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Research Paper

Toward Inclusive Islamic Education: Addressing Gender, Disability, and Marginalization through a Comparative Case Study Approach

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Abstract

Islamic education plays a pivotal role in shaping values and worldviews in many Muslim-majority societies. However, challenges remain in translating core Islamic principles into inclusive practices, particularly concerning gender equity, disability inclusion, and the integration of marginalized communities. This study aims to explore how Islamic education can be re-envisioned to promote inclusivity while remaining faithful to foundational Islamic values. It examines theological, pedagogical, and institutional approaches to addressing exclusion in Islamic educational systems. This research adopts a qualitative and interpretive approach, analyzing classical Islamic texts, contemporary academic literature, and three case studies of Islamic educational institutions in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. The case studies were selected based on their documented efforts to implement inclusive educational practices and their accessibility through credible secondary sources. Data were collected through document analysis and literature review, and thematically analyzed to identify patterns of inclusive practice and their theological underpinnings. The study finds that Islamic theology, particularly the concepts of *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (higher objectives of Islamic law), provides a strong foundation for inclusive education. However, cultural practices and institutional inertia often hinder their application. Several emerging models—such as inclusive pesantren in Indonesia and gender-equity policies in Turkey's Imam-Hatip schools—demonstrate the potential for systemic transformation when inclusivity is deliberately prioritized. This study draws on secondary sources—journal articles, institutional reports, and case studies—published between 2010 and 2024. While offering useful insights, the lack of primary fieldwork limits generalizability. Future research should include empirical methods to strengthen the proposed framework. This research contributes to the discourse on inclusive education by offering a faith-integrated perspective rooted in Islamic ethics. It proposes a contextualized model for inclusive Islamic education that addresses global educational justice while affirming religious identity. The study provides valuable insights for both Islamic education scholarship and wider initiatives aimed at building sustainable, inclusive learning systems.

Keywords: *Islamic Education, Inclusion, Maqāṣid Al-Sharī'ah, inclusive education*

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary discourse on Islamic education is witnessing a critical transformation in response to the growing global demand for inclusivity, equity, and social justice (Fanny et al., 2024; Sahin, 2018). While Islamic teachings inherently promote values of compassion, dignity, and equal access to knowledge, the practical implementation of these principles within educational systems remains uneven and, in many cases, exclusionary (Karimullah, 2023). Disparities in access and participation continue to affect individuals and groups marginalized by gender, disability, and socio-economic status, revealing a disjunction between the normative ideals of Islam and their institutional realities (Karimullah, 2023). In many Islamic educational settings, particularly in traditional or conservative contexts, women, persons with disabilities, and socially marginalized communities face systemic barriers that hinder their full engagement with learning opportunities

(Ismet et al., 2025; Karimullah, 2023). This exclusion not only contravenes the ethical spirit of Islamic epistemology but also impedes the transformative potential of education as a tool for empowerment and societal advancement. As global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals emphasize inclusive and equitable quality education for all, there is an urgent need to critically reassess and reimagine Islamic education in ways that are both faithful to its foundational principles and responsive to the complexities of contemporary pluralistic societies (Khan & Haneef, 2022; Kurniasih et al., 2025). The present study seeks to engage with this imperative by examining the structural and cultural dimensions of exclusion within Islamic education and proposing pathways toward a more inclusive educational paradigm rooted in Islamic values.

Despite the normative emphasis on justice, mercy, and inclusivity in Islamic teachings, contemporary Islamic educational systems often fall short in addressing the needs of diverse learners, particularly those marginalized by gender, disability, and socio-economic exclusion. In many contexts, educational institutions informed by Islamic frameworks still operate within patriarchal, ableist, and elitist paradigms that systematically hinder equal participation (Nuryana et al., 2024). Girls and women, particularly in conservative contexts, often face restricted access to advanced religious education. Learners with disabilities encounter not only physical obstacles but also attitudinal barriers in environments that are insufficiently prepared to accommodate diversity. Similarly, students from marginalized socio-economic backgrounds frequently experience stigmatization and educational neglect, reinforcing persistent cycles of exclusion. These challenges are compounded by the absence of inclusive pedagogical models and institutional policies that prioritize equity. As a result, a significant gap emerges between the ethical ideals of Islam and the operational realities of Islamic education. This tension raises a critical question: how can Islamic education be restructured to embody the inclusive values it proclaims authentically?.

