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## **EQUITABLE HUMAN CAPITAL FUTURES: A QUR'ANIC FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER JUSTICE, ETHNIC HARMONY, AND EDUCATIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN INDONESIA**

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**Abstract:** This article proposes a Qur'anic framework for advancing equitable human capital futures in Indonesia by integrating principles of gender justice, ethnic harmony, and transformative education. Grounded in the concern that existing national education and development agendas often struggle to balance economic competitiveness with cultural diversity and religious values, the study argues that Qur'anic teachings on dignity (karāmah), justice (al-'adl), and pluralism (ta'āruf) offer an underexplored epistemic foundation for inclusive human capital development. Using a qualitative, interpretive methodology that combines thematic Qur'anic analysis with sociocultural mapping of Indonesia's gender and ethnic realities, the research critically examines how Qur'anic perspectives can inform more just educational practices, reduce structural inequities, and strengthen intergroup cohesion. Findings show that Qur'anic narratives encourage the empowerment of women as intellectual agents, endorse inter-ethnic cooperation as a moral-social imperative, and frame knowledge as both a spiritual and civilizational asset—positions that align with contemporary human capital theories emphasizing equity and social capability. The article concludes that integrating Qur'anic values with Indonesia's multicultural context can produce an education paradigm that is both globally competitive and culturally rooted, inspiring policymakers to move beyond technical reforms toward transformative, values-driven human development.

**Keywords:** *Educational Equity, Human Capital, Qur'anic Studies*

## Introduction

Indonesia's demographic trajectory positions the nation to become one of the world's central contributors to global human capital formation by 2045, yet profound challenges persist in aligning economic aspirations with cultural, religious, and social realities. Within this context, the Qur'an continues to serve as a central epistemic and ethical resource for Indonesian Muslims, shaping values surrounding justice, dignity, and community life (Mahmudhassan & Abuzar, 2024; Shihab, 2007). However, national development policies often treat religion as a symbolic backdrop rather than an intellectual source capable of guiding transformative human capital frameworks. As the nation navigates rapid technological change, widening gender gaps, and persistent ethnic inequalities, a more integrative paradigm becomes necessary—one that situates the Qur'an not only as scripture but also as a civilizational discourse on human flourishing (Junaidi et al., 2023). This article responds to that need by proposing a Qur'anic framework that foregrounds principles of *karāmah* (human dignity), *al-'adl* (justice), and *ta'aruf* (intercultural recognition), situating them within Indonesia's multicultural context. Such an approach underscores the compatibility of Islamic moral imperatives with contemporary development goals, offering a holistic vision where economic advancement, gender equity, and ethnic harmony can coexist as mutually reinforcing pillars of human capital formation.

The urgency of rethinking Indonesia's human capital development stems partly from ongoing disparities in educational access, gender representation, and inter-ethnic participation in knowledge-driven sectors. Studies have shown that despite progress in female literacy and school enrollment, women remain underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, policy leadership, and high-skilled labor markets (Ceci et al., 2014; Zajac et al., 2025). Similarly, ethnic communities—particularly in the eastern provinces—continue to experience uneven access to educational resources and economic mobility (Ananta et al., 2023). These structural inequities limit Indonesia's ability to fully mobilize the talents of its diverse population, undermining long-term national competitiveness. The Qur'anic worldview, however, reframes human potential through an emphasis on universal dignity and the divine mandate to seek knowledge (*'ilm*) as a means of individual and collective elevation (Ramadan, 2017). Integrating this worldview into human capital strategies encourages a shift from technocratic reforms toward ethical, inclusive approaches that recognize gender and ethnic diversity as assets rather than obstacles. In doing so, the Qur'anic perspective offers a moral compass that aligns with Indonesia's multicultural ethos, reinforcing national commitments to justice, unity,

and educational transformation as outlined within Pancasila and broader national development visions.

Central to this study is the argument that Qur'anic teachings offer underutilized conceptual resources for shaping equitable human capital futures in Indonesia. Qur'anic narratives consistently portray human beings as agents endowed with cognitive, moral, and spiritual capacities, emphasizing intellectual responsibility and ethical participation in society (Esack, 2005). These themes align with contemporary human capital theories that stress the importance of capability development, social cohesion, and inclusive participation as prerequisites for sustainable growth (Sen, 1999, 2014). Yet, in practice, education and development policies often focus primarily on economic output and labor market needs, sidelining the ethical dimensions of empowerment. By revisiting Qur'anic principles, particularly those concerning justice and mutual recognition, this article seeks to bridge the gap between moral-spiritual vision and policy-level implementation. Such an approach challenges reductionist interpretations of human capital that prioritize productivity over dignity, offering instead an integrative model that values personal growth, social harmony, and civic responsibility. Through this framework, the Qur'an becomes not merely a text for ritual recitation but a guide for constructing educational ecosystems that empower diverse communities and foster long-term national resilience.

The theme of gender justice emerges as a crucial dimension of this Qur'anic human capital approach. Indonesia's social landscape-deeply influenced by Islamic scholarship, local adat traditions, and modern educational reforms-reflects complex interactions between cultural norms and religious interpretations. While patriarchal structures persist in many contexts, Islamic intellectual history provides a wealth of evidence supporting the intellectual and social agency of women, grounded in Qur'anic affirmations of equality in piety, moral responsibility, and pursuit of knowledge (Akhmetova, 2025). Verses such as Q. 9:71, which describe believing men and women as allies in enjoining justice, challenge the cultural stereotypes limiting women's roles in educational and professional spheres. Moreover, Indonesia's own historical narratives-from female ulama in Aceh to contemporary women scholars-provide culturally grounded precedents for gender-inclusive knowledge production (van Bruinessen, 2018). By framing women not merely as beneficiaries but as producers of knowledge, a Qur'anic perspective fosters a more just and dynamic human capital ecosystem. This aligns with global research showing that gender-equitable systems yield stronger innovation, higher economic returns, and more resilient social institutions.

