

## Islamic Education Management: Promoting Literacy and Social Transformation of Urban Muslims in Facing the Challenges of Globalization

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### Abstract

This study examines the relationship between Islamic literacy and social awareness among urban Muslim communities in the context of accelerating globalization, with particular attention to Indonesia as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by PRISMA protocol, the study systematically screened 312 scholarly publications retrieved from Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ERIC, DOAJ, and SINTA databases, covering the period 2018–2024. Following a rigorous three-stage selection procedure, 87 studies met the inclusion criteria and were subsequently analyzed through a narrative-thematic synthesis approach. The findings reveal that Islamic literacy is inherently multidimensional, encompassing four analytically distinct yet interrelated dimensions: textual-classical, critical-interreligious, digital-media, and social-civic. These dimensions operate synergistically through four principal mechanisms: the formation of scripture-grounded ethical character, the cultivation of critical capacity for social resilience, the reinforcement of communal identity as a driver of prosocial action, and the development of cross-cultural competence. The evidence strongly indicates that when Islamic literacy is developed in an integrative manner, it functions simultaneously as a protective and constructive force reducing individual susceptibility to disinformation and extremist recruitment, nurturing inclusive and moderate religious identity, and strengthening ethically-grounded civic participation. Mosque-based literacy programs, institutionalized digital literacy initiatives, and formal Islamic educational institutions each play vital roles in producing Muslim communities capable of robust and socially responsible engagement with contemporary challenges. The study concludes that rather than rendering Islamic literacy obsolete, the era of globalization intensifies its urgency as a foundational resource for social consciousness.

### Keywords

Globalization; Islamic Literacy; Social Awareness; Urban Muslims.



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## INTRODUCTION

The convergence of religious life and digital modernity represents one of the most consequential tensions in twenty-first-century Islam. For approximately 1.9 billion Muslims distributed across the world's expanding urban centers, globalization simultaneously generates unprecedented opportunities for religious learning and poses profound challenges to

established forms of religious identity and social cohesion. The compression of geographical distance through digital communication platforms has democratized access to Islamic knowledge, yet has equally opened new pathways for the rapid propagation of extremist ideologies, theological disinformation, and culturally disruptive consumerism (Athoillah et al., 2023). These competing dynamics render the question of how Islamic literacy intersects with social awareness among urban Muslim populations both empirically pressing and analytically complex.

Historically, the concept of Islamic literacy has been associated with the capacity to read Qur'anic scripture and to engage with the classical corpus of Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and ethics. Yet, as increasing proportions of the global Muslim population inhabit complex urban environments saturated with competing value systems, ideological narratives, and unrelenting digital stimuli, this classical conception proves inadequate for the challenges confronting contemporary Muslim communities (Faiz, 2023). Urban Muslims navigate informational ecosystems that bear little resemblance to those presupposed by traditional Islamic pedagogy. As ethnographic studies conducted in middle-class mosque communities in Yogyakarta have demonstrated, Islamic literacy in the Indonesian urban context functions not merely as textual mastery, but as a dynamic social practice through which individuals actively construct and negotiate religious identity amid the pressures of consumer society and pluralistic modernity.

The pertinence of this inquiry is further magnified by Indonesia's distinctive position in the global Islamic landscape. As the nation with the world's largest Muslim-majority population exceeding 230 million adherents increasingly concentrated in rapidly expanding metropolitan centers Indonesia represents a set of Islamic literacy challenges and possibilities of unparalleled scale and diversity. The institutional pluralism of Indonesian Islamic education encompassing state-run madrasah networks, privately operated pesantren, university-based Islamic faculties, and a diverse ecosystem of community-based majelis taklim generates a complex landscape in which divergent conceptions of literacy and civic engagement coexist and compete (Hermansyah et al., 2024). This institutional complexity makes Indonesia an especially productive site for investigating the relationship between Islamic literacy and social awareness.

The central problems motivating this research are threefold. First, there remains an absence of any comprehensive and empirically grounded conceptual framework capable of capturing Islamic literacy as a genuinely multidimensional competence suitable for the conditions of digital modernity. Second, the empirical evidence concerning the specific mechanisms through which Islamic literacy cultivates or inhibits social awareness in urban contexts remains fragmented, scattered across disciplinary boundaries, and rarely synthesized in a theoretically coherent manner. Third, Islamic educational institutions have demonstrated an insufficient capacity to respond to the rapid digital transformation that is fundamentally altering the production, circulation, and consumption of religious knowledge (Ju'subaidi et al., 2024). From these identified gaps, the study formulates its central research question: Through

what mechanisms does Islamic literacy contribute to the development of social awareness among urban Muslim communities in an era of accelerating globalization?

