

## Synthesizing traditions: A framework for integrating classical islamic theology into modern educational paradigms

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### ABSTRACT

In an era of globalization, secularism, and rapid technological change, Islamic theology faces the imperative to remain dynamically engaged with contemporary social, political, and ethical issues. This study systematically maps the current scholarly discourse on integrating traditional Islamic theological principles with modern educational paradigms to meet this challenge. Employing the PRISMA framework, we conducted a systematic literature review of relevant studies published over the past five years from Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. Our analysis identifies and synthesizes several pivotal trends: a discernible shift in theological discourse from a purely theocentric to a more anthropocentric perspective, the application of theology to modern challenges like economic justice, ethical leadership, and environmental sustainability, and the critical role of contextual hermeneutics. Furthermore, the findings underscore theology's essential engagement with issues of gender equality, interfaith dialogue, and technological ethics. We argue that Islamic theology functions not as a static relic but as a dynamic framework, offering robust ethical guidance for modern Muslim societies. This review provides a synthesized conceptual map of this evolving landscape, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and theologians committed to developing a contextually relevant and inclusive Islamic theological education.

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## Introduction

For over fourteen centuries, Islamic theology (*ilm al-kalam*) has functioned as the dynamic intellectual core of Muslim civilization, continually adapting to the shifting intellectual, social, and political landscapes of Muslim societies. Its emergence from early, intense debates over divine attributes, human free will, and the delicate interplay between reason (*aqal*) and revelation (*naql*) established a robust tradition of epistemological inquiry. A significant turning point was the subsequent engagement with Greek philosophy, which acted as a powerful catalyst for the development of sophisticated theological systems. Notably, the orthodox frameworks articulated by al-Ash'ari and al-Maturidi sought a deliberate synthesis of logical argumentation with scriptural authority. This project was further enriched by rival schools of thought, particularly the Mu'tazila,

whose foregrounding of human reason in divine matters introduced a critical and enduring tension into the tradition (Umiarso, 2019).

The colonial encounter and the rising hegemony of Western modernity marked a critical juncture, compelling Islamic theology to confront fundamentally new paradigms, including secularism, scientific rationalism, and novel political ideologies. This period inevitably spurred reformist movements, led by influential figures like Muhammad Abduh, who championed a renewed interpretive effort (*ijtihad*) to align classical teachings with contemporary realities. However, this modernist project has remained a source of enduring contention, with traditionalist scholars consistently warning against any perceived deviation from established theological orthodoxy (Lumbard, 2025). In more recent decades, the discipline confronts a dual challenge: on one hand, it faces radical ideologies that often reject traditional hermeneutics in favor of a politicized literalism; on the other, it must engage with globalized discourses on human rights, gender, and pluralism that demand sophisticated theological responses (Ulfat, 2020).

A review of the last five years of scholarship reveals a notably fragmented academic landscape. While studies by scholars such as Saada & Magadlah (2021) and Suyatno et al. (2022) adeptly chart the tensions between tradition and modernity, they frequently lack a deep grounding in classical Islamic epistemology. Conversely, works that focus intently on specific historical schools or figures often fail to systematically bridge these classical frameworks with contemporary educational and social paradigms. This divergence points to a significant research gap: the absence of a comprehensive framework capable of integrating the profound methodological depth of classical theology rooted in *ushul al-din* (principles of religion), *maqasid al-shariah* (higher objectives of Islamic law), and established *tafsir* (exegesis) methodologies with the complex demands of modern and post-modern contexts.

The central problem this research addresses, therefore, is the pronounced disjunction between the rich discourse of traditional Islamic theology and the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century. Consequently, the study is driven by the following central question: How can classical Islamic theology, with its rich epistemological heritage, be systematically reinterpreted and effectively transmitted to provide coherent ethical guidance for contemporary issues, all while remaining faithful to its foundational principles?