Beyond gender, Indonesia's vast ethnic diversity-comprising more than 1,300 recognized groups-constitutes a significant but often underleveraged driver of human capital growth. The Qur'anic concept of *ta'āruf*, articulated in Q. 49:13, emphasizes

that humanity's diversity is a divine design intended to foster mutual understanding and collective progress. This perspective resonates with Indonesia's national ideology of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (unity in diversity) and reinforces the moral imperative to cultivate harmonious intergroup relations. Yet persistent inequalities, discriminatory stereotypes, and unequal educational access continue to disrupt inter-ethnic cohesion (Schefold, 1998; Suryadinata, 2000). Applying a Qur'anic lens reframes ethnic harmony not merely as a sociopolitical goal but as a theological mandate grounded in justice and mutual respect. In this framework, ethnic communities are recognized as bearers of unique cultural capital whose contributions enrich the national fabric. Integrating Qur'anic ethics with intercultural education can therefore reduce prejudice, strengthen social unity, and enhance collaborative competencies essential for future-oriented human capital development. Ultimately, embracing diversity as a divine asset positions Indonesia to cultivate a more adaptive, innovative, and contextually grounded development model.

Education stands at the center of human capital formation, and the Qur'an's pedagogical ethos provides a powerful foundation for designing transformative learning systems. Qur'anic narratives emphasize reflection (*tafakkur*), critical awareness (*tadabbur*), and the pursuit of wisdom (*hikmah*), all of which align with modern educational theories that prioritize higher-order thinking, creativity, and moral development (Putra & Yunianika, 2025). Indonesian education, however, often remains constrained by exam-oriented practices, unequal resource distribution, and limited attention to sociocultural dynamics. As a result, both gender and ethnic disparities persist across learning outcomes, contributing to long-term inequalities in workforce opportunities. Embedding Qur'anic principles within curricular and pedagogical innovations can shift educational paradigms toward more holistic, values-driven approaches. This includes fostering inclusive classrooms, promoting ethical reasoning, and cultivating intercultural competencies essential for navigating Indonesia's diverse environment. When aligned with the nation's cultural heritage—such as pesantren traditions, local wisdom, and community-based learning—the Qur'anic ethos can strengthen both national identity and global competitiveness, enabling education to function as a vehicle for social transformation.

The theoretical significance of integrating Qur'anic values with human capital development lies in its potential to bridge religious ethics with sociopolitical realities. Classical Islamic scholarship conceptualizes knowledge as both a spiritual pursuit and a civilizational driver, emphasizing its role in uplifting communities and promoting justice (*'adl*) (Rahman, 1982). Contemporary Indonesian discourse, however, often separates religious education from economic or developmental considerations, resulting in fragmented approaches that do not fully capitalize on the potential synergy between Islamic ethics and national progress. By synthesizing Qur'anic principles with modern human capital theory, this article positions Islamic values as

compatible with, and even foundational to, inclusive development. This framework offers a corrective to models that rely too heavily on economic indicators while overlooking cultural and ethical dimensions. It also counters assumptions that religious values hinder modernization, highlighting instead how Qur'anic ethics can cultivate socially responsible citizens, reduce inequality, and foster cohesive communities. Such integration is particularly relevant in multicultural societies like Indonesia, where religious identity and national development are deeply intertwined.

Methodologically, this research adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach, combining thematic Qur'anic analysis with sociocultural mapping of Indonesia's gender and ethnic dynamics. This design allows for a nuanced understanding of how scriptural teachings intersect with lived realities across diverse communities. Previous studies on Qur'anic hermeneutics emphasize the importance of contextual interpretation (*tafsīr maudhū'ī*) that considers historical, linguistic, and sociopolitical dimensions (Baidan, 2012). By applying such an approach, this study extracts ethical principles relevant to contemporary human capital challenges while remaining faithful to the text's moral vision. Sociocultural mapping further grounds the analysis in empirical realities, drawing from interdisciplinary literature on gender inequality, ethnic relations, and educational transformation in Indonesia. This combined methodology enables the development of a holistic framework that is both textually grounded and sociologically informed. Rather than imposing external theories onto the Qur'an or reducing Indonesia's complexities to simplistic categories, this approach fosters a dialogical integration where scriptural insights inform social strategies, and social conditions illuminate new dimensions of Qur'anic meaning.

The significance of this research extends beyond academic discourse, offering practical implications for policymakers, educators, and civil society organizations. As Indonesia aims to strengthen its global competitiveness, debates around human capital often focus narrowly on digital skills, market efficiency, and technological integration. While these are crucial, such approaches risk overlooking the moral, social, and cultural foundations necessary for sustainable development. A Qur'anic framework that emphasizes dignity, justice, and intercultural harmony provides a counterbalance, ensuring that economic advancement does not come at the expense of social cohesion or ethical integrity. Moreover, by grounding educational and developmental reforms within culturally resonant values, policymakers can foster broader public trust and community engagement. Such an approach aligns with Indonesia's ongoing efforts to promote religious moderation (*wasathiyyah*), strengthen national unity, and develop inclusive education systems (Sholeh, 2025). Ultimately, this framework provides a pathway for reimagining human capital as a multidimensional construct rooted in both global knowledge systems and Indonesia's rich religious and cultural heritage.

