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JOURNAL OF INDONESIAN ISLAMIC STUDIES

<https://ejournal.iainpalopo.ac.id/index.php/jiis/>

Humanizing Islamic Education in Elementary Islamic School: Teacher Strategies, Classroom Dynamics, and Contextual Factors at MIM Pringkuku

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Articles

Information

History:

Received: January

Approved: April

Publish: May

Keywords: humanization, Islamic Education, humanistic learning.

Abstract

This study investigates the humanization of Islamic Education (PAI) learning at MIM Pringkuku, Pacitan, focusing on humanistic value implementation, teacher strategies, and supporting-inhibiting factors. A qualitative descriptive case study design was employed, with data collected through structured observation, semi-structured interviews with the Islamic Education teacher, school principal, and nine sixth-grade students, and documentation study. Data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman & Saldaña interactive model with triangulation to ensure validity. Findings reveal that humanistic values are consistently embedded through warm classroom atmosphere creation, empathic responses to student mistakes, and organic moral value internalization across all Islamic Education subjects. Teacher strategies include contextual learning, dialogic teaching, and a peer tutoring system that achieved most of students completing Juz 30 memorization. Supporting factors are ecosystemic, encompassing teacher commitment, institutional support, and community involvement, while the primary challenge is the cognitive-affective gap between high in-school mastery and inconsistent value implementation in students' daily lives. This study proposes that the single-teacher condition creates a consistent humanistic pedagogical identity across all Islamic Education subjects, reframing Islamic Education humanization as an ecosystemic rather than individual phenomenon.

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Introduction

Islamic Education plays a vital role in education at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level. It is not just about religious knowledge but also shapes students' character, morality, and dignity. Islamic Education teachers serve as the center, acting as educators, mentors, and role models who integrate moral values and noble ethics through school activities (Judrah et al., 2024). Thus, humanizing Islamic Education is urgent, as education should address not only cognition but also students' humanistic aspects. Humanism-oriented Islamic Religious Education forms character, morality, and knowledge. It positions humans as individuals grounded in religious values, maintaining relationships with Allah SWT and others (Shodikun et al., 2023). The Elementary Madrasah shapes a knowledgeable, well-mannered generation by integrating Islamic values and general knowledge (Wulandari & Windarto, 2023). This is supported by Muzaini and Ichsan, who explain that humanistic values at Elementary Madrasah foster students' democratic attitudes, solidarity, and tolerance (Muzaini & Ichsan, 2023).

Although the urgency of humanizing Islamic Education (PAI) has been widely recognized, there remains a significant gap between theory and practice. Conventional, teacher-centered approaches still dominate PAI instruction in madrasahs. A monotonous, rote-memorization model that minimizes dialogue makes it hard for students to connect material to real-life contexts. In private Madrasah Ibtidaiyahs in rural areas, challenges are exacerbated by a shortage of teachers. As a result, one educator must cover the entire PAI curriculum, including Qur'an and Hadith, Fiqh, Aqidah and Akhlak, SKI, and Arabic at once. This can limit the teacher's ability to design varied, responsive, and humanistic instruction. When instruction focuses only on cognitive aspects and neglects humanistic values, the PAI learning process risks becoming dehumanized (Firmansyah et al., 2024). Using contextual and problem-based learning can help students connect religious theories with daily life, yet constraints such as limited time and low pedagogical innovation remain persistent barriers in the field (Dahuri & Wantini, 2023).

Several studies indicate that research on the humanization of Islamic Education (PAI) still has significant gaps. According to Muzaini & Ichsan, humanistic values are indeed present at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level, but they remain limited to a single subject and a single indicator. Consequently, the practice of humanizing Islamic Education is not implemented comprehensively (Muzaini & Ichsan, 2023). Based on research by Shodikun et al., studies tend to focus on public madrasahs in urban areas with relatively adequate facilities, thereby overlooking the reality of private madrasahs in rural areas, which actually constitute the majority of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia (Shodikun et al., 2023). In fact, the success of internalizing humanistic-religious values is greatly influenced by the local context, so findings from one environment cannot necessarily be generalized to another with different social and cultural conditions (Sundari et al., 2024). Thus, there is a clear gap in that research on the humanization of Islamic Education has not yet addressed the context of private Madrasah Ibtidaiyah in rural areas where a single teacher is responsible for teaching the entire Islamic Education curriculum, a field reality that is commonly encountered but rarely examined academically (Subqi et al., 2022).

