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Rahmatan lil 'Alamin as a Pedagogical Paradigm in Islamic Education: A Literature Review

Rahmadi Agus Setiawan

Universitas Islam Indonesia (UII) Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: 145110404@uii.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Although ethical values are central to Islamic education, many foundational Islamic concepts remain framed primarily in normative-theological terms, with limited pedagogical development. One such concept is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which is frequently invoked to promote inclusivity, moderation, and compassion but rarely articulated as a coherent educational paradigm. This conceptual gap limits its pedagogical relevance in contemporary and plural educational contexts. This article aims to reconstruct *rahmatan lil 'alamin* as a pedagogical paradigm in Islamic education by translating its ethical foundations into educational principles. Using a qualitative literature review, the study examines Qur'anic and Prophetic sources alongside Islamic education scholarship and international literature on religious and values-based education. The analysis identifies four interrelated pedagogical principles through which *rahmatan lil 'alamin* can be operationalized: humanization of education, justice and inclusivity, orientation toward public good and social responsibility, and integrative epistemology of learning. These principles position learners as ethical agents, affirm diversity as a pedagogical resource, connect learning with social engagement, and integrate religious knowledge with contemporary disciplines. This study contributes by reframing *rahmatan lil 'alamin* from a moral ideal into a pedagogical framework and by situating Islamic education within broader global debates on inclusive and humane education.

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Introduction

Religious education across diverse cultural contexts is increasingly challenged by rapid social change, globalization, digital culture, and intensifying identity politics. In plural societies, education is expected not only to transmit religious knowledge but also to cultivate ethical responsibility, social cohesion, and the capacity to engage constructively with difference. International scholarship in religious education has therefore emphasized the need for pedagogical approaches that are humanizing, inclusive, and dialogical, enabling learners to develop moral agency while navigating complex social realities (Jackson & Everington, 2017; Saada & Magadlah, 2021). Within this discourse, religious education is increasingly viewed as a formative practice that must address both personal ethical development and public coexistence. At the same time, critics warn that religious education risks becoming either overly confessional or excessively neutralized if pedagogical foundations are not carefully articulated. Transmission-based models that prioritize doctrinal mastery may fail to equip learners with the reflective and ethical capacities required in contemporary societies, while value-neutral approaches may weaken the normative integrity of religious traditions (Sahin, 2018). These tensions have prompted renewed scholarly attention to pedagogical paradigms capable of sustaining religious authenticity while fostering inclusivity, critical reflection, and social responsibility.

Within Islamic education, similar tensions are widely acknowledged. Islamic education is often characterized as ethically rich, grounded in strong normative commitments to justice, compassion, and moral responsibility. However, a growing body of literature suggests that these values are frequently articulated in predominantly theological or doctrinal terms, with limited pedagogical elaboration regarding how they should inform teaching practices, learning processes, and educational outcomes (Zainab, 2020; Sahin, 2018). As a result, Islamic education may appear normatively robust yet pedagogically underdeveloped, particularly when confronted with pluralism and contemporary social challenges. This pedagogical tension becomes especially visible in higher education and teacher education contexts, where students are expected to engage critically with religious knowledge while interacting with diverse worldviews. Studies indicate that when Islamic education relies heavily on normative exposition, it risks reducing ethical values to abstract ideals or moral slogans, rather than cultivating learners' capacity for ethical reasoning, empathy, and socially responsible action (Hidayah, 2023). Addressing this gap requires conceptual frameworks that translate Islamic ethical principles into pedagogical orientations responsive to learners' lived experiences and broader social contexts.