This inquiry is theoretically anchored in the distinct, and often competing, paradigms of traditional, modern, and postmodern education as they intersect with Islamic theology. The traditional paradigm, exemplified by the scholastic methods of classical madrasahs, prioritizes textual transmission (*isnad*), commentary (*sharh*), and the established doctrines of seminal thinkers. The intellectual foundation of this tradition is epitomized by Al-Ghazali, whose work achieved a synthesis between Islamic orthodoxy and Sufi mysticism that, "since his time, has been a central position for the majority of Muslims" (Watt, 2011). In contrast, the modern paradigm, profoundly influenced by reformers like Muhammad Abduh, champions critical reason and scientific inquiry. As Hourani (1983) notes, Abduh sought "to free Muslims from the bondage of *taqlid* (blind imitation) and to show the compatibility of Islam with modern thought and with modern science". More recently, the postmodern paradigm challenges all grand narratives, emphasizing pluralism and the decolonization of knowledge. This project resonates with contemporary calls for a more inclusive discourse and necessitates, as Arkoun (1994) argued, a "deconstruction of Islamic reason" by "questioning the accepted categories of thought and the structures of authority in religious discourse".

This study posits that a fruitful path forward lies not in choosing one paradigm over the others, but in a creative synthesis that leverages classical tools for modern ends. For instance, the *maqasid al-shariah* framework, which has been expanded by modern scholars like Ibn 'Ashur to encompass values such as freedom and human dignity, provides a remarkably robust theological basis for engaging with discourses on human rights and social justice. Similarly, Al-Maturidi's

nuanced theology of human agency (*kasb*) offers a foundational resource for contemporary philosophical and ethical debates on freedom and responsibility. In light of this analysis, the present article pursues three primary objectives:

1. To provide a deep theological analysis of how classical principles (*ushul al-din, maqasid*) can be constructively reinterpreted to address pressing modern challenges, including environmental ethics, religious pluralism, and human rights.
2. To investigate and propose effective pedagogical models for transmitting Islamic theology to a new generation, specifically by bridging the traditional, modern, and post-modern educational paradigms across diverse institutions, from traditional *madrasahs* to contemporary universities.
3. To propose an integrative framework that convincingly demonstrates the ongoing relevance and vitality of Islamic theology in shaping moral, intellectually vibrant, and socially responsible Muslim communities in the 21st century.

By undertaking this comprehensive examination, this research aims to make a significant contribution to the revitalization of Islamic theological discourse, ensuring it remains a dynamic and authentic source of guidance while faithfully preserving its profound intellectual and spiritual heritage.

Method

To identify all relevant literature, a systematic search was conducted across four major electronic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Publish or Perish. The search was limited to articles published in English or Indonesian within the last five years (2019-2024) to ensure the review captured the most recent scholarly discourse. Only articles from peer-reviewed journals indexed in Scopus (minimum Q4) or of equivalent repute were considered to guarantee source quality. The search strategy utilized a combination of keywords and Boolean operators to maximize coverage. The primary search string was:

Table 1. Keyword

| Component           | Search Terms                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Islamic Perspective | "Islamic theology" OR "Islamic education"                                                                                                     |
| Educational Context | "traditional education" OR "modern education"                                                                                                 |
| Conceptual Focus    | "paradigm" OR "integration" OR "reform"                                                                                                       |
| Final Search String | ("Islamic theology" OR "Islamic education") AND ("traditional education" OR "modern education") AND ("paradigm" OR "integration" OR "reform") |

This string was adapted to the specific syntax of each database. The initial search results were imported into Mendeley reference manager for deduplication and organization.

Study Selection and Data Extraction

The study selection process followed the PRISMA flow diagram (see Figure 1). After removing duplicates, the titles and abstracts of all identified records were screened against the pre-defined eligibility criteria. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were:

Table 2. Inclusion And Exclusion Criteria

| Category           | Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Inclusion Criteria | <div>1. Focus on the intersection of traditional and modern educational methodologies, curricula, or epistemologies in Islamic theology.</div> <div>2. Empirical research, theoretical analyses, or case studies published in a peer-reviewed academic journal.</div> <div>3. Published in English or Indonesian between 2019 and 2025.</div> |
| Exclusion Criteria | <div>1. Articles not focusing on educational paradigms (e.g., purely theological, historical, or philosophical discussions without a pedagogical link).</div> <div>2. Non-peer-reviewed literature, such as books, book reviews, editorials, or conference proceedings</div> <div>3. Articles for which the full text was unavailable.</div>  |

Articles that passed the initial screening underwent a full-text assessment for eligibility. The final included studies were subjected to a detailed data extraction process. A standardized form was used to extract information on the author(s), year of publication, research objectives, methodology, context, key findings, and conclusions.

