

## DIRECTION OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT FOR STUDENT CHARACTER FORMATION: LITERATURE STUDY

Muhammad Fahmi Setiawan<sup>1a\*</sup>, Ishomuddin<sup>2b</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Master of Islamic Religious Education Program, University of Muhammadiyah Malang

<sup>2</sup> Muhammadiyah University of Malang

[fahmimuhammad@webmail.umm.ac.id](mailto:fahmimuhammad@webmail.umm.ac.id)

(\*) Corresponding Author

[fahmimuhammad@webmail.umm.ac.id](mailto:fahmimuhammad@webmail.umm.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum development needs to address not only religious knowledge but also student character formation in response to social change and technological development. This study aims to examine the direction of IRE curriculum development for student character formation through a qualitative literature study. The literature was regularly identified through Publish or Perish using the Google Scholar database and selected through a PRISMA-based screening process, covering publications from 2017 to 2025. Of the 213 articles identified in the initial search, 11 articles met the selection criteria and were included in the final analysis. The selected studies were analyzed using qualitative content analysis to identify recurring themes, findings, and limitations related to IRE curriculum development. The findings indicate that previous studies consistently position character formation, religious values, and moral development as important directions of IRE curriculum development. However, the existing literature remains fragmented across curriculum implementation, conceptual models, curriculum objectives, and learning strategies. Viewed through Tyler's curriculum rationale, the main gap lies in the limited alignment among educational objectives, learning experiences, their organization, and evaluation. Furthermore, digitalization, sociocultural diversity, and religious moderation have not yet been sufficiently integrated into IRE curriculum design. The study concludes that future IRE curriculum development should be oriented toward a value-based, contextual, integrative, and adaptive curriculum. This direction provides a conceptual foundation for developing and empirically testing IRE curriculum models that are more responsive to students' needs and contemporary educational challenges.

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### INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) holds an important place in Indonesia's national education system. Its role extends beyond helping students understand religious teachings; it is also expected to nurture faith, moral awareness, and character that can be reflected in everyday conduct. This orientation is consistent with the objectives of national (Republik Indonesia, 2003). education, which emphasize the development of students as faithful, morally responsible, competent,

and socially responsible citizens. In this sense, IRE has a distinctive position because religious knowledge is expected to become part of the way students think, make decisions, and behave.

The formation of such character cannot be achieved simply by increasing the amount of religious content taught in the classroom. Students also need opportunities to understand and practice values such as honesty, patience, responsibility, and concern for others. (Tafsir, 2010) argues that IRE should maintain a balance between worldly knowledge and spiritual development, enabling students to develop intellectual competence without losing their religious and moral orientation. This perspective places IRE not merely as a subject for learning religious concepts but as part of a broader educational process through which students learn to deal with moral choices in their daily lives.

The role of IRE becomes even more significant in a society marked by religious and cultural diversity. Indonesia's social landscape requires students to develop a firm religious identity while at the same time learning to respect differences. Religious moderation and dialogue can provide students with ways of understanding diversity without reducing their commitment to their own religious values. (Abdillah, 2024) for example, highlights the contribution of inclusive Islamic education to developing openness, fairness, and balanced attitudes toward religious differences. Thus, character formation through IRE is not confined to personal morality; it also concerns how students relate to people who may have different beliefs, backgrounds, and social experiences.

These expectations, however, are being shaped by changes in the environment in which students grow and learn. Globalization and digitalization have altered access to information, patterns of communication, and exposure to different cultural influences. Social media, in particular, gives students almost unlimited access to religious and non-religious information, but not all of that information is accompanied by adequate guidance or critical judgment. This situation makes contextual religious education increasingly important. IRE needs to help students connect Islamic values with situations they actually encounter, including questions of digital ethics, social interaction, and responsible citizenship. (Mujahidin, 2018) emphasizes that Islamic education should adopt an integrative approach that supports the holistic development of students by connecting religious values with their social and cultural contexts. From this perspective, religious education can contribute to students' ability to understand and internalize Islamic values as a meaningful foundation for responding to changing social realities, while Alanshori and (Alanshori & Zahidi, 2025) point to the challenges that contemporary social environments pose to religious and moral development.

