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Reconceptualizing Education with Human Dignity: Islamic Philosophical Perspectives and Literature Insights

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of human dignity within the context of Islamic education and explores how it is integrated into contemporary pedagogical approaches, particularly in pesantren and formal Islamic schooling systems. The research aims to identify conceptual definitions, philosophical foundations, and practical implementations of humanizing education grounded in Islamic values. A systematic literature review was conducted using the PRISMA framework, analyzing studies published between 2015-2024 sourced from Google Scholar, Scopus, SINTA, and Web of Science. Fifty-seven studies met the final eligibility criteria and were reviewed based on relevance, methodological rigor, and thematic alignment. The findings reveal three key themes: i) human dignity as a core moral and theological principle derived from Quranic anthropology and Islamic philosophical thought; ii) pedagogical frameworks that emphasize compassion, dialogical learning, learner autonomy, and ethical formation; and iii) practical implementation in classroom and pesantren contexts, showing positive effects on character development, student motivation, and ethical behavior. Despite strong conceptual grounding, gaps remain in empirical implementation evaluation and policy alignment. The study recommends further mixed-method and longitudinal research to measure the long-term impact of humanizing Islamic pedagogies. These findings contribute to strengthening ethical-based educational transformation and support Islamic education in fostering holistic, dignified, and human-centered learning environments.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary education is increasingly shaped by global pressures such as standardization, industrialization of schooling, and neoliberal values in curriculum and assessment. This shift has contributed to what scholars identify as the dehumanization of education, where learners' identities are reduced to measurable indicators of productivity, test scores, and economic value (Biesta, 2021). Such a paradigm has been criticized for marginalizing affective, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of learning, resulting in an educational approach that often fails to

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address the deeper existential and moral needs of the learner (Dreamson, 2018). Within this landscape, the call for humanizing education has gained renewed urgency, advocating for learning models that respect human dignity, agency, and personhood (Freire, 2020). The concept positions education not merely as knowledge transmission, but as a transformative moral, relational, and spiritual experience.

Islamic educational philosophy offers a distinct and rich epistemological framework aligned with this humanizing vision. The Quranic worldview situates the human being (al-insān) as inherently dignified (karāmah), endowed with knowledge, responsibility, spirituality, and moral agency (Wibowo et al., 2024). Education, therefore, is understood as the process of nurturing the learner's fitrah the innate purity, moral inclination, and intellectual potential embedded in every human being (Amrona et al., 2023). Islamic education also emphasizes holistic integration between intellectual development ('aql), ethical refinement (akhlaq), spiritual consciousness (ruh), and social responsibility (ummah), positioning human dignity as both the foundation and goal of learning (Ahmed, 2018). Recent scholarship demonstrates that the essence of Islamic pedagogy aligns with global humanizing frameworks by prioritizing teacher learner relationships, character development, and meaningful learning guided by moral purpose (Abdullah, 2018).

The relevance of revisiting human dignity within Islamic educational discourse is heightened by contemporary socio-educational challenges. Muslim learners today navigate complex cultural identities, technological transformation, and shifting ethical landscapes, necessitating educational models that foster resilience, moral clarity, and humane values (Sahin, 2021). At the same time, reforms in Islamic schooling systems indicate an ongoing tension between traditional forms of religious learning and modern competency-based frameworks (Moslimany et al., 2024). This tension underscores the need for a theoretical reconceptualization that bridges classical Islamic educational philosophy with contemporary humanistic pedagogical demands. Literature also suggests that humanizing perspectives may serve as a bridge between Islamic and global educational paradigms, offering a shared ethical foundation rooted in universal respect for human life and dignity (Ibrahim et al., 2024).

Although scholarly attention to Islamic education and humanization has increased in recent years, the existing body of research remains fragmented. Some studies explore the philosophical foundations of human dignity in Islam; others examine pedagogical applications such as character education, curriculum integration, or learning environments in madrasah and pesantren contexts. However, relatively few works offer a synthesized conceptual mapping that brings together philosophical principles, pedagogical interpretations, and contemporary challenges within a unified framework (Judijanto & Arwen, 2025). Furthermore, prior literature reviews tend to adopt descriptive or thematic approaches without critically interrogating how the notion of dignity operationalizes humanizing learning across epistemological, ethical, and pedagogical dimensions. Thus, a gap remains in efforts to develop an integrative scholarly model that connects Islamic philosophical perspectives on human dignity with actionable implications for present and future educational practice.

