

## CHARACTER EDUCATION IN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to explore the concept, implementation and challenges of character education in Islamic higher education. Through an in-depth literature review, this research identifies that character education in Islamic universities does not only focus on academic achievement, but also on the formation of strong morality and ethics. Islamic universities utilize Islamic values as the main foundation in educating students to become individuals with integrity, morals, and able to contribute positively to society. However, this research also revealed a number of significant challenges, including limited resources, lack of training for lecturers, diversity of student cultural backgrounds, time constraints, and difficulties in measuring character development. Literacy related to curriculum development strategies, lecturer training, and character evaluation methods is the key to overcoming this challenge. Character education in Islamic higher education requires the commitment of all parties involved, from institutional leaders to students, to achieve optimal results. This research concludes that with a holistic and integrative approach, Islamic higher education has great potential to produce graduates who are not only academically superior but also have noble character.

**Keywords:** Character Education, Islamic Higher Education, Islamic Values

### **INTRODUCTION**

Character education is an effort that aims to shape the morals and personality of students so that they become individuals who have integrity, ethics and Islamic values. In the context of Islamic higher education, character education receives special attention considering its strategic role in producing a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also has high morality. Islamic higher education is responsible for educating students to be able to face the challenges of the times with a solid moral foundation, in accordance with Islamic teachings (Rahayu et al., 2023).

Character education in Islamic higher education is not only limited to theoretical learning in the classroom, but also includes various extracurricular activities and campus environments that support character development. The

implementation of character education is important to create a conducive academic environment, where values such as honesty, responsibility and social care can be instilled and practiced every day (Supa'at & Muslim, 2023). Students are expected to be able to internalize these values and apply them in various aspects of their lives.

The approach used in character education at Islamic universities involves collaboration between lecturers, education staff and students. Lecturers and educational staff have an important role as role models in instilling character values. They must be able to demonstrate attitudes and behavior that are in accordance with Islamic values, so that they can be good examples for students. Apart from that, an integrative curriculum also needs to be designed to combine academic and character aspects holistically (Alimron et al., 2023).

In the development of globalization and modernization, the challenges faced by Islamic higher education in implementing character education are increasingly complex. The influence of foreign cultures, technological advances and rapid social change often cause identity and moral crises among the younger generation (Rohman & Muhid, 2022). Therefore, Islamic higher education must be able to adapt its character education methodology so that it remains relevant and effective in overcoming these challenges. Equipping students with critical skills accompanied by a strong moral foundation is becoming increasingly important.

Evaluation and supervision of the implementation of character education in Islamic higher education is also an important component that should not be ignored. This evaluation aims to assess the extent to which character education programs have been implemented and have had an impact on students' personalities. Through continuous evaluation, Islamic higher education institutions can continue to improve and perfect their character education programs to form a generation with Islamic personalities and global competitiveness (Putri, 2023).

Apart from that, it is also important to involve various parties in the character education process in Islamic universities. Collaboration between students, lecturers, campus management and parents will provide broader and more comprehensive support. The active participation of all parties will create strong synergy in developing student character. Campuses can also collaborate with community organizations or religious institutions to provide seminars, training and activities based on Islamic values, so that students have

a deeper understanding and practical application of what they have learned (Huda et al., 2023).

Innovation in teaching methods and character education approaches is also needed so that moral and spiritual messages can be conveyed more effectively. The use of information technology and social media can be a useful tool in spreading positive values and inspiring students to develop Islamic character. Through various digital platforms, students can be invited to participate in discussions, collaborative projects, and social activities that support strengthening character values (Fijriyani et al., 2023). Thus, character education in Islamic higher education not only forms superior individuals in society, but also brings blessings and benefits to the surrounding environment.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The study in this research is qualitative with literature. The literature study research method is a research approach that involves the analysis and synthesis of information from various literature sources that are relevant to a particular research topic. Documents taken from literature research are journals, books and references related to the discussion you want to research (Earley, M.A. 2014; Snyder, H. 2019).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Approaches to Implementing Character Education in Islamic Higher Education**

The approach to implementing character education in Islamic universities must be comprehensive and integrative, including cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects. Each course can be integrated with Islamic character values such as honesty, responsibility, justice and social concern (Sofiyandi et al., 2024). For example, in economics courses, students can be taught about sharia economic principles which emphasize honesty and justice, while in sociology courses, they can learn about social roles and responsibilities towards society. This approach allows students not only to understand theoretical concepts, but also to apply them in real life.

