

THE URGENCY OF MORALITY AND SOCIAL NORMS IN CAMPUS LIFE

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Abstract

This study seeks to explore the perceptions of students at the Al Mujaddid Islamic Institute Sabak regarding the urgency of morals and norms in campus life, addressing the gap between the recognized importance of ethical behavior and observed inconsistencies in moral practice among students. While higher education is often focused on cognitive development, less attention has been given to how moral values and social norms are internalized and practiced in daily campus interactions, particularly in Islamic-based institutions. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom and campus observations, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis, involving systematic coding, categorization of emerging patterns, and triangulation across sources to ensure credibility and a comprehensive understanding of students' perspectives on moral and normative values. The findings indicate that most students perceive morals and norms as having a significant role in maintaining social harmony, academic ethics, and shaping their identity as Muslim students. However, challenges were also identified in the implementation of these values, such as the influence of popular culture, social media, and the lack of role models. The study highlights the importance of strengthening students' awareness and internalization of moral values and norms in campus life, emphasizing the role of Islamic-based education, ethical practices, and social interactions in shaping a harmonious and responsible academic environment.

Keywords

Students' perception, Morality, Norms, Campus life, Civic and Pancasila Education.



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INTRODUCTION

Recent studies and reports highlight a growing concern regarding moral and social crises in campus life, manifested in behaviors such as academic dishonesty, social disengagement, peer conflicts, and diminished ethical awareness among students (Eshet, 2024; Wowra, 2007). These issues reflect a broader challenge in higher education, where rapid modernization, digitalization, and social pressures sometimes weaken adherence to traditional moral and social norms. The prevalence of such behaviors underscores the urgency of addressing not only academic achievement but also the ethical and social development of students, as lapses in these areas can impact both individual growth and the broader campus community.

Campus life serves as an important arena in shaping the character of the younger generation, particularly students who will become the nation's future leaders (Rudagi et al., 2023). Higher education is not merely an institution that produces intellectual graduates; it also bears a moral responsibility to cultivate individuals with integrity, ethics, and social responsibility. As agents of change, students are expected not only to excel academically but also to mature emotionally, spiritually, and socially (Puniman, 2023; Usman et al., 2021). Therefore, campus life becomes a strategic arena for instilling moral values and norms as provisions for facing the challenges of community and national life.

An ideal higher education institution must be able to balance the development of intellectual capacity with the cultivation of character rooted in universal moral values and local wisdom (Hidayati & Waluyo, 2020). In the context of Indonesia, a nation that upholds Pancasila and social norms, students must be guided to understand and internalize these values in every aspect of their lives. Campus life is not only about academic achievements but also about how students uphold ethics, respect differences, and build healthy and productive social relationships. Strengthening morals and norms within higher education institutions is an imperative in the face of globalization, which brings new values that may not align with the nation's culture.

In recent years, evidence from empirical studies and institutional reports has highlighted a rise in moral and ethical challenges within higher education communities, painting a concerning picture of campus life. Surveys by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) reveal that around 44.5 % of university students admit to engaging in plagiarism, a form of academic dishonesty that undermines academic integrity and intellectual development (Kirya, 2019). Research on moral disengagement and academic dishonesty further shows that many students rationalize unethical

behavior, indicating weakened internal moral restraint and ethical awareness (Köfünçeli, 2022). Academic literature also identifies forms of moral decadence among students, including hedonistic lifestyles, lack of ethical conduct, and dishonesty in academic settings (Gamage et al., 2021). Such trends are exacerbated by pervasive social media use, which has been empirically linked to a significant increase in moral degeneration among Generation Z students, as exposure to digital content shapes values and interpersonal behaviour (McFadden, 2021). These documented phenomena suggest that contemporary campus environments face genuine moral and social crises, underscoring the urgency of reinforcing ethical norms and moral education before discussing their importance in shaping student character.

