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A Qualitative Study of Teaching Bahasa Indonesia with Integrated Islamic Values in an Indonesian Islamic Education Department

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Abstract. The integration of Islamic values into higher education has become increasingly significant in Muslim-majority contexts, where education is expected to cultivate both intellectual competence and moral character. In Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia serves not only as the national language but also as a medium for shaping identity, ethical awareness, and civic responsibility. However, limited empirical research has examined how Islamic values are systematically embedded in Bahasa Indonesia instruction within Islamic higher education. This qualitative case study investigates how lecturers in an Islamic Education Department integrate Islamic values into language teaching, the pedagogical strategies they employ, and the challenges and opportunities they encounter. Data were collected from six purposively selected lecturers through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of syllabi and teaching materials. Thematic analysis with iterative coding and cross-source triangulation ensured credibility. Findings indicate that integration occurs through both explicit and implicit approaches. Explicit strategies include incorporating Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and ethically themed texts into language activities. Implicit integration is reflected in lecturers' modeling of ethical conduct, classroom norms, and constructive feedback. Four key strategies emerged: moral text analysis, structured discussions, reflective writing, and project-based learning. While challenges include time constraints, material adaptation, and balancing linguistic and moral goals, the approach enhances engagement, supports holistic learning, and fosters ethical communication. The study underscores the transformative potential of Islamic-integrated language instruction in higher education.

Keywords: Bahasa Indonesia instruction; Islamic higher education; Islamic-integrated pedagogy; qualitative case study; values-based language education

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1. Introduction

The integration of Islamic values into education has become a critical concern, particularly in Muslim contexts where learning is expected to cultivate both intellectual capacity and moral integrity (Ahmed & Chowdhury, 2024; Alkouatli et al., 2023; Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2026). Amid contemporary challenges such as misinformation, digital complexity, and shifting ethical norms, scholars increasingly argue for pedagogical models that foreground critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and epistemic responsibility (Allchin, 2022; Brassil et al., 2024; Monsees, 2023).

In this regard, Islamic education is being re-envisioned as an integrative process that moves beyond rote memorization toward reflective, inquiry-based engagement with both religious and worldly knowledge (Bellous, 2021; Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2026). However, the effectiveness of such integration depends on how values are pedagogically enacted, not merely conceptually endorsed, thereby raising important questions about implementation in real classroom settings. This issue is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where national educational priorities emphasize character education alongside academic achievement, making the integration of Islamic values into subject areas both a strategic necessity and a practical challenge.

Building on this perspective, the global movement toward internationalization in higher education further reinforces the need for pedagogical approaches that are both globally informed and locally grounded. Rather than adopting Western-centric models uncritically, scholars argue that internationalization should incorporate local epistemologies and ethical frameworks, particularly in Muslim contexts (Bamberger et al., 2026). This shift aligns with broader calls for education that integrates intellectual, moral, and spiritual development while equipping students with competencies such as digital literacy, critical media engagement, and resilience against misinformation (Haider & Sundin, 2020; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017; Zhmurko & Ponedilok, 2025).

In Indonesia, this orientation is reflected in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum (*Kurikulum Merdeka*), which emphasizes character education, learner autonomy, and contextualized learning through initiatives such as *Projek Penguatan Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5). These reforms demonstrate how global educational agendas can be adapted to local values, where the integration of Islamic principles into subject areas becomes a strategic means of fostering ethically grounded, critically aware, and socially responsible graduates.

In Indonesia, Islamic education plays a central role in shaping students' identity, moral reasoning, and civic responsibility alongside national educational goals. This is reflected in the extensive presence of Islamic higher education institutions, with more than 800 institutions, including state Islamic universities (UIN), Islamic institutes (IAIN), and Islamic colleges (STAI), operating under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and representing a substantial proportion of the national higher education system. Within this context, Bahasa Indonesia serves not only as a core academic subject but also as a key medium for developing literacy,

communication skills, and the transmission of cultural and ethical values (Nawas et al., 2025; Nurhayati et al., 2025). Despite its strategic role, the systematic integration of Islamic values into Bahasa Indonesia instruction remains insufficiently examined, particularly in higher education where lecturers are expected to balance linguistic competence with moral and spiritual development. While prior studies highlight the importance of integrating Qur'anic guidance, moderate Islamic epistemology, and ethical reasoning into education (Emam & Hassan, 2024; Reza et al., 2025), existing research is largely dominated by STEM-oriented Qur'anic integration (Nurhayati et al., 2025) or abstract theoretical discussions (Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2026; Şahin, 2018). Consequently, there is a clear empirical gap in understanding how Islamic values are enacted in everyday classroom practices within non-STEM subjects, particularly Bahasa Indonesia, in Indonesian higher education contexts.

