

Internalizing ethical and humanistic values in AIK education to foster an anti-bullying culture in Islamic higher education

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of bullying in higher education has become a serious challenge for the academic environment, including Islamic universities that are fundamentally grounded in moral and humanistic values. This article aims to analyze the process of internalizing ethical and humanistic values in Al-Islam and *Kemuhammadiyahan* (AIK) education as a strategy to foster an anti-bullying culture in Islamic higher education institutions. This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach through literature review and observations of AIK learning practices in various Muhammadiyah educational settings. The findings indicate that AIK education plays a significant role in instilling the values of tawhid, justice, empathy, and respect for human dignity, moral foundations essential to creating a civilized campus environment free from social violence. The internalization of these values is carried out through an integrative approach that combines cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions, enabling students not only to understand Islamic teachings theoretically but also to apply them in constructive social behavior. This article concludes that strengthening ethical-humanistic values within AIK education is a strategic step toward building an inclusive academic culture that respects diversity and rejects all forms of bullying in Islamic higher education. The study contributes by offering an integrated framework that connects value-based AIK learning with anti-bullying behavioral outcomes, providing theoretical and practical insights for the development of more effective and humanistic AIK models in Islamic higher education.

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1. Introduction

The phenomenon of bullying in the realm of education has increasingly become a serious social and psychological issue (Ma et al., 2001; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017), including within Islamic higher education institutions (Makmudi et al., 2026; Wardi & Mappanyompa, 2025). Bullying does not occur only at the elementary or secondary school levels, but also extends to higher education, which should ideally serve as a space for character formation and academic civilization. In this context, campuses are expected to function as centers of knowledge and morality, but often become arenas where symbolic and social violence is reproduced. (Nugraha et al., 2025) reveal that forms of bullying in higher education are not only physical, but also verbal, psychological, and even digital through social media (cyberbullying), which has become increasingly widespread among university students due to the rapid development of communication technology.

This phenomenon demonstrates that higher education institutions, including Islamic universities, face significant challenges in safeguarding moral and humanistic integrity amid the rapid currents of digitalization and social change. The issue of bullying within university environments reflects a complex social reality (Gómez-Galán et al., 2021; Meyer, 2025). It is not solely related to individual behavior but is also connected to the weak internalization of moral values and social empathy within the educational system. When education places greater emphasis on cognitive aspects and technical competencies while neglecting affective and spiritual dimensions, an imbalance occurs in the formation of students' character.

This condition often produces individuals who are intellectually capable yet lack empathy and social sensitivity. In fact, within the framework of Islamic education, the primary goal is not merely to produce academically proficient individuals, but also those who possess noble character and holistic integrity (*insan kamil*). (Rezky et al., 2025) emphasize that bullying on campus not only damages the learning climate but also hinders the process of shaping students into civilized individuals with empathetic personalities.

Islamic higher education is fundamentally oriented toward creating an academic environment that embodies the values of rahmatan lil-'alamin (compassion, justice, and respect for human dignity) (Mokhtar & Rahman, 2025; Rahmadi Agus Setiawan, 2026). These values serve as the normative foundation for all processes within Islamic education. However, empirical realities show that a gap still exists between the ideal teachings of Islam (*das Sollen*) and the social conditions that unfold in practice (*das Sein*).

This moral gap indicates that the internalization of Islamic values has not been fully effective within Islamic higher education institutions. Therefore, a more contextual, systematic, and character-oriented value education strategy is needed, one that focuses on cultivating empathy and justice in students. In this context, the Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) courses hold a highly strategic role (Nuryana, 2017). AIK is not merely a medium for teaching religious doctrines but also a platform for shaping students' moral and spiritual character.

Ideally, AIK learning should not stop at the transfer of knowledge about Islamic teachings; it must also engage the affective and practical domains, namely, how Islamic values are manifested in real-life situations within both academic and social environments. Fauzia dan Basri emphasize that AIK serves as an essential instrument for cultivating *insan kamil* (holistic individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and virtuous in character) (A. Fauzia and M. Basri, 2020). Through AIK, values such as honesty, empathy, social responsibility, and respect for diversity can be systematically instilled in students as moral foundations for campus life.

