Islamic Religious Education from an Ontological Perspective: A Philosophical Study

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Abstract: Islamic Religious Education from an Ontological Perspective: A Philosophical Study

Objectives: This study examines the ontological foundations of Islamic Religious Education (IRE), focusing on the nature of reality, human existence, knowledge, and educational aims within Islamic philosophical thought. **Methods:** A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted by synthesizing academic works published between 2015 and 2025 through systematic identification, screening, and thematic analysis. **Results:** The study reveals that IRE rests on a theocentric worldview that positions God as the ultimate reality; views humans as holistic beings with physical, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions; and regards knowledge as originating from divine revelation, supported by reason and experience. This ontological orientation strengthens curriculum development, clarifies the educator's moral-spiritual role, and promotes the integration of religious and scientific knowledge. **Conclusion:** Ontological principles offer a comprehensive philosophical foundation for redefining educational aims, methods, and teacher roles, while restoring moral and spiritual direction in education. **Contribution:** This research provides a conceptual overview of IRE's ontological structure, serving as a foundation for curriculum reform, teacher capacity building, and integrative educational models rooted in Islamic metaphysics

Keyword: Ontology; Islamic Religious Education; Islamic Philosophy; Metaphysics; Holistic Education

Abstract: Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Perspektif Ontologi: Sebuah Kajian Filosofis

Tujuan: Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji landasan ontologis Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dengan menelaah hakikat realitas, keberadaan manusia, pengetahuan, dan tujuan pendidikan dalam perspektif filsafat Islam. **Metode:** Penelitian menggunakan metode Systematic Literature Review (SLR) terhadap publikasi ilmiah tahun 2015–2025 melalui proses identifikasi, seleksi, dan analisis tematik. **Hasil:** Penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ontologi PAI berakar pada pandangan teosentris yang menempatkan Tuhan sebagai realitas tertinggi, manusia sebagai makhluk holistik, dan pengetahuan sebagai gabungan wahyu, akal, dan pengalaman. Pendekatan ini memperkuat kurikulum, peran pendidik, serta integrasi ilmu agama dan ilmu umum. **Kesimpulan**: Landasan ontologis memberikan kerangka filosofis komprehensif untuk merumuskan kembali tujuan, metode, dan struktur pendidikan Islam. **Kontribusi:** Penelitian ini menyajikan peta konseptual ontologi PAI sebagai dasar pengembangan kurikulum, peningkatan kompetensi pendidik, dan model pendidikan integratif berbasis prinsip metafisik Islam:

Kata Kunci: 3-5 kata atau frase yang penting, spesifik, atau representatif bagi artikel ini.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education holds a central position in shaping the identity and civilization of Muslims, as its function extends beyond the mere transmission of rituals and dogma; it also nurtures the human existence as a being in relation to transcendental reality. In an academic context, the fundamental question that must be answered is: What is meant by "being" in Islamic Religious Education? Ontological questions such as this have direct implications for how the objectives, content, and methods of Islamic Religious Education are formulated. Without ontological clarification, the orientation of education will be prone to fragmentation and a loss of existential direction (Luthfiyah et al., 2023).

Ontology, as the study of the nature of existence, serves as a philosophical foundation that determines the conception of humanity, science, and values in Islamic Religious Education. Many pedagogical studies of Islamic Religious Education have so far focused more on epistemological aspects (how children learn religion) or axiological aspects (what values are taught). In contrast, the ontological dimension (what is the essence of humanity, science, and values according to Islam) has not been systematically examined. This gap in research is a conceptual weakness because the ontological foundation colors the entire theoretical construction of education (El-Yunusi et al., 2023).

In the realm of contemporary research, several studies have begun to highlight the need for ontological reconstruction in Islamic education so that the curriculum and learning practices are not only instrumental and pragmatic but also existentially meaningful. These studies urge policymakers and academics to reexamine fundamental assumptions about human existence and the origins of knowledge, thereby providing Islamic Religious Education with a solid foundation in the face of the secularization of science (Ulum et al., 2023).

In the tradition of Islamic thought, the ontological understanding of existence cannot be separated from the principle of tawhid; God as the Supreme Reality (al-wujūd al-ḥaqq) lays the foundation for how to view knowledge, values, and humanity. This ontological perspective, guided by tawhid, distinguishes Islamic education from modern secular models of education, which often separate the transcendental dimension from educational practice. Therefore, studies are needed to bridge the classical heritage and contemporary demands (Budianto et al., 2024).