Apart from that, extracurricular activities and student organizations in Islamic universities also play an important role in implementing character education. Activities such as regular recitations, religious discussions, social service, and leadership training based on Islamic values can develop students' character more comprehensively. Campuses can organize activities that

accommodate students' interests and talents while instilling noble values, so that they can learn to work together, think critically and have high empathy. A campus environment that supports and provides good role models is also very influential in the process of forming student character (Nugroho, 2023).

Regular monitoring and evaluation is also an inseparable part of the approach to implementing character education in Islamic universities. With routine evaluations, universities can measure the extent to which the character education process has been effective and the extent to which students have internalized the values taught. Institutions can also conduct surveys or research to get feedback from students and lecturers regarding the character development that occurs. Through this evaluation, campuses can continue to improve and develop better strategies, ensuring that the character education provided can bring maximum benefits to the entire academic community (Jirde & Arifin, 2022).

The use of information technology can also be an effective approach in implementing character education in Islamic universities. E-learning platforms and educational applications can be used to provide material that contains Islamic character values in a more interactive and accessible manner (Jones, 2023). For example, learning videos, quizzes and online discussions can be designed to develop students' understanding and appreciation of values such as integrity, discipline and mutual respect. Technology also allows for easier supervision and quick feedback, as well as encouraging active participation from students despite physical limitations.

The role of lecturers and teaching staff is also very crucial in implementing character education. They are not only teachers of academic material, but also role models and mentors who provide concrete examples of how noble character can be applied every day. Lecturers can use reflective and dialogical teaching methodologies, where students are invited to reflect and discuss moral values in real life contexts. This includes the use of case studies, simulations, and service-based projects (service learning) that place students in situations where they must apply the values they have learned (Nielsen, 2023).

Collaboration with external institutions, such as community institutions and religious organizations, can also enrich the character education process. Islamic universities can establish partnerships for internship programs, volunteers, or other community activities that provide students with direct experience in applying character values in a broader context. This collaboration not only supports student character development, but also

strengthens relations between the campus and the community, creating an educational ecosystem that is holistic and relevant to the needs of the times (Lafrarchi, 2023).

### **Implementation Methods in Teaching and Learning Activities and Extracurricular Activities**

Implementation of character education in teaching and learning activities can be done through teaching methods that integrate character values into academic material. One example is through an integrated curriculum approach, where values such as honesty, discipline, hard work and responsibility are inserted in each subject. The use of case studies and problem-based projects (problem-based learning) is also effective in inviting students to analyze real situations they face every day, and encouraging them to make decisions that are in accordance with the character values they have learned (Gonzalez, 2023).

Reflective and dialogic approaches can also be applied in the classroom. For example, after delivering material, the lecturer or teacher can facilitate a discussion session where students or students are asked to reflect and share personal experiences related to the values discussed. This discussion can include identifying ethical dilemmas and how to resolve them, and linking them to Islamic religious and moral teachings (Otegenov, 2023). This approach not only develops critical and moral thinking skills, but also strengthens conceptual understanding and practical application of character values in everyday life.

Apart from formal teaching and learning activities, character education can also be implemented through extracurricular activities. Activities such as student organizations, arts groups, sports, and social communities can be effective platforms for developing student character. In this activity, students learn to work together, lead, and face challenges with integrity and responsibility (Sirovina et al., 2023). For example, in student organizations, values such as leadership, teamwork, and initiative can be taught through direct experience in organizing activities and solving problems together.