A number of studies reinforce the importance of AIK in cultivating students' moral awareness (Kurniawan & Mardiana, 2026; Masrizal & Nurhuda, 2026). Nugraha dan Kurniasih found that integrating ethical and humanistic values into Islamic learning can enhance students' moral resilience and social empathy, thereby reducing tendencies toward aggressive behavior and bullying (Nugraha A., 2023).

Meanwhile, Hasanah *et.al*, state that reflective-dialogical AIK instruction can strengthen students' awareness of the importance of respecting differences and rejecting all forms of symbolic violence on campus (Hasanah, N., Putra, D., and Karim, 2021). Thus, AIK does not merely serve a cognitive function but also plays a role as a medium of moral transformation that guides students to become individuals with social concern and commitment to humanitarian values.

The phenomenon of campus bullying has become not only a national concern but also a global one. A UNESCO report emphasizes that cases of campus bullying and cyber harassment increased significantly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift of academic communication into digital spaces without adequate moral supervision has created a new arena for the emergence of online verbal and psychological violence.

This situation underscores the importance of moral and digital ethics literacy among students, while further strengthening the urgency of humanistic education. Universities should not function merely as institutions of knowledge transfer but must become spaces for character formation and the development of civilization. In this regard, Islamic higher education institutions hold a strategic position, as they possess spiritual, moral, and intellectual foundations that are inherently embedded in their educational mission.

The process of internalizing ethical and humanistic values in AIK learning involves three essential stages. First, cognitive internalization, namely instilling value-based understanding through contextual studies of the Qur'an and Hadith, enabling students to connect Islamic values with social realities. Second, affective internalization, which refers to developing empathy and moral sensitivity through social interaction, reflective discussions, as well as mentoring and moral guidance activities. Third, practical internalization, which is the application of Islamic values in concrete actions such as social programs, community service projects, and anti-bullying campaigns. This approach, as emphasized by Rahman and Yusof, is believed to transform *das Sein*, the social reality of bullying, into *das Sollen*, the ideal reality of a safe, inclusive, and civilized campus (Rahman, N., and Yusof, 2020).

In addition to functioning as an instrument for moral formation, AIK also plays a preventive role in creating a healthy academic culture. By internalizing ethical and humanistic values, students learn to manage differences wisely, communicate respectfully, and reject all forms of discrimination and symbolic violence. When students possess strong moral awareness, bullying behavior will have no space to grow within the campus environment.

In this sense, value-based education functions as a moral vaccine that protects younger generations from moral crises and ethical degradation in the digital era. The challenge for Islamic higher education in the future lies in how to develop AIK learning models that remain relevant to contemporary social dynamics. AIK needs to be designed through an interdisciplinary approach, integrating perspectives from theology, ethics, psychology, and digital technology. This enables students to understand Islamic values in an integral and contextual manner.

AIK lecturers are also expected to serve as moral role models who demonstrate exemplary academic and social behavior. Exemplarity becomes a key factor in the internalization process, as students tend to emulate behaviors more easily than merely accepting moral instructions. Based on these phenomena, this study seeks to analyze in depth how the internalization of ethical and humanistic values within Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) learning can serve as an effective strategy for fostering an anti-bullying culture in Islamic higher education institutions.

Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich Islamic educational discourse with a humanistic perspective that emphasizes the balance between spirituality and rationality (Nuryana et al., 2026). Practically, the findings of this research are expected to serve as a reference for Islamic higher education institutions in designing AIK learning models that are contextual, innovative, and oriented toward cultivating students' civilized character. Thus, Islamic universities will not only function as centers for the development of knowledge but also as moral strongholds that nurture a generation of individuals who are faithful, knowledgeable, and virtuous in character.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research approach with a phenomenological orientation to explore the internalization of ethical and humanistic values within Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah (AIK) education and its contribution to fostering an anti-bullying culture in Islamic higher education. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of moral values as manifested in educational practices and social interactions. The

phenomenological orientation enabled an in-depth examination of how individuals experience and assign meaning to ethical and humanistic values in their academic environment. Rather than measuring behavioral changes quantitatively, the study focused on understanding the processes through which values are interpreted, internalized, and expressed in everyday campus life (Lewis, 2015).

