

The Best Strategy for Student's Islamic Character Development Program in Public University

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Abstract

The good character of public university students contributes to anticipating the potential for nation's moral degradation. Islamic character education, which is believed to be closely related to controlling daily moral ethics, is taught through Islamic religious as well as personality development lectures. This study aims to analyze the educational model of forming Islamic character for students in search for the best strategy to build the students' piety in expressing Islamic character. A total of 529 undergraduate students in the second semester of the Faculty of Animal Husbandry, Brawijaya University of Malang, Indonesia became the respondents of the study. They have had the experience in attending Islamic religious lectures and involved in religious activities. WarpPLS software is used to analyze the structural model of students' Islamic character development (IC) which involves the roles of religious lectures (RL), non-religious lectures (NRL), and mentoring programs (MP). The results showed that the highest direct correlation path coefficient was found in MP to IC (0.413; $P < 0.001$) compared to the others: RL to IC mediated by MP (0.347; $P < 0.001$) and NRL to IC mediated by RL and followed by MP mediation (0.254; $P < 0.001$). The results of the study concluded that the mentoring programs (MP) had the most influence in building the students' Islamic character (IC).

Keywords: Islamic character, university students, state university, Islamic religious lectures, non-religious lectures, mentoring programs.

Introduction and Background

• The Study

Moral degradation in the young generation has become a hot issue in all countries nowadays. It occurs because right now children are used to socializing using information and communication devices (television, computers, and mobile phones) including their applications/programs (entertainment movies, games, YouTube, Facebook, WhatsApp, and many more). Parents have less time to interact with their children to teach the good moral values to prevent the effects of moral degradation through the internet. This condition makes the early adult individuals not to have good foundation of moral values ??(Boruah, 2017). Examples of reported negative cases due to moral degradation in Indonesia in 2021 are 10,247 cases of violence toward women and 6,500 cases of sexual violence toward children. These cases have doubled compared to the number of cases in 2020 (Mantalean, 2022).

In reality, the moral decline does not only exist among ordinary people, but it is also found among the government officials, private employees, and even among students (Syafrial, 2017). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia has reported that in 2021, sexual violence occurred in universities and only 27% of the cases were reported (Kemendikbud, 2021).

15% of sexual violence occurs in universities, 33% of which occurs on the streets, and 19% of which occurs in transportation modes (Achdami, 2021). Several other cases such as bullying, and intolerance toward different religions have also been reported.

Human resources with good morals are much-needed to support the nation's development. University students are important assets in developing the nation in the future. New students are looking for their identity, so they are vulnerable to behavior changes due to the influence of their new environment on campus and its surrounding. Noble character education is needed to support the acquisition of the best identity in students.

Industrialization does not only exist in the business world, but it also exists in universities. The university uses an industrialization approach in designing its curriculum as well as its graduates' competencies. Personal development (moral, character, and spiritual) began to be neglected. The harmonious relationship between the lecturers and the students weakens because there are targets in achieving morality and industrial values. These conditions must be eliminated and conversely, education that forms personal and moral integrity is strengthened. Universities must be able to balance the demands of the business world and moral integrity, so there will be harmonization between the market needs and the widespread social issues (Pabbajah et al., 2020).

Islamic character development in state universities formally is carried out through 2 credits of Islamic Religion course in the first or second semester and 6 credits of personality development courses, namely Pancasila (Philosophy of the Nation), Civics, and Indonesian language, which are taught in the first or second semester (Regulation: Kepdirjen Dikti Number 84/E/KPT/2020). The formation of Islamic character through mentoring programs has been widely carried out in state universities and has had a positive impact in increasing the motivation in worship (Novitasari et al., 2017; Nurlaila and Nurhayati, 2019). It has not been revealed what factors play a role in improving Islamic morals, as well as how big the role of mentoring activities is toward the motivation in carrying out religious worship activities. This study analyzes each of the factors that play a role in determining the students' Islamic character in state universities and their interactions with the influencing factors.

- *The Significance of Study*

The development of noble character through formal education deals with several obstacles because the educators: (1) have not fully understood the concept of character education; (2) cannot determine important character values ??in the current learning topic; (3) have not mastered how to integrate character values ??during the learning; and (4) have not been able to provide examples of relevant character values ??in learning. These four obstacles become the challenges for educational institutions to produce educational models that can build noble character for students (Fidyati et al., 2018).

Noble morals for Moslems are Islamic morals, which are based on the Holy Quran, Hadith, and the guidance of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Islamic character of students is the basis for the meaning of science and technology obtained from learning activities.

It directs the attitudes and behaviors of students in society with prevailing moral values. It becomes a solid foundation for individuals to be professional with noble and superior character (Suyadi et al., 2021).

Noble character education in university is carried out through Islamic Religion courses, personality formation courses, and other lectures. Noble character education is also conveyed to students through lecturers' moral messages and extracurricular activities (religious assistance programs). The Islamic religious assistance program in university is a mentoring system to increase the students' commitment to apply Islamic teachings in daily life. However, the mentoring programs are not implemented by all

universities; it depends on the policies and available student organization's activities (Andrian et al., 2018).