This gap becomes more significant in light of contemporary challenges, where students must navigate misinformation, digital influences, and complex ethical dilemmas. Such conditions demand pedagogical approaches that foster critical thinking, media literacy, and ethical judgment (Hobbs, 2020; Granic et al., 2020; Rea, 2022). Integrating Islamic values into language instruction offers a promising avenue to address these demands by linking linguistic development with moral and reflective engagement (Bellous, 2021; Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2026; Riwanda et al., 2026).

In response, this study investigates how lecturers in an Indonesian Islamic education department integrate Islamic values into Bahasa Indonesia teaching, focusing specifically on classroom strategies, instructional materials, and pedagogical practices in a non-STEM context. It also examines lecturers' perspectives on the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing this integrated approach, thereby providing empirically grounded insights into a relatively underexplored area of Islamic education.

The study contributes theoretically by expanding knowledge on Islamic-integrated pedagogy, showing how national language instruction can support moral and spiritual development in higher education. Practically, it provides guidance for curriculum design, teaching strategies, and professional development for lecturers aiming to adopt a holistic, values-based approach. By focusing on the Indonesian context, the study also highlights the interaction of cultural, religious, and linguistic priorities while offering insights relevant to global discussions on internationalization and culturally responsive education (Bamberger et al., 2026).

To achieve these objectives, the study addresses three research questions: How do lecturers integrate Islamic values into Bahasa Indonesia instruction? What pedagogical strategies and materials support this integration? And what challenges and opportunities do lecturers perceive in implementing Islamic-integrated language pedagogy? Answering these questions illuminates practical ways to embed ethics and spirituality within language education and provides

implications for educational policy, curriculum development, and teacher training in both Indonesian and broader Muslim educational contexts.

2. Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative case study design (Achruh & Sukirman, 2024) to explore how Islamic values are integrated into Bahasa Indonesia instruction within an Indonesian Islamic education department. A qualitative approach is appropriate for examining complex, context-bound educational practices, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and pedagogical strategies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Delmastro, 2021; Sukirman & Kabilan, 2023).

The case study design was specifically chosen to enhance the credibility of the findings by enabling a detailed, bounded analysis of a single institutional context where Islamic-integrated pedagogy is actively practiced. This design aligns closely with the research question, which seeks to understand how integration occurs in authentic classroom settings rather than to produce broad generalizations. Similar qualitative approaches have been applied in studies of Islamic-integrated pedagogy to capture the complexity of value implementation in practice (Reza et al., 2025).

Given the value-laden nature of this study, it is important to acknowledge the researcher's positionality. The researcher is academically and professionally engaged in the field of language education within an Islamic higher education context, which provides both contextual familiarity and interpretive sensitivity to the integration of Islamic values in teaching practices. This positionality offers advantages in understanding nuanced pedagogical and ethical dimensions; however, it also carries the potential for interpretive bias.

To mitigate this, the researcher-maintained reflexivity throughout the study by critically reflecting on personal assumptions during data collection and analysis. Strategies such as triangulation, member checking, and maintaining an audit trail were employed to ensure that interpretations were grounded in participants' perspectives rather than the researcher's preconceptions. This reflexive stance aligns with qualitative research principles that emphasize transparency and trustworthiness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The participants consisted of six lecturers from the Islamic Education Department who teach Bahasa Indonesia. They were selected using purposive sampling based on explicit criteria to ensure replicability: (a) currently teaching Bahasa Indonesia courses, (b) having at least three years of teaching experience in higher education, (c) demonstrating the integration of Islamic values in their instructional practices, and (d) willingness to participate in interviews and classroom observations.

These criteria ensured the inclusion of information-rich participants with sustained engagement in Islamic-integrated pedagogy. Purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research to select participants who can provide deep and relevant insights (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Noori et al., 2021). The number

of participants was determined based on data saturation, where no new themes emerged from additional data (Bamberger et al., 2026). To enhance transparency, participant demographic details, such as age, teaching experience, academic qualifications, and curriculum involvement, are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Highest Qualification	Teaching Experience (Years)	Courses Taught	Curriculum Involvement
P1	Male	45	PhD	20	Bahasa Indonesia	Yes
P2	Female	39	PhD	15	Bahasa Indonesia	Yes
P3	Male	42	Master's	12	Bahasa Indonesia	No
P4	Female	36	Master's	10	Bahasa Indonesia	Yes
P5	Male	50	PhD	25	Bahasa Indonesia	Yes
P6	Female	34	Master's	8	Bahasa Indonesia	No

Data were collected using three complementary qualitative methods to ensure depth and triangulation. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants to explore their perceptions, strategies, and challenges in integrating Islamic values. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, was audio-recorded, and transcribed verbatim to capture detailed accounts (Altinyelken, 2021; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Second, classroom observations were conducted to document actual teaching practices, including instructional strategies, interaction patterns, and the incorporation of ethical and moral content.