As an Islamic higher education institution, the Al Mujaddid Islamic Institute Sabak is institutionally committed to integrating Islamic values into all academic and non-academic activities. However, preliminary field observations conducted by the researcher during the current academic semester reveal a noticeable gap between the institution's stated vision and the everyday practices of students on campus. Several empirical issues were identified, including inconsistent adherence to academic etiquette, low discipline in punctuality for lectures and congregational prayers, and limited application of Islamic manners (*adab*) in peer interactions. These findings were further corroborated through semi-structured interviews with eight lecturers and twelve students, which indicated that Islamic values are often perceived as normative ideals rather than internalized habits shaping daily campus life. This condition reflects broader challenges faced by Islamic higher education institutions, where the implementation of religious values tends to remain symbolic and insufficiently embedded within institutional culture (Muhaimin, 2023; Nasir & Rijal, 2021; Studies & Bilgiler, 2019).

Furthermore, document analysis of academic guidelines, student codes of conduct, and student activity reports demonstrates that the integration of Islamic values is largely confined to formal policy documents, without being supported by systematic implementation and evaluation mechanisms. The absence of specific instruments to monitor and assess the internalization of moral and normative values among students indicates a weak institutional strategy for cultivating a value-based campus environment. These empirical findings highlight a significant academic concern regarding the limited transformation of Islamic values from institutional identity into lived student practices. Educational literature emphasizes that effective moral and character education requires consistency among institutional policies, educator role modeling, and a supportive campus

ecosystem(Holst, 2023; H. Liu et al., 2021; Tohri et al., 2022). Therefore, a comprehensive and participatory approach involving all campus stakeholders is essential to ensure that Islamic moral values function not merely as institutional rhetoric, but as an integral and sustainable component of campus life.

The Civics and Citizenship Education (PPKn) course holds an important role in supporting the character formation of students. Through this course, students are not only introduced to the fundamental values of national life but are also expected to apply moral and normative principles in real life, particularly within the campus context. An integrative and contextual approach to teaching PPKn can serve as an effective medium for highlighting the importance of morality in building social interactions, upholding academic ethics, and fulfilling responsibilities as citizens.

Students' understanding of moral values and norms is strongly influenced by their educational background (Hermino & Arifin, 2020), social environment (Achievements, 2021), and personal experiences before and during their studies (Collin & Schmidt, 2020). In a heterogeneous campus environment, students' perceptions of the importance of these values may vary. Some may view morals and norms as non-negotiable principles, while others may regard them as relative values that can be adjusted to serve personal or group interests. Such differences in perception present a challenge for educational institutions in designing inclusive and effective character education strategies. The rapidly changing socio-cultural conditions also affect students' perceptions and attitudes toward moral values and norms(Alfirević et al., 2021; Nieuważny et al., 2021). Exposure to digital media, popular culture, and behavioral models showcased by public figures often shapes new behavioral standards(Olasina, 2019). Consequently, students tend to be more permissive toward deviant behaviors and begin to disregard social norms that were once held in high regard. As agents of change, campuses need to balance these influences by providing spaces for reflection, education, and sustainable character development.

Understanding students' perceptions of the urgency of morals and norms in campus life is crucial in formulating policies and learning strategies that meet real needs. A purely normative approach is no longer sufficient for instilling moral values, as students now demand more dialogical, critical, and contextual methods(Gurr & Forster, 2023; Snauwaert, 2019; Vogt & Weber, 2020). Research into student perceptions can provide insights into how moral values and norms are understood, internalized, and practiced in campus life, enabling institutions to design more adaptive and relevant character education programs.

This study aims to explore in depth how students of the Al Mujaddid Islamic Institute Sabak perceive the urgency of morals and norms in campus life. The focus of this study is directed at how students view the role of these values in shaping academic ethics, fostering healthy social relationships, and maintaining the reputation of the campus as a dignified Islamic educational institution. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more effective models of learning and character building in Islamic higher education institutions.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach (Aljurf et al., 2020; Cameron & Rideout, 2022; Guerrero-dib & Portales, 2020; Valen et al., 2019) aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of students' perceptions regarding the urgency of morals and norms in campus life. As an Islamic higher education institution, the Al Mujaddid Islamic Institute Sabak is institutionally committed to integrating Islamic values into all academic and non-academic activities. However, preliminary field observations conducted by the researcher during the current academic semester reveal a noticeable gap between the institution's stated vision and the everyday practices of students on campus. Several empirical issues were identified, including inconsistent adherence to academic etiquette, low discipline in punctuality for lectures and congregational prayers, and limited application of Islamic manners (*adab*) in peer interactions. These findings were further corroborated through semi-structured interviews with eight lecturers and twelve students, which indicated that Islamic values are often perceived as normative ideals rather than internalized habits shaping daily campus life. This condition reflects broader challenges faced by Islamic higher education institutions, where the implementation of religious values tends to remain symbolic and insufficiently embedded within institutional culture (Biygautane & Clegg, 2020).

