

## Innovation of a Humanistic–Religious Islamic Education Learning Model in Strengthening Students' Character

Abd. Hafid<sup>1\*</sup>, Ita Tryas Nur Rochbani<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1&2</sup> Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Ibnu Sina Batam, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

Islamic education faces contemporary educational challenges in the form of a moral crisis, the growing trend of individualism, and the reduction of the meaning of religiosity among students. These conditions demand innovations in learning models that are not merely normative–dogmatic but are also capable of shaping character in a reflective and meaningful way. This study aims to examine and formulate an innovative Islamic education learning model based on the integration of humanistic and religious approaches in strengthening students' character. The study employs a qualitative approach with a conceptual–analytical design through a systematic review of reputable national and international literature published within the last five years. Data analysis was conducted using thematic–conceptual analysis to identify patterns, principles, and pedagogical constructs of the humanistic–religious learning model. The results indicate that the integration of humanistic and religious approaches fosters Islamic education learning that is more dialogical, reflective, and contextual. This model strengthens the role of teachers as value facilitators and moral exemplars, promotes the internalization of values through reflection and socio-religious experiences, and is effective in developing students' religious character, empathy, responsibility, and integrity. This study concludes that the humanistic–religious Islamic education learning model represents a relevant, integrative, and adaptive pedagogical alternative in addressing contemporary challenges in Islamic education and contributes both theoretically and practically to the development of character education in Islamic educational institutions.

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### Corresponding Author:

Abd. Hafid  
Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Ibnu Sina Batam, Indonesia  
Email: [taranghafid@gmail.com](mailto:taranghafid@gmail.com)

## INTRODUCTION

The development of global society, marked by rapid technological advancement, value disruption, and the increasing complexity of social problems, has posed serious challenges to education, particularly in the formation of students' character. Education is no longer sufficient when oriented solely toward the transfer of cognitive knowledge; rather, it is required to cultivate holistic personalities that reflect a balance between intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual intelligence. In this context, Islamic education holds a strategic position because, normatively and philosophically, it aims to develop individuals who are faithful, morally upright, and socially responsible. However, these ideal objectives are often not fully reflected in classroom learning practices.

Various studies indicate that Islamic education learning in many educational institutions is still dominated by normative–doctrinal approaches, is teacher-centered in nature, and emphasizes the memorization of religious content (Saada & Magadlah, 2021; Rahman et al., 2022). Such learning patterns tend to position students as passive recipients of values rather than as active subjects who

reflect upon and internalize Islamic values in real-life contexts. Consequently, a gap emerges between students' religious knowledge and the behaviors and character manifested in their daily lives.

In response to these issues, humanistic approaches in education have increasingly been developed. Humanistic education positions learners as subjects who possess unique potentials, needs, and experiences that must be respected within the learning process. From the perspective of Islamic education, this approach is consistent with the principle of respecting human fitrah and fostering holistic personality development (*insān kāmil*). A number of recent studies demonstrate that humanistic-based learning contributes positively to the development of students' empathy, moral responsibility, and self-awareness (Huda et al., 2020; Widodo & Sari, 2023).

On the other hand, the dimension of religiosity remains a fundamental foundation in Islamic education. A religious approach to learning is not merely understood as the transmission of normative teachings, but also as a process of internalizing spiritual values that are living and meaningful for students. Research indicates that contextual and reflective religious learning is capable of strengthening students' religious character, integrity, and self-control (Azra et al., 2021; Yusuf & Nurhayati, 2024). However, a religious approach that is not accompanied by humanistic principles has the potential to produce formalistic and exclusive attitudes.

Several previous studies have examined innovations in Islamic education learning, such as the integration of character values into the Islamic education curriculum (Sutrisno et al., 2021), learning models based on the values of religious moderation (Rahman & Abdullah, 2023), and contextual approaches in moral education (*akhlaq*) learning (Fauzi & Karim, 2022). Nevertheless, most of these studies still treat the humanistic and religious dimensions as two separate approaches, and thus have not yet presented an integrative and holistic learning model.

