



Toward Holistic Curriculum Management in Islamic Early Childhood Education: A Framework for Integrated Learning Development

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the implementation of holistic Islamic curriculum management in early childhood education and its contribution to comprehensive child development. The research employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method by analyzing selected national and international publications from major academic databases. Articles were screened using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure relevance and methodological rigor. The findings reveal that holistic Islamic curriculum management effectively integrates core values—*aqidah* (faith), *ibadah* (worship), and *akhlaq* (morality)—into learning processes through thematic, interactive, and child-centered approaches. This integration supports balanced development across spiritual, cognitive, social, emotional, and moral domains. The review also highlights the importance of participatory management involving teachers, parents, and community stakeholders, as well as continuous evaluation aligned with holistic educational objectives. However, challenges remain, including limited teacher capacity, inadequate resources, and inconsistencies in assessing character and religious outcomes. The study implies that strengthening holistic Islamic curriculum management requires sustained professional development, improved resource support, and enhanced stakeholder collaboration. These efforts are essential to optimize character education and promote integrated child development in Islamic early childhood education contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) represents a critical phase in human development where cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual capacities are simultaneously formed. A holistic educational approach is therefore essential to ensure that learning processes do not solely emphasize academic readiness but also foster moral and character development. This issue has become increasingly significant in contemporary society, where concerns regarding moral decline and social behavior among younger generations continue to rise. Research indicates that early exposure to value-based education significantly shapes children's behavioral patterns, emotional regulation, and ethical decision-making (Rahman et al., 2023; Sholeh, 2023). In addition, holistic learning approaches that integrate multiple developmental domains have been shown to produce more balanced and adaptive individuals (Rahmah et al., 2024). Therefore, integrating holistic and value-oriented education is not only an educational

priority but also a societal necessity. Within this context, Islamic early childhood education offers a distinctive framework that integrates spiritual, moral, and intellectual development (Rahmatullah et al., 2022).

Despite its importance, the implementation of holistic education in early childhood settings often faces structural and pedagogical challenges. Many institutions still prioritize cognitive achievement over comprehensive developmental outcomes, resulting in fragmented learning experiences. This issue is particularly evident in faith-based education, where religious instruction is sometimes delivered separately from broader developmental activities (Aziz et al., 2025; Zunaidah & Rokhmah, 2023). As a consequence, children may experience a disconnect between moral teachings and their practical application in daily life. Furthermore, limitations in curriculum design, teacher competence, and assessment systems frequently hinder the effective implementation of holistic approaches. Studies also highlight inconsistencies in evaluating character and religious outcomes, which weaken alignment between curriculum goals and learning assessment (Iqbal et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). These challenges indicate a significant gap between the theoretical ideals of holistic education and its practical implementation in early childhood institutions.

In practice, Islamic early childhood institutions such as Raudhatul Athfal (RA) have attempted to integrate Islamic values into daily learning activities. The incorporation of *aqidah* (faith), *ibadah* (worship), and *akhlak* (morality) is embedded in routines, classroom interactions, and thematic learning experiences to support children's holistic development (Rahman et al., 2023; Rahmatullah et al., 2022). However, empirical findings indicate that this integration is not always implemented consistently across institutions. Some RA settings have successfully adopted child-centered and interactive learning approaches, while others still rely on conventional teacher-centered methods that limit student engagement (Rahmah et al., 2024). In addition, disparities in institutional resources and teacher competencies significantly influence the quality of curriculum implementation (Aziz et al., 2025; Sholeh et al., 2025). These variations suggest that although the concept of holistic Islamic education is widely recognized, its practical application remains uneven.

Previous studies have examined the integration of Islamic values, thematic learning, and character development within early childhood education. Research shows that embedding Islamic values into daily learning activities contributes to strengthening children's moral awareness and social behavior (Aziz et al., 2025). Furthermore, thematic and child-centered learning approaches are considered effective in connecting religious teachings with children's real-life experiences, thereby enhancing meaningful learning (Rahmah et al., 2024). In addition to classroom practices, curriculum management has been identified as a crucial factor influencing educational effectiveness, particularly through processes of planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation (Rahman et al., 2023). Leadership also plays an important role in ensuring alignment between academic competencies and spiritual development within Islamic education settings (Wiyani et al., 2023). These findings highlight the multidimensional nature of holistic Islamic education.