Data Synthesis and Analysis

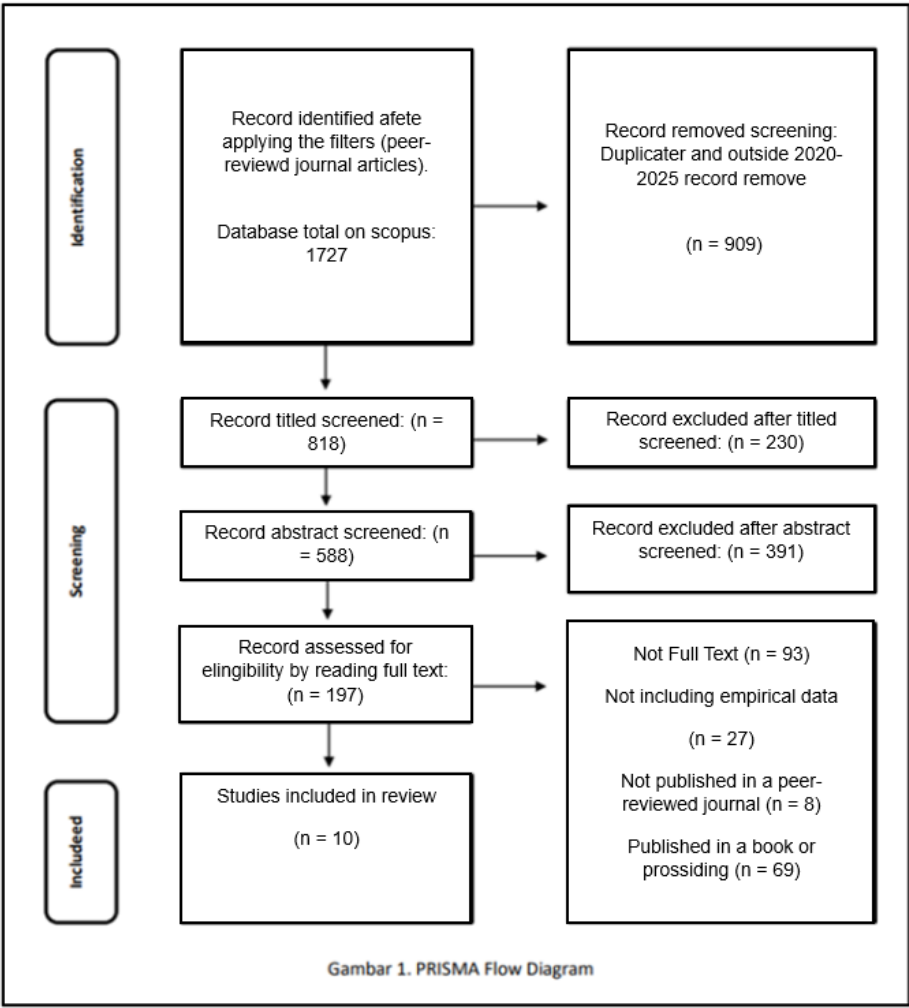
The synthesis of the final article set transcended mere summarization, evolving into a critical and comparative analysis. The process commenced with a phase of familiarization and coding, which involved repeated close readings of each included article to ensure a profound understanding. Initial codes were generated to capture key concepts, arguments, and findings pertinent to the research question.

Subsequently, these initial codes were clustered into emergent, cross-cutting themes through a process of thematic categorization. This iterative grouping of similar codes led to the development of a coherent thematic framework. For instance, codes such as "curriculum reform," "pedagogical integration," and "hybrid learning models" were consolidated under the broader theme of "Synthesis of Pedagogical Approaches."

The final stage entailed a comparative and critical examination within each theme. Here, the findings and perspectives from different articles were systematically compared to explicitly identify areas of consensus, contradiction, and evolution in thought. For example, studies advocating for the full integration of modern sciences were contrasted with those championing a renewed traditionalism. This critical examination serves to highlight the intellectual tensions and diverse solutions proposed within the field, thereby avoiding a unified yet oversimplified narrative. Through this multi-stage analytical process, the review not only delineates the existing literature but also offers a critical evaluation of the scholarly landscape, pinpointing dominant trends, research gaps, and divergent viewpoints.