In light of these considerations, this article argues that integrating Qur'anic principles with Indonesia's multicultural context can produce a more equitable, culturally grounded, and future-oriented human capital paradigm. By foregrounding gender justice, ethnic harmony, and transformative education, the Qur'anic framework offers a coherent set of values capable of addressing persistent inequalities while fostering national cohesion. Such integration not only enriches policy discourse but also revitalizes Islamic scholarship, reaffirming the Qur'an's relevance in addressing contemporary social challenges. The insights developed herein aim to encourage policymakers, educators, and religious leaders to move beyond technical reforms and embrace a values-driven approach to human development. As Indonesia prepares to enter its demographic peak and pursue the vision of "Indonesia Emas 2045" (Rachmad, 2025), the fusion of Qur'anic ethics with inclusive human capital strategies presents a promising pathway toward a just, harmonious, and intellectually vibrant society. Grounded in scriptural teachings yet responsive to sociocultural realities, this framework aspires to contribute to a more holistic vision of national progress—one where economic prosperity, ethical integrity, and social unity reinforce one another in shaping Indonesia's future.

Building upon the preceding conceptual foundations, this article positions its inquiry within the broader effort to articulate a Qur'anic paradigm that meaningfully addresses Indonesia's complex human capital challenges while remaining responsive to its cultural and civilizational heritage. As the nation continues to negotiate tensions between economic imperatives, democratic aspirations, and religious identities, the need for an integrative framework becomes increasingly urgent. The Qur'an's ethical worldview offers a coherent lens for reimagining the goals of development beyond technical efficiency, foregrounding values such as compassion, reciprocity, and collective uplift as essential components of societal progress. When situated within Indonesia's multicultural environment—where gender norms, ethnic diversity, and educational disparities intersect in dynamic ways—this Qur'anic lens provides both a normative compass and an analytical tool for diagnosing structural inequities. To advance this agenda, the present study focuses on two guiding questions that shape the subsequent discussion: (1) How can Qur'anic principles of dignity, justice, and mutual recognition be operationalized to promote gender-equitable and ethnically inclusive human capital development in Indonesia? and (2) In what ways can Indonesia's educational institutions integrate Qur'anic ethical teachings to foster transformative learning ecosystems that strengthen social cohesion and support equitable national advancement?

## **Method**

This study employs a qualitative interpretive methodology designed to uncover the ethical and epistemic foundations of human capital development embedded within the Qur'anic text. The interpretive approach allows for a nuanced engagement with scriptural discourse by recognizing that meaning emerges through the interaction between text, context, and the researcher's analytical lens (Schwandt, 2014). Central to this method is thematic Qur'anic analysis, which identifies recurring ethical motifs—such as dignity (*karāmah*), justice (*al-'adl*), and pluralism (*ta'āruḥ*)—and interprets their relevance for gender relations, ethnic cohesion, and educational transformation. Following the procedures outlined in thematic hermeneutics, the study systematically examines key verses, situates them within broader Qur'anic narratives, and analyzes the ethical principles that emerge from their interconnections (Baidan, 2012). This method avoids atomistic readings by emphasizing coherence and moral continuity across the Qur'anic text, allowing for the construction of an interpretive framework applicable to contemporary Indonesian realities. Through this approach, the study bridges classical scriptural themes with modern sociocultural challenges while preserving the integrity of the Qur'an's linguistic and moral structure.

Complementing the thematic analysis of the Qur'an, this research integrates sociocultural mapping to examine Indonesia's gender and ethnic dynamics. Sociocultural mapping enables the identification of structural patterns, cultural norms, and social inequalities that shape the lived experiences of diverse communities across the archipelago (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Data for this mapping process were drawn from national demographic reports, gender equity assessments, ethnographic studies, and policy documents produced by governmental and non-governmental institutions. The mapping focuses on three interrelated domains: gender disparities in education and labor participation, ethnic inequalities in access to resources and educational opportunities, and regional variations linked to historical and cultural contexts. By juxtaposing these sociocultural patterns with Qur'anic ethical themes, the method highlights points of convergence and disjunction between normative teachings and empirical realities. This comparative interpretive strategy provides a grounded understanding of how Qur'anic values might inform equitable human capital development in Indonesia. It also allows the research to move beyond abstract theorization by situating scriptural insights within concrete social contexts, ensuring that the resulting framework is both textually valid and sociologically relevant.

The research design is further strengthened through an integrative literature review, which synthesizes scholarly works on Qur'anic hermeneutics, human capital theory, gender justice, ethnic relations, and Indonesian educational reform. The literature review serves three primary functions: (1) establishing theoretical foundations for interpreting Qur'anic values within contemporary development discourse, (2) identifying gaps in existing research concerning the intersection of religion, diversity, and human capital, and (3) situating this study within broader

academic conversations across Islamic studies, sociology, and education. Sources include peer-reviewed journal articles, classical and contemporary tafsīr works, national policy documents, and international development reports. The review also draws from interdisciplinary scholarship that frames knowledge as both an economic and moral resource, aligning with the Qur'anic notion of knowledge as a civilizational asset (Rahman, 1982; Sen, 2014). By integrating these diverse bodies of literature, the study constructs a comprehensive analytical lens through which the Qur'anic themes identified in the textual analysis can be interpreted in relation to Indonesia's plural society. This triangulated methodological approach-textual, sociocultural, and scholarly-ensures that the findings are robust, contextually grounded, and theoretically coherent.