Despite the growing body of research, existing studies tend to address holistic Islamic education in a fragmented manner rather than as an integrated system. Many studies focus primarily on instructional practices while giving limited attention to broader curriculum management frameworks that support holistic implementation. In addition,

several challenges persist, including limited teacher competence, inadequate learning resources, and uneven access to professional development opportunities. Another critical issue lies in the inconsistency of assessment practices, particularly in evaluating religious and character outcomes, which weakens the alignment between curriculum objectives and evaluation systems (Iqbal et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). Moreover, tensions between national education standards and Islamic educational priorities remain insufficiently explored in the literature (Islamiyah et al., 2024). These gaps indicate the need for a more comprehensive and integrative analysis of holistic Islamic curriculum management.

This study offers a novel perspective by systematically examining holistic Islamic curriculum management as an integrated and dynamic system rather than isolated practices. It emphasizes the interconnection between value integration, pedagogical approaches, stakeholder involvement, and evaluation mechanisms. By adopting a holistic lens, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how curriculum management can support balanced child development. This approach also highlights the importance of contextual sensitivity, adaptability, and sustainability in designing and implementing Islamic early childhood education. The novelty lies in its effort to bridge theoretical concepts with practical challenges, offering a more cohesive framework for understanding and improving holistic education practices.

Based on these considerations, this study addresses the central question of how holistic-based Islamic curriculum management is conceptualized and implemented, and how it contributes to children's overall development. It argues that effective curriculum management must integrate religious values, pedagogical strategies, and institutional support systems into a coherent framework. The study also posits that challenges such as teacher competence, resource availability, and assessment alignment must be addressed to optimize implementation. By synthesizing existing literature through a Systematic Literature Review approach, this research aims to identify key patterns, strengths, and limitations in current practices. Ultimately, the study contributes to the development of a more integrated and contextually relevant model of holistic Islamic education that can support sustainable improvements in early childhood learning outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine Islamic-based curriculum management in early childhood education and its contribution to holistic development. The SLR method was selected because it allows for a structured, transparent, and replicable synthesis of existing theoretical and empirical studies, enabling comprehensive identification of patterns, themes, and research gaps (Rahayu et al., 2025). Rather than focusing on a specific geographical location, this study analyzed scholarly publications from diverse contexts to provide a broader and more generalizable understanding of Islamic curriculum management practices. Data sources were obtained from multiple academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, ERIC, and JSTOR, with ResearchGate used as a complementary source for accessing full-text articles and recent publications, provided their credibility could be verified (Subekhan & Suryapermana, 2024). The

literature search covered publications from 2014 to 2025 using keywords such as “Islamic education,” “curriculum management,” “holistic education,” and “early childhood education,” combined with Boolean operators to ensure search precision.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic identification and screening process based on predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Studies were included if they focused on Islamic education and curriculum management in early childhood settings, addressed holistic development, were published in reputable academic sources, and employed clear research methodologies (Aziz et al., 2025; Rahayu, 2025). Conversely, studies were excluded if they lacked relevance, methodological clarity, or full-text accessibility. The screening process involved reviewing titles, abstracts, and full texts to ensure alignment with the research objectives, while maintaining transparency in study selection (Moslimany et al., 2024; Sholeh, 2023). Additionally, a quality appraisal was conducted to evaluate the credibility and relevance of selected studies, prioritizing peer-reviewed publications with rigorous methodologies and substantive contributions to the topic.

The data analysis process followed an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and categorizing relevant information from the included studies based on themes such as value integration, curriculum management practices, stakeholder involvement, and evaluation systems. The condensed data were then organized and presented through systematic displays to facilitate comparison and pattern identification across studies. Finally, conclusions were drawn and continuously verified through iterative analysis to ensure consistency and validity of the findings. Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring trends and gaps in the literature, enabling a comprehensive synthesis of how Islamic-based curriculum management supports holistic early childhood development (Iqbal et al., 2022). This analytical approach ensured that the findings were both systematically derived and conceptually meaningful.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Implementation of Islamic Curriculum

The reviewed literature consistently indicates that the implementation of the Islamic curriculum at Raudhatul Athfal (RA) prioritizes the systematic integration of core Islamic values—*aqidah* (faith), *ibadah* (worship), and *akhlaq* (morality)—into everyday learning activities. This integration is positioned as a foundational strategy for shaping children’s moral identity and spiritual orientation from an early age. Rather than being limited to formal religious instruction, Islamic values are embedded across learning contexts, routines, and social interactions, enabling children to internalize these principles as part of their daily behavior (Rahmatullah et al., 2022).

Several studies highlight that Qur’anic memorization, daily religious routines, and guided discussions on ethical behavior form an integral part of classroom practice. These activities emphasize respect, discipline, empathy, and social responsibility, which are considered essential components of character formation in Islamic early childhood education. Through repeated exposure and habituation, children gradually develop an understanding of Islamic values that extends beyond conceptual knowledge and becomes reflected in observable behavior.