Based on the review of previous studies, there is a significant research gap, namely the absence of a well-formulated and in-depth analysis of an Islamic education learning model that systematically integrates humanistic and religious principles as a unified pedagogical framework for strengthening students' character. In fact, the integration of these two approaches is believed to be capable of addressing the challenges of character education in the modern era while maintaining the authenticity of Islamic values and their relevance to students' psychological and social needs.

Therefore, this study aims to examine and formulate an innovative humanistic–religious Islamic education learning model for strengthening students' character. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of a more inclusive, reflective, and transformative paradigm of Islamic education learning, as well as practically to teachers and curriculum developers in designing learning processes that are not only normatively religious but also humanistic and meaningful for students' lives.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a conceptual–analytical design (conceptual qualitative study). This approach was chosen because the research objective does not focus on the quantitative measurement of variables, but rather on an in-depth understanding of the concepts, principles, and pedagogical constructs of a humanistic–religious Islamic education learning model for strengthening students' character. Qualitative research is considered appropriate for exploring meanings, values, and conceptual relationships inherent in value- and character-based educational practices (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data include reputable national and international journal articles (indexed in SINTA and Scopus) that discuss

Islamic education learning, humanistic approaches, character education, and religious learning published within the last five years. Secondary data comprise scholarly books, educational policy documents, and relevant research reports. Data collection was conducted through a systematic literature review, involving stages of identification, selection, quality appraisal of sources, and the categorization of major conceptual themes (Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Data analysis was carried out using thematic–conceptual analysis (thematic content analysis). The analytical procedures included: (1) initial coding of key concepts such as humanism, religiosity, and character; (2) thematic clustering to identify patterns of relationships among concepts; and (3) conceptual synthesis to formulate the framework of a humanistic–religious learning model. This approach enables researchers to interpret pedagogical meanings in a reflective and critical manner while connecting them to the practical context of Islamic education (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Guest et al., 2024).

Data trustworthiness was ensured through source triangulation and conceptual auditing, by comparing findings across various sources and maintaining the consistency of the theoretical arguments developed. In addition, this study applied principles of ethical scholarship, ensuring accurate citation, traceability of sources, and academic integrity throughout the analysis and writing process. This approach is essential to ensure that the formulated learning model is grounded in a strong scientific foundation and can be academically and ethically justified (Tracy, 2020; Levitt et al., 2023).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

Based on a thematic–conceptual analysis of literature published over the last five years, this study identifies several key findings related to innovations in a humanistic–religious Islamic education learning model for strengthening students' character, as presented below.

#### 1. Humanistic–Religious Integration as a New Pedagogical Paradigm

The findings indicate that an innovative Islamic education learning model that simultaneously integrates humanistic and religious approaches is the most relevant for strengthening students' character. This approach no longer positions Islamic values merely as norms to be obeyed, but rather as sources of meaning that are personally internalized by students. This finding aligns with Saada and Magadlah (2021), who emphasize that Islamic education responsive to modern challenges must integrate human and spiritual dimensions so that religious values do not remain at a symbolic and formalistic level.

The study further reveals that the humanistic approach functions as a primary psychopedagogical foundation within the innovative Islamic education learning model. Respect for students' fitrah, potential, and subjective experiences is shown to strengthen their emotional engagement and moral awareness in the learning process. Huda et al. (2020) argue that humanistic theory has epistemological compatibility with the Islamic concepts of fitrah and tarbiyah, as both emphasize holistic human development. These findings demonstrate that humanistic learning encourages students not only to understand Islamic values cognitively, but also to experience them as intrinsic inner needs.

Moreover, the findings show that religiosity within the humanistic–religious learning model is understood as a reflective process of value internalization rather than mere indoctrination of teachings. Islamic education that emphasizes reflection, value-based dialogue, and contextual religious experiences is proven to be more effective in shaping students' religious

character and moral integrity. Azra et al. (2021) assert that religious education that fosters ethical awareness and spiritual reflection will produce mature and inclusive religiosity. This finding reinforces the view that living religiosity emerges from understanding and conscious awareness, not from mechanical compliance alone.