- *The Purposes of Study*

The purpose of this study is to find the best model in implementing Islamic religious education for Moslem students in state universities. This study is intended to answer the following questions:

1. What is the mediating role of religious lectures in strengthening the values ??of Islamic character of students as productive adults, especially in exploring the mediating role of religious lectures in strengthening the influence of non-religious lectures for the development of students' Islamic character?
2. What is the mediating role of mentoring programs in strengthening the influence of both Islamic religious and non-religious lectures toward the students' Islamic character?
3. How strong is the role of the mentoring programs in improving the students' Islamic character?

- *Theoretical Framework*

- *The Character Formation*

Universal character must be possessed by everyone so that they can present themselves in personal, family, and social life spontaneously without having to think and make long considerations. Humans have logic and common sense in both intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. Character formation is a long process of instilling noble values ??in individuals, started at a young age by parents and family and then continued with education in schools as well as in the society. Character education is a term that describes the learning in children; adults help them develop in these following things: morals, society, kindness, behavior, politeness, non-intimidation, success, traditions, and social values. Moral character reveals the individuals' uniqueness in thinking, feeling, and behaving ethically. Moral character is also a differentiator for individuals regarding to morality (Cohen & Morse, 2014).

Character education is the result of the accumulated process of knowledge on how to live the life and create a good life for humans (Rokhman et al., 2014). The basic goal of character education is to cultivate noble character values, so that they are internalized and reflected in their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors during the process of growing up (Rawana et al., 2011). According to Alexander (2001), the principles of character formation include responsibility, discipline, patience, and perseverance.

School is no longer just a place to transfer knowledge, but it is also a place for the growth of attitudes, behaviors, character and leadership of the younger generation (Rokhman et al., 2014). At school, the character building is emphasized on the discipline aspect. Religious schools can develop critically reflective skills and respect the differences so that they can contribute to a tolerant, peaceful, and multicultural nation (Indonesia). Several conditions related to character education can be found in public schools. There is an overlap in implementing and understanding the civic education and the character education. Thus, education needs to make use of the uniqueness and similarities between those two discussions carefully so that the meanings that apply to character education and civic education are not distorted, but still contributing to the noble character of individuals (Davies et al., 2005; Hoon, 2014). The challenge comes from the pressure from schools and the state legislatures regarding the priorities for the development of educational activities that eventually the intention of building character is neglected (Ellenwood, 2006).

Religious assistance is a campus' extracurricular activity and becomes one of the methods for building religious character carried out by peers under the guidance of lecturers so that the students are motivated and accustomed to the application of religion-based characters in daily life (Nurlaila and Nurhayati, 2019). Assistance is generally carried out once a week by conveying knowledge and guiding students to carry out

daily worship activities. Such assistance programs have an impact on significantly increasing students' worship activities, adding insight, changing mindsets, and are expected to form good character for students (Novitasari et al., 2017).

- *The Islamic Teachings*

As an element of culture and as a social reality, the dominance of Islam has provided fundamental changes in various sectors of people's lives (Khaki, 2021). Nowadays, Islamic values ??does not only become references for Moslems to carry out daily life's activities, but they have also been internalized through educational institutions (Hassan & Sabli, 2018). In the conception of Khaidir & Suud (2020), the influence of Islamic values toward educational institutions is a process of manifesting the values ??of the Holy Quran and Hadith in daily life through educational and learning activities. As Tambak (2021) shows that the orientation of universities that embodies Islamic teachings often appears in the forms of socializing anti-radicalism attitudes, namely: tolerance, living in harmony; moderate Islamic teachings, and the application of 'kaffah' Islamic teachings in the learning process. Therefore, it is very important to significantly incorporate Islamic teachings into educational institutions (Toosi, 2019).

The conception of the educational foundation based on Islamic teachings aims to form the civilization so that humans can live a better life with the teachings of the Holy Quran and Hadith (Zubaidillah, 2018). In Malaysia, during the Covid-19 outbreak, an alternative concept of education was implemented in university which involved Islamic religious education teachers. This concept focused on increasing the intellectual capacity of university graduates who are able to assist and support the national development in a peaceful life for all people (Jamilah, 2021; Latipah Sidek, 2021). In Russia, educational institutions that embodies Islamic values ??aim to produce religious experts, but young Moslem students often respond differently toward this goal. They hope that Islamic teachings does not only provide religious knowledge, but they also convey social networks and new economic opportunities (Muller, 2020). Therefore, Sonita et al. (2021) stated that Islam in the university does not only have a close relationship with the divinity concept, but it is also able to form competent society in economic, social, and political contexts.

