

## Curriculum and Learning Innovation in Islamic Religious Education: A Systematic Literature Review (2015–2025)

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### Abstract

*This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to identify and analyze models of curriculum and learning innovation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) from 2015 to 2025. Through a rigorous screening and content analysis of 63 initial articles, 13 methodologically sound studies were selected for in-depth review. The findings reveal five specific major themes in IRE curriculum innovation: (1) the integration of Islamic and humanistic values to balance faith and modern science; (2) the integration of digital technology and AI for interactive learning; (3) the adoption of design thinking and evidence-based approaches for contextual curriculum design; (4) a strong emphasis on character formation and soft skills; and (5) post-pandemic internationalization that promotes global engagement while maintaining Islamic identity. Theoretically, this study contributes a transformative conceptual framework that harmonizes Islamic values, modern pedagogy, and digital learning. Practically, it provides actionable insights for educators and policymakers to design flexible, humanistic, and research-based curricula that enhance graduate competitiveness in the digital and post-pandemic era.*

**Keywords:** Curriculum Innovation; AI Integration; Post-Pandemic Curriculum.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini menerapkan metode Systematic Literature Review (SLR) untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis model inovasi kurikulum serta pembelajaran dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) pada rentang tahun 2015 hingga 2025. Melalui penyaringan ketat dan analisis konten terhadap 63 artikel awal, terpilih 13 studi dengan metodologi yang kuat untuk ditinjau secara mendalam. Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan lima tema utama dalam inovasi kurikulum PAI: (1) integrasi nilai Islam dan humanistik guna menyeimbangkan keimanan dan sains modern; (2) integrasi teknologi digital dan kecerdasan buatan untuk menciptakan pembelajaran interaktif; (3) penerapan pemikiran desain dan pendekatan berbasis bukti untuk perancangan kurikulum yang kontekstual; (4) penekanan kuat pada pembentukan karakter serta keterampilan lunak; dan (5) internasionalisasi pascapandemi yang mempromosikan keterlibatan global dengan tetap mempertahankan identitas Islam. Secara teoretis, studi ini memberikan kontribusi berupa kerangka konseptual transformatif yang mengharmonisasikan nilai-nilai Islam, pedagogi modern, dan pembelajaran digital. Secara praktis, penelitian ini menyajikan wawasan aplikatif bagi pendidik dan pembuat kebijakan untuk merancang kurikulum yang fleksibel, humanistik, dan berbasis riset guna meningkatkan daya saing lulusan di era digital serta pascapandemi.

**Kata kunci:** Inovasi Kurikulum; Integrasi Kecerdasan Buatan; Kurikulum Pascapandemi.

### A. Introduction.

The global transformation of education has compelled institutions, including Islamic Religious Education (IRE), to innovate their curriculum and learning strategies to adapt to rapid changes in society. The digital revolution, globalization of values, and sociocultural shifts demand an educational model that goes beyond the mere transfer of knowledge one that fosters character development, creativity, and technological literacy.<sup>1</sup> Globally, educational innovation has become a crucial factor in enhancing the relevance and competitiveness of graduates while maintaining humanistic and spiritual values amidst scientific and technological advancement.<sup>2</sup>

Within the context of Islamic education, previous studies have emphasized the integration of religious and contemporary sciences, as well as the incorporation of digital technologies in learning. Specifically in Indonesia, recent research has explored several dimensions of IRE curriculum innovation. For instance, Priatna, Gustini, and Mulyani (2023) highlighted curriculum changes aimed at facing global challenges and the post-pandemic era within Islamic Education Management programs.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Assegaf et al. (2022) investigated curriculum innovation for the internationalization of Islamic higher education in Surabaya, while Firmansyah et al. (2023) focused on the foundational role of IRE in character building among elementary school students. These studies confirm a scholarly consensus that IRE must dynamically balance spiritual and moral values with modern global demands.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these advancements, a critical gap persists in the literature. Explicitly, what has not been adequately addressed by previous studies is the systematic operationalization of these innovations. Prior research has predominantly approached IRE innovation in a fragmented manner focusing either strictly on theoretical ideals or isolated technological adoption (such as basic e-learning) without detailing *how* to fuse these elements comprehensively. Previous studies have failed to provide an integrative conceptual framework that harmonizes cutting-edge pedagogical paradigms, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration and Design Thinking, with core Islamic principles. Consequently, existing literature remains highly descriptive and lacks actionable, evidence-based blueprints for educators and policymakers to sustainably redesign the IRE curriculum.