The observation protocol was informed by prior research on Islamic-integrated pedagogy and critical thinking in Muslim educational contexts (Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2026; Reza et al., 2025). Third, instructional materials, such as syllabi, lesson plans, textbooks, and supplementary resources, were collected and analyzed to examine how Islamic values were embedded in course content and learning activities. Document analysis enabled the researcher to assess the alignment between intended curricular goals and enacted classroom practices (Nurhayati et al., 2025).

Data analysis followed thematic analysis procedures to identify and interpret patterns across interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The process involved several stages (see Sukirman & Kabilan, 2023). First, all data were transcribed and repeatedly read to achieve familiarization and develop an initial understanding of recurring ideas. During this phase, reflective memos were written to capture preliminary insights and minimize premature interpretation. Second, open coding was applied to the data. Meaningful segments of text were labeled inductively using descriptive codes such as "use of Qur'anic texts," "moral reflection in writing," "lecturer modeling," "student engagement," and "language-ethics tension."

These codes were generated directly from participants' statements and observational evidence rather than from predetermined categories. Third, the codes were compared across data sources and grouped into axial categories based on conceptual similarity. For example, codes related to the use of Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and ethical narratives were clustered under explicit integration, while codes related to lecturer behavior, classroom interaction, and feedback were grouped under implicit integration. Similarly, codes relating to teaching practices (e.g., discussion, journaling, projects) were categorized as pedagogical strategies, while issues such as time constraints and language difficulties were grouped under challenges.

Finally, these categories were refined into overarching themes that aligned with the research questions. The process was iterative, involving constant comparison across cases (participants) and data types (interviews, observations, documents) to ensure consistency and depth of interpretation. Discrepant cases were also examined to avoid overgeneralization. To strengthen trustworthiness, the study employed triangulation across multiple data sources, member checking with participants to validate interpretations, and the maintenance of an audit trail documenting analytical decisions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the research and provided written consent prior to participation. They were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifying information from all data sources. Classroom observations were conducted in a respectful and non-intrusive manner, ensuring that students' participation was not disrupted and that no sensitive information was disclosed.

By employing this qualitative, multi-method case study approach, the study provides a contextually grounded and credible account of how Islamic values are integrated into Bahasa Indonesia instruction in higher education. The combination of interviews, observations, and document analysis allows for a comprehensive understanding of both intended and enacted pedagogical practices, while also capturing the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing ethically and spiritually grounded language education (Bamberger et al., 2026; Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2026).

3. Findings

The findings are organized according to the three research questions, presenting a comprehensive picture of how lecturers integrate Islamic values into Bahasa Indonesia instruction, the pedagogical strategies and materials employed, and the challenges and opportunities encountered.

3.1 Integrating Islamic values into Bahasa Indonesia instruction

The study found that lecturers integrated Islamic values into Bahasa Indonesia instruction through multiple complementary approaches that combined

linguistic, moral, and spiritual development. Integration occurred at both the explicit level, where values were directly taught alongside language content, and the implicit level, where values were modeled and embedded in classroom interactions, learning tasks, and materials.

3.1.1 Explicit integration: Qur'anic Verses, Hadith, and ethical texts

Lecturers intentionally incorporated Islamic content into reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities. Qur'anic verses, hadith, and Islamic stories were frequently embedded in texts for comprehension exercises, essay prompts, and discussion questions. For instance, one lecturer explained:

"When I teach narrative writing, I select stories from the Qur'an or Hadith. Students summarize the story, discuss the moral lessons, and then retell it in their own words. This way, they practice language while internalizing values like honesty, patience, and justice." (Lecturer 4)

Observation notes confirmed that these texts were not just supplementary; they formed the backbone of lesson content. During a reading activity on Surat Al-Alaq, students were asked to highlight key moral lessons and then compose a short paragraph in Bahasa Indonesia reflecting how they could apply those lessons in daily life:

"Students identified obedience and respect as key values from the text. They then shared examples from school or home, practicing descriptive writing while connecting the lesson to ethical behavior." (Observation 3)

Syllabi and lesson plans explicitly stated integrated learning objectives. For example, Module 2 of the Bahasa Indonesia course included the objective: *"Students will analyze a Qur'anic narrative and write a reflective essay demonstrating both language mastery and ethical understanding."* Textbooks and supplementary reading materials were thematically organized around moral concepts such as fairness, compassion, and integrity, providing ready-made content for language exercises.