At the classroom level, however, the expectations placed on IRE do not always correspond to what happens in practice. Several studies have shown that IRE learning remains largely normative and textual, with considerable attention given to cognitive achievement, including the understanding or memorization of religious concepts. The affective and psychomotor dimensions of learning have received less attention (Suyanto et al., 2020). When this occurs, students may know what a particular religious value means without necessarily incorporating it into their attitudes and behavior. The problem, therefore, is not simply a matter of teaching methods. It also raises a broader question about whether the curriculum provides sufficient space for religious knowledge to be translated into meaningful experiences and character development.

This question brings curriculum development to the center of the discussion. A curriculum determines not only what students learn but also the purposes, learning experiences, approaches, and forms of engagement through which learning takes place. (Sukmadinata, 2017) stresses that curriculum development should respond to students' needs, social demands, and developments in knowledge and technology. In the context of IRE, (Suharyanto, 2018) similarly emphasizes that character-based curriculum development in Islamic Religious Education should respond to students' developmental stages, environmental contexts, and changing educational needs. Accordingly, an IRE curriculum oriented toward character formation should not merely transmit religious values but should integrate them into meaningful learning experiences that enable students to connect Islamic teachings with their everyday lives.

Several previous studies provide useful pieces of this picture. (Mulyasa, 2017) emphasizes the need for a dynamic curriculum that can respond to social change and students' changing needs. (Mulyasa, 2017) draws attention to limitations in IRE implementation, particularly the continued dominance of lecture-based teaching and limited instructional innovation. (Sukmadinata, 2017) offers a broader framework for curriculum development based on students' needs, social demands, and developments in science and technology. (Suyanto et al., 2020) meanwhile, shows the potential of integrated IRE in strengthening students' character. Taken together, these studies suggest that relevance, flexibility, instructional innovation, and character formation are all important considerations. Yet they largely discuss these elements from separate angles rather than bringing them together to examine the direction that IRE curriculum development should take.

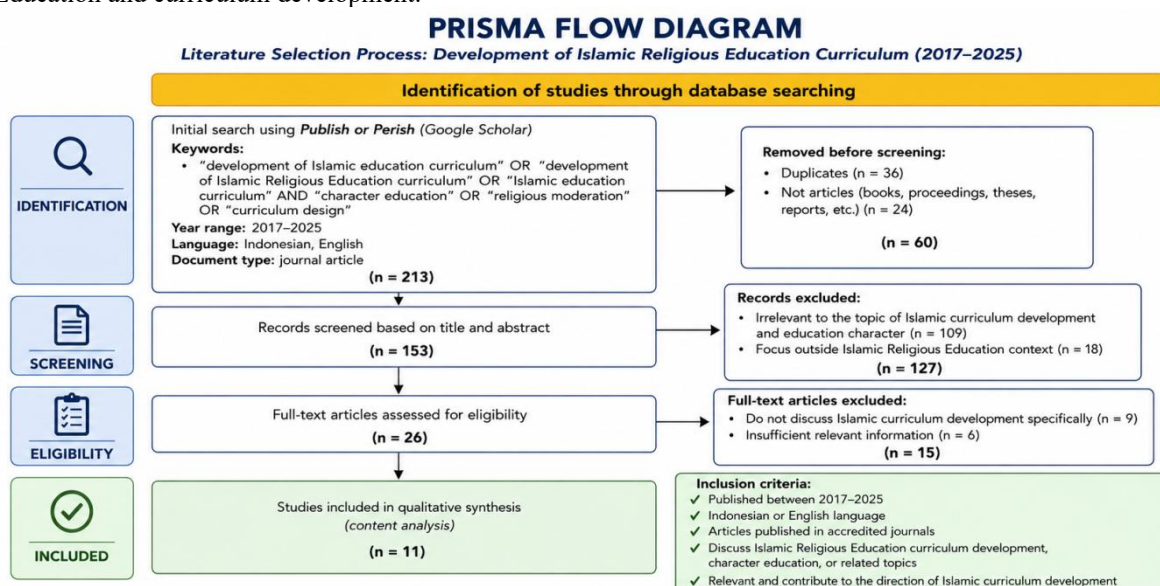
This fragmented picture points to an important gap. Existing studies have established the contribution of IRE to character formation and have discussed curriculum relevance, instructional implementation, and adaptation to social change, but there is still limited systematic synthesis of how these concerns should be integrated into the future direction of IRE curriculum development. In particular, the literature does not sufficiently clarify how character formation, religious values, contextual learning, cognitive-affective-psychomotor development, digital challenges, sociocultural diversity, and religious moderation can be considered together within curriculum development.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the direction of Islamic Religious Education curriculum development for student character formation through a literature study. Rather than focusing on a single curriculum model or school context, the study brings findings from relevant previous research into a broader discussion of the orientations, contributions, and limitations that characterize IRE curriculum development. The aim is to identify a direction for curriculum development that is adaptive to contemporary challenges, connected to students' everyday realities, and sufficiently attentive to the internalization of religious and character values. In this way, the study seeks to contribute a conceptual basis for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in strengthening the relevance of IRE in contemporary education.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a literature study design to examine the direction of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum development for student character formation. This approach was chosen because the study aimed to understand and interpret concepts, ideas, and findings from previous studies rather than to test hypotheses or measure variables statistically (Sugiyono, 2019). A literature study was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to examine relevant academic sources, compare different perspectives, and synthesize existing knowledge into a conceptual understanding of IRE curriculum development in response to contemporary educational challenges (Zed, 2014).