This gap underlines the urgent need for a holistic framework that bridges Islamic

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<sup>1</sup> Chelsea Willness and Vincent Bruni-Bossio, "The Curriculum Innovation Canvas: A Design Thinking Framework for the Engaged Educational Entrepreneur," *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 21, no. 1 (2017): 134–64.

<sup>2</sup> Kimberly L Oliver et al., "'The Sweetness of Struggle': Innovation in Physical Education Teacher Education through Student-Centered Inquiry as Curriculum in a Physical Education Methods Course," *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy* 20, no. 1 (2015): 97–115.

<sup>3</sup> Priatna, Hary, Neng Gustini, and Heny Mulyani. "Facing Global Challenges and A New Post Pandemi Era in Indonesia: Curriculum Changes and Innovations in The Bachelor Of Islamic Education Management Program." *Environmental & Social Management Journal/Revista de Gest'o Social e Ambiental* 17, no. 7 (2023).

<sup>4</sup> Firmansyah, M. I., Surahman, C., Lestari, W., Septiani, S., & Sudaryat, M. R. "Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Pembangunan Karakter Siswa Sekolah Dasar: Studi Eksplorasi". *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan*, (2023): 46-58.

values with modern, innovative pedagogical paradigms. Therefore, this study aims to analyze and formulate innovative approaches to curriculum and learning in IRE by synthesizing insights from contemporary educational innovation models. It explores how principles of design thinking, evidence-informed teaching, and the integration of technology can enhance the relevance and effectiveness of IRE curricula. The main contribution of this paper lies in developing a conceptual synthesis that positions IRE curriculum innovation as a transformative process one that explicitly harmonizes Islamic and humanistic values, modern pedagogy, and digital learning.

The main contribution of this paper lies in developing a conceptual synthesis that positions Islamic Religious Education curriculum innovation as a transformative process one that harmonizes Islamic values, modern pedagogy, and digital learning. The article is organized as follows: the first section discusses the theoretical foundation of curriculum and learning innovation in IRE, the second presents a critical synthesis of selected literature, and the final section outlines the practical implications and recommendations for sustainable Islamic curriculum development.

## **B. Research Method.**

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to analyze various models and approaches of curriculum and learning innovation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE). The SLR approach was chosen for its ability to provide a systematic, transparent, and replicable synthesis of empirical and conceptual evidence related to educational innovation in modern Islamic contexts (Suhartono, 2017).<sup>5</sup> To ensure rigorous methodological standards, the entire research process was structurally guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol, encompassing the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion phases. During the identification phase, a comprehensive literature search was conducted across prominent academic databases, specifically Scopus, Google Scholar, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), and SINTA. The search utilized carefully formulated keywords, including curriculum innovation in Islamic education, learning innovation, and digital-based Islamic learning, to capture highly relevant literature.

Following the initial identification, the screening and eligibility phases were strictly governed by predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to filter the retrieved documents. The inclusion criteria were intentionally limited to peer-reviewed academic journal articles published in either English or Indonesian between 2015 and 2025, ensuring the contemporary relevance of the data. Furthermore, selected articles had to explicitly focus on IRE curriculum innovation and demonstrate a sound methodological foundation, whether qualitative, quantitative, or conceptual. Conversely, non-peer-reviewed materials, opinion pieces, book chapters, and studies

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<sup>5</sup> Suhartono, Entot. "Systematic Literatur Review (SLR): Metode, Manfaat, Dan Tantangan Learning Analytics Dengan Metode Data Mining Di Dunia Pendidikan Tinggi." *Jurnal Ilmiah INFOKAM* 13, no. 1 (2017).

lacking direct contextual relevance to Islamic education were explicitly excluded. To establish the validity and reliability of the data collection, the screening and quality assessment procedures were executed independently by two researchers. Any emerging discrepancies regarding article eligibility were resolved through a consensus discussion, thereby securing a strong degree of inter-rater reliability.

In the final inclusion and conducting stage, 13 national and international scholarly articles successfully met all stringent criteria and were selected for in-depth review. These articles were subsequently analyzed using content analysis to systematically extract specific data concerning research aims, methodologies, overarching themes, and key findings. The reporting stage ultimately produced a comprehensive thematic synthesis covering five major themes: Islamic value-based curriculum innovation, digital learning, design thinking, character development, and the internationalization of Islamic education. This systematic procedure facilitated the construction of a robust conceptual framework for curriculum and learning innovation in IRE that is integrative, adaptive, and character-oriented.

