Baktiar Karno, who emphasized that the program combined theoretical instruction with practical religious training:

> "I have only recently embraced Islam, but I have learned many things little by little. The instructor patiently showed us how to pray and recite the prayers correctly. He did not simply explain the procedures but also taught us why we perform them. That has helped me understand worship more deeply." (Baktiar Karno, 2025)

Baktiar Karno's experience highlights the importance of experiential learning in Islamic education. Rather than relying solely on verbal instruction, mentors integrated explanation, demonstration, and repeated practice, enabling converts to develop both practical competence and a deeper understanding of the spiritual meaning of worship. This approach reflects the concept of tarbiyah, which emphasizes systematic, gradual, and continuous educational development (Febrianto, Firmansyah, Lesmana, Maulana, & Sein, 2025). Participant observation further supported these interview findings. During several guidance sessions, mentors repeatedly demonstrated acts of worship, corrected participants' mistakes, and provided individualized assistance until converts were able to perform the practices independently. Such observations indicate that Islamic educational

guidance in East Yapen District emphasizes sustained mentoring rather than one-time instruction, allowing converts to develop religious knowledge and practical skills simultaneously. Overall, the findings suggest that Islamic educational guidance is perceived by converts as a fundamental resource for strengthening their Islamic identity. Beyond transmitting religious knowledge, the program fosters confidence, facilitates the practice of worship, and supports converts in adapting to their new religious lives. These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing that effective Islamic education for converts should integrate religious knowledge, practical guidance, and continuous mentoring to promote long-term spiritual development (Rahman, Jannah, & Syafei, 2024).

The findings further indicate that the primary objective of the Islamic educational guidance program is to strengthen the faith of converts while equipping them with the religious knowledge and practical skills necessary to live as Muslims. This objective was consistently emphasized by both mentors and converts. Rifai, one of the instructors, explained:

> "My goal in teaching these converts is to help them understand Islam from the basics. We teach them faith, Islamic principles, prayer, and proper etiquette so that they can practice Islam correctly, not only partially." (Rifai, 2025)

This statement demonstrates that the educational program is designed not merely to transfer religious knowledge but to develop a comprehensive understanding of Islam that integrates belief, worship, and moral conduct. The emphasis on beginning with fundamental concepts reflects an educational strategy that recognizes the diverse religious backgrounds and learning needs of new converts. This objective was also reflected in the experiences of the participants. As Fitri Samber explained:

> "This training has taught me how to fulfill my obligations as a Muslim. My goal is to be able to pray, recite the prayers, and maintain good manners." (Fitri Samber, 2025)

The participant's testimony suggests that converts perceive Islamic education as practical preparation for everyday religious life rather than as theoretical instruction alone. The guidance program therefore contributes to strengthening religious commitment while enabling converts to perform essential acts of worship with greater confidence. The findings also reveal that the instructional materials were delivered progressively, beginning with the most fundamental aspects of Islamic teaching before introducing more advanced topics. According to Fitri Samber:

> "The instructor first taught us about the pillars of faith so that we understood the foundations of Islam. Everything was explained slowly because we were completely new to these teachings." (Fitri Samber, 2025)

Participant observation confirmed this staged approach. During several educational sessions, mentors introduced basic concepts such as the pillars of faith (arkan al-iman), the pillars of Islam (arkan al-Islam), ablution (*wudu*), prayer (*salat*), and basic Islamic etiquette before proceeding to more complex religious topics. Documentary evidence,