In practice, RA institutions commonly apply thematic learning approaches to contextualize Islamic teachings within children's lived experiences. Contextual and thematic learning allows abstract religious concepts to be translated into concrete experiences that are developmentally appropriate for young learners (Rahmah et al., 2024). For example, values associated with the Five Pillars of Islam are frequently integrated into creative and play-based activities such as storytelling, role-playing, singing, and arts and crafts. These strategies support holistic development by aligning cognitive learning with emotional engagement and behavioral practice, thereby strengthening children's ability to relate Islamic principles to real-life situations.

Emphasis on Religious Instruction, Ethics, and Moral Education

The findings further demonstrate that religious instruction, ethics, and moral education constitute central elements of early childhood learning at RA. Across the reviewed studies, moral education is not treated as a separate curricular subject but is embedded within daily learning activities and classroom culture. This integrative approach reflects the understanding that moral development in early childhood is most effective when values are modeled, practiced, and reinforced consistently (Wiyani et al., 2023).

Research on integrated Islamic education models indicates that early exposure to religious and ethical instruction provides children with a value-based framework for interpreting their actions and social interactions (Syarifuddin et al., 2023). Participatory and child-centered teaching methods encourage children to practice Islamic values through peer interaction, cooperative activities, and teacher modeling. As a result, moral education becomes habitual rather than merely conceptual, supporting the formation of ethical behavior that is sustained beyond the classroom environment.

Components of Islamic Curriculum Management

Consistent Application of Religious, Ethical, and Character Education

One of the dominant components identified in Islamic curriculum management at RA is the consistent application of religious, ethical, and character education across curriculum planning and implementation. The reviewed studies emphasize that the integration of *aqidah*, *ibadah*, and *akhlak* into learning objectives and classroom practice plays a critical role in shaping children's spiritual and moral development (Andri et al., 2024).

Effective character education management is described as a structured process involving careful planning, systematic implementation, and continuous evaluation. Studies report that comprehensive character education programs grounded in Islamic values significantly influence children's behavior, contributing to the development of discipline, honesty, respect, and social responsibility (Kuncoro et al., 2025). These findings highlight the importance of curriculum coherence, where moral and spiritual objectives are consistently reinforced across learning activities and institutional practices.

Use of Integrated Evaluation Systems

Another key component of Islamic curriculum management identified in the literature is the use of integrated evaluation systems that assess not only academic outcomes but also affective and behavioral dimensions of development. Evaluation practices in RA are expected to align with the holistic goals of Islamic education by capturing children's understanding and practice of religious values (Hamid et al., 2025).

Several studies emphasize that assessment of character education should include indicators of moral attitudes, social behavior, and spiritual awareness to ensure congruence between curriculum goals and evaluation practices (Kuncoro et al., 2025). Integrated evaluation systems enable educators to monitor children's holistic development and to identify areas requiring additional support. However, the literature also notes that inconsistencies in assessment tools and criteria remain a challenge, particularly in measuring religious and character outcomes in a standardized manner.

Involvement of Parents and School Committees

The findings also reveal that parental and school committee involvement constitutes an important dimension of Islamic curriculum management at RA. Engaging stakeholders in curriculum evaluation and implementation fosters shared responsibility and strengthens collaboration between schools and families. Parental involvement provides valuable insight into children's behavior and value internalization outside the school environment, contributing to more contextually responsive curriculum adjustments (Ramatni et al., 2025).

Collaborative evaluation practices involving teachers, parents, and administrators support reflective curriculum management and enhance consistency in the reinforcement of Islamic values across home and school settings ('Ain et al., 2025). Through this participatory model, RA institutions strengthen curriculum implementation while maintaining alignment with Islamic educational objectives and community expectations.

Application of a Holistic Approach in Islamic Education

Across the reviewed studies, the application of a holistic approach in Islamic education at RA is described as an integrative model that connects spiritual, moral, social, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of child development. This approach is grounded in the understanding that these developmental aspects are interrelated and should be nurtured simultaneously to support children's overall growth in accordance with Islamic principles (Zakariyah, 2024).

The literature emphasizes that integrating spiritual development with moral education supports children's emotional regulation, social awareness, and ethical decision-making. This multidimensional orientation contributes to the formation of individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also empathetic, responsible, and socially engaged. Furthermore, studies conducted during periods of educational disruption, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, demonstrate that holistic approaches were particularly effective in supporting children's emotional and spiritual well-being alongside academic learning (Koen et al., 2021). These findings suggest that holistic Islamic education provides a flexible framework capable of responding to diverse contextual challenges.

