



The Concept Of Humanism In Islam And its Problems

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Abstract

This study examines the concept of humanism in Islam and its contemporary problematics within the context of community development. Employing a qualitative library research approach, the study analyzes classical and contemporary scholarly works published between 2021 and 2025, with particular attention to discussions on Islamic humanism in academic journals. The findings indicate that Islamic humanism is firmly grounded in theological and philosophical principles that emphasize human dignity (*karāmah al-insāniyyah*), moral responsibility, social justice, and collective accountability. Unlike secular humanism, which is largely anthropocentric, Islamic humanism is characterized by a theo-anthropocentric orientation that integrates divine values with human welfare. The study further reveals that Islamic humanism has strong relevance for community development, especially in education, social transformation, and the empowerment of marginalized groups. Nevertheless, several challenges hinder its implementation, including the gap between normative Islamic ideals and social realities, reductive interpretations that confine humanism to individual morality, and rigid textual approaches that overlook contextual and humanitarian dimensions of Islam. The novelty of this research lies in positioning Islamic humanism not merely as an ethical discourse but as an integrative normative-structural framework for community development. By emphasizing its applied and transformative dimensions, this study contributes to expanding Islamic humanism from a conceptual discourse to a practical paradigm. The study recommends strengthening contextual interpretations of Islamic teachings, integrating humanistic values into Islamic education, and employing Islamic humanism as a foundation for community empowerment and policy development to promote a just, inclusive, and sustainable society.

Keywords: Islamic Humanism, Human Dignity, Community Development, Islamic Education, Social Justice

INTRODUCTION

The discourse on humanism is one of the important issues in contemporary Islamic studies, especially when Islam is confronted with the dynamics of modernity, globalization, and increasingly complex social changes. Humanism, in general, is understood as a view that places humans as the main subject in social life, with an emphasis on dignity, freedom, rationality, and moral responsibility (Assyaukanie, 2023). In the context of Islam, the concept of humanism does not stand autonomously as Western secular humanism does, but is integrated with theological and ethical dimensions derived from revelation.

Islam views humans as noble beings (*al-insān al-mukarram*), servants of Allah (*'abdullāh*), as well as caliphs on earth who carry the mandate to uphold justice, benefit, and balance in life (Hakim et al., 2024). This view emphasizes that human dignity in Islam is not absolute, but is attached to moral and spiritual responsibilities that must be carried out in relation to God, fellow human beings, and the universe.

Humanism in Islam is deeply rooted in the principle of *tawhid*, which places God at the center of values, while humans obtain their dignity and rights precisely because of their connection to these divine values. The Qur'an and Sunnah emphasize the importance of respect for life, human equality, social justice, and the protection of basic rights without discrimination (Febrian et al., 2022). Therefore, Islamic humanism is often understood as theocentric humanism, which is a view that harmonizes human interests with obedience to God (Kurnialoh, 2025).

In the development of modern and contemporary Islamic thought, the concept of Islamic humanism has been enriched through the contributions of Muslim thinkers and academics who seek to respond to the challenges of the times. Islamic humanism is no longer understood solely as a normative-theological concept, but also as a relevant practical paradigm in the fields of education, community development, and social transformation (Idris & Tabrani, 2023). In the context of community development, Islamic humanism emphasizes holistic human development that encompasses spiritual, intellectual, social, and moral aspects (Ramadhani et al., 2025).

However, the application of humanism in Islam is not without its problems. One of the main issues is the conceptual tension between Islamic humanism and Western humanism, which is secular and individualistic in nature. In practice, the term humanism is often perceived negatively because it is considered to negate the role of God and revelation in human life (Anwar & Surawan, 2025). This perception has led to resistance among some Muslims to the idea of humanism, even though human values are actually an integral part of Islamic teachings.