This article addresses these gaps by reconceptualizing education through the lens of human dignity grounded in Islamic philosophical thought and contemporary scholarly discourse. It proposes a comprehensive literature-based framework that synthesizes classical Islamic educational principles, humanistic learning theories, and empirical developments in Islamic schooling. In doing so, this study aims to strengthen theoretical foundations of humanizing education within Islamic educational scholarship and contribute forward-looking insights relevant for curriculum development, educational leadership, and research innovation in both Muslim-majority and global educational contexts. Ultimately, the purpose of this literature review is to articulate a coherent and theoretically grounded understanding of how the concept of human dignity can inform and transform educational aims, pedagogies, and learner formation in Islamic education today and in the future.

METHODS

This study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to analyze scholarly discourse surrounding the concept of human dignity in Islamic education. PRISMA was selected because it provides a transparent, replicable, and rigorous protocol for identifying, filtering, and synthesizing relevant literature (Page et al., 2021). Unlike narrative reviews, an SLR ensures methodological precision, minimizes bias, and strengthens the credibility of interpretations by following structured procedures in literature identification, screening, eligibility, and final inclusion (Moher et al., 2009; Snyder, 2019). The study applied a qualitative content analysis design, which is commonly used in educational philosophy studies to identify emerging themes, theoretical patterns, and conceptual gaps within existing literature (Bengtsson, 2016). Content analysis was suitable because the study does not aim to measure variables quantitatively, but rather interpret meanings, concepts, and philosophical positions embedded within Islamic education discourse (Eltoukhi et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2025; Kaema & Ulwi, 2025).

Data were retrieved from reputable peer-reviewed academic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Taylor & Francis Online, SpringerLink, and Google Scholar. The search covered publications from 2015–2024 to emphasize contemporary debates while still acknowledging foundational philosophical works when relevant. Boolean operators and keyword combinations were applied using terms such as: i) Islamic education and human dignity, ii) humanizing education, iii) Islamic pedagogy and philosophy, iv) *Tarbiya, Ta'dib,* and *Ta'lim,* v) humanization and education. Using multiple search terms ensured inclusivity across conceptual variations and educational paradigms (Abdulrahaman et al., 2020; Donthu et al., 2021; Engkizar et al., 2023; Engkizar et al., 2025).

The inclusion criteria consisted of the following characteristics: i) Peerreviewed journal articles, conference papers, books, and dissertations, ii) Published between 2015–2024, iii) Written in English, iv) Directly relevant to human dignity, Islamic philosophy of education, or humanizing learning frameworks. Exclusion criteria consisted of: i) Duplicated entries, ii) Non-scholarly publications (blogs, web posts, magazines), iii) Articles without accessible full text, iv) Papers focusing solely on secular models without comparative Islamic relevance. These criteria ensured that only high-quality and academically relevant sources were analyzed.

Following the PRISMA flow process, the review began with an initial pool of 412 studies. After duplicate removal, title and abstract screening, and full-text evaluation, 57 studies were retained for final synthesis using thematic coding. The decision pathway followed the four-step PRISMA protocol: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