Extracurricular activities can also include community service programs which provide opportunities for students to interact with various levels of society and learn the values of empathy, equality and solidarity (Karmova, 2022). For example, volunteer programs that require students to help at an orphanage or carry out environmental projects can develop a sense of social responsibility and concern for others. In this way, students not only develop

academic skills but also the noble character needed to become individuals who contribute positively to society.

The application of character education implementation methods in teaching and learning and extracurricular activities requires a planned and systematic strategy. One important first step is to conduct training for teachers and extracurricular activity supervisors so that they have a deep understanding of the goals and methods of character development. This training should also include facilitation techniques, conflict resolution, and how to provide constructive feedback. This is important to ensure that every interaction with students can be used as a character education moment (Sharma & Jamwal, 2023).

Apart from training, it is also important to ensure good coordination between all parties involved, including teachers, counselors and school management. Forming a special team or committee responsible for the implementation and supervision of character education can help ensure the smooth running of the program. This team can involve representatives from each school unit and is tasked with planning, coordinating and evaluating the activities carried out. Regular evaluation through surveys, observations, and group discussions is essential to assess program effectiveness and make necessary adjustments (Rao, 2022).

To evaluate the success of implementing character education, schools can use a number of methods including knowledge tests, self-assessment and peer assessment. In addition, assessment through portfolios that collect various evidence of student activities and achievements can also be used to provide a more comprehensive picture of student character development. Through a comprehensive evaluation, schools can identify successful aspects and areas that require improvement, and ensure that character education programs are running according to their objectives and providing optimal benefits for students (Hermanto et al., 2023).

### **The Impact of Character Education on Students at Islamic Universities**

Character education has a significant impact on students at Islamic universities. One of the main impacts is the development of strong moral and ethical integrity. Students who are involved in character education tend to have a deeper understanding of Islamic values and the moral principles that accompany them. This not only enriches their spiritual life but also shapes positive behavior in daily life, such as honesty, responsibility and justice (Azizah, 2022). In this way, they are ready to become individuals who

contribute positively to society, both in the academic environment and outside the campus.

Apart from moral development, character education also has an impact on strengthening students' social and emotional skills. Character education programs often include activities that encourage cooperation, effective communication, and constructive conflict resolution (Fepriyanti & Roqib, 2024). Through these activities, students learn to manage their emotions, understand other people's perspectives, and work together in teams. These skills are essential in their professional and personal lives, helping them become empathetic and collaborative leaders who are able to adapt to a variety of situations and challenges.

Furthermore, character education can improve student academic achievement. By internalizing values such as discipline, hard work, and determination, students are more likely to have high motivation and a positive attitude towards learning. They tend to be more committed to pursuing their academic goals, develop effective study habits, and demonstrate persistence in facing academic challenges. The cumulative impact of these values and skills is increased academic achievement which can open up more opportunities for them in their future careers and lives (Lestari & Aryanti, 2024).

Apart from the impacts already mentioned, character education also influences students' psychological well-being. Students who receive character guidance tend to have higher self-confidence and strong self-esteem. They are taught to recognize and appreciate their own potential and weaknesses, which helps in developing a growth mindset. This mindset allows them to see failures and difficulties as opportunities to learn and grow (Amri, 2024). As a result, students can deal with academic and social pressure better and have more stable mental well-being.

Furthermore, character education at Islamic universities often integrates Islamic teachings in the curriculum, which has a positive influence on students' religious identity. In an environment that supports and promotes Islamic values, students can strengthen their faith and religious practices. This creates a solid foundation for a continued spiritual life even after they graduate. Students who have a strong religious identity tend to have a clearer and more focused view of life, so they are better prepared to face ethical and moral challenges in modern life (Taufikin et al., 2024).