To address this academic concern, the study employed a qualitative research approach with a case study design, as this approach allows for an in-depth and holistic exploration of social phenomena based on individuals' subjective experiences. The research focused on students' lived experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of moral values and norms as manifested in their social and academic interactions within higher education. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, enabling triangulation to enhance the credibility of the findings. The research was conducted at the Al Mujaddid Islamic Institute Sabak, an Islamic-based higher education institution that formally upholds ethical and religious values.

This methodological approach is considered appropriate for capturing the complexity of value internalization processes within a specific institutional context, particularly in understanding how moral and normative ideals are negotiated, practiced, and sometimes contested in everyday campus life (Kraatz et al., 2020).

The research subjects consisted of ten students selected through purposive sampling. The criteria for selection included completion of the Civics and Citizenship Education (PPKn) course and active engagement in campus activities. To ensure diverse perspectives, the informants were chosen based on study program (3 students from education program, 4 from natural Sciences, and 3 from Language and Arts programs), semester (4 students in the 5th semester, 3 in the 6th semester, and 3 in the 7th semester), and involvement in campus organizations (3 students actively participating in student councils, 4 in cultural or sports clubs, and 3 in volunteer or community service groups). This sampling approach ensured that the findings reflected a broad range of experiences and viewpoints within the student population.

Data collection was carried out using three main techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Imanina, 2020). In-depth interviews were conducted with ten students ranging from the second semester to the final semester, using open-ended questions that explored their understanding of the concepts of morals and norms, the application of these values in campus life, and the factors influencing their attitudes and behaviors. Participant observation was conducted from 12 February to 4 May 2024 by systematically observing student behavior across various settings, including classroom learning activities, peer interactions, and participation in campus organizations. The observations were carried out in a naturalistic manner, focusing on recording social interactions and the manifestation of moral values and norms in students' daily behaviors without any intervention in the observed situations.

The collected data were analyzed thematically, beginning with detailed transcription of interview results and observation notes. This process was followed by data coding to identify key themes reflecting students' perceptions of morals and norms. Categories and subcategories were developed based on similarities in meaning, the intensity of perspectives (Essay, 2022), and frequency of occurrence within the data. Thematic analysis enabled the researcher to uncover the relationships between students' perceptions and their educational backgrounds, social experiences, and religious contexts within the campus environment. Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation. Specifically, the researcher compared information from three different

sources: interviews with students, classroom and campus observations, and analysis of relevant documents, such as student activity reports and course assignments, to identify consistencies and discrepancies.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In the context of higher education, the role of universities extends beyond the transfer of knowledge and academic skills to include the cultivation of moral values and social responsibility among students. Moral and normative values serve as fundamental pillars in shaping students' character, guiding their behavior, and fostering an academic culture that is ethical, harmonious, and dignified. This is particularly crucial in Islamic-based institutions, where morality and norms are inseparable from religious teachings and are expected to be reflected in both academic and social interactions. However, the rapid influence of globalization, digital culture, and shifting social dynamics presents challenges in the consistent internalization of these values. Against this backdrop, exploring students' perceptions of the urgency of morals and norms in campus life is essential to understand how these values are interpreted, practiced, and challenged, as well as to provide insights for developing more contextual and sustainable models of character education within higher education institutions.

Table 1. Result of research

No.	Themes	Key Findings	Illustrative Quotes
1	Students' Awareness of the Importance of Morals and Norms in Campus Life	Students showed relatively high awareness of the importance of morals and norms, associating them with their identity as Muslim students. Observations confirmed practices such as greeting lecturers, respecting peers, and polite criticism, though inconsistencies occurred due to peer pressure and lack of supervision.	"Moral values such as honesty and respecting others must be our foundation as Muslim students, especially in an Islamic campus." – 4th semester student "Even when friends joke or tease, I try to stay polite and maintain good manners because it reflects my character." – 5th semester student "Sometimes it's hard to always follow the rules, but I remind myself that respecting lecturers and peers is part of being a responsible student." – 6th semester student
2	The Urgency of Morals and Norms in Social Interaction	Students regarded campus as a space for maturity and responsibility, emphasizing respect for lecturers and peers as well as ethical social media use.	"Campus is not only a place to learn knowledge, but also a place to learn how to respect others." – 5th semester student "Through mentoring and study