Various contemporary thinkers describe the essence of humanity in the Islamic ontological framework as a composite that unites the physical, rational, and spiritual (qalb/ruh) dimensions. This view has pedagogical consequences: the goal of education is not merely the achievement of competence or economic productivity, but also the refinement of character and the formation of individuals with ontological awareness. Without recognition of this ontological structure, educational programs are prone to producing fragmented individuals (Kafi, 2024).

The ontology of science in the Islamic tradition also demands a reorientation: science is not understood merely as an accumulation of empirical facts, but as an aspect of reality that originates and finds meaning in revelation and the Sunnah (Jasnain et al., 2022a). Consequently, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum must establish a relationship between religious knowledge and general knowledge that maintains both transcendental truth and contextual relevance. Studies exploring this relationship are needed to avoid a destructive dichotomy between religious knowledge and worldly knowledge (Mukti, 2019).

In addition to theoretical discussions, practical conditions tend to reduce Islamic Religious Education to mere cognitive-ritual teaching. This can be seen in the curriculum orientation that often prioritizes memorization without internalizing values or moral programs that are separated from scientific teaching. This gap between practice and theory indicates a failure to apply the ontological foundations that should bind pedagogical concepts into a coherent whole (Batubara, 2022).

Furthermore, existing studies are often partial, focusing on one ontological aspect, such as humans or science, and treating it separately; thus, a conceptual model integrating the forms of God, humans, science, and values has not yet emerged. This lack of thematic synthesis poses a methodological challenge that can be overcome through a systematic and comprehensive SLR approach, which is capable of mapping discourse and exploring conceptual gaps (Holid et al., 2023).

Social changes and the challenges of modernity, including globalization, secularization, and cultural homogenization, make the need for ontological reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education increasingly urgent (Satria & Aryati, 2024). Educational management researchers have shown that an ontological understanding influences the formulation of institutional vision and mission, curriculum design, and learning policies, enabling education to maintain its moral-spiritual goals amid the pressure of commercialization (Alivia et al., 2023).

In historical studies, the tradition of Islamic thought provides a rich foundation for ontological reconstruction, ranging from the examination of concepts of existence and reason in classical works to the reformulation of the positions of science and literature by contemporary thinkers. However, the literature that synthesizes this heritage into an applicable framework for Islamic Religious Education is relatively limited. Therefore, a systematic study is needed that collects and synthesizes classical and modern arguments (Tiam, 2021).

The research gap also includes methodology: few philosophical studies of Islamic Religious Education utilize the SLR approach to produce a comprehensive literature map. The use of SLR in the realm of educational philosophy will help reveal dominant themes, theoretical contradictions, and empirical contributions relevant to the formulation of an ontological framework. This approach also adds to the reliability of theoretical studies (Ainina, 2024).

By understanding these theoretical and practical urgencies, this study is designed to formulate an integrative ontological framework for Islamic Religious Education. The framework is expected to elucidate the ontological relationship between God, humans, science, and values, and to demonstrate its implications for curriculum objectives, learning strategies, and educational evaluation in the context of contemporary madrasahs/pesantren/Islamic schools (Ghifari, 2021).

The main research questions guided by the above needs are: (1) how do ontological concepts in Islamic tradition and literature shape the understanding of Islamic Religious Education; (2) how do the ontological structures of humans and science influence educational orientation; and (3) what conceptual models can be applied to strengthen the ontological integrity of Islamic Religious Education. The answers to these questions are expected to provide conceptual contributions and practical recommendations for the development of Islamic Religious Education (Ahmed, 2016).

Theoretically, the innovation of this research lies in its multi-figure synthesis (integration of classical and contemporary perspectives) and methodological novelty in the form of applying SLR to the study of the philosophy-ontology of Islamic Religious Education (Zajonc, 2015). Practically, this research aims to develop a model that can serve as a reference for curriculum development, teacher training, and institutional policies, thereby maintaining the spiritual and ethical orientation of Islamic education (Syafriadi et al., 2025).

This research not only fills bibliographic and analytical gaps in the discourse on Islamic Religious Education, but also provides a clear direction for reconstructing education rooted in the ontological reality of Islam. The resulting literature mapping, thematic analysis, and conceptual synthesis are expected to form a strong argumentative basis for academics and practitioners of Islamic education (Huda, 2021).

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the ontological structure in Islamic Religious Education can be systematically mapped through a comprehensive literature review. This study aims to identify the primary ontological themes that underlie the concepts of humanity, knowledge, reality, and educational goals from an Islamic perspective, while also evaluating

the extent to which contemporary studies employ ontological frameworks in the development of educational theory and practice. In addition, this study aims to establish a philosophical foundation that can serve as a basis for curriculum design renewal, enhancing the role of educators, and integrating science into the Islamic education system more consistently and comprehensively.