This study pursues four interrelated objectives: (1) to analyze the multiple dimensions of Islamic literacy that carry direct relevance for urban and global contexts; (2) to identify and characterize the mechanisms linking Islamic literacy to social awareness; (3) to examine both the challenges and the opportunities that digital transformation presents for Islamic literacy development; and (4) to formulate evidence-based recommendations for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers working to strengthen Muslim social engagement. Theoretically, the study contributes to educational and social science scholarship by integrating a multilevel literacy framework into the discourse on Islamic education and civil society. Practically, its findings are intended to inform curriculum reform efforts aimed at equipping Muslim urban populations with the competencies necessary for meaningful civic participation in the twenty-first century.

Prior scholarly work has illuminated several relevant dimensions of this relationship. (Ali et al., 2021) documented interreligious literacy learning as a promising counter-radicalization strategy within Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions. Saada, (2023) argued persuasively that religious education, when thoughtfully designed, can contribute meaningfully to global citizenship through the cultivation of what she terms ‘epistemic humility.’ Zaid et al., (2022) analyzed the ways in which social media influencers are reconfiguring religious authority among Muslim millennials, with consequential implications for how Islamic knowledge is acquired and legitimated. Notwithstanding these contributions, a comprehensive synthesis connecting Islamic literacy, the mechanisms of social consciousness formation, and the conditions of digital transformation remains notably absent from the literature. The present study addresses this gap by offering an integrative framework grounded in systematic evidence synthesis.

The theoretical scaffolding of this study builds upon and extends multiliteracy theory as originally articulated by the New London Group (1996) and subsequently elaborated within Islamic educational scholarship. Whereas foundational treatments of literacy emphasize the decoding of written text, contemporary literacy theorists conceptualize literacy as a set of socially situated, culturally mediated, and critically oriented practices that enable individuals to navigate and reshape meaning within specific sociocultural contexts. Applied to the domain of Islamic education, this theoretical orientation invites a reconceptualization of Islamic literacy that transcends the exclusively textual and incorporates the critical, the digital, and the civic.

Drawing on this theoretical foundation, and synthesizing the relevant empirical literature reviewed in the present study, Islamic literacy is conceptualized as encompassing four analytically distinct yet mutually reinforcing dimensions. The textual-classical dimension concerns competence in reading and interpreting Qur’anic scripture, hadith literature, and the classical corpus of Islamic jurisprudence and theology—the historical core of Islamic learning. The critical-interreligious dimension refers to the capacity to evaluate religious claims and interpretations through principled reasoning, and to engage constructively with religious others

from a position of informed confidence rather than defensive insularity. The digital-media dimension encompasses the skills required to navigate Islamic content across digital platforms critically, to distinguish authoritative from unreliable sources, and to participate in online religious communities in an ethically grounded manner. The social-civic dimension involves the translation of religiously grounded values and ethical commitments into concrete forms of civic participation, prosocial behavior, and community engagement.

This four-dimensional framework constitutes the organizing principle of the present review and provides the analytical lens through which the synthesized evidence is interpreted. Its originality lies in the explicit theorization of the relationships among these dimensions and in its systematic linkage to empirically identifiable mechanisms of social awareness formation. Social awareness, as employed in this study, refers to a complex of cognitive, affective, and behavioral orientations that enable individuals to perceive, understand, and respond to the needs, conditions, and experiences of others both within and beyond their immediate community. In the Islamic scholarly tradition, this capacity finds expression in concepts such as *maslahah* (the common good), *adalah* (justice), and *rahmah* (mercy), which collectively establish a normative framework for Muslim social engagement. Contemporary social science scholarship has elaborated analogous constructs under such headings as civic consciousness, prosocial orientation, and social responsibility.

