



## **Qur'anic Philosophical Foundations for Developing an Inclusive Islamic Religious Education Curriculum: Justice, Human Dignity, and *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Inclusive Islamic Religious Education (IRE) requires a robust Qur'anic philosophical foundation to transform the prevailing exclusive-doctrinaire paradigm into a humanistic, equitable, and transformative educational framework. This study aims to construct a Qur'an-based philosophical framework for developing an inclusive IRE curriculum grounded in three interconnected principles: justice (*al-'adl*), human dignity (*karāmah insāniyah*), and *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* (mercy to all creation). The study adopts a qualitative approach using a library research design combined with the thematic tafsir (*tafsir mawḍū'ī*) method. Primary data comprise purposively selected Qur'anic verses representing the three philosophical principles, analyzed through four sequential stages: text identification, thematic categorization, philosophical interpretation, and pedagogical-curricular synthesis. The findings demonstrate that the three principles constitute an integrated philosophical trilogy in which justice serves as the structural foundation, human dignity as the ontological foundation, and *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* as the axiological foundation of inclusive education. These principles are systematically derived from nine key Qur'anic verses: QS. An-Nahl [16]:90, QS. Al-Mā'idah [5]:8, and QS. An-Nisā' [4]:135 for justice; QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13, QS. Ar-Rūm [30]:22, and QS. Al-Isrā' [17]:70 for human dignity; and QS. Al-Anbiyā' [21]:107, QS. At-Taubah [9]:128, and QS. Āli 'Imrān [3]:159 for mercy. Their synthesis generates practical implications for five essential curriculum components: differentiated learning objectives, culturally responsive content, student-centered pedagogy, a dignified learning environment, and equitable assessment. This study contributes to Islamic educational philosophy by proposing an operational Qur'anic philosophical trilogy that bridges normative Qur'anic interpretation with practical curriculum development. It further offers a conceptual framework for curriculum developers, teachers, and policymakers to advance inclusive, context-sensitive, and transformative Islamic Religious Education while demonstrating the Qur'an's enduring epistemological relevance in addressing contemporary educational challenges.

### **Keywords:**

Inclusive Islamic Religious Education, Qur'anic justice, human dignity, *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn*, thematic tafsir, curriculum development

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## 1. Introduction

Islamic Religious Education currently faces an increasingly worrying paradox amidst global demands for inclusive and equitable education. On the one hand, Islamic Religious Education theologically has a mandate to humanize all students without discrimination. On the other hand, empirical reality shows that the practice of Islamic Religious Education at various levels of education is still dominated by an exclusive-doctrinaire paradigm that tends to homogenize students and ignore the reality of plurality in the classroom (Mutmainah, 2025; Arifin, 2024). Prihatin et al (2025) emphasizes that inclusive education is not merely a technical policy, but a moral imperative that demands systemic transformation in the curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture to eliminate all forms of learning barriers. However, students with special needs, minority groups, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds still often experience marginalization and educational alienation in the conventional Islamic Religious Education ecosystem (Sidik & Ashari, 2026). The gap between the normative idealism of Islamic religious education as a blessing for all mankind and the reality of discriminatory practices indicates the absence of a solid philosophical foundation for transforming Islamic religious education into a truly inclusive, humanistic, and just education.

Various previous studies have examined the dimensions of Islamic religious education and inclusivity from various perspectives, but their focus has been partial and normative-descriptive. Kurnia (2026) and Khotimah et al. (2026) criticized the exclusive practice of Islamic religious education but failed to offer an operational philosophical foundation based on the Quran as a solution. Khoir (2025) highlighted the unpreparedness of the national Islamic religious education curriculum to respond to inclusivity, but his study stopped at the level of policy criticism without conceptual reconstruction. From an exegetical perspective, Maki (2025) explores inclusivity in the Qur'an textually, Mariya et al. (2025) discuss the principle of *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* separately, while Hanifah (2024) and Tohis and Malula (2023) develop thematic exegesis methodologies without transforming them into concrete pedagogical-curricular syntheses. Rohmadi (2017) further examines Islamic education and diversity from a historical-sociological perspective that is not directly relevant to contemporary curriculum development. Although these studies make significant contributions, no research has comprehensively integrated the three Qur'anic philosophical principles of justice (*al-'adl*), human dignity (*karāmah insāniyah*), and *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* as a unified systemic trilogy operationalized into the five components of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum simultaneously and in a structured manner.

This research aims to construct the philosophical foundation of an inclusive Islamic Religious Education curriculum based on the trilogy of Qur'anic principles that integrate justice as a structural foundation, human dignity as an ontological foundation, and *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* as an axiological foundation, then transform it into concrete implications on five curriculum components: objectives, materials, pedagogy, learning environment, and assessment. The urgency of this research lies in its ability to bridge the epistemological gap that has been gaping between the normative-theological discourse of Qur'anic interpretation and the development of an Islamic Religious Education curriculum that is practical-technical. Through a thematic interpretation approach (*mawḍū'ī*) combined with a pedagogical-curricular synthesis, this study offers a conceptual model that not only enriches the literature on Islamic educational philosophy, but also provides an applicable operational framework for curriculum developers, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and educational policy makers in realizing Islamic Religious Education that is inclusive, humanistic, just, and truly reflects the universal mission of Islam as *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn*.