Interactive, Participatory, and Child-Centered Learning Methods

To operationalize holistic education, RA institutions commonly apply interactive, participatory, and child-centered learning methods. These pedagogical strategies actively involve children in the learning process and situate learning experiences within contexts that are meaningful to their daily lives (Adelia & Anbia, 2023). Participatory activities such as group discussions, collaborative projects, and hands-on exploration promote not only cognitive development but also social competence and emotional resilience.

Studies indicate that interactive learning environments facilitate deeper engagement with educational content while enabling children to connect Islamic values with broader social and scientific perspectives (Mohammed et al., 2021). The creation of safe and supportive learning environments further enhances the effectiveness of holistic pedagogy by encouraging exploration, creativity, and reflection, thereby strengthening character formation and value internalization (Khairani et al., 2024).

Balancing Religious Instruction and Holistic Development

The findings indicate a clear pattern of balance between religious instruction and holistic development in RA. Islamic education practices integrate intellectual learning with spiritual cultivation, reflecting the view that cognitive achievement should develop alongside moral and spiritual growth (Saepudin, 2024). Embedding Islamic values into general learning areas supports analytical thinking while reinforcing ethical reasoning and spiritual consciousness (Hidayat, 2025).

Character education embedded in daily routines and learning activities further reinforces values such as honesty, discipline, and social responsibility, ensuring that moral development progresses in tandem with academic achievement (Aziz et al., 2025).

Challenges in Implementing Islamic-Based Curriculum Management

Despite its strengths, the literature consistently identifies several challenges affecting the implementation of holistic Islamic curriculum management at RA. The most frequently reported challenge is limited teacher training related to holistic and Islamic pedagogical approaches. Insufficient professional development constrains educators' ability to translate curriculum objectives into effective classroom practice (Sofyan et al., 2023).

In addition, insufficient educational resources and facilities limit opportunities for diverse and interactive learning experiences essential to holistic development (Komariah et al., 2023). Variations in stakeholders' understanding of Islamic values also create inconsistencies in implementation, underscoring the need for shared vision and sustained communication among educators, parents, and community members (Iqbal et al., 2022).

Alignment with Summary of Findings

These themes correspond with the synthesis presented in Table 1, which summarizes the dominant patterns, enabling factors, and challenges identified across the reviewed literature on holistic Islamic curriculum management at Raudhatul Athfal.

Table 1. Findings on Holistic Islamic Curriculum Management

No.	Focus Area	Key Findings	Supporting Evidence
1	Integration of Islamic Values in the Curriculum	Islamic values (<i>aqidah</i> , <i>ibadah</i> , and <i>akhlak</i>) are systematically integrated into daily learning activities across subjects, not limited to religious instruction. Character education is embedded within routine classroom practices.	Rahmatullah et al. (2022); Rahmah et al. (2024)
2	Holistic Child Development	The holistic curriculum positively influences children's spiritual, moral, social, emotional, and intellectual development, supporting balanced and comprehensive growth in early childhood.	Kasmawati et al. (2023)
3	Learning Approaches	Interactive, participatory, and child-centered learning methods are widely applied, enhancing	Saepudin (2024); Mohammed et al.

		student engagement, emotional intelligence, and social skills while reinforcing Islamic values.	(2021)
4	Curriculum Management Practices	Curriculum planning at RA aligns with Qur'anic values and is implemented through continuous evaluation involving teachers, parents, and community stakeholders.	Hidayat (2020); Adila et al. (2023)
5	Character Education Focus	Character education is consistently reinforced through curricular and extracurricular activities, emphasizing discipline, responsibility, honesty, and social awareness.	Aziz et al. (2025)
6	Stakeholder Collaboration	Active collaboration among teachers, parents, and school leaders strengthens curriculum implementation and reinforces Islamic values across school and home environments.	Kuncoro et al. (2025); Hermanto & Pamungkas (2023)
7	Implementation Challenges	Major challenges include limited teacher training in holistic Islamic education, insufficient educational resources, and variations in stakeholders' understanding of Islamic values.	Iqbal et al. (2022); Komariah et al. (2023)
8	Assessment and Evaluation Issues	There is a lack of standardized assessment tools for measuring religious and character outcomes, leading to inconsistencies between curriculum goals and evaluation practices.	Rahman et al. (2023); Iqbal et al. (2022)

Discussion

The findings of this review reinforce that the integration of Islamic values in early childhood curriculum management functions not merely as an additional component but as a structural foundation shaping both learning orientation and developmental outcomes. In Islamic early childhood education, values such as *aqidah*, *ibadah*, and *akhlaq* are embedded across planning, implementation, and evaluation processes, enabling the simultaneous development of cognitive competencies and moral–spiritual character. This alignment supports previous findings that value-based curriculum integration facilitates the internalization of ethical norms and guides children's everyday behavior (Nadifa & Ambarwati, 2024). Rather than relying on doctrinal instruction alone, this integrative approach allows children to experience Islamic values through meaningful and contextual learning interactions, strengthening their sense of responsibility, belonging, and moral awareness within both school and community environments.