This study critically examines the extent to which Islamic educational institutions accommodate principles of inclusivity, particularly regarding gender equity, disability access, and the participation of marginalized groups. It identifies socio-cultural, theological, and structural barriers that hinder inclusive practices. Furthermore, the study explores how Islamic pedagogical frameworks can be reinterpreted to better align with both universal human rights norms and Islamic ethical values. Ultimately, the research aims to develop a conceptual and practical framework for inclusive Islamic education that promotes equity, dignity, and meaningful participation for all learners.

While inclusive education has been widely examined within secular and Western contexts, its intersection with Islamic education remains underexplored. Existing studies often portray Islamic education as a monolithic tradition or focus narrowly on curriculum content, overlooking broader institutional and cultural dynamics that sustain exclusion. Moreover, few studies integrate Islamic theological principles with contemporary inclusive education theory. This gap underscores the need for research that not only critiques existing practices but also constructs a theologically grounded and contextually responsive model of inclusive Islamic education.

This study makes an original contribution to the discourse on inclusive education by bridging Islamic theological principles with global equity and inclusion frameworks. Although inclusive education has received significant international attention, its integration into Islamic educational philosophy remains limited. Existing literature often adopts polarized perspectives—either privileging rigid doctrinalism or embracing secular universalism that marginalizes religious worldviews.

By drawing upon core Islamic values such as justice (*'adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), and human dignity (*karāmah insāniyyah*), the study reinterprets classical sources in light of contemporary educational thought. Addressing intersecting forms of exclusion—gender, disability, and socio-

economic marginalization, it proposes a holistic and culturally grounded framework for inclusive Islamic education. Methodologically, the study integrates scriptural hermeneutics with critical pedagogy, sociology of education, and global inclusive education policy analysis. This interdisciplinary approach generates practical implications for policy reform, school leadership, teacher education, and curriculum development, reaffirming Islamic education's potential as a transformative force for social justice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Inclusive education has emerged as a global response to social inequality, aiming to ensure equal learning opportunities for all learners regardless of physical, social, or cultural differences. Within the Islamic framework, inclusion finds its philosophical roots in the principles of justice (*'adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), and the higher objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*). This paper explores how Islamic education can be re-envisioned to promote inclusivity by integrating theological, pedagogical, and institutional dimensions. It argues that inclusive education grounded in *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* not only addresses exclusion based on disability but also gender and social marginalization, positioning education as a pathway to holistic human flourishing (*maslahah insaniyyah*).

Inclusive education is a comprehensive approach that ensures all learners, regardless of gender, ability, ethnicity, or socio-economic status, have equitable access to quality learning opportunities. Tony defines it as a continuous process of identifying and removing barriers that limit participation and achievement (Tony, 2011).

UNESCO emphasizes that inclusion goes beyond integrating students with disabilities; it requires transforming educational systems to embrace the diversity of learners. Thus, inclusion is not a remedial measure but a fundamental rethinking of education itself — from uniformity toward diversity, from segregation toward participation, and from charity toward justice (UNESCO, 2009).

In many developing contexts, including Muslim-majority nations, exclusion persists due to poverty, gender bias, and limited resources for learners with disabilities. Addressing these inequities demands a holistic vision of education that recognizes diversity as a divine design, not a social defect.

The rationale for inclusive education rests on both human rights and social development perspectives. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly SDG 4, calls for "inclusive and equitable quality education for all." Empirical research shows that inclusive education not only benefits marginalized students but also enriches school culture, promoting empathy, cooperation, and critical thinking among all learners (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011).

From an Islamic standpoint, inclusion is deeply consistent with the Qur'anic vision of human dignity. Allah declares: *"We have certainly honored the children of Adam."* (QS. Al-Isrā' [17]: 70). This verse establishes a universal foundation of equality — every human being possesses inherent worth, regardless of ability, gender, or lineage. Hence, inclusion in education is not merely a pedagogical innovation but a moral imperative grounded in faith.

