

Islamic Education in Europe, The Middle East, and Asia: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

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Abstract: This study examines Islamic education in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia from historical and contemporary perspectives. Using library research with a qualitative descriptive-comparative approach, data were collected from academic journals, books, and policy documents published between 2020 and 2024. Content analysis and cross-regional comparison were employed to identify educational orientation, curriculum structure, sociopolitical context, and contemporary challenges. The findings show that Islamic education is dynamic and adaptive, shaped by diverse historical and sociocultural contexts. In Europe, Islamic education has shifted from the intellectual legacy of Andalusia to a minority-based system emphasizing identity and social integration. In the Middle East, it balances classical traditions with modern reforms amid ideological and political dynamics. In Asia, Islamic education demonstrates contextual adaptation through integration with local culture, national education systems, and digital technology. Major challenges include digital transformation, educational inequality, ideological tensions, and curriculum reform.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji pendidikan Islam di Eropa, Timur Tengah, dan Asia dalam perspektif historis dan kontemporer. Penelitian menggunakan studi kepustakaan dengan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif-komparatif. Data diperoleh dari jurnal akademik, buku, dan dokumen kebijakan terbitan 2020–2024. Analisis dilakukan melalui teknik analisis isi dan perbandingan lintas kawasan untuk mengidentifikasi orientasi pendidikan, struktur kurikulum, konteks sosial-politik, dan tantangan kontemporer. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan Islam bersifat dinamis dan adaptif, dipengaruhi oleh konteks sejarah dan sosial-budaya yang beragam. Di Eropa, pendidikan Islam bergeser dari warisan intelektual Andalusia menuju sistem berbasis minoritas yang menekankan identitas dan integrasi sosial. Di Timur Tengah, pendidikan Islam menyeimbangkan tradisi klasik dan reformasi modern di tengah dinamika ideologis dan politik. Di Asia, pendidikan Islam beradaptasi melalui integrasi budaya lokal, sistem pendidikan nasional, dan teknologi digital. Tantangan utama meliputi transformasi digital, ketimpangan pendidikan, ketegangan ideologis, dan reformasi kurikulum.



INTRODUCTION

Islamic education holds a fundamental position in the formation of human civilization, as it is rooted in revealed values and aims to cultivate individuals of knowledgeable, faithful, and ethical integrity (Anwar, 2024). Historically, the advancement of Islamic civilization during the golden ages of Baghdad, Andalusia, and various intellectual centers throughout the Middle East provides compelling evidence that well-structured educational systems were able to produce generations of scholars who successfully integrated religion, science, and culture (Pulungan, 2017). The theological foundation of Islamic education is explicitly emphasized in the Qur'anic verse Surah al-Mujadalah [58]:11, which states that Allah elevates the status of those who believe and possess knowledge (Zulfah et al., 2023). This verse indicates that education is not merely a process of transmitting knowledge, but also a means of moral and spiritual elevation of humans (In'ami, 2025).

In the global context, Islamic education has evolved through diverse historical and cultural dynamics. In Europe, the intellectual heritage of Andalusia a significant period in the development of Islamic education, during which philosophy, medicine, mathematics, and the arts flourished and contributed to the broader intellectual history of Western civilization (Wahidah et al., 2021). However, following the Christian reconquest, Islamic educational institutions experienced a prolonged decline and only began to regain visibility alongside the growth of Muslim immigrant communities in contemporary Europe (Napitupulu & Fahmi, 2020). Today, Islamic education in Europe faces major challenges related to its integration into secular education systems, particularly in negotiating religious identity, citizenship, and institutional legitimacy.

In contrast, the Middle East represents the historical heartland of Islamic education, where madrasas and universities such as Al-Azhar have functioned as authoritative centers of Islamic learning for centuries. Despite their long-standing tradition, efforts to modernize curricula and pedagogical approaches continue to face resistance from traditionalist scholars who prioritize the preservation of classical epistemological frameworks and scholarly authority (Yusoff & Ushama, 2022). This tension between tradition and reform remains a defining feature of Islamic education in the region. Meanwhile, in Asia especially Indonesia Islamic education has developed through a process of cultural acculturation, resulting in distinctive educational models such as pesantren, madrasahs, and modern Islamic schools. The contemporary transformation of Islamic education in this region is evident in the emergence of hybrid pesantren that integrate digital technology and innovative learning methods while maintaining traditional Islamic values (Mustofa et al., 2023).