### **C. Result and Discussion.**

Based on a systematic review of 13 selected scholarly articles, five overarching themes were identified that represent the direction and practice of curriculum and learning innovation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) over the past decade. These themes indicate that innovation in IRE has evolved in a structured and consistent way anchored in Islamic values, enhanced by technology, informed by evidence and design, focused on character formation, and responsive to global developments.

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<b>No</b>	<b>Authors &amp; Year</b>	<b>Article Title</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Main Focus</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>
1	Willness & Bruni-Bossio (2017)	<i>The Curriculum Innovation Canvas: A Design Thinking Framework for the Engaged Educational Entrepreneur</i>	Design thinking; model development; prototyping	Curriculum innovation based on design thinking and multi-stakeholder collaboration	Produced the <b>Curriculum Innovation Canvas</b> , a collaborative tool for designing human-centered, creative, and community-responsive curricula

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2	Jessani et al. (2019)	<i>University Curricula in Evidence-Informed Decision Making and Knowledge Translation</i>	Qualitative descriptive; case study of a training course	Integration of Knowledge Translation (KT) in evidence-based decision making	Identified seven innovative pedagogy principles (reflection, collaboration, hands-on practice) that enhance relevance and knowledge transfer
3	Gustini et al. (2023)	<i>Facing Global Challenges and a New Post Pandemic Era in Indonesia: Curriculum Changes and Innovations in the Bachelor of Islamic Education Management Program</i>	Qualitative; documentat ion, observation , interviews	Post-pandemic curriculum innovation in Islamic education in Indonesia	Curriculum innovation focuses on graduate competitiveness, flexible learning, and international recognition
4	Fauzi, Hamami & Kim (2024)	<i>Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Innovation: Fethullah Gülen's Perspective</i>	Literature review (content analysis)	Gülen's perspective on Islamic Religious Education curriculum innovation	Emphasizes integration of religious and modern sciences, character education, active methods, and holistic evaluation
5	Assegaf et al. (2022)	<i>Curriculum Innovation for the Internationalization of Islamic Education Study Program at Higher Education</i>	Qualitative case study	Internationalization of Islamic education curriculum	Highlights global competence development, language skills, and universal Islamic values in higher education curriculum

6	D. Dai et al. (2023)	<i>Curriculum Innovation in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Thinking-Based Instruction Theory and Its Application</i>	Qualitative analysis	Use of Thinking-Based Instruction during the pandemic	Critical thinking models strengthen creativity and flexibility in online curriculum
7	L. Bayerlein (2015)	<i>Curriculum Innovation in Undergraduate Accounting Degree Programmes Through Research-Informed Teaching</i>	Qualitative; document analysis & interviews	Innovation through research-informed teaching in accounting programs	Research-based learning improves student engagement and curriculum professional relevance
8	Jeng-Chung et al. (2021)	<i>Stimulating Innovation with an Innovative Curriculum</i>	Conceptual study	Relationship between curriculum design and innovation culture	Innovative curricula foster adaptive, experimental, and collaborative learning environments
9	E. McKenna et al. (2018)	<i>(Re-) designing higher education curricula in times of systemic dysfunction: a responsible research and innovation perspective</i>	Conceptual study	Higher education curriculum transformation in disruption era	Proposes flexible, interdisciplinary approaches responsive to global change
10	Oliver et al. (2015)	<i>The Sweetness of Struggle: Innovation in Education Reform</i>	Conceptual analysis	Curriculum innovation in moral and social contexts	Emphasizes balancing spiritual values, ethics, and modern educational demands
11	J. Glover et al. (2023)	<i>Developing a Model for AI Across the Curriculum</i>	Research and Development (R&D)	Integrating artificial intelligence across curriculum	Offers cross-disciplinary AI-based model supporting digital literacy and 21st-century skills

12	A. Purwanto (2020)	<i>Effect of Hard Skills, Soft Skills, Organizational Learning and Innovation Capability on Islamic University Lecturers' Performance</i>	Quantitative; regression	Relationship between innovation, organizational learning, and lecturer performance	Curriculum innovation and lecturer competence strongly influence academic performance
13	Haryani et al. (2021)	<i>Exploration of Islamic Religious Learning Innovation Technology with the iLearning Approach</i>	Development research; exploratory	Use of innovative technology in Islamic Religious Education (IRE)	iLearning approach increases engagement, collaboration, and digital learning effectiveness in IRE