Among the ethical concepts frequently invoked in contemporary Islamic discourse is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*—the Qur'anic characterization of Islam, and the prophetic mission, as a mercy to all creation. This concept has gained prominence in

discussions of Islamic education, religious moderation, and social coexistence, where it is often presented as a normative foundation for inclusivity, justice, and peaceful engagement with diversity. In educational policy and curriculum discourse, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* is increasingly used to signal Islam's universal ethical orientation and its relevance for plural societies. Despite its widespread appeal, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* is most often approached as a theological or moral ideal rather than as a pedagogical framework. Existing studies tend to emphasize its scriptural basis and ethical significance, while offering limited analysis of how this concept can systematically inform educational design, classroom interaction, and learning objectives (Mokhtar, 2025). Consequently, the pedagogical potential of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* remains underexplored, particularly in relation to contemporary educational theory and international religious education research.

A review of the literature reveals a notable gap between the normative richness of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* and its pedagogical articulation. While numerous studies discuss mercy, moderation, and inclusivity as Islamic values, few explicitly reconstruct *rahmatan lil 'alamin* as a coherent pedagogical paradigm. Moreover, much of the existing scholarship remains context-specific and rarely engages in sustained dialogue with international debates on religious education, inclusive pedagogy, and ethical formation. This gap limits the contribution of Islamic education scholarship to broader academic conversations on values-based education. Without a clear pedagogical framework, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* risks remaining rhetorically powerful yet educationally underutilized. Addressing this limitation requires an interdisciplinary approach that bridges Islamic theological ethics, Islamic education studies, and international pedagogical research.

Responding to this gap, this article aims to reconstruct *rahmatan lil 'alamin* as a pedagogical paradigm in Islamic education. Rather than treating mercy solely as a theological affirmation, the article explores how *rahmatan lil 'alamin* can be translated into pedagogical principles that guide educational aims, teaching practices, and epistemological orientations. Through a critical review of relevant literature, the study articulates a set of pedagogical principles—humanization of education, justice and inclusivity, orientation toward *maṣlaḥah* and social responsibility, and integrative epistemology of learning—that operationalize *rahmatan lil 'alamin* within educational contexts.

The contribution of this article is threefold. Conceptually, it offers a pedagogical reinterpretation of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* that bridges Islamic ethical theology and contemporary educational theory. Theoretically, it advances a structured framework that situates Islamic education within international discussions on religious and values-based education. Discursively, it positions Islamic education as an active contributor to global pedagogical debates, demonstrating how Islamic ethical concepts can inform inclusive and socially responsive educational practices. The article proceeds by outlining the methodological approach employed in reviewing the literature, followed by a

presentation of the conceptual findings concerning *rahmatan lil 'alamin* and its pedagogical implications. The discussion section situates these findings within international religious education scholarship, highlighting points of convergence and contribution. The article concludes by summarizing the key insights and proposing directions for future research on *rahmatan lil 'alamin*-oriented pedagogy in Islamic education.

Method

This study employs a qualitative literature review to examine *rahmatan lil 'alamin* as a pedagogical paradigm in Islamic education. A literature review was selected because the primary objective of the study is conceptual reconstruction rather than empirical measurement. This approach allows for a systematic examination of how *rahmatan lil 'alamin* has been discussed across theological, educational, and pedagogical literatures, as well as how these discussions can be synthesized into a coherent pedagogical framework. Conceptual and theoretical reviews are particularly appropriate for studies that seek to clarify key constructs, identify gaps in existing scholarship, and propose integrative frameworks for future research (Snyder, 2019).

The review adopts an interpretive and critical orientation. Rather than merely summarizing existing studies, the analysis focuses on identifying dominant themes, underlying assumptions, and conceptual tensions within the literature. This orientation enables the study to move beyond descriptive mapping toward analytical synthesis, particularly in reconciling normative Islamic ethical concepts with contemporary pedagogical discourse. The literature reviewed in this study was drawn from multiple sources to ensure conceptual breadth and scholarly rigor. Primary sources include Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions relevant to the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which provide the normative-ethical foundation of the analysis. Secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and policy documents related to Islamic education, religious education, and pedagogy. To ensure academic quality and relevance, journal articles were selected primarily from internationally recognized databases and publishers, including Scopus-indexed and Web of Science-indexed journals, as well as reputable international journals in religious education and education studies.

