

JAPANESE POP CULTURE AS A MICRO-ENVIRONMENT FOR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS: A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION APPROACH

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Abstract

This article examines Japanese pop culture as a factor in the microenvironment of organizational skills in the *A.W.P (All Weebs Projects)* community. As a community based on an interest in Japanese pop culture, this article highlights how Japanese cultural values—such as discipline, cooperation, and self-development—affect the organizational structure and dynamics within the community. Using a qualitative approach through Focus Group Discussion, this study analyzes community members' interactions, communication patterns, and decision-making processes with elements of Japanese culture. The results show that Japanese cultural values play an important role in shaping members' behavior in the organization, improving teamwork efficiency, and strengthening individual sense of responsibility in achieving common goals. These findings provide new insights into how culture can impact the management of organizations, particularly in the context of hobby and interest communities.

Keywords: Japanese Pop Culture, Micro Environment, Organizational Skills, Community, Focus Group Discussion

INTRODUCTION

Japanese Pop Culture (J-Pop) has had a significant impact in shaping micro-environments in various communities, including the "All Weebs Projects" (A.W.P) community. According to Iwabuchi (2002), Japanese pop culture serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium that facilitates social interaction and the formation of group identity. In the context of the A.W.P community, this can be seen from the way community members use Japanese pop culture references such as anime, manga, and music to build emotional bonds and collaborations. This interaction then becomes the foundation for the development of organizational skills, such as coordination and effective communication. Furthermore, while doing the research, the researcher found that the effect of Japanese pop culture elements in organizational activities helps create a more inclusive and fun atmosphere.

A.W.P. members' involvement in Japanese pop culture-based activities also trains problem-solving skills and creativity. Crawford & Hancock (2019) Mention participation in a fandom community often involves creative challenges that require innovative solutions. For example, in a cosplay or other creative content creation project, community members have to deal with limited resources and time. While researcher doing discussion with members of A.W.P, it was revealed that this experience taught them to think critically and look for alternative solutions, which are important skills in organizing. In addition, the process of brainstorming ideas for these projects also trains communication and collaboration skills. Japanese pop culture also changes the way A.W.P. members manage conflicts and reach consensus. Jenkins (2013) said Fandom communities are often faced with differences of opinion, but they tend to develop effective conflict resolution

mechanisms. In this discussion, A.W.P. members stated that discussions about anime plots or favourite characters often lead to debate, but they learn to appreciate different perspectives and find common ground. These skills are then applied in organizational decision-making, where consensus and teamwork are key to success.

Japanese pop culture also encourages the development of digital skills and media literacy among A.W.P. members. Furthermore, Black (2008) states that participation in fandom communities often involves the use of technology and digital platforms to create and share content. A.W.P. members revealed that they often use editing apps, social media platforms, and online forums to support the organization's activities. This experience not only improves their technical skills but also trains the ability to manage information and communication effectively. These skills are particularly relevant in the context of modern organizations that are increasingly dependent on technology.

Finally, Japanese pop culture also plays a role in building a spirit of collaboration and social responsibility in the A.W.P community. Condry (2013) said the fandom community is often involved in social activities that aim to have a positive impact on society. In fact, A.W.P. members mentioned that they often hold charity events or social campaigns inspired by the values raised in anime or manga. This activity not only trains organizational skills but also develops social awareness and responsibility as part of society. Thus, Japanese pop culture not only changes the technical skills of members but also shapes the character and values that underpin the success of the organization.

From this, it can be seen that the phenomenon of Japanese Pop Culture is not only entertainment. However, it can be a source of motivation or inspiration for a person to develop, especially in organizational skills. The new thing that can be taken from this topic is that it is an answer to research related to organizational skills, which also answers the phenomenon that people who have a hobby in Japanese Pop Culture are always oriented with negative stigmas such as Anti- social, Incompetent, and Unable to take care of themselves (Alifiandy & Ardi, 2023). So it also indirectly shows that the micro-environment, such as Japanese Pop Culture, has a positive side that can be a reference for other organizations or communities.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

Japanese Pop Culture

Japanese pop culture encompasses anime, manga, video games, music (J-Pop), as well as fan practices such as *cosplay* and *fandom*, and is now evolving into a global cultural landscape that influences the values and identities of its consumers. Research from Krongbooncho et al. (2026) about Generation Z in Thailand shows that anime consumption has transformed from something stigmatized to *mainstream*, reflecting the cultural influence of Japanese pop culture that is increasingly widespread among younger generations. This shift affirmed Japan's pop culture position as a significant cultural force across countries.

An important characteristic of Japanese pop culture is its participatory nature, which encourages informal learning. Alsubaie and Alabbad's research found that the consumption of Japanese animated series contributes to the learning process and facilitates the informal acquisition of language skills outside of formal classrooms (Alsubaie & Alabbad, 2020). These findings suggest that engagement with Japanese pop culture content serves as an indirect learning medium that forms specific competencies without structured instruction.