These differing historical experiences and socio-cultural configurations across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia have produced significant diversity in curriculum design, pedagogical orientations, educational objectives, and implementation strategies. In Europe, Islamic education is largely situated within minority and secular frameworks, generating complex dynamics related to identity negotiation and institutional adaptation (Afendi & Khojir, 2024). In the Middle East, the central issue lies in balancing curriculum modernization with the preservation of traditional scholarly authority (Satria, 2016).

Meanwhile, in Asia, Islamic education demonstrates a strong capacity for contextual adaptation, responding to globalization while preserving local cultural and religious values (Lubis, 2025). This diversity not only reflects the heterogeneity of Islamic education globally but also raises important theoretical questions regarding how Islamic education negotiates change without compromising its normative foundations.

Despite the growing number of studies on Islamic education, existing research still tends to examine this field in a partial and fragmented manner, focusing on a single region, a specific institution, or a particular educational dimension. Within the limited body of comparative studies, Sidik, Vachruddin, and Rusydiyah (2024) explored the integration of Islamic education and science in Imam Hatip Schools in Turkey and MAN Insan Cendekia in Indonesia. While this study shares a common concern with the present research regarding curriculum integration and educational modernization, it differs in scope by concentrating primarily on elite institutions and lacking a broader historical and cross-regional perspective. Similarly, Fitriani, Munir, and Nurlaila (2025) analyzed Islamic education systems in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Egypt through philosophical, sociological, and pedagogical lenses. Although their study offers a multi-country overview, it remains largely descriptive and does not systematically examine how Islamic education evolves across distinct civilizational regions.

Other studies adopt a more localized focus. Sholeh, Rohman, and Suwandi (2023) examined curriculum transformation in Indonesia in response to global demands, emphasizing national-level educational reform without situating it within a broader comparative or historical framework. Likewise, Juliana, AR, and Saiful (2026) investigated the modernization of dayah institutions in Aceh, providing valuable empirical insights at the regional level but without engaging in cross-regional comparison. While these studies share thematic similarities with the present research in addressing reform and adaptation in Islamic education, they differ substantially in terms of geographical scope, analytical integration, and theoretical ambition.

Based on this body of literature, a clear research gap emerges. There remains a lack of systematic, cross-regional comparative studies that integrate Europe, the Middle East, and Asia within a single analytical framework while simultaneously incorporating both historical and contemporary perspectives. Existing studies tend to focus either on institutional comparison, curriculum reform, or regional case studies, but rarely explain how Islamic education across different regions negotiates social change, political contexts, and globalization while maintaining its normative Islamic principles.

Responding to this gap, the present study is guided by three central research questions. First, how has Islamic education developed historically and contemporarily in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia? Second, what social, political, cultural, and historical factors shape the distinctive characteristics of Islamic education in each region? Third, how do similarities, differences, and contemporary challenges emerge, and how does Islamic education in these regions negotiate modernization and globalization while maintaining its core Islamic values?

Aligned with these questions, the objectives of this research are to provide a comprehensive account of the development of Islamic education across the three regions, to analyze the contextual factors influencing its configuration and transformation, and to compare curriculum patterns and pedagogical practices within diverse socio-cultural settings. This research is also represents one of the first integrative cross-regional analyses that systematically compares Islamic education across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia within a unified historical and contemporary framework. In this regard, the study contributes conceptually by offering a holistic model for understanding how Islamic education in diverse socio-cultural contexts negotiates change while maintaining its foundational Islamic principles.

METHOD

This study adopts a library research design with a qualitative descriptive comparative approach to examine the development and characteristics of Islamic education in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Data were obtained from primary and secondary sources, including reputable international journals, accredited national journals, academic books, and relevant educational policy documents, accessed through Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and the collections of the National Library of the Republic of Indonesia. The literature search focused on publications from 2020 to 2024 to capture contemporary developments, while earlier sources were used selectively for historical and conceptual grounding. Keywords included *Islamic education*, *comparative Islamic education*, and *Islamic education in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia*, with inclusion criteria based on topical relevance, methodological clarity, and geographical context, and the exclusion of non-academic, duplicate, and irrelevant sources to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative findings.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis and comparative analysis. The process involved thematic categorization of key issues, such as educational orientation, curriculum, state–religion relations, and sociocultural challenges, followed by conceptual interpretation of theoretical frameworks in relation to regional historical and policy contexts, and argumentative synthesis through cross-regional comparison. The validity of the findings was ensured through source triangulation by cross-checking multiple credible academic sources to maintain thematic consistency, interpretative accuracy, and robustness of the comparative conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Islamic Education in Europe