including instructors' lesson notes, further showed that the curriculum followed a structured sequence specifically adapted to the educational needs of converts. These findings indicate that the guidance program adopts a learner-centered approach by adjusting instructional content and teaching methods to participants' prior knowledge and learning pace. Rather than expecting immediate mastery, mentors emphasized gradual learning, repeated practice, and continuous mentoring. Such an approach appears to reduce anxiety among converts while facilitating the internalization of Islamic beliefs and religious practices. The present findings are consistent with previous studies showing that effective guidance for converts should begin with strengthening faith, introducing the fundamentals of worship, and cultivating Islamic moral values before progressing to more advanced religious instruction (Siregar, Nor, & Hajrullah, 2020). Likewise, Awang, Che Mat, Musa, and Abdul Ghani (2023) argued that the religiosity of converts develops most effectively through structured educational programs combined with practical guidance. The current study extends these findings by demonstrating how a staged and individualized educational approach can be successfully implemented in the geographically remote context of East Yapen District. Furthermore, the findings support Hakim's (2013) argument that the transition to a new religious identity requires continuous educational and spiritual guidance, as religious conversion involves not only acquiring new knowledge but also reconstructing beliefs, values, and patterns of everyday religious practice.

Implementation of Islamic Education for Converts to Islam in East Yapen District

The findings indicate that the implementation of Islamic educational guidance in East Yapen District is characterized by gradual instruction, continuous mentoring, and regular follow-up beyond formal learning sessions. This approach reflects the educational needs of converts, most of whom are indigenous residents of East Yapen District who previously adhered to Christianity and possess limited prior knowledge of Islamic teachings. Consequently, mentors prioritize foundational religious knowledge before introducing more advanced aspects of Islamic practice (Salsabila, Rahman, & Setiawan, 2019). Rifai, one of the mentors, explained the instructional strategy adopted during the guidance program:

> "I teach the converts gradually because many of them are completely new to Islam. I begin with ablution, prayer, and Qur'an recitation. At every meeting, I evaluate their progress. If they have not yet understood the material, I repeat it until they are confident, without rushing the learning process." (Rifai, 2025)

This statement demonstrates that the educational process is learner-centered, with instruction adapted to each participant's level of understanding and learning pace. Rather than emphasizing the completion of predetermined content, mentors prioritize participants' mastery of essential religious knowledge and practices. Such an individualized approach enables converts to develop confidence while reducing the difficulties commonly experienced during the early stages of religious conversion. The findings further reveal that Islamic educational guidance extends beyond formal

instructional sessions at the mosque. Mentors continue to monitor and support converts as they apply Islamic teachings in their daily lives. As Rifai explained:

> "After the training sessions, I continue to monitor them. I ask about their daily prayers, including the dawn and evening prayers, and sometimes I visit their homes to see how they are practicing. I want them not only to learn Islam but also to live it." (Rifai, 2025)

Participant observation corroborated this statement. Following each guidance session, converts were encouraged to practice the religious knowledge and skills they had learned, while mentors continued to provide feedback and encouragement through face-to-face meetings and regular communication regarding daily worship. Documentary evidence, including photographs of the educational activities, further confirmed that mentoring was conducted repeatedly and consistently throughout the program. These findings suggest that Islamic educational guidance in East Yapen District adopts a mentoring model that combines formal instruction with continuous accompaniment. Learning is therefore understood as an ongoing developmental process rather than a series of isolated classroom sessions. This sustained interaction enables converts to reinforce their understanding of Islamic teachings while gradually incorporating religious practices into their everyday lives.

The present findings support Marimba's concept of Islamic education, which emphasizes the holistic development of both spiritual and behavioral dimensions through continuous guidance grounded in Islamic values (Usman, 2015). They also reinforce previous studies arguing that converts require sustained educational support after embracing Islam, as successful religious conversion depends not only on acquiring religious knowledge but also on receiving continuous mentoring that facilitates the practical application of Islamic teachings in daily life (Hakim, 2013; Salsabila, Rahman, & Setiawan, 2019). However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that such a mentoring model can be effectively implemented in a geographically remote and culturally diverse context, where ongoing personal interaction between mentors and converts becomes a critical factor in strengthening religious commitment and supporting long-term religious development.