MIM Pringkuku is a strategic research site because it represents a rural madrasah with limited resources but a crucial role in shaping students' character. Here, one teacher handles the entire Islamic Education curriculum. This situation reveals both limitations and

a pedagogical phenomenon worth studying: how one educator manages diverse religious subjects while maintaining a humanistic, meaningful approach. Humanistic governance in PAI teaching at the elementary level includes child-friendly values and a safe learning environment (Sirajuddin et al., 2026). These elements are essential in Islamic education management and need further empirical study, especially in resource-limited madrasahs. This importance is further underscored by findings that ecosystemic support involving teachers, school leadership, parents, and the Islamic community environment collectively determines the sustainability of humanistic practices in madrasah settings (Hanum et al., 2022). This study aims to fill this gap with an authentic empirical portrait of grassroots Islamic education in Indonesia.

This study offers novelty on three levels. First, it examines humanization in Muhammadiyah Elementary Schools in rural areas. Second, it depicts humanization across branches of Islamic Education (PAI) through the same teachers, offering a more authentic and comprehensive picture (Muzaini & Ichsan, 2023). Third, it reflects on three dimensions, which is pedagogical strategies, teacher-student relationships, and institutional factors within a holistic framework. Theoretically, the study is grounded in religious humanism, integrating Paulo Freire's dialogic education, Carl Rogers' student centered learning, and Ki Hajar Dewantara's vision of humanizing education, all in line with the Islamic concept of *ta'dib*. Empirical studies in Islamic schools confirm that *rahmah*, *'adl*, and *tasamuh* are intrinsic to the Islamic moral tradition, making Islamic pedagogy essentially ethical and humanistic (Kartikasari et al., 2023).

Based on the above discussion, this study has three aims. First, describe the forms of application of humanistic values in Islamic Education (PAI) instruction at MIM Pringkuku. Second, analyze teachers' strategies in integrating humanistic values into the teaching-learning process, and third to identify supporting and hindering factors. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of literature on the humanization of PAI at the elementary level of Islamic education, particularly in the context of rural private madrasahs, which have long been overlooked by academic research. Practically, these findings are expected to serve as a reference for Islamic Education teachers, madrasah principals, and policymakers in designing more humane, meaningful, and contextually appropriate learning experiences for madrasahs across Indonesia.

Method

This study used a qualitative design with a descriptive case study approach, chosen because it is suitable for addressing exploratory research questions, namely to gain an in-depth understanding of how humanistic values are applied in Islamic Education (PAI) instruction (Creswell & Poth, 2024). The research was conducted at MIM Pringkuku, Pacitan Regency, East Java, in April 2026. The research subjects were selected purposively based on the relevance and depth of the information they could provide, consisting of one PAI teacher as the key informant who had taught all Islamic Education subjects for more than five years, the school principal as the institutional policy informant, and nine fifth-grade students divided into three focus groups to ensure diversity in data perspectives (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data collection was conducted through three complementary techniques. First, structured non-participatory observation was carried out across six learning sessions

covering at least three different Islamic Education subject clusters, using an observation sheet developed based on humanistic value indicators encompassing four dimensions: (1) how the teacher opens and closes the lesson, (2) teacher-student interaction patterns, (3) instructional delivery strategies, and (4) the psychological atmosphere of the classroom, with all results recorded in descriptive field notes immediately after each session (Angrosino, 2022). Second, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the Islamic Education teacher across three sessions (45–60 minutes each) and with the school principal in one session (30–45 minutes), alongside focus group interviews with students (20–30 minutes per group), all recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim. Third, documentary study was conducted on lesson plans, syllabi, affective assessment records, and school vision-mission documents to validate and enrich the primary data.

Data analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña interactive model comprising three simultaneous stages (Miles et al., 2018). The first stage, data condensation, involved a systematic coding process beginning with open coding, in which all transcripts, field notes, and documents were carefully read and initial labels assigned to meaningful data segments. These initial codes were then grouped through thematic coding, clustering related codes into categories based on conceptual similarity, before category construction integrated them into overarching themes responding to each research question, combining inductive reasoning from the data with deductive confirmation from the religious humanistic theoretical framework. The second stage involved presenting data in descriptive-analytical narratives supported by verbatim quotations as empirical evidence. The third stage comprised inductive conclusion-drawing based on converging patterns across all data sources. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, comparing data from the teacher, students, and school principal, methodological triangulation between observation, interview, and documentary results, and member checking with key informants to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

Results

The Application of Humanistic Values in Islamic Education

The research findings indicate that the application of humanistic values in Islamic Education (PAI) instruction at MIM Pringkuku manifests in three primary forms that can be consistently identified through observation and interviews. First, teachers routinely begin each learning session with physical and cognitive warm-up activities before delving into the subject matter. Second, teachers respond empathetically to students' mistakes by involving the entire class in collectively finding the correct answer, rather than judging individual students. Third, moral values such as honesty, compassion, and responsibility are organically integrated into every learning activity, not just specific subject matter. All students from the three interview groups stated that the PAI classroom atmosphere felt "exciting" and not stressful, and they felt confident to ask and answer the teacher's questions.