Islamic education in Europe historically developed during the period of Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula, particularly in the region known as Andalusia. The term *Andalusia* is believed to originate from *Vandalusia*, meaning “the land of the Vandals,” referring to the Germanic tribe that once inhabited the region before the arrival of Islam (Aizid, 2025). Prior to the emergence of Islamic rule, the Iberian Peninsula experienced political instability, social inequality, and limited intellectual development during what is

often referred to as the early medieval period (Aizid, 2017). The arrival of Islam in the Iberian Peninsula in 711 CE marked a significant transformation in the region's political, cultural, and intellectual landscape. Muslim forces led by Tariq ibn Ziyad crossed from North Africa and defeated the Visigothic ruler, initiating the establishment of Islamic governance in Andalusia. Other military figures, including Tharif ibn Malik and Musa ibn Nusayr, also played important roles in the expansion and consolidation of Muslim rule in the region (Ghoni & Roza, 2024).

Under Islamic governance, Andalusia rapidly developed into one of the most advanced centers of learning in medieval Europe. Cities such as Córdoba became major intellectual hubs where scholars, students, and translators from various parts of Europe gathered to study science, philosophy, and religious knowledge. This period, commonly referred to as the Golden Age of Andalusia (711–1492 CE), witnessed the flourishing of Islamic educational institutions such as madrasahs, libraries, research centers, and early forms of universities (Supriyadi, 2015). Educational institutions in Andalusia offered a comprehensive curriculum that integrated both religious and rational sciences. Students studied Islamic disciplines such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and fiqh, alongside philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and natural sciences. This integrative educational model reflected the Islamic intellectual tradition that emphasized harmony between revelation and reason.

Several influential scholars emerged during this period and made major contributions to intellectual life in both the Islamic and Western worlds. Among the most prominent were Ibn Rushd (Averroes), a philosopher and jurist known for his commentaries on Aristotle, and Ibn Bajjah (Avempace), a philosopher who contributed to the development of rational thought and scientific inquiry. Their works significantly influenced European scholasticism and played an important role in the intellectual transmission that later contributed to the emergence of the Renaissance (Kosasih & Fahmi, 2024). Another important characteristic of Islamic education in Andalusia was its spirit of intellectual openness and pluralism. Educational institutions were not limited exclusively to Muslims; Christian and Jewish scholars also participated in scholarly activities. This environment facilitated the translation and transmission of Greek and Arabic knowledge into Latin, enabling European scholars to access scientific and philosophical works that had previously been preserved and developed within the Islamic intellectual tradition.

The dissemination of knowledge from Andalusia to Christian Europe became one of the major factors contributing to the rise of intellectual revival in Europe, often associated with the Renaissance period (Afriadi & Hoktaviandri, 2024). However, the fall of Granada in 1492 marked the end of Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula. Following this event, many Islamic educational institutions were closed, libraries were destroyed, and Muslim scholars were forced to migrate, leading to a decline in Islamic intellectual activity in the region. Despite this decline, the intellectual legacy of Islamic education in Andalusia continued to influence European scholarship through manuscripts, translations, and philosophical works produced by Muslim scholars. These contributions

became foundational references in the development of modern Western science and philosophy.

In the modern era, the context of Islamic education in Europe has changed significantly. Muslims today constitute a minority population in most European countries, which affects the structure and objectives of Islamic educational institutions. Islamic education is now developed through institutions such as Islamic schools, local madrasahs, community learning centers, and Islamic studies programs in universities. The primary goals of Islamic education in contemporary Europe include strengthening Muslim identity, fostering moral character, and promoting the ability of Muslim communities to live harmoniously within pluralistic societies (Koenig, 2023). Educational programs often combine the national curriculum with Islamic religious instruction to support both academic achievement and religious understanding.