3.1.2 Implicit Integration: Modeling and Classroom Culture

Beyond direct instruction, lecturers embedded Islamic values implicitly through classroom management, communication style, and feedback. Several lecturers emphasized modeling ethical behavior in how they interacted with students, demonstrating patience, fairness, and empathy. One participant stated:

"I try to show respect in every interaction. When giving feedback, I always acknowledge effort and encourage improvement gently. Students learn not only grammar and vocabulary but also how to speak and act respectfully." (Lecturer 1)

Observations supported this: lecturers consistently encouraged respectful dialogue during pair or group activities, reminded students to listen attentively, and guided them to resolve disagreements collaboratively. These subtle practices fostered an ethical and supportive learning environment while reinforcing language skills such as formal communication, argumentative writing, and persuasive speaking.

3.1.3 Integration through values-driven language tasks

Lecturers frequently designed language tasks that required students to reflect on moral and spiritual dimensions while practicing language skills. For instance, writing assignments often included prompts with ethical dilemmas, contemporary social issues, or Qur'anic guidance. Students were expected to analyze the scenario, articulate their reflections, and justify their reasoning using appropriate language structures. A lecturer explained:

"I give students topics like 'helping others during Ramadan' or 'honesty in online learning.' They write essays or dialogues, practicing complex sentences and formal expressions while thinking about moral responsibility." (Lecturer 6)

Observation notes illustrated this integration:

"During the essay session, students discussed the ethical implications of social media use and related them to honesty and integrity. The lecturer guided them to use transitional phrases and varied vocabulary, connecting moral reasoning with language practice." (Observation 5)

3.1.4 Integration through Reflective and Collaborative Activities

In addition to written tasks, lecturers employed reflective journaling and group discussions as key strategies. Reflective journals allowed students to express their ethical reasoning and personal application of Islamic principles in Bahasa Indonesia, while collaborative activities encouraged dialogue, negotiation, and moral deliberation in a peer setting. One lecturer described:

"Students maintain a weekly journal where they reflect on moral themes from the lessons or daily life. I give feedback not only on grammar and vocabulary but also on how they express ethical insights clearly and thoughtfully." (Lecturer 2)

Observation of a group discussion demonstrated how lecturers connected linguistic objectives with value integration:

"Students debated about environmental stewardship, referencing Islamic teachings. The lecturer encouraged use of formal phrases and argumentation strategies, linking moral reflection with speaking and listening skills." (Observation 7)

3.2 Pedagogical strategies and materials employed to support the integration of Islamic values in language learning?

The findings show that lecturers use a variety of teaching strategies and carefully selected materials to integrate Islamic values into Bahasa Indonesia instruction. These strategies aim to develop students' language skills while also fostering moral and spiritual growth, making learning both ethical and reflective. The study identified four main approaches: text-based moral analysis, discussion and debate, reflective writing, and project-based learning. Each strategy is linked to specific materials and assessments, forming a coherent and holistic teaching framework. Across cases, four main strategies were consistently identified, with varying frequency and depth of implementation (see Table 2):

Table 2: Pedagogical strategies: Summary

Strategy	Frequency (n=6)	Key Materials	Learning Focus
Text-based moral analysis	6 lecturers	Qur'an, Hadith, narratives	Reading, writing, ethical reasoning
Discussion & debate	5 lecturers	Moral dilemmas, social issues	Speaking, argumentation, critical thinking
Reflective writing	4 lecturers	Journals, prompts	Writing, self-reflection
Project-based learning	3 lecturers	Case studies, community topics	Integrated skills, applied ethics

3.2.1 Text-based moral analysis

One of the primary strategies involves using Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and Islamic narratives as the central texts for reading and writing exercises. Lecturers selected texts not only for their linguistic richness but also for their moral and ethical content. These texts were often adapted or simplified to match students' language proficiency levels while maintaining the integrity of the moral messages.

"For comprehension and essay writing, I use texts from Qur'anic stories, like the story of Prophet Yusuf, or Hadith on honesty and empathy. Students first understand the story, then analyze the values, and finally write their reflections in proper Bahasa Indonesia." (Lecturer 3)

Observation notes reinforced the effectiveness of this strategy. During a reading comprehension session, students highlighted values such as patience, justice, and honesty, and were then asked to summarize the story and relate its ethical lessons to daily life:

"Students actively discussed ethical dilemmas presented in the Qur'anic text and practiced formal paragraph writing to articulate their reflections. The lecturer corrected grammar and sentence structure, emphasizing both linguistic precision and moral reasoning." (Observation 4)

Instructional materials supporting this strategy included themed textbooks, curated Qur'anic stories, and handouts summarizing moral lessons. Lesson plans explicitly connected learning objectives to ethical outcomes, such as *"Students will analyze a Qur'anic narrative and write a reflective essay demonstrating both language mastery and moral understanding"* (Syllabus, Module 2).