Result

To obtain a systematic, accurate, and scientifically accountable review, the researcher employed the PRISMA method as the primary guideline. The stages of this method include the identification of relevant articles, screening based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, assessment of the eligibility of the selected articles, and the final stage, which involves analyzing and synthesizing data from the articles that meet the research criteria



The following articles were selected for an in-depth review after passing through the screening procedures outlined in the previous step;

| No | Author(s) & Year                                                  | Title                                                                                                                                                 |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Addzaky, K. U., Hasanah, U., Hasanah, I. F., & Asy'ari, M. (2025) | Contextualizing Liberation Theology in Indonesian Religious Literature through the Contributions of K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid                            |
| 2  | Ashafa, S. A., Raimi, L., & Bamiro, N. B. (2025)                  | Catalytic Role of Islam's Social Well-Being and Economic Justice as Determinants of Peaceful Coexistence: A Systematic Literature Review Using PRISMA |

|    |                                                                |                                                                                                                                   |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3  | Dreier, L., & Wagner, C. (2021)                                | Nicht-Passung in der Hochschule: Nicht-Passungen, kulturelles sowie religiöses Kapital bei Studierenden der Islamischen Theologie |
| 4  | Gilani, M. H., Ali, S., & Mohyiddeen, G. (2024)                | Reimagining Islamic Discourse: Towards a Global Ethical Framework for Contemporary Leadership                                     |
| 5  | Lumbard, J. E. B. (2025)                                       | Islam, Coloniality, and the Pedagogy of Cognitive Liberation in Higher Education                                                  |
| 6  | Saada, N., & Magadlah, H. (2021)                               | The Meanings and Possible Implications of Critical Islamic Religious Education                                                    |
| 7  | Shaleh, M. (2024)                                              | Development of a Holistic-Integrative Islamic Religious Education Curriculum in an Integrated Islamic School                      |
| 8  | Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, D. (2024)                               | Philosophy and Pedagogy of Islamic Education in Today's Europe                                                                    |
| 9  | Suyatno, S., Wantini, W., Sukiman, S., & Rachmawati, Y. (2022) | Progressive Islamic Education: Bridging the Gap of Islam, Indonesianness, and Modernity                                           |
| 10 | Wibawa, N. H. H. P., & Fata, A. K. (2023)                      | From God to Humanity: Reconstruction of Islamic Theology in Contemporary Era                                                      |

Discussion

The Development of Islamic Theology: From Classical Traditions to Modern Integration.

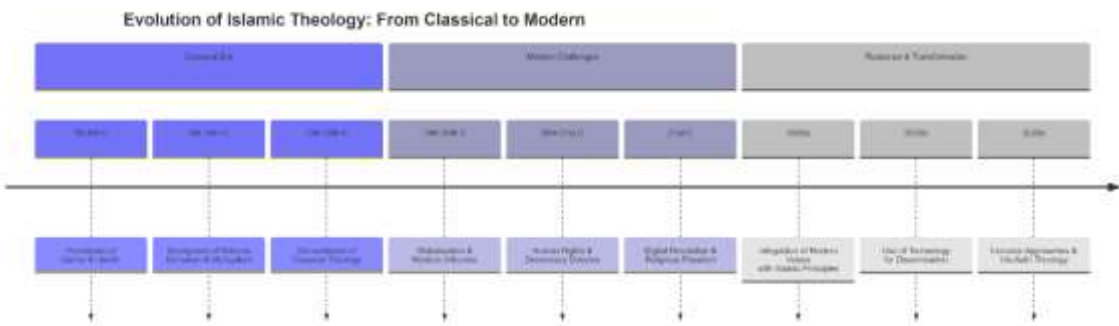


Figure 2. The Development of Islamic Theology

The trajectory of Islamic theology, from its classical foundations to its contemporary engagement with modern thought, reveals a dynamic and often contentious evolution, profoundly shaped by globalization and technological progress. Its initial formation was squarely built upon the principles derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, with early theological discourse primarily concerned with defending Islamic tenets through rigorous intellectual debate that navigated the intricate relationship between revelation and reason. The emergence of seminal schools like Ash'arism and

Mu'tazilism, interestingly, established a tradition of theological reasoning whose echoes remain distinctly audible in today's discourses (Günther, 2009).

The advent of globalization, however, precipitated a new set of challenges for these established traditions. The pervasive influence of global culture, politics, and social norms compelled the Muslim world to grapple with an increasingly complex reality. As issues such as human rights, democracy, and constitutionalism gained global prominence, they inevitably recalibrated Muslim perspectives on the religion-state nexus. This created a palpable tension: classical theology strived to maintain its foundational integrity, while the forces of modernity demanded the formulation of novel theological ideas capable of addressing these unprecedented circumstances (Lumbard, 2025).