The research was conducted at a Muhammadiyah Islamic higher education institution in West Java, Indonesia. The study involved 15 participants representing three groups within the academic community: five lecturers, eight students, and two institutional leaders. These participant groups provided different perspectives on the implementation of AIK education, the internalization of ethical and humanistic values, and the development of an anti-bullying academic culture. The inclusion of lecturers, students, and institutional leaders allowed the study to examine the phenomenon from pedagogical, experiential, and institutional perspectives. This diversity of participants was intended to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic ethical principles are communicated, experienced, and reinforced across different levels of the higher education environment. The research methodology framework for this study is presented in Fig. 1.

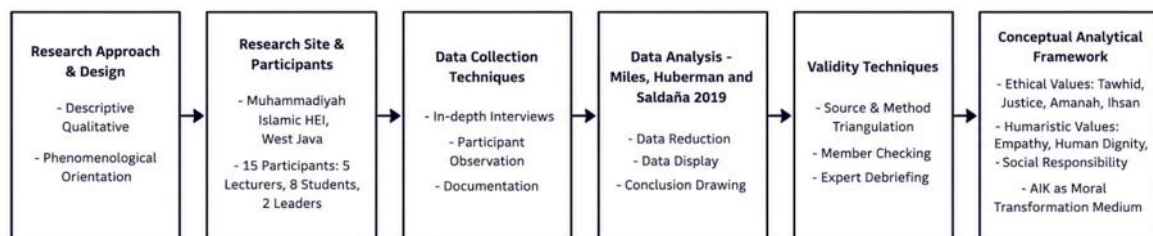


Fig. 1. Research Methodology Framework of the Study

Data were collected using three complementary techniques: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' understanding and experiences of ethical and humanistic values, including tawhid, justice, trustworthiness (amanah), compassion (ihsan), empathy, and respect for human dignity. Participant observation focused on educational practices, academic interactions, and social behaviors relevant to the internalization of these values and the prevention of bullying. Documentation was used to examine relevant institutional and educational materials associated with AIK learning and character development. The combination of these techniques enabled the researchers to investigate both participants' reported experiences and the observable educational practices through which moral values are promoted. Using multiple sources of qualitative evidence also facilitated a more contextualized interpretation of the phenomenon.

The collected data were analyzed using the interactive qualitative data analysis model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (Creswell & Poth, 2016), encompassing three interconnected activities: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the first stage, data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were systematically organized and reduced to identify information relevant to the research objectives. The second stage involved displaying the data through descriptive narratives and thematic groupings to identify recurring patterns, relationships, and differences across participant perspectives. In the final stage, conclusions were developed and continuously verified by comparing emerging interpretations with the available empirical evidence. The analysis was guided by a conceptual framework integrating Islamic ethical values, including tawhid, justice, amanah, and ihsan; humanistic values, particularly empathy and human dignity; and social responsibility. Within this framework, AIK education was examined as a potential medium of moral transformation through which ethical understanding may be translated into respectful interpersonal behavior and an anti-bullying academic culture.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that the Al-Islam and Muhammadiyah Studies (AIK) learning program plays a significant role in fostering an anti-bullying culture within Islamic higher education institutions. Based on interviews with lecturers, students, and AIK institutional managers, it was found that the internalization of ethical and humanistic values has been systematically integrated into both the curriculum and instructional practices see Fig. 2. This integration occurs not only in classroom settings but is also reinforced through co-curricular and extracurricular activities such as AIK mentoring, thematic study circles, and community service programs.