To operationalize the sociocultural dimension, the study incorporates a dedicated sociocultural mapping method as a complementary sub-section of the methodology. This mapping draws on quantitative and qualitative data, including reports from Indonesia's Central Statistics Agency (BPS) on the Human Development Index, gender-disaggregated education indicators, and regional inequality profiles, as well as international measures such as the Gender Gap Index (Gap, 2023; Setiawan et al., 2022). These datasets are supplemented by selected case studies documenting ethnic and gender-related tensions in educational settings across diverse provinces. Rather than treating these data as merely descriptive, they function as diagnostic entry points for analysis. Identified disparities and social frictions are systematically read alongside relevant Qur'anic concepts—such as *'adl* (justice), *musāwāh* (equality), and *ta'āruf* (mutual recognition)—to frame normative responses. In this way, sociocultural realities become the starting coordinates for applying the Qur'anic framework to Indonesia's human capital challenges.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Qur'anic Ethical Foundations for Advancing Gender Justice and Ethnic Inclusion in Indonesia's Multicultural Human Capital Development

The Qur'anic principle of *karāmah* (human dignity) provides a foundational lens through which Indonesia can reevaluate persistent inequities within its gender and ethnic structures. In the Qur'an, dignity is granted universally to all humans (Q. 17:70), a notion that challenges sociocultural practices that reproduce hierarchical social relations or limit equal access to education and economic participation. When applied to Indonesia's multicultural landscape-shaped by diverse adat traditions, patriarchal norms, and regional disparities-this principle demands a reorientation of policy frameworks toward inclusive human flourishing (Abdullah, 2017; Izi & Salim, 2023). Such an approach aligns with Indonesia's commitment to religious moderation

(*wasathiyyah*), which emphasizes justice, balance, and the protection of marginalized groups. By grounding human capital development in *karāmah*, policymakers can move beyond purely economic metrics and instead cultivate systems that protect personal agency, affirm communal dignity, and dismantle discriminatory practices affecting women and ethnic minorities. This shift is essential because human dignity is not merely a theological claim but a civilizational imperative embedded in Islamic ethics. It positions Indonesia to construct a development model that honors Qur'anic values while responding critically to contemporary social challenges, reinforcing the nation's identity as both globally engaged and culturally anchored.

The concept of *al-'adl* (justice) in the Qur'an further reinforces the ethical necessity of gender-responsive and ethnically inclusive human capital systems. Justice, as articulated in Q. 4:135, requires impartiality even when justice challenges familial, cultural, or institutional biases. In Indonesia, where patriarchal structures and ethnic stratification remain embedded in social institutions, operationalizing Qur'anic justice requires acknowledging that inequity is not only a policy failure but also a moral infraction. Contemporary human capital theory increasingly highlights the social and moral dimensions of justice, arguing that development is sustainable only when resources, opportunities, and rights are equitably distributed (Sen, 2014). When read through this lens, the Qur'anic principle of justice substantiates the need for affirmative policies supporting women's leadership, equitable access to quality education across ethnic regions, and the removal of discriminatory barriers within workplaces. Indonesia's ongoing promotion of religious moderation aligns with these goals, advocating for a balanced, compassionate, and justice-oriented society. Thus, embedding Qur'anic justice into human capital policy bridges religious ethics with developmental imperatives, producing a framework that resonates with Indonesia's spiritual identity while addressing structural inequities in tangible, transformative ways.

The Qur'anic ethic of *ta'āruf* (recognition across differences), articulated in Q. 49:13, provides an essential foundation for nurturing ethnic harmony within Indonesia's human capital landscape. In a nation home to more than 1,300 ethnic groups, *ta'āruf* promotes not merely tolerance but active engagement with diversity as a divine intention. This concept challenges homogenizing narratives that marginalize minority groups or prioritize dominant ethnic perspectives (Purnama, 2024; Suryadinata, 2000). Instead, it encourages intercultural cooperation and shared responsibility in national development. When applied to human capital, *ta'āruf* positions cultural difference as a resource rather than an obstacle, emphasizing that diverse communities collectively enrich national knowledge systems. This aligns strongly with Indonesian cultural philosophies such as *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Butler, 2016), which similarly valorize unity through diversity. In the context of religious moderation, *ta'āruf* supports a civic ethos where intergroup

solidarity becomes both a spiritual and national duty. By integrating this Qur'anic framework into education, leadership training, and institutional policy, Indonesia can cultivate social cohesion while elevating marginalized ethnic communities. Such an approach not only addresses current inequities but also strengthens Indonesia's cultural resilience amid global shifts demanding adaptive and culturally grounded development strategies.

Gender justice, a central pillar of this study, is deeply rooted in Qur'anic narratives that affirm women's moral agency, intellectual capacity, and social responsibility. Verses such as Q. 9:71 emphasize the mutual partnership of believing men and women in enjoining good and fostering justice, thereby rejecting interpretations that confine women to passive or subordinate roles. In Indonesia, however, cultural perceptions shaped by certain patriarchal adat traditions continue to influence women's participation in education, leadership, and high-skilled labor sectors (Akhmetova, 2025; Ceci et al., 2014). By grounding reform efforts in Qur'anic principles, Indonesian society can challenge these cultural constructs while preserving positive local values. This aligns with the agenda of *wasathiyah Islam*, which promotes balanced interpretations that uphold justice without undermining cultural identity. Moreover, Indonesia's history includes strong precedents of female religious scholars and leaders who exemplify Qur'anic ideals of knowledge and piety (van Bruinessen, 2018). Thus, applying Qur'anic gender ethics to human capital development promotes not only inclusion but also the revitalization of Indonesia's intellectual tradition. The result is a more dynamic and just system capable of empowering women as transformative agents within Indonesia's multicultural society.