## 2. Literatur Review

Islamic Religious Education in the contemporary era faces significant paradigmatic challenges as global awareness of the importance of inclusivity in the education ecosystem grows. Prihatin et al. (2025) emphasize that inclusive education is not merely a technical policy but a moral imperative that demands systemic transformation in the curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture to eliminate all forms of learning barriers. However, various studies show that the practice of Islamic Religious Education in Indonesia is still dominated by an exclusive-doctrinaire paradigm that reduces religious education to merely the transfer of dogma, ignores the reality of student plurality, and tends to foster intolerance and religious exclusivity (Syarif, 2021; Maqfirah, 2025). This condition causes students with special needs, minorities, and marginalized groups to experience educational alienation, while Islamic Religious Education teachers lose the momentum to transform religious education into a humanizing experience. According to the theory of distributive justice proposed by Rawls (1971), equitable education must be able to provide reasonable accommodation for the most vulnerable groups, not merely mathematical equality in treatment. Islamic

education teachers need to adopt an inclusive approach rooted in the philosophical foundations of the Quran to embrace the diversity of students holistically and with dignity.

The principles of justice (*al-'adl*) and human dignity (*karāmah insāniyah*) are two fundamental pillars of Islamic educational philosophy, offering an ontological and structural foundation for the development of an inclusive curriculum. Al-Attas (1979) emphasized that justice in Islamic education is not merely the equal distribution of resources, but rather the placement of each student in a proportional position according to their potential and needs. Hidayat et al. (2024) reinforce this perspective by stating that human dignity in Islam is intrinsic and universal, granted by God unconditionally to all descendants of Adam, so that every individual has an equal right to develop. In inclusive education, Fajriyah (2025) argues that the principle of Quranic justice demands additional affirmation and support for students with special needs as a manifestation of epistemological justice. Meanwhile, Fauzi (2024) points out that the concept of human dignity in the Qur'an serves as an ethical foundation for rejecting all forms of physical, social, and cognitive discrimination. According to Noddings (1988), an ethics of care approach to education requires teachers to build caring relationships that honor each student, in line with the principle of *karāmah insāniyah*, which positions each child as a valuable subject. Through the integration of justice and dignity, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum can transform from an elitist system into an ecosystem that honors diversity and guarantees equal access for all students (Hikmah et al., 2026).

The principle of *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn*, as Islam's universal mission, offers an axiological foundation that drives the entire educational ecosystem with an ethos of compassion, empathy, and prophetic tenderness. Shihab (2006) emphasizes that the concept of mercy in the Qur'an encompasses broad and boundless compassion, not only for Muslims but also for the entire ecosystem of life. Hasyim (2025) identified that the principle of mercy has significant pedagogical implications, particularly in shaping a humanistic, empathetic, and learner-centered learning approach. Alifah (2025) further explored how the concept of mercy can be transformed into a pedagogical ethos that rejects violence and coercion in education, and encourages dialogue and deliberation as the primary learning method. In inclusive education, Mariya et al. (2021) demonstrated that the principle of mercy requires Islamic Education teachers to be empathetic and responsive to students' learning difficulties, especially those from marginalized backgrounds. According to Freire (2015), liberating pedagogy must be rooted in compassion and concern for the oppressed, in line with the essence of *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn*, which places compassion as the driving spirit of education. Ladson-Billings (2020) reinforced this with the concept of culturally responsive teaching, which requires teachers to embrace students' cultural diversity as an epistemological asset, not as an obstacle. Through the principle of mercy, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum not only transfers religious knowledge, but also forms students as transformative agents who bring goodness to the whole world.

Various previous studies have examined the dimensions of Islamic education and inclusivity, but most still focus on partial and normative-descriptive analyses. Tohis and Malula's (2023) study on thematic interpretation in Islamic education, for example, remains normative-descriptive without a concrete curricular synthesis. On the other hand, Hanifah's (2024) study on the *mawdū'i* approach has not yet systematically operationalized the interpretation findings into curriculum components. Meanwhile, Rohmadi's (2017) study on Islamic education and diversity focuses more on a historical-sociological perspective than a philosophical-curricular construct. Maki's (2025) study on inclusivity in the Qur'an is still limited to textual analysis without structured pedagogical implications, while Mariya et al.'s (2025) study on *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* in education only explores one principle without comprehensively integrating it with the principles of justice and dignity. This literature gap indicates that there has been no in-depth study constructing a conceptual model for an inclusive Islamic education curriculum based on the Qur'anic philosophical triology (justice, dignity, and mercy) that is systematically operationalized into five curriculum components. Based on this review, this research aims to fill this gap by offering a new perspective on the integration of the Qur'anic philosophical triology as a solid foundation for developing an inclusive, humanistic, and transformative Islamic education curriculum.