- *The Morality*

Morality is highly dependent on free will and on the capacity of individuals to know and then choose the right path, after going through a balance of spiritual and social values ??without submitting to institutional power or authority (Lovat, 2016). Morals in Islam are emphasized on these following character traits: (1) Al-khairah al-mutlaqah (avoiding ego); (2) Al-sholahiyah al-'aamah (good deeds can be done at any moment); (3) Al-Tsabat (being consistent); and (4) Al-Iljam al-Mustajab (being obedient in various circumstances) (Jamaluddin, 2013). Islamic morality is instilled and applied by Moslems so that they are able to consider what is lawful and unlawful to do because Allah always watches over our actions and demands responsibility in due time (Mahdavikhou & Khotanlou, 2012). This is in line with the statement made by Saada (2013) that morals in Islam appear in the form of suitability and harmony in one's activities using norms such as decency, custom, tradition, and society. Islamic morality plays an important role in developing independent individuals regarding: ideas thinking, religious qualities, discipline, and the ability to identify deficiencies and psychological needs (Gao & Wang, 2020; Meindl et al., 2018; Baumann, 2018).

Islamic morality is present as an important concept of educational practice so that it follows religious law. One example of the application of Islamic morals in education is the establishment of regulations that integrate the elements of religious morals (Syaparuddin, 2020; Rahmat & Yahya, 2021). Ishak & Abdullah (2013) revealed that Islamic morals are taught at schools through curriculum design and character-building extracurricular activities. In educational practice, Islamic morals are taught through the provision of theological knowledge (Holy Quran, Hadith, Aqidah), Islamic law (fiqh), the history of the prophet (Sirah), Islamic civilization, and Islamic character, which aim to educate Moslem students to become individuals

who behave and contribute positively to their environment, based on the Moslem's way of life (Tan et al., 2018; Mohamed, 2014). Ishak & Abdullah (2013) added that morality (character) in Islam is instilled through learning focusing on several values ??such as tarbiya (nurturing), ta'lim (teaching and learning), and ta'dib (moral views).

- *The Learning in University*

A study on students at a private Indonesian university showed that online learning reduces the learning motivation and the adoption of character values ??(Mardesci, 2020). Online learning does not have an encouraging effect in influencing students' behavior. However, students assume that the online learning system will have a positive impact if the learning system is well-designed; therefore, lecturers must have adequate online learning innovations (Ferrer et al., 2020).

The Research and Development Team of the Directorate of Islamic Higher Education of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia in 2004 also stated that:

“Intellectual higher education institutions tend to design their study program curriculum based on knowledge or content. The lecturers tend to verbally explain knowledge, conceptions, data, and facts to students. Students naturally tend to learn verbally, memorize, and memorize formulas as what their lecturers guide. Students are rarely trained to apply concepts, so they know a lot indeed, but they are less able to do or weak in creative skills” (Mansoer, 2004; Ekowicaksono & Wisesa, 2020).

Previous studies have shown that the learning of Islamic religious lectures has a low impact on the Islamic character formation compared to those through mentoring programs (Dhillon & Kaur, 2021; Iaconelli & Anderman, 2021; Putri & Elmiati, 2017). Mentoring is a coaching program with several lecturers from non-religious subjects and those from religious subjects accompanied by several senior students acting as mentors. Students get broader and deeper knowledge on Islamic teachings from lecturers. This knowledge is then discussed in groups and practiced more intensively with mentor guidance. The mentoring learning method in principle is a learning method which students who have experienced the ability to think carefully are accompanied by lecturers to practice collaboratively, interactively, and creatively in applying the religious teachings they have learned (Mardiana et al., 2021).

Methodology

- *The Design and The Scope of Study*

The survey was conducted to explore the students' perceptions toward their Islamic character which grew during college. The target population in this study is the Moslem students of the Faculty of Animal Husbandry, Brawijaya University of Malang who took full online lectures during the COVID-19 pandemic in the even semester of 2021. The respondents had participated in a religious coaching program (mentoring) for 2 semesters. Mentoring is a program set to develop Islamic character, managed in accordance with the Regulation of the Dean of the Faculty of Animal Husbandry, Brawijaya University number 62 of 2015. The organizational structure of the mentoring arrangement is determined by the Dean annually, consisting of supervisors who are also presenters of topics for students who act as committees and mentors as well. The material consists of four main topics, namely: ethics toward God, Prophets, and religion; ethics toward parents and fellow humans; ethics toward the environment; and ethics toward scientific professionals. Mentoring is carried out every Saturday morning starting from 6 to 9 a.m. consisting of 10 meetings for each semester. Each mentor manages 15-20 members for each group.

- *The Instruments of Study*

The survey was developed based on the indicators which are identified from the measured variables. The structural model of Islamic character development consists of latent variables of Non-Religious Lectures (NRL), Religious Lectures (RL), Mentoring Programs (MP), and Islamic Character (IC). This latent variables consist of reflective indicators. Exogenous latent variables consist of NRL, while endogenous latent variables consist of RL, MP, and IC. Each of the latent variable of RL and NRL consists of 5 (five) indicators, the latent variable of MP consists of 7 (seven) indicators, and the latent variable of IC consists of 6 (six) indicators. Each question in the survey instrument represents the measured indicators.

• *The Procedure of Study and The Data Collecting Techniques*

The data for this study were collected from all students who met the previously-mentioned criteria. Among 600 students who became the respondents, 529 students submitted the questionnaire and were used as samples equal to 88.17%. The sample size of the study has met the requirements of more than 5 times the number of indicators that must be reached (Solimun et al., 2018).