Another problem arises in the form of a gap between the discourse and implementation of Islamic humanism. In the field of education, for example, Islamic humanistic values are often not optimally internalized in the curriculum, teaching methods, or the relationship between educators and students (Aulia Rachman et al., 2025). At the social level, Islamic humanism also faces structural challenges in the form of economic inequality, social exclusion, and identity conflicts that have the potential to weaken solidarity among the people (Saprin et al., 2025).

On the other hand, global challenges such as humanitarian crises, environmental degradation, and rising intolerance demand a more contextual and solution-oriented formulation of Islamic humanism. Islamic humanism is required to be not only normative and idealistic, but

also capable of serving as an ethical framework for formulating equitable social policies and practices (Bahri & Rizquha, 2023). Therefore, a critical study of the concept of humanism in Islam and its problems is important to ensure its relevance in efforts to develop a civilized community.

Based on this background, this article aims to comprehensively examine the concept of humanism in Islam and analyze the various problems that accompany it in the context of contemporary Muslim life. This study is expected to contribute academically and practically to the development of a humanistic, moderate, and transformative Islamic discourse, particularly within the framework of community development studies, which is the main focus of journals at the University of Muhammadiyah West Sumatra.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with library research. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on examining the concepts, meanings, and constructions of thought about humanism in Islam and the accompanying issues, which cannot be measured quantitatively but rather understood through in-depth analysis of texts and scientific discourse (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Idris & Tabrani, 2023).

This research is descriptive-analytical in nature, which is to describe the concept of humanism in Islam as contained in Islamic sources and contemporary academic studies, then analyze it critically in relation to the challenges and problems of the development of the Muslim community today (Sugiyono, 2021). The descriptive-analytical approach allows researchers to combine conceptual explanations with critical analysis of the relevance and implications of these ideas.

Epistemologically, this study combines a normative-theological approach and a sociological-critical approach. The normative approach is used to examine the foundations of humanism in Islam, which are derived from Qur'anic values and the thoughts of Muslim scholars, while the sociological-critical approach is used to interpret the problematic reality of the application of Islamic humanism in the social context and the development of the contemporary Muslim community (Assyaukanie, 2023; Hakim et al., 2024).

The data sources for this study consist of primary and secondary data. The primary data are scientific journal articles discussing Islamic humanism, humanistic education, and community development published in the last five years (2021–2025), including articles published in the *Journal of Community Studies and Development of the University of Muhammadiyah West Sumatra*. Secondary data includes academic books, scientific proceedings, and other supporting publications relevant to the themes of humanism and contemporary Islamic thought (Febrian et al., 2022; Kurnialoh, 2025).

Data collection was conducted through documentation studies, namely by systematically searching, inventorying, and reviewing written sources relevant to the research focus. This technique included critical reading, data recording, theme grouping, and document content review to find patterns of thought about humanism in Islam and the problems of its application (Zed, 2021).

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis and critical-conceptual analysis. Content analysis was used to identify the main themes in the literature, such as the concept of

human dignity, the role of the caliph, social justice, and human values in Islam (Krippendorff, 2019). Furthermore, critical-conceptual analysis was used to reflectively examine the problems, conceptual tensions, and implementation challenges of Islamic humanism in the context of contemporary Muslim life (Ramadhani et al., 2025).

The stages of data analysis include data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions in an argumentative manner. With these procedures, this study is expected to produce a comprehensive and systematic understanding of the concept of humanism in Islam and its contribution to the development of a civilized community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Humanism in Islam: Theological, Philosophical, and Conceptual Foundations

A review of the literature shows that the concept of humanism in Islam has a very strong theological and philosophical foundation. The Qur'an explicitly affirms the nobility of human beings as creatures of Allah who are endowed with intellectual, moral, and spiritual potential, and who are entrusted with the responsibility of being caliphs on earth (QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 30). This concept places humans not merely as biological beings, but as ethical and moral subjects who are responsible for themselves, society, and the environment (Nasr, 2021).