In addition to a solid philosophical foundation, the successful implementation of an inclusive Islamic education curriculum is also greatly influenced by contextual factors, teacher pedagogical competence, and institutional policies. Miller's (2007) holistic curriculum theory emphasizes that transformative education must consider the cognitive, affective, spiritual, and social dimensions of students in an integrated manner, with teachers acting as facilitators who embrace diversity as a divine gift. In practice in madrasas and schools, Islamic Education teachers often face challenges in the form of rigid national curriculum documents that are not always aligned with the characteristics and readiness of students in the field, as well as minimal training in implementing differentiated pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching. This condition can

make the ideal principles of inclusiveness difficult to operate effectively. Therefore, pedagogical flexibility and policy support are needed that allow teachers to adapt Qur'anic principles to local contexts without reducing their theological essence (Isnaini et al., 2025). An inclusive Islamic Education curriculum implemented with a participatory and reflective approach—rooted in the philosophical trilogy of justice, dignity, and mercy—will be able to create a humanistic educational ecosystem, reduce the marginalization of students, and ultimately realize the vision of Islamic Education as an education that humanizes humans totally and brings mercy to the entire universe.

### 3. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach with a library research design using **hermeneutic analysis** to examine the Qur'anic philosophical foundations for developing an inclusive Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum. A qualitative approach was chosen because the research is oriented towards a deep understanding of the meaning, values, and conceptual constructions contained in textual sources, not on quantitative measurement of variables. Meanwhile, library research is used to systematically examine primary and secondary sources relevant to the research focus, while tafsir mawḍū'ī allows the verses of the Qur'an scattered in various surahs to be collected based on certain themes to obtain a more comprehensive and contextual understanding (Fadli, 2025). The primary data of the study are in the form of verses of the Qur'an which are selected purposively based on their relevance to three main philosophical constructs, namely: (1) justice and equality of rights through QS. An-Nahl [16]: 90, QS. Al-Mā'idah [5]: 8, and QS. An-Nisā' [4]: 135; (2) respect for diversity and human dignity through QS. Al-Hujūrāt [49]: 13, QS. Ar-Rūm [30]: 22, and QS. Al-Isrā' [17]: 70; and (3) the principle of *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* through QS. Al-Anbiyā' [21]: 107, QS. At-Taubah [9]: 128, and QS. Āli 'Imrān [3]: 159. The selection of verses was carried out by considering the thematic relationship and conceptual coherence between verses, while their meaning was enriched through reading classical and contemporary interpretations and academic literature on Islamic educational philosophy, curriculum development, and inclusive education. This strategy aligns with the thematic approach, which places verses related to a single issue within a unified conceptual framework, enabling a more systematic and relevant construction of the meaning of the Quran for contemporary educational issues (Harahap et al., 2025).

Data were analyzed using a four-stage hermeneutic framework (Byrne, 2001). The first stage involved textual interpretation, in which the selected verses were examined linguistically and contextually using classical and contemporary tafsir to establish their original meanings. The second stage consisted of contextual interpretation, where the philosophical values embedded in the verses were related to contemporary issues of inclusivity, justice, diversity, and educational equity. The third stage involved philosophical synthesis, integrating the interpreted meanings into three interconnected philosophical principles—justice, human dignity, and *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn*—that collectively form the epistemological foundation of inclusive Islamic education. Finally, the fourth stage comprised pedagogical-curricular reconstruction, translating these philosophical principles into practical implications for five curriculum components: learning objectives, curriculum content, pedagogical strategies, learning environment, and equitable assessment. This hermeneutic procedure moves beyond descriptive textual interpretation by reconstructing Qur'anic meanings into an operational philosophical framework capable of informing contemporary curriculum development. Consequently, the study demonstrates how Qur'anic values can function not only as theological doctrines but also as dynamic epistemological resources for designing an inclusive, humanistic, equitable, and transformative Islamic Religious Education curriculum.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### Justice and Equal Rights in Education in Qur'an

The ontological foundation of the inclusive Islamic Religious Education curriculum rests on the principles of justice (*al-'adl*) and goodness (*al-ihsan*), as explicitly stated in Surah An-Nahl, verse 90. This verse serves as a normative foundation that affirms the divine command to uphold justice and goodness in all aspects of human life, including in the context of education, which must guarantee the rights of every individual equally and with dignity without discrimination of any kind. As Allah SWT says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ ۚ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

*"Indeed, Allah commands justice and good deeds, and gives to relatives, and He forbids indecency, evil, and hostility. He teaches you so that you may learn a lesson." (Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Misbah, 16:90)*

In his Tafsir Al-Misbah, Quraish Shihab emphasizes that al-'adl means placing something in proportion and granting equal rights, while al-ihsan goes beyond that by granting more than the due rights. This perspective is reinforced by Buya Hamka in his Tafsir Al-Azhar, which places justice as a fundamental pillar of society, including the educational ecosystem. In inclusive Islamic education, this interpretation indicates that justice is not merely mathematical equality in treatment, but rather epistemological justice that guarantees equal access for all students. The principle of ihsan requires the curriculum to provide affirmation and additional support (reasonable accommodation) for students with special needs so that they can achieve their maximum potential in Islamic Religious Education. Thus, Qur'anic justice transforms the educational paradigm from rigid uniformity to an equilibrium that embraces diversity, ensuring that every child receives their full right to learn, regardless of their physical condition or social background, throughout the school year. Equitable education does not allow structural inequalities to perpetuate marginalization.