A Qur'anic approach to ethnic justice further supports the advancement of marginalized communities, particularly those in Indonesia's eastern regions where educational and economic disparities remain persistent. Qur'anic teachings consistently emphasize the moral obligation to uplift those who experience structural disadvantage, as reflected in commands to support the oppressed (*mustadh'afin*) and uphold justice for vulnerable groups (Q. 4:75). This imperative resonates with the Indonesian government's commitment to affirmative development for remote, under-resourced, and culturally distinct populations. From the perspective of religious moderation, prioritizing the welfare of marginalized ethnic groups promotes national unity by ensuring no community feels excluded from the nation's progress (Esack, 2005). Integrating this ethical principle into human capital development means designing policies that consider linguistic diversity, local wisdom, and region-specific challenges. It also entails empowering ethnic communities to participate in decision-making processes, reflecting Qur'anic values of consultation (*shūrā*) and mutual responsibility. Such an approach recognizes that Indonesia's cultural mosaic is a strategic asset for global competitiveness, and when harmonized with Qur'anic ethics, it strengthens both national identity and social cohesion.

Education plays a critical role in operationalizing Qur'anic values within Indonesia's human capital strategy. The Qur'an repeatedly invites believers to engage in reflection (*tafakkur*), contemplation (*tadabbur*), and the pursuit of wisdom (*hikmah*), underscoring that knowledge is both a spiritual mandate and a civilizational obligation (Zarkasyi et al., 2019). In Indonesia, integrating this epistemic vision into educational institutions requires pedagogical models that cultivate critical thinking, moral discernment, and intercultural understanding-skills necessary for navigating a diverse and rapidly changing society. Yet many schools continue to rely on rote memorization, hierarchical teacher-centered approaches, and limited engagement with contextual social issues. A Qur'anic pedagogical approach would encourage dialogical learning, ethical reasoning, and community-based educational initiatives that reflect Indonesia's long-standing traditions such as *pesantren*, *surau*, and local learning networks. These culturally rooted models mirror Qur'anic commitments to holistic education and provide fertile ground for fostering moderation, justice, and harmony. By aligning educational practice with Qur'anic ethics and Indonesian cultural heritage, Indonesia can construct a robust, equitable, and globally relevant human capital system.

Integrating Qur'anic ethics into gender-equitable educational transformation requires recognizing women not as passive beneficiaries but as active intellectual agents. Qur'anic narratives such as those of Maryam and the Queen of Sheba illustrate women's capacity for spiritual insight, political judgment, and intellectual leadership (Rahman, 1982, 2009). These narratives challenge cultural assumptions in certain Indonesian communities that limit women's academic or professional aspirations. Moreover, contemporary Islamic scholarship affirms that restricting women's educational opportunities contradicts the Qur'anic imperative to seek knowledge (Ramadan, 2012, 2017). In Indonesia, enhancing women's access to STEM fields, leadership training, and scholarly production aligns with both global human capital strategies and Islamic values (Zajac et al., 2025). Programs promoting girls' education in rural communities and supporting women scholars in Islamic higher education institutions serve as practical embodiments of Qur'anic ethics. When framed within the discourse of religious moderation, these initiatives counter extremism by promoting balanced, just, and inclusive understandings of gender roles. Consequently, a Qur'anic model of human capital development reinforces Indonesia's cultural traditions of strong female leadership while advancing national educational competitiveness.

Ethnic inclusion within educational institutions is likewise central to the Qur'anic framework proposed in this study. Qur'anic discourse repeatedly urges believers to cultivate fairness, uphold truth, and dismantle systems that perpetuate injustice, regardless of ethnic affiliation (Q. 5:8). In Indonesia, where educational inequalities disproportionately impact ethnic minorities, applying these principles

requires rethinking curriculum design, language policies, and resource distribution. Sociocultural mapping reveals that students from regions such as Papua, Maluku, and parts of Kalimantan face structural disadvantages, including limited school infrastructure and culturally alienating pedagogies (Ananta et al., 2023). Qur'anic ethics encourage acknowledging these disparities as moral concerns requiring systemic reform. Inclusive educational policies that incorporate local knowledge, multilingual instruction, and community participation embody both Islamic values and Indonesia's pluralistic cultural identity. Through religious moderation, educators can foster inter-ethnic empathy and solidarity, reducing prejudice and creating learning environments conducive to social cohesion. This approach also equips students with intercultural competencies necessary for contributing to Indonesia's diverse workforce.

A Qur'anic-human capital synthesis also critiques development models that overemphasize economic efficiency at the expense of ethical and cultural considerations. Human capital is often reduced to productivity metrics, ignoring moral dimensions of human wellbeing (Sen, 2014). Yet the Qur'an frames development as a balanced process involving spiritual, ethical, and intellectual growth alongside economic progress. In Indonesia, where modernization sometimes clashes with cultural identities and religious values, an ethically grounded human capital approach provides a mediating framework. This aligns with *wasathiyyah*, which advocates moderation, critical reasoning, and contextual application of Islamic principles (Addzaky et al., 2024). By integrating Qur'anic ethics into policies on labor, education, and gender equity, Indonesia can pursue modernization without eroding cultural identity or marginalizing vulnerable groups. Such a model not only aligns with Islamic teachings but also enhances national resilience by fostering social cohesion and moral accountability.