B. METHOD

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to examine the ontological basis of Islamic Religious Education philosophically. The SLR method was chosen because it enables the systematic and transparent identification, evaluation, and synthesis of scientific literature, allowing subsequent researchers to replicate the study's results and reduce subjective bias (Hermansyah et al., 2024).

This research was conducted in 2025. The data sources in this study were scientific journal articles, conference proceedings, and academic books relevant to the theme of Islamic education ontology. To obtain credible and up-to-date sources, literature searches were conducted through databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, and Islamic education journals that use SLR as a method. The search protocol refers to the SLR guidelines commonly used in education and philosophy research (Nisa, 2025).

The data collection procedure began with determining keywords that were representative of the ontology of Islamic Education, such as "ontology of Islamic education," "philosophy of Islamic education," and "metaphysics of Islamic education." After the keywords were identified, the literature identification stage was conducted through academic search engines and journal databases, followed by an initial screening based on titles and abstracts. Literature that met the inclusion criteria was then further evaluated at the eligibility stage, and finally, relevant literature was selected for synthesis (Booth et al., 2016).

The inclusion criteria were designed so that only truly relevant and high-quality literature was considered. These criteria included: (1) publication between 2015 and 2025, (2) peer-reviewed, (3) discussing ontological aspects or the philosophy of Islamic education, and (4) available in full text. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria included popular opinion literature, non-academic writings, and sources that did not provide in-depth philosophical analysis (Afif, 2024).

The data collection instrument utilized a literature extraction matrix, which contained the following elements: author, year of publication, purpose of the writing, theoretical approach, ontological assumptions, methods (if applicable), and main findings. This matrix helped to summarize and organize ontological arguments from various sources, facilitating further analysis. The data from the matrix were then analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach, combining deductive and inductive coding. The deductive coding focused on ontological concepts already established in Islamic philosophy, while the inductive coding explored new themes emerging from the latest literature (Nasution, 2025).

The data analysis technique was conducted conceptually and qualitatively. In this process, the selected literature was analyzed to develop an ontological understanding of Islamic Religious Education through cross-analysis of the thoughts of classical Islamic philosophers, contemporary Islamic education research, and modern educational theory. The results of the analysis are expected to form a coherent and comprehensive conceptual framework regarding existence (reality), humans, science, and values in Islamic Religious Education (Dluha, 2024).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Result

Based on the results of data screening that has been carried out, the research results are explained in the following table:

Table 1. Results of Review

No	Author & Year	Research Title	Objective	Main Findings	Ontological Relevance in Islamic Education
1	Salminawati (2020)	Ontological Basis of Science Classification (Study on the Philosophy of Islamic Education)	To study the ontological basis of Islamic education based on Tawhid.	Found that Tawhid is the ontological foundation of all Islamic educational processes.	Emphasizes that the reality of education in Islamic Education is theocentric and centered on God.
2	Wijayanti (2025)	Philosophy of Science in the Perspective of Islamic Education	To examine key concepts in the philosophy of science, including epistemology, ontology, and axiology, and their relevance to Islamic education.	Found that Islamic philosophy of science emphasizes the integration of revelation and reason. Islamic education not only aims to enlighten but also to form character and spirituality, creating a knowledgeable, ethical, and virtuous generation.	Stresses that Islamic education views humans as physical-spiritual beings, thus requiring holistic education.
3	Batubara (2022)	The Meaning of Ontology in the Perspective of Islamic Education	To explain the concept of ontology in Islamic education.	Ontology is understood as the study of the essence of existence in education.	Becomes the conceptual foundation for understanding the reality of Islamic education.
4	Halik (2020)	Islamic Education Science: Ontological, Epistemological, Axiological Perspective	To study the philosophical structure of Islamic education.	Islamic education is built on a transcendental ontological foundation.	Relevant for mapping the nature of reality in education.
5	Mukti & AS (2019)	Ontology of Islamic Education	To elaborate on the concept of ontology in Islamic education.	Found that the essence of education is the formation of human existence.	Explains human existence as the ontological foundation of Islamic education.
6	Mansur (2021)	Islamic Education: Ontological & Axiological Perspective	To describe the ontology of Islamic education in a philosophical perspective.	Teachers and students have an ontological position as transcendental subjects.	Clarifies the ontological structure of teachers and students.