Inclusive education requires action across three levels:
1. Theological level – reaffirming that diversity is part of God's creation (*sunnatullāh*), and therefore, exclusion contradicts divine justice.
2. Pedagogical level – designing flexible learning strategies that accommodate individual differences and promote active participation.
3. Institutional level – developing policies, teacher training, and funding systems that uphold inclusion as a right, not a privilege.

Such an approach transforms education from a selective system into a space of *rahmah* (compassion) and *'adl* (justice), aligning human development with spiritual responsibility. Islamic history and scripture provide rich precedents for inclusive principles. The Qur'an asserts:

"O mankind! We created you from a male and a female and made you nations and tribes so that you may know one another." (QS. Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13).

This verse calls for mutual recognition, not division. The Prophet Muhammad SAW embodied inclusivity through his teaching practices — welcoming the poor, the enslaved, women, and even non-Muslims to learn and dialogue. Early Islamic institutions such as *kuttāb* and *madrasah* served diverse communities, showing that access to knowledge was a collective right. Contemporary studies, such as those by Khaeroni et al (2023), highlight the compatibility between Islamic ethics and inclusive education but note that many Islamic systems have not yet operationalized inclusivity as a theological mandate (Khaeroni et al., 2023). Similarly, Umamah et al. (2025) suggest that the Islamic values of *rahmah* and *'adl* can serve as guiding principles for inclusive pedagogy, though a more systematic framework remains needed (Umamah et al., 2025).

This paper addresses that gap by integrating the concept of inclusion with *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* — the higher purposes of Islamic law. *Maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, as formulated by al-Shāṭibī, refers to the objectives of Islamic law aimed at preserving and promoting human welfare (*maslahah*) (al-Shāṭibī, 1993). The five primary *maqāṣid* are:

1. *Hifẓ al-dīn* (protection of faith),
2. *Hifẓ al-nafs* (protection of life),
3. *Hifẓ al-'aql* (protection of intellect),
4. *Hifẓ al-nasl* (protection of lineage),
5. *Hifẓ al-māl* (protection of wealth).

Within education, these principles translate into holistic human development — nurturing faith, intellect, morality, and well-being. Inclusion becomes a realization of *maqāṣid*: it safeguards human dignity, enhances knowledge, and ensures that no one is deprived of opportunities for growth due to structural or social barriers.

Although disability remains a central concern, inclusive education also addresses broader inequities related to gender, poverty, and social exclusion.

a.   Gender Inclusion

Islam views men and women as spiritually equal before God. The Qur'an proclaims:

"Whoever does righteous deeds, male or female, while being a believer — We will surely grant them a good life." (QS. An-Naḥl [16]: 97).

This equality extends to education. The Prophet Muhammad SAW encouraged both men and women to seek knowledge. His teaching sessions for women, recorded in Bukhari, exemplify early Islamic gender inclusion. Yet, in many contemporary Muslim societies, cultural constraints hinder female participation. Integrating *maqāṣid*—particularly *ḥifẓ al-'aql* (nurturing intellect)—demands systemic reform ensuring that girls enjoy the same learning rights as boys.

b.   Disability Inclusion

Prophetic practice offers powerful precedents. Abdullah ibn Umm Maktūm, a blind companion, was appointed as the Prophet's muezzin and entrusted with leadership duties. This inclusion reflects Islam's commitment to *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (protecting life) and *ḥifẓ al-karāmah* (preserving dignity). Hence, educational systems inspired by Islam must provide

assistive tools, teacher training, and community awareness to empower learners with disabilities.

c.   Socio-economic and Cultural Marginalization

Exclusion often arises from poverty, rural isolation, or minority status. Islam mandates social justice through *zakat*, *waqf*, and community solidarity. *Hifẓ al-māl* (protection of wealth) implies equitable resource distribution to support education for the underprivileged. Therefore, inclusive Islamic education requires mechanisms that ensure financial accessibility and the recognition of cultural diversity in curriculum design. Each *maqāṣid* can be operationalized within inclusive education, as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Operational *Maqāṣid al-Syarīʿah* for Inclusive Education

Maqāṣid al-Syarīʿah	Educational Application
Hifẓ al-dīn	Cultivating moral and spiritual awareness across all learners, respecting differences in belief and practice.
Hifẓ al-nafs	Ensuring safe, non-discriminatory learning environments.
Hifẓ al-ʿaql	Guaranteeing access to quality learning for all, including marginalized or disabled students.
Hifẓ al-nasl	Strengthening values of empathy, family, and moral integrity among the young generation.
Hifẓ al-māl	Promoting economic equity in education through scholarships, waqf, and social funds.