Unlike modern Western humanism, which tends to be anthropocentric and separates humans from the transcendental dimension, Islamic humanism is theocentric, combining respect for human dignity with submission to divine values (Assyaukanie, 2023). Within this framework, humans are valued not solely for their autonomy, but for their relationship with God and fellow humans. This approach gives Islamic humanism a strong ethical orientation and prevents it from falling into moral relativism (Hakim et al., 2024).

Literature findings also show that contemporary Muslim thinkers such as Fazlur Rahman emphasize the importance of understanding Islamic teachings as a value system oriented towards human welfare in a historical and contextual manner (Rahman, 2021). Islam, in this view, is presented as a religion that guides humans towards justice, responsible freedom, and collective welfare. Thus, Islamic humanism is not only normative in nature, but also has a practical dimension in the social life of the ummah.

2. The Principles of Islamic Humanism and Their Relevance to the Development of the Ummah

Based on content analysis of journal articles from the past five years, several key principles of Islamic humanism were found to be directly relevant to community development. The first principle is human dignity (*karāmah al-insāniyyah*). Islam views all human beings as having equal intrinsic value without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, or social status (Idris & Tabrani, 2023). This principle forms the ethical foundation for the development of an inclusive and just society.

The second principle is social justice (*al-ʿadālah al-ijtimāʿiyyah*). Islamic humanism rejects all forms of structural inequality that demean human dignity, including systemic poverty and social marginalization (Hakim et al., 2024). These findings show that the

discourse of Islamic humanism cannot be separated from community issues, such as economic empowerment, equitable education, and protection of vulnerable groups.

The third principle is collective responsibility (*al-mas'ūliyyah al-jamā'iyah*). Islam emphasizes that community development is not only an individual task but a shared responsibility of all elements of society. This principle is in line with the community-based development approach that places community participation as the key to successful community development (Sutrisno & Anwar, 2022).

These three principles show that Islamic humanism has great potential as an alternative paradigm in community development that is oriented towards a balance between the individual and the collective, between spirituality and social reality.

3. Islamic Humanism in Education and Social Transformation

The field of education is one of the most strategic arenas for implementing Islamic humanistic values. Studies show that humanistic Islamic education aims to develop human potential holistically, covering intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and social aspects (Kurniasih, 2024). This paradigm rejects mechanistic and authoritarian models of education because they have the potential to reduce the humanity of students.

Islamic humanism in education emphasizes dialogue, empathy, and appreciation for individual uniqueness. This approach is in line with the concept of *tarbiyah*, which views education as a process of humanization (Rahman, 2021). Education not only functions as a transfer of knowledge, but also as a process of character building and social awareness.

In addition to education, Islamic humanism also plays an important role in social transformation through the strengthening of civil society. The concept of *ummatan wasaṭan* reflects the ideals of a moderate, just, and civilized Islamic society (Nasr, 2021). In this context, Islamic humanism functions as a social ethic that encourages dialogue, tolerance, and social solidarity amid a pluralistic society.

4. Conceptual Problems of Humanism in Islam

Despite its strong theological foundation, the results of the study show that Islamic humanism faces a number of conceptual problems. One of the main problems is the tension between the normativity of the text and social reality. Many Islamic humanistic values are idealistic, but have not been fully internalized in the social practices of the community (Assyaukanie, 2023).

Another problem is reductionism in understanding, where Islamic humanism is often narrowed down to individual ethics and is not developed as a structural paradigm. As a result, Islamic human values have not been optimally applied in addressing systemic injustices and macro-level problems affecting the Muslim community (Hakim et al., 2024).

In addition, the influence of literalism and extremism also poses a serious challenge to the actualization of Islamic humanism. A rigid and ahistorical religious approach has the potential to negate the inclusive and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* dimensions of Islam (Kurnialoh, 2025).