The logical consequence of this foundation of justice is objectivity in evaluation, as actualized in Surah Al-Ma'idah, verse 8, which commands the courage to be fair, even to those disliked. This principle requires educators to transcend personal preferences and emotional bias, so that student assessments are conducted solely based on competence and objective learning, without being influenced by the student's background, social status, or physical condition. Here is the word of Allah SWT:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاَنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۖ اعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

*"O you who believe! Be upholders of justice for Allah's sake (when) you bear witness. And let not your hatred of a people incite you to injustice. Be just, for that is closer to piety. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is All-Aware of what you do." (Quran 5:8)*

In his commentary, Ibn Kathir emphasized that this commandment prohibits Muslims from being influenced by emotional bias or personal hatred in decision-making. Quraish Shihab reinforced this by linking the objectivity of justice to the essence of piety, where educators are required to transcend their subjectivity. This bias often manifests unconsciously through teachers' preference for high-achieving students or students from the majority group. An inclusive Islamic education curriculum must systematically deconstruct these discriminatory practices, especially in assessment instruments. Assessments should no longer be designed based on a single standard that ignores the diversity of students' learning styles and cultural backgrounds. Fairness in assessment is a direct manifestation of educators' piety, ensuring that each evaluation measures competency authentically without being distorted by prejudice, so that each student receives recognition for their learning in a proportional and dignified manner. Therefore, siding with the weak must be embodied in a liberating evaluation policy.

This evaluation objectivity further demands a clear advocacy dimension for marginalized groups, based on Surah An-Nisa' verse 135, which obliges Muslims to be upholders of justice and witnesses for Allah. This verse emphasizes that justice must be upheld without compromise, even when it conflicts with personal interests or those of close groups. Therefore, Islamic education has a moral responsibility to defend the marginalized and ensure that no one is deprived of their right to access education. Here is the word of Allah SWT:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ ۚ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا ۖ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا ۚ وَإِنْ تَلَوُّوا أَوْ نَعَضُوا ۖ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

*"O you who believe! Be upholders of justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or your parents and relatives. Whether they are rich or poor, Allah knows best what is in their best interest. So do not follow your own desires, wanting to deviate from the truth. And if you distort (words) or refuse to bear witness, then indeed, Allah is All-Aware of what you do." (Quraish Shihab [4]: 135)*

Quraish Shihab highlights that this verse demands moral courage to uphold the truth even at the risk of harming oneself or close relatives. Meanwhile, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs' interpretation emphasizes the dimension of social justice and protection for vulnerable groups within the societal structure. In the reality of education, students with special needs, minorities, or from low-income backgrounds are

often marginalized by elitist systems. An inclusive Islamic education curriculum must respond to this challenge by integrating advocacy narratives into teaching materials. The material not only teaches justice textually but also fosters students' critical awareness to side with their peers experiencing hardship or unfair treatment. Islamic religious education is designed to shape pious individuals who are also capable of becoming agents of social change who dare to speak up for justice and protect the dignity of those marginalized within the educational ecosystem. Fundamentally, Islamic education must be a safe space for all groups without exception.

These three principles of Qur'anic justice directly reconstruct the objectives and representation of material in an inclusive Islamic education curriculum. Learning objectives are no longer formulated in a singular and elitist manner that only benefits regular students, but are instead differentiated to accommodate a diverse spectrum of abilities and learning needs. The curriculum must formulate competencies that ensure no student is left behind due to physical, cognitive, or socioeconomic barriers. The representation of Islamic education material must be free from majority bias and narratives that stigmatize minority groups or people with disabilities. The material must explicitly include inclusive exemplary stories, respect the internal diversity of the Muslim community, and teach empathy for vulnerable groups. This approach transforms the face of Islamic Religious Education material from its previously rigid, doctrinal nature to a humanistic, responsive one. Within this framework, Islamic Religious Education teachers are required to curate material sensitive to social justice issues. This step is crucial. The curriculum serves not only as a tool for transferring religious knowledge, but also as a strategic instrument for dismantling structures of discrimination and building a school culture that consciously embraces substantive justice for all learners.

The culmination of this curricular justice implementation is manifested in the creation of an inclusive learning environment and a fair assessment system. The physical and psychological environment of the school must be designed as a safe space free from bullying, group exclusivity, and stigma against differences. Every corner of the school must project a visual and cultural message that every child, regardless of their circumstances, has an equal place. Furthermore, the assessment system must shift from rigid summative tests to formative, authentic, and differentiated assessment. This assessment no longer standardizes success but instead measures individual development contextually (epistemological justice). Therefore, evaluation must be process-oriented, not just a uniform end result. Teachers are given the autonomy to modify assessment instruments according to students' learning profiles, including providing additional time or alternative formats for students with special needs. Through the synergy between a nurturing environment and liberating assessment, the inclusive Islamic education curriculum successfully transforms the Qur'anic values of justice into a real, meaningful, and humanizing learning experience for all students without discrimination. This is in line with the true spirit of inclusivity. Ultimately, justice becomes the driving force.