### 1. Curriculum Innovation Grounded in Islamic and Humanistic Values

The first and most fundamental finding is that curriculum innovation in Islamic education must remain deeply rooted in moral and spiritual values, even as it adopts modern pedagogical and scientific approaches. Fauzi, Hamami, and Kim drawing from Fethullah Gülen's perspective, argue that curriculum renewal in IRE should not be understood merely as updating content but as reinforcing three essential principles: the integration of religious and modern sciences, active learning, and moral education. An innovative Islamic curriculum must therefore aim to cultivate homo moralis morally conscious individuals who embody both intellectual and ethical maturity.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Assegaf et al. emphasizes that the internationalization of Islamic education must not lead to the erosion of Islamic universal values. For him, curriculum innovation should not be seen as westernization but as communicative islamization, embracing global standards and international languages while maintaining the spiritual balance (tawazun) and moderation (tawassuth) that characterize Islamic education.<sup>7</sup>

This value-based orientation resonates with the philosophical argument in *The Sweetness of Struggle*, who warn that education reform that focuses only on technical change will lose its ethical core. Meaningful innovation, they contend, must remain

<sup>6</sup> Fauzi, Muhamad Restu, Tasman Hamami, and Hyung-Jun Kim. "Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Innovation: Fethullah G'len's Perspective." *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 1 (2024): 186–200.

<sup>7</sup> Assegaf, Abd Rachman, Husniyatus Salamah Zainiyah, and Muhammad Fahmi. "Curriculum Innovation for the Internationalization of Islamic Education Study Program at Higher Education Institutions in Surabaya, Indonesia." *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, 2022, 671–706.

morally grounded and socially responsive.<sup>8</sup> In the same vein, McKenna et al. highlight the importance of designing curricula that are not merely *relevant* but *responsible*, sensitive to social change, and aligned with the higher goals of education.<sup>9</sup>

However, to critically position these findings, they must be compared with broader, foundational discourses on the integration of science and Islam. While the 13 reviewed articles heavily emphasize pedagogical and communicative integration, they tend to overlook the deep epistemological restructuring proposed by major external frameworks.<sup>10</sup> Comparing the current synthesized literature with these foundational theories reveals that contemporary IRE curriculum innovation is largely pragmatic focused on equipping students for modern workforce demands rather than fundamentally redesigning the philosophical ontology of the scientific subjects being taught.

## **2. Integration of Digital Technology in Learning**

The second major theme highlights the growing role of digital technology as a transformative tool in IRE learning. Haryani et al. in their study on the iLearning approach, demonstrate that technology can shift Islamic learning from a teacher-centered to a more interactive and collaborative mode. The use of iLearning increased student engagement, transforming religious education from a textual, lecture-based experience into one that is participatory and dynamic.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, Xu et al. through their work *Developing a Model for AI Across the Curriculum*, provide a valuable framework for integrating artificial intelligence across disciplines. Although their study focuses on general education, the model offers critical insight for IRE: technology integration must be interdisciplinary, future-oriented, and anchored in digital literacy and 21st-century skills. For Islamic education, this suggests that technology should be infused with ethical and spiritual considerations, ensuring that digital progress aligns with Islamic values.<sup>13</sup>

The transformative potential of technology became even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dai et al. in their application of *Thinking-Based Instruction*, argue that digital learning environments must promote higher-order

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<sup>8</sup> Oliver et al., “‘The Sweetness of Struggle’: Innovation in Physical Education Teacher Education through Student-Centered Inquiry as Curriculum in a Physical Education Methods Course.”

<sup>9</sup> Valentina C Tassone et al., “(Re-) Designing Higher Education Curricula in Times of Systemic Dysfunction: A Responsible Research and Innovation Perspective,” *Higher Education* 76, no. 2 (2018): 337–52.

<sup>10</sup> I. R. al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan* (Washington, D.C.: International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), 1982).

<sup>11</sup> M. A. Abdullah, “Religion, Science, and Culture: An Integrated, Interconnected Paradigm of Science,” *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 52, no. 1 (2014): 175–203.

<sup>12</sup> Hendriyati Haryani, Erna Astriyani, and Viola Tashya Devana, “Exploration of Islamic Religious Learning Innovation Technology with the Ilearning Approach,” *Aptisi Transactions on Technopreneurship (ATT)* 3, no. 2 (2021): 189–200.