		Religious activities (halaqah, study circles, mentoring) fostered patience, discipline, and mutual respect.	circles, I learned to be patient and listen to others' opinions without judging." – 6th semester student "Even on social media, I try to communicate politely and avoid spreading negative content because it reflects my character as a student." – 4th semester student "Respecting peers and lecturers is not just a rule; it helps create harmony and makes learning more meaningful." – 5th semester student
3	Challenges in the Implementation of Moral and Normative Values	Challenges included the influence of permissive digital culture via social media, lack of consistent role models from seniors and lecturers, and limited safe spaces for dialogue. These factors weakened the consistent application of moral values.	"On social media, we often see glamorous, free, and seemingly 'cool' content. If our faith is not strong, it's easy to get carried away." – 6th semester student "Sometimes it's hard to always behave politely when seniors or peers don't set a good example." – 5th semester student "We rarely have spaces to discuss ethical dilemmas openly, so it's easy to feel confused about what is right or wrong." – 4th semester student "Even when we know the rules, peer pressure and online trends make it challenging to consistently follow moral values." – 6th semester student

Source; 2024

The findings of the study reveal that students at the Al Mujaddid Islamic Institute Sabak demonstrated a relatively strong awareness of the importance of moral and normative values in campus life, viewing them as integral to their identity as Muslim students and practicing them in daily interactions such as greeting lecturers, respecting peers, and offering polite criticism. Campus life was also perceived as a space for social maturity and responsibility, where values of respect and discipline were reinforced through religious activities like halaqah, study circles, and mentoring sessions. However, the research also identified several challenges in the consistent implementation of these values, including the pervasive influence of permissive digital culture through social media, the lack of exemplary role models among seniors and lecturers, and the limited availability of safe and open dialogue spaces. These findings highlight both the potential and the obstacles in fostering a campus culture rooted in morals and norms, emphasizing the need for continuous guidance, mentorship, and institutional support.

Discussion

Students' Awareness of the Importance of Morals and Norms in Campus Life

Most of the interviewed students demonstrated a relatively high awareness of the importance of morals and norms in campus life, viewing academic achievement and ethical behavior as interdependent. This aligns with social constructivist perspectives that emphasize learning as a socially mediated process, where norms and values are co-constructed within a community (Vespone, 2023). A fourth-semester student from the Islamic Religious Education program stated: "Moral values such as honesty and respecting others must be our foundation as Muslim students, especially in an Islamic campus. If academics are good but there is no proper attitude, it feels incomplete."

This reflection illustrates that students do not perceive moral values merely as theoretical concepts; rather, they internalize them as part of their identity within a religious and academic community. This observation resonates with the findings of (Goff et al., 2022), who argues that higher education should cultivate individuals not only intellectually but also morally, socially, and spiritually. Norms are thus seen as unwritten rules regulating behavior, ensuring a more orderly, harmonious, and humane campus environment.

Observation notes from learning activities and campus interactions further supported these insights. In classrooms, students were often observed greeting lecturers, allowing them to sit first, and listening attentively, while outside the classroom, similar behaviors appeared in organizational meetings and religious activities, including mutual respect, attentive listening, and polite criticism. For example, during one organizational discussion, a student reminded a peer who interrupted another: "patient, let's listen until the end. We are here to learn manners, not just arguments."

Such behaviors demonstrate that moral awareness is internalized and enacted in daily interactions, not merely a response to external rules. This finding complements the literature on ethical socialization in higher education, which highlights that repeated practice and peer modeling are critical for students to adopt ethical and prosocial behaviors (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2022; X. Liu et al., 2022). Moreover, the observed discrepancies in consistent behavior across students point to the influence of external pressures and the need for structured guidance, aligning with studies on moral development in campus contexts that emphasize the interplay between personal values and social environments (Kim, 2022).