### **Respect for Human Diversity as God's Creation in Qur'an**

The epistemology of diversity in Islam is rooted in the principle of dialogue and mutual understanding (li-ta'ārafu), as explicitly stated in Surah Al-Hujurāt, verse 13. This verse serves as a normative foundation, affirming that diversity is not a source of conflict, but rather a divine gift for building cross-cultural understanding and enriching the perspective of universal humanity. Here is what Allah SWT says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

*"O humans! Indeed, We created you from a man and a woman, then We made you into nations and tribes so that you may know each other. Indeed, the most noble in the sight of Allah is the most pious. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing." (QS. Al-Hujurāt [49]: 13)*

Quraish Shihab in Tafsir Al-Misbah emphasizes that li-ta'ārafu is not merely a physical or superficial introduction, but rather an in-depth dialogue for mutual understanding, exchange of ideas, and enrichment of perspectives. This perspective is reinforced by Buya Hamka in Tafsir Al-Azhar, which highlights that the common origin of humans (from men and women) eliminates claims of superiority of race, ethnicity, or class. This synthesis of interpretations indicates that diversity in the classroom—whether ethnicity, culture, language, or neurodiversity—is not a threat or deficit that must be standardized, but rather an epistemological asset that enriches the learning process. The Islamic Religious Education curriculum must transform the paradigm from homogeneity to an embraced heterogeneity, where differences in students' backgrounds are used as living learning resources. The Islamic Religious Education class becomes a

productive dialogical space, not a monologue space that suppresses differences. Therefore, diversity should be celebrated as a gift, not tolerated as a burden (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

The ontological foundation that underpins this epistemology of diversity is the concept of human dignity (*karāmah insāniyah*), actualized in Surah Al-Isrā', verse 70. This verse affirms that human dignity is intrinsic and universal, granted by God unconditionally to all descendants of Adam, so that every individual has equal value and the right to develop without discrimination. Here is the word of Allah SWT:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

*"And indeed, We have honored the children of Adam, and We carried them on land and sea, and We provided them with good things, and We preferred them with an appropriate excellence above many of those We created."* (Quraish Shihab, 17:70)

In his commentary, Quraish Shihab emphasizes that *karāmah* (nobleness) is given universally and unconditionally to all the Children of Adam, not based on academic achievement, wealth, physical perfection, or social status. Ibn Kathir reinforces this by linking this honor to the gift of reason and moral responsibility given to every human being. This verse deconstructs the paradigm that measures a student's worth solely on cognitive abilities or conformity to majority norms. Every student, regardless of their academic performance, physical condition, or economic background, possesses equal and intrinsic dignity. An inclusive Islamic education curriculum must be designed to systematically protect this dignity, strictly prohibiting any form of humiliation, bullying, or marginalization. Every student should feel "valuable" and "accepted" in the eyes of their teachers and peers. Islamic education not only transfers knowledge but also honors the full humanity of each child (Noddings, 2005). Therefore, human dignity serves as a moral compass that guides all pedagogical practices.

The synthesis of these two Qur'anic principles—diversity as an epistemological asset and dignity as an ontological foundation—directly reconstructs the components of objectives and material representation in an inclusive Islamic education curriculum. Learning objectives are no longer formulated in a single format that assumes student homogeneity, but rather are differentiated to accommodate a diverse spectrum of abilities, interests, and cultural backgrounds. The curriculum must formulate competencies that ensure every student, including those with unique learning styles or from minority cultures, can access religious knowledge meaningfully. Furthermore, Islamic Education materials must explicitly incorporate local wisdom values and narratives that respect the internal diversity of Muslims and non-Muslim groups in a pluralistic environment. The materials must not be biased against the majority group or stigmatize people with disabilities. This approach transforms Islamic Education materials from being rigidly doctrinal to being humanistic and responsive. Islamic Education teachers are required to be curators of materials sensitive to issues of diversity and human dignity. The curriculum serves as a strategic instrument for dismantling structures of discrimination and building an inclusive religious narrative. Fundamentally, Islamic Education materials must be a mirror reflecting the face of Islam that embraces differences (Gay, 2018).

The culmination of the implementation of these principles of diversity and dignity is manifested in culturally responsive teaching (CRT) and the creation of a nurturing learning environment. Islamic Religious Education teachers must implement a CRT approach in which students' experiences, languages, and cultural backgrounds are used as capital (assets) in the construction of religious knowledge, rather than being ignored or considered obstacles. Learning methods must use Universal Design for Learning (UDL) that accommodates various learning styles (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and provides multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. The physical and psychological environment of the school must be designed as a safe space that conveys the visual and cultural message that every child, regardless of their differences or disabilities, has an equal place and is respected. On the other hand, the assessment system must shift from rigid standardized tests to authentic assessments that measure individual development contextually, respecting different learning speeds. Through the synergy between responsive pedagogy and a nurturing environment, an inclusive Islamic Religious Education curriculum successfully transforms the values of diversity and Qur'anic dignity into a learning experience that is real, empowering, and humanizing. This is in line with the true spirit of inclusivity (Tomlinson, 2017). Ultimately, respect for dignity becomes the driving force of the entire educational ecosystem.

### **Quranic Perspektif of Islam as *Rahmatan lil 'Ālamīn*: Inclusion, Empathy, and Compassion**

The meta-paradigm of inclusive Islamic Religious Education culminates in the principle of *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn*, which places compassion as the highest axiological foundation within the entire educational

ecosystem. Unlike structural justice and ontological dignity, rahmat operates at a relational and emotional level, driving all pedagogical practices in a humanistic and transformative manner. Islam is not essentially an exclusive and elitist religion, but rather a prophetic mission that brings salvation, peace, and happiness to all creatures without discrimination. This principle serves as a firm antithesis to the authoritarian, mechanistic, and violent learning paradigm—both physical and verbal—that still prevails in some educational institutions. A truly inclusive Islamic Religious Education curriculum must make rahmat the spirit that permeates every component, from learning objectives and teacher-student interactions to the overall school culture. Islamic education is not simply a transfer of religious dogma, but a transformative space that radiates warmth, acceptance, and genuine concern for every student, especially those most vulnerable and marginalized in the conventional education system (Noddings, 2013).