<sup>13</sup> Jane Southworth et al., “Developing a Model for AI Across the Curriculum: Transforming the Higher Education Landscape via Innovation in AI Literacy,” *Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence* 4 (2023): 100127.

thinking rather than passive consumption of materials. This is particularly relevant for IRE, where traditionally memorization-heavy subjects such as *aqidah*, *fiqh*, and *akhlak* can be reframed into reflective, problem-solving learning experiences.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Jessani et al. reinforce the role of digital tools in facilitating *knowledge translation* and *evidence-informed decision-making*, processes that are crucial for reflective and collaborative Islamic education.<sup>15</sup>

### **3. Application of Design Thinking and Evidence-Based Learning**

The third theme concerns the emergence of *design thinking* and *evidence-based learning* as innovative strategies for curriculum reform.<sup>16</sup> Willness and Bruni-Bossio propose the *Curriculum Innovation Canvas*, a framework that reimagines curriculum design as a collaborative, iterative, and stakeholder-driven process similar to the development of a creative product. Their approach redefines educators as *educational entrepreneurs* who actively co-design solutions with students, peers, and institutions. For IRE, this perspective challenges the top-down tradition of curriculum planning by promoting participatory curriculum co-creation.<sup>17</sup> Complementing this, Jessani et al. emphasize the importance of *evidence-informed decision-making* and *knowledge translation* within university curricula.

Critically, however, adapting "design thinking" a paradigm originating from the highly fluid, user-centric corporate sector into the context of IRE requires rigorous theological calibration. IRE is inherently laden with normative, absolute doctrines (revealed knowledge) that cannot be altered merely because they are unpopular with "users" or students. If adopted uncritically, the relativistic nature of design thinking could dilute the sacred tenets of Islamic *aqidah* (creed). Therefore, this study argues that design thinking in IRE must be strictly confined to pedagogical delivery and contextual problem-solving rather than theological content alteration. It serves as a pedagogical vehicle to bridge rigid normative doctrines with dynamic socio-cultural realities, ensuring that the method of teaching evolves while the core message remains eternal.

Likewise, Bayerlein in his study of *research-informed teaching* in accounting education, finds that linking teaching to research enhances student engagement and professional relevance. For IRE, this implies that integrating Islamic values into evidence-based, research-informed instruction can make religious studies both

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<sup>14</sup> Yangping Li et al., "Curriculum Innovation in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Thinking-Based Instruction Theory and Its Application," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (2021): 601607.

<sup>15</sup> Jessani et al., "University Curricula in Evidence-Informed Decision Making and Knowledge Translation: Integrating Best Practice, Innovation, and Experience for Effective Teaching and Learning."

<sup>16</sup> Yenchun Jim Wu and Jeng-Chung Chen, "Stimulating Innovation with an Innovative Curriculum: A Curriculum Design for a Course on New Product Development," *The International Journal of Management Education* 19, no. 3 (2021): 100561.

<sup>17</sup> Willness and Bruni-Bossio, "The Curriculum Innovation Canvas: A Design Thinking Framework for the Engaged Educational Entrepreneur."

academically rigorous and socially relevant.<sup>18</sup>

#### **4. Character Formation and Soft Skills Development**

A consistent theme across several studies is that successful curriculum innovation requires human capacity particularly the cultivation of character and soft skills. Purwanto in his quantitative analysis on Islamic university lecturers, concludes that performance and innovation are significantly influenced by organizational learning and individual soft skills such as adaptability, collaboration, and creativity. This finding suggests that innovation in IRE will not thrive without educators who embody these competencies.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, Dai et al. demonstrate that *Thinking-Based Instruction* not only enhances cognitive ability but also builds independence and creativity among learners traits that constitute the foundation of soft skills. For IRE, this indicates that curriculum innovation should emphasize process as much as content, shaping learners who can think critically while remaining ethically grounded.<sup>20</sup> Supporting this perspective, a study involving Firmansyah et al. (2023) emphasizes that character building in Islamic Religious Education must be integrated exploratively from the elementary level to establish a strong moral foundation.<sup>21</sup>

#### **5. Internationalization and Contextualization of Islamic Education**

The final theme underscores the growing emphasis on global engagement and contextual adaptation in Islamic education. The internationalization of Islamic higher education necessitates strengthening global competencies, foreign language proficiency, and participation in international academic networks without compromising Islamic principles. This vision of internationalization is value-driven rather than assimilationist.<sup>22</sup>

Aligned with this, Gustini et al. observe that the post-pandemic curriculum reform in Indonesian Islamic higher education has prioritized flexibility, competitiveness, and international recognition while remaining faithful to Islamic educational philosophy.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, McKenna et al. suggest that redesigning

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<sup>18</sup> Leopold Bayerlein, "Curriculum Innovation in Undergraduate Accounting Degree Programmes through 'Virtual Internships,'" *Education+ Training* 57, no. 6 (2015): 673–84.