The data collection began with observing the implementation of online assistance, and interviewing the committees to find out the rundown of the event, the way the material was delivered, and the content being discussed. Quantitative data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires in Google Forms format sent to the respondents via WhatsApp. The questionnaire was sent by the mentoring committees in the last meeting of the mentoring program. The respondents were given 60 minutes to complete the questionnaire without any intervention and were asked to submit it back to the committees.

• *The Data Analysis*

The latent variables were measured for their validity and reliability using a questionnaire using the ordinal scale of 1 to 5. There were 5 (five) categories, namely: very good (4,200<score?5,000); good (3,400<score?4,200); quite good (2,600<score?3,400); bad (1,800<score?2,600), and very bad (1,000<score?1,800). The survey data was collected and analyzed using the WarpPLS program.

Based on the real phenomena and the previous studies, the following structural model diagram is constructed. This study discusses the development of Islamic character for students which is optimized by proposing the mediations of religious lectures and mentoring program in the form of religious assistance (see Figure 1). This lecture activity takes place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

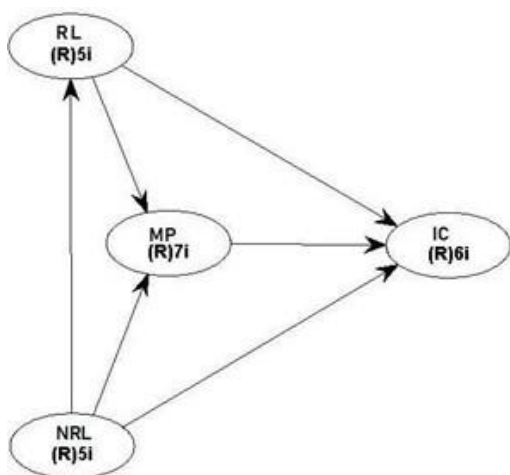


Figure 1. The Concept of Structural Model of Developing Islamic Character.

Notes: RL –Religious Lectures; NRL – Non-Religious Lectures; MP – Mentoring Programs; IC – Islamic

Character.

The hypotheses developed based on the model diagram (Figure 1) are:

1. Hypothesis 1 (H1) Non-religious lectures have a significantly and positively direct effect toward Islamic character.
2. Hypothesis 2 (H2) Non-religious lectures have a significantly and positively indirect effect toward Islamic character, mediated by religious lectures and then mediated by mentoring programs.
3. Hypothesis 3 (H3) Non-religious lectures have a significantly and positively indirect effect toward Islamic character, mediated by religious lectures and mentoring programs.
4. Hypothesis 4 (H4) Religious lectures have a significantly and positively direct effect toward Islamic character.
5. Hypothesis 5 (H5) Religious lectures have a significantly and positively indirect effect toward Islamic character, mediated by mentoring programs.
6. Hypothesis 6 (H6) Mentoring programs have a significantly and positively direct effect toward Islamic character.

Results of Study

- *The Testing of Outer Model*

The validity of the indicators shows that all indicators on all variables have convergent validity (loading factor of 0.40 and P -value <0.001) and discriminant validity (loading factor $>$ cross-loading) (Sholihin et al., 2013; Solimun et al., 2018) . P is considered significant if its value is equal to or less than 0.05 (Kock, 2019).

Table 1. Results of Outer Model Testing

Variables	Statements	Indicators	Loading Factor	P	Category
Non-Religious Lectures (NRL)	Organizing the Class	NRL1	0.737	<0.001	Good
	Lecturers' Exemplary Attitude	NRL2	0.847	<0.001	Good
	Religious Character Integration	NRL3	0.772	<0.001	Good
	Lecturers' Moral Message	NRL4	0.787	<0.001	Good
	Clarity of Lecturers' Moral Message	NRL5	0.836	<0.001	Good
Religious Lectures (RL)	Subject Materials	RL1	0.918	<0.001	Good
	Usefulness of Materials	RL2	0.943	<0.001	Good
	Practices	RL3	0.942	<0.001	Good
	Examples of Worship	RL4	0.905	<0.001	Good
	Fun Learning	RL5	0.786	<0.001	Good
Mentoring Programs (MP)	Attendance	MP1	0.615	<0.001	Very Good
	Active Participation	MP2	0.935	<0.001	Good
	Love the Religion	MP3	0.94	<0.001	Very Good
	Mutual Respect	MP4	0.918	<0.001	Very Good
	Friendship	MP5	0.895	<0.001	Good

	Inter- ReligiousHarmony	MP6	0.959	<0.001	Very Good
	Consistent	MP7	0.956	<0.001	Good
Islamic Character (IC)	Mandatory Prayers	IC1	0.855	<0.001	Very Good
	Non-Mandatory Prayers	IC2	0.856	0.001	Very Good
	Reading the Holy Quran	IC3	0.907	<0.001	Very Good
	Alms	IC4	0.867	<0.001	Very Good
	Shalawat to Prophet Muhammad SAW	IC5	0.884	<0.001	Very Good
	Being Kind to People	IC6	0.849	<0.001	Very Good

The reliability of latent variables of Religious Lectures (RL), Non-Religious Lectures (NRL), Mentoring Programs (MP), and Islamic Character (IC) is met, indicated by the value of reliability coefficients is bigger than 0.7 and the value of Cronbach’s alpha coefficients is bigger than 0.6 (see Table 2). These values measure that the indicators being studied have internal consistency on their respective latent variables (Sholihin et al., 2013; Solimun et al., 2018).