Modern Islamic education in Europe also utilizes contemporary pedagogical approaches such as digital learning platforms, interactive classrooms, and multilingual teaching materials to accommodate diverse Muslim communities. In addition, collaboration between Islamic institutions and universities has contributed to the development of academic programs in Islamic studies that are open to both Muslim and non-Muslim students (Napitupulu & Fahmi, 2020). Nevertheless, Islamic education in Europe continues to face several challenges, including issues related to cultural assimilation, discrimination, and concerns about radicalization. Consequently, Islamic educational institutions play an important role in promoting moderation, intercultural dialogue, and social integration within European societies.

Overall, the historical development of Islamic education in Europe demonstrates a transformation from a center of intellectual civilization during the Andalusian Golden Age to a minority-based educational system in the modern era. The main characteristics of this development across different historical periods are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.
Development of Islamic Education in Europe

Period	Educational Characteristics	Institutions	Major Scholars	Contributions
Andalusian Golden Age (711–1492)	Integration of religious sciences and rational sciences	Madrasahs, libraries, study circles, early universities	Ibn Rushd, Ibn Bajjah	Transmission of scientific and philosophical knowledge to Europe
Post-Reconquista (after 1492)	Decline of Islamic educational institutions	Closure of madrasahs and destruction of libraries	Migration of Muslim scholars	Preservation of knowledge through manuscripts and translations

Modern Europe	Minority-based Islamic education emphasizing identity formation and integration	Islamic schools, community madrasahs, Islamic studies programs in universities	Contemporary Muslim scholars	Strengthening Muslim identity, promoting social integration, and intercultural dialogue
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Table 1 illustrates the historical transformation of Islamic education in Europe across three major periods. During the Andalusian Golden Age (711–1492), Islamic education reached its peak, characterized by the integration of religious and rational sciences and supported by well-developed institutions such as madrasahs, libraries, and early universities. This period produced prominent scholars such as Ibn Rushd and Ibn Bajjah, whose works contributed significantly to the transmission of knowledge to Europe (Ainiyah & Setiawan, 2024).

Following the Reconquista after 1492, Islamic educational institutions experienced a significant decline. Many institutions were closed, and intellectual activities diminished as Muslim scholars migrated. Despite this decline, the preservation of knowledge through manuscripts and translations allowed Islamic intellectual contributions to continue influencing European thought.

In the modern period, Islamic education in Europe has shifted into a minority-based system. Its primary focus is no longer the expansion of scientific dominance, but rather the strengthening of Muslim identity, moral development, and the promotion of social integration within pluralistic societies (Napitupulu & Fahmi, 2020). This transformation highlights the adaptive nature of Islamic education in responding to changing social, political, and cultural contexts in Europe.

Islamic Education in the Middle East

Islamic education in the Middle East represents the earliest and most foundational development of Islamic educational traditions. Since the emergence of Islam in the seventh century CE, several cities in the region have served as primary centers of learning, including Mecca, Medina, Kufa, Basra, and Baghdad. In the early period, education was primarily conducted in mosques through informal study circles (*halaqah*), where the companions of the Prophet and subsequent generations of scholars transmitted knowledge of the Qur'an, Hadith, jurisprudence, and Islamic ethics (Sipahutar et al., 2026).

As Islamic civilization expanded, more structured educational institutions began to emerge. Elementary educational institutions known as *kuttab* were established to teach basic literacy and Qur'anic recitation to children. Over time, madrasahs developed as centers for advanced learning that provided systematic instruction in both religious sciences and rational sciences. Subjects such as theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and literature were taught within these institutions,

reflecting the integrative intellectual tradition of Islamic civilization (T. A. H. Hasibuan et al., 2026).

During the classical period of Islamic civilization, the Middle East became a global center of intellectual activity. Major cities such as Baghdad played a significant role in the development of scientific and philosophical traditions. Scholars actively engaged in translation movements that introduced Greek, Persian, and Indian knowledge into Islamic intellectual discourse. This process not only preserved classical knowledge but also stimulated new intellectual developments in science, philosophy, and medicine, which later influenced educational traditions in other parts of the world (Mir & Anjum, 2025).

In the modern era, Islamic education in the Middle East continues to play an important role in the religious and intellectual life of Muslim societies. Several classical institutions remain influential centers of Islamic scholarship, including Al-Azhar University in Cairo, University of Zaytuna in Tunis, and Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca (Fadhluzzakiyy et al., 2024). These institutions continue to maintain classical Islamic scholarship while gradually integrating modern disciplines such as technology, social sciences, and contemporary scientific studies into their curricula.