In response, the integration of Islamic values with globalized frameworks spurred a search for political models that could accommodate concerns for human rights and equality. This endeavor saw Muslim intellectuals attempting to construct bridges between timeless principles and the exigencies of modern politics. Consequently, a more inclusive Islamic theology began to take shape, one that consciously embraces the diversity of values and worldviews characterizing the global context. This evolution is not occurring in a vacuum; it resonates with findings from systematic reviews on Islamic education, which identify a growing, albeit contested, trend toward harmonizing religious authenticity with contemporary humanistic values (Misrawi & Fahmi, 2022).

The role of technology, particularly in information and communication, has been nothing short of transformative. By facilitating the rapid and borderless dissemination of ideas, technology has granted Muslims unprecedented access to a plurality of theological perspectives. This has effectively collapsed traditional spatial and temporal boundaries, enabling direct engagement with evolving theological discourses from across the globe. While this presents a significant challenge to monolithic interpretations, it also offers a remarkable opportunity for Islamic theology to develop a dynamic character, absorbing relevant viewpoints that align with contemporary realities (Umiarso, 2019).

Within this technological milieu, modern Islamic thought has begun to incorporate innovative approaches that blend contemporary philosophy and social theory. Notably, frameworks such as critical realism and process theology are being gradually woven into the fabric of Islamic studies, a domain long dominated by classical philosophy. These approaches proffer more flexible paradigms for understanding the divine and the cosmos, all while striving to uphold core Islamic doctrines, particularly the principle of *tawhid* (divine unity) (Shaleh, 2024).

A particularly significant shift in modern theology is its growing acceptance of pluralism. Globalization has irrevocably placed Muslims in sustained interaction with other faiths and cultures. In this context, interfaith theology has gained traction, advocating for a more inclusive understanding of religious diversity. This represents a notable departure from the more exclusive approaches that historically viewed Islam as the sole repository of truth. This transformation is a powerful testament to the adaptive capacity of Islamic theology in the face of globalizing pressures, even as it seeks to maintain the integrity of its foundational teachings (Suyatno et al., 2022).

Therefore, it becomes evident that Islamic thought is increasingly positioned as a potential bridge between tradition and modernity. Discourses on human rights, religious freedom, and democracy have found a firm footing within modern theological deliberations. This allows Muslims to adhere to the fundamental principles of their faith while simultaneously engaging with ideals of individual freedom and pluralism. The central challenge for contemporary intellectuals, however, lies in striking a sustainable balance between tradition and innovation without compromising the faith's core values (Saada & Magadlah, 2021).

Amid these developments, the paramount challenge remains the preservation of Islamic teachings' authenticity. There is a legitimate concern that, in the zeal to respond to globalization,

theological thought might become unmoored from its essence by uncritically adopting external ideologies. Consequently, any project of reform within Islamic theology must be firmly rooted in established principles such as *tawhid*, *sharia*, and *akhlak* (morality). Here, the role of scholars is crucial, acting as custodians who ensure that renewal occurs within the authentic framework of Islamic teachings (Sijamhodžić-Nadarević, 2024).

In light of this analysis, it is clear that modern Islamic theology is not merely a passive entity striving for relevance, but an active force transforming itself to meet the challenges of a globalized, technologically advanced world. The integration of classical and modern paradigms appears to be the key to its continued significance. Ultimately, every change and renewal in this field is directed towards ensuring that Islamic teachings remain a vital guide for Muslims navigating an increasingly complex and dynamic world (Dreier & Wagner, 2021; Ulfat, 2020).

In conclusion, despite significant transformations, the core of Islamic theology has demonstrated remarkable resilience. The evolution of its paradigms whether in politics, social issues, or philosophy underscores a capacity for adaptation without a loss of foundational identity. This ongoing evolution confirms that Islamic theology continues to function not just as a system of belief, but as a relevant moral and intellectual compass in a perpetually changing world.

