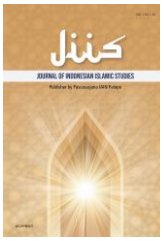
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Compassion-Based Education in Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3: A Textual and Contextual Analysis and Its Implications for Contemporary Islamic Religious Education

David Riyan[1]✉, Yusefri[2], Busra Frebriyarni[3], Noza Aflisia[4]

[1-4]Institut Agama Islam Negeri Curup Bengkulu, Indonesia

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Abstract

Contemporary education faces challenges arising from an overemphasis on cognitive achievement, dehumanizing instructional practices, and emotional distress in digital learning environments. This study examines compassion-based education in Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3 through textual and contextual interpretation and considers its implications for contemporary Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Employing qualitative library research, the study integrates thematic Qur'anic exegesis, linguistic analysis of classical and contemporary commentaries, and contextual hermeneutics. The analysis suggests that the sequence of Ar-Raḥmān (the Most Merciful), the teaching of the Qur'an, and the creation of humankind can be interpreted as an epistemological ordering in which divine compassion provides a foundation for learning and human development. In contemporary pedagogical terms, this reading challenges exclusively cognitive, dogmatic, or transactional instructional approaches. The study proposes four interconnected implications for IRE: an affectively oriented curriculum informed by social and emotional learning, dialogic and empathetic teaching practices, educators who model compassionate conduct, and psychologically safe and inclusive learning environments. These implications constitute a conceptual pedagogical framework rather than an empirically validated intervention. Further classroom-based research is required to examine their feasibility and effectiveness.

✉ Email Correspondent:
davidricardo.ricard@gmail.com

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Introduction

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) at the senior secondary school level faces increasing challenges in digitally mediated learning environments. The automation of instructional systems may reduce pedagogical interactions to the transmission of cognitive knowledge, thereby contributing to emotional alienation and an erosion of empathy between teachers and students (Riska Aini Putri, 2023). The growing influence of technology on the affective and nurturing dimensions of education underscores the need for an epistemological reorientation informed by Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3. In the proposed interpretation, the sequence of these verses places compassion at the foundation of knowledge transmission and the development of human potential.

Dehumanizing tendencies, mental health concerns, verbal aggression on social media, and the prevalence of school bullying point to a gap between the transmission of religious doctrines and the cultivation of human empathy. IRE, which is expected to foster noble character (akhlāq), may at times be constrained by dogmatic and legalistic approaches that give insufficient attention to students' emotional and spiritual development (Mutia Nur Putri et al., 2023).

Reconstructing a more humanistic paradigm of IRE is therefore increasingly important. Rigid and authoritarian instructional approaches may generate emotional distress and adverse psychological consequences for students, even when they appear to produce immediate gains in motivation (Kurniawan et al., 2025). These potential risks strengthen the case for a Qur'anically grounded pedagogical orientation in which compassion is treated as a guiding principle of educational practice.

ٱلرَّحۡمَٰنُ .عَلَّمَ ٱلۡقُرۡءَانَ .خَلَقَ ٱلۡإِنسَٰنَ

"The Most Merciful; taught the Qur'an; created humankind." (Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3; translation of meaning)

Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3 provides an epistemological and ontological point of departure through its discourse sequence (siyāq al-kalām), which foregrounds the divine attribute Ar-Raḥmān before the teaching of the Qur'an (ʿallama) and the creation of humankind (khalaqa). The present analysis focuses on verses 1–3 because they constitute the proposed conceptual sequence underlying compassion-based education. Verse 4 (ʿallamahu al-bayān) is considered only in terms of inter-verse coherence (munāsabah al-āyāt), as a communicative dimension through which raḥmah may be expressed in pedagogical interaction, without expanding the primary textual corpus (Anni Annisa' & Sulistiyawati, 2025). This sequence carries significant theological and educational implications (Sarif et al., 2025). The divine name Ar-Raḥmān (the Most Merciful) is mentioned first, followed by the teaching of the Qur'an and then the creation of human beings. From the pedagogical perspective developed here, compassion is thus understood not as a supplementary quality but as a foundational principle for the pursuit of knowledge and the formation of human identity (Suryati et al., 2026).