In addition, the study identifies a significant transformation in pedagogical relationships between teachers and students. Teachers are no longer positioned as the sole sources of truth, but rather as moral mentors, reflection facilitators, and value exemplars. This dialogical pedagogical relationship contributes to the strengthening of students' character through contextual and sustainable learning processes. Rahman and Abdullah (2023), Fauzi and Karim (2022), and Widodo and Sari (2023) emphasize that character traits such as responsibility, empathy, honesty, and religiosity develop through reflective and meaningful moral experiences. Thus, the humanistic–religious Islamic education learning model is shown to make a significant contribution to the development of contemporary Islamic education that is inclusive, relevant, and oriented toward character formation.

## 2. Transformation of the Teacher's Role from Authoritative Figure to Value Facilitator

The research findings indicate a fundamental shift in the role of teachers in the implementation of the humanistic–religious Islamic education learning model. Teachers are no longer positioned as authoritative figures whose primary function is to transmit religious doctrine; instead, they act as value facilitators, reflection mentors, and moral exemplars. This shift is characterized by a reduction in one-way lecturing and an increase in value-based dialogue, experiential reflection, and meaning-centered learning practices. These findings suggest that teachers' pedagogical authority has moved away from epistemic control toward a more contextual moral and relational authority.

The study also finds that the teacher's role as a value facilitator strengthens students' emotional engagement in Islamic education learning. Teachers guide students to connect Islamic teachings with the realities of everyday life, enabling religious values to be experienced personally rather than understood abstractly. Huda et al. (2020) emphasize that humanistic learning requires teachers to attend to students' psychological and emotional dimensions as integral components of the value internalization process. These findings demonstrate that empathetic pedagogical relationships contribute significantly to students' moral awareness.

Furthermore, the results show that teacher exemplarity (moral exemplarity) constitutes a key element of the humanistic–religious model. Teachers are perceived not merely as content instructors, but as representations of Islamic values reflected in their attitudes, language, and pedagogical decisions. Rahman and Abdullah (2023) argue that teacher exemplarity in Islamic education exerts a stronger influence than normative instruction, as students learn values through observation and direct interaction. These findings indicate that consistency between teachers' teachings and practices reinforces the moral legitimacy of religious learning.

In addition, the shift from an authoritative role to that of a value facilitator fosters a dialogical and reflective classroom climate. Students become more active in expressing their perspectives, experiences, and moral questions without fear of being judged or blamed. Widodo and Sari (2023) assert that dialogical pedagogical relationships in value-based education promote deeper character internalization. Thus, the findings of this study demonstrate that the transformation of the teacher's role is a determining factor in the success of the humanistic–religious Islamic education learning model for strengthening students' character.

### 3. Strengthening Character through Reflective and Contextual Processes

The research findings indicate that the strengthening of students' character is more effective when Islamic education learning is implemented through reflective and contextual approaches. Learning processes that involve value-based discussions, moral case studies, and socio-religious experiences enable students to connect Islamic teachings with the realities of their lived experiences. These findings suggest that character does not emerge solely from normative understanding, but rather from students' capacity to reflect on the meaning of values and their implications for real-life actions.

The study further reveals that self-reflection serves as a primary mechanism for the internalization of character values. When students are encouraged to reflect on personal experiences, moral dilemmas, and social events through the lens of Islamic values, there is a strengthening of ethical awareness and moral responsibility. Yusuf and Nurhayati (2024) emphasize that spiritual reflection in religious learning plays a crucial role in developing students' self-control, empathy, and integrity. These findings demonstrate that reflection is not merely a cognitive activity, but an affective process that shapes individuals' moral orientation.

In addition to reflection, the social context of learning also plays a significant role in character strengthening. The findings show that students' involvement in socio-religious experiences—such as service-learning activities, collaboration, and community interaction—enhances empathy and social concern. Fauzi and Karim (2022) argue that contextual and socially experiential moral education is more effective than rote memorization approaches, as moral values are learned through direct practice and meaningful social interaction. These findings affirm that character develops through social relationships rather than within isolated classroom settings.

Overall, the results indicate that reflective and contextual approaches promote a more transformative model of Islamic education learning in strengthening students' character. Religious character, responsibility, empathy, and integrity are formed through a continuous process of value internalization that involves self-awareness and authentic social experiences. Saada and Magadlah (2021) emphasize that Islamic education capable of bridging normative values with the realities of modern life will foster authentic and inclusive character development. Thus, these findings underscore the importance of designing reflective and contextual Islamic education learning as an effective strategy for character formation.