Table 2: Values of Composite Reliability Coefficients and Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficients

	RL	NRL	MP	IC
Composite Reliability Coefficients	0.955	0.897	0.965	0.949
Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficients	0.941	0.859	0.956	0.936
Full Collinearity VIFs	4.503	2.219	3.068	1.115

The latent variables of RL, NRL, MP, and IC are also free from collinearity (VIF value<5, accepted) (Kock, 2015).

• *The Testing of Inner Model*

The evaluation of the inner model (Figure 2) was analyzed based on the values of coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance of the model (Q^2), and Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) (Table 3)

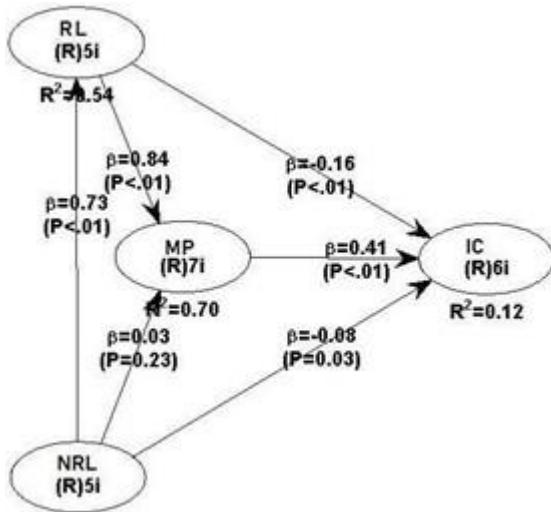


Figure 2. Results of Measuring the Structural Model.

Table 3: Values of R², Q², and GoF

Variables	Symbols	R ²	Q ²	GoF
Religious Lectures	RL	0.536	0.546	0.584
Religious Coaching	MP	0.704	0.698	
Islamic Character	IC	0.121	0.131	

Chin (1998) in Henseler et al. (2009) states that: R² value >0.67; 0.66?R²>0.33; and 0.32?R²>0.19 as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively. The average value of the coefficient of determination (ARS) as the quality of the model of endogenous variable is 0.454 with P<0.001. The ARS value (0.454) of the model being studied explains that the model has a moderate quality of determination in representing the real condition of the influence pattern on the results of students' Islamic moral mentoring. This value indicates that the variables of Religious Lectures (RL), Non-Religious Lectures (NRL), Religious Coaching (MP), and Islamic Morals (IC) have an aggregately moderate variance (45.4%).

The endogenous latent variables of religious lectures (RL), mentoring programs (MP), and Islamic characters (IC) have predictive accuracy (Q²>0) for each structural model. The description of the relevance of the prediction model with real conditions based on the value of Q² is: low (0.25>Q²>0), moderate (0.5>Q²>0.25), and high (Q²>0.5) (Hair et al., 2018). The endogenous latent variable of religious lectures (RL) and religious mentoring (MP) has a high predictive model accuracy, while the endogenous latent variable of Islamic character (IC) has a low predictive model accuracy (See Table 3). The structural model on the latent variable of religious lectures (RL) and mentoring programs (MP) can be a reference to determine the main factors and the relationship among factors that must be prioritized to consider or develop. While the structural model of Islamic character (IC) can be used as a reference, but there are opportunities for other factors and relationships that support the achievement of Islamic character. This condition is very relevant to the results of the coefficient of determination (R²) on the latent variable of endogenous Islamic character (IC).

Kock (2015), Putri (2017), and Solimun et al. (2018) state that Goodness of fit (GoF), which is an index and measure of the relationship among latent variables, has the following relationship value categories: low

($0.10 < GoF < 0.25$), moderate ($0.25 < GoF < 0.36$), and high ($GoF > 0.36$). The research model shows that the category of relationship among latent variables is high ($GoF = 0.584$). The learning model is very good in representing the relationship between the variables of religious lectures (RL), non-religious lectures (NRL), mentoring programs (MP), and Islamic character (IC); the data reflects reality and real phenomena.

- *The Hypotheses Testing*

The hypothesis testing on the Islamic character building model is assessed based on the results of the path analysis as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Path Analysis

Hypotheses	Paths	Path Coefficient (β)	P	Effect Size (f^2)	Status
H1	NRL \rightarrow IC	-0.079	0.033	0.021	Not Accepted
H2	NRL \rightarrow RL \rightarrow IC	-0.106	0.007	0.029	Not Accepted
	NRL \rightarrow MP \rightarrow IC				
H3	NRL \rightarrow RL \rightarrow MP \rightarrow IC	0.254	0.001	0.069	Accepted
H4	RL \rightarrow IC	-0.162	<0.001	0.037	Not Accepted
H5	RL \rightarrow MP \rightarrow IC	0.347	<0.001	0.08	Accepted
H6	MP \rightarrow IC	0.413	<0.001	0.137	Accepted

H3, H5, and H6 are accepted because they have a P-value < 0.05. The path coefficient values of H1, H2, and H4 are negative meaning that in such path there is a reduction effect of the explanatory latent variable on the value of the coefficient of determination (R^2) of the latent variable explained; it is also indicated by a low effect size. An effect size value which is less than 0.02 (positive) shows a very weak effect which was considered not to contribute relevantly. H1, H2, and H4 are not accepted (Cohen, 1988 in Kock, 2015).