The theological foundation of this principle of mercy is explicitly actualized in Surah Al-Anbiyā', verse 107. This verse serves as a normative foundation affirming that the prophetic mission—and by extension, the mission of Islamic education—is universal and radically inclusive, transcending religious, ethnic, and social barriers to bring prosperity to the entire ecosystem of life. Here is what Allah SWT says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

*"And We have not sent you (Muhammad) except as a mercy to all the worlds." (Quraish Shihab, Tafsir Al-Misbah, 21:107)*

Quraish Shihab, in his Tafsir Al-Misbah, asserts that the word mercy in this verse encompasses broad and boundless compassion, directed not only at Muslims but also at non-Muslims, animals, plants, and the entire ecosystem of life. This perspective is reinforced by Buya Hamka in his Tafsir Al-Azhar, who explains that the primary mission of prophecy is to bring happiness and salvation, not violence and rigidity that would distance humanity from the essence of the teachings. This universality indicates that the mission of Islamic education is radically inclusive, transcending the boundaries of particular identities. In the context of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, this principle demands a paradigm shift from education oriented toward group exclusivity to education that shapes students as agents of benefit for the entire surrounding environment. Islamic Religious Education materials must consistently instill the awareness that every Muslim's actions must reflect real mercy for others, including those of different beliefs, abilities, and cultural backgrounds within the educational environment (Freire, 2000).

The relational dimension of Qur'anic mercy is further manifested in prophetic exemplars as depicted in Surah At-Taubah, verse 128. This verse illustrates the depth of the Prophet's empathy, who psychologically felt the suffering of his people as his own, an archetype of educator who goes beyond mere superficial sympathy to transformative and liberating concern. Here is the word of Allah SWT:

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُم بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

*"Indeed, there has come to you a messenger from among your own people, your suffering grieved by him, eager for you (faith and salvation), forbearing and compassionate to the believers." (Surah At-Taubah [9]: 128)*

In his commentary, Ibn Kathir explains that this verse describes the Prophet's psychological state, authentically experiencing the suffering of his people as his own, an emotional depth that is the foundation of prophetic leadership. Quraish Shihab reinforces this by highlighting the aspect of compassionate leadership, where educators are not apathetic to students' difficulties, but rather proactively seek liberating solutions. In an inclusive Islamic education ecosystem, this prophetic educator archetype demands that teachers not be apathetic to the learning difficulties experienced by students, especially students with special needs or those from marginalized backgrounds. Teacher empathy is not simply a feeling of pity, but rather an active sensitivity that encourages appropriate and compassionate pedagogical interventions. The curriculum must be designed to facilitate teachers in recognizing each student's individual learning profile, so that each child receives attention and support tailored to their needs, reflecting authentic and transformative prophetic care in every classroom learning interaction (Palmer, 1998).

The practical manifestation of this prophetic empathy is actualized through a pedagogy of gentleness, as affirmed in Surah Āli 'Imrān, verse 159. This verse firmly rejects the paradigm of authoritarian pedagogy and emphasizes that gentleness, dialogue, and a persuasive approach are the keys to successful humanizing education, while violence and harshness will only result in alienation and resistance from students. Here is what Allah SWT says:

فَبِمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

"So, thanks to Allah's grace, you (Muhammad) act gently towards them. If you were harsh and harsh-hearted, they would certainly distance themselves from those around you. Therefore, forgive them and ask for forgiveness for them, and consult with them in all matters. Then, when you have made up your mind, then put your trust in Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who put their trust." (QS. Āli 'Imrān [3]: 159)