Despite these developments, Islamic education in the Middle East faces several contemporary challenges. These challenges include the politicization of educational institutions, ideological tensions between conservative and reformist interpretations of Islam, and disparities in educational quality across different countries in the region (Fadhluzzakiyy et al., 2024). Additionally, issues related to gender equality and access to education remain important concerns in certain contexts. Nevertheless, various reform initiatives continue to be implemented to modernize Islamic education while preserving its classical intellectual heritage.

Overall, Islamic education in the Middle East demonstrates a long historical continuity, beginning with mosque-based learning in the early Islamic period, developing into formal educational institutions during the classical era, and continuing today through modern universities and educational reforms (Fadhluzzakiyy et al., 2024). The main characteristics of Islamic educational development in the Middle East across different historical periods are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2.
Development of Islamic Education in the Middle East

Period	Educational Centers	Institutions	Educational Characteristics	Main Challenges / Contributions
Early Islamic Period (7th–10th centuries)	Mecca, Medina, Kufa, Basra	Mosques, halaqah study circles	Transmission of Qur’anic and Hadith knowledge;	Formation of foundational Islamic educational traditions

Classical Islamic Civilization	Baghdad and other major intellectual cities	Kuttab, madrasahs	informal learning systems	Development of global intellectual and scientific traditions
			Integration of religious sciences with rational sciences such as philosophy, medicine, and mathematics	
Modern Era	Major Islamic educational centers in the Middle East	Al-Azhar University, Zaytuna University, Umm Al-Qura University	Integration of Islamic studies with modern sciences, technology, and social sciences	Challenges of politicization, ideological tensions, and disparities in educational quality

Table 2 presents the historical development of Islamic education in the Middle East across three major periods. In the early Islamic period (7th–10th centuries), education was primarily centered in mosques through halaqah study circles, focusing on the transmission of foundational religious knowledge such as the Qur’an and Hadith. This phase established the core structure and tradition of Islamic education (Sipahutar et al., 2026).

During the classical period of Islamic civilization, educational development became more structured with the emergence of institutions such as kuttab and madrasahs. Major intellectual centers like Baghdad played a significant role in advancing knowledge through the integration of religious sciences and rational disciplines, including philosophy, medicine, and mathematics. This period marked the rise of the Middle East as a global hub of intellectual and scientific activity (T. A. H. Hasibuan et al., 2026).

In the modern era, Islamic education in the Middle East continues through established institutions such as Al-Azhar University, University of Zaytuna, and Umm Al-Qura University. These institutions combine classical Islamic scholarship with modern academic disciplines. However, contemporary challenges such as politicization, ideological differences, and unequal educational quality remain significant issues. Overall, the table highlights the continuity and adaptability of Islamic education in the Middle East across different historical contexts (Fadhluzzakiyy et al., 2024).

Islamic Education in Asia

The spread of Islam in Asia began in the seventh century CE through various channels, including trade networks, missionary activities of Muslim scholars, and cultural interactions between Muslim merchants and local communities. These processes occurred across several regions, particularly South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia.

In the early stages, Islamic education was conducted informally in mosques, *surau*, small prayer houses, and the homes of religious scholars. Instruction primarily focused on the study of the Qur'an, Hadith, and the basic principles of Islamic worship and ethics (Nada et al., 2026).

As Islamic influence expanded throughout Asia, more formal educational institutions gradually developed. Madrasas emerged as structured institutions for teaching Islamic sciences, while other forms of educational institutions also appeared in different regions. In Southeast Asia, traditional Islamic boarding schools known as *pesantren* developed as distinctive centers of Islamic learning, particularly in the Indonesian archipelago. Meanwhile, *surau* functioned as local educational institutions in several parts of the Malay world. In South Asia, particularly in India and Pakistan, madrasas became important centers for the transmission of religious knowledge and intellectual traditions (Mawarni et al., 2024).

The development of Islamic education in Asia was closely connected to the growth of Islamic political and cultural centers. In Southeast Asia, Islamic education expanded alongside the rise of Islamic kingdoms such as Samudra Pasai, Malacca, Demak, and Mataram (Razaq, 2025). These centers supported the establishment of Islamic educational institutions that played a crucial role in teaching religion, training scholars, and disseminating Islamic knowledge within local societies.