In addition, selected peer-reviewed national journals were included where they provided direct and substantive engagement with *rahmatan lil 'alamin* in educational contexts. Publications considered for review were limited to those published within the last five to ten years, except for classical Islamic sources and foundational theoretical works that remain influential in contemporary scholarship. The analysis followed a thematic and integrative procedure. First, the selected literature was read iteratively to identify key conceptualizations of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* within theological and educational discussions. Second, the literature was

coded thematically to capture recurring pedagogical concerns, such as human dignity, inclusivity, social responsibility, and epistemological integration. Third, these themes were compared and synthesized across different bodies of literature— Islamic theology, Islamic education studies, and international religious education research—to identify points of convergence and divergence.

This integrative process enabled the articulation of pedagogical principles that are both normatively grounded and pedagogically operational. Rather than imposing predefined categories, the analytical framework emerged inductively from the literature, while being informed by established pedagogical theories and concepts. The resulting synthesis forms the basis for the pedagogical framework presented in the Results section. To enhance analytical rigor, the study employed several strategies commonly used in qualitative literature reviews. First, source triangulation was applied by engaging diverse types of literature, including scriptural texts, academic research, and policy-oriented documents. Second, conceptual transparency was maintained by explicitly outlining the analytical steps and criteria used to derive the pedagogical principles. Third, the study situates its interpretations within existing international scholarship, allowing readers to assess the plausibility and transferability of the proposed framework. While this study does not aim for empirical generalization, it seeks analytical generalization by offering a conceptual framework that may inform further empirical research and pedagogical development. The limitations of the study—particularly its reliance on secondary sources—are acknowledged, and the proposed framework is presented as a basis for future empirical validation rather than as a definitive pedagogical model.

Results and Discussion

Conceptual Foundations of Rahmatan lil ‘Alamin

The concept of *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* is firmly rooted in the Qur’anic portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad’s mission as a universal source of mercy. This foundational idea is explicitly articulated in the following verse: *And We have not sent you [O Muhammad] except as a mercy to all worlds”* (Qur’an, 21:107). Classical Qur’anic exegetes consistently emphasize the universality embedded in this verse. Ibn Kathīr interprets *al-‘ālamīn* as encompassing all of creation, including believers and non-believers alike, arguing that the Prophet’s mercy manifests through guidance, moral instruction, and the prevention of harm (*daf’ al-mafāsīd*) even for those outside the Muslim community (Ibn Kathīr, 2000). Al-Ṭabarī similarly explains that the prophetic mission alleviates human suffering by promoting justice, ethical order, and social balance, thereby affirming mercy as a civilizational principle rather than a narrowly confessional one (al-Ṭabarī, 2001).

Within contemporary Islamic education literature, this Qur'anic foundation is frequently cited to affirm the ethical orientation of Islamic pedagogy. However, such references often remain at the level of theological affirmation, emphasizing moral ideals without systematically translating them into pedagogical frameworks that address learning processes, curriculum design, and educational outcomes (Hidayah, 2023; Zainab, 2020).

Prophetic traditions further reinforce mercy (*rahmah*) as the central ethical axis of Islam. Among the most frequently cited hadith is the Prophet's declaration: *Indeed, I am nothing but a gifted mercy* (al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*). Another well-known tradition articulates mercy as a reciprocal social ethic: *"The merciful are shown mercy by the Most Merciful. Show mercy to those on earth, and the One in heaven will show mercy to you."* (al-Tirmidhī).

Classical scholars such as al-Nawawī interpret these traditions as establishing mercy not merely as an emotional disposition but as an active moral responsibility that governs social interaction, leadership, and educational engagement (al-Nawawī, 1997). Mercy, in this interpretive tradition, entails safeguarding human dignity, promoting justice, and nurturing ethical awareness through concrete actions. Contemporary scholars extend this understanding by arguing that these Prophetic teachings implicitly demand educational approaches that cultivate empathy, inclusivity, and social responsibility, rather than relying solely on doctrinal transmission (Hasfiana & Ahmad, 2025).