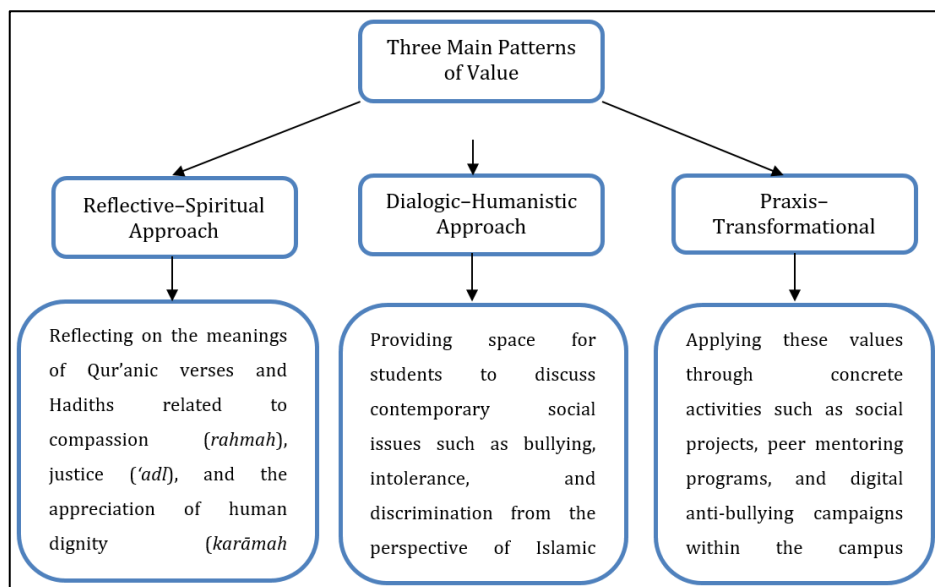


Fig. 2. Three-Stage Model of Ethical and Humanistic Value Internalization in AIK Learning

These combined approaches form a comprehensive learning cycle that not only transfers religious knowledge but also transforms students' ways of thinking, behaving, and interacting in accordance with the values of *rahmatan lil-'alamin*. As a result, AIK education contributes meaningfully to cultivating an inclusive campus environment that rejects all forms of bullying.

3.1. Internalization of Ethical Values in AIK Learning

The ethical values most prominently internalized in AIK learning include honesty (*ṣidq*), justice (*'adl*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), and *ihsan*. The process of internalization is carried out through value clarification and learning-by-example models, in which lecturers serve as moral role models who demonstrate integrity in academic interactions. As stated by one AIK lecturer: "Islamic values are not merely to be taught, but exemplified. Students understand the meaning of justice or empathy more effectively when they experience it directly in the learning process". This approach aligns with the concept of Islamic ethical education, which emphasizes *uswah hasanah* (exemplary conduct) as a means of character formation (Iwan Sanusi et al., 2024).

The internalization of these ethical values directly contributes to reducing exclusive and aggressive behaviors among students. They begin to understand that insulting, demeaning, or excluding others constitutes a violation of the principle of social *tawhid*, namely the unity of humankind under divine justice. The study also found that the presence of the AIK Semester Learning Plan (RPS), which incorporates topics on social ethics and justice, serves as an essential foundation for integrating moral values into academic content. In this context, *das Sein*, the reality of bullying phenomena on campus, is addressed through *das Sollen*, the normative effort to cultivate just behavior through value-based education.

3.2. Internalization of Humanistic Values in AIK Learning

Humanistic values such as empathy, appreciation of diversity, social solidarity, and collective responsibility constitute key components in AIK learning grounded in a human-centered approach. Interview findings show that most students experienced a shift in perspective after taking AIK courses that adopt a dialogical orientation. They became more open to differences in social, economic, and cultural backgrounds among their peers. The humanistic approach implemented by AIK lecturers integrates reflective dialogue, cooperative learning, and project-based learning.

Through this approach, students not only understand Islamic values theoretically but also internalize them through concrete social actions. For instance, in the “*Kampus Ramah Sesama*” initiative, AIK students organized mentoring programs for new students who struggled to adapt, ensuring they did not become isolated or potential victims of bullying. These findings align with Nugraha & Kurniasih, who assert that the internalization of humanistic values in Islamic education can foster social empathy and reduce aggressive behavior among university students. Thus, AIK functions as a *moral filter* that enables students to evaluate, control, and correct their social behavior ethically and spiritually.