In Central Asia, Islamic education flourished in major intellectual cities such as Bukhara and Samarkand, which produced influential scholars such as Imam Al-Bukhari, Al-Farabi, and Ulugh Beg. These scholars made significant contributions to both religious sciences and rational sciences, including philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics. Their works played an important role in shaping Islamic intellectual traditions across the Muslim world (T. A. H. Hasibuan et al., 2026).

One distinctive characteristic of Islamic education in Asia is its strong integration with local cultural traditions. Educational models such as *pesantren* in the Indonesian archipelago represent a unique form of Islamic education that combines religious instruction, moral development, community engagement, and cultural adaptation (Shofiyah & Zaelani, 2024). Historically, these institutions not only functioned as centers of learning but also as hubs for religious propagation, leadership training, and community development.

In the modern era, Islamic education in Asia has undergone significant transformation. Many Islamic educational institutions, including madrasas, *pesantren*, and Islamic universities, have begun integrating classical Islamic studies with modern disciplines such as science, technology, and social sciences (Hussain, 2025). In countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, Islamic education has increasingly adopted a dual curriculum that combines national education standards with religious studies (Wahdi et al., 2024).

The development of digital technology has also expanded access to Islamic education across the region. Online learning platforms, Qur'an memorization applications, virtual classrooms, and social media-based learning forums enable wider participation in Islamic learning regardless of geographic limitations (Anvarov, 2024).

These developments contribute to strengthening the religious identity of younger generations in contemporary Muslim societies.

Nevertheless, Islamic education in Asia faces several important challenges. These include disparities in educational quality between countries and institutions, limited educational resources in certain regions, differences in curriculum standards, and concerns regarding the emergence of radical interpretations of religion in some contexts (K. Hasibuan et al., 2025). Consequently, ongoing reforms aim to improve educational quality, promote religious moderation, and prepare Muslim communities to participate actively in global society (Hermansyah et al., 2024).

Overall, Islamic education in Asia demonstrates a dynamic historical development characterized by the integration of Islamic teachings with diverse cultural traditions and modern educational systems. The main characteristics of Islamic educational development in Asia across different historical periods are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3.
The Evolution of Islamic Education in Asia Across Historical Periods

Period	Channels of Islamic Spread	Educational Institutions	Distinctive Characteristics	Challenges / Contributions
Early Development	Trade networks, missionary activities, cultural interaction	Mosques, surau, informal study circles	Transmission of Qur'anic knowledge and basic Islamic teachings	Formation of early Islamic educational traditions
Classical Period	Expansion of Islamic kingdoms and intellectual centers	Madrasas, pesantren, local Islamic schools	Integration of Islamic teachings with local cultures	Development of regional Islamic intellectual traditions
Modern Era	Educational reform and globalization	Madrasas, pesantren, Islamic universities	Integration of national curriculum, modern sciences, and digital technology	Educational quality gaps, limited resources, and concerns about radicalization

Table 3 illustrates the development of Islamic education in Asia across three major historical phases. In the early period, the spread of Islam occurred primarily through trade networks, missionary activities, and cultural interactions. Educational practices were still informal and conducted in mosques, surau, and small study circles, with a primary focus on the transmission of Qur'anic knowledge and basic Islamic teachings.

This phase laid the foundation for the development of Islamic educational traditions in the region.

During the classical period, the expansion of Islamic kingdoms and intellectual centers contributed significantly to the institutionalization of Islamic education. Formal institutions such as madrasas and pesantren began to develop in various regions. In Southeast Asia, pesantren became a distinctive model of Islamic education that integrated religious learning with local cultural traditions. At the same time, major intellectual centers in Central Asia produced influential scholars such as Imam Al-Bukhari, Al-Farabi, and Ulugh Beg, whose contributions shaped both religious and rational sciences (T. A. H. Hasibuan et al., 2026).

In the modern era, Islamic education in Asia has undergone significant transformation influenced by educational reform and globalization. Institutions such as madrasas, pesantren, and Islamic universities have increasingly integrated Islamic studies with modern disciplines, including science, technology, and social sciences. In addition, the use of digital technology has expanded access to education through online platforms and virtual learning environments (Mintasih et al., 2024). Despite these advancements, challenges such as disparities in educational quality, limited resources, and concerns about radical interpretations remain important issues. Overall, the table highlights the dynamic and adaptive nature of Islamic education in Asia, shaped by historical continuity, cultural diversity, and contemporary global influences.