Religious moderation (*wasathiyyah*) serves as a vital interpretive bridge linking Qur'anic ethics to Indonesia's multicultural realities. As a national agenda, *wasathiyyah* emphasizes balance, openness, and peaceful coexistence-values strongly resonant with Qur'anic teachings on justice, compassion, and mutual recognition (Esack, 2005). This orientation counters exclusivist interpretations that hinder women's empowerment or marginalize ethnic minorities. When embedded in human capital development, religious moderation offers a framework for harmonizing diverse religious interpretations and cultural expressions. In educational settings, *wasathiyyah* encourages dialogical learning and inclusive curricula, preventing ideological polarization and promoting civic responsibility. In workplaces and public institutions, it supports equitable hiring, anti-discrimination policies, and culturally sensitive leadership development. Through this synergy, Qur'anic ethics and Indonesian moderation reinforce one another, producing a holistic model of

development that is spiritually grounded, culturally rooted, and socially transformative.

The integration of Qur'anic values into Indonesia's human capital development also demands institutional reform. Educational institutions, workplaces, and government agencies must adopt governance frameworks that reflect Qur'anic ethics of transparency, accountability, and consultation (*shūrā*). Research shows that institutions grounded in moral values foster higher levels of trust, participation, and innovation (Ramadan, 2017). In Indonesia's multicultural society, institutions that embody these principles will naturally be more responsive to the needs of women and ethnic minorities. Policies that incorporate community consultation, gender-sensitive decision-making, and culturally adaptive practices align with both Islamic governance and Indonesian democratic traditions. Such institutional alignment also supports national religious moderation initiatives, which encourage ethical leadership and inclusive governance. Ultimately, embedding Qur'anic ethics into institutional structures enhances not only moral legitimacy but also long-term developmental effectiveness.

These Qur'anic ethical principles—dignity, justice, pluralism, knowledge, and moderation—form a coherent framework capable of transforming Indonesia's approach to gender equity and ethnic inclusion in human capital development. When contextualized within Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and religious identity, this framework gains both moral authority and cultural resonance. It demonstrates that progressive human capital strategies need not conflict with Islam; rather, they can be strengthened by its ethical vision. The integration of Qur'anic teachings with Indonesia's multicultural realities encourages policymakers to move beyond technical fixes and embrace value-driven transformation. It also empowers educators, religious leaders, and communities to contribute to national development in ways that honor both spiritual commitments and social responsibilities. Ultimately, this Qur'anic framework supports the creation of an educational and developmental paradigm that is globally competitive, socially just, and deeply rooted in Indonesia's religious and cultural fabric.

## **2. Integrating Qur'anic Principles of Knowledge, Justice, and Pluralism into Transformative Educational Ecosystems Across Indonesian Institutions**

Integrating Qur'anic principles into Indonesia's educational ecosystems requires expanding the meaning of human capital beyond economic productivity toward holistic moral-intellectual formation. The Qur'an consistently highlights knowledge (*ilm*) as a transformative force capable of elevating individuals and societies, as seen in QS al-Mujādalah 58:11, where God raises those endowed with knowledge to higher ranks. This framing parallels contemporary human capital theory, which increasingly emphasizes capabilities, creativity, and social cohesion rather than mere labor-market

output. However, Indonesian education policy often remains trapped in technocratic orientations that prioritize standardized testing and market competitiveness. By reinfusing Qur'anic epistemology-centered on inquiry, humility, and ethical responsibility-educational institutions can produce learners who not only excel cognitively but also embody justice and empathy. This direction resonates with Indonesian religious moderation (*wasathiyyah*), which stresses balance, inclusivity, and respect for diversity. Through Quranic grounding, *wasathiyyah* becomes not just a sociopolitical discourse but an epistemic orientation embedded in teaching and learning processes. Thus, integrating Qur'anic knowledge principles provides an alternative developmental model, allowing Indonesia to cultivate a generation capable of bridging religious values with contemporary intellectual challenges (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

A transformative educational ecosystem must also foreground justice (*al-'adl*) as a structural principle rather than a rhetorical ideal. The Qur'an demands justice even when it contradicts personal or group interests (QS al-Nisā' 4:135), reflecting a radical commitment to impartiality that can reshape institutional decision-making. In Indonesia, persistent educational inequalities-particularly along gender and ethnic lines-demonstrate the need for justice-based reform. Marginalized groups, including women in rural areas and ethnic minorities in Papua or Kalimantan, often face systemic barriers to quality education. Qur'anic justice compels proactive measures to dismantle such inequities, not merely equal treatment. This aligns with Indonesia's constitutional mandate for equitable education and the cultural principle of *gotong royong*, which promotes shared responsibility in ensuring collective welfare (Slikkerveer, 2019). When Qur'anic justice is translated into educational policies-such as fair resource allocation, gender-sensitive curricula, and community-based learning-it strengthens local cultures of solidarity and nurtures a more inclusive national identity. Such integration illustrates that religious principles can support, rather than hinder, democratizing reforms in the Indonesian education sector (Rahman, 1982).

Pluralism (*ta'āruf*) is central to the Qur'anic worldview and provides a normative framework for cultivating interethnic harmony within educational environments. QS al-Hujurāt 49:13 frames human diversity as purposeful, encouraging mutual recognition rather than assimilation. Indonesia's multicultural society-home to more than 1,300 ethnic groups—requires an educational approach grounded in this Qur'anic understanding to promote intergroup respect and social cohesion. Yet, many Indonesian schools still operate within monocultural frameworks that privilege dominant narratives over local wisdom traditions. Curricular integration of Qur'anic pluralism can help normalize cultural empathy by encouraging students to view diversity as a divine blessing rather than a political problem. This vision aligns with *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, Indonesia's national motto, which echoes Qur'anic pluralism through its message of unity in diversity (Butler, 2016). By

embedding *ta'aruf* into pedagogical practices—such as collaborative cross-cultural projects, intercultural dialogue forums, and inclusion of local knowledge-educational institutions can build resilience against sectarianism and exclusivism. This contributes to national stability and strengthens Indonesia's model of religious moderation rooted in both scriptural sources and cultural traditions (Baidan, 2012).