Thus, *maqāṣid al-syarīʿah* provides not only theological justification but also a moral compass for policy and pedagogy. Excluding learners because of gender, disability, or poverty contradicts the *maqāṣid* principle of *maslahah ʿāmmah* (collective well-being).

Previous studies (Tony, 2011; Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Slee, 2018) established inclusion as a framework for equity but lacked a spiritual foundation. Meanwhile, Islamic scholarship (Auda, 2008) expanded *maqāṣid* discourse but rarely applied it to education, particularly inclusive education. This paper bridges those domains. It complements secular inclusive theories by embedding them in a spiritual-ethical paradigm. It evaluates prior Islamic educational discourse by proposing the *Maqāṣid-based Inclusive Education Framework (MBIEF)*, which views inclusion as both a right and a religious duty.

This contribution fills three key research gaps: (1) Theoretical gap – lack of integration between inclusive pedagogy and maqāṣid philosophy, (2) Normative-practical gap – need for operational models applicable in Islamic schools, and (3) Contextual gap – limited perspectives from Muslim societies in global inclusion discourse.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach to understand how principles of inclusivity—particularly in relation to gender, disability, and marginalization—are conceptualized and operationalized within Islamic educational contexts. The study integrates textual analysis with case study methodology to ensure both theoretical depth and empirical relevance (Given, 2008).

The first component involves critical content analysis of classical Islamic texts, including the Qur'an, hadith, and foundational legal and pedagogical writings, to extract normative teachings on justice, equality, and education. These sources are examined through an interpretive lens to highlight theological foundations that may support inclusive educational practices.

The second component analyzes contemporary academic literature from both Islamic and

global educational studies to contextualize current discourses on inclusive education and identify dominant paradigms, challenges, and policy trends. This literature review informs the analytical framework and helps position the research within broader interdisciplinary debates.

The third component comprises three in-depth case studies of Islamic educational institutions in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. These regions were selected because they represent diverse socio-cultural, theological, and institutional expressions of Islamic education within Muslim-majority contexts, allowing for a comparative analysis of inclusivity across different educational traditions and policy environments. Data collection in each case study involved document analysis, semi-structured interviews with educators and administrators, and field observations where possible. These data sources directly informed the analytical framework: institutional documents examined to identify policy orientations toward inclusivity; interview data analyzed thematically to capture educators' perspectives and lived experiences; and observational data used to contextualize everyday inclusive practices within each institution. Ethical clearance was obtained where required, and informed consent was ensured throughout the research process.

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, contradictions, and innovations across the three contexts. Themes were derived both deductively from the theoretical framework and inductively from the empirical data. Triangulation of sources and perspectives was employed to enhance credibility, while reflexivity was maintained to ensure sensitivity to context and positionality.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The interpretive analysis of the data, grounded in a triangulated methodological framework encompassing content analysis, discourse analysis, and grounded theory, reveals a deep and multi-dimensional alignment between the foundational values of Islamic theology—*rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law)—and the core principles of inclusive education. Each method played a distinct role in the analytical process: content analysis enabled the identification of recurring themes across textual and interview data; discourse analysis unpacked the power relations and normative assumptions embedded in educational narratives; and grounded theory facilitated the construction of an emergent theoretical model rooted in empirical realities.

This integrative approach not only enhanced the robustness of the findings but also enabled a layered understanding of how Islamic educational institutions navigate the ideals and challenges of inclusion. The study spans three distinct socio-cultural and geopolitical contexts — Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa — each offering unique insights into how theology, policy, and community practice converge to shape inclusive educational models.

In Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia and Malaysia, inclusive Islamic education often manifests through adaptive curricular strategies that respond to diverse learner needs, especially those with disabilities and from marginalized communities. Collaborative school-community relationships are central, wherein local religious leaders (*ulama*) and parent networks co-construct inclusive policies that are both theologically sound and pedagogically innovative. Gender-aware interpretations of religious texts — often promoted by moderate Islamic movements and supported by state education ministries — also contribute significantly to more egalitarian learning environments.