In urban contexts characterized by rapid social change, ethnic and cultural diversity, and the constant mediation of social experience through digital platforms, the cultivation of social awareness presents distinctive challenges. Urban environments simultaneously expose Muslim individuals to heightened social complexity and to the resources institutional, intellectual, and relational through which that complexity might be navigated (Taufikin et al., 2025). The relationship between Islamic literacy and social awareness in this context is neither simple nor linear; it is mediated by institutional conditions, pedagogical approaches, and the broader social and digital ecologies within which Muslim urban communities are embedded.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to synthesize empirical and theoretical evidence concerning the relationship between Islamic literacy and the social awareness of urban Muslim communities. The SLR approach was selected because it offers a transparent, replicable, and methodologically rigorous framework for evaluating diverse and widely dispersed literature, thereby enabling the identification of convergent findings as well as unresolved theoretical issues within the field (Mubaidilah et al., 2025). The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol, which provides standardized procedures for the identification, selection, appraisal, and synthesis of relevant studies. The primary data sources consisted of academic publications indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ERIC, DOAJ, and SINTA, as well as institutional repositories from Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia, including State Islamic Universities (UIN), State Institutes of Islamic Studies (IAIN), and State Islamic Colleges

(STAIN). The study focused on publications released between 2018 and 2024, representing a period characterized by rapid digital platform expansion and significant reforms within Indonesian Islamic education. Search queries were developed using combinations of English and Bahasa Indonesia keywords such as Islamic literacy, literasi Islam, social awareness, kesadaran sosial, urban Muslims, digital literacy, pesantren, madrasah, and majelis taklim, connected through Boolean operators including AND and OR. In addition, citation-chaining techniques were utilized to identify relevant references not captured through database searches. The article selection process followed three stages in accordance with the PRISMA protocol. From 312 initial records identified, 264 unique studies remained after the removal of duplicate entries. Abstract screening further reduced the number to 148 potentially eligible articles, and subsequent full-text evaluations based on the established inclusion criteria resulted in a final dataset of 87 studies included in the synthesis (Athoillah et al., 2023; Judijanto et al., 2025).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1. PRISMA Flow: Systematic Selection of Studies**

Stage	Records (n)	Reason for Exclusion / Inclusion
Initial database retrieval	312	—
Post de-duplication	264	48 duplicate records removed
Post abstract screening	148	116 excluded (off-topic, rural-only, non-urban focus)
Final included studies	87	61 excluded at full-text (non-empirical, no social dimension)

Source: Authors' systematic selection following PRISMA 2020 protocol

### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Studies were included if they satisfied five criteria: (1) published in an indexed peer-reviewed journal or equivalent institutional repository; (2) focused substantively on Islamic literacy, Islamic education, or religiously-informed knowledge practices; (3) addressing social, civic, or community dimensions of Muslim experience; (4) situated in an identifiably urban context; and (5) published within the 2018–2024 period. Studies were excluded if they were restricted to purely theological or jurisprudential analysis without social scientific engagement, if they were based exclusively in rural settings, or if full-text access could not be obtained. These criteria ensured analytical coherence while preserving adequate breadth for meaningful synthesis.

## Quality Appraisal and Analytical Approach

Methodological quality was assessed using three validated appraisal instruments aligned to study design: the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) for mixed-methods studies, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist for qualitative studies, and an adapted Newcastle-Ottawa Scale for cross-sectional surveys. Data extraction was conducted independently by two researchers using a standardized extraction template, with discrepancies resolved through consensus discussion to ensure coding reliability (Hermansyah et al., 2024). Analysis employed narrative-thematic synthesis guided by the four-dimensional Islamic literacy framework outlined in the theoretical framework, enabling identification of cross-study convergences and divergences.

## Profile of Included Studies

Of the 87 studies meeting inclusion criteria, qualitative research designs were most prevalent (42.5%), followed by mixed-methods studies (31.0%), quantitative studies (18.4%), and review or conceptual articles (8.1%). In terms of geographical focus, Indonesia dominated the corpus (64.4%), followed by MENA contexts (18.0%), non-Indonesian Southeast Asia (10.3%), and multi-country comparative studies (7.3%). Institutional sites most frequently examined included pesantren and madrasah (38.2%), informal mosque and community settings (24.1%), Islamic universities and higher education institutions (21.8%), and digital platforms (15.9%). The largest cluster of publications was concentrated in the 2022–2024 period, reflecting accelerated scholarly attention coinciding with the post-pandemic intensification of digital engagement and associated Islamic educational reform efforts.