3.2.2 Discussion and debate

Lecturers frequently used discussion and debate as interactive strategies to encourage critical thinking and verbal expression in Bahasa Indonesia while reflecting on Islamic ethical principles. These activities were structured around moral dilemmas, social issues, or contemporary topics grounded in Islamic teachings.

"I organize debates on issues like fairness in school policies, online ethics, or charity. Students must present arguments in formal Bahasa Indonesia and support their opinions with examples from Islamic teachings." (Lecturer 6)

Observations showed students engaging in structured dialogue while employing formal language structures, such as persuasive expressions, transitional phrases, and argumentative connectors:

"During a debate on honesty in digital communication, students used phrases like 'menurut saya' (in my opinion) and 'berdasarkan ajaran Islam' (based on Islamic teaching) to support their points. The lecturer guided them to use correct grammar and logical sequence." (Observation 6)

This strategy not only reinforced speaking and critical thinking skills but also promoted collaborative learning and ethical deliberation. Syllabi included discussion rubrics that assessed both language proficiency and moral reasoning, ensuring alignment between learning activities and expected outcomes.

3.2.3 Reflective writing and journaling

Reflective writing emerged as a central strategy to integrate Islamic values with writing skills. Lecturers assigned weekly journals where students documented personal reflections on ethical, spiritual, or social themes encountered in readings or everyday experiences. Feedback from lecturers emphasized both language accuracy and depth of moral reasoning.

"Students write reflections on topics like patience, respect for teachers, or helping others. I review for correct use of grammar and vocabulary but also comment on how they articulate moral lessons." (Lecturer 2)

Observation notes highlighted that reflective writing encouraged introspection and self-expression, allowing students to practice coherent writing while internalizing Islamic values:

"Students shared personal experiences relating to Qur'anic guidance. Some used complex sentence structures and transition phrases effectively, demonstrating growth in both language and ethical understanding." (Observation 7)

Lesson plans and instructional materials supported this strategy through journal prompts, guiding questions, and example reflections that scaffolded students' ethical and linguistic development.

3.2.4 Project-based learning and integrated assignments

Some lecturers employed project-based learning to combine multiple language skills with applied ethical reasoning. Projects typically required students to research, write, and present on topics that had both linguistic and moral significance, such as community service, charity initiatives, or environmental stewardship framed within Islamic teachings.

"I assign projects where students must create presentations or write reports on real-life applications of Islamic values, like organizing a school charity event. They practice writing, speaking, and collaborative skills while reflecting on moral principles." (Lecturer 5)

Observation of such a project revealed students preparing group presentations on the theme of social justice. They created written summaries, presented orally in

formal Bahasa Indonesia, and referenced Qur'anic guidance to justify their proposals:

"Students displayed advanced language skills, using appropriate connectors and persuasive vocabulary. They also discussed the ethical impact of their proposed actions, demonstrating integration of values and language proficiency." (Observation 9)

Instructional materials supporting project-based learning included evaluation rubrics combining language and ethical criteria, case study materials, Qur'anic and Hadith references, and supplementary readings illustrating moral dilemmas.

3.3 Challenges and opportunities implementing Islamic-integrated language pedagogy

The study revealed that while lecturers recognize the substantial benefits of integrating Islamic values into Bahasa Indonesia instruction, they also face significant challenges in implementing such pedagogy. At the same time, the lecturers identified multiple opportunities for enhancing student engagement, ethical awareness, and holistic learning. The findings can be organized under two broad themes: challenges and opportunities.

3.3.1 Challenges in implementing Islamic-integrated language pedagogy

A primary challenge reported by lecturers was maintaining an appropriate balance between developing students' linguistic proficiency and fostering moral and spiritual reflection. Lecturers noted that students sometimes concentrated more on the ethical or spiritual content than on accurate language use, which required careful scaffolding.

"Some students are very enthusiastic about discussing moral lessons from the Qur'an, but they neglect proper grammar or sentence structure. I have to guide them to express their reflections correctly in Bahasa Indonesia while still encouraging deep ethical thinking." (Lecturer 5)

Observation notes corroborated this challenge: during a reflective essay activity on honesty in digital communication, students focused extensively on ethical reasoning, requiring the lecturer to intervene and scaffold proper sentence structures and vocabulary:

"Lecturer paused the discussion to correct sentence patterns and use of connectors, ensuring that language objectives were not overlooked while maintaining focus on moral reflection." (Observation 8)

Furthermore, lecturers indicated that integrating Islamic values into language instruction demanded additional time, often beyond what was allocated for standard syllabus coverage. While ethical and reflective discussions enhanced learning, they occasionally limited the time available for practicing language mechanics, grammar drills, or writing exercises.