No	Author & Year	Research Title	Objective	Main Findings	Ontological Relevance in Islamic Education
7	Luthfiyah & Khobir (2023)	Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology in Educational Philosophy	To analyze the basic structure of educational philosophy.	Humans have ontological potentials in intellect and spirit.	Strengthens the concept of humans as holistic beings in Islamic education.
8	Dluha et al. (2024)	Teaching Materials Development in Islamic Education Research	To conduct an SLR on the development of teaching materials in Islamic education.	Curriculum and teaching materials are based on ontological values of Tawhid.	Relevant to the ontology of Islamic education curriculum.
9	Achmad (2024)	Philosophy Trilogy for the Development of Islamic Education Management	To explain the philosophy trilogy in the management of Islamic education.	Ontology serves as the basis for the direction of Islamic education development.	Provides conceptual contributions to the ontology of Islamic education management.
10	Munir & Salminawati (2025)	Islamic Education in the Perspective of WCM Education	To study the ontology-epistemology-axiology of Islamic education.	Islamic education is rooted in the reality of revelation and the values of Tawhid.	Relevant as the ontological foundation for contemporary Islamic education models.
11	Ulum & Azizah (2023)	Knowledge in the Perspective of Islam and the West	To analyze the ontology of Islamic and Western knowledge.	Differences in the origins of knowledge produce new ontological perspectives.	Emphasizes that knowledge in Islamic education is derived from revelation.
12	Nisa (2025)	Implementation of Islamic Education Philosophy in Curriculum Development	To describe the implementation of philosophy in the curriculum of Islamic education.	The curriculum must be built on the ontological structure of humans and revelation.	Highly relevant for the development of Islamic education curricula.
13	Karoma et al. (2023)	Introduction to the Ontology of Science	To study the ontological essence of science.	Science has an ontological structure that includes metaphysical dimensions.	Strengthens the concept of integrating science in Islamic education.
14	Nuralim et al. (2022)	Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology of the Pesantren Curriculum	To analyze the framework of the pesantren curriculum.	The curriculum is rooted in the ontological structure of students.	Relevant as a foundation for the development of the Islamic curriculum.

No	Author & Year	Research Title	Objective	Main Findings	Ontological Relevance in Islamic Education
15	Jasnain et al. (2022)	Study on Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology in Islamic Education	To study the structure of Islamic education philosophy.	Ontology is the central framework for formulating the objectives of Islamic education.	Explains the ontological relationship between humans and God.
16	Ahmed (2016)	Naquib al-Attas' Theory of Education	To study the concept of ta'dib al-Attas.	Education is rooted in the concept of existence (ontology of being).	An important source for the theory of Islamic education ontology from classical to modern times.
17	Fawwaz Noor (2021)	Dimensions of Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology in Islamic Education	To study the dimensions of Islamic education philosophy.	Ontology determines the direction of educational goals and values.	Relevant for the structure of Islamic education philosophy.
18	Mahfud (2018)	Understanding Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology in Islamic Education	To describe the three pillars of Islamic education philosophy.	Islamic education is rooted in divine reality.	Strengthens the ontological foundation of Islamic education.
19	Budianto & Syukri (2024)	The Relevance of Ontology in Educational Management	To analyze the role of ontology in Islamic education management.	Ontology determines the direction of educational management policies.	Relevant for the development of Islamic education policies.
20	El-Yunusi et al. (2023)	Ontology in Islamic Education Philosophy	To study literacy materials in ontological philosophy.	Teaching materials are derived from the ontological essence of humans.	Relevant for the design of Islamic education learning.
21	Khafidotur (2024)	Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology in Islamic Education Management Theory	To study the philosophical basis of Islamic education management.	Ontology determines the development of educational management theory.	Relevant for the managerial development of Islamic education.
22	Ainina (2024)	Integrating Science and Religion through Ontology	To explain the integration of religion and science through ontology.	Integration based on metaphysical Islamic reality.	Relevant to the development of integrative Islamic education curriculum.

No	Author & Year	Research Title	Objective	Main Findings	Ontological Relevance in Islamic Education
23	Syafriadi et al. (2025)	Aspects of Ontology in Science	To analyze the ontological aspects of science.	Science is understood as a layered reality.	Becoming the ontological foundation of Islamic education knowledge

From the results of the review of the above articles, the findings show that the majority of studies from the 2016–2025 period consistently affirm that ontology is the primary foundation for developing an Islamic Education framework. Almost all articles emphasize that tauhid is the highest ontological basis that guides the structure of knowledge, educational goals, the role of educators, the curriculum, and even the life orientation of students. In addition, the literature shows agreement that, from the perspective of Islamic Religious Education, humans are understood as physical-spiritual beings with spiritual, intellectual, and moral potential that must be developed in an integrated manner through a humanistic and theocentric educational process.