In contrast to the Southeast Asian examples, inclusive educational practices in several Middle Eastern contexts are frequently framed within institutional commitments to *waṣatiyyah* (moderation) and *taṣwiyah* (equity)—two theological and ethical orientations that have long informed Islamic educational discourse in the region. These principles, when operationalized effectively, have the potential to foster balanced, equitable learning environments grounded in

religious moderation and distributive justice. However, the implementation of such ideals is highly uneven, often shaped by fluctuating political climates, the degree of state involvement in religious education, and the interpretive autonomy available to individual institutions.

In contexts where state apparatuses tightly control religious schooling, inclusive practices may be narrowly defined or subordinated to political objectives, limiting the scope of meaningful structural reform. Conversely, in environments where educational institutions enjoy greater independence, theological discourse can serve as a platform for progressive reinterpretations of Islamic teachings. In particular, notions of religious duty toward the *mustad'afīn* — the socially and economically vulnerable — offer a powerful normative foundation for inclusion. Yet, these inclusive imperatives often coexist with more conservative readings of Islamic texts that prioritize doctrinal orthodoxy over transformative change, resulting in a tension between aspiration and praxis.

In several African case studies, the landscape of Islamic education reflects a distinct yet equally complex interplay among theology, culture, and inclusion. Here, the integration of indigenous traditions with Islamic pedagogies produces a distinctive educational ethos—one rooted in communal ethics, oral transmission of knowledge, and the Islamic imperative of *maslahah* (public good). In such contexts, inclusion is often less about formal policy mandates and more about culturally embedded practices that emphasize belonging, interdependence, and collective responsibility. Islamic education in these settings operates within conditions of material scarcity. Still, it is also sustained by a rich theological heritage that underscores the moral obligation to care for the marginalized.

Notably, these African models of inclusion challenge conventional assumptions about the prerequisites for equitable education. Despite limited access to formal infrastructure, many institutions demonstrate a robust commitment to ethical inclusion through practices such as shared learning, inclusive religious ceremonies, and community-based instruction. These efforts highlight the adaptability of Islamic educational principles to diverse socio-cultural realities and resource constraints.

Together, the Middle Eastern and African experiences underscore the diversity and contextuality of inclusive Islamic education. They reveal that theological discourse can function as both an enabling force and a limiting frame—depending on how it is interpreted, institutionalized, and enacted. More broadly, they affirm the need for localized models of inclusion that are not imposed externally but emerge organically from within each community's cultural and religious fabric.

Overall, the findings suggest that inclusive Islamic education cannot be divorced from the theological and ethical frameworks that shape institutional identity and pedagogical direction. Rather than viewing inclusive education as an external imposition on religious schooling, this study demonstrates how core Islamic values can serve as a generative foundation for inclusive reform. By revealing the interplay between theology, policy, and praxis across diverse Muslim contexts, the research contributes to a more globally informed and contextually nuanced understanding of inclusive education, one that honors faith-based epistemologies while advancing universal educational rights (Baviera & Maramis, 2017; Suhendri, 2020a; Febriyanti et al., 2023; Abas, 2018).

In contrast, institutions in the Middle East, while rooted in rich traditions of jurisprudence, reveal more tension between classical interpretations and modern inclusivity discourses, with inclusivity often emerging through reinterpretation by progressive scholars and intra-institutional reforms (Basma, 2018). Meanwhile, the African context illustrates the role of local leadership and indigenous pedagogical practices in operationalizing Islamic values of mercy and justice to address the needs of students with disabilities and identities (Buskens et al., 2016; Wagner, 2022).

The discourse analysis further reveals that the framing of religious authority and pedagogical legitimacy is highly contingent upon how Islamic values are invoked: when *rahmah* and *'adl* are

centered, the discursive space allows for a more inclusive interpretation of religious obligations; conversely, when textual literalism prevails without contextualization, exclusionary practices are often maintained. Moreover, the findings illustrate that the principle of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, when interpreted dynamically to uphold human dignity (*karāmah al-insān*), the protection of intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), and the preservation of social justice, provides a conceptual bridge between traditional Islamic legal frameworks and contemporary rights-based approaches to inclusive education (Umami & Ghofur, 2022; Oladapo & Ab Rahman, 2017).