Table 1. Forms of Humanistic Value Implementation in PAI Learning at MIM Pringkuku

Dimension	Concrete Form	Data Source
Emotional readiness	Physical and cognitive warm-ups at the start of the lesson	Teacher observations and interviews
Individual recognition	Engaging students through questions and games	Teacher interviews
Empathetic response	Correcting answers through dialogue, involving other students	Teacher and student interviews
Internalization of values	Moral values are incorporated into every learning activity	Teacher interviews
Contextual connections	The content is linked to students' daily lives	Teacher and student interviews
Affective impact	Students apply Islamic Education values in their daily lives	Student interviews

Strategies Used by Islamic Education Teachers in Integrating Humanistic Values

This study identifies three main strategies used by Islamic education teachers in integrating humanistic values. The first strategy is the contextual approach, which involves linking Islamic education content to students' daily experiences and realities, including through out-of-class learning activities. The second strategy is dialogic teaching, where lectures are not monologues but are always accompanied by questions that elicit active responses from students. The third strategy, which is the most original finding of this study is a peer-tutoring system initiated at the institutional level, where more capable students guide their younger peers in memorizing the Qur'an. This system has yielded remarkable results: most students at MIM Pringkuku have memorized Juz 30.

Table 2. Strategies for Humanizing Islamic Education at MIM Pringkuku

Level	Strategy	Concrete Form	Impact
Individual teacher	Contextual	Outdoor learning, independent practice	Students identify the relevance of the material
Individual teacher	Dialogic	Interactive lecture, open Q&A	Students feel comfortable asking questions and expressing their opinions
Individual teacher	Affective	Warm-up, empathetic response to mistakes	Warm and safe classroom atmosphere
Institutional	Peer tutoring	Upperclassmen mentor underclassmen	Many students have memorized Juz 30
Institutional	Morning Routine	Daily group review of Juz 30 memorization	Internalizing the value of a routine and structured schedule

Factors Supporting and Inhibiting the Implementation of Humanistic Values

The study identified two clusters of factors that have opposing effects on the implementation of humanistic values at MIM Pringkuku. Supporting factors include: the availability of adequate facilities for worship, institutional support in the form of access to professional teacher training, an Islamic community ecosystem (TPA, diniyah, religious study groups), and active parental cooperation. Inhibiting factors include: the gap between cognitive mastery and affective implementation in students' daily lives, the counterproductive influence of media and the social environment, and the diversity of student personalities that demands continuous pedagogical creativity.

Table 3. Factors Supporting and Inhibiting the Implementation of Humanistic Values in Islamic Education

Dimensions	Supporting Factors	Inhibiting Factors
Teacher	High commitment, pedagogical creativity	Teaching load covering 5 PAI subject areas simultaneously
Institutional	Proper worship facilities, access to training	Limited number of Islamic Education teachers
Family	Parental cooperation in instilling good habits	Inconsistent monitoring of values at home
Community	Islamic ecosystem (TPA, religious study groups)	Influence of media and the social environment

Discussion

The Application of Humanistic Values in Islamic Education

A Warm Learning Environment as a Prerequisite for the Internalization of Values

The findings of this study confirm that creating a warm and non-stressful learning atmosphere is a fundamental prerequisite for the effective internalization of humanistic values in Islamic Education instruction. Islamic Education teachers at MIM Pringkuku consistently begin each session with physical and cognitive warm-up activities before delving into the subject matter, prioritizing students' emotional readiness over the achievement of curriculum targets. This practice aligns with Rogers' educational humanism principle, which asserts that meaningful learning can only occur when students feel psychologically safe, accepted, and valued as whole individuals (Suyatno et al., 2023). All groups of students interviewed consistently stated that the Islamic Education classroom atmosphere felt enjoyable and not stressful, and they felt free to ask questions and express opinions without fear, a strong empirical confirmation that a humanistic climate is genuinely established and experienced by students as a collective experience, not merely an individual perception. This finding aligns with the research which demonstrated that enjoyable opening activities in Islamic elementary schools have a positive and significant impact on learning motivation, making students more active, enthusiastic, and focused throughout the learning session (Andesti et al., 2024). Furthermore, Lutfi, Mazrur, & Saihu found that the exploration of joyful learning from a humanistic theory perspective in Islamic elementary schools resulted in higher and more meaningful student engagement compared to conventional approaches that dive straight into the material (Lutfi et al., 2025). Thus, the opening routine implemented by the Islamic Education teacher at MIM Pringkuku