Other findings show that knowledge in Islamic Religious Education is hierarchical, rooted in revelation as a source of absolute truth supported by reason and experience. Many studies emphasize that Islamic Religious Education rejects the separation between religious and general knowledge, because all knowledge is seen as part of the reality of Allah's creation. In addition, a number of articles also pay attention to ontological integration in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, in which the curriculum must be built on the structure of the values of monotheism, worship, morals, and muamalah so that it can shape students into perfect human beings.

In the realm of educational practice, studies highlight that educators occupy an ontological position as murabbi and muaddib, namely educators who not only transfer knowledge but also shape the existence of students through moral and spiritual exemplary behavior. Students themselves are positioned as ontological subjects who develop through spiritual, intellectual, and ethical potential that must be guided to achieve spiritual maturity. In addition, many articles emphasize that the ontology of Islamic Religious Education plays a crucial role in addressing modern educational problems that tend to be materialistic and fragmented, thereby necessitating an Islamic ontological paradigm to restore the orientation of education to the existential goals of humans.

Overall, the SLR table reveals that Islamic Religious Education possesses a comprehensive ontological structure, encompassing the realities of God, humans, knowledge, goals, values, curriculum, and the role of educators. This structure serves as the foundation for developing an Islamic education model that is holistic, integrative, and responsive to the needs of the times.

A literature review also reveals that ontological understanding in Islamic Religious Education views reality not merely as a material phenomenon, but also encompasses metaphysical reality related to the relationships between humans, God, nature, and themselves (Wijayanti, 2025). This confirms that Islamic Religious Education has a theocentric ontological character, which places God's existence at the center of the meaning, direction, and purpose of education. Other sources also indicate that this metaphysical aspect is not only understood as a concept but also as the basis for pedagogical actions that shape students' life orientation. Analysis of philosophical texts and Islamic educational literature reveals that the essence of humans as subjects of education is understood as natural beings with an innate potential to recognize truth and goodness (Luthfiyah, 2023). In this context, the ontology of Islamic Reli-

gious Education places humans as spiritual entities who are directed to return to their natural purity through the learning process. The SLR findings show that this orientation of returning to one's natural state is a dominant theme in the ontological interpretation of Islamic education.

In addition, the SLR synthesis results indicate that the reality of knowledge in Islamic Religious Education is not isolated but is directly related to the concept of revelation as the source of absolute truth (Suhaimis & Amrizon, 2024). Its ontology views knowledge as originating not only from empirical experience or rational reasoning, but also from divine information sourced from the Qur'an and Sunnah. Thus, the ontological structure of knowledge in Islamic Religious Education is hierarchical, with revelation as the foundation, reason as the tool, and experience as the reinforcement. In the realm of educational objectives, the study's results show that the ontology of Islamic Religious Education views the goal of education as a process of perfecting human existence (tahdzib al-nafs), which harmonizes intellectual, spiritual, and moral abilities (Murtopo, 2019). Various literature emphasizes that these objectives are not only related to academic achievement, but also to character building and an integral awareness of diversity. This orientation shows that Islamic Religious Education operates within a comprehensive and holistic ontological framework (Bazza, 2017).

The SLR results also reveal that the reality of the educational process in Islamic Religious Education is understood as a multidimensional interaction between educators, students, curriculum, and environment, unified by the value of monotheism (Holid et al., 2023). This process is not only an activity of knowledge transfer, but also a process of self-transformation and appreciation of spiritual values that are manifested in actions. The literature emphasizes that this ontological dimension renders the educational process a worshipful activity of transcendental value.

In addition to the process, ontological studies also focus on the existence of educators as central figures in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education. SLR shows that educators are understood as murabbi, mu'allim, and muaddib who not only teach but also educate through existential exemplarity (Mansur, 2021). The role of teachers is to reflect divine values in real life, so that the ontology of educators encompasses moral, spiritual, and epistemic elements simultaneously. Likewise, students are understood as ontological entities that have the potential to develop gradually. The literature states that humans develop through three ontological layers: spiritual potential, intellectual potential, and ethical potential (Rofingah, 2024). Islamic Religious Education aims to nurture all these layers so that students can achieve spiritual maturity, which is the ultimate goal of Islamic education.