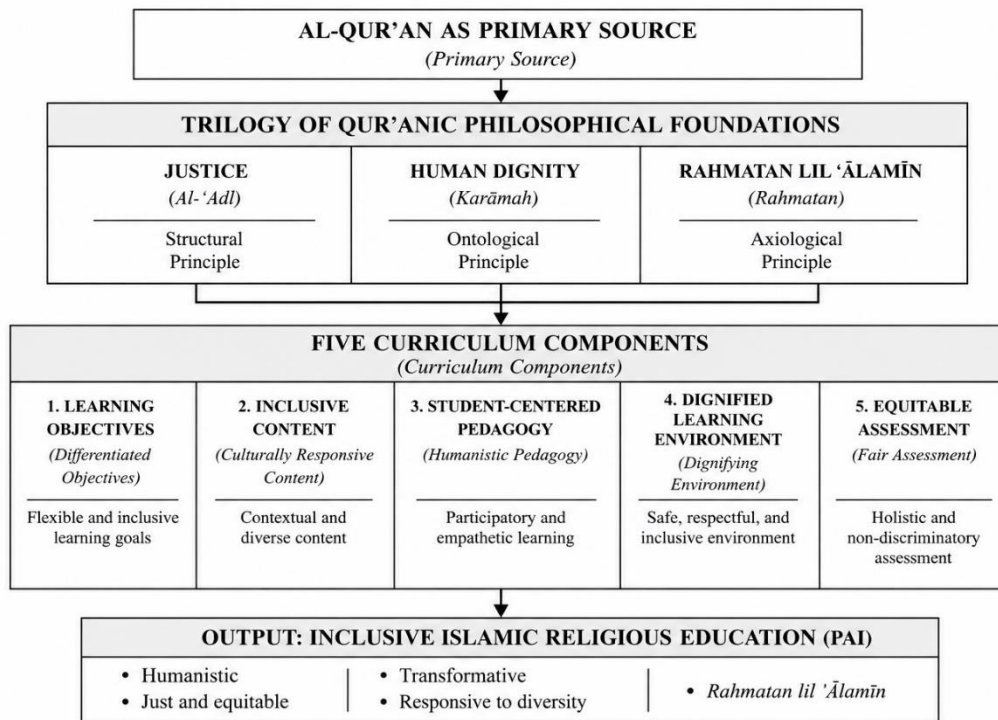
Quraish Shihab in Tafsir Al-Misbah underlines that violence and rudeness in education will cause students to become alienated and lose motivation to learn, while gentleness and deliberation (dialogue) are the keys to the success of the educational process. The Indonesian Ministry of Religion's interpretation strengthens this by linking gentleness to the success of da'wah and education, where a persuasive approach is much more effective than a coercive approach. This verse firmly rejects the authoritarian pedagogical paradigm still rooted in some conventional Islamic education practices, where physical and verbal punishment are considered legitimate disciplinary methods. An inclusive Islamic education curriculum must adopt student-centered learning and differentiated instruction as concrete manifestations of this prophetic gentleness. Teachers proactively modify learning content, processes, and products according to students' readiness and learning profiles, ensuring that no learner feels oppressed, intimidated, or marginalized by a system that does not accommodate their diversity (hooks, 1994).

The synthesis of these three principles of Qur'anic mercy confirms that rahmatan lil 'ālamīn (mercy for the world) is not merely a theological slogan, but rather an axiological framework that must be systematically operationalized in all components of the inclusive Islamic education curriculum. The value of mercy must be brought to life through the hidden curriculum, namely teacher exemplary interaction, a warm and accepting school culture, and consistent, empathetic and nurturing interactions between students. Furthermore, an inclusive Islamic Religious Education curriculum must transcend classroom boundaries by instilling social and ecological concerns, shaping students who are not only ritually pious but also become agents of mercy for the community and the universe in real terms. Thus, the Islamic Religious Education class transforms into a microcosm that reflects the true face of Islam: warm, accepting, and bringing to life every potential of humanity. Ultimately, when structural justice, ontological dignity, and axiological mercy synergize completely in one curriculum ecosystem, then Islamic Religious Education truly realizes its mission as an education that humanizes humans totally and brings blessings to the entire universe without exception. This philosophical trilogy becomes a solid foundation for the transformation of Islamic Religious Education from an exclusive and doctrinal education to an inclusive, humanist, and transformative education in the contemporary era (Miller, 2019).

## Discussion

The findings of this study construct the philosophical foundation of an inclusive Islamic Religious Education curriculum based on the trilogy of Qur'anic principles including justice (al-'adl) as a structural foundation, human dignity (karāmah insāniyah) as an ontological foundation, and rahmatan lil 'ālamīn as an axiological foundation. The most important findings show that these three principles are not merely stand-alone theological concepts, but rather form a systemic unity that mutually reinforces and integrates the normative-transcendental dimension with the pedagogical-practical dimension. Justice guarantees equal access and treatment, dignity protects the intrinsic value of each student, and mercy drives the entire educational ecosystem with an ethos of compassion and empathy. The synthesis of these three principles produces a conceptual framework capable of transforming Islamic Religious Education from an exclusive-doctrinaire paradigm to an inclusive-humanist one, with concrete implications for the five components of the curriculum: differentiated objectives, culturally responsive materials, student-centered pedagogy, a respectful learning environment, and fair assessment. These findings confirm that the Quran possesses a rich epistemological capacity to respond to contemporary educational challenges, particularly in embracing diversity and inclusivity without losing its theological roots. To provide a comprehensive visualization of how this philosophical trilogy is transformed into curriculum components, a conceptual model summarizing all of this research's findings is presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Philosophical Trilogy Model for an Inclusive Islamic Education Curriculum Based on the Quran



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Model of an Inclusive Islamic Religious Education Curriculum  
Based on Qur'anic Philosophical Trilogy.

Figure 1 visually models the transformation path from the primary source (the Quran) through three philosophical principles (justice, dignity, and mercy), which are then operationalized into the five components of the Islamic Education curriculum, ultimately resulting in a humanistic, just, and transformative Islamic Education output. The research findings engage productively with several progressive education theories, strengthening their validity and relevance. The concept of epistemological justice found is in line with John Rawls' theory of distributive justice, which emphasizes that inequality can only be justified if it benefits the most vulnerable groups, which in the context of Islamic Religious Education is realized through reasonable accommodation for students with special needs. The principle of human dignity (karāmah insāniyah) strongly intersects with Nel Noddings' theory of ethics of care, which places caring relationships as the foundation of moral education, as well as the concept of human dignity in Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, which rejects all forms of dehumanization in education. Meanwhile, the principle of rahmatan lil 'ālamīn reflects the essence of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) by Gloria Ladson-Billings and the holistic curriculum by John Miller, where education not only transfers knowledge but also glorifies diversity and fosters ecological-social concerns. This theoretical dialogue demonstrates that the Qur'anic values found are not only internally valid within the Islamic tradition but also resonate with contemporary global educational discourse, thus strengthening this article's position as a significant contribution to the international Islamic education literature.