Figure 3. Photo of the Worship Material Guidance and Repetition Activities

The findings indicate that Islamic educational guidance in East Yapen District emphasizes not only the acquisition of religious knowledge but also the gradual development of practical worship skills. Mentors consistently encouraged converts to practice Islamic rituals repeatedly until they were able to perform them independently and correctly. Rather than expecting immediate mastery, the guidance process was adapted to each participant's learning pace and prior religious background. Participant observation confirmed that worship practices, particularly ablution (*wudu*), prayer (*salat*), Qur'an recitation, and daily supplications, were taught through demonstration, repeated practice, and direct correction. During the guidance sessions, mentors patiently asked converts to repeat prayer recitations and worship movements until they demonstrated adequate understanding and confidence. This individualized mentoring approach enabled participants to acquire practical religious competencies while gradually internalizing Islamic values. These findings support previous research emphasizing that practical worship is central to strengthening converts' religious identity and facilitating the application of Islamic teachings in everyday life (Hakim, 2013; Siregar, Nor, & Hajrullah, 2020).

Beyond religious instruction, the findings reveal that the guidance program also serves as a mechanism for social integration. Converts are encouraged to participate actively in congregational prayers, religious gatherings, and other mosque-based activities that foster relationships with the broader Muslim community. Such participation enables converts to develop a sense of belonging while reducing the social isolation that often accompanies religious conversion. This social dimension was clearly reflected in the experience of one mentor, Rian Botutihe, who explained:

> "In Islam, brotherhood is very strong. Even people who have never met treat us as family. When I converted, some of my relatives rejected me, but the Muslim community accepted me, supported me, and treated me as a brother. That gave me the strength to continue." (Rian Botutihe, 2025)

This testimony illustrates that religious guidance extends beyond doctrinal instruction to include emotional and social support. For many converts, acceptance within the Muslim community helps compensate for the loss of social support that may result from conversion. The mosque therefore functions not only as a center for religious education but also as a community that provides psychological security, social acceptance, and opportunities to establish new interpersonal relationships. These findings reinforce previous studies demonstrating that social inclusion is an essential component of successful convert guidance (Widodo, Swarizona, Pasu, Hadiarto, Wahyuni, & Rahmawati, 2025). The findings further indicate that mentors implemented Islamic education while remaining attentive to the local socio-cultural context of East Yapen District. Islamic values were introduced through approaches that respected local traditions and cultural practices, provided these did not conflict with Islamic principles. This culturally responsive strategy appeared to facilitate participants' acceptance of Islamic teachings by reducing potential tensions between newly adopted religious values and existing cultural identities.

Another important finding concerns the role of motivation in sustaining converts' religious commitment. Interviews and observational data indicate that mentors consistently provided encouragement throughout the educational process, particularly at the conclusion of each guidance session. Rather than functioning solely as religious instructors, mentors also acted as sources of emotional support by encouraging converts to remain steadfast despite the personal and social challenges associated with embracing a new faith. Documentary evidence, including photographs of the guidance activities, confirmed that motivational reinforcement was a regular component of the program. Mentors routinely concluded educational sessions with advice, encouragement, and spiritual reminders intended to strengthen participants' confidence and commitment to practicing Islam. These findings suggest that motivational support is not an additional component of Islamic educational guidance but an integral element that reinforces learning, promotes consistency in religious practice, and strengthens converts' long-term commitment to their new religious identity. Overall, the findings demonstrate that Islamic educational guidance in East Yapen District adopts a holistic approach that integrates religious instruction, practical worship training, social inclusion, and continuous motivational support. This integrated model contributes not only to improving converts' religious knowledge but also to fostering psychological resilience, social belonging, and sustained religious practice. While previous studies have emphasized the importance of faith development and practica

According to Al-Syaibani, Islamic education aims to develop individuals with Islamic personalities through a planned and systematic educational process. This perspective is particularly relevant to new converts, who require continuous guidance during the early stages of adapting to their new religious identity. Accordingly, Islamic education for converts should prioritize strengthening fundamental beliefs (*aqidah*), developing an understanding of worship (*ibadah*), and cultivating Islamic moral values through a structured and well-planned educational approach, as emphasized by Ahmad D. Marimba and Al-Syaibani. The successful implementation of such education requires practice-oriented instruction supported by competent and committed mentors. Therefore, the Islamic education program for converts in East Yapen District should be systematically designed to ensure that the guidance process is effective, sustainable, and responsive to the needs of converts (Nasih, Thoriquttyas, Sultoni, Malihah, Azca, & Budiman, 2024).