The Qur'anic emphasis on reflective reasoning (*tafakkur*) underscores the importance of critical thinking within transformative education. Rather than promoting rote memorization, the Qur'an repeatedly calls believers to analyze signs in nature and society (QS Āl 'Imrān 3:190–191). This epistemological encouragement mirrors contemporary educational theories that prioritize higher-order cognitive skills. Yet, Indonesian classrooms, particularly in Islamic schools, often perpetuate memorization-heavy approaches due to exam pressures and traditional pedagogies. Reintegrating Qur'anic hermeneutics—especially interpretive reasoning (*ijtihad*)—can stimulate pedagogical innovation that values inquiry, debate, and analytical discourse. Culturally, this aligns with Indonesia's tradition of *musyawarah* (deliberation), which encourages inclusive problem-solving and consensus-building. Both Qur'anic reasoning and local deliberative culture promote dialogical learning, enabling students to practice respectful disagreement while deepening intellectual maturity. Embedding such dialogical methods within teacher training programs would enhance Indonesia's capacity to develop independent thinkers who can navigate modern scientific knowledge alongside Islamic ethical norms. Thus, Qur'anic *tafakkur* provides a strategic pathway for addressing Indonesia's learning crisis while preserving cultural identity (Schwandt, 2014).

Gender justice within educational ecosystems must be framed not only as a social aspiration but also as a Qur'anic imperative. While patriarchal interpretations have at times constrained women's educational participation, the Qur'an's holistic narrative affirms intellectual equality and shared moral agency. The story of the Queen of Sheba (QS al-Naml 27:23–44), for example, demonstrates a woman exercising political wisdom and diplomatic intelligence. This counters cultural misconceptions that equate piety with passivity among women. In the Indonesian context, women have historically played central roles in Islamic scholarship and community leadership, from Nyai Ahmad Dahlan of Muhammadiyah to pesantren-based female scholars. However, structural gender disparities persist, especially in access to STEM education and leadership roles in Islamic institutions (Zajac et al., 2025). Applying Qur'anic gender justice requires actively dismantling discriminatory norms while amplifying women's intellectual contributions. This approach is consistent with Indonesia's *moderasi beragama* agenda, which views gender equality as a component of religious balance. Policy changes—such as gender-sensitive teacher training and inclusive school governance—can operationalize these Qur'anic principles and reorient educational cultures toward fairness and empowerment (Sen, 2014).

Ethnic inclusion in educational systems must also be situated within the Qur'anic ethic of communal solidarity (*ukhuwwah insāniyyah*) (Utama & Mubarak, 2024). The Qur'an envisions humanity as interconnected, warning against arrogance and tribal superiority (QS Luqmān 31:18). These teachings are particularly relevant for Indonesia, where ethnic tensions occasionally resurface in schools, universities, and local communities. By grounding ethnic inclusion in Qur'anic ethics, educational institutions can cultivate moral commitments that transcend cultural boundaries. Indonesia's indigenous traditions-such as the Javanese ethic of *tepa selira* (empathic consideration) and the Bugis principle of *siri' na pacce* (shared dignity)-reinforce this scriptural ethic. Integrating these local values with Qur'anic teachings can produce culturally resonant pedagogies that reduce prejudice and strengthen intercultural trust. Classroom practices might include intercultural storytelling, collaborative service-learning, and recognition of students' cultural assets. Such practices not only promote social cohesion but also enhance the nation's human capital by strengthening interpersonal skills essential for a collaborative economy. Thus, Qur'anic solidarity, aligned with Indonesian cultural ethics, provides a robust foundation for inclusive educational transformation (Rahman, 1982).

Transformative education also requires rethinking institutional authority and promoting participatory governance inspired by Qur'anic principles of consultation (*shūrā*) as found in QS al-Shūrā 42:38. In many Indonesian schools, decision-making remains top-down, limiting the agency of teachers, students, and local communities. Qur'anic consultation offers a model for distributed leadership that values collective wisdom and shared responsibility. This aligns with the democratic ethos embedded in *Pancasila* and Indonesia's long-standing tradition of community involvement in education, illustrated by pesantren networks and school committees. Institutionalizing *shūrā* within school governance could improve transparency, increase community trust, and ensure policies remain grounded in student and cultural needs. For example, curriculum design could involve teachers and parents, while student councils might participate in school policy discussions. Such participatory structures not only strengthen accountability but also embody religious moderation by fostering pluralistic dialogue and reducing hierarchical authoritarianism. When Qur'anic *shūrā* becomes an educational norm, institutions develop cultures of collaboration that enhance both learning outcomes and societal cohesion (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

A Qur'anic approach to educational transformation further requires acknowledging the socio-economic disparities that shape learning opportunities. The Qur'an repeatedly condemns structural injustice and commands believers to support the vulnerable (QS al-Hashr 59:7). In Indonesia, economic inequality strongly correlates with learning gaps, with students in remote provinces suffering from limited access to qualified teachers, learning materials, and digital technologies. By

grounding equity strategies in Qur'anic justice, policymakers can frame resource redistribution not merely as administrative necessity but as moral responsibility. Programs such as affirmative scholarships for remote learners, incentives for teachers in marginalized areas, and community-based digital literacy initiatives reflect the Qur'anic ethic of social uplift (*islāh*). Indonesian values of *gotong royong* further reinforce the need for collective responsibility in addressing inequality. Through Qur'anic and cultural synergy, educational institutions can cultivate socially responsive human capital capable of transforming not only the economy but also the moral fabric of society (Sen, 2014).