Discussions

Islamic character building is an effort to instill the noble values so that students can express good behavior that avoids various disgraceful acts during their study in university, later at work and in social life. The ability of students to apply some Islamic traits is believed to be able to avoid various kinds of immoral acts. This study aims to examine whether the educational programs for students in universities can instill and strengthen the values of Islamic character, then applied in daily life.

Islamic character education in most religious-based universities has been carried out through 2 credits of Islamic Religion course which is held either in the first or second semester for the freshmen. Carried out only in 2 credits, the learning process is merely in the forms of tutorials and limited discussions, without any practical activities and coaching or mentoring. Noble moral education for students, as a reinforcement of Islamic character education, is carried out through the personality development courses, namely Pancasila, Civics, and Indonesian language, each of which weighs 2 credits without any practical activities. In other lectures, the lecturers also often deliver moral advice directly in the class as well as act as a role model.

The religious guidance in mentoring is another form of fostering students to understand, learn, and believe in moral values and mandatory worship in daily life more deeply. The results of observations and interviews showed that the religious assistance which was provided consisted of: ethics toward God, ethics toward religion; ethics toward parents; ethics toward society, ethics toward fellow religion-embracers, and

ethics toward environment.

Students have learned religious education, Civics, and character at the previous level of education. In Indonesia, there are several types of education at the pre-college levels, namely: senior high schools, vocational high schools, Islamic senior high schools (with additional religion-based subjects), Madrasah Aliyah (Islam-based schools), and boarding schools (focusing in learning about Islam). The diversity of previous types of education will eventually produce a diversity of characters (knowledge, attitudes/behaviors, and skills) that differ among the graduates.

- *The Influence of Non-Religious Lectures (NRL)*

The analysis results show that the variable of non-religious lectures is mainly reflected in the lecturers' role-model attitude in motivating students to strengthen their religious character (the strongest indicator with a loading factor of 0.847). The clarity of the moral message is the second-strongest indicator (loading factor of 0.836), and it is followed by an indicator which states that most of non-religious subject's lecturers provide moral messages which are relevant to religious character building (loading factor of 0.787).

The results of document studies and interviews show that public universities have not had such policies or directions for character-integrated lectures. Lecturers are not required to identify and strengthen noble character values that are relevant to their learning topics. The modelling of the noble character application from lecturers can be understood, applied, and imitated by students when there is a long and repeated period of communication and approaches; however, this process is less accommodated (Fidyati et al., 2018).

Students develop their moral values depending on their existing foundations (education and life experiences). The previous schools (senior high school/vocational high school/Madrasah Aliyah) had the challenge to fulfill the priority learning outcomes set by the government; consequently, the educational process for students' character development was neglected (Ellenwood, 2006). Each individual's unique character values are the result of the internalization process and then reflected in reasoning, emotion, and behavior during their maturity development (Rawana et al., 2011; Rokhman et al., 2014; Suyadi et al., 2021).

The development of these noble character values is less-supported in the non-religious learning process as well. Each lecturer has a difference in the role model he displays, the moral message he conveys (based on the objectives of the learning topic), and the intensity or the timing of conveying the moral message. There is no agreement regarding the learning contribution strategy in non-religious lectures in students' Islamic character strengthening programs. The risk of not having this consensus is the loss of exemplary meaning, moral message, and motivation for applying Islamic character given by lecturers in non-religious subjects. The presentation of exposure to Islamic character has the potential to be limited to discourse because of no support of guidelines for implementing moral messages, monitoring, measurement, and evaluation.

The participation of students in non-religious lectures does not directly affect the instillation and strengthening of their Islamic character. The absence of a direct positive effect ($\beta = -0.079$; $P < 0.033$) is caused by the diversity of education previously taken by students as well as the absence of consensus on strategies for implementing non-religious lectures that contribute to strengthening noble and Islamic characters. The delivery of general non-religious courses thoroughly is not yet in a design which directs, familiarizes, and ensures the students to understand, motivate, apply, and possess moral values (Islamic character).

The independent variable of non-religious lectures, based on the results of statistical analysis, has a significant and positive effect ($\beta = 0.254$; $P < 0.001$) toward Islamic character variables if it goes through the 3-segment path. The 3-segment path is an indirect effect of the variable of non-religious lectures. Such variable requires reinforcement (mediation) from the variable of religious lectures followed by another

mediation from the variable of mentoring programs to be able to influence the Islamic character variable.