Despite this rich ethical foundation, Islamic education has often treated these Prophetic teachings as moral exhortations rather than as guiding principles for pedagogical design. As a consequence, the transformative ethical vision of Prophetic mercy frequently remains underutilized within formal educational practices (Zainab, 2020). Recent scholarly discussions increasingly highlight the limitations of normative–theological approaches that dominate interpretations of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* in education. While such approaches successfully articulate ethical ideals, they often prioritize what learners should believe over how they should learn, interact, and contribute meaningfully to society. This tendency risks reducing Islamic education to moral instruction detached from learners' lived experiences and the complexities of pluralistic social contexts (Adibah, 2025; Hakim, 2025).

Azra (2020) argues that values such as mercy, justice, and moderation must be understood as civilizational ethics that inform institutional practices, including education. When these values remain confined to theological discourse, Islamic education may appear ethically rich yet pedagogically limited. Mokhtar (2025) characterizes this condition as an axiological gap, in which universal ethical commitments are affirmed rhetorically but insufficiently operationalized within educational structures that promote critical reflection, inclusivity, and social transformation.

Policy-oriented educational frameworks in Indonesia reflect growing institutional awareness of this challenge. Documents such as the *Buku Saku Moderasi*

Beragama (Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, 2019) and the *Guidelines for Strengthening the Rahmatan lil 'Alamin Student Profile (P5-PPRA)* (Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, 2022) explicitly emphasize the need to translate Qur'anic and Prophetic values into learner-centered, inclusive, and socially responsive educational practices. These developments underscore an emerging consensus that *rahmatan lil 'alamin* must be reconceptualized as a pedagogical paradigm rather than remaining solely a theological ideal—a shift that forms the basis for the pedagogical definition discussed in the following section.

Toward a Pedagogical Definition of Rahmatan lil 'Alamin

Building upon its theological and ethical foundations, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* requires a deliberate reconceptualization when situated within the field of education. While Qur'anic and Prophetic sources articulate mercy as a universal moral vision, a pedagogical definition demands clarity regarding how this vision shapes learning objectives, instructional processes, and educational outcomes. In educational theory, values acquire pedagogical meaning only when they are translated into structured learning experiences that influence learners' cognition, attitudes, and social practices. Consequently, defining *rahmatan lil 'alamin* pedagogically involves moving beyond normative affirmation toward an operational framework that informs how education is designed, enacted, and evaluated (Hidayah, 2023; Mokhtar, 2025).

Recent literature in Islamic education increasingly frames *rahmatan lil 'alamin* as an axiological foundation that orients educational practice toward human dignity, justice, and the common good. From this perspective, mercy is not treated as a peripheral moral sentiment but as a core educational value that shapes the purpose of learning itself. Education grounded in *rahmatan lil 'alamin* thus seeks to cultivate learners who are not only knowledgeable in religious doctrines but also capable of ethical reasoning, empathetic engagement, and constructive participation in diverse social environments (Adibah, 2025).

Pedagogically, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* can be understood as an orientation that prioritizes humanization, inclusivity, and social responsibility within the learning process. This orientation resonates with broader critical and humanistic educational theories that view education as a transformative practice aimed at empowering learners and addressing social injustices. In this sense, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* aligns with the educational vision articulated by Pedagogy of the Oppressed, which emphasizes education as a dialogical and liberative process rather than a mechanism of domination. Although emerging from different intellectual traditions, both frameworks converge in their commitment to restoring human dignity and fostering ethical agency through education.