The literature search was conducted using Publish or Perish as the search tool and Google Scholar as the primary database. The search covered publications from 2017 to 2025. An initial search identified 213 articles using keywords related to the research focus, including "Islamic Religious Education curriculum development," "IRE curriculum," "Islamic Religious Education," "character education," and "religious moderation." The keywords were combined using the Boolean operators AND and OR to refine the search according to the research focus. The search was limited to publications in Indonesian and English and focused primarily on scholarly journal articles relevant to Islamic Religious Education and curriculum development.



Source: Author's elaboration based on literature searches using Publish or Perish and Google Scholar (2026)

The literature selection process was conducted in several stages, as presented in Figure 1 . The 213 records identified through the initial search were screened according to their titles and abstracts. Publications that were clearly related to Islamic Religious Education, curriculum development, character education, or the main focus of the study were excluded. Articles that remained relevant after the initial screening were then examined further based on their full-text content and the predetermined eligibility criteria. The selection process was guided by the relevance of each publication to the research question, the credibility of the source, and the contribution of its findings to understanding the direction of IRE curriculum development.

The inclusion criteria were: (1) publications issued between 2017 and 2025; (2) articles written in Indonesian or English; (3) scholarly publications relevant to Islamic Religious Education or Islamic education curriculum; (4) studies discussing curriculum development, curriculum implementation, character formation, curriculum models, curriculum objectives, contextual learning, or related issues; and (5) publications containing conceptual arguments, empirical findings, or recommendations that could contribute to the development of IRE curriculum. Publications were excluded when they were duplicate records, did not specifically relate to IRE or Islamic education curriculum, focused on issues outside the research scope, or did not provide sufficient information for analysis.

Following the screening and eligibility assessment, 11 articles were selected as the final literature corpus . The selected studies represented different perspectives on IRE curriculum development, including character-based curriculum implementation, integrated and contextual curriculum models, curriculum objectives, holistic Islamic education, cultural integration, character and nationalism, multicultural approaches, technology-oriented curriculum development, curriculum implementation, and adaptation to the digital era. The studies employed various research approaches, including descriptive qualitative research, case studies, literature studies, and qualitative analysis. The diversity of these studies provided a basis for comparing conceptual and implementation-oriented perspectives on IRE curriculum development.

The selected articles were analyzed using qualitative content analysis based on the principles proposed by (Krippendorff, 2019). The analysis was conducted through three interconnected stages: data reduction, thematic categorization, and conceptual synthesis . During data reduction, relevant information was extracted from each article, including the author and publication year, research focus, methodological approach, major findings, and identified limitations. The extracted information was then organized into thematic categories based on recurring issues across the selected studies.

The thematic adaptation focuses on several dimensions relevant to the research question, including character formation, religious values, curriculum relevance, contextual, curriculum flexibility, cultural integration, technological development, and religious moderation. The findings of the 11 studies were subsequently compared to identify similarities, differences in emphasis, and limitations that remained unresolved. Rather than examining each study independently, the analysis brought the findings together to identify broader patterns in the existing literature.