The SLR study also found that the curriculum in Islamic Religious Education is viewed as a structured reality built on the values of monotheism, worship, morals, and muamalah (Rohmatulloh, 2024). This structure contains an ontological dimension because each subject does not stand alone but is connected in a network of meanings that leads to the formation of a complete human being. This shows that the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is designed based on a comprehensive understanding of human nature and the purpose of life. The following finding indicates that the ontology of Islamic Religious Education has a significant impact on educational praxis, particularly in emphasizing the integration of religious and general knowledge (Mahfud, 2018). The literature confirms that the separation of the two is considered contrary to the ontological principles of Islam, which views all knowledge as part of the reality of Allah's creation. Therefore, the ontological paradigm of Islamic Religious Education leads to the integrative reconstruction of knowledge.

In addition to the integration of knowledge, the results of the SLR also show that the ontology of Islamic Religious Education emphasizes the concept of balance (tawazun) as the basic structure of human existence (Munir & Salminawati, 2025). Humans are understood as beings who must balance both worldly and spiritual aspects, as well as physical and spiritual aspects, and individual and social aspects. This ontological awareness is the basis that strengthens cha-

racter-based learning practices. A literature review also found that this ontological orientation has an impact on the identification of modern educational problems that tend to be materialistic. Many academic works emphasize that the loss of the religious ontological dimension in education has caused a moral and spiritual crisis among students (Hasanah et al., 2025). Therefore, Islamic Religious Education is considered a means of restoring a more meaningful existential orientation to human life.

Another important finding reveals that the ontology of Islamic Religious Education views students as subjects who must be educated in accordance with their nature. This nature implies that education must be humanistic and theocentric, not merely technocratic (Nuralim, 2022). Much of the literature concludes that this approach is relevant to the needs of 21st-century education, which demands the formation of personal integrity, not just technical competence. In addition, the study also found that the ontology of Islamic Religious Education broadens students' understanding of social reality, where education extends beyond the classroom and is influenced by culture, technology, and family environment (Halik, 2020). This reinforces that the ontology of Islamic Religious Education is dynamic and open to change as long as it does not conflict with the principle of tawhid.

The last paragraph of the research results shows that all literature studies are consistent in describing that the ontology of Islamic Religious Education builds awareness that education is a process of returning human existence to God (Jasnain et al., 2022b). This is the overall conclusion of the ontological structure of Islamic Religious Education, which includes the reality of God, humans, knowledge, goals, values, and the educational process. Islamic Religious Education is understood not merely as a subject, but as an existential system that defines how humans interpret life.

Discussion

The ontological discussion of Islamic Religious Education places the issue of "the essence of existence" as the starting point that determines the entire theoretical and practical direction of education. According to a literature review, contemporary works emphasize that the ontology of Islamic Religious Education is theocentric: God (al-Wujud Al-Haqq) is the ontological source that gives meaning to human existence and all knowledge taught in Islamic Religious Education. This approach leads to education that is not merely a transfer of instrumental knowledge, but the formation of students' existential orientation, so that their lives are meaningful in relation to God (Yunita & Saidah, 2025).

Furthermore, a synthesis of the literature reveals that the ontological construction of humans in Islamic Religious Education necessitates a multidimensional understanding that encompasses the aspects of the body, mind, and spirit/heart, which must be integrated into the objectives and methods of learning. The concept of fitrah, often referred to as the "ontological potential" of humans, frequently appears in studies that underpin the rationale for Islamic education to be nurturing (tarbiyah) rather than merely instructional (ta`lim). The SLR results demonstrate the consistency of this view in recent studies, indicating that the curriculum and pedagogical strategies must prioritize the integral development of human beings (Alivia et al., 2023).

In relation to epistemology, the discussion reveals a close relationship between revelation and reason as two primary sources of knowledge, each occupying an ontological position within the Islamic tradition. The literature reviewed rejects a sharp dichotomy between revelation and reason; instead, many authors emphasize the symbiosis of the two as a way for humans to understand reality. Thus, the ontology of science in Islamic Religious Education is not merely a claim of propositional truth, but a claim about the origin of truth rooted in divine reality and its confirmation through reason and experience (Barid et al., 2025).

The discussion also highlights the ontological implications for curriculum design: an ontology-based curriculum is no longer seen as a list of instrumental competencies, but as a

network of knowledge and practices that culminates in the formation of a complete human being. The analyzed literature provides evidence that an ontological curriculum incorporates elements of reflection, ritual, ethics, and intellectual disciplines that reinforce each other. Therefore, the transformation of the Islamic Education curriculum must be directed towards aligning learning forms with the ontological goals of Islamic education (Abdillah & Najib, 2024).