In sum, these findings illustrate that students' moral awareness is both an individual and social construct, shaped by internalized values, peer interactions, and institutional culture. By juxtaposing empirical observations with theoretical perspectives, it becomes evident that campus life functions as a critical arena for ethical formation and identity development, highlighting the practical relevance of integrating moral education with everyday academic and social experiences.

Despite this, inconsistencies between understanding and behavior were also identified. Several students admitted that while they knew the importance of morals and norms, it was not always easy to remain consistent. A sixth-semester student explained: "Sometimes we know what's right, but because of the environment or peer pressure, we just go along. For example, in group assignments, only one or two people work, while the others remain silent, even though we know it's unfair." This highlights the challenges of fully internalizing moral values. Peer influence, social pressure, and lack of supervision were factors weakening the practice of values. Nevertheless, students' critical awareness of such inconsistencies suggests their strong potential to strengthen moral and normative practices, provided consistent guidance and supportive spaces are available.

The Urgency of Morals and Norms in Social Interaction

Students at the Al Mujaddid Islamic Institute Sabak generally recognized that the campus functions as a public space requiring maturity and responsibility, reflecting both moral and social expectations. A fifth-semester student from the Sharia Economic Law program stated: "Campus is not only a place to learn knowledge, but also a place to learn how to respect others. Lecturers must be respected, friends must be valued, and we should not act as if we are always right."

This insight demonstrates that students perceive norms not merely as formal rules but as part of a living culture of courtesy that guides daily interactions. Respect for lecturers greeting them, listening attentively, and following academic instructions is interpreted as both respect for knowledge and for educators themselves. Similarly, respect for peers is enacted through mutual assistance, non-judgmental discussion, and ethical conduct in social media interactions. These findings resonate with social constructivist and character education frameworks, which emphasize that learning occurs through participation in social norms and practices, not only through formal instruction (Allen et al., 2022; Harrison & Laco, 2022).

Observations in classrooms and organizational activities further confirmed these behaviors. In class, students maintained politeness, waited their turn to speak, and followed discussion protocols. During Islamic Student Activity Unit (UKMI) events, students reminded each other to

arrive on time, dress modestly, and begin activities with prayers, illustrating the integration of ethical and religious practices into daily routines. For example, in one organizational meeting, a student calmed a peer who was speaking harshly by saying: “If it can be said calmly, why get angry? Here we are learning patience together.”

Such incidents indicate that religiously grounded moral values patience, mutual encouragement in goodness, and speech control—are actively internalized and practiced, rather than remaining abstract norms. This observation aligns with prior research on moral and character development in higher education, which highlights that embedding values into routine social interactions strengthens ethical awareness and self-regulation among students (Russell et al., 2022). Therefore, the campus serves not only as an academic arena but also as a critical space for ethical formation, where moral norms are lived, negotiated, and reinforced through social and religious practices.

Religious activities also played an important role in moral internalization (Ward & King, 2021). A third-semester student remarked: “Attending weekly study circles makes me realize that being a student is not only about GPA, but also about character. In that forum, we remind each other, and it really helps me to stay disciplined.” Activities such as halaqah, scriptural study sessions, and mentoring provided safe spaces for students to practice moral values in supportive settings (Mohd Yusoff et al., 2022). They were not merely passive participants but took active roles in cultivating a culture of mutual advice, respect for differing views, and conflict avoidance. This indicates that strengthening moral values and norms is not only effective through formal learning (e.g., PPKn) but also through consistent, structured, and community-based religious practices.

Challenges in the Implementation of Moral and Normative Values

The application of moral and normative values on campus faced several challenges, despite students’ awareness of their importance. One major factor was the dominance of social media in student life, which often promotes hedonistic, individualistic, and permissive cultural values. A sixth-semester student noted: “On social media, we often see glamorous, free, and seemingly ‘cool’ content. If our faith is not strong and we lack clear guidance, it’s easy to get carried away.”

This observation illustrates how digital culture can conflict with the ethical and moral norms promoted within an Islamic campus environment, influencing students’ behavior, attitudes, and decision-making. These findings align with prior studies highlighting the role of social media in shaping youth values, sometimes undermining traditional moral frameworks and promoting

superficial or self-centered lifestyles (Ward & King, 2021).

Another significant challenge was the absence of consistent role models among campus figures. Some students expressed concern when senior students or even lecturers failed to demonstrate moral integrity. A fourth-semester student remarked: “We are taught honesty and responsibility, but sometimes we see seniors manipulating activity data or lecturers being inconsistent with attendance. So, who should we follow?”