The final stage involved synthesizing the identified themes to determine the emerging direction of IRE curriculum development for student character formation. Particular attention was given to how previous studies connected curriculum development with students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development , contextual learning, digital transformation, sociocultural diversity, and religious moderation. The synthesis was then used to identify the strengths and limitations of existing research and to formulate a conceptual direction for IRE curriculum development that is adaptive, contextual, and oriented toward sustainable student character formation

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the selected literature was conducted not only to identify what previous studies have reported, but also to examine how their findings collectively describe the current direction of Islamic Religious Education curriculum development. The eleven selected studies reveal several recurring concerns, particularly character formation, curriculum relevance, contextual adaptation, cultural integration, technological change, and the implementation of religious values. At the same time, differences in research focus and methodological orientation indicate that these concerns have not yet been integrated into a comprehensive curriculum framework. Therefore, the discussion begins by mapping the characteristics and contributions of the selected studies before moving to a critical synthesis of their common patterns, limitations, and implications for future IRE curriculum development.



**Table 1. Characteristics, Findings, and Limitations of Previous Studies on Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Development**

| Author & Year              | Focus                                                                                                     | Method                                                  | Findings                                                                                                                       | Weakness                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (Kusairi et al., 2019)     | Development of the implementation of character-based Islamic Education curriculum in junior high schools. | Descriptive fields (observation, interviews, documents) | Implementation of character-based curriculum through three stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation.                   | The study is primarily concerned with the implementation of a character-based PAI curriculum within a specific junior secondary school context. Consequently, it provides limited discussion of the broader curriculum design process, particularly the formulation of curriculum objectives, content selection, learning experiences, and systematic integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. |
| (Ajir et al., 2024)        | Model for developing an Islamic education curriculum based on education.                                  | Literature review                                       | An integrated PAI curriculum model that is adaptive and contextual based on Islamic values.                                    | The proposed curriculum development model is largely conceptual and has not been sufficiently validated through empirical implementation across diverse elementary school settings. The study therefore provides limited evidence regarding how the proposed model operates under different institutional, sociocultural, and student conditions.                                                                      |
| (Saifullah et al., 2024)   | The goal of developing a comprehensive Islamic Education curriculum                                       | Qualitative (literature, interviews, observations)      | The objectives of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum should include faith, worship practices, morals, and life skills. | The study provides a broad formulation of PAI curriculum objectives but does not develop a sufficiently detailed curriculum design framework that translates those objectives into curriculum content, learning experiences, assessment strategies, and measurable character outcomes. The relationship between curriculum objectives and practical curriculum components therefore remains underdeveloped.            |
| (Karlaely et al., 2024)    | Development of Islamic Education and Curriculum, as well as good moral education in high schools.         | Qualitative with literature study.                      | A holistic curriculum is important to strengthen students' character and social responsibility.                                | The study discusses curriculum development and character education at the senior secondary level, but the analysis remains largely descriptive and does not establish an integrated framework connecting curriculum objectives, content, pedagogy, assessment, and long-term character formation. Its contextual focus also limits the applicability of the findings to other educational levels.                      |
| (Sa'diyah & Suparjo, 2025) | Development of Islamic Religious Education &                                                              | Qualitative descriptive (case study)                    | The process of developing the Islamic Education                                                                                | The study emphasizes the adaptation of the PAI and Character Education curriculum to contemporary needs in elementary schools, but the analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |



| Author & Year             | Focus                                                                                                    | Method                             | Findings                                                                                             | Weakness                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                           | Character Curriculum in Elementary Schools                                                               |                                    | curriculum reflects the need for adaptation to the times.                                            | remains strongly tied to the specific school context. It provides limited explanation of how contextual adaptation can be systematically incorporated into a broader curriculum design that remains consistent across different sociocultural and educational settings.                                                                                                                                                                       |
| (Azhar, 2022)             | Development of Islamic education curriculum based on religious culture in schools.                       | Qualitative analysis theory        | Cultural and religious integration is important for the internalization of PAI values.               | The study emphasizes the integration of religious values and school culture, but the relationship between religious culture and the formal structure of curriculum development is not examined in sufficient detail. In particular, the study provides limited discussion of how culturally embedded religious values can be translated into curriculum objectives, learning activities, assessment, and contemporary character competencies. |
| (Nurdiyanto et al., 2024) | The strategy for developing the Islamic Religious Education curriculum builds character and nationalism. | Literature review                  | Modern learning strategies strengthen national character & insight.                                  | The study focuses on strategies for strengthening character and nationalism through PAI, but its emphasis remains on learning strategies rather than the comprehensive redesign of the PAI curriculum. The study therefore gives limited attention to how character, nationalism, religious moderation, digital literacy, and other contemporary competencies can be systematically integrated across curriculum components                   |
| (Maharani, 2024)          | Relevant & innovative PAI curriculum development model                                                   | Descriptive qualitative literature | Multicultural, competency, and technological approaches can enrich the Islamic Education curriculum. | The study proposes a relevant and innovative PAI curriculum by highlighting multiculturalism, competencies, and technology, but the proposed dimensions are not sufficiently integrated into an operational curriculum framework. The study also provides limited empirical evidence demonstrating whether these innovations effectively contribute to students' character development in actual school settings.                             |
| (Acetylena et al., 2025)  | Development of Islamic Education curriculum to improve the                                               | Qualitative (literature analysis)  | An effective Islamic Education curriculum can shape integrity, discipline, and                       | The study positions curriculum development as an instrument for character formation, but its discussion is concentrated on the desired character outcomes rather than on the mechanisms through which curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