Discussion

Integration of Religious and Scientific Knowledge

The findings from the three regions Europe, the Middle East, and Asia demonstrate that one of the most significant characteristics of Islamic education is the integration of religious and scientific knowledge. This integrative approach has been a defining feature of Islamic intellectual tradition across different historical and geographical contexts (T. A. H. Hasibuan et al., 2026).

In the Middle East, particularly during the classical period of Islamic civilization, educational institutions such as madrasahs developed curricula that combined religious sciences with rational disciplines. Scholars in major intellectual centers like Baghdad actively engaged in the study of theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, medicine, and mathematics. This integration was further strengthened through translation movements, which allowed the incorporation of Greek, Persian, and Indian knowledge into Islamic scholarship (T. A. H. Hasibuan et al., 2026).

Similarly, in Europe during the Andalusian period, Islamic education reached a high level of intellectual advancement. Institutions in Andalusia implemented an integrative curriculum that combined the study of the Qur'an, Hadith, and fiqh with philosophy, astronomy, medicine, and other sciences. Prominent scholars such as Ibn Rushd and Ibn Bajjah played a crucial role in bridging religious knowledge with rational inquiry (Kosasih & Fahmi, 2024). Their works significantly influenced the transmission of knowledge to Europe and contributed to the development of Western intellectual traditions.

In Asia, the integration of religious and scientific knowledge took a more adaptive and culturally embedded form. Educational institutions such as pesantren not only focused on religious instruction but also incorporated elements of social, cultural, and practical knowledge relevant to local communities. In the modern era, this integrative model has evolved further, with Islamic educational institutions adopting dual curricula that combine national education systems with Islamic studies, as well as incorporating science, technology, and digital learning (Arizqi et al., 2026).

Across these regions, the integration of knowledge reflects a shared epistemological foundation within Islamic education, which does not separate revelation and reason but rather views them as complementary sources of truth. This perspective aligns with broader intellectual traditions developed by scholars such as Al-Farabi, who emphasized the harmony between philosophy and religion (Saleh & Syamsuddin, 2026).

However, the findings also indicate that the degree and form of integration have changed over time. While classical Islamic education demonstrated a strong and balanced integration of disciplines, modern Islamic education in many contexts tends to face challenges in maintaining this balance. In some cases, there is a tendency toward dichotomy between religious and secular knowledge, influenced by colonial legacies, modern educational systems, and socio-political factors.

Therefore, the integration of religious and scientific knowledge remains both a historical strength and a contemporary challenge for Islamic education. Strengthening this integrative approach is essential for developing educational systems that are not only rooted in religious values but also responsive to the demands of modern society.

Contextual Adaptation of Islamic Education

Islamic education has historically demonstrated a strong capacity to adapt to diverse social, cultural, and political contexts across different regions. This adaptability is evident in the variations of educational models and institutional practices found in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Rather than being a rigid system, Islamic education evolves in response to the needs and characteristics of the societies in which it is embedded (Bahri et al., 2025).

In Europe, Islamic education operates within a minority context, where Muslims live alongside diverse religious and cultural communities (Fanani & Nasirudin Al Ahsani, 2025). As a result, Islamic educational institutions emphasize the development of religious identity while simultaneously promoting values such as tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and social integration. Educational programs often incorporate national curricula alongside Islamic teachings, reflecting an effort to balance religious commitment with civic participation. This context encourages Islamic education to adopt inclusive and pluralistic approaches in order to remain relevant within European societies.

In the Middle East, Islamic education is deeply rooted in its historical role as the center of Islamic civilization. However, contemporary developments show that it is also shaped by political, ideological, and social dynamics. Educational institutions in this region continue to preserve classical Islamic scholarship while gradually integrating

modern academic disciplines. The adaptation process in the Middle East is therefore characterized by a tension between maintaining tradition and responding to modern educational demands. In some contexts, this adaptation is influenced by state policies and ideological orientations, which affect curriculum design and educational objectives (Fadhluzzakiyy et al., 2024).

In Asia, Islamic education exhibits a distinctive form of contextual adaptation through the integration of national education systems, modern sciences, and digital technologies (Rochim et al., 2025). This demonstrates a dynamic balance between preserving religious identity and engaging with contemporary developments.