is not merely a tradition, but a humanistic strategy that is well-planned, evidence-based, and directly contributes to the quality of the internalization of religious values that follows.

Respect for the Individual and Empathetic Responses as Manifestations of Humanistic Values

The most tangible humanistic values in Islamic Education (PAI) at MIM Pringkuku are reflected in how teachers respond to the diversity of students' personalities and handle moments of error in the classroom. Teachers actively "engage" passive students through questions and games to ensure no individual feels marginalized, a commitment that, in Rogers' terminology, is termed "unconditional positive regard," meaning the unconditional acceptance of every student regardless of their ability or level of participation (Suyatno et al., 2023). When a student gives an incorrect answer, the teacher does not immediately correct them individually which could potentially be humiliating, but instead invites the entire class to engage in a dialogue to collectively find the correct answer, a strategy that simultaneously protects students' dignity and fosters a collaborative classroom culture. Islamic Education teachers who consistently apply humanistic interactions through empathetic communication have been shown to significantly strengthen students' moral development. In line with this, Maharani et al. assert that humanistic-oriented teaching strategies for fostering empathy in inclusive elementary schools result in a classroom climate that is safer, more inclusive, and more conducive to the internalization of values (Maharani et al., 2025). Sultani & Alfitri also argue that humanistic learning theory in Islamic Education instruction is most effectively realized not through mere lectures on values, but through modeling relationships that respect the dignity of every student in every daily interaction in the classroom (Sultani et al., 2023). The findings of this study not only confirm these arguments but also add a new dimension: in the context of a single teacher covering the entire Islamic Education curriculum, the consistency of a humanistic approach that flows evenly across all subjects actually creates a more coherent and integrated learning experience for students.

Strategies Used by Islamic Education Teachers to Integrate Humanistic Values ***Contextual and Dialogic Strategies in Islamic Education Instruction***

The contextual strategies implemented by Islamic Education teachers at MIM Pringkuku go beyond simply providing relevant examples. Teachers design authentic situations that allow students to truly experience Islamic Education values in real life, for example, through out-of-class learning activities to directly observe God's creations, and the Friday charity system with self-service change collection serving as a real-world laboratory for the value of honesty. This approach is a concrete manifestation of experiential learning, which is one of the main pillars of educational humanism (Schunk, 2021). The implementation of a humanistic-based Islamic Education curriculum in Islamic elementary schools which integrates real-life experiences as the primary medium of learning, results in a far deeper internalization of character compared to a purely textual approach (Asykur et al., 2025). Dahuri & Wantini also emphasize that Islamic Education instruction based on the ta'dib perspective which focuses on fostering good manners through authentic experiences has proven to be more effective in building students' moral integrity (Dahuri & Wantini, 2023). From a dialogic perspective, although lectures remain

a frequently used method, the findings of this study indicate that lectures at MIM Pringkuku are not monological, they are always accompanied by questions that elicit active responses and invitations to express opinions, making them more appropriately categorized as dialogic teaching rather than conventional lectures. This aligns with the findings of Afandi & Ningsih that the most effective implementation of the humanistic learning model in Islamic Education is one that successfully transforms the teacher's role from an information provider into a dialogue facilitator who actively listens and responds to students' perspectives (Afandi & Ningsih, 2023).

Pair Tutoring as Humanization at the Institutional Level

The most original finding of this study is the identification of an institutionally developed pair tutoring system as a humanization strategy that extends beyond the individual classroom. The principal explicitly used the term "humanistic approach" to describe this system, arguing that the close relationship between older students serving as mentors and younger students being mentored creates a learning environment that is more personal, equal, and comfortable compared to the hierarchical teacher-student relationship. This system has produced remarkable results: most of students at MIM Pringkuku have memorized Juz 30. This finding aligns with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development theory, which asserts that learning is most effective through guidance from a slightly more competent individual within an atmosphere of equal and comfortable relationships. Asmin also found that the use of peer tutors in the teaching of the Qur'an and Hadith significantly improved students' memorization outcomes (Amri, 2024). Asnur, Kustati, & Amelia reinforce these findings by demonstrating that the halaqah-based peer teaching method in Quranic literacy instruction yields significant improvements in proficiency while simultaneously strengthening social bonds among students (Asnur et al., 2024). This study expands on these findings by demonstrating that peer tutors are not only cognitively effective in improving memorization outcomes but also function as a mechanism for institutional humanization that fosters a learning ecosystem characterized by mutual support, respect, and empowerment across generations of students in madrasahs.