| Author & Year              | Focus                                                                                                           | Method                  | Findings                                                                                         | Weakness                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            | character of new students.                                                                                      |                         | empathy in students.                                                                             | design produces those outcomes. The connections among curriculum content, learning experiences, assessment, and sustained character internalization remain insufficiently elaborated.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| (Pratama et al., 2024)     | Implementation of Islamic Education curriculum in educational institutions                                      | Descriptive qualitative | Implementation factors such as teacher competence and curriculum flexibility are very important. | The study primarily examines curriculum implementation and the factors influencing implementation at the elementary school level, particularly teacher-related and institutional factors. As a result, less attention is given to the upstream curriculum design process, including how objectives, content, learning experiences, and assessment should be formulated to support systematic character formation.        |
| (Paramansyah et al., 2023) | Development of Islamic education curriculum in leading universities in the context of Islam in the digital era. | Descriptive qualitative | The Islamic Education curriculum is needed to prepare students to adapt to the digital era.      | The study addresses PAI curriculum development in Islamic higher education in response to digital transformation, but its emphasis is predominantly on institutional and digital adaptation rather than on an integrated character-oriented curriculum framework. The connection between digital competencies, religious values, character formation, and curriculum assessment is therefore not sufficiently developed. |

### Character Formation as the Central Direction of IRE Curriculum Development

The eleven studies show a clear tendency to position character formation at the center of Islamic Religious Education curriculum development. Although the terminology varies, the desired outcomes are closely related: faith, morality, integrity, discipline, empathy, social responsibility, nationalism, and responsible religious practice. This pattern appears in both conceptual studies and studies examining curriculum implementation. (Acetylena et al., 2025), for example, emphasize the contribution of IRE curriculum to the development of integrity, discipline, responsibility, and empathy, while (Saifullah et al., 2024) place faith, religious practice, morality, and life skills within the objectives of Islamic Education. Similarly, (Kusairi et al., 2019) demonstrate how character-oriented curriculum can be incorporated into planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The consistency of these findings is significant. It indicates that the role of IRE is clearly understood not simply as the transmission of religious knowledge but as an educational process intended to influence students' dispositions and conduct. In other words, the literature has moved toward an understanding of curriculum in which religious knowledge should have consequences for the way students act.

However, a closer reading reveals an important limitation. Character formation is widely identified as an intended outcome, but it is not always translated into an integrated curriculum structure. Some studies concentrate on the desired character outcomes, whereas others focus on implementation strategies or learning approaches. The connection between the desired values, learning experiences, curriculum organization, and evaluation is therefore not equally developed across the literature.

This distinction is important because character cannot be treated solely as an additional outcome placed at the end of a curriculum document. If honesty, discipline, empathy, responsibility, and religious commitment are expected to become part of students' behavior, these values need to be encountered repeatedly through meaningful learning

experiences. The curriculum accordingly has to provide opportunities for students to understand religious values, practice them, reflect on them, and apply them in situations that are relevant to their lives.

#### **From Curriculum Implementation to Curriculum Design**

A second pattern concerns the relationship between curriculum implementation and curriculum design. Several studies provide valuable insights into what happens when Islamic Education curricula are implemented in particular educational settings. (Kusairi et al., 2019) highlight planning, implementation, and evaluation in a character-based curriculum, while (Pratama et al., 2024) emphasize teacher competence and curriculum flexibility as important implementation factors. (Sa'diyah & Suparjo, 2025) similarly show the importance of adapting curriculum development to changing educational and social demands.

