

## Islamic Values in Humanities Education: Bridging Tradition and Modernity

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the integration of Islamic values into humanities education as a means of bridging tradition and modernity in contemporary Indonesian society. Drawing on qualitative data collected from educators, students, and practitioners through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participatory observations, the research examines how principles such as justice (*'adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), and communal solidarity (*ukhuwah*) are applied in educational and social contexts. The findings indicate that Islamic values provide both ethical guidance and cultural grounding, fostering moral awareness, social responsibility, and intercultural understanding. Generational differences were observed, with senior educators emphasizing preservation of tradition, while younger participants advocated adaptability in globalized contexts. The study also identifies potential tensions, including challenges in maintaining academic freedom when applying values rigidly. Despite limitations related to urban-centric sampling and self-reported data, the research demonstrates the practical and theoretical relevance of Islamic ethics in humanistic discourse. By offering a dynamic, context-sensitive approach, the integration of Islamic values can enhance educational practices, strengthen cultural identity, and promote inclusive social development. Future research is recommended to expand empirical applications across diverse settings, refining frameworks that balance tradition, modernity, and ethical engagement.



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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as a vast archipelagic nation, is characterized by its rich diversity of ethnicities, languages, and belief systems. This cultural plurality forms both the strength and the challenge of its social fabric. In such a setting, the role of education and the humanities becomes pivotal in shaping mutual understanding among diverse communities (Hasan, 2021).

The humanities, as disciplines concerned with identity, culture, and values, provide critical frameworks for negotiating diversity. They serve as a medium for dialogue across traditions and worldviews. However, the prominence of Western paradigms in the humanities often sidelines alternative epistemologies rooted in non-Western traditions (Al-Attas, 2020).

Within this discourse, Islamic values emerge as a vital yet underexplored dimension. Islam has long shaped social, cultural, and intellectual life in Indonesia, influencing literature, philosophy, and ethics. Yet, its role within formal academic humanities remains marginal, frequently reduced to religious studies rather than integrated into broader discussions (Abdullah, 2019).

Existing scholarship on Islam and the humanities tends to be descriptive, focusing on historical contributions without adequately addressing contemporary challenges. Many studies reiterate the civilizational legacy of Islam but do not investigate how its values can actively shape present-day humanistic discourse (Karim, 2022).

This creates a significant research gap. While the potential of Islamic values as ethical frameworks is acknowledged, there is limited exploration of their application in navigating issues such

as multiculturalism, social justice, and globalization. In particular, the Indonesian context, with its unique blend of tradition and modernity, remains underrepresented (Azra, 2020).

The neglect of Islamic perspectives in the humanities also perpetuates epistemic imbalance. Western thought continues to dominate academic discourse, reinforcing stereotypes that marginalize Islamic contributions to philosophy, ethics, and cultural studies (Mahmood, 2021). Addressing this imbalance requires deliberate efforts to bring Islamic values into conversation with contemporary humanities.

Moreover, current literature often treats “Islamic values” as monolithic. In reality, these values are diverse, context-dependent, and historically dynamic. Failing to capture this nuance risks oversimplification and weakens their applicability in solving modern problems (Khalid, 2023).

Another limitation lies in the scarcity of practical examples. While theoretical discussions abound, few studies document how Islamic values have been operationalized in curricula, literature, or social programs. Without concrete illustrations, the integration of these values remains abstract and detached from lived realities (Nasr, 2021).

In Indonesia, where Islam plays a central role in shaping everyday life, such oversight is particularly striking. Despite the country’s majority-Muslim population and vibrant Islamic intellectual tradition, systematic research on the intersection of Islamic values and the humanities is still limited (Rahman, 2022).

Educational institutions, especially universities, offer critical sites for exploring this integration. Humanities curricula that incorporate Islamic ethical perspectives can equip students to address complex issues of identity, diversity, and justice in ways that resonate with local traditions while engaging global thought (Ismail, 2023).

At the same time, globalization complicates this endeavor. As societies become increasingly interconnected, there is an urgent need to strike a balance between cultural identity and openness to modern innovations. Islamic values, if integrated thoughtfully, can provide a framework for negotiating this balance without succumbing to cultural homogenization (Latif, 2020).

This study argues that integrating Islamic values into the humanities is not merely an academic exercise but a necessary response to contemporary challenges. It aims to highlight the potential of these values to foster dialogue, enrich ethical discourse, and strengthen social cohesion (Hanafi, 2022).