5. The Challenges of Implementing Islamic Humanism in the Contemporary Era

At the practical level, the implementation of Islamic humanism faces challenges from globalization, rapid social change, and a crisis of human values. Globalization brings secular values that are not always in line with Islamic ethics, while the response of Muslims to this phenomenon is often reactive and defensive (Nasr, 2021). Internal challenges also arise from the weakness of Islamic social and educational institutions in internalizing humanistic values. Without institutional strengthening, Islamic humanism risks becoming merely a normative discourse without any real impact on the lives of the people (Sutrisno & Anwar, 2022).

However, the results of the study show that there are great opportunities to revitalize Islamic humanism through contextual approaches, intercultural dialogue, and strengthening the role of education and civil society. This strategy enables Islamic humanism to function as a transformative paradigm in the development of a just and sustainable community (Ramadhani et al., 2025).

6. The Implications of Islamic Humanism for Community Development

The above discussion shows that Islamic humanism has strategic implications for the development of the ummah at various levels. At the individual level, Islamic humanism shapes ethical awareness, social empathy, and moral responsibility. At the community level, humanistic values encourage social solidarity and active community participation. Meanwhile, at the structural level, Islamic humanism can be a normative foundation for public policies that are just and oriented towards the welfare of the ummah.

Thus, Islamic humanism is not only conceptually relevant, but also has significant practical potential in addressing contemporary humanitarian and community issues. The reactivation of Islamic humanistic values is an urgent necessity for the realization of a civilized, inclusive, and sustainable community.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study and discussion that has been conducted, it can be concluded that humanism in Islam is a concept that has a strong theological, philosophical, and ethical foundation. Islam normatively places humans as noble beings who are gifted with dignity (*karāmah al-insāniyyah*), responsible freedom, and the mandate to be caliphs on earth. This concept emphasizes that respect for human values in Islam cannot be separated from the divine dimension, thus giving rise to a form of humanism that is theocentric, not secular anthropocentric.

The results of this study indicate that the principles of Islamic humanism—such as social justice, equality, collective responsibility, and social solidarity—have significant relevance for the development of the Muslim community. Islamic humanism functions not only as an individual ethical framework, but also as a social paradigm capable of driving structural transformation in the fields of education, social welfare, and community empowerment. In this context, Islamic humanism has the potential to become a normative basis for the development of a civilized, inclusive, and sustainable community.

However, this study also found a number of problems in the actualization of Islamic humanism. These problems include the tension between the normative idealism of Islamic

teachings and the social reality of the Muslim community, the tendency toward reductionism in the understanding of Islamic humanism, which is limited to the realm of individual morality, and the influence of a textual and exclusive religious approach. These conditions have prevented Islamic humanistic values from being fully internalized in the social and institutional practices of the Muslim community. The main novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach to Islamic humanism as a paradigm for community development, rather than merely as a discourse on Islamic ethics or philosophy. This study emphasizes that Islamic humanism needs to be read contextually and transformatively, placing it as a normative-structural framework capable of addressing contemporary community problems, such as social inequality, educational crisis, and weak social solidarity. Thus, this study expands the study of Islamic humanism from the conceptual realm to the applicative realm in community development, particularly in the context of Indonesian Muslim society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made. **First**, efforts are needed to reinterpret and reactualize Islamic humanist values in a contextual manner so that they are more responsive to contemporary social challenges. This can be done through interdisciplinary and dialogical Islamic studies.

Second, Islamic educational institutions are advised to integrate the paradigm of Islamic humanism into their curricula and learning practices, so that education is not only oriented towards the transfer of knowledge, but also towards the formation of humanistic character and social awareness among students.

Third, policy makers and community leaders are expected to use Islamic humanism values as the basis for formulating policies and programs for community empowerment. Thus, community development will not only be oriented towards material aspects, but also towards strengthening human values and social justice.

Finally, further research is recommended to examine the concrete implementation of Islamic humanism in the practice of community development in various local contexts, thereby enriching Islamic scholarship and making a real contribution to a just and civilized civilization.

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