These studies are useful because the curriculum does not operate independently of teachers, schools, and their surrounding contexts. Nevertheless, the literature also shows an imbalance: implementation is more visible than systematic curriculum design. Studies that propose integrated or adaptive curriculum models tend to remain conceptual, while empirical studies are often situated within particular schools or institutions (Ajir et al., 2024; Sa'diyah & Suparjo, 2025). This creates a gap between curriculum ideas and their systematic translation into a curriculum structure that can be implemented and evaluated.

The issue is therefore not whether curriculum design or implementation is more important. Rather, the two need to be understood as parts of the same process. A curriculum model may be conceptually attractive but have limited practical value if teachers cannot translate it into learning experiences. Conversely, empirical accounts of implementation may describe what teachers do without providing sufficient direction for redesigning the curriculum itself.

This synthesis suggests that future IRE curriculum development should move beyond the distinction between "curriculum model" and "curriculum implementation." The more useful direction is to develop a curriculum in which its intended values, learning experiences, implementation strategies, and evaluation mechanisms are connected from the outset.

#### **Reading the Findings through Tyler's Curriculum Rationale**

The patterns emerging from the literature can be examined further through Tyler's curriculum rationale. (Tyler, 1949) organizes curriculum development around four fundamental questions: the educational purposes to be achieved, the learning experiences that can facilitate those purposes, the organization of those experiences, and the means of determining whether the purposes have been achieved. This framework provides a useful analytical lens for interpreting the limitations found across the eleven studies.

Viewed through this perspective, the literature has already provided considerable attention to the first dimension: educational purposes. Character formation, religious commitment, morality, social responsibility, and life skills repeatedly appear as important curriculum goals (Acetylena et al., 2025; ). The problem lies more in how these purposes are connected with the other curriculum dimensions.

The second dimension, learning experiences, receives comparatively less systematic attention. Some studies discuss contextual, multicultural, or technology-oriented learning (Maharani, 2024), while others focus on contemporary learning strategies (Nurdiyanto et al., 2024). However, the literature does not consistently explain what kinds of learning experiences should be deliberately designed to help students transform religious knowledge into character and behavior.

The same issue appears in the organization of learning experiences. A character-oriented IRE curriculum requires more than isolated activities. Values need to be reinforced across topics, learning activities, classroom interactions, and possibly school experiences. Yet several of the reviewed studies focus on individual components rather than explaining how these components can be sequenced and connected within a coherent curriculum structure.

The evaluation dimension is another area that deserves greater attention. Although (Kusairi et al., 2019) explicitly refers to evaluation in the implementation of a character-based curriculum, the broader literature provides limited detail on how character development should be assessed as part of curriculum evaluation. This is particularly important because character formation cannot be adequately represented through cognitive tests alone.

From Tyler's perspective, therefore, the main weakness in the existing literature is not a lack of desirable curriculum goals. The more fundamental issue is incomplete alignment between curriculum objectives, learning experiences, their organization, and evaluation. This finding provides an important basis for determining the future direction of IRE curriculum development.

#### **Digitalization, Sociocultural Diversity, and Religious Moderation**

The literature also indicates that IRE curriculum development can no longer be separated from changes in students' social and technological environments. Digital transformation has expanded the ways students access information,

communicate, and encounter religious ideas. (Maharani, 2024) identifies technology integration as one potential component of a more relevant and innovative Islamic Education curriculum, while (Paramansyah et al., 2023) emphasize the need for Islamic Education curriculum development to respond to the digital era.

However, digital adaptation should not be understood simply as the addition of digital media to classroom instruction. The deeper curriculum issue concerns what students need to learn in an environment where religious information is abundant, diverse, and not always accompanied by adequate context. An adaptive IRE curriculum therefore needs to connect religious knowledge with students' ability to interpret information critically, communicate ethically, and apply Islamic values to interactions in digital spaces.

The same argument applies to religious moderation and sociocultural diversity. Religious moderation should not merely become an additional topic in the curriculum. It needs to appear in the kinds of learning experiences students encounter: engaging with differences, considering alternative perspectives, developing fairness, and practicing respectful interaction. In this sense, moderation becomes part of the formation of character rather than a separate body of knowledge.

This point also reveals a limitation in the current literature. Digitalization, multiculturalism, and religious moderation are increasingly recognized as relevant concerns, but they are often discussed as additional curriculum components rather than as principles that influence the entire curriculum design. A more responsive IRE curriculum would integrate these concerns into its objectives, learning experiences, organization, and evaluation. This would prevent digital literacy or religious moderation from becoming isolated themes that are disconnected from the broader purpose of character formation.