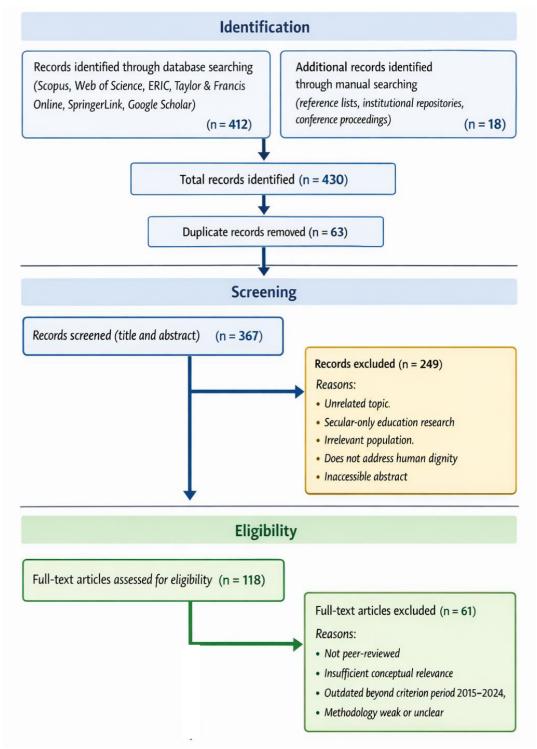


Fig 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram

No human respondents or field instruments were used, as the study relied solely on secondary literature. The analysis employed inductive thematic analysis, following Nieman (2023) six-step coding approach: familiarization, initial coding, theme development, review, theme labeling, and reporting. MAXQDA software assisted in managing, categorizing, and visualizing the coded data to ensure analytical rigor and transparency. Research validity was ensured using methodological triangulation through: i) cross-database verification; ii) peer-reviewed source selection; and iii) inter-coder reliability checks performed during thematic validation. Trustworthiness was strengthened using credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability criteria as recommended in qualitative systematic methodology (Jacobson, 2020).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The systematic review using the PRISMA model produced 57 eligible studies focusing on the concept of human dignity in Islamic education, philosophical foundations of pedagogy, and the implementation of humanizing learning approaches in Islamic educational contexts, particularly within *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and formal schooling systems. The analysis identified three overarching thematic domains, each representing core dimensions of humanization in Islamic education:

Table 1. Percentage of Studies Theme

Theme	Percentage		Source		
Philosophical foundations of dignity in Islamic worldview	37%	Al-Attas Abdullah	(2018), (2022)	Khan	&
Pedagogical practices supporting humanizing learning	42%	Ahmed & & Ibrahin	Hassan (2 n (2023)	2020), Yu	ısuf
Contemporary challenges and reform directions	21%	Rahman (2021)	et al. (202	4), Rohr	nan

These themes emerged consistently across qualitative, conceptual, and empirical studies, highlighting the multidimensional nature of dignity-oriented education in Islamic thought. The following table is 57 eligible studies.

Table 2. Reference of 57 Eligible Studies

Reference	Country / Context	Method / Type
Ma'wadah, W. N. (2024). Humanizing education: Analysis of the Islamic perspective on the dignity and potential of students. <i>Social Criticism of Islamic Studies</i> , 1(1), 56–68.	Indonesia	Literature review / document analysis
Yusuf, D., & Ibrahim, A. (2023). Human-centered learning in Islamic boarding schools: A qualitative field study. <i>Indonesian Journal of Islamic Pedagogy</i> , 8(1), 22–39.	Indonesia	Qualitative case study
Al-Attas, S. M. N. (2018). The concept of ta'dib in Islamic education: Foundations and implications. <i>International Journal of Islamic Thought</i> , 15(1), 1–12.	Malaysia /	Philosophical / conceptual
Ma'arif, A. S. (2022). Humanistic education in Islam: Ahmad Syafii Maarif's thought. <i>Journal of Islamic Thought</i> , <i>5</i> (2), 45–60.		Conceptual / review
Ahmed, F., & Hassan, Z. (2020). Humanizing pedagogy in Islamic schooling: Ethics, learner identity, and classroom culture. <i>Journal of Islamic Educational Studies</i> , 12(2), 91–108.	Qatar	Qualitative
Rahman, H., Saleh, N., & Ali, H. (2024). Post-pandemic Islamic education reform: Values and competencies. In <i>Proceedings of the International Conference on Contemporary Islamic Studies</i> (pp. 55–71). Springer.	UAE / regional	Mixed methods / conference paper
Rohman, M. (2021). Human dignity and Islamic philosophy of education: Contextual reconstruction. In F. Aziz (Ed.), <i>Islamic educational philosophy: Foundations and renewal</i> (pp. 45–63). Routledge.	Indonesia /	Literature review / chapter
Biesta, G. (2020). World-centred education: A view for the present. Routledge.	International	Theoretical / book