Within Islamic education discourse, scholars argue that a pedagogical definition of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* requires learner-centered approaches that recognize students as moral subjects capable of reflection and ethical growth. Rather than

positioning learners as passive recipients of moral instruction, this paradigm encourages active engagement with religious texts, social realities, and ethical dilemmas. Such engagement allows learners to internalize values of mercy, justice, and responsibility through critical inquiry and lived experience, thereby bridging the gap between normative ideals and practical application (Hakim, 2025; Zainab, 2020).

A pedagogical interpretation of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* also necessitates an epistemological shift in how knowledge is conceived and transmitted. Traditional instructional models that privilege rote memorization and unilateral authority may inadvertently limit the transformative potential of Islamic education. In contrast, a *rahmatan lil 'alamin*-oriented pedagogy emphasizes integrative and dialogical epistemologies, where religious knowledge is interconnected with ethical reflection, social analysis, and contemporary challenges. This integrative approach reflects the growing scholarly consensus that Islamic education must engage critically with modern knowledge systems while remaining anchored in its ethical and spiritual foundations (Hasfiana & Ahmad, 2025).

Institutional and policy frameworks further reinforce this pedagogical shift by articulating *rahmatan lil 'alamin* as a guiding principle for educational reform. Indonesian educational policies, for example, explicitly frame mercy, moderation, and inclusivity as competencies to be developed through structured pedagogical strategies rather than assumed as implicit outcomes of religious instruction (Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, 2019, 2022). These frameworks suggest that a pedagogical definition of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* entails intentional curriculum design, participatory learning methods, and evaluative practices that foreground ethical formation alongside intellectual development.

Synthesizing these perspectives, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* may be pedagogically defined as an educational paradigm that orients teaching and learning toward the cultivation of humane, just, and socially responsible individuals through inclusive, dialogical, and integrative educational practices. This definition situates mercy not as an abstract theological claim but as a lived educational commitment that shapes how knowledge is produced, relationships are formed, and social realities are engaged. As such, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* functions as both an ethical compass and a pedagogical framework that guides Islamic education toward transformative engagement with contemporary global challenges.

This pedagogical definition provides the conceptual bridge between theological foundations and practical educational principles. It establishes the basis for articulating specific pedagogical principles—such as humanization, justice and inclusivity, orientation toward *maṣlahah*, and integrative epistemology—which are elaborated in the following section.

Pedagogical Principles of Rahmatan lil 'Alamin

Having established a pedagogical definition of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* as an educational paradigm rather than a purely theological claim, this section articulates its core pedagogical principles. In the literature, the operationalization of Islamic ethical concepts into education requires two complementary moves: first, conceptual clarity regarding how Islamic values translate into learning aims and processes; second, pedagogical coherence so that classroom practices, teacher roles, and assessment align with the intended ethical outcomes (Sahin, 2018). Recent scholarship on Islamic religious education (IRE) further suggests that values such as mercy, justice, and moderation should not be positioned as abstract moral ideals, but embedded within learner-centered approaches that cultivate critical reflection, dialogue, and ethical agency—particularly in plural and contested social environments (Saada & Magadlah, 2021). Accordingly, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* may be translated into pedagogy through four interrelated principles: (1) humanization of education, (2) justice and inclusivity, (3) orientation toward *maṣlahah* and social responsibility, and (4) integrative epistemology of learning.

1. Humanization of Education

Humanization is the first pedagogical principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, positioning learners as dignified moral subjects rather than passive recipients of religious content. In contemporary Islamic education studies, Sahin (2018) argues that one persistent challenge is conceptual and pedagogical—namely, when Islamic education is reduced to doctrinal transmission, it risks neglecting the educational cultivation of moral autonomy, reflective judgement, and the learner's holistic development. A humanizing pedagogy, by contrast, foregrounds dialogical engagement with religious sources and lived realities, enabling students to interpret values such as mercy and justice as orientations for ethical living rather than merely as propositions to affirm.