**Contemporary Challenges in Islamic Theology: Bridging Traditional Values with Social, Political, and Moral Issues in the 21st Century**

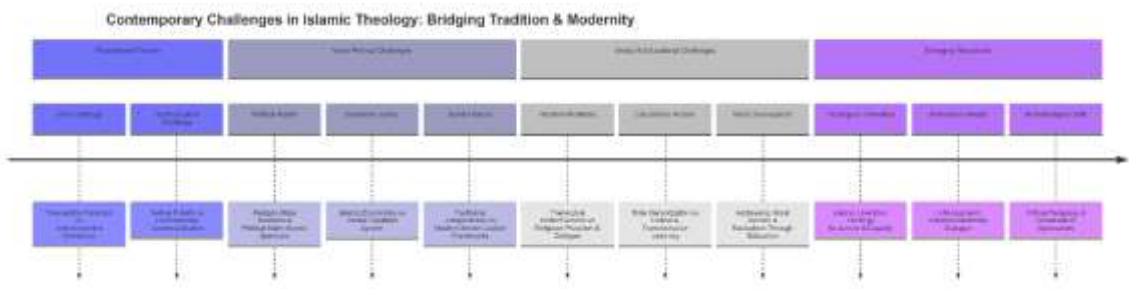


Figure 3. Contemporary Challenges in Islamic Theology

As a central discipline within Islamic studies, theology has perpetually demonstrated a dynamic character, responding to the evolving needs of Muslim societies. The 21st century, however, presents a uniquely complex set of challenges, demanding a reconciliation of traditional theological values with pressing contemporary issues. This situation inevitably raises critical questions about the relevance, adaptability, and future direction of Islamic theology in a rapidly transforming global landscape.

One of the most profound challenges is the perceived need to shift from a predominantly theocentric paradigm towards a more anthropocentric orientation. While traditional theology rightly places God at the center of all discourse, the modern era increasingly calls for a theology that more directly addresses human concerns in their quotidian existence. This reorientation aims to enhance the relevance of theology to issues like justice, human rights, and social liberation (Wibawa & Fata, 2023). Yet, this very shift creates a fundamental tension with classical paradigms that prioritize divine sovereignty, presenting a dialectic that lies at the heart of modern theological debates.

Equally critical is the challenge of hermeneutics and contextualization. The interpretation of sacred texts must walk a fine line: remaining faithful to the original revelation while being responsive to contemporary socio-cultural realities. As societies evolve, so must the interpretive methodologies that underpin theological thought. Hermeneutics thus becomes indispensable in bridging the historical distance between text and context (Naghipour & Pourmohammad, 2012). This often necessitates embracing insights from critical pedagogy and constructivist theories,

where texts become sites for critical engagement and meaning-making, rather than objects of passive transmission.

The tumultuous social and political realities in many Muslim-majority countries further complicate the theological landscape. In contexts marked by instability and conflict, theology is often instrumentalized, serving as a source of both legitimization and resistance. The role of Islam in political movements, across the spectrum from progressive to radical, requires rigorous theological scrutiny to ensure alignment with core Islamic values of justice, peace, and human dignity (Almazova, 2016). The contentious relationship between Islam and the state continues to demand sophisticated theological engagement with modern political systems.

Economic justice represents another formidable frontier. The global dominance of capitalism, with its emphasis on profit and materialism, has prompted serious theological critique regarding its compatibility with Islamic values. While Islamic economics offers a compelling alternative based on fairness and social justice, its integration into the global economic order remains fraught with complexity. Theologians and economists face the daunting task of conceptualizing an economic system that is both authentically Islamic and viable within a globalized framework (Tripp, 2006).

Similarly, gender issues persist as a major site of theological debate. The status and rights of women in Islamic societies are subjects of intense discussion, driven by evolving global norms. There is a growing, and urgent, demand for theology to address gender inequalities within its interpretive traditions. This requires a careful re-examination of textual sources to promote gender justice, a process that vividly illustrates the collision between traditional juristic interpretations and modern ethical frameworks (Afsaruddin, 2015).

In an increasingly interconnected world, the relationship between Islam and other faiths demands nuanced theological attention. The imperative for interfaith dialogue and coexistence has never been greater. Islamic theology is thus challenged to develop responses to religious pluralism that maintain the distinctiveness of its teachings while fostering mutual respect and understanding, particularly in relation to Christianity and Judaism (Subakir, 2020).

These challenges converge powerfully in the domain of Islamic education. Confronted with issues like moral decline, radicalism, and the digital revolution, Islamic education must find ways to inculcate strong moral and ethical values. The traditional model of rote memorization is increasingly seen as inadequate. There is a compelling need to integrate experiential learning and transformative learning theories, which can help students internalize values and apply them to real-world dilemmas (Subakir, 2020). Illustratively, institutions like the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) have pioneered models where critical thinking and modern sciences engage in a continuous dialogue with traditional theology, demonstrating that a symbiotic coexistence of paradigms is not only possible but fruitful

In this complex landscape, the concept of Islamic liberation theology, as articulated by thinkers like K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid, offers a potent response. By centering justice, equality, and human rights, and reinterpreting teachings to empower the marginalized, it provides a theological pathway for addressing systemic oppression and inequality (Addzaky et al., 2025).