These findings are consistent with previous studies suggesting that Islamic education for new converts should be implemented through approaches that accommodate their educational backgrounds and individual circumstances. Guidance focusing on faith and worship, delivered through the talaqqi method, direct mentoring, and regular religious study, has been shown to significantly enhance converts' understanding of the fundamental principles of Islam (Salsabila, Rahman, & Setiawan, 2019; Usman, 2015). However, the present findings differ from those reported by Hidayati (2014), who found that guidance for converts in East Yapen District was inadequately managed due to the absence of a structured program, limited evaluation mechanisms, and weak coordination among mentors. These shortcomings increased the risk that converts would

discontinue their religious learning or even return to their previous religion. The findings of the present study suggest that the current guidance program has become more structured and sustainable, indicating improvements in the implementation of Islamic educational guidance in East Yapen District since the earlier study.

Obstacles that Occur in the Process of Implementing Islamic Religious Education Through the Development Program for Converts in East Yapen District

Mentors, guidance activities, and the converts themselves identified several obstacles affecting the implementation of Islamic religious education in East Yapen District. These challenges emerged throughout the guidance process and influenced both the implementation of the program and the achievement of its educational objectives. Based on observations conducted during the guidance activities, the researchers found that the number of participants attending each session varied considerably. Some converts attended regularly, while others were only able to participate at certain times. This finding was supported by photographic documentation, which showed differences in attendance across guidance sessions. The varying attendance was largely influenced by participants' work commitments and individual personal circumstances.



Figure 4. Photo of the Attendance of Converts at the Guidance Sessions Which Are Not Always the Same

The obstacles identified can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal obstacles originate from the converts themselves, including limited religious knowledge, differences in educational and cultural backgrounds, and varying learning abilities. These conditions require mentors to adopt a patient, gradual, and individualized approach to ensure that the educational materials are understood effectively (Bakar & Zubaidah, 2018; Usman, 2015). During the observations, several converts were found to require repeated instruction, particularly in learning prayer recitations and the procedures for ablution (wudu). External obstacles are associated with factors beyond the converts' control, including limited educational facilities and infrastructure, time constraints, and a social environment that is not always fully supportive of the conversion process. These conditions necessitate adaptive instructional strategies to ensure that the objectives of Islamic religious education can be achieved effectively (Bakar & Ismail, 2018; Usman, 2015). Photographic documentation also illustrated that the guidance activities

were conducted under modest conditions with limited facilities, although the program continued according to the available schedule.

Preachers and mentors play a central role in the guidance of converts, serving as the primary sources of Islamic knowledge and spiritual support. Through appropriate guidance, they help converts understand Islamic teachings correctly while fostering confidence and steadfastness in their faith. Converts require mentors who are able to communicate Islamic teachings in a simple, patient, and empathetic manner that is responsive to their educational backgrounds and personal circumstances. Therefore, the availability of an adequate number of qualified mentors is a crucial factor in the successful implementation of sustainable guidance programs for converts. However, one of the major challenges identified in East Yapen District is the limited number of preachers and mentors specifically assigned to guide converts. This shortage requires mentors to provide guidance individually or in small groups, increasing both their workload and the time required to support each participant. As Rifai, one of the mentors, explained:

> "A major obstacle in implementing Islamic religious education for these converts is the lack of preachers. Sometimes only two or three people are available to assist, even though many new converts need more time and attention. We do our best, but because of the shortage of mentors, we cannot consistently monitor everyone." (Rifai, 2025)

This finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that a limited number of mentors reduces the effectiveness of guidance programs. Religious education for converts should be delivered in a structured and gradual manner to ensure that participants develop an accurate understanding of Islamic teachings; however, this objective is difficult to achieve when mentoring resources are insufficient (Salsabila, Rahman, & Setiawan, 2019). The consequences of this shortage are evident in the unequal implementation of guidance across villages. While some villages receive regular mentoring, others only receive guidance occasionally. As a result, there are noticeable differences in the level of religious understanding among converts in different areas. The limited number of mentors also reduces the frequency and intensity of guidance, making it difficult to provide continuous and comprehensive support that meets the educational needs of converts in East Yapen District. This challenge was also highlighted by Nur Mandawai, one of the converts, who explained:

> "I am still new to Islam, so I need continuous guidance from a religious teacher. Sometimes the teacher comes only once or twice a week, and sometimes not at all. When I have questions, I have to wait, even though there are still many things I do not understand." (Nur Mandawai, 2025)

Mentoring is the primary means through which new converts to Islam develop an understanding of Islamic teachings, strengthen their faith, and learn to practice Islam in their daily lives. However, the limited number of available mentors means that the learning process cannot always be conducted optimally. As a result, the intensity of guidance is limited and support is unevenly distributed, leaving some converts without continuous mentoring tailored to their individual religious needs. Time constraints and demanding

work schedules constitute the second major obstacle to the implementation of Islamic religious education for converts in East Yapen District. Most converts work as laborers, fishermen, farmers, or daily wage workers, whose irregular working hours make it difficult to balance employment with participation in guidance activities. Consequently, not all converts are able to attend mentoring sessions regularly. Observations indicated that participants often attended different sessions depending on their availability, while the guidance program continued despite the rotating attendance of participants.

These time constraints prevent the Islamic religious education program from being implemented optimally. Some converts are only able to attend guidance sessions occasionally, while others are unable to participate because of work commitments. Therefore, more flexible scheduling and alternative guidance methods are needed to ensure that the program remains effective and accessible. Similar findings were reported by Hidayati (2014), who identified work-related commitments as a major barrier to regular participation in guidance activities. Ismail Mandawai, a convert who works as a fisherman, described how his occupation affects his participation in the guidance program:

> "I'm a fisherman who usually goes out to sea in the morning and sometimes doesn't return until late afternoon. I often miss the guidance sessions because of the schedule. I'd really like to attend, but if I don't work, I won't have any income. That's what makes it so difficult for me to participate." (Ismail Mandawai, 2025)

This statement illustrates that economic considerations are a major factor influencing converts' attendance at guidance activities. The need to earn a daily income often takes priority over participation in religious education, limiting consistent engagement in the guidance program. A similar experience was shared by Nur Mandawai, a convert and housewife, who explained:

> "Sometimes the guidance sessions are held while I'm still busy with household work. If I want to attend, I have to finish all my chores first. When I have too much work, I usually arrive late or sometimes cannot attend at all because I'm too busy." (Nur Mandawai, 2025)

These findings indicate that work-related responsibilities, whether income-generating or domestic, significantly influence converts' participation in scheduled guidance sessions. Nevertheless, the interviews also revealed that converts remain highly motivated to deepen their understanding of Islam. This commitment is reflected in their willingness to attend guidance sessions whenever possible, seek clarification from mentors outside scheduled meetings, and continue learning independently during their free time. Furthermore, the findings indicate that geographical conditions intensify the challenges associated with the limited number of mentors and the work commitments of converts. The shortage of mentors becomes even more problematic when they are required to serve geographically dispersed communities across a large and difficult-to-access area.