This humanizing direction is particularly important in contexts where students encounter complex moral discourses through digital media and plural social interactions. In such settings, pedagogies that nurture critical awareness and reflective engagement become essential for preventing simplistic moral binaries and for supporting students' ethical reasoning (Saada & Magadlah, 2021). Within the emerging RLA-specific literature, this principle is echoed through calls to reconstruct Islamic education toward universal, humanistic values to reduce exclusivist tendencies and strengthen holistic moral formation (Hidayah, 2023). As a pedagogical principle, humanization therefore entails participatory learning designs (discussion, inquiry, reflection), teacher roles oriented toward facilitation and ethical modeling, and learning outcomes that include moral discernment, empathy, and constructive agency (Mokhtar, 2025).

2. Justice and Inclusivity

Justice and inclusivity constitute the second pedagogical principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, translating mercy into equitable educational relationships and learning environments. International research in religious education emphasizes that inclusive classrooms require more than “tolerance talk”; they demand careful pedagogical positioning, fairness, and practices that allow students from diverse religious or nonreligious backgrounds to learn without being marginalized or pressured (Jackson & Everington, 2017). Within Islamic religious education specifically, Saada and Magadlah (2021) propose a critical Islamic religious education orientation that acknowledges the plurality of Islamic interpretations and the sociopolitical contexts in which Islam is taught, encouraging students to engage Islam as a tradition capable of ethical critique, deliberation, and social responsibility.

Empirical work in the British Journal of Religious Education also shows that “religious tolerance” is not merely an attitude but a contested subjectivity shaped by discourse, identity formation, and teacher education—indicating why inclusivity must be intentionally cultivated through pedagogical strategies rather than assumed as a natural outcome of religious instruction (Mulya et al., 2022). In RLA-oriented scholarship, inclusivity is frequently positioned as a defining expression of mercy, framing educational practice as respectful engagement with difference and the protection of learners’ dignity (Mokhtar, 2025). Thus, justice and inclusivity in an RLA pedagogical paradigm imply: equitable classroom interaction, non-discriminatory learning resources, dialogical engagement across differences, and assessment practices that recognize diversity in learners’ starting points while maintaining shared ethical learning goals.

3. Orientation toward *Maṣlahah* and Social Responsibility

A third pedagogical principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* is an explicit orientation toward *maṣlahah* (public good) and social responsibility. Pedagogically, this principle reframes learning as ethical formation with societal implications: students are guided to connect religious knowledge with real-world concerns such as social justice, civic coexistence, and the prevention of harm. In the wider religious education literature, interfaith learning research suggests that structured dialogue—when appropriately facilitated—can cultivate the dispositions required for civic engagement: listening across difference, moral courage, and the capacity to negotiate disagreement without dehumanization (Pope, 2021). Such findings support the claim that mercy-based education is not only inwardly formative but outwardly oriented, producing learners prepared to contribute to social cohesion.

From the RLA-specific side, the integration of moderation, tolerance, and social justice within curricular frameworks is consistently framed as a necessary move for higher education IRE, especially in plural societies where students’ civic responsibilities are inseparable from their ethical development (Setiawan, 2025). In this sense, an RLA pedagogy oriented toward *maṣlahah* encourages contextual learning designs—community projects, case-based ethical inquiry, and problem-

oriented discussions—that translate values into action and position students as responsible contributors to collective well-being (Hidayah, 2023).

4. Integrative Epistemology of Learning

The fourth pedagogical principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* is an integrative epistemology, addressing the long-discussed dichotomy between religious and “secular” knowledge. Sahin (2018) emphasizes that Islamic education requires conceptual clarity about what counts as educational knowledge and how religious traditions engage modern intellectual life. An integrative epistemology within an RLA framework therefore implies that religious knowledge is taught not as isolated doctrine but as ethically oriented understanding that can dialogue with contemporary sciences, humanities, and social realities.