Collectively, these challenges underscore the necessity for a thoughtful reconstruction of Islamic theology. To remain a source of meaningful guidance, it must evolve in ways that are responsive to the dynamic realities of the 21st century, all while retaining its commitment to core principles.

### **Contribution of Islamic Theology in Shaping the Moral and Ethical Framework of Muslim Societies, Especially in Responding to Social and Cultural Challenges in the Era of Globalization**

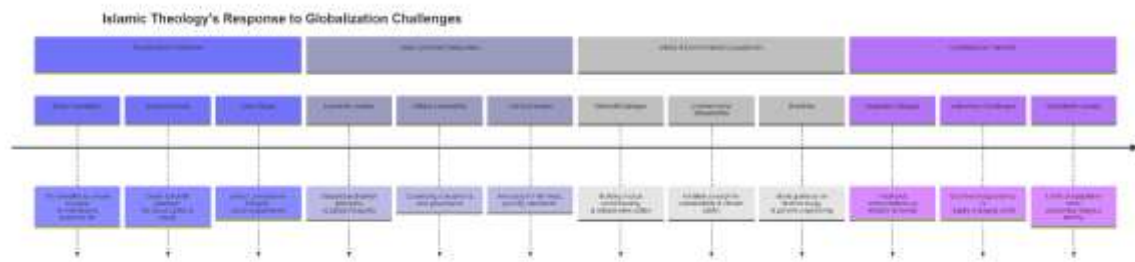


Figure 4. Islamic Theology's Response to Globalization Challenges

The era of globalization, with its attendant complexities from economic inequality and secularism to ethical dilemmas in technology and the tension between modernization and tradition has made the moral and ethical guidance of Islamic theology more critical than ever. It provides an essential framework for Muslim societies seeking to navigate these challenges while remaining grounded in their religious identity.

Islamic theology, or *'Ilm al-Kalām*, fundamentally shapes the moral compass of Muslim societies by furnishing an ethical framework that governs both individual conduct and collective life. Its emphasis on justice, integrity, compassion, and social responsibility is indispensable for fostering social harmony and moral consciousness (Bensaid & Machouche, 2019). In a world characterized by rapid change and cultural diversity, these values provide a stable foundation for mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

The scriptural sources of Islam, the Quran and Hadith, establish a robust ethical paradigm that prioritizes social justice, economic equity, and the welfare of the marginalized (Ashafa et al., 2025). In the context of globalization, which often exacerbates inequality, the principles of economic justice derived from the *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* (the higher objectives of Islamic law) offer a powerful counter-narrative. They advocate for fair trade, poverty eradication, and the protection against exploitation, thereby promoting a vision of collective prosperity over divisive wealth accumulation (Ashafa et al., 2025).

The concept of ethical leadership, deeply embedded in Islamic theology, offers a vital corrective to contemporary issues of corruption and poor governance. By emphasizing integrity, accountability, and compassion, Islamic theology calls for leaders who embody moral virtues and prioritize the common good (Gilani et al., 2024). Such leadership is crucial for tackling the complex political and social challenges that accompany globalization.

Furthermore, Islamic theology makes a significant contribution to interfaith dialogue and cooperation. Its historical tradition of engaging with other civilizations provides a foundation for building mutual understanding and tolerance in today's globalized world. By emphasizing shared values and collaborative action on issues like human rights and environmental sustainability, Islamic theology helps bridge divides and foster peaceful coexistence (Leskova, 2019).

A particularly relevant contribution lies in theology's engagement with modern science and technology. As advancements in fields like biomedicine and genetics raise profound ethical questions, Islamic ethics, rooted in the Quran and Hadith, offer critical perspectives. They ensure that scientific progress is guided by moral considerations, contributing to global debates on issues from genetic engineering to public health (Suleman, 2020).

Similarly, the theological concept of environmental stewardship (*Khilafah*) is gaining renewed urgency. By positioning humans as custodians of the Earth, Islamic theology imposes a moral responsibility to protect the environment and manage resources sustainably. In the face of escalating crises like climate change, these principles are being mobilized by scholars and activists to advocate for policies promoting sustainability and environmental justice (Foltz, 2009).