Although previous scholarship, including Annisa' and Sulistiyawati (2025), has examined the humanistic dimensions of the educator in Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–4, limited

attention has been devoted to interpreting the discourse sequence of verses 1–3 as an integrated epistemological framework for contemporary IRE. This gap informs two research questions: (1) How does the siyāq al-kalām of Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3 inform an epistemology of compassion-based education? and (2) What practical implications can be derived from this interpretation for contemporary IRE? The study's proposed contribution lies in a thematic-hermeneutic synthesis that relates the sequence of divine compassion, teaching, and human creation to a pedagogical framework encompassing affective curriculum development, a reconceptualization of teachers' roles, and inclusive digital learning environments.

Method

This study employed qualitative library research using a thematic approach to Qur'anic interpretation (mawḍūʿī), with a focus on a single sūrah (mawḍūʿī sūrī), integrated with contextual hermeneutics. The research proceeded through four interconnected phases. First, primary textual materials were collected from Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3 and from classical and contemporary exegetical works, including al-Zamakhsharī's al-Kashshāf and al-Rāzī's al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr. Second, a close linguistic analysis, informed by the interpretive principles discussed by M. Quraish Shihab (2013), examined syntax (iʿrāb), morphology (taṣrīf), the semantics of key terms, inter-verse coherence (munāsabah), and discourse sequence (siyāq al-kalām). Third, contextual analysis, drawing on Abdullah Saeed's hermeneutical framework, considered how the core values interpreted from the text might relate to contemporary sociopedagogical conditions, particularly the affective challenges of digital-era IRE. Finally, a qualitative synthesis connected the textual and contextual interpretations to proposed pedagogical implications for IRE (Saeed, 2005).

The primary corpus comprised Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3 and four selected exegetical works: al-Kashshāf (al-Zamakhsharī, 2009, Vol. 4, pp. 438–440), consulted for its rhetorical analysis; Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb (al-Rāzī, 1981, Vol. 29, pp. 86–89), for its treatment of epistemological relationships; Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ (Shihab, 2002, Vol. 13, pp. 283–287), for its Indonesian contextualization; and Fī Ẓilāl al-Qur'ān (Quṭb, 2003, Vol. 6, pp. 3430–3433), for its psychological and existential perspectives. Secondary sources included Decree No. 032/H/KR/2024 of the Head of the Educational Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment Agency (BSKAP), Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, and relevant scholarly articles.

At the analytical level, the contextual-hermeneutic procedure involved three operations. First, a linguistic and exegetical reading of verses 1–3 examined iʿrāb, morphology, and siyāq al-kalām, while a comparative assessment of exegetical interpretations (muqāran) sought points of convergence (ijmāʿ maʿnawī) regarding the placement of Ar-Raḥmān before teaching and creation. Second, the theological values identified through this reading were considered in relation to the affective challenges of contemporary digital IRE. Third, an inductive synthesis translated the resulting conceptual sequence into four proposed dimensions of educational practice: an affectively oriented curriculum, humanistic teaching methods, a reconceptualized educator role, and an inclusive learning environment.

Results

Textual Analysis of Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3

The textual and morphological examination of Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–2 identifies linguistic features that inform the verses' theological and pedagogical interpretation. The word Ar-Raḥmān (الرَّحْمٰنُ) functions syntactically as a mubtadaʾ (subject) and is morphologically associated with an intensive form (ṣīghat al-mubālaghah) on the faʿlān pattern (فَعْلَان), suggesting the abundance and intensity of divine mercy. Its appearance without a preceding verb is interpreted in this study as foregrounding raḥmah as a primary ontological principle. The phrase ʿallama al-Qur'ān (عَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ) contains a perfect verb in the augmented triliteral Form II (faʿʿala), associated linguistically with causative or transitive force (taʿdiyah) and intensification (takthīr). The inference that teaching should be gradual and responsive to learners' emotional conditions does not follow from the verbal form alone. Rather, it is developed through al-Rāzī's exegetical discussion, which relates the teaching of the Qur'an to the recipients' cognitive capacities and spiritual readiness (Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, 2004).

In the third verse, the expression khalaqa al-insān (خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ) combines the unaugmented triliteral perfect verb khalaqa with al-insān as its direct object (mafʿūl bih). The generic definite article (al-jinsiyyah) permits a reference to humankind in general, encompassing physical, affective, and spiritual dimensions (Shihab, 2011). Read as a discourse unit, verses 1–3 suggest an interpretive hierarchy in which Ar-Raḥmān is foregrounded before teaching (ʿallama) and human creation (khalaqa). Within the pedagogical reading proposed here, this structure supports the normative claim that education and the affirmation of human dignity should be grounded in compassion (Quthb, 2000).