Character education also plays an important role in forming a young generation who is competitive and ready to contribute to global society. Students who are equipped with good character will not only become

competent professionals in their field, but will also bring positive values that can influence their work environment and community (Warsito, 2022). In this way, the impact of character education is not only felt at the individual level but also has a broader impact in building a more ethical, civilized and harmonious society. The combination of academic dedication, high morality and strong social skills of these graduates will be invaluable in realizing positive change and sustainable development.

### **Challenges Faced in Implementing Character Education**

The implementation of character education in Islamic universities faces many complex challenges. One of them is limited resources, both in terms of teaching staff and relevant and quality educational materials. Not all lecturers have special expertise in character education, and sometimes they have not received sufficient training to convey these values effectively (Sholihuddin, 2022). Apart from that, the existing curriculum may not yet optimally integrate character education, so it needs to be revised and updated which requires a lot of time, money and effort.

Another challenge is cultural resistance within higher education institutions. In some cases, there is a tendency in the academic community to prioritize purely academic results over personal character development. Some students and even academic staff may see character education as a less important addition compared to other academic achievements. This kind of mindset can hinder the process of internalizing character values within the campus environment (Khaira et al., 2023). In addition, some students come from different family and school backgrounds, which may not have introduced or placed no emphasis on character education, thus adding to the difficulty in creating a uniform approach to this education.

Then, social dynamics and modern technology also present their own challenges. Students now live in a digital era full of instant information and social media that can influence them quickly and significantly. Sorting out good and bad information and maintaining character integrity amidst abundant and often uncontrolled access to information is a big challenge (Indria et al., 2022). In addition, social pressure to appear a certain way or conform behavior to "trends" can influence the process of character formation which actually requires more consistency and deep reflection. Overcoming these challenges requires innovative and adaptive educational strategies as well as cooperation from various parties – from educational institutions, families, to communities (Hari et al., 2023).

Apart from the three main challenges mentioned, there are also other issues such as the diversity of cultural backgrounds and values brought by students. Islamic universities, especially in Indonesia, have students from various regions who bring with them different values and cultural norms. This can have potential, but it can also become an obstacle if not managed well. The character values taught may be interpreted differently by students from different backgrounds, thus requiring extra effort to achieve consistent understanding and application throughout the campus community (Prayitno & Nur, 2022).

Apart from that, time constraints are also a significant challenge. With busy study schedules and high academic demands, character education often only receives secondary attention. Students and lecturers may feel that they do not have enough time to explore character values or engage in activities that support character development (Munir, 2023). On this basis, there needs to be a smoother integration of character education into daily academic activities, where these values are not only taught in class but also lived out in various aspects of campus life.

However, no less important is evaluating and measuring the effectiveness of character education itself. Measuring character development is something more abstract and subjective compared to academic achievement which can be measured with numbers and grades (Yuliharti, 2022). Therefore, a more comprehensive and multidimensional evaluation method is needed to ensure that character education really has the expected impact. This may require collaboration with character education experts and the use of new technology to assist in the evaluation process. Building an effective feedback system is also essential in order to identify areas that need improvement and ensure that character education continues to develop and adapt to the needs of the times.

## **CONCLUSION**

Character education at Islamic universities is an important effort to form individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also have strong morality and ethics. Through the integration of Islamic values, universities strive to create graduates who are able to become role models in society, have a positive impact, and lead with integrity.

However, the implementation of character education is not without challenges. Some of the main obstacles include limited resources, lack of training for lecturers, diversity of student cultural backgrounds, limited time,

and difficulty in measuring character development. Overcoming this challenge requires a comprehensive strategy, including curriculum development that includes integral character education, continuous training for lecturers, and the use of effective evaluation methods.

To achieve the expected goals of character education, there needs to be commitment from all parties involved, from university leaders to students. Thus, Islamic universities can play a strategic role in producing graduates who are not only academically ready, but also have noble character and are able to become agents of positive change in society.

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