### 4. Relevance of the Humanistic–Religious Model to Contemporary Educational Challenges

The research findings indicate that the humanistic–religious Islamic education learning model is relevant and adaptive in responding to contemporary educational challenges, particularly the moral crisis, the growing trend of individualism, and the reduction of the meaning of religiosity among students. This model positions Islamic values as sources of ethics and spirituality that are consciously internalized, rather than as external norms imposed upon learners. These findings demonstrate that religious learning which integrates humanistic and religious dimensions is capable of revitalizing the moral meaning of Islamic education within an ever-changing social context.

The study also reveals that the humanistic–religious model is able to bridge students' needs for freedom of expression and learning autonomy with the demands of Islamic education to uphold normative values and spirituality. Students are provided with space to express their perspectives, experiences, and moral questions without losing value orientation rooted in Islamic teachings. Saada and Magadlah (2021) emphasize that Islamic education which fails to provide

opportunities for dialogue and learner autonomy risks producing symbolic and exclusive forms of religiosity. The findings of this study indicate that maintaining a balance between pedagogical freedom and transcendent value orientation is a key factor in the effectiveness of religious learning.

Furthermore, the findings show that the humanistic–religious approach contributes to strengthening students’ spiritual dimension in a more authentic manner. Spirituality is not understood merely as ritual compliance, but as ethical awareness and social responsibility that are internalized in behavior. Azra et al. (2021) assert that religious education which emphasizes moral awareness and spiritual reflection will produce mature and inclusive religiosity. These findings demonstrate that the humanistic–religious model is capable of preventing the reduction of religiosity to formal practices devoid of deep values.

Overall, the results of this study affirm that the humanistic–religious learning model makes a strategic contribution to addressing the complexity of Islamic education in the modern era. This model not only preserves the continuity of Islamic normative and spiritual values, but is also relevant to students’ psychological and social needs. Widodo and Sari (2023), as well as Rahman and Abdullah (2023), emphasize that the integration of humanistic and religious approaches represents an important direction for character education in Islamic schools. Thus, these findings strengthen the argument that the humanistic–religious learning model constitutes an effective and contextual pedagogical alternative for confronting contemporary educational challenges.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the view that Islamic education is no longer sufficient when developed solely through a normative–dogmatic approach. Educational practices that emphasize formal compliance, rote memorization, and one-way transmission of religious teachings have shown limited effectiveness in addressing the complex moral and social challenges faced by students in the contemporary era. Such approaches often fail to engage learners at the level of meaning, reflection, and moral agency.

In the context of rapid social change, globalization, and digital transformation, students encounter ethical dilemmas that cannot be resolved merely through doctrinal knowledge. Islamic education, therefore, must move beyond transmissive models toward pedagogical approaches that cultivate moral reasoning, self-awareness, and ethical responsibility. This shift is essential for ensuring that religious learning remains relevant to students’ lived realities.

Within this framework, the integration of humanistic and religious approaches identified in this study represents a significant pedagogical advancement. This integration aligns with the arguments of Saada and Magadlah (2021), who emphasize the necessity of transforming Islamic education pedagogy into one that is dialogical, reflective, and context-sensitive. Rather than positioning Islamic values as externally imposed truths, this approach frames them as meaningful principles to be consciously internalized.

By treating Islamic values as sources of meaning rather than rigid prescriptions, learners are encouraged to engage religion as a living moral compass. This pedagogical orientation allows students to interpret religious teachings in relation to their personal experiences, social contexts, and ethical challenges, fostering a deeper and more authentic form of religiosity.

Moreover, this study demonstrates that the integration of humanistic and religious perspectives provides a new epistemological foundation for Islamic education. The humanistic approach recognizes learners as active subjects endowed with agency, dignity, and unique

experiences, while the religious approach supplies a transcendent moral orientation grounded in Islamic teachings. Together, these perspectives create a balanced pedagogical framework.

This epistemological synthesis produces learning experiences that respect students' freedom and developmental needs without abandoning the normative and spiritual foundations of Islam. As a result, Islamic education is positioned not as a restrictive system, but as an enabling process that supports personal growth within a moral and spiritual framework.