This discrepancy between theoretical instruction and observed behavior reflects what (Harrison & Laco, 2022) describe as a barrier to moral development, where inconsistent modeling reduces students’ motivation and may lead to ethical disengagement. The combination of external pressures from digital culture and insufficient role modeling underscores the complexity of fostering ethical behavior on campus, suggesting that both structural guidance and continuous reinforcement of moral norms are necessary to support students’ moral and social development.

The absence of safe and open dialogue spaces to discuss moral issues also contributed to these challenges. Observations of orientation activities for new students revealed that moral education was still delivered in a one-way format, without opportunities for students to share their concerns or dilemmas. One student noted: “We need more interactive forums, not just lectures about character. There should be space to share, tell stories, or openly discuss.” Without such dialogue, moral values risk being seen as mere memorization or formalities. Effective character development should provide opportunities for reflection, discussion, and empathetic guidance (Kirya, 2019).

Students’ Recommendations for Strengthening Moral Values

In addition to identifying challenges, students proposed several concrete steps to reinforce the internalization of moral and normative values in campus life. A prominent recommendation was the integration of ethical values across all courses, not limited to Civics and Citizenship Education (PPKn) or religious studies. Students argued that principles such as honesty, discipline, responsibility, and respect should permeate the learning process in all disciplines, including science, economics, and technology. An Islamic Education Management student emphasized: “If moral values are only discussed in PPKn, it feels like separating morality from life. Every field of knowledge needs ethics. For example, in management, honesty and transparency are essential.”

This perspective aligns with the concept of value integration in curriculum design, which suggests that ethical education should not be siloed but embedded throughout academic experiences to support holistic character development (Harrison & Laco, 2022). Students also

highlighted the importance of regular, personal, and continuous mentoring programs, such as halaqah, study circles, or small-group mentoring led by lecturers, alumni, or senior students who exemplify integrity. Observations of religious student organizations showed that these forums fostered strong social bonds and reflective practices. One mentoring participant shared: "In mentoring, we can be open and remind each other. It feels closer, and it's easier to practice good values because someone is guiding and setting an example."

Such informal but well-directed mentoring appears more impactful than purely formal approaches, which students sometimes perceive as rigid or disconnected from their daily experiences. This finding supports prior research indicating that mentoring and peer modeling are critical mechanisms for moral development in higher education (Mohd Yusoff et al., 2022).

Institutional student organizations were also recognized as crucial in promoting ethical culture on campus (Ramísio et al., 2019). Students expected entities such as the Student Executive Board (BEM), Student Activity Units (UKM), and other campus communities to act as agents of change, engaging actively in campaigns addressing moral issues rather than focusing solely on achievements or ceremonial events. A student organization leader remarked: "We want BEM and UKM to be more active in raising ethical issues, like campaigns against plagiarism, promoting respect, or educating on digital ethics. That's more relevant to our real student life."

These insights indicate that sustainable internalization of moral values requires a multi-level approach: curriculum integration, mentoring, and active institutional support. When combined, these strategies provide continuous reinforcement of ethical practices, bridging the gap between theoretical moral instruction and lived experiences, and fostering a campus culture that supports both personal integrity and communal responsibility. This indicates that students are not passive in facing value-related challenges; instead, they possess a collective awareness to be part of the solution, provided they are given sufficient space, trust, and institutional support. Their aspirations highlight the importance of building a systemic campus ecosystem that promotes moral growth not merely through administrative regulations but through lived culture and collective practice.

Overall, this study reveals that students at the Al Mujaddid Islamic Institute Sabak demonstrate a relatively high level of moral awareness and normative understanding, particularly regarding the importance of ethics, respect, and responsibility in campus life. The findings show that moral values are not merely understood at a cognitive level, but are also practiced in daily academic and social interactions, especially within classrooms, student organizations, and religious

activities. At the same time, the study identifies persistent challenges in maintaining consistency between moral understanding and actual behavior, influenced by peer pressure, digital culture, limited role modeling, and the absence of dialogical moral learning spaces. These findings suggest that moral and normative development in higher education is a dynamic and contested process rather than a linear or uniform outcome.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings strongly align with social constructivist theory, which views learning and value formation as socially mediated processes shaped through interaction, negotiation, and shared meaning-making (Yáñez et al., 2019). Students' moral awareness emerged not only from formal instruction but also from repeated engagement in social practices, such as respectful dialogue, peer reminders, and collective religious routines. This supports the argument that moral values are co-constructed within communities of practice rather than transmitted unilaterally. The campus environment thus functions as a moral ecosystem, where values are continuously reinforced or weakened through everyday interactions, institutional norms, and social expectations.