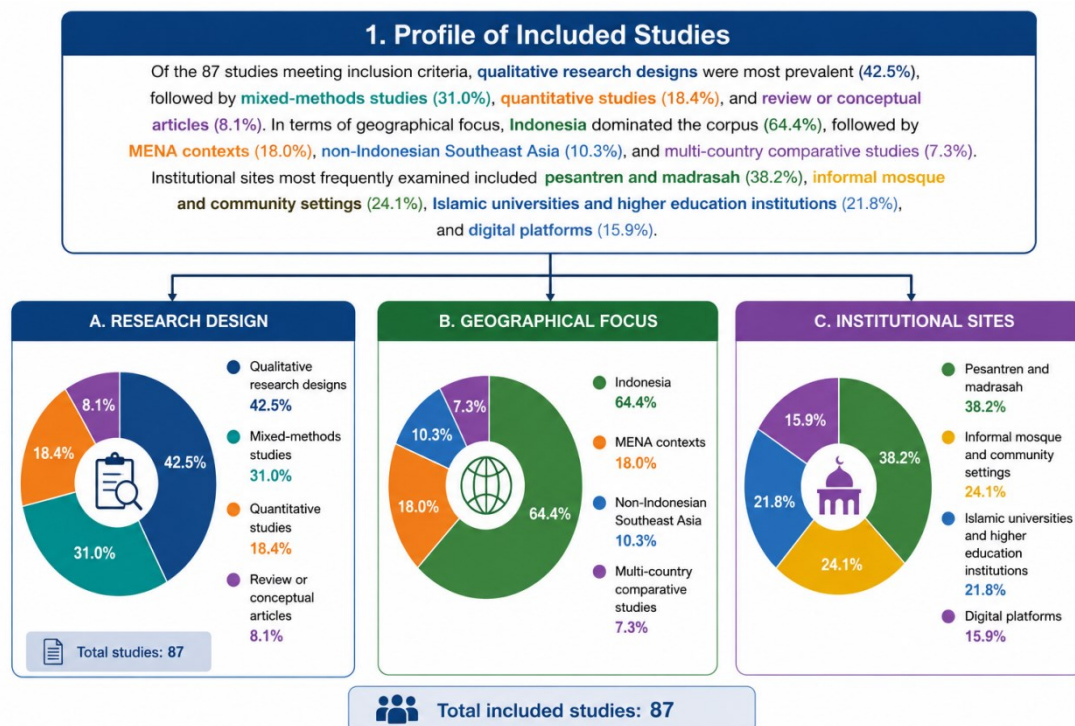


Figure 1. Profile of Included Studies

**Table 2. Distribution of Islamic Literacy Dimensions Across Included Studies**

Literacy Dimension	Studies (n)	Percentage (%)	Primary Institutional Context
Textual-Classical	23	26.4%	Pesantren, Madrasah
Critical-Interreligious	19	21.8%	Islamic Higher Education
Digital-Media	28	32.2%	Digital Platforms, Schools
Social-Civic	17	19.5%	Mosques, Urban Communities
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100%</b>	—

Source: Authors' systematic analysis, 2024

### Dimensions of Islamic Literacy: Empirical Profile

The textual-classical dimension, represented in 26.4% of included studies, centers on Qur'anic competence and familiarity with hadith and tafsir literature. Studies within this cluster consistently demonstrated that depth of textual engagement builds what Yusak, Madrah, and Ardi (2023) characterize as 'faith resilience'—a capacity to sustain ethical commitment amid the disruptions of rapid social change. This dimension was most prominently developed within pesantren and madrasah contexts, where extended and structured engagement with classical texts remains central to the educational mission.

The critical-interreligious dimension (21.8% of studies) demonstrates that structured exposure to knowledge of other religious traditions substantially diminishes susceptibility to exclusivist interpretations of Islam (Ali et al., 2021). This dimension was most consistently cultivated within Islamic higher education institutions, where greater curricular flexibility and a more academically plural environment facilitate encounters with intellectual diversity.

The digital-media dimension constitutes the most actively researched area, comprising 32.2% of included studies. This concentration reflects widespread scholarly concern about the implications of social media platform transformation for Islamic authority structures (Zaid et al., 2022). Research in this cluster documents both the risks that poorly developed digital literacy poses including heightened susceptibility to misinformation and extremist content and the significant protective and developmental benefits that emerge when digital literacy is deliberately cultivated within an Islamic ethical framework.

The social-civic dimension, while constituting the smallest proportion of studies (19.5%), demonstrates the most direct and consistent association with measurable forms of civic engagement and prosocial behavior (Aldi, 2025). Research in this cluster reveals that Islamic literacy programs that explicitly connect religious values to social responsibility and civic participation produce graduates whose community involvement is both more consistent and

more sustainably motivated than those whose education treats religious formation and civic development as separate endeavors.