This principle gains practical urgency in modern educational contexts where students must navigate complex knowledge ecologies and digital environments. Contemporary work on compassion-related pedagogy shows that learning environments benefit when relational and ethical dimensions—such as empathy, care, and attentiveness to learners’ challenges—are treated as integral to learning rather than as optional “soft” components (Hamilton & Petty, 2023). Broader higher education debates similarly argue that compassion should be understood as a serious concern in contemporary universities, shaping pedagogy, student support, and institutional culture (Waddington, 2025). In RLA-oriented Islamic education, integrative epistemology is often framed as linking religious ethics with knowledge production and application, so that learning becomes oriented toward benefit for “all creation” in concrete terms—through ethical reasoning, interdisciplinary engagement, and socially responsive knowledge practices (Mokhtar, 2025; Setiawan, 2025).

Taken together, these four principles operationalize *rahmatan lil 'alamin* as a pedagogical paradigm: a humanizing and inclusive educational process, oriented toward public good, and enacted through integrative ways of knowing. This framework also provides a clear bridge from “Results” to “Discussion,” where the article can compare how these principles appear across theological literature, Islamic education scholarship, and international religious education research.

Discussion

This study positions *rahmatan lil 'alamin* as a pedagogical paradigm that resonates strongly with contemporary international discourses on religious education, particularly those emphasizing humanization, inclusivity, and ethical engagement. The findings demonstrate that when *rahmatan lil 'alamin* is interpreted pedagogically, it aligns with global calls to move beyond confessional transmission toward learner-centered and dialogical approaches in religious education (Sahin, 2018; Saada & Magadlah, 2021). Rather than functioning as a uniquely local or theological slogan, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* emerges as a value-based educational

framework capable of engaging shared pedagogical concerns across religious and cultural contexts.

International scholarship increasingly recognizes that religious education must address learners' moral agency and social responsibility within plural societies. Studies in the *British Journal of Religious Education* highlight the importance of inclusive pedagogies that allow students to encounter religious traditions as dynamic, internally diverse, and ethically oriented rather than as monolithic belief systems (Jackson & Everington, 2017; Mulya et al., 2022). The pedagogical principles derived from *rahmatan lil 'alamin*—particularly humanization and justice—contribute to this discourse by offering an Islamic ethical foundation for inclusive and dialogical education without diluting religious identity.

The principle of humanization articulated in this article parallels critical and humanistic approaches in international education research that critique authoritarian and transmission-based pedagogies. Sahin (2018) argues that Islamic education faces a persistent tension between theological instruction and educational transformation, a tension also observed in broader religious education contexts. The findings of this review suggest that *rahmatan lil 'alamin* provides a conceptual resolution to this tension by framing education as an ethical encounter that prioritizes learners' dignity, reflective capacity, and lived experiences.

Similarly, the emphasis on justice and inclusivity corresponds with international concerns regarding equity, representation, and learner safety in religious classrooms. Empirical research indicates that inclusive religious education does not automatically result from teaching "tolerant values" but requires deliberate pedagogical design and teacher positioning (Mulya et al., 2022). In this respect, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* strengthens inclusive pedagogy by grounding it in an Islamic ethical commitment to mercy and justice, thereby legitimizing inclusive practices within Islamic education settings while remaining compatible with international educational norms.

A key contribution of this study lies in highlighting *maṣlahah* and social responsibility as pedagogical imperatives rather than ancillary moral outcomes. International research on interfaith and civic-oriented education underscores the importance of structured learning experiences that connect moral values with social engagement, dialogue, and civic responsibility (Pope, 2021). The orientation toward *maṣlahah* identified in this review aligns with such findings, suggesting that *rahmatan lil 'alamin*-based education can foster learners' readiness to engage constructively with societal challenges.

This orientation also responds to critiques that religious education may become inward-looking or detached from public life. By explicitly linking learning to social benefit and harm prevention, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* reframes Islamic education as a public good that contributes to social cohesion rather than sectarian withdrawal. Policy frameworks emphasizing moderation and social responsibility further reinforce this direction, indicating that the pedagogical operationalization of mercy

is increasingly recognized at institutional levels (Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, 2019, 2022).