<sup>19</sup> Agus Purwanto, "Effect of Hard Skills, Soft Skills, Organizational Learning and Innovation Capability on Islamic University Lecturers' Performance," *Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy*, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Li et al., "Curriculum Innovation in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Thinking-Based Instruction Theory and Its Application."

<sup>21</sup> Firmansyah, M. I., Surahman, C., Lestari, W., Septiani, S., & Sudaryat, M. R. "Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Pembangunan Karakter Siswa Sekolah Dasar: Studi Eksplorasi". *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan*, (2023): 46-58.

<sup>22</sup> Assegaf, Zainiyah, and Fahmi, "Curriculum Innovation for the Internationalization of Islamic Education Study Program at Higher Education Institutions in Surabaya, Indonesia."

<sup>23</sup> Priatna, Gustini, and Mulyani, "FACING GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND A NEW POST PANDEMI ERA IN INDONESIA: CURRICULUM CHANGES AND INNOVATIONS IN THE BACHELOR OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM."

curricula amid systemic change requires cross-border collaboration and stakeholder inclusivity, opening space for interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue.

These studies indicate that innovation in IRE is increasingly outward-looking yet value-rooted engaged with global educational standards while preserving its Islamic ethical foundation.

## **6. Methodological Limitations of the Reviewed Literature**

Despite the robust thematic findings, a critical reflection on the 13 synthesized articles reveals significant methodological limitations within the current body of literature. The existing research is overwhelmingly dominated by qualitative approaches, conceptual analyses, and isolated case studies. There is a distinct lack of rigorous experimental, quasi-experimental, or longitudinal designs to empirically validate the long-term effectiveness of these curriculum innovations on student outcomes. Furthermore, a pronounced geographical bias is evident, as the majority of the deeply contextual studies focus heavily on specific regional dynamics, particularly in Indonesia. This overrepresentation limits the global generalizability of the findings to broader Muslim-minority contexts or other distinct cultural landscapes. Acknowledging these limitations is vital, as it highlights the urgent need for future research to conduct large-scale, quantitative impact assessments and cross-cultural comparisons to truly solidify the evidence base for IRE curriculum innovation.

## **D. Conclusion**

This study aimed to identify and analyze the prevailing models and approaches to curriculum and learning innovation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) to address the research question regarding how institutional innovations are systematically developed. In answering this question, the findings reveal a significant paradigm shift from a conservative to a transformative approach. Specifically, curriculum innovation in IRE is currently driven by five major pillars: the integration of Islamic and humanistic values, the adoption of digital technology and artificial intelligence for interactive learning, the implementation of design thinking and evidence-based pedagogy, a deliberate focus on character formation, and post-pandemic internationalization. Ultimately, these integrated approaches successfully harmonize faith, knowledge, and modern technology to cultivate intellectually capable, morally upright, and globally competent learners.

The findings of this systematic review offer substantial practical implications for various educational stakeholders. For curriculum managers and policymakers, these results provide an evidence-based blueprint to transition from rigid, top-down curriculum planning towards flexible, participatory models that gracefully accommodate technological advancements without compromising core theological doctrines. Furthermore, for lecturers and educators, this study underscores the urgent need to adopt design thinking and interactive digital pedagogies. It practically

encourages educators to shift their traditional roles from mere knowledge transmitters to educational entrepreneurs who actively co-create engaging, character-oriented learning experiences with their students.

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to certain methodological limitations that must be acknowledged. The scope of the literature search was strictly confined to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English and Indonesian between 2015 and 2025, thereby excluding potentially valuable insights from unpublished dissertations, conference proceedings, and publications in other prominent languages. Moreover, the reviewed literature is predominantly qualitative and conceptually driven. Therefore, future research is highly recommended to conduct large-scale quantitative impact assessments and cross-cultural longitudinal studies. Such endeavors will be crucial to empirically validate the long-term effectiveness of these curriculum innovations across diverse global contexts.

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