The novelty of this research lies in the systematic integration of thematic interpretation of the Qur'an and pedagogical-curricular synthesis that produces a conceptual model of philosophical trilogy, which significantly surpasses five previous relevant studies. First, Tohis and Malula's (2023) study on thematic interpretation in Islamic education is still normative-descriptive without a concrete curricular synthesis. Second, Hanifah's (2024) study on the mawdū'ī approach has not yet operationalized the interpretation findings into curriculum components systematically. Third, Rohmadi's (2017) study on Islamic education and diversity focuses more on a historical-sociological perspective than a philosophical-curricular construct. Fourth, Maki's (2025) study on inclusivity in the Qur'an is still limited to textual analysis without structured pedagogical implications. Fifth, Mariya et al.'s (2025) study on rahmatan lil 'ālamīn in education only explores one principle without integrating it with the principles of justice and dignity comprehensively. Unlike the five aforementioned studies, this article offers a philosophical trilogy model that simultaneously integrates justice, dignity, and mercy as a systemic whole, then operationally transforms them into five components of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. This novelty fills a significant gap between the discourse of Quranic interpretation and practical curriculum development, making this research a rare epistemological bridge in contemporary Islamic education literature.

The implications of this research's findings and novelty demand a strategic and structured policy response at both the macro (government) and meso (school) levels. At the government level, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education need to revise the National Islamic Religious Education Curriculum by explicitly integrating these three philosophical principles as meta-principles that permeate all curriculum components, not simply as additional material. It is necessary to develop Guidelines for the Implementation of Inclusive Islamic Religious Education Based on Quranic Values, which will serve as a national reference for the development of textbooks, teaching modules, and assessment instruments. The government also needs to allocate a special budget for training Islamic Education teachers in implementing differentiated pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, and authentic assessment that accommodates student diversity. At the school level, every madrasah (Islamic school) and school needs to develop an Inclusive Vision and Mission that explicitly refers to the principles of justice, dignity, and mercy, then translate this into school culture through anti-bullying programs, inclusive classes, and cross-cultural activities. Islamic Education teachers need to be encouraged to become critical curators of materials, able to select and contextualize teaching materials to avoid bias and stigma. Schools need to build a differentiated assessment system that measures individual development contextually, rather than standardizing success. These policies will ensure that Islamic Education is not merely an agent of dogma transfer, but also a social transformer that humanizes all students and brings blessings to the entire education ecosystem.

Furthermore, the government should institutionalize the Inclusive Islamic Religious Education Curriculum through a dedicated national policy framework that establishes inclusivity as a mandatory standard rather than an optional initiative. Such a policy should explicitly require all curriculum documents, textbooks, learning modules, and assessment systems to undergo an inclusivity review based on the Qur'anic principles of justice (*al-'adl*), human dignity (*karāmah insāniyah*), and *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn*. The policy should also mandate differentiated instruction, reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities, culturally responsive learning materials, and anti-discrimination mechanisms within all Islamic Religious Education settings. In addition, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education should develop national indicators and accreditation standards for Inclusive Islamic Religious Education to ensure measurable implementation across schools and madrasahs. These standards need to be accompanied by periodic monitoring, teacher certification in inclusive pedagogy, and dedicated funding schemes that support accessibility, inclusive learning resources, and continuous professional development. Through a comprehensive regulatory framework, inclusivity can move beyond normative discourse and become an institutionalized practice embedded within the governance, implementation, and evaluation of Islamic Religious Education at the national level.

## 5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the philosophical foundation of an inclusive Islamic Religious Education curriculum can be constructed solidly through a trilogy of Qur'anic principles that integrate each other: justice (*al-'adl*) as a structural foundation that guarantees equal access and eliminates discrimination, human dignity (*karāmah insāniyah*) as an ontological foundation that glorifies diversity as *sunnatullah* and divine grace, and *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* as an axiological foundation that drives the entire educational ecosystem with an ethos of compassion, empathy, and prophetic gentleness. These three principles are not merely stand-alone theological concepts, but form a systemic unity that transforms Islamic Religious Education from an exclusive-doctrinaire paradigm to an inclusive-humanist one through five curriculum components: differentiated objectives, culturally responsive materials, student-centered pedagogy, a nurturing learning environment, and fair assessment. These findings confirm that the Qur'an has a rich epistemological capacity to respond to contemporary educational challenges, particularly in embracing diversity and inclusivity without losing its theological roots, while offering a conceptual model relevant to global educational discourse.

The main contribution of this research is bridging the epistemological gap between the discourse of Qur'anic interpretation and practical curriculum development through an operational philosophical trilogy model. The limitations of this research lie in the nature of library research, which has not yet tested the empirical implementation of this model in real school settings. Further research is recommended to develop implementation studies of this inclusive Islamic Religious Education curriculum model based on this philosophical trilogy in various madrasah and school contexts, and to explore its impact on the psychological well-being and learning outcomes of students with special needs.

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