At the same time, converts with limited free time often find it difficult to travel to mentoring locations that are far from their homes (Nasih, Thoriquttyas, Sultoni, Malihah,

Azca, & Budiman, 2024). The geographical characteristics of East Yapen District therefore present an additional challenge to the implementation of Islamic educational guidance. Converts are scattered across several villages, with relatively small numbers in each location, making centralized and regular guidance difficult to organize. These geographical constraints not only create logistical challenges but also reduce the effectiveness of mentoring strategies that ideally require intensive and individualized interaction. Overall, these findings suggest that the successful implementation of Islamic religious education for converts requires careful consideration of local geographical conditions. Expanding mentor availability, adopting more flexible guidance schedules, and developing community-based mentoring strategies may help ensure that all converts receive equitable and continuous religious guidance regardless of their location.

The long distances between villages, limited transportation access, and uneven distribution of converts have impacted the suboptimal implementation of guidance. Therefore, a more adaptive and contextual guidance strategy is needed to ensure that Islamic religious education for converts can continue effectively despite geographical challenges. The challenges facing converts in East Yapen District, both in general and specifically, must be tailored to their specific circumstances and to create knowledge tailored to their needs (Iribaram, 2020). In other words, Islamic education for converts is not uniform but must consider their level of religious understanding, social experience, and adaptability. In line with Sahara (2016) research, the success of a convert development program is not only determined by the substance of the material and the methods of Islamic religious education provided, but is also greatly influenced by various supporting and inhibiting factors, both internal and external. The limited number of preachers, the busy workload of converts, economic conditions, and geographical challenges in the region are important aspects that require serious attention in the planning and implementation of development. These obstacles highlight the importance of adapting coaching strategies and schedules to better adapt to the conditions of the converts. Some strategies that can be implemented include home-based coaching, adjusting coaching times and schedules, and dividing into small groups to ensure the coaching process remains effective, adapting to the social and work circumstances of the converts (Usman, 2015).

Conclusion

The Islamic education program for new converts in East Yapen District has been implemented through various religious activities, including regular religious study sessions, Qur'an reading and writing instruction, practical worship training (prayer, ablution, and daily supplications), and direct religious mentoring. The program is designed not only to enhance religious knowledge but also to provide practical guidance that enables new converts to adapt to Islamic teachings and apply them in their daily lives. The implementation of Islamic education for new converts in East Yapen District is characterized by an adaptive, gradual, and humanistic approach. Guidance is delivered by considering the social and psychological conditions, religious backgrounds, and levels of understanding of individual converts. This learner-centered approach makes the

educational process more accessible and less overwhelming, enabling converts to gradually develop their understanding and practice of Islamic teachings in a sustainable manner.

The implementation of Islamic religious education through mentoring programs for converts in East Yapen District faces three major challenges. First, the limited number of preachers and mentors restricts the intensity and coverage of guidance activities. Second, the time constraints and demanding work schedules of converts reduce their ability to participate regularly in mentoring sessions. Third, the vast and geographically remote nature of East Yapen District, combined with limited transportation infrastructure, makes it difficult for mentors to provide continuous guidance across all villages. These geographical conditions further exacerbate the existing challenges by limiting the frequency, accessibility, and sustainability of mentoring activities. Addressing these challenges requires increasing the availability of qualified mentors, adopting more flexible mentoring schedules, and developing community-based guidance strategies that are responsive to the geographical and socio-economic conditions of the region.

Ethical Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles for research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the voluntary nature of their participation. Written or verbal informed consent was obtained from all participants before interviews and observations were conducted. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. To protect participants' privacy and confidentiality, all personal information was anonymized, and the data were used solely for research purposes. The researchers ensured that the study did not cause physical, psychological, or social harm to participants. Particular attention was given to respecting the religious beliefs, cultural backgrounds, and personal experiences of converts throughout the research process.

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

- **Author 1**: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Visualization, Project Administration.
- **Author 2:** Methodology, Validation, Formal Analysis, Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing.
- **Author 3:** Investigation, Resources, Data Curation, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known financial or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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