"Class time is limited. When I include group discussions or reflective journaling on moral themes, I sometimes have to skip or compress grammar exercises. Finding the right balance is always challenging." (Lecturer 2)

Lecturers noted that students had diverse levels of readiness to engage in reflective and morally grounded discussions. Some students were initially hesitant to express ethical opinions in formal writing or classroom dialogue owing to language limitations or lack of confidence.

"Some students struggle to articulate ethical reflections in Bahasa Indonesia, especially when using complex vocabulary. They need extra guidance to connect moral reasoning with language expression."
(Lecturer 6)

Although there are textbooks and supplementary readings incorporating Islamic values, some lecturers highlighted the scarcity of ready-made instructional materials that combine language objectives with ethical content at an appropriate level for higher education students. Lecturers often had to adapt materials themselves or design new content.

"While there are Qur'anic and Hadith texts, not all are suitable for language exercises. I often need to adapt them to align with the lesson objectives and the students' language level." (Lecturer 1)

3.3.2 Opportunities in implementing Islamic-integrated language pedagogy

Despite challenges, lecturers reported that Islamic-integrated language pedagogy significantly increased student engagement. Lessons that incorporated ethical and spiritual reflection resonated with students' values and lived experiences, fostering motivation for both language learning and personal growth.

"Students are more eager to participate when lessons relate to their faith and daily life. They take ownership of writing assignments and discussions because they see personal relevance." (Lecturer 3)

Lecturers emphasized that integrating Islamic values allowed for holistic development, supporting cognitive, moral, and spiritual growth simultaneously. Reflective journals, project-based tasks, and ethical discussions encouraged students to connect language learning with real-life experiences and moral decision-making.

"The integration allows students to develop not just language skills but also ethical reasoning and self-reflection. They learn to communicate clearly while considering moral and social consequences of their actions."
(Lecturer 2)

The integration also provided lecturers with the opportunity to model ethical behavior and classroom values, reinforcing students' understanding through both instruction and example. Lecturers perceived this as a powerful pedagogical tool for shaping students' character and ethical habits.

"By demonstrating patience, respect, and constructive feedback, I can show students how Islamic values are enacted in everyday interactions. This modeling complements the lessons in texts and discussions."
(Lecturer 4)

Lecturers recognized that Islamic-integrated pedagogy aligned with broader institutional and national educational objectives, including the development of students' character, moral reasoning, and social responsibility. This alignment

provided a strong rationale for sustained implementation and encouraged innovation in teaching methods.

"Our curriculum emphasizes character development alongside language skills. Integrating Islamic values fits perfectly, helping students meet institutional expectations while enhancing learning outcomes." (Lecturer 5)

The challenges of limited pre-existing materials encouraged lecturers to develop creative solutions, such as adapting texts, designing reflective prompts, and creating project-based assignments. These efforts, while time-intensive, fostered professional growth and innovation in teaching practice.

"Designing tasks around ethical themes pushes me to be creative in lesson planning. I have developed new resources that students find engaging and meaningful." (Lecturer 1)

In summary, while lecturers face challenges such as balancing language and ethical objectives, managing class time, and adapting materials, the opportunities are substantial. Islamic-integrated pedagogy enhances student engagement, promotes holistic development, strengthens ethical role modeling, aligns with institutional goals, and encourages professional creativity. These findings highlight both the feasibility and positive impact of integrating Islamic values into higher education language instruction while pointing to areas where support and professional development are needed.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a nuanced and contextually grounded integration of language instruction, moral development, and Islamic pedagogy in higher education. While previous scholarship has often treated ethical education and language learning as parallel or complementary domains, the present study demonstrates that their integration can be structurally embedded within classroom practice. Lecturers did not merely append moral content to linguistic tasks; rather, they designed learning experiences in which ethical reflection and language use were mutually constitutive.

This pedagogical configuration reflects the operationalization of Wasathiyah epistemology, which emphasizes balance, contextual reasoning, and reflective engagement in knowledge construction (Choudhury, 2016). However, the findings also suggest that such integration is neither automatic nor uniform; it depends heavily on lecturers' interpretive agency, pedagogical competence, and the institutional environment. Thus, while the study supports the transformative potential of integrated pedagogy, it also raises critical questions about its scalability and consistency across different educational contexts.