The inter-verse relationship (munāsabah) also reveals a distinctive ordering. In ordinary chronological terms, human beings exist before they are taught the Qur'an (Nisrina et al., 2024). The Qur'anic sequence, however, places ʿallama al-Qur'ān ('He taught the Qur'an') before khalaqa al-insān ('He created humankind'). Exegetical interpretations of this ordering emphasize that human worth cannot be reduced to physical existence but is also associated with divine guidance conveyed through the Qur'an as an expression of mercy (Mohd Yusoff et al., 2022). From this perspective, compassion-oriented Qur'anic education is closely related to the development of human capacities for fulfilling the responsibility of stewardship (khilāfah) on earth.

Contextual Analysis: The Relevance of Compassion to Contemporary IRE

Viewed through the principle of inter-verse coherence (munāsabah), Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3 presents a distinctive theological sequence by placing ʿallama al-Qur'ān before khalaqa al-insān, rather than following the historical chronology of human physical existence (Nurul Aulia et al., 2022). The priority accorded to Qur'anic teaching can be read as highlighting the significance of spiritual guidance beyond biological existence and as an expression of divine raḥmah in character formation (Gunawan, 2022). Within the limits of a pedagogical interpretation, this sequence is not advanced as the sole theological explanation for human creation. Instead, it offers an epistemological basis for viewing compassion-based education as an important means of developing human potential and affirming human dignity in contemporary society (Anni Annisa' & Sulistiyawati, 2025).

The compassion-based educational framework derived from Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3 offers a theoretical proposition for addressing the dehumanizing tendencies associated with contemporary education. It distinguishes compassion as a foundational orientation toward human flourishing, empathy as a cognitive-affective capacity to understand learners' circumstances, and care as the practical expression of sustained educational support. These dimensions may interact to foster inclusive learning environments (Sulthon et al., 2024). Knowledge transmission conducted within a caring educational climate may, in turn, encourage more reflective, authentic, and transformative religious awareness.

Nevertheless, acceptance of students within this framework should not be conflated with unrestricted permissiveness. Compassionate teaching remains compatible with discipline, ethical norms, and clearly articulated pedagogical responsibilities. Because the present framework is conceptual, it is not proposed as an immediate or universally applicable solution. Its assumptions and potential effects require further empirical examination across educational levels and institutional contexts (Zain et al., 2024).

Implications for Contemporary Islamic Religious Education

Interpreting compassion through Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3 suggests possible revisions to several dimensions of contemporary IRE. Four interrelated areas are considered: curriculum design, instructional methods, teachers' professional roles, and the learning environment.

Table 1. Synthesis of the Proposed Implications of Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3 for IRE

IRE component	Identified educational concern	Primary exegetical basis	Proposed reconstruction and indicators
Curriculum	Emphasis on cognitive load and memorization (Sholahudin et al., 2025)	Q.S. 55:1 (al-Rāzī: raḥmah precedes the transmission of knowledge)	SEL/affective orientation: use of rubrics to assess empathy and affective responses.
Instructional methods	One-way and doctrinal instruction (Rama Armedi, 2025)	Q.S. 55:2 (al-Zamakhsharī: dialogic transmission and intensification [takthīr])	Caring pedagogy: weekly reflective circle-time discussions and moral dilemma reflection.
Educators	Fear-based authoritarian practices (Juliani et al., 2025)	Q.S. 55:1–2 (Quṭb: the educator as a nurturing guide [murshid])	Empathetic facilitation: positive reinforcement and opportunities for individual consultation.
Learning environment	Rigid climates and individualistic competition (Ariza et al., 2025)	Q.S. 55:3 (Shihab: affirmation of human dignity)	Psychological safety: participatory classroom norms, anti-bullying reporting mechanisms, and peer support.

Discussion

Reconstructing the IRE Curriculum

The integration of social and emotional learning (SEL) into the IRE curriculum is proposed as a constructive dialogue with contemporary educational theory, rather than as a literal equivalence between the Qur'anic verses and a modern psychological model. The SEL framework associated with CASEL (Weissberg et al., 2015)—comprising self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—shows conceptual affinities with the dimension of raḥmah emphasized in Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3. Whereas Ar-Raḥmān offers a theological and spiritual orientation associated with self-purification (tazkiyat al-nafs), SEL provides a contemporary

psychopedagogical framework through which relevant educational practices may be articulated. The proposed curriculum therefore distinguishes three learning domains: religious knowledge (cognitive), the internalization of values (affective), and observable behavior (conative/psychomotor).