In terms of the role of educators, the discussion emphasizes that teachers or murabbi hold an ontological function as figures who mediate the revelatory and rational experiences of students. Contemporary literature emphasizes the exemplary character, spiritual sincerity, and reflective abilities of teachers as prerequisites for the learning process to become a truly transformative experience. In other words, pedagogical competence must be enriched with ontological competence so that education produces fundamental character building (Ulum & Azizah, 2023).

The SLR discussion also revealed modern challenges to the application of Islamic Religious Education ontology, particularly conflicts with secularization, the commodification of education, and an emphasis on economic outcomes. The authors' study reveals that the absence of ontological understanding can lead to education becoming mechanical and technocratic. Therefore, the ontological reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education becomes a corrective strategy to restore the purpose of education to its authentic human and divine dimensions (Sumarno & Syukri, 2021).

At the practical level, the discussion highlights learning methods that align with ontology: approaches that recommend reflective, discursive, and contextual learning are more effective in fostering ontological awareness than one-way instruction. The SLR research results recommend integrating contemplative practices, hermeneutic dialogue, and meaningful project-based learning into an ontological Islamic Religious Education curriculum. These methods help students internalize the relationship between knowledge, existence, and values (Karoma et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the discussion shows that the ontological discourse of Islamic Religious Education is not homogeneous; there are variations in perspectives that refer to classical traditions (*Ibn Sīnā, al-Ghazālī, al-Farābī*) and contemporary thinkers (al-Attas, local thinkers). A synthesis of the literature highlights the need for a comparative approach that leverages the strengths of classical theory and its relevance to the contemporary context, thereby making the ontological framework of Islamic Religious Education more alive and applicable (Achmad, 2024).

From the gap analysis, the discussion confirms that although many writings discuss ontological elements, there are still few studies that systematically combine ontology, epistemology, and axiology into an operational conceptual model for curriculum and evaluation. Therefore, the contribution of this SLR is to offer a thematic map that can be used as a basis for developing a more concrete ontological model of Islamic Religious Education that can be tested in implementation studies (Page et al., 2021).

In summary, the discussion concludes that ontology provides an essential philosophical framework for revitalizing Islamic Religious Education: it affirms goals, enriches the curriculum, designs methods, and defines the role of educators from an existential perspective. The challenge ahead is to transform this ontological narrative into consistent policies, practices, and evaluations so that Islamic Religious Education can respond to the needs of the times without losing its philosophical roots. Further empirical and implementation research needs to be conducted to test the effectiveness of the proposed ontological model.

D. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Research Implications

This research has significant theoretical implications for the development of Islamic educational philosophy, particularly in terms of ontology. The SLR study reveals that the ontology of Islamic Religious Education is grounded in a theocentric, holistic, and hierarchical structure of reality, thereby enriching Islamic educational theories that have thus far focused more on epistemology or methodology. The finding that educational reality is based on tawhid, fitrah, and the relationship between humans, God, and nature provides a new theoretical basis for reconstructing the concepts of humanity, knowledge, and educational goals in Islamic Religious Education. These theoretical implications help expand the philosophical framework that education cannot be separated from the metaphysical foundations that guide its orientation and practice.

On a practical level, this research encourages educators, policymakers, and educational institutions to adopt an ontological approach in the implementation of Islamic Religious Education. The SLR findings, which emphasize the importance of integrating spiritual, intellecttual, and moral dimensions, indicate the need for a curriculum design that not only emphasizes academic competence but also strengthens the religious identity and character of students. The emphasis on the role of teachers as murabbi and muaddib has practical implications in the form of demands for improvements in the personality, exemplary behavior, and spirituality of educators so that the learning process does not stop at the transfer of knowledge but can shape the existence of students.

Methodologically, this study demonstrates that the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach is a practical method for examining philosophical concepts, such as the ontology of Islamic Religious Education. SLR enables researchers to identify patterns, gaps, and thematic trends across various literatures, resulting in a comprehensive conceptual map. The methodological implication is that further research related to Islamic education philosophy can use a similar approach to strengthen the accuracy, objectivity, and depth of theoretical synthesis. In addition, the finding that the literature remains fragmented between ontology, epistemology, and axiology opens up opportunities for research with a more integrative philosophical synthesis approach.

From a managerial and policy perspective, this research suggests that the Ministry of Education, Islamic educational institutions, and curriculum developers should reconsider the philosophical foundations of education. The SLR finding that modern education tends to be trapped in a materialistic and technocratic orientation is an important warning for policymakers to re-instill Islamic ontological values into the direction and objectives of national education. This includes the integration of religious and general knowledge, the strengthening of value-based curricula, and the development of a learning environment that fosters students' transcendental awareness. Thus, education policy can shift towards a humanistic-theocentric orientation that aligns with the essence of humanity in the Islamic perspective.