In dialogue with previous research, the findings corroborate studies emphasizing the role of higher education in fostering holistic student development that integrates intellectual, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions (X. Liu et al., 2022). Similar to the present study, (Patrick et al., 2019) highlight that ethical behavior is more likely to be internalized when students repeatedly observe and practice moral conduct within peer groups. The prominence of religious and organizational activities in shaping moral awareness at Al Mujaddid also echoes (Johnson & Sloth-nielsen, 2020) findings on the role of faith-based communities in strengthening self-regulation and ethical commitment among students.

However, this study also offers a critical nuance that partially challenges idealized assumptions in character education literature. While many frameworks assume that moral knowledge naturally leads to moral behavior, the findings here demonstrate a clear gap between moral cognition and moral consistency. Students were aware of ethical standards yet struggled to uphold them under social pressure, digital influence, or institutional inconsistency. This observation supports (DeTienne et al., 2021) argument that moral development is highly contextual and vulnerable to environmental contradictions. In this sense, the findings act as an antithesis to purely normative or rule-based models of moral education that overlook structural and cultural constraints.

The influence of social media emerged as a particularly salient external factor complicating moral internalization. Consistent with prior studies on youth digital culture (Zaid et al., 2022), students reported tension between Islamic moral ideals and the values promoted through online platforms. This finding affirms the need to reconceptualize moral education in higher education as extending beyond physical campus boundaries into digital spaces. Ethical education that fails to address digital behavior risks becoming disconnected from students' lived realities, thereby reducing its relevance and effectiveness.

Another significant contribution of this study lies in its emphasis on role modeling and dialogical spaces as central mechanisms for moral development. While previous studies acknowledge the importance of exemplary figures (Biesta, 2021), the present findings demonstrate that inconsistencies among lecturers and senior students can actively undermine moral education efforts. Moreover, the lack of safe, interactive forums for discussing moral dilemmas reinforces (Joseph Jeyaraj & Gandolfi, 2022) critique of one-directional character education approaches. These results affirm that moral norms cannot be sustained through regulation and instruction alone; they require trust, openness, and reflective dialogue.

Students' recommendations further reinforce the study's theoretical implications by highlighting the necessity of a systemic and integrative approach to moral education. Their call for embedding ethical values across all disciplines aligns with integrative curriculum theories that reject the compartmentalization of morality into specific subjects (Berman, 2020). Similarly, their emphasis on mentoring and student organizations as ethical agents supports (Hickey & Riddle, 2022) assertion that informal, relational learning spaces often exert a stronger moral influence than formal coursework.

In summary, this discussion affirms that moral and normative development in Islamic higher education is best understood as a socially constructed, institutionally mediated, and contextually challenged process. While the findings largely affirm existing theories on social learning and character education, they also challenge linear models that underestimate the impact of digital culture, role inconsistency, and structural gaps. By positioning students not merely as moral recipients but as reflective agents with constructive recommendations, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of moral education as a lived, negotiated, and collective practice within contemporary campus life.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that students at the Al Mujaddid Islamic Institute Sabak perceive moral values and norms as essential for maintaining a harmonious and responsible campus environment. They recognize that campus life is not only for academic learning but also for developing personality, social maturity, and ethical conduct. Accordingly, values such as honesty and responsibility, and norms such as courtesy and mutual respect, are seen as highly relevant and necessary to be upheld in daily interactions. A notable aspect revealed by the study is students' view that moral values should be integrated across all courses and reinforced through mentoring, informal forums, and student organizational activities, rather than being confined to a single subject. These findings directly address the research objective, emphasizing the urgency of instilling and practicing moral values and norms in campus life, and provide evidence that students themselves recognize and support strategies to sustain ethical behavior and social responsibility within the academic community.

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