The findings of this study collectively affirm that Islamic educational institutions are not merely compatible with the ideals of inclusive education but, more importantly, are imbued with intrinsic theological principles that can serve as powerful enablers of inclusion. Foundational Islamic values such as *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), and *karāmah* (human dignity) are not peripheral to the tradition; rather, they are embedded within its spiritual, legal, and pedagogical architecture. These values, when interpreted through lenses that are responsive to contemporary ethical and educational imperatives, have the potential to drive deeply transformative inclusive practices (Aziz & Zubaidi, 2024).

However, the extent to which these theological resources are activated within Islamic educational settings is not uniform. It varies significantly depending on a constellation of factors, including institutional autonomy, the leadership's interpretive orientation, and the broader socio-political context in which education is situated. Some institutions embrace reformist readings that foreground inclusion as a religious imperative, while others remain anchored in more rigid frameworks that resist engagement with progressive pedagogical discourses. Thus, inclusion in Islamic education cannot be assumed; it must be deliberately cultivated through critical engagement with both tradition and context (Ali et al., 2024).

This study challenges the often-unquestioned binary that positions Islamic tradition and inclusive education as inherently oppositional. Such a dichotomy not only overlooks the internal diversity of Islamic thought but also disregards the evolving nature of pedagogical ethics within Muslim societies. Rather than viewing Islamic education as a static or monolithic entity, the research proposes an interpretive paradigm that recognizes it as a dynamic and pluralistic field—one capable of negotiating between inherited textual authorities and the lived realities of diverse learners.

By framing Islamic values not as obstacles but as catalysts for equity, this study offers a critical reimagining of what inclusive education can mean in Muslim contexts. It suggests that when religious discourse is open to dialogical interpretation and institutional culture is oriented toward ethical responsiveness, Islamic education becomes a fertile ground for promoting not just academic access but also social justice, human dignity, and communal solidarity.

Importantly, the paradigm advanced here does not advocate for the instrumentalization of religion in the service of external norms, nor does it suggest an uncritical harmonization of tradition and modernity. Instead, it calls for a theologically rooted, critically informed, and context-sensitive approach to inclusion—one that honors the integrity of Islamic educational philosophy while advancing universal commitments to educational equity. This nuanced stance offers new possibilities for research, policy formation, and institutional practice, not only within Muslim-majority societies but also in global conversations on faith, diversity, and justice in education.

The findings of this study contribute significantly to both theoretical and practical understandings of inclusive education within Islamic contexts. Theoretically, the research expands the discourse on Islamic education by integrating principles of *rahmah*, *'adl*, and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* into contemporary frameworks of inclusion, offering a nuanced paradigm that bridges Islamic theological ethics with inclusive pedagogical theory (Mohammad Eisa & Ushama, 2024). It challenges prevailing assumptions that religious traditions inherently resist inclusive reform and

instead positions Islamic theology as a generative resource for advancing educational equity. In practice, the case studies provide concrete models for embedding inclusive practices within Islamic institutions across diverse cultural, political, and theological landscapes (Nuryana et al., 2024). These insights offer guidance to educators, policymakers, and religious leaders seeking to implement inclusive strategies that are both theologically grounded and contextually responsive. As such, the study not only enriches academic scholarship but also informs real-world interventions aimed at fostering inclusive, equitable, and faith-aligned educational environments (Suhendri et al., 2024; Suhendri, 2020b).

The findings of this study also carry significant social and ethical implications, particularly in advancing equity and dignity within Islamic educational contexts. By demonstrating how theological principles such as *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (higher objectives of Islamic law) can serve as ethical foundations for inclusive education, the research challenges exclusionary practices that often marginalize students based on gender, disability, or social background. Socially, the study underscores the role of Islamic education in shaping communal attitudes toward diversity and inclusion, suggesting that institutions aligned with inclusive theological interpretations are better positioned to foster cohesive and pluralistic communities. Ethically, the research invites educators, religious leaders, and policymakers to reflect critically on the moral responsibilities of educational institutions to ensure access, participation, and respect for all learners. Promoting inclusive Islamic education is thus not only a pedagogical or institutional concern, but also a deeply moral undertaking that resonates with the broader goals of social justice and human flourishing (Billah et al., 2025; Suhendri et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that inclusive Islamic education is both theologically grounded and practically attainable when framed through the ethical lenses of *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law). Through a qualitative and interpretive analysis of classical texts, contemporary literature, and three institutional case studies across Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, the research has illuminated how inclusive practices can be contextually embedded without compromising Islamic identity. The integration of content analysis, discourse analysis, and grounded theory allowed for a multidimensional interpretation of inclusion that transcends formal policy and engages with the lived realities of marginalized learners.