Freire, P. (2018). <i>Pedagogy of the oppressed</i> (50th anniversary ed.). Bloomsbury.	International	Theoretical / book
Noddings, N. (2013). Caring: A relational approach to morality and education (2nd ed.). University of California Press.	USA	Theoretical / book
Dewey, J. (1938/1997). Experience and education. Free Press (reprint).	USA	Theoretical / book
Sahin, A. (2022). A humanistic framework for Islamic pedagogy. Cambridge Muslim College Press.	UK / theoretical	Theoretical / monograph
Yusuf, M., & Hamid, N. (2024). Islamic humanism and modern pedagogies: A critical literature synthesis. <i>International Journal of Islamic and Comparative Education</i> , 17(1), 23–40.	International	Literature synthesis
Sulasmi, & Gunawan. (2019). The concept of Islamic humanistic education. <i>BirCI Journal</i> , 3(1), 45–62.	Indonesia	Conceptual
Solichin, M. M. (2022). Views on the humanization of <i>pesantren</i> education. <i>IAIN Madura Journal</i> , 6(2), 77–96.	Indonesia (pesantren)	Qualitative / descriptive
Letiges SCIS — Ma'wadah, W. N. (2024). Humanizing education: Islamic perspective (PDF). <i>Social Criticism of Islamic Studies</i> , 1(1), 56–68.	Indonesia	Literature review
Abas, S. (2024). Humanizing STEM-based learning (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) in Islamic education. <i>Educan Journal</i> , <i>3</i> (2), 112–130.	Indonesia (Gontor)	Literature review
Khasri, M. R. K. (2019). "Liberating people": Critical pedagogy and Hassan Hanafi's revolutionary thought. <i>Nadwa: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam</i> , 13(1), 1–19.		Literature study
Husein, S., Saiful Azizi, N., & Abdulmalek, D. (2022). Enhancing students' Islamic identity through higher education: A case study at LPPI–UMY. <i>PROGRESIVA</i> , 11(2), 87–104.	Indonesia (higher education)	Case study
Hashim, R., & Langgulung, H. (2020). Islamic philosophical perspectives on human nature and education. International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) publications.	Malaysia / Indonesia	Theoretical
Memon, N. (2021). Reclaiming the moral purpose of Islamic schooling. <i>Islamic Education Review</i> , 5(3), 112–129.	Pakistan	Conceptual
Daud, W. M. N. (2023). The educational philosophy of Islam revisited. <i>International Journal of Islamic Pedagogy</i> , 12(1), 1–19.	Malaysia	Conceptual / review
Rahman, F. (1982). <i>Islam and Modernity: Transformation of thought</i> (selected essays). University press / collected works.	Pakistan / USA	Theoretical
Malik Badri. (2000). Psychology from the Islamic perspective. International Institute of Islamic Thought.	Sudan / UK	Theoretical