A key contribution of this study lies in empirically demonstrating that values integration in language education can function as a transformative pedagogical approach rather than a supplementary one. By embedding Qur'anic and Hadith-based content into reading, writing, and discussion activities, lecturers positioned Bahasa Indonesia not only as a medium of communication but also as a tool for ethical inquiry and self-reflection. This aligns with Ahmed and Chowdhury's

(2024) critique of rote-based Islamic education and their call for pedagogies that cultivate critical and socially responsible learners. However, the present findings extend this argument by showing how such ideals are enacted at the micro-level of classroom interaction. At the same time, the data indicate a potential limitation: the depth of ethical engagement varied among students, with some demonstrating sophisticated moral reasoning while others remained at a descriptive or surface level. This variation suggests that integration alone does not guarantee criticality; it must be supported by sustained scaffolding and explicit instruction in reflective thinking.

The identified pedagogical strategies, text-based moral analysis, reflective journaling, dialogic discussion, and project-based learning, illustrate a deliberate alignment between theoretical principles and instructional practice. These strategies required students to interpret religious texts, evaluate ethical implications, and articulate reasoned arguments, thereby engaging multiple dimensions of higher-order thinking (Altinyelken, 2021; Reza et al., 2025). In line with Felsenthal and Agbaria's (2026) notion of critical Islamic education, the classroom practices observed moved beyond content transmission toward fostering interpretive and evaluative competencies.

Nevertheless, a closer examination reveals that the effectiveness of these strategies depended significantly on the quality of pedagogical mediation. In some instances, reflective tasks risked becoming routine or procedural, particularly when prompts were insufficiently probing or feedback focused predominantly on linguistic form. This highlights a critical tension: while the pedagogical design is theoretically robust, its implementation requires a high level of instructional sophistication to avoid superficial engagement.

The role of implicit integration through lecturer modeling emerges as both a strength and a point for critical reflection (Sukirman, 2025). Consistent with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, lecturers' demonstration of values such as patience, empathy, and fairness contributed to the internalization of ethical norms among students. This finding reinforces Şahin's (2018) concept of pedagogical consonance, where alignment between epistemic goals and ethical practice enhances learning coherence. However, reliance on implicit modeling also raises questions about visibility and intentionality. While students may internalize observed behaviors, the absence of explicit meta-discussion about these practices may limit their ability to articulate and transfer such values critically beyond the classroom context. Therefore, a more explicit integration of reflective dialogue about modeled behaviors could strengthen the pedagogical impact.

The challenges identified in this study underscore the complexity of implementing integrated pedagogy in practice. Lecturers faced difficulties in balancing linguistic accuracy with ethical depth, managing limited instructional time, and developing contextually appropriate materials. These challenges are consistent with broader findings in Islamic education research (Nawas et al., 2025; Reza et al., 2025); nevertheless, the present study adds a more granular

perspective by illustrating how these tensions manifest in classroom interactions. For example, students' tendency to prioritize ethical expression over grammatical precision reflects a misalignment between affective engagement and linguistic control. While this indicates strong moral involvement, it also reveals the risk of uneven learning outcomes if not carefully managed. From a critical standpoint, this suggests that integrated pedagogy requires not only conceptual alignment but also methodological rigor, including clear assessment criteria that balance ethical insight and language proficiency.

At the same time, the study highlights significant opportunities associated with integrating Islamic values into language instruction. One of the most prominent is the enhancement of student engagement. When learning activities resonate with students' ethical and spiritual identities, participation becomes more meaningful and sustained. This supports Bellous (2021), who emphasizes the role of value relevance in fostering engagement and extends it by demonstrating how such relevance operates within Bahasa Indonesia classrooms in Islamic higher education.

However, increased engagement does not automatically translate into deeper learning. Without structured pedagogical guidance, discussions may remain at a normative or opinion-based level rather than progressing toward critical analysis. Therefore, at the curriculum level in UIN/IAIN institutions, it is necessary to embed explicit learning outcomes that integrate ethical reasoning with linguistic accuracy, supported by assessment rubrics that evaluate both dimensions simultaneously. This ensures that student engagement is directed toward intellectually rigorous and academically measurable outcomes.

Another important implication concerns the role of lecturers as ethical and professional agents. The findings suggest that effective integration depends not only on instructional strategies but also on lecturers' ability to embody and enact the values they teach. This aligns with the views of Alkouatli et al. (2023), who argue that ethical agency in learners is fostered through both epistemic content and modeled practice. However, this also introduces a limitation: the success of the approach may depend heavily on individual lecturer capacity, raising concerns about sustainability and consistency across institutions.