By focusing on the Indonesian context, this research seeks to fill critical gaps in both local and global scholarship. It responds to the lack of studies that address how Islamic values can be applied concretely in humanities education and practice, moving beyond descriptive accounts to analytical frameworks (Syamsuddin, 2023).

The novelty of this research lies in its dual orientation: honoring the richness of Islamic intellectual heritage while simultaneously engaging modern humanistic concerns. It does not frame tradition and modernity as opposing forces but as dimensions that can be bridged through dialogue and integration (Yusof, 2024).

Ultimately, this study contributes to ongoing conversations about decolonizing knowledge and broadening the scope of the humanities. Foregrounding Islamic values in academic discourse, it offers pathways toward a more inclusive, plural, and contextually relevant understanding of human experience, both in Indonesia and beyond.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the integration of Islamic values into humanities education in Indonesia. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences, perceptions, and practices of individuals engaged in the humanities. By prioritizing rich descriptions over numerical generalizations, this design enables the researcher to capture the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in educational contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Purposive sampling was employed to identify participants with direct involvement in humanities education and curriculum development. The inclusion criteria required participants to (a) be actively engaged as lecturers, students, or practitioners in humanities disciplines, and (b) possess at least two years of relevant experience. A total of 24 participants were recruited: 10 lecturers (6 male, 4 female, aged 32–55), 8 undergraduate students (5 male, 3 female, aged 19–24), and 6 practitioners (4 male, 2 female, aged 28–45). This demographic distribution ensured diversity in age, gender, and professional background, thereby capturing a wide range of perspectives on the integration of Islamic values.

Data were collected through three complementary techniques: semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and participant observations. Semi-structured interviews enabled participants to reflect individually on their experiences with humanities education, while FGDs encouraged collective dialogue and the negotiation of ideas among diverse voices. Participant observations, conducted in classroom and seminar settings, allowed the researcher to gain firsthand insights into academic practices, pedagogical strategies, and institutional culture that shaped the representation of Islamic values.

Thematic analysis was employed as the primary method of data interpretation, following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-step model. These steps included familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. NVivo 12 software was used to organize and code transcripts systematically. To enhance consistency, two researchers independently coded 20% of the transcripts and discussed discrepancies until consensus was reached, ensuring inter-coder reliability.

To ensure methodological rigor, several strategies were applied. Triangulation was achieved by comparing data across interviews, FGDs, and observations. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with participants to verify accuracy. An audit trail documenting the analytical process was maintained, and peer debriefing was used to minimize researcher bias. These measures collectively enhanced the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant institutional review board before data collection. All participants were informed of the study's objectives and procedures, and informed consent was obtained in writing. Anonymity was preserved through pseudonyms, and participants retained the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. These ethical safeguards ensured that the study was conducted responsibly and respectfully, aligning with established standards for qualitative research in educational contexts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Thematic analysis revealed three dominant themes regarding the integration of Islamic values into humanities education: (a) Islamic values as ethical foundations, (b) negotiation between tradition and modernity, and (c) practical challenges in curriculum implementation. These themes were consistently identified across interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations.

Participants emphasized that Islamic values—such as *adl* (justice), *rahmah* (compassion), and *ukhuwwah* (solidarity)—serve as guiding principles in addressing social and ethical dilemmas in the humanities. Lecturers, in particular, viewed these values as a means of fostering inclusive perspectives in disciplines such as philosophy, history, and literature (Ismail, 2023). This finding aligns with Hasan (2021), who argues that ethical frameworks grounded in Islam can enrich contemporary academic discourses.

Students noted that courses integrating Islamic values into discussions of multiculturalism and social justice helped them appreciate Indonesia's diversity. By linking religious ethics to humanistic inquiry, education became more contextually relevant to their daily lives and social realities. This supports Latif (2020), who highlights the importance of value-based curricula in strengthening social harmony in plural societies.

A recurring insight was the perception that Islamic values are not in conflict with modern humanistic thought but can coexist and complement it. Practitioners stressed the importance of positioning Islamic perspectives as dialogical rather than oppositional. This resonates with Yusuf (2024), who frames Islamic humanism as a “bridge” that negotiates between heritage and contemporary challenges.

Despite this potential, several participants reported that humanities curricula often marginalize Islamic contributions, focusing predominantly on Western paradigms. For instance, in philosophy courses, Greek and European thinkers are emphasized, while Islamic philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Khaldun, or Al-Ghazali are rarely discussed. This confirms earlier observations by Mahmood (2021) about epistemic imbalance in global academia.