The study also demonstrates that holistic approaches play a central role in supporting balanced child development across spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual domains. Holistic pedagogy bridges religious formation with developmental appropriateness by integrating values into daily routines and interactive learning experiences. This process fosters character development through habituation and modeling while promoting active engagement in learning (Kasmawati, 2023; Saepudin, 2024). Such approaches are particularly relevant in responding to contemporary educational demands, as they encourage communication skills, empathy, collaboration, and emotional regulation without detaching learning from Islamic ethical principles. Consequently, holistic education strengthens both character formation and learner agency in early childhood contexts.

In comparison with previous studies, the findings confirm that Islamic curriculum management is most effective when values are integrated throughout the entire management cycle rather than confined to specific instructional components (Rahman et al., 2023; Wati et al., 2022). However, this review also reveals variations in implementation across institutional contexts. While many institutions demonstrate

commitment to value integration, differences exist in the degree of flexibility and depth of curriculum application. RA institutions tend to adopt more child-centered and integrative approaches compared to settings that rely on segmented instruction, which aligns with evidence that holistic pedagogies enhance both spiritual literacy and cognitive development (Azhari, 2025). These findings highlight the importance of contextual adaptability in implementing holistic Islamic education.

A key contribution of this study lies in its integrative perspective on curriculum management as a dynamic and interconnected system. Unlike previous research that often examines pedagogical practices or value integration in isolation, this study synthesizes curriculum management, stakeholder collaboration, and evaluation mechanisms into a unified analytical framework. This approach represents a novel contribution by positioning holistic Islamic curriculum management not only as a pedagogical model but also as an institutional system that coordinates multiple educational components. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that holistic curriculum management aligns with contemporary educational needs, including the development of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and adaptability, while maintaining strong ethical and spiritual foundations (Baidowi et al., 2025; Farid et al., 2025). Despite these strengths, the literature identifies several persistent challenges that limit effective implementation. One major issue is the lack of standardized assessment tools for evaluating religious and character outcomes, which often results in a greater emphasis on cognitive achievement (Iqbal et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). In addition, gaps between curriculum design and classroom practice remain evident, largely due to limited teacher competence and unequal access to resources (Iqbal et al., 2022; Nadifa & Ambarwati, 2024). These constraints reduce opportunities for experiential and habituation-based learning, which are essential for character development in early childhood. Variations in institutional capacity further contribute to inconsistencies in implementation, indicating the need for more systematic support structures.

The findings also emphasize the importance of stakeholder collaboration in strengthening curriculum implementation and character education outcomes. Active involvement of teachers, parents, and community members enhances consistency in value reinforcement across learning environments and supports children's holistic development (Hermanto & Pamungkas, 2023; Kuncoro et al., 2025). This study implies that improving holistic Islamic curriculum management requires stronger alignment between curriculum objectives, pedagogical practices, and assessment systems, supported by sustained professional development and adequate resources (Hermawan et al., 2024; Iqbal et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). Overall, this review highlights that holistic Islamic curriculum management operates as a coherent system in which curriculum design, pedagogy, evaluation, and stakeholder collaboration collectively contribute to comprehensive child development and character formation in contemporary educational contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the most significant insight is that holistic Islamic curriculum management in early childhood education functions as a foundational system that integrates *aqidah*, *ibadah*, and *akhlaq* into all learning processes, ensuring that character formation develops in parallel with cognitive growth. This confirms that holistic approaches are not merely complementary but essential for fostering balanced development across spiritual, moral, social, emotional, and intellectual domains. The

main scholarly contribution of this study lies in its integrative perspective, presenting holistic Islamic curriculum management as an interconnected system encompassing curriculum design, pedagogy, evaluation, and stakeholder collaboration, thereby extending existing literature that often treats these elements separately. However, the study is limited by its reliance on secondary data and the variability of contexts across reviewed studies, particularly regarding differences in teacher capacity, resource availability, and assessment practices. Therefore, future research should focus on developing standardized yet context-sensitive assessment models for religious and character outcomes, as well as exploring innovative pedagogical strategies and collaborative frameworks involving educators, parents, and policymakers to strengthen the implementation of holistic Islamic curriculum management in diverse educational settings.

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