The research by Anisa Umoro states that there are four most dominant themes in this Japanese pop culture. There are cinema and anime, audience and reception, soft power and cultural diplomacy, and identity and representation. Among these, cinema and anime have been the most extensively covered topics from 2003 to 2023. She also highlights some limitations in the current body of research, including a lack of robust theoretical discussions and a tendency to focus on

repetitive themes. Despite these shortcomings, the findings offer valuable insights into areas for improvement and potential development in future research (Umoro, 2025).

Micro-Environment

Microenvironment refers to internal and external factors that directly affect the operations and performance of an organization or entity, including customers, competitors, suppliers, and other stakeholders. According to Kotler & Keller (2016), the micro environment is the closest environment that has a significant impact on business strategies and decisions, as the interaction within it determines how an organization responds to market demand and competitive challenges. In the context of Japanese popular culture, the microenvironment can be seen through the interaction between content producers, fans, and distributors that make up the creative industry ecosystem. For example, anime studios like Studio Ghibli and Toei Animation operate in a micro-environment that involves collaborating with manga writers, musicians, and merchandising companies to create products that appeal to consumers.

Japanese pop culture can also be understood as a micro-environment because it provides immediate social settings where members interact, negotiate meanings, build habits, and participate in collective practices. According to Vardell et al. (2022), anime clubs, cosplay communities, J-Pop fandom groups, Japan festival committees, and online fan communities are not merely spaces of cultural consumption but also small-scale social environments that shape members' practical behaviour. Members discuss content, organize events, divide responsibilities, manage online interaction, share information, solve technical problems, and maintain community norms. In this sense, Japanese pop culture communities contain social structures, roles, expectations, and informal learning processes. Studies on cosplay communities show that members obtain and share information, especially in relation to costume-making, while supportive community culture helps sustain participation.

Srimulyani and Paidi also stated that Japanese popular culture and youth identity show that engagement with Japanese cultural products can shape young people's identities, relationships, and aspirations. They also found that fandom identities are fluid, socially endorsed, narratively constructed, and future-oriented. The High engagement–High future quadrant dominated, with participants translating practice and recognition into concrete pathways such as creative portfolios, animation degrees, or Japanese language study (Srimulyani & Paidi, 2025).

Organizational Skills

Organizational skills are essential skills that involve planning, coordinating, and managing resources to achieve goals effectively. According to Robbins & Judge, (2023) These skills include skills such as time management, task delegation, teamwork, and problem-solving, which are indispensable in a variety of contexts, both professional and personal. Organizational skills not only increase individual productivity but also support collective success within a group or community. In the context of Japanese popular culture, organizational skills can be seen through fan community activities that hold events such as anime conventions, cosplay competitions, or fan art-making projects. These activities require careful planning and collaboration among members to ensure the smooth running of the event and the achievement of common goals.

Eva et al. (2024) stated that organizational skills refer to practical abilities required to participate effectively in collective activities, including communication, leadership, teamwork, task division, time management, decision-making, responsibility, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. These skills may develop not only through formal organizations but also through informal cultural participation. In Japanese pop culture communities, members may become moderators, committee members, cosplayers, content creators, photographers, event promoters, or group administrators. Each role requires coordination, responsibility, and collaboration.

In addition, Japanese cultural values such as *wa* (harmony) and *ganbaru* (unyielding spirit) also change the way community members carry out their organizational activities. Winata et al. (2022) show that these values encourage a spirit of cooperation and high dedication in achieving common goals. In the context of the Japanese popular culture fan community, this is reflected in their commitment to hosting events responsibly and their willingness to help each other when faced with obstacles. With the support of these cultural values, the ability to organize in this community is not only functional but also emotionally and socially meaningful.

Focus Group Discussion

Shabina et al. (2024) stated that FGD is useful for collecting qualitative data related to participants' responses, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes. Focus Group Discussion is an appropriate method for this study because the research topic concerns shared experience, group meaning, and collective interpretation. FGD enables participants to respond to one another, confirm or challenge experiences, and construct meaning collectively. This is especially relevant because organizational skills are relational rather than purely individual. Communication, leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving are practiced through interaction. Therefore, FGD can reveal not only what participants think about Japanese pop culture communities, but also how they interpret their participation as a process of learning.