3.3. AIK as a Medium for Campus Cultural Transformation

AIK learning functions as a medium for transforming campus culture through the integration of ethical and humanistic values into daily academic life. Observations show significant shifts in students’ interaction patterns after value-based AIK programs were implemented. Students demonstrate greater appreciation for diversity, stronger solidarity toward peers facing social pressure, and active involvement in anti-bullying initiatives.

This emphasizes that AIK is not merely a compulsory course, but a moral ecosystem that harmonizes Islamic values with humanistic principles, supporting the development of a just and civilized campus community (Rahman, N., and Yusof, 2020). AIK’s influence is further strengthened when its values are incorporated into institutional policies such as the student code of conduct and character-building programs. As a result, moral values extend beyond the cognitive domain and become embedded within students’ affective and behavioral dimensions.

The findings also reveal that AIK plays a strategic role in bridging *das Sein*, the empirical reality of bullying still found on campuses, and *das Sollen*, the ethical ideals of Islamic teachings that emphasize justice, dignity, and the prohibition of all forms of violence. By integrating these values into curriculum design and classroom practice, AIK becomes a moral transformation instrument that aligns students’ real-life social behavior with Islamic ethical imperatives (Ismail & Clarita, 2024). The transformation of ethical values within AIK learning can be mapped through three main stages: cognitive, affective, and praxis.

These stages are interrelated and work together to form a holistic and continuous value education system. The internalization of values in AIK operates through three interconnected stages. The cognitive stage strengthens students’ understanding of ethical principles through Qur’anic and Hadith-based learning. The affective stage cultivates empathy and moral sensitivity through reflection, mentoring, and dialogical learning.

The practical stage encourages students to express these values through concrete actions such as community service, peer mentoring, and anti-bullying initiatives. Together, these stages form a continuous cycle that fosters moral awareness and ethical behavior within the academic environment. The synergy of these stages demonstrates a shift in Islamic education from a purely doctrinal approach to a more transformative and humanistic model. AIK thus becomes a medium for operationalizing the values of *rahmatan lil-‘alamin* amid contemporary social challenges, preparing students to become individuals who are spiritually grounded, intellectually capable, and ethically responsible.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the learning of *Al-Islam and Kemuhammadiyah* (AIK) plays a crucial role as a bridge between *das Sein* (the campus reality that still faces issues of bullying) and *das Sollen*, the normative Islamic imperatives regarding the dignity of the human person. AIK functions as a medium for students' moral transformation through three interconnected stages: cognitive, affective, and practical. In the cognitive stage, students understand Islamic ethical and humanitarian values rationally and contextually, enabling them to recognize that bullying contradicts the principles of justice and compassion in Islam. The affective stage emphasizes the cultivation of empathy and moral awareness through self-reflection, humanitarian dialogue, and mentoring, making students more sensitive to the suffering of others and more inclined to reject any form of violence. Meanwhile, the practical stage encourages students to actualize these values through concrete actions such as social activities and anti-bullying campaigns, positioning AIK as a moral laboratory that integrates faith, knowledge, and action. Therefore, AIK is not merely a normative course but a strategic instrument for character formation and the development of a civilized academic culture. Effective implementation of AIK requires exemplary lecturers, a contextualized curriculum, and strong institutional support. The findings affirm that humanistic Islamic education through AIK can effectively harmonize the ideality of Islamic teachings with campus social realities, while strengthening students' moral commitment to creating a just, inclusive, and bullying-free higher education environment.

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Declarations

- Author contribution** : ISR is responsible for the overall research project, including the formulation of ideas, research design, drafting of the main manuscript, and coordinating collaboration with the second author. KHZ and ISM contributed to data collection, transcription, and data analysis, and also assisted in the editing and refinement of the manuscript. All three authors approved the final version of this article for publication.
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