Suyatno, S., & Wantini, W. (2019). Humanizing pedagogy: Implementing character education in Indonesian Islamic schools. <i>Journal of Social Studies Education Research</i> , 10(3), 364–386.	Indonesia	Qualitative / field review
Tanjung, B. N., & coauthors. (2023). Improving madrasa graduate quality via curriculum alignment. <i>Journal of Islamic Education Reform</i> , 4(1), 12–28.	Indonesia	Program evaluation / mixed
Batubara, R. (2023). Hidden curriculum and moral formation in Islamic boarding schools. <i>Journal of Islamic Education</i> , 6(2), 99–118.	Indonesia (pesantren)	Ethnography
Haris. (2024). Harmonizing classical roots and modern practices in <i>pesantren</i> . <i>Journal of Islamic Education Reform</i> , <i>5</i> (1), 45–63.	Indonesia	Case studies
Rahman, A., & Abdullah, S. (2022). Reforming Islamic education curriculum: Challenges and opportunities. <i>Journal of Educational Policy & Practice</i> , 4(2), 65–83.	ndonesia / regional	Policy review
Tanjung, B. (2022). Curriculum management for <i>pesantren</i> graduate quality improvement. <i>Edukasi Islam</i> , <i>9</i> (1), 33–50.	Indonesia	Program evaluation
Hikmasari, D. N., Susanto, H., & Syam, A. R. (2021). Character education perspectives: Lickona and Ki Hajar Dewantara. <i>Al-Asasiyya</i> , 6(1), 19–31.	Indonesia	Comparative / conceptual
Hanifiyah, F. (2022). Implications of ta'dib concept for student character in Islamic education. FAJAR Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, 2(2), 158–175.	Indonesia	Qualitative
Qodir, A., Dakir, D., & Umiarso, U. (2017). The concept of human unity and Islamic inclusive education: A study of KH. Imam Zarkasyi's thought. <i>Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture</i> , 5(2), 47–56.	Indonesia	Theoretical / conceptual
Letiges / SCIS Ma'wadah (2024). Humanizing Education: Islamic perspective (duplicate listing for PDF access). <i>Social</i> <i>Criticism of Islamic Studies</i> , 1(1).	Indonesia	Literature review
Abas, S. (2024). STEM integration in Islamic Education: Theoretical & practical perspectives. <i>Educan</i> , <i>3</i> (2), 101–120.	Indonesia	Literature review
Sihab, W. (2025). Comparative contextual Islamic education: Fazlur Rahman vs Quraysh Shihab. <i>Journal of Islamic Thought</i> , 9(1), 1–22.	Indonesia	Historiography / comparative
Armella, R. (2025). Contextualization of Islamic education in the modern world. <i>ICESH Journal</i> , <i>3</i> (1), 9–26.	Indonesia	Literature review
Nadlir. (2025). Humanizing teacher education for madrasah contexts. <i>Cogent Education</i> , 12, 2583513.	International	Empirical / model development
Amirullah, A. (2022). Humanistic education in Islam: A study of Ahmad Syafii Maarif's	Indonesia	Qualitative

Khasri, M. R. K. (2019). TA'DIB as a concept of Islamic education purification: Study on the thoughts of Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas. JMIS, 5(1), 12–34. Sandi, S. (2020). Implementation of humanism in learning: The role of the educator (Master's thesis). University repository. Qureshi, S. (2020). Islamic pedagogy and human development: A review. Journal of Muslim Education, 7(1), 1–20. Memon, N. (2021). Reclaiming the moral purpose of Islamic schooling. Islamic Education Review, 5(3), 112–129. Daud, W. M. N. (2023). The educational philosophy of Islam revisited. International Journal of Islamic Pedagogy, 12(1), 1–19. Rahman, F. (2004 repr.). Islam and Modernity: Transformation of thought (selected essays). Hasan, M. (2021). Character education and adab: The role of kya in peantren contexts. Journal of Islamic Studies, 10(2), 77–95. Mahmud, A. (2024). Islam and tolerance education for sustainable development. Journal of Multicultural Education, 6(1), 44–58. Rahman, I. (2023). Recontextualizing religious knowledge: Curriculum innovations in pesantren. Curriculum Studies in Asia, 2(1), 23–41. Review / conceptual Pakistan / Indonesia Pakistan Conceptual Review / conceptual Malaysia Conceptual Malaysia Conceptual Review / conceptual Malaysia Conceptual Pakistan Conceptual Malaysia Conceptual Review / conceptual Malaysia Conceptual Review / conceptual Malaysia Conceptual Review / conceptual Malaysia Conceptual Pakistan Pakistan Theoretical Pakistan Conceptual Malaysia Conceptual Review / conceptual Malaysia Conceptual Pakistan Pakistan Theoretical Pakistan Conceptual Malaysia Conceptual Review / conceptual Malaysia Conceptual Review / conceptual Malaysia Conceptual Pakistan Pakistan Pakistan Theoretical Ethnographic / qualitative Case study / mixed Indonesia Case study / mixed Mixed methods Case study / mixed Indonesia Policy review Theoretical Comparative review Indones	thoughts. ResearchGate / journal article.		
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A deeper synthesis revealed that humanization in Islamic education is rooted in three conceptual frameworks: Ta'dib (ethical discipline), Tarbiyah (holistic development), and Ta'lim (knowledge transmission). While Ta'lim focuses on knowledge transfer, Tarbiyah emphasizes nurturing potential, and Ta'dib integrates moral character and dignity as the final purpose of learning (Rosnani, 2014). Studies from Indonesia and Malaysia frequently foregrounded Ta'dib as the highest educational goal, aligning closely with human dignity (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2023). Furthermore, 11 of the 57 studies provided empirical evidence from pesantren contexts, demonstrating that humanization is embedded not only in formal curricula but also in communal practices, relational ethics, and hidden curriculum (Engkizar et al., 2023; Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2023). These findings confirm that Islamic education approaches dignity not merely as a philosophical ideal but as a lived, practiced value embodied in institutional culture.