Despite these significant contributions, the adaptation of Islamic theology to the modern context is not without struggle. The tension between traditional interpretations and the demands of modernity remains a central challenge. Islamic institutions grapple with maintaining their doctrinal independence while engaging a rapidly changing world, and scholars continue to debate the limits of adaptation while preserving religious authenticity (Charfi, 2025).

### Practical Implications for Islamic Higher Education

The theoretical and critical deliberations outlined above lead to concrete implications for Islamic higher education institutions (IHEIs), demanding a strategic rethinking of curriculum, pedagogy, and policy.

1. **Curriculum Design:** A move beyond siloed knowledge is imperative. The curriculum should be redesigned to foster integration, for instance, by pairing the study of *'Ilm al-Kalām* with modules on modern philosophy, sociology, and critical theory. Themes of human rights, gender justice, and environmental ethics should be systematically embedded within theological courses, explicitly framed by the *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* to demonstrate their deep-rooted relevance.
2. **Teacher Training:** The effectiveness of any curricular reform hinges on faculty. Instructors of theology require professional development that extends beyond classical texts to include modern pedagogical theories like constructivism and transformative learning. This will empower them to facilitate dynamic classrooms where students learn to critically interrogate both text and context, rather than merely receiving information.
3. **Policy Implementation:** Institutional leadership must enact policies that champion this integrative vision. This includes incentivizing interdisciplinary research between theology departments and faculties of education, law, and social sciences. Furthermore, accreditation standards could be leveraged to reward IHEIs that produce graduates capable of not only mastering traditional texts but also critically applying theological concepts to contemporary problems. The pioneering models of institutions like the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) provide a valuable comparative benchmark, demonstrating the practical feasibility of such a synthesis.

In final analysis, the role of Islamic theology in shaping the moral and ethical framework of Muslim societies is both vital and multifaceted. Its principles provide a robust foundation for addressing the complexities of globalization. For it to remain effective, however, it must continue its dynamic engagement with the modern world, ensuring that ethical and moral considerations, derived from its rich tradition, are positioned at the forefront of societal decision-making. This contribution is indispensable not only for Muslim communities but also for the broader global dialogue in our increasingly interconnected world.

### Conclusion

This review has systematically charted the evolution of Islamic theology, demonstrating its dynamic trajectory from classical dialectics to a discipline actively engaging with modern thought. Our analysis proves that this is not merely a passive adaptation but a proactive intellectual reformation. The study clarifies that the core challenge of contemporary Islamic theology is successfully navigating the paradigm shift from a purely theocentric worldview toward a more integrative, anthropocentric approach that addresses pressing human concerns without compromising the principle of *tawhīd*.

This study makes several key contributions. Theoretically, it synthesizes disparate discourses to present a coherent framework for understanding "modern Islamic theology" as a distinct field, defined by its engagement with issues like pluralism, human rights, and scientific

ethics. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of a systematic review in mapping a complex theological landscape, identifying dominant trends and critical gaps. Practically, the findings provide a robust foundation for policymakers and educators to develop curricula and theological frameworks that are both authentically Islamic and contextually relevant, thereby directly informing educational policy and curriculum development.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this review. The scope of the analysis was necessarily constrained by its reliance on specific academic databases, which may have excluded significant works in other languages or from non-traditional publications. Furthermore, the reviewed literature exhibited a limited geographical focus, with a predominance of scholarship from specific regions, potentially overlooking unique theological developments in other Muslim-majority and minority contexts.

To build upon this synthesis, we recommend a clear pathway for future empirical research. The theoretical integration of theology with modern domains now requires rigorous, ground-level validation. Specific areas for investigation include:

1. **Empirical Studies on Theology and Technology:** Research into how digital Islamic pedagogy and AI shape theological understanding and religious authority.
2. **Theology and Sustainability:** Field studies measuring the impact of eco-theological frameworks on environmental behavior in Muslim communities.
3. **Comparative and Interfaith Contexts:** Empirical analyses of how reformed theological education influences interfaith relations and promotes social cohesion.

Ultimately, the most significant contribution of a revitalized Islamic theology is its potential to furnish a comprehensive moral and ethical compass for the globalized age. By moving beyond description to prescribe clear pathways for intellectual and practical engagement, this review underscores theology's role as an indispensable force in shaping Muslim societies—guiding them to uphold principles of justice and compassion while confidently navigating the complexities of the 21st century.

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