**Table 3. Geographic and Institutional Distribution of Included Studies**

Category	Sub-category	Proportion (%)
Geographic Focus	Indonesia	64.4%
	MENA Region	18.0%
	Non-Indonesian Southeast Asia	10.3%
	Multi-country Comparative	7.3%
Institutional Site	Pesantren / Madrasah	38.2%
	Mosque / Community Informal	24.1%
	Islamic University / HEI	21.8%
	Digital Platforms	15.9%

Source: Authors' systematic classification of included studies

### **Mechanisms Connecting Islamic Literacy to Social Awareness**

The synthesized evidence from the 87 included studies converges on the identification of four principal mechanisms through which Islamic literacy shapes social awareness among urban Muslim communities. Understanding these mechanisms is analytically essential, since the social effects of Islamic literacy are neither automatic nor uniform; they depend critically on which dimensions are developed, under what pedagogical conditions, and within what institutional environments.

### **Digital Globalization: Challenges and Opportunities for Islamic Literacy**

The digital revolution has fundamentally reconfigured every dimension of urban Muslim religious life, producing what (Ichwan et al., 2024) characterize as a structural shift in the religious knowledge landscape that carries profound implications for Islamic literacy development. Social media platforms Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp, and Telegram have become the primary channels through which urban Muslims access Islamic knowledge, form religious communities, and express religious identity. The scale and velocity of this transformation exceed the adaptive capacity of traditional Islamic educational institutions, generating a significant and growing gap between the digital religious practices of urban Muslims and the literacy competencies required to navigate that landscape critically and ethically.

Zaid et al. (2022)'s analysis of digital Islam and Muslim millennials reveals how social media influencers are reconfiguring religious authority in ways that challenge the legitimacy

and reach of traditional Islamic educational institutions. The influencer ecosystem creates new forms of religious learning characterized by accessibility, informality, emotional resonance, and visual appeal qualities that resonate powerfully with young urban Muslims, but that carry risks of theological superficiality and uncritical deference to charismatic digital personalities. Najamuddin, (2025) found that while exposure to Islamic content on social media does significantly shape religious beliefs, the direction and quality of this influence depends heavily on users' pre-existing levels of Islamic literacy: those with stronger foundational literacy tended to engage with social media content selectively and critically, while those with more limited literacy were considerably more vulnerable to sensationalist and extremist content.

The evidence also documents significant potential opportunities. Putra & Ayyaisy (2025) argued that the deliberate optimization of digital technology within progressive Islamic education can enhance public literacy and function as an effective countermeasure against misinformation. Communities with strong institutional Islamic literacy programs demonstrated substantially lower rates of misinformation sharing and higher indicators of generalized social trust. Prasetyo et al., (2024) showed that social media communities deliberately designed for Islamic learning can effectively supplement formal religious education, particularly for urban Muslim adults whose engagement with educational institutions has concluded. These findings collectively suggest that the challenges posed by digitalization are not grounds for avoidance of digital platforms, but rather powerful arguments for the systematic development of digitally-oriented Islamic literacy that is explicitly grounded in Islamic ethical values.

### **Institutional Responses: Islamic Education in the Global Era**

The challenges and opportunities identified above have elicited diverse institutional responses from Islamic educational institutions, mosque communities, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. (Hermansyah et al., 2024) found that institutions that deliberately integrate classical Islamic literacy with contemporary critical and digital competencies produce graduates who are substantially better prepared for social engagement in global contexts than those treating these dimensions as separate or competing domains. Hajar, (2024) argued that institutional reform must prioritize the development of what she terms 'glocal literacy' the capacity to navigate authentically between local Islamic traditions and global intellectual currents without sacrificing ethical coherence.

The pesantren system, as Indonesia's distinctive educational institution that has for centuries integrated religious literacy with social engagement, merits particular attention as a potential model for wider emulation. Yusak et al., (2023) found that the holistic integration of textual, ethical, and social learning that characterizes traditional pesantren produces what they term 'resilient faith communities' communities capable of maintaining Islamic values and social commitments in the face of globalization's pressures. Khimmataliev et al. (2025) extended this finding, arguing that the principle of integrating multiple literacy dimensions exemplified by pesantren at their best should inform broader Islamic educational reform at the system level.