Observations revealed that when lecturers incorporated case studies from Islamic intellectual history, students engaged more critically with concepts of ethics, politics, and culture. Such practices demonstrate that Islamic values can be integrated not merely as add-ons but as substantive frameworks shaping classroom dialogue. Similar pedagogical strategies are recommended by Rahman (2022), who stresses contextualization as a pedagogical imperative.

Nevertheless, tensions emerged. Some educators expressed concern that overemphasis on Islamic frameworks might risk excluding non-Muslim perspectives or oversimplifying the diversity within Islam itself. Students also reported occasional confusion when lecturers presented Islamic perspectives without adequately connecting them to broader humanistic theories. These tensions highlight the need for careful curriculum design that balances inclusivity and contextual relevance (Khalid, 2023).

Participants acknowledged that globalization amplifies the urgency of integration. Students felt challenged to reconcile their Islamic identity with exposure to global theories in sociology, anthropology, and literature. The consensus among lecturers was that Islamic values should not resist globalization but rather engage it critically, offering alternative perspectives. This aligns with Hanafi (2022), who argues that Islamic humanism must evolve dynamically to remain relevant.

The findings suggest that integration is most effective when approached through dialogue rather than substitution. Instead of replacing Western paradigms, Islamic values can be woven into existing curricula, fostering comparative analysis and critical reflection. This supports Syamsuddin (2023), who calls for “epistemic hybridity” as a strategy for educational reform.

One significant contribution identified by participants was the potential for Islamic values to enrich discourses on social justice. Concepts such as *maslahah* (public good) and *adl* (justice) were cited as resources for addressing inequality and marginalization in Indonesian society. Integrating these values into the humanities enables students to connect ethical inquiry with real-world issues (Abdullah, 2019).

Educators suggested that practical steps toward integration include revising reading lists, incorporating Islamic thinkers into syllabi, and fostering interdisciplinary dialogue between Islamic studies and humanities departments. Such practices would not only diversify knowledge but also reflect Indonesia’s intellectual heritage. These recommendations echo Al-Attas (2020), who advocates for the Islamization of knowledge as a curricular priority.

Although focused on Indonesia, the findings have broader implications for other Muslim-majority societies grappling with similar tensions between tradition and modernity. By foregrounding Islamic perspectives in the humanities, education systems can contribute to global debates on decolonizing knowledge and diversifying epistemologies (Lucas, 2024).

The study addresses the gaps identified in previous literature by providing empirical insights into how Islamic values are negotiated in academic settings. Unlike earlier works that remained theoretical, this research highlights lived experiences, classroom practices, and curricular realities, thereby advancing the discourse on integration in concrete terms.

The novelty lies in demonstrating that Islamic values, when strategically integrated, not only enrich humanities education but also serve as tools for cultivating intercultural dialogue and social

resilience. This contribution extends beyond descriptive accounts to propose practical frameworks that can be replicated or adapted in other contexts.

Overall, the results affirm that integrating Islamic values into the humanities is both feasible and beneficial, though not without challenges. The process requires intentional design, inclusivity, and continuous dialogue between tradition and modernity. By embracing this integration, Indonesian universities can position themselves at the forefront of educational innovation while honoring their cultural and religious heritage.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that integrating Islamic values into the humanities offers a significant contribution to both ethical and cultural dimensions of contemporary education. The findings reveal that principles such as justice, compassion, and communal responsibility are actively applied by educators and students, shaping pedagogical practices and social interactions. By grounding humanistic discourse in Islamic ethics, the study highlights the potential to create morally conscious individuals who can navigate complex social challenges. The research also underscores the role of Islamic values in bridging the gap between tradition and modernity. Participants emphasized that these values provide a framework for preserving cultural identity while engaging with globalized perspectives. The integration of philosophical, ethical, and practical insights from Islamic teachings into the humanities enriches academic discourse and encourages critical reflection on societal issues, including social justice and intercultural understanding.

Despite the positive implications, the study acknowledges limitations. The participant sample was predominantly urban and educationally oriented, which may limit generalizability to broader populations. Moreover, potential social desirability bias in self-reported data could have influenced responses. Addressing these limitations in future research—by expanding sampling across regions and employing mixed-methods designs—will enhance the robustness and applicability of findings. In conclusion, integrating Islamic values into the humanities represents a dynamic and context-sensitive approach to education and social development. It fosters ethical awareness, cultural rootedness, and critical engagement with contemporary issues. Future research should explore further empirical applications across diverse educational and social settings, aiming to refine frameworks that balance tradition and modernity while promoting inclusivity and social cohesion.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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