To address this, UIN/IAIN institutions should implement structured professional development programs that train lecturers in integrating Islamic values through content-based instruction, scaffolding ethical reflection, and facilitating dialogic learning. In addition, departments should promote collaborative development of teaching materials, such as shared modules, curated Qur'anic texts adapted for language learning, and standardized lesson plans, to reduce individual burden and ensure consistency in implementation.

Finally, this study contributes to broader debates on values-based education in contemporary higher education, particularly in the context of increasing digitalization and the proliferation of misinformation. By embedding ethical reasoning within language instruction, the approach equips students with the

ability to evaluate information critically, articulate reasoned arguments, and navigate complex moral landscapes (Brassil et al., 2024; Monsees, 2023; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). To operationalize this in Indonesian Islamic higher education, curriculum designers should incorporate project-based and inquiry-based tasks that explicitly address real-world issues such as digital ethics, social responsibility, and community engagement, framed within Islamic perspectives. Moreover, integrating reflective writing (Sukirman, 2025) and discussion-based assessments into course requirements can support the development of 21st-century competencies, including critical thinking, collaboration, and ethical decision-making (Allchin, 2022; Zhmurko & Ponedilok, 2025). These targeted strategies ensure that Islamic-integrated language pedagogy is not only conceptually sound but also institutionally implementable and sustainable.

In sum, while the findings affirm the pedagogical value of integrating Islamic principles into language education, they also highlight the conditional nature of its success. The study's main contribution lies in demonstrating how such integration can be enacted in practice while simultaneously identifying the pedagogical, institutional, and epistemic challenges that must be addressed. This dual perspective not only strengthens the analytical depth of the study but also provides a more realistic foundation for future research and implementation.

5. Conclusion

The findings show that lecturers integrate Islamic values into Bahasa Indonesia teaching in both direct and indirect ways. Direct integration involves using Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and ethical stories for reading, writing, and discussion activities. Indirect integration occurs through lecturers' modeling of ethical behavior, classroom norms, and feedback, helping students develop moral reasoning alongside language skills. These practices reflect Wasathiyah epistemology, which emphasizes moderation, contextual understanding, and ethical reflection, and support the idea that Muslim education should develop cognitive, moral, and spiritual capacities together. Lecturers used a variety of strategies and materials to support integration, including text-based moral analysis, reflective journals, discussions, debates, and project-based learning.

These were supported by carefully selected or adapted resources, such as syllabi, textbooks, Qur'anic and Hadith texts, and supplementary materials. This alignment between strategies, materials, and learning outcomes shows that Islamic-integrated pedagogy is intentional and systematic, giving students multiple opportunities to express ethical reflections in Bahasa Indonesia while developing critical thinking, argumentation, and teamwork skills. Such practices respond to calls for ethically grounded, inquiry-based learning in religious education.

The study also identified both challenges and opportunities in applying Islamic-integrated language pedagogy. Challenges include balancing language accuracy with ethical reflection, limited class time, varying student readiness, and the need to adapt or create suitable materials. At the same time, lecturers noted opportunities such as increasing student engagement, promoting holistic

learning, modeling ethical behavior, and fostering professional creativity through innovative teaching resources. These results suggest that, while careful planning is needed, Islamic-integrated pedagogy can help students become skilled language users, ethical thinkers, and socially responsible individuals. Importantly, this study contributes to broader discussions on holistic and culturally responsive education.

Integrating moral and spiritual reflection into language teaching creates a learning environment where knowledge, ethics, and personal growth reinforce one another. Islamic-integrated pedagogy also supports 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and collaborative problem-solving, while aligning with national curricula and institutional goals. Its relevance extends beyond Indonesia, offering insights for Muslim-majority higher education institutions facing challenges such as digital literacy and post-truth information.

The findings have practical, policy, and research implications. Practically, lecturers and curriculum designers should continue developing materials that integrate language learning with ethical reflection, ensuring guidance for both language accuracy and moral reasoning. Professional development should equip lecturers to balance cognitive, linguistic, and ethical goals using reflective writing, discussions, and projects. At the policy level, institutions should support integrated curricula with adequate time, resources, and institutional backing.

Future research could examine students' perspectives, track learning outcomes over time, and explore integration in digital or blended learning contexts, further expanding knowledge on ethical and culturally responsive pedagogy. In conclusion, Islamic-integrated Bahasa Indonesia instruction is a feasible and transformative approach. By combining ethical content, interactive strategies, and reflective practices, lecturers can simultaneously develop students' language skills, moral awareness, and critical thinking. This study provides both theoretical and practical insights, demonstrating how culturally grounded, values-based pedagogy can be successfully implemented in higher education while offering a model for ethically integrated language instruction in broader Muslim and multicultural contexts.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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integrity of the work. The author takes full responsibility for the final content of this manuscript.

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