Supporting and Hindering Factors in the Implementation of Humanistic Values

The School Ecosystem as a Systemic Supporting Factor

This study found that the success of humanizing Islamic Education (PAI) at MIM Pringkuku is ecosystemic in nature it does not depend solely on the individual quality of teachers, but rather on the synergy between teachers, the principal, parents, and the surrounding community, who collectively build an environment conducive to the internalization of values. The availability of adequate facilities for worship, teachers' access to professional training and seminars, the practice of structured morning murajaah, the community's Islamic ecosystem through TPA and religious study groups, as well as active parental involvement are mutually supportive factors that cannot be separated from one another. Sirajuddin, Zamroni, & Bahrani emphasize that humanistic governance in Islamic Education learning in elementary schools which encompasses the internalization of child-friendly values and the creation of a safe learning environment, requires systemic institutional support (Sirajuddin et al., 2026). The most effective model for value

internalization in Indonesian Islamic schools is one that simultaneously integrates classroom pedagogy, school culture, and community engagement (Noe et al., 2026). The findings of this study are fully consistent with both of these arguments, while adding a new dimension: in the context of rural madrasahs with limited resources, it is the strength of the community ecosystem, not the sophistication of facilities that is the primary determinant of the sustainability of Islamic Education humanization.

The Cognitive-Affective Gap as the Primary Challenge in the Humanization of Islamic Education

The most critical finding of this study is the identification of a sharp gap between cognitive mastery and the affective implementation of Islamic education values in students' daily lives outside of school. Students who are cognitively capable of perfectly memorizing the prayer recitations and mastering Juz 30 have not consistently implemented these values such as the Subuh prayer and good manners in their daily lives outside the madrasah. This gap is not a failure of learning at school, but rather a reflection of the complexity of value transfer across different contexts, particularly due to the influence of digital media and counterproductive social environments. The internalization of humanistic-religious values does not automatically occur simply because students have mastered the material cognitively; it requires consistent reinforcement of these values across school, family, and community (Subqi et al., 2022). The most significant determinant of moral development among Islamic Education students is not merely teachers' cognitive competence, but rather the consistency of value modeling in all daily interactions (Samsuriadi & Suardi, 2025). This finding simultaneously challenges the assumption that high memorization achievement is directly proportional to the depth of value internalization a new theoretical proposition that opens up an important agenda for further research: how to design a stronger bridge between the values learned within the madrasah and those truly lived outside the school walls (Jailani et al., 2025).

Conclusion

This study concludes that the humanization of Islamic Education (PAI) at MIM Pringkuku is realized through three interrelated dimensions: the creation of a warm and stress-free learning environment; contextual and dialogic strategies that connect the material to students' real lives; and a peer-tutoring system that has proven effective in achieving Quran memorization rates, with most of students completing Juz 30. The supporting factors are ecosystemic in nature, synergy between teachers, the principal, parents, and the community while the greatest challenge is the cognitive-affective gap, where high mastery of the material at school does not yet correlate directly with the consistent implementation of values in students' daily lives outside the madrasah.

Theoretically, this study proposes a new hypothesis: that the situation where a single teacher instructs all Islamic Education (PAI) subjects actually fosters a consistent humanistic pedagogical identity that permeates all subjects, shifting the understanding of the humanization of Islamic Education from an individual phenomenon to an ecosystemic one. Nevertheless, these findings cannot be directly generalized, given that the study was conducted at a single location with a limited observation period. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct comparative studies in several rural Islamic elementary

schools with similar conditions, as well as to examine in greater depth the mechanisms of value transfer from the school environment to students' daily lives as the most urgent research agenda to be pursued.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to express sincere gratitude to the principal, PAI teacher, and students of MIM Pringkuku, Pacitan, for their openness and willingness to participate in this research. Appreciation is also extended to the Institut Studi Islam Muhammadiyah Pacitan and the supervisor for the academic guidance and constructive feedback that greatly improved the quality of this article.

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