The contextual adaptation of Islamic education highlights its flexibility and resilience across different historical and geographical settings. While the core through its close interaction with local cultures and traditions. Institutions such as pesantren in Indonesia and surau in the Malay world reflect how Islamic teachings are integrated with indigenous cultural practices. This cultural accommodation allows Islamic education to be more socially embedded and widely accepted within local communities. Furthermore, in the modern era, Islamic education in Asia has adapted to globalization by incorporating principles of Islamic teachings remain consistent, their implementation varies according to local needs and conditions. This adaptability not only ensures the continuity of Islamic education but also enhances its relevance in addressing contemporary challenges in diverse societies.

Contemporary Challenges and Transformation

Islamic education in the contemporary era faces a range of complex challenges that arise from rapid social, technological, and political changes. At the same time, these challenges have encouraged significant transformations in the structure, content, and delivery of Islamic education across different regions, including Europe, the Middle East, and Asia (Hermansyah et al., 2024).

One of the major challenges is the rapid advancement of digital technology, which has fundamentally altered the landscape of education. Islamic educational institutions are required to adapt to digital learning environments, including online platforms, virtual classrooms, and multimedia-based instruction. While these developments provide opportunities to expand access to knowledge, they also demand new pedagogical competencies from educators and raise concerns about the quality and authenticity of religious instruction in digital spaces (Mintasih et al., 2024).

Another significant issue is the disparity in educational quality across regions and institutions. In some parts of Asia and the Middle East, limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and uneven access to qualified teachers continue to hinder the effectiveness of Islamic education. These disparities create gaps in learning outcomes and contribute to unequal opportunities for students. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive educational reforms, including curriculum development, teacher training, and institutional support (Shofiyyah & Zaelani, 2024).

In addition, Islamic education faces challenges related to ideological tensions and the potential emergence of radical interpretations of religion. In certain contexts, educational institutions may become influenced by rigid or exclusive perspectives that do not reflect the broader values of Islam. This situation highlights the importance of promoting moderate, inclusive, and balanced approaches to Islamic teachings. Educational institutions therefore play a crucial role in fostering critical thinking, ethical awareness, and intercultural understanding among students (Fanani & Al Ahsani, 2025).

In Europe, additional challenges emerge from the position of Muslims as minority communities. Issues such as discrimination, identity negotiation, and social integration influence the development of Islamic education. Institutions must balance the preservation of religious identity with the need to engage constructively within pluralistic societies. This requires adaptive curricula and inclusive educational strategies that support both religious and civic competencies (Koenig, 2023).

Despite these challenges, Islamic education has undergone significant transformation as a response to contemporary demands. Many institutions have begun integrating modern disciplines such as science, technology, and social sciences into their curricula, reflecting a more holistic approach to education. Furthermore, the adoption of digital technologies has expanded access to Islamic learning beyond traditional classroom settings, enabling broader participation across geographical boundaries (Afendi & Khojir, 2024).

In Asia, for example, pesantren and madrasas have increasingly incorporated formal education systems and modern subjects, while maintaining their traditional religious foundations. In the Middle East, universities such as Al-Azhar continue to reform their curricula to remain relevant in a globalized world. Meanwhile, in Europe, Islamic education has evolved into a system that emphasizes integration, dialogue, and coexistence within multicultural societies (Fadhuzzakiyy et al., 2024).

The challenges faced by Islamic education in the contemporary era have not only created obstacles but also stimulated meaningful transformation. These developments demonstrate the capacity of Islamic education to evolve while maintaining its core values. By responding to modern challenges with innovative and inclusive approaches, Islamic education continues to play a vital role in shaping knowledgeable, ethical, and socially responsible individuals in diverse global contexts.

CONCLUSION

Islamic education in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia has developed dynamically across historical and contemporary contexts, shaped by diverse socio-cultural, political, and intellectual factors. Historically, it evolved from informal religious learning into structured institutions integrating religious and scientific knowledge, which remains a core characteristic across regions. The findings show that in Europe, Islamic education has transformed from the intellectual center of Andalusia into a minority-based system emphasizing identity and integration; in the Middle East, it maintains strong continuity while negotiating tensions between tradition and modernization; and in Asia, it

demonstrates high adaptability through cultural integration and the incorporation of modern and digital education systems.

Despite regional differences in curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional forms, Islamic education shares common challenges, including digital transformation, educational inequality, ideological tensions, and the need for curriculum reform. Overall, Islamic education demonstrates a strong capacity to negotiate modernization and globalization while preserving its foundational Islamic principles, thereby highlighting its relevance and resilience in diverse global contexts.

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