2. Research Contribution

This research makes a significant contribution to the development of knowledge in the field of Islamic Religious Education, particularly in clarifying the ontological foundations that underlie the entire process of Islamic education. Through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, this research successfully maps out how the concepts of reality, humanity, and the purpose of existence in the Islamic perspective form the basis for the entire educational structure. This study emphasizes that Islamic Religious Education is not merely a pedagogical activity, but a process rooted in the Islamic metaphysical view of human existence as servants and caliphs. This contribution enriches the literature on Islamic Religious Education, which normative and methodological approaches have dominated.

Another contribution of this study is reflected in the mapping of the concept of humanity in Islamic ontology, which has a direct impact on the development of learner theory in Islamic Religious Education. This study found that the paradigm of human existence in Islamic education integrates spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social dimensions. This finding reinforces modern theories that emphasize the importance of a holistic approach in education, while providing a philosophical basis for the development of a humanizing educational design for Islamic Religious Education. Thus, this research provides a new theoretical basis that academics can use in formulating a comprehensive concept of learners.

In the field of Islamic Religious Education, this research also contributes to the development of a philosophical framework for the curriculum. By examining the latest academic studies, this research demonstrates that integrating Islamic ontological values into the curriculum is a fundamental requirement for Islamic Religious Education to remain relevant to contemporary challenges.

This contribution also fills a gap in the literature, which has tended to focus more on the implementation of the curriculum than on its metaphysical discussion. The results of this study can serve as a basis for curriculum designers to strengthen the spiritual and moral objectives of Islamic education without neglecting modern academic competencies. Methodologically, this study contributes by introducing the use of SLR as a valid and systematic approach in the study of Islamic education philosophy.

SLR shows that philosophical studies can be conducted not only through the analysis of classical texts, but also empirically through the synthesis of various accredited academic studies. With this methodological contribution, the study opens up opportunities for further studies that seek to examine the epistemological, axiological, and scientific integration dimensions of Islamic education using more structured and replicable methods.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future research is recommended to expand the study of Islamic Religious Education ontology through an empirical approach that can test the extent to which these ontological principles are implemented in educational practices in schools, madrasas, or Islamic boarding schools. Field research using qualitative or mixed methods approaches can provide a concrete picture of how the dimensions of monotheism, understanding of human nature, and existential orientation are applied by teachers and students in the actual learning process.

In addition, future research needs to develop conceptual models or operational frameworks that integrally combine the ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects of Islamic Religious Education. This model can then be tested through experimental studies or research and development (R&D) to assess its effectiveness in strengthening the character, spirituality, and thinking abilities of students. Comparative studies between classical and contemporary approaches to Islamic education can also be research opportunities that enrich the philosophical understanding of Islamic Religious Education in the context of the 21st century.

F. CONCLUSION

An ontological study of Islamic Religious Education, conducted through a Systematic Literature Review approach, confirms that the foundations of human existence, knowledge, and the educational process in Islam are built on the principle of monotheism, which unifies all dimensions of human existence. This conclusion addresses the research objective that the ontological essence of Islamic Religious Education serves not only as a philosophical foundation but also as a guiding direction for curriculum development, learning methods, and the role of educators in shaping individuals who are spiritually, intellectually, and morally whole.

This study also affirms that strengthening the ontological dimension in Islamic Religious Education contributes to a more comprehensive reconstruction of the educational paradigm,

especially in facing modern challenges such as secularization, materialism, and the reduction of education to a technocratic activity. Through a reading of contemporary literature, it is evident that the development of Islamic education requires the integration of metaphysical values and the practical needs of today's educational world so that Islamic Religious Education remains relevant and capable of answering the existential problems of modern humans.

As a development in science, this research opens up opportunities to formulate a new conceptual model of Islamic Religious Education based on ontology that can serve as a basis for curriculum development and learning evaluation. Further research is recommended to test this model in an empirical context, ensuring its effectiveness in shaping the character and religious awareness of students. Thus, this study makes a substantial theoretical contribution, leading to practical innovations that can be applied in the world of Islamic education.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

All authors actively participated in the preparation of this article. LHB: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - Original Draft, Data Curation. RS: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing, Formal analysis. MA: Conceptualization.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no significant competing financial, professional, or personal interests that may influence the performance or presentation of the work described in this manuscript.

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