#### **Toward an Integrated Direction of IRE Curriculum Development**

The critical synthesis of the eleven studies points toward a direction that is broader than simply making the IRE curriculum "adaptive" or "character-based." The literature has already identified many important components: religious values, character formation, contextual learning, cultural responsiveness, teacher competence, curriculum flexibility, technology, and religious moderation. What remains insufficiently developed is the integration of these components into a coherent curriculum direction.

Based on the synthesis, four interconnected orientations can be identified. First, the curriculum needs a value-oriented direction. Religious and character values should be formulated as explicit educational purposes rather than treated as implicit consequences of learning religious content. Faith, morality, integrity, responsibility, empathy, and social awareness should be connected with the broader developmental goals of students.

Second, the curriculum needs a contextual direction. Learning experiences should relate Islamic values to situations that students actually encounter in their families, schools, communities, and digital environments. This is consistent with the emphasis on adaptive and contextual curriculum development found in previous studies (Ajir et al., 2025; Sa'diyah & Suparjo, 2025).

Third, IRE curriculum development needs an integrative direction. Cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions should not be treated as separate educational targets. Religious understanding needs to be connected with reflection, attitudes, practice, and observable behavior. In this respect, character formation becomes part of the curriculum process rather than merely its final outcome.

Fourth, the curriculum needs an adaptive direction. Changes in technology, social interaction, cultural diversity, and religious discourse require the curriculum to remain responsive without losing its Islamic foundation. Maharani (2025) and Paramansyah et al. (2025) illustrates the growing importance of technological adaptation, while the broader literature indicates the need for curriculum flexibility in responding to changing educational contexts.

These four orientations can be brought together through Tyler's curriculum rationale. Educational purposes provide the direction; learning experiences translate those purposes into meaningful student activities; the organization of experiences ensures continuity and reinforcement; and evaluation determines whether the intended development has actually occurred (Tyler, 1949). The contribution of the present literature study therefore lies not in proposing another isolated curriculum model, but in identifying the need for stronger alignment among these dimensions.

Taken together, the findings suggest that the future IRE curriculum should move from knowledge transmission toward value internalization, from isolated learning activities toward connected learning experiences, and from static curriculum content toward an adaptive curriculum structure. Character formation, digital responsiveness, cultural diversity, and religious moderation should not be positioned as separate additions. They should become interconnected elements of curriculum planning and implementation.

The direction identified in this study can therefore be summarized as an adaptive, contextual, integrative, and value-oriented IRE curriculum. Such a curriculum maintains the religious foundation of Islamic Education while giving

greater attention to the realities in which students live. Its success should not be judged solely by students' ability to explain religious concepts, but also by the extent to which those concepts are reflected in their attitudes, decisions, interactions, and responsible participation in social and digital life.

## CONCLUSION

This literature adaptation study shows that the development of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum is increasingly directed toward student character formation, contextual learning, and to contemporary educational challenges. The analysis of eleven selected studies indicates that religious values such as faith, morality, integrity, discipline, responsibility, empathy, and social awareness have become important orientations of IRE curriculum development. However, the existing literature remains fragmented. Some studies focus primarily on curriculum implementation, while others propose conceptual models or emphasize particular issues such as technology, multiculturalism, or character education. Viewed through Tyler's curriculum rationale, this condition indicates that the main challenge is not the absence of curriculum objectives, but the limited alignment between educational objectives, learning experiences, their organization, and evaluation. Therefore, the future direction of IRE curriculum development needs to be value-oriented, contextual, integrative, and adaptive, so that religious knowledge can be meaningfully connected with students' attitudes, behavior, social realities, and digital experiences.

This study also has limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. The analysis was based on 11 articles selected from Google Scholar through Publish or Perish, with publications limited to the 2017–2025 period. The use of a single primary database and a relatively limited number of studies means that the findings should not be generalized as a comprehensive representation of all research on IRE curriculum development. In addition, because this study employed a literature-based qualitative approach, the proposed curriculum direction has not been tested directly in educational settings. Future research should therefore move beyond conceptual synthesis toward empirical curriculum development and validation. One possible direction is to develop an IRE curriculum model using design-based research, followed by iterative testing and refinement in different educational contexts. Comparative empirical studies involving elementary, secondary, and higher education settings would also be valuable for examining whether the proposed value-oriented, contextual, integrative, and adaptive direction could be applied consistently across different levels and sociocultural contexts.

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