The Qur'an's holistic conception of knowledge also challenges the fragmentation often found in Indonesian educational curricula, where religious studies and scientific subjects are taught in isolation. The Qur'an presents knowledge as integrated—linking cosmology, ethics, and social responsibility. For instance, QS al-Baqarah 2:164 encourages reflection on natural phenomena as signs of divine knowledge. This verse supports an interdisciplinary approach that harmonizes scientific inquiry with spiritual reflection. Indonesian educational institutions can adopt integrative models that connect Islamic studies with environmental science, economics, or sociology, enabling students to interpret contemporary issues through both empirical and ethical lenses. Such an approach resonates with Islamic intellectual history, where scholars like Ibn Sina and al-Farabi exemplified holistic knowledge production. Culturally, it aligns with Indonesia's *kearifan lokal* (local wisdom), which traditionally blends ecological awareness, spirituality, and social norms. Integrating Qur'anic knowledge principles into interdisciplinary curricula can thus foster learners who are intellectually versatile and ethically grounded, contributing to a more humane and sustainable model of national development (Baidan, 2012).

Religious moderation (*moderasi beragama*) is strengthened when Qur'anic principles are positioned as resources for bridging religious, cultural, and academic spheres. Extremism often thrives in environments where scriptural interpretation is rigid and disengaged from social realities. The Qur'an's call for balance (QS al-Baqarah 2:143) promotes a middle path that resists both literalist rigidity and secular exclusion. Indonesian educational institutions play a central role in operationalizing this balance by teaching students interpretive skills, ethical reasoning, and empathy across differences. Moderation is also culturally embedded in Indonesian traditions such as *adat bersendi syara', syara' bersendi Kitabullah* in Minangkabau communities, where customary norms harmonize with Islamic values. When Qur'anic moderation and cultural moderation interact, they produce educational environments resilient against polarizing ideologies. Teacher training programs centered on scriptural reasoning, civic ethics, and interreligious communication can further reinforce moderation as both a scholarly and civic virtue. This contributes directly to

Indonesia's goal of developing human capital that supports peace, unity, and democratic stability (Schwandt, 2014; Wimra, 2017).

Qur'anic values can reshape classroom dynamics by promoting compassion, humility, and mutual respect. The Qur'an describes the Prophet Muhammad as a model of gentleness and pedagogical compassion (QS Āl 'Imrān 3:159), offering an ethical template for teaching. Harsh, authoritarian teaching styles-still prevalent in some Indonesian institutions-contradict this scriptural ethos and can hinder student confidence and creativity. Cultivating compassionate pedagogy aligns with Indonesian cultural values such as *asih*, *asah*, *asuh* (loving, nurturing, guiding), which emphasize holistic learner care (Pertiwi & Fitriani, 2025). Educators who embody Qur'anic compassion can better engage diverse learners, reduce classroom conflict, and support emotional well-being-an increasingly important component of human capital in the 21st century. This approach also resonates with global educational research highlighting the importance of socio-emotional learning. By grounding compassion in both Qur'anic ethics and Indonesian culture, educators create learning environments that empower students to develop both intellectual excellence and ethical maturity (Rahman, 1982).

Integrating Qur'anic principles of knowledge, justice, and pluralism into Indonesia's educational ecosystems offers a strategic pathway toward building equitable human capital for a diverse nation. The Qur'anic worldview does not oppose modern educational goals but enriches them with ethical depth and social responsibility. When connected with Indonesian cultural traditions such as *gotong royong*, *musyawarah*, and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, Qur'anic values create a culturally grounded yet globally relevant educational philosophy (Noorzeha, 2023). This synthesis supports Indonesia's aspirations for a competitive, cohesive, and morally resilient society. For policymakers, this means that curriculum reform, teacher training, institutional governance, and community engagement must all be informed by Qur'anic ethical frameworks that prioritize dignity, justice, and pluralism. Such efforts align with contemporary human capital theories emphasizing equity, social capability, and intercultural competence. Therefore, a Qur'anic-integrative educational transformation is not only possible but necessary for shaping Indonesia's future-one where economic progress and spiritual values coexist harmoniously to produce a just and inclusive society (Sen, 2014).

## Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that integrating Qur'anic principles of knowledge, justice, and pluralism offers a coherent and culturally grounded pathway for transforming Indonesia's human capital development agenda. By emphasizing dignity, gender equality, and interethnic harmony, the Qur'anic worldview provides

ethical depth that complements contemporary educational theories and aligns with Indonesia's multicultural identity. The discussion shows that Qur'anic teachings -when connected with national values such as *gotong royong*, *musyawarah*, and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*- can reshape educational ecosystems to be more inclusive, dialogical, and socially responsive. This integration strengthens religious moderation, encourages compassionate pedagogy, and promotes participatory governance, all of which support resilient learning communities capable of confronting structural inequities. To advance this vision, the article recommends that policymakers embed Qur'anic ethical frameworks into curriculum reform, teacher education, and institutional leadership training; that schools adopt interdisciplinary learning models connecting scriptural values with scientific and social knowledge; and that community stakeholders actively participate in shaping educational priorities through consultative mechanisms. Moreover, gender-sensitive policies, intercultural learning programs, and equitable resource distribution must be institutionalized to ensure that educational justice becomes a lived reality across diverse regions. Ultimately, the study concludes that a Qur'an-inspired, culturally rooted, and socially inclusive educational paradigm is essential for shaping equitable human capital futures and strengthening Indonesia's moral, intellectual, and civic foundations in the decades ahead.

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