- *The Influence of Religious Lectures (RL)*

The students need knowledge and values that are relevant to their current and future practical needs. However, the results of the previous study indicate that there are several obstacles against these expectations, one of which is that the religious lectures are held through the lecturing method (Fidyati et al., 2018; Hermawan et al., 2021). The lecturers of religious subjects said that the religious curriculum had regulated both materials and time allocation for learning. Curriculum design limits the lecturers' freedom to innovate and be creative in delivering interactive religious lectures. The learning is carried out in the form of knowledge transfer but has not delivered the values from lecturers to students (Satiawan & Sidik, 2021).

Some of the conditions found in the learning of religious lectures are:

- The lecturers of Islamic Religion subject in Faculty of Animal Husbandry, Brawijaya University can teach more than 15 classes for each semester (unpublished data, 2021). Those lecturers who receive a loaded teaching duties tend to merely complete their teaching duties than to pay attention to the quality of learning and the level of learning achievement for students. Such lecturers tend to not evaluate the students' learning outcomes and not conduct a quality research to improve the quality of learning (Ekowicaksono & Wisesa, 2020).
- Time constraints, large classes (consisting of many students), and compulsory subjects (curriculum) make the learning of religious lectures be carried out using a one-way communication method (teacher-centered). One-way communication does not support the lecturers' interactive communication style the students prefer. The learning interactions are less developed, and the tutorial learning is monotonous. The lecturers' communication styles can be classified into passive, aggressive, and assertive. Most students like assertive communication style (100%), followed by aggressive (86%), and passive (16%) (Nur-tegin et al., 2020).
- The respondents in this study stated that religious lectures provided useful lecture material (loading factor of 0.943), were easy to understand and provided an overview combined by examples of daily practice/implementation (loading factor of 0.942) which were useful in building the respondents' character. However, interviews with respondents revealed that the material was not adaptive/integrative enough to support the students' professions in the future.

The appreciation on differences in students' characters, the student-oriented learning designs (differentiated learning), the control on the students' learning processes, and the evaluation on the impact of learning cannot run properly. Students are not motivated nor trained to apply the knowledge they receive during learning. They have not been able to think critically, decide, and act (behave) suitably to the concepts and knowledge provided. This condition makes religious lectures have no direct positive effect toward the students' Islamic character ($\beta = -0.162$; $P < 0.001$). However, the religious lectures are badly needed by students to gain a knowledge base of Islamic teachings beyond their current level needs of maturity. In addition, the results of the path analysis of non-religious lectures variable mediated by the religious lectures variable also do not have a positive effect toward the students' Islamic character development ($\beta = -0.106$; $P < 0.007$).

- *The Influence of Mentoring Programs (MP)*

The mentoring programs in this study, during the COVID-19 pandemic, was online-based. In the pre-COVID-19 pandemic period, the mentoring programs were carried out face-to-face. Such programs are held intensively by mentors for freshmen once a week. The results of the study showed that online mentoring program activities were more strongly reflected in strengthening the attitude of harmony among religious communities (loading factor of 0.959), increasing motivation to worship/istiqomah (loading factor of 0.956),

and increasing the love toward Islam (loading factor of 0.940). The students stated that these three things were well-conveyed by all lecturers and supervisors during the online mentoring program process. The design of mentoring programs (both the method and the material) was able to have the most significant and positive effect toward the students' Islamic character building ($\beta=0.413$; $P<0.001$) compared to other factors, namely religious lectures ($\beta=-0.162$; $P<0.001$) and non-religious lectures ($\beta=-0.079$; $P<0.033$).

The small group learning method and the less formal learning process allow each participant to interact closely and openly with the supervisors in expressing their opinion. The students understand better, are more directed, and are more motivated to apply the teachings they received. Mentoring activities followed repeatedly become a habit formation for students so that they will slowly and gradually instill and grow the Islamic character (Hidayati et al., 2020).

The mentoring programs are more effective learning tool to change the behavior of the mentorees (Novitasari et al., 2014; Mardiana et al., 2021). The results of the structural model analysis showed that there was a significant and positive effect between the mentoring programs variable toward the effect of Islamic character variable ($\beta=0.413$; $P<0.001$). The results also show that exemplary and moral messages during non-religious subjects learning affect the growth of students' Islamic character after having learning strengthening on religious lectures and habituation of practicing Islamic teachings in mentoring programs ($\beta=0.254$; $P<0.001$). Likewise, the religious lectures variable ($\beta=0.347$; $P<0.001$) gave a significant and positive effect toward the Islamic character variable through the mediation of the mentoring programs variable.

- *The Islamic Character Development (IC)*

Reading the Holy Quran (loading factor of 0.907), 'shalawat' to the Prophet Muhammad SAW (loading factor of 0.884), and alms/infaq (loading factor of 0.867) sequentially are the indicators with the strongest loading factor on the Islamic character variable (IC). The respondents of the study stated that the Islamic character variable is mainly reflected in the motivation to read and learn the Holy Quran, much 'dhikr' and 'shalawat' to the Prophet Muhammad SAW, and fond of giving alms and infaq.