Beyond formal educational institutions, mosque communities have emerged as critical sites of Islamic literacy development for urban Muslim adults. (Alam et al., 2023) documented a significant new trend of urban Islamism in Yogyakarta and Surakarta, marked by the emergence of mosque-centered communities in which middle-class Muslims engage in intensive collective religious learning as a response to the dislocations of urban modernity. These communities function not merely as devotional spaces but as literacy incubators that generate distinctive forms of social engagement. Rahmat & Utomo (2025) showed that carefully designed digital platforms can effectively support the development of moderate religious literacy among urban Muslims when integrated with face-to-face learning and mentorship relationships.

### **An Integrative Framework: Synthesis of Evidence**

The evidence synthesized across the 87 included studies converges on an integrative framework organized around four core propositions. First, Islamic literacy is a multidimensional competence whose social effects depend critically on which dimensions are developed and in what combination. Classical textual literacy, while foundational, does not independently generate social awareness; it requires integration with critical, digital, and social dimensions to produce the full spectrum of competencies necessary for socially engaged Muslim life.

Second, institutional context and pedagogical design exercise a crucial mediating role. The same textual content can produce markedly different social outcomes depending on the pedagogical environment: environments that encourage critical reflection, dialogue across difference, and connection between religious learning and social engagement produce socially aware graduates; those that valorize passive reception and intellectual insularity do not (Judijanto et al., 2025).

Third, digital globalization has fundamentally altered the conditions under which Islamic literacy must be developed. The substantial migration of Islamic knowledge production and consumption to social media platforms creates structural pressures that work against deep literacy development, rewarding emotional engagement over careful analysis. Institutions that fail to develop explicit digital literacy curricula leave their graduates increasingly vulnerable to manipulation by ideologically motivated actors (Nurpriatna<sup>1</sup> et al., 2025).

Fourth, urban contexts constitute crucial laboratories for authentically socially-aware Islamic literacy. Mosque communities, learning circles, and hybrid educational institutions emerging in Indonesian urban centers represent important experiments in contextually embedded Islamic literacy. Their relative success in creating spaces of genuine religious depth and social engagement amid the pressures of urban modernity offers important counter-narratives that merit systematic and sustained scholarly study (Setianingrum et al., 2025).

**Table 4. Four Mechanisms Linking Islamic Literacy to Social Awareness**

<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Primary Dimension Activated</b>	<b>Key Evidence</b>	<b>Social Outcome</b>
Ethical character formation	Textual-Classical	Husna et al. (2023); Yusak et al. (2023)	Prosocial values; masalah & 'adalah orientation
Critical capacity for social resilience	Critical-Interreligious	Ju'subaidi et al. (2024); Ramlan et al. (2024)	Resistance to extremism; informed civic action
Communal identity & prosocial motivation	Social-Civic	Hermansyah et al. (2024); Aldi (2025)	Charitable giving; sustained civic participation
Cross-cultural competence	Critical-Interreligious + Social-Civic	Ali et al. (2021); Taufikin et al. (2025)	Intercultural solidarity; inclusive engagement

Source: Authors' synthesis from included studies.

## CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Islamic literacy, understood as the integrative development of textual, critical, digital, and social competencies grounded in Islamic ethical values, constitutes a fundamental resource for the cultivation of social awareness among urban Muslims navigating the complex currents of contemporary global life. When systematically developed through carefully designed educational programs and community-based learning environments, Islamic literacy equips urban Muslims to resist social manipulation, build bridges across cultural differences, contribute actively to communal welfare, and engage constructively with the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world.

The era of globalization, far from rendering Islamic literacy obsolete or marginal, intensifies its social significance. The emergence of digital platforms as dominant channels for the production and consumption of religious knowledge creates new pathways for both literacy development and its degradation. Islamic educational institutions that succeed in integrating multiple literacy dimensions bridging the classical and the contemporary, the textual and the digital, the individual and the communal are developing graduates who demonstrate the highest levels of social awareness and civic engagement.

For researchers, the most pressing need is for longitudinal empirical studies that track the social outcomes of different Islamic literacy development approaches over time, moving beyond the cross-sectional designs that currently dominate the literature. Such designs would enable causal inference currently unavailable from the available evidence base. Several limitations of this study warrant acknowledgment. The dominance of the Indonesian context

(64.4% of included studies) constrains the generalizability of findings to Muslim urban communities that differ substantially in their institutional histories and sociocultural configurations. As a review study, the analysis is dependent on the quality and completeness of published literature; unpublished studies with null or negative findings may not be adequately represented, introducing potential publication bias. Additionally, the heterogeneity of research designs across included studies limits the strength of causal claims that can be responsibly advanced. Future research would benefit from greater methodological diversity, including longitudinal experimental and quasi-experimental designs.

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