As a conceptual formulation, the proposed SEL-informed curriculum cannot be assumed to resolve the affective challenges of IRE. It should instead be treated as a pedagogical hypothesis requiring empirical investigation, for example through classroom action research or curriculum trials in different educational institutions (Kasmila et al., 2025).

Table 2. Proposed SEL-Informed IRE Learning Design Matrix (Grade 10, Senior Secondary School)

Learning domain	Learning objective	Learning activities	Assessment
Religious knowledge (cognitive)	Analyze the message of Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3 regarding the meaning of raḥmah.	Analytical (taḥlīlī) study and comparison of classical and contemporary exegesis.	Analytical essay questions and a conceptual synthesis worksheet.
Value internalization (affective)	Develop emotional awareness and empathy toward others.	Reflective circle-time discussion of bullying case studies.	Daily self-reflection journal.
Observable conduct (conative)	Demonstrate care, support, and social responsibility within the school community.	Peer-support projects and student mentoring activities.	Daily observation records and peer assessment.

When achievement in IRE is assessed primarily through students' fluency in recitation or their memorization of religious history and ritual obligations, important dimensions of everyday ethical conduct may receive insufficient attention. The proposed expansion of the curriculum seeks to connect religious learning with the enactment of values in daily life. Cognitive and ritual learning remain essential; however, they should be approached not merely as academic requirements but also as opportunities to develop students' emotional and social competencies (Tukly et al., 2025).

Transforming Instructional Methods

IRE instruction could benefit from dialogic approaches, experiential learning, and storytelling that draws on exemplary narratives in the Qur'an. Such methods would emphasize the internalization of values rather than outward compliance alone (Irodati, 2022). In practice, reflective dialogue allows teachers to facilitate critical consideration of shared experiences, while empathetic feedback acknowledges students' responses and circumstances. These strategies are intended not simply as a collection of techniques but as practical means of supporting a safe, participatory learning climate that strengthens students' understanding.

Reconceptualizing the Role of IRE Teachers

The quality of relationships between educators and students is central to the transformation of religious education. In this perspective, IRE teachers are not solely instructors (muʿallim) responsible for transmitting religious knowledge; they are also educators and mentors (murabbī) who embody the ethical significance of Ar-Raḥmān through their professional conduct (Dwistia et al., 2024; Judrah et al., 2024). Such exemplary conduct may include empathetic communication, accessible individual guidance for students experiencing difficulties, and patient, responsive classroom management that avoids punitive or repressive corrective practices.

Establishing a Psychologically Safe Learning Environment

Schools and IRE classrooms should provide welcoming, psychologically safe environments free from physical and symbolic violence. Such conditions can support students' holistic development (Wasiati, 2024), while the broader educational environment plays an important role in the internalization of religious teachings (Mukmin, 2024). Psychological safety refers to a learning climate in which students feel able to express opinions, ask questions, and learn from mistakes without fear of humiliation or negative personal judgment (Edmondson, 1999). Accordingly, the proposed approach involves collaboratively developed classroom agreements, prompt and firm responses to bullying, and constructive feedback that corrects mistakes without shaming learners. These conditions are expected to support both meaningful learning and character development, although their effectiveness in IRE settings remains to be tested.

Conclusion

This study concludes that a pedagogical interpretation of Q.S. Ar-Rahman [55]: 1–3 places compassion (raḥmah) at the conceptual foundation of Islamic education. The textual analysis identifies a meaningful relationship in which divine mercy precedes Qur'anic teaching and the reference to human creation, providing an interpretive basis for linking education with the affirmation of human dignity. In contemporary settings, this framework offers a possible response to dehumanizing tendencies and emotional harm in educational practice. Its proposed implications include affectively oriented curricula, dialogic and empathetic instructional methods, teachers who model compassionate conduct, and psychologically safe learning environments. The principal contribution of the study is a conceptual framework for Ar-Raḥmān-based pedagogy that connects Qur'anic theological principles with the pedagogical needs of contemporary IRE. Its limitations include the restricted textual corpus of verses 1–3, the existence of alternative hermeneutical interpretations, and the absence of classroom-based evaluation. Future research should therefore develop, implement, and empirically evaluate instructional models derived from these principles in educational institutions.

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