Yuliharti (2018) states that Islamic morals are behaviors and morals that are based on the values stated in the Holy Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Islamic character is a manifestation of obedience to keep striving to be guided by the teachings of Allah SWT as stated in the Holy Quran and to carry it out as the example given by the Prophet Muhammad SAW which, in this study, is manifested by the actualization of 'shalawat' to the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Having noble character toward others and the environment is manifested by the habit of giving zakat/infaq. Social and environmental concern in the form of giving alms and infaq frequently is a form of love to Allah SWT's creation as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW (Mawardi, 1970; Yuliharti, 2019).

Conclusion

The diversity of the students' pre-college school becomes a challenge for university to produce an educational model that can build Islamic character for students. Learning materials in Islamic Religion subject course need to be developed so that they are more supportive and applicable matching the needs of worship, social interaction, and professional behavior of students. Analysis of the results of the study shows that learning in religious lectures in particular needs to be strengthened by: the usefulness of the materials (applicative, relevant, and contextual), the examples of good practices materials, and the clarity of the orientation of the Islamic character material to be developed.

The learning materials in non-religious lectures need to be further studied and highlighted their integration to Islamic character. The development of integrated Islamic character material for students must result from

a study derived from the faculty’s vision and mission, regarding the profile and character of graduates. The setting of goals, programs, achievement strategies, and the flow of mapping/guidelines for the identified Islamic values ??must result from an agreement between ??all lecturers who are in charge of the course before the lecturing period takes place. Participation, agreement, commitment, and cooperation among all religious and non-religious lecturers are very important in this regard.

Assertive communication style in learning is mostly preferred by students. It accommodates the process of extracting learning materials, relevant to the characteristics of each lecturer and student. The interactive and fun learning motivates students to develop and apply their Islamic characters in their daily life. The strategy to anticipate the limited allocation of lesson hours is to regulate the level of learning maturity of each student. The use of learning technology is very important now. Students learn independently and be discipline individually or in groups using the Faculty’s Learning Management System. The meeting sessions between lecturers and students are used for the active participation of students. To strengthen the impact of learning, it is necessary to practice contextual and relevant learning topics. Mentoring is the most accommodating learning method for these issues.

The results of the study stated that the lecturer’s exemplary behaviors, the clarity of the lecturer’s moral message, and the religious character integration were the main prerequisites for the lecturer’s daily performance. The lecturers’ abilities in: understanding the concept of Islamic character education, identifying the Islamic character values ??that are relevant to learning topics, integrating the Islamic values, and imitating the application of these values are what the students really need. The togetherness of the entire academic community committing to improve the Islamic character of students and to build a learning environment and culture. The learning design accompanied by a conducive learning environment and culture will further motivate and ease the students in applying the moral message of learning being conveyed.

Both non-religious and religious lectures do not have a direct positive effect toward the Islamic character building, but they significantly support the strengthening of mentoring programs. Mentoring programs with student-oriented approaches and in small groups are effective learning methods to instill the Islamic characters. The strongest reflection of online Islamic mentoring is training the students for inter-religious harmony (tolerance), worshipping orderly, and expressing love to Islam in their daily life. This mentoring program is applied to all freshmen in a planned, organized, controlled, monitored, and evaluated manner to support the achievement of the vision and mission of both the faculty and the university.

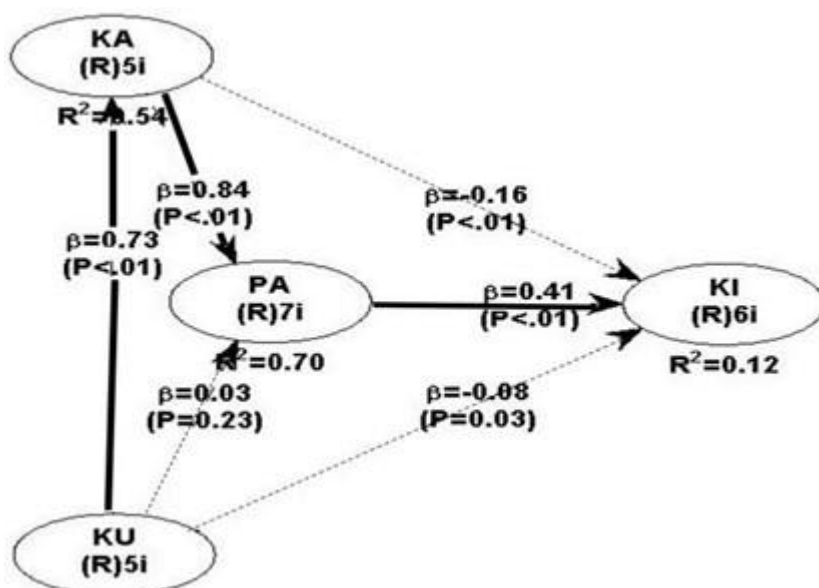


Figure 3. Recommendations for the development of Islamic character for students.

Reading the Holy Quran, shalawat to Prophet Muhammad SAW, and alms/infaq are the strongest indicators in the development of students' Islamic characters. The lecturers and the supervisors are expected to be able to interpret those three worships as good practices in the students' daily and professional life. Islamic characters in students are the key to avoiding immoral practices on campus and in society, and they will be able to prevent the demoralization process in today's millennial century.

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