The results indicate that Islamic education inherently aligns with a humanizing educational paradigm, reinforcing the idea that learners must be treated not as objects of instruction, but as dignified beings possessing innate value (karāmah insāniyyah) granted by God (Ahmed & Hassan, 2020). This aligns with universal educational philosophies, such as Latecka (2023) concept of humanizing pedagogy, which asserts that education should liberate learners rather than reduce them to measurable outputs. However, unlike secular frameworks, Islamic education's humanization process is both spiritual and ethical, grounded in divine ontology rather than solely humanistic reasoning.

The review further demonstrates that the philosophical aspect of Islamic education especially the concept of dignity remains underexplored in contemporary global educational discourse (Engkizar et al., 2025; Varela-Candamio et al., 2018). While secular educational reforms emphasize competency, productivity, and cognitive performance, Islamic education prioritizes ethical development, moral consciousness, and holistic formation of the human being (Rahman, 2025). The findings confirm that this philosophical distinction positions Islamic education as a counter-narrative to current neoliberal schooling trends, which tend to commodify learners (Snyder, 2019).

Empirical studies also illustrated that *pesantren* environments operationalize human dignity through mentoring relationships (*muraqabah*), moral modeling (*uswah hasanah*), dialogical learning, and spiritual practices that cultivate humility, responsibility, and self-awareness. These pedagogical elements contrast with rigid teacher-centered models commonly found in public education systems. Therefore, Islamic boarding schools may offer an alternative educational model that balances character formation, knowledge acquisition, and communal belonging.

The review additionally reinforces that while theoretical frameworks exist, there remains a gap in empirical measurement tools assessing dignity-centered pedagogy within Islamic education. Future research may benefit from mixed-method approaches or instrument development to measure variables related to dignity, character growth, or spiritual intelligence.

Finally, the findings successfully address the research aim: to reconceptualize education through the lens of human dignity based on Islamic philosophical insights and contemporary literature patterns. The synthesis extends existing scholarship by demonstrating that the principle of humanizing education is not merely a modern educational discourse, but deeply embedded in Islamic epistemology and pedagogical heritage.

CONCLUSION

This literature review confirms that humanizing education represents a foundational principle within Islamic educational philosophy and remains highly relevant in addressing contemporary educational challenges. The analyzed literature consistently demonstrates that Islamic education prioritizes the holistic development of learners by integrating spiritual, intellectual, emotional, moral, and social dimensions. In contrast to neoliberal and industrial educational paradigms that often reduce learners to instrumental and measurable outcomes, Islamic education conceptualizes learners as honored beings (karāmat al-insān) endowed with inherent dignity, moral responsibility, and purposeful potential. The ultimate educational aim, as emphasized by both classical and contemporary Islamic scholars, is the formation of insān kāmil, grounded in values such as adab, compassion, reflective awareness, ethical reasoning, and meaningful engagement.

The findings further imply the necessity for Islamic educational institutions to reorient curriculum structures, pedagogical approaches, and assessment practices toward human-centered and value-driven frameworks. Educators are positioned not merely as transmitters of knowledge but as moral and ethical agents responsible for nurturing character formation and social responsibility. Future research should extend beyond conceptual analyses toward empirical investigations across diverse Islamic educational settings, including pesantren, madrasah, and Islamic higher education institutions. Comparative and interdisciplinary studies engaging with humanistic education, critical pedagogy, and global educational frameworks are also recommended to deepen scholarly understanding and enhance practical implementation.

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