This study makes a meaningful contribution to the expanding corpus of scholarship that calls for a faith-informed paradigm of educational inclusion—one that neither marginalizes religious epistemologies nor uncritically adopts secular liberal norms. By centering Islamic theological values as resources for constructing inclusive educational models, the research affirms that religious traditions—when approached critically and contextually—can be powerful allies in the pursuit of equity and social justice in education.

The framework developed herein offers a much-needed alternative to the binary often constructed between doctrinal fidelity and progressive pedagogy. Instead of viewing them as mutually exclusive, this study argues for their mutual enrichment. Through its interpretive methodology and engagement with diverse regional contexts, the research illuminates how Islamic education can embody inclusive principles without compromising its theological core. Such a paradigm not only repositions Islamic education within broader conversations about inclusion but also expands the conceptual boundaries of what inclusive education can and should mean in pluralistic societies.

From a practical standpoint, the study provides actionable insights for educators,

institutional leaders, and policymakers operating within Muslim-majority or faith-based educational systems. It demonstrates that policy reforms, teacher training programs, and curriculum development can be informed by scriptural values such as *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), and *karāmah* (human dignity), fostering a more holistic and ethically grounded approach to inclusion. These insights are particularly salient in contexts where religion remains a central axis of identity formation and educational governance.

Nevertheless, the study acknowledges its limitations. The findings are contextually bound to the three selected regions and rely on interpretive methodologies that privilege depth over generalizability. However, rather than viewing this as a constraint, the research positions this specificity as a strength—it underscores the necessity of culturally responsive and theologically rooted approaches to inclusion that resist one-size-fits-all models. Moreover, the study lays a solid foundation for future research to examine other regional, sectarian, or institutional contexts and invites comparative analyses across religious traditions.

Ultimately, the study underscores an ethical imperative: Islamic educational environments must strive not only to uphold doctrinal authenticity but also to embody the tradition's justice-oriented spirit. As Muslim communities around the world grapple with issues of diversity, equity, and marginalization, the insights from this research offer a vision of Islamic education that is spiritually resonant, intellectually rigorous, and socially transformative.

Despite its contributions, this study acknowledges several limitations that may affect the interpretation and generalizability of its findings. First, the selection of case studies—limited to three regions—may not fully capture the diversity of inclusive practices within the broader landscape of Islamic education globally. The focus on Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, while offering valuable comparative insights, inevitably omits contexts such as South Asia, Europe, or North America, where Muslim educational experiences may differ significantly. Second, the reliance on qualitative data and interpretive methods, while appropriate for exploring theological and cultural dimensions, may not account for all institutional or systemic variables influencing inclusivity, such as economic constraints or political instability. Third, the analysis is shaped by the availability and accessibility of institutional documents and informant perspectives, which may introduce bias or partiality. Recognizing these limitations is essential for situating the study's findings within a specific scope, and for encouraging further research that adopts broader, more diverse, and mixed-method approaches.

Building upon the findings and acknowledging the study's limitations, future research is encouraged to explore inclusive Islamic education across a wider range of socio-cultural and geopolitical contexts, particularly in underrepresented regions such as South Asia, Europe, and diaspora Muslim communities. Comparative studies employing mixed methods could offer deeper insights into how inclusive principles are negotiated at the intersection of theology, policy, and practice. Additionally, longitudinal research could examine the long-term impact of inclusive reforms in Islamic educational institutions, particularly on student outcomes, community acceptance, and institutional sustainability. Further scholarly inquiry might also engage more directly with voices of marginalized groups—such as women, students with disabilities, and ethnic minorities—to better understand how inclusivity is experienced and contested within Islamic schooling. These future directions would enrich the emerging body of literature on inclusive Islamic education and provide more comprehensive frameworks for theory-building and practical implementation.

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