The integrative epistemology identified in this study addresses long-standing debates concerning the relationship between religious knowledge and contemporary academic disciplines. International literature increasingly emphasizes the need for holistic and interdisciplinary learning approaches that integrate ethical reflection with cognitive development (Hamilton & Petty, 2023; Waddington, 2025). Within this context, *rahmatan lil 'alamin* contributes a distinctive Islamic perspective that evaluates knowledge not only by its epistemic validity but also by its ethical and social implications.

This integrative orientation challenges dichotomies that separate “religious” from “secular” knowledge and instead promotes educational practices that engage learners with complex global realities. Such an approach enables Islamic education to participate meaningfully in broader academic conversations while maintaining its ethical commitments. The findings suggest that *rahmatan lil 'alamin* can serve as a mediating framework through which Islamic education negotiates tradition and modernity, faith and reason, and ethical values and scientific inquiry.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by reframing *rahmatan lil 'alamin* as a pedagogical paradigm rather than a solely theological construct. By synthesizing Islamic theological sources, Islamic education scholarship, and international pedagogical research, the article demonstrates that *rahmatan lil 'alamin* can function as a coherent framework guiding curriculum design, teaching strategies, and educational aims. This positioning addresses a notable gap in the literature, where discussions of mercy and moderation often remain normatively rich yet pedagogically underdeveloped.

Practically, the discussion suggests several implications for future research and educational practice. Empirical studies are needed to examine how *rahmatan lil 'alamin*-oriented pedagogies are enacted in classrooms, how teachers interpret and negotiate these principles, and how learners experience ethical formation in diverse educational contexts. Comparative research across national and institutional settings would further illuminate the adaptability of this paradigm and its potential contribution to global debates on religious and values-based education.

Conclusion

This article has argued that *rahmatan lil 'alamin* can be meaningfully reframed as a pedagogical paradigm in Islamic education rather than remaining a primarily theological or moral slogan. Through a critical literature review spanning Qur'anic and Prophetic foundations, Islamic education scholarship, and international pedagogical research, the study demonstrates that *rahmatan lil 'alamin* possesses conceptual coherence and pedagogical relevance when translated into educational aims, processes, and epistemologies. This reframing responds to longstanding

critiques that Islamic education is often normatively rich yet pedagogically underdeveloped, particularly in plural and rapidly changing social contexts. The analysis identified four interrelated pedagogical principles—humanization of education, justice and inclusivity, orientation toward *maṣlahah* and social responsibility, and integrative epistemology of learning—as the core components of a *rahmatan lil ‘alamin*-based pedagogical framework. These principles position learners as dignified moral agents, affirm diversity as an educational resource, connect religious learning with social responsibility, and promote holistic ways of knowing that bridge ethical, spiritual, and empirical knowledge. When situated within international religious education discourse, this framework resonates with contemporary concerns regarding learner-centered pedagogy, inclusive education, civic engagement, and compassionate approaches to teaching and learning.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field by advancing *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* as a mediating concept that bridges Islamic ethical theology and global pedagogical debates. It shows that Islamic education can participate constructively in international academic conversations without relinquishing its normative foundations. Practically, the framework proposed here offers a conceptual reference for curriculum development, teacher education, and pedagogical innovation in Islamic education, particularly in higher education and multicultural settings. Future research should extend this conceptual work through empirical studies examining how *rahmatan lil ‘alamin*-oriented pedagogies are interpreted and enacted by educators, how learners experience ethical formation in such contexts, and how institutional structures support or constrain their implementation. Comparative and cross-cultural research would further illuminate the adaptability of this paradigm and its potential contribution to broader discussions on values-based and religious education globally. By grounding mercy in pedagogy, *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* may serve not only as an ethical aspiration but as a viable educational paradigm for cultivating humane, just, and socially responsible learners in contemporary societies.

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