A key implication of this integration is the transformation of the teacher's role. The findings reveal that teachers are no longer positioned as authoritative figures who monopolize religious truth, but rather as facilitators of values, mentors of reflection, and moral exemplars. This shift significantly alters classroom dynamics and learning relationships.

This transformation is consistent with the findings of Huda et al. (2020) and Widodo and Sari (2023), who argue that humanistic pedagogy fosters more egalitarian, dialogical, and meaningful educational relationships. Such relationships create a learning environment where students feel respected, heard, and morally engaged.

In Islamic education, teacher exemplarity (*uswah*) occupies a central role in character formation. This study shows that when teachers consistently embody the values they teach, students perceive religious learning as credible and authentic. Moral authority, therefore, emerges not from positional power, but from ethical consistency and relational trust.

When teachers function as living representations of Islamic values, the internalization of character occurs more naturally and sustainably. Students learn not only through instruction, but through observation, interaction, and moral resonance, reinforcing the formative role of exemplarity in Islamic pedagogy.

In addition to relational transformation, the findings highlight the critical role of reflective and contextual learning processes. Religious character develops most effectively when students are engaged in moral experiences that are lived, reflected upon, and meaningfully interpreted. This supports the findings of Fauzi and Karim (2022) and Yusuf and Nurhayati (2024).

Reflective practices such as value-based discussions, moral case studies, and socio-religious engagement enable students to connect abstract teachings with concrete ethical situations. Through these processes, learners develop moral sensitivity, ethical judgment, and responsibility, rather than mere doctrinal familiarity.

These findings further confirm that character formation is not an instant outcome of curriculum design, but the result of a continuous and meaningful pedagogical process. Islamic education oriented toward character development must provide sustained opportunities for experience, reflection, and value internalization within real-life contexts.

Such an approach renders religious learning more dynamic, relevant, and responsive to students' social realities. It transforms Islamic education from a static body of knowledge into a living ethical practice that guides students in navigating moral complexity.

Finally, the humanistic-religious learning model formulated in this study addresses a significant research gap in previous scholarship that has tended to separate humanistic and religious approaches dichotomously. By integrating both within a unified pedagogical framework, this study offers an innovative model that is integrative, contextual, and adaptive to the challenges of Islamic education in the modern era.

These findings align with the recommendations of Rahman and Abdullah (2023) and Azra et al. (2021), who emphasize the need to develop Islamic education that maintains a dynamic balance between humanity, spirituality, and the demands of changing times. As such, the proposed model

contributes meaningfully to contemporary discourse on Islamic education reform and character development

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that innovation in Islamic education learning models based on the integration of humanistic and religious approaches is an urgent necessity in responding to contemporary educational challenges. The normative–dogmatic approach that has long been dominant has proven insufficient in optimally shaping students’ reflective, responsible, and integrity-driven character. Humanistic–religious integration allows Islamic values to be presented as sources of meaning that are consciously understood and internalized by students, rather than merely formal norms to be complied with.

The findings indicate that the humanistic approach provides a strong psychopedagogical foundation by positioning students as active subjects in the learning process, while the religious approach maintains a transcendent moral and value orientation. The combination of these approaches produces Islamic education learning that is more dialogical, reflective, and contextual, thereby strengthening students’ religious character, empathy, responsibility, and integrity in a sustainable manner.

This study also affirms a significant transformation in the role of teachers—from authoritative transmitters of doctrine to value facilitators, reflection mentors, and moral exemplars. Egalitarian and empathetic pedagogical relationships are shown to reinforce the internalization of values through exemplarity (*uswah*), which constitutes the core of character education from an Islamic perspective. In addition, reflective and contextual processes—such as value-based discussions, moral case studies, and socio-religious experiences—serve as the primary mechanisms for forming authentic and meaningful character.

Theoretically, this study bridges a research gap that has long separated humanistic and religious approaches in Islamic education. By integrating both within a unified pedagogical framework, the study offers a conceptual contribution to the development of an Islamic education learning paradigm that is integrative, adaptive, and relevant to contemporary demands. Practically, the findings may serve as a reference for teachers, curriculum developers, and Islamic educational institutions in designing learning processes oriented toward strengthening students’ character.

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