Dedios-Sanguinetti et al. (2025) further strengthen this methodological basis by showing that FGD can capture collective sense-making in real time. This research also found that complex participant interactions can emerge in online FGDs conducted via WhatsApp, therefore situating messaging apps as promising data collection sites for including hard-to-reach and highly mobile populations in research. The proposed qualitative indicators model is a useful tool for assessing interaction in FGDs and provides insights into whether and how collective sense-making occurred.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a Qualitative approach with the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method as the main data collection technique. The FGD was chosen for its ability to delve deeply into perceptions, experiences, and group dynamics, especially in the context of the Japanese culture as a microenvironment on organizational skills in the A.W.P (All Weebs Projects) community that is located in Surabaya. FGD participants were selected based on the criteria of community members who have actively joined and have a significant role in the organization, such as administrators, coordinators, or active participants. The number of participants in each FGD session is planned to be between 5 and 14 people to ensure effective interaction and maximum participation. The FGD questions are structured around key themes, such as the values of Japanese culture adopted, their impact on teamwork, and the challenges in their implementation. The FGD process is planned to last for 60-90 minutes and will be recorded with the consent of the participants to ensure the accuracy of the data. This research adheres to research ethical principles, including informed consent, anonymity, and transparency, to ensure the integrity and trust of participants. This method is adapted from the guide Creswell (2014) in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* and enriched with a case study of Japanese culture described by Hofstede et al. (2010) in *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Japanese Pop Culture Has Become a Motivation in Organizations

As commonly known, Japanese Pop Culture encompasses various forms of modern creative expression such as anime, manga, J-Pop music, movies, television dramas, and cosplay that have become global phenomena. Japanese pop culture not only serves as entertainment but also as a

medium that promotes Japanese cultural values through *soft power*, attracting the interest of international audiences. Elements such as in-depth stories, relatable characters, and unique visual aesthetics make Japanese pop culture easy to adopt and modify by various communities around the world. This makes Japanese pop culture one of the most influential cultural exports from Asia (Iwabuchi, 2002). Ray, one of the members of A.W.P replied that:

“Japanese popular culture also influences organizing. In this case, because we have similar hobbies/likes, a sense of kinship arises in this community. So that activities in the organization can be well coordinated and also between members can support each other in running community programs.”

The respondent's statement highlights how Japanese popular culture functions as a unifying force within community organizing. Because members share similar hobbies and interests, a sense of kinship emerges that binds the community together. This aligns with research showing that fan communities built around shared passions create strong opportunities for self-expression, mutual recognition, and emotional connection among members (Kim et al., 2023). Japanese popular culture in particular has been shown to shape the identities, relationships, and aspirations of young people, serving not only as a form of entertainment but also as a foundation for collective belonging (Srimulyani & Paidi, 2025). In this sense, the affinity that grows from common interests becomes the social glue that allows participants to feel that they are part of something larger than themselves. Another member named Tama also replied:

“The presence of a community whose elements are a forum for those who love Japanese popular culture can certainly encourage members to be active in organizing here.”

This shared identity, in turn, has practical consequences for how the organization operates. When members feel a sense of kinship, activities can be coordinated more smoothly, and members are more willing to support one another in running community programs. Such mutual support reflects the broader finding that fan-based communities can be mobilized toward collaborative and even philanthropic goals, transforming shared enthusiasm into organized, sustainable collective action (Zhang et al., 2023). A fan-based community is not merely a leisure activity but a framework through which communities build solidarity, empower one another, and sustain joint initiatives. Ultimately, the influence of Japanese popular culture on this organization demonstrates how cultural affinity can be translated into effective coordination and reciprocal support among members (Li et al., 2025). Lastly, member name Ame stated:

“Japanese pop culture such as anime, cosplay, and J-pop has motivated me to organize. I also want to share, exchange opinions, and use the organization as a stress diversion.”

From her statement, Japanese Pop Culture has become a primary source of motivation to organize and engage in community activities. This experience reflects a broader pattern in which involvement in fandom strengthens identification with a community, encouraging members to take initiative and participate actively in collective endeavors (Reysen et al., 2022). At a wider level, Japanese popular culture also operates as a form of soft power whose global appeal continues to attract and mobilize young audiences in the digital era (Asaad Baker, 2025). In this sense, her involvement in the organization is driven by a genuine affinity for the culture itself, which transforms personal enthusiasm into a desire for organized engagement.

Beyond motivation, all respondents also see the organization as a space to share, exchange opinions, and relieve stress. Participating in fandom-based communities provides opportunities for self-expression and mutual support, and intragroup helping among members has been linked to higher self-esteem and psychological well-being. At the same time, engaging with Japanese popular culture serves an important emotional function, as practices such as cosplay have been associated with positive effects on mental health and a healthy outlet for self-expression rather than mere escapism (Amelia et al., 2025). Taken together, these motivations show that the organization is not only a platform for coordinating shared activities but also a meaningful space for emotional support, personal balance, and stress relief.

Japanese Pop Culture Encourages Responsibility, Teamwork, And Commitment

Japanese pop culture, such as anime, manga, and cosplay, is closely linked to improved organizational skills because it often involves collaborative projects that require effective planning, coordination, and communication. According to Ito et al. (2009), participation in Japanese pop culture-based communities, such as creating fan art or organizing cosplay events, trains individuals to work in teams, manage time, and solve creative challenges together. Thus, Japanese pop culture became a medium that not only entertained but also supported the practical development of organizational skills. Other member name Iqbal replied:

“One of the cultures of the Japanese people is upholding respect and cooperation. Here, we respect each other, value all aspirations, and help one another whenever there are difficulties in our activities. The Japanese are also known for their meticulousness, as they try to minimize even the slightest mistake that might occur in the future. That is where A.W.P builds the ability to be careful about every form of action and decision to be taken.”

Iqbal's statement reveals how core Japanese cultural values, particularly respect and cooperation, are internalized and reproduced within the A.W.P organization. His emphasis on mutual respect, valuing every member's aspiration, and helping one another during difficulties closely mirrors the Japanese concept of *wa* (group harmony), in which trust and cooperation are not treated as fixed individual traits but as dynamic moral constructs shaped by shared sociocultural values (Nishishiba, 2026). This collective orientation fosters a supportive environment where teamwork, empathy, and consideration for others take precedence over individual interest. By embedding these principles into its daily activities, the organization cultivates social cohesion and a sense of belonging, demonstrating that cultural values are not merely symbolic but actively guide how members interact, coordinate, and resolve challenges together.

“As part of AWP members, with the existence of Japanese pop culture, it encourages members to be more active, exemplary, and also trustworthy. So that all responsibilities can be carried out properly. The impact is not only for the good of the community, but also for every member who implements.”

This statement is from Zaki, as the Chairman of A.W.P Community 2026. He suggests that the presence of Japanese popular culture within AWP serves as a catalyst that encourages members to be more active, exemplary, and trustworthy in carrying out their responsibilities. This dynamic can be understood through the lens of fan engagement and identity development, in which the admired traits of cultural figures and idols resonate with members' personal aspirations and become a core motivator for active participation (Kim et al., 2023). When members identify strongly with a shared cultural interest, that identification fosters a sense of belonging, ownership, and responsibility, empowering them to take initiative within the community. In this way, Japanese popular culture is not merely a leisure pursuit but a meaningful source of motivation that strengthens members' commitment to fulfilling their roles properly and consistently (Dym & Fiesler, 2020).

Other Aspects Than Japanese Popular Culture That Encourage Members To Improve Their Organizational Skills

Organizational ability is an essential skill that involves planning, coordinating, and managing resources to achieve goals effectively (Robbins & Judge, 2023). These skills include task management, time management, and teamwork, which are necessary in various contexts such as the world of work, education, or social activities. Organizational skills also involve leadership, clear communication, and the ability to solve problems systematically. In a professional environment, for example, individuals with good organizational skills tend to be more productive, able to meet deadlines and optimize team performance, thus contributing to the overall success of the organization. Tama replied:

“Although this community is more inclined towards Japanese pop culture, we mustn’t forget other aspects such as social values or moral virtues. As good Indonesian citizens, we mustn’t forget the virtue norms that have been taught to us, such as donations or sharing takjil. In Indonesia, we say it as [Bagi-Bagi Takjil] in the month of Ramadhan.”

The statement reflects a conscious effort to balance global cultural influence with the preservation of local moral values. Although the community is strongly inclined toward Japanese popular culture, the speaker emphasizes that members must not abandon social values and moral virtues rooted in their identity as Indonesian citizens. This negotiation illustrates how young people in a globalized world actively construct their identities by drawing on multiple, sometimes competing, sets of cultural values rather than wholly replacing local traditions with foreign ones (Djumat et al., 2025). In this sense, the community's affinity for Japanese pop culture does not displace its commitment to local ethics but is consciously positioned alongside it.

CONCLUSION

Based on all the data above, it was found that an important point was that Japanese popular culture, as a microenvironment, makes the members of A.W.P have the main motivations and similarities. This shared interest becomes a strong basis for the formation of emotional bonds and a sense of togetherness between them. Through their love of Japanese pop culture, such as anime, manga, and music, they become driven to be passionate about organizing. This can be seen from their enthusiasm in participating in activities, collaborating on creative projects, and working together to achieve common goals. Japanese pop culture not only becomes entertainment for them, but also becomes a medium that motivates them to actively contribute and develop organizational skills.

Although this research has successfully identified motivation and common interests as factors driving organizational morale, there are some suggestions for improvement for future research. First, further research can expand the scope by comparing other communities with different interests to see if the same patterns occur universally. Second, it is important to explore more deeply how interest in Japanese pop culture can be developed into more structured programs or training to improve organizational skills. Third, the number of participants is insufficient for the target, which is only six people. Finally, future research may involve more in-depth qualitative methods, such as in- depth interviews or participatory observations, to understand internal dynamics and other factors that may influence organizational spirit within the community.

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