



A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF CHARACTER-BUILDING PRACTICES AT A UNIVERSITY IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Character-building has increasingly become a key priority for higher education institutions, especially faith-based universities that seek to balance academic excellence with the moral and ethical development of students. In this context, the present study explores character-building practices at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI). The study was conducted with a total population of 1,834 participants, comprising 1,800 male undergraduate (BS-level) students and 34 male faculty members. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation, resulting in a sample of 360 students and 7 faculty members. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 32 students and all 7 faculty members, while structured observations were conducted with 100 male students to examine the campus environment, peer interactions, and participation in co-curricular activities. A qualitative exploratory case study design was adopted for this research. The interview data were analyzed thematically, while observational data were examined using descriptive analysis to provide contextual support and triangulation. Findings indicate that both students and faculty place high importance on character-building as a core educational value. However, institutional practices aimed at fostering character development were found to be largely informal, inconsistent, and fragmented. Despite the presence of various moral and co-curricular initiatives, these efforts lack coordination and a systematic framework for implementation and assessment. The study concludes that the absence of a structured institutional model for character education significantly limits its effectiveness at IIUI. It is therefore recommended that character education be more explicitly integrated into the formal curriculum, faculty capacity in this area be strengthened through targeted training, and existing value-based initiatives be systematically organized and aligned with Islamic ethical principles to ensure a more coherent and impactful approach to student character development.

Keywords: *Character-building, higher education, faith-based university, Islamic values, moral development, co-curricular activities, IIUI*

Introduction

Higher education institutions are increasingly expected to prepare graduates who are not only academically competent but also ethically responsible and socially conscious. Within this broader expectation, character-building has gained renewed importance. It refers to the intentional cultivation of moral values such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, empathy, and self-discipline that shape and regulate individual behaviour (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014).

In Islamic universities, this responsibility carries an added dimension, as it is firmly rooted in the concepts of akhlaq (moral virtue) and tarbiyah (holistic nurturing). These principles emphasize the integration of spiritual, moral, and intellectual development, aiming to produce well-rounded individuals who embody both knowledge and ethical conduct (Al-Attas, 2019). However, despite this strong philosophical and institutional foundation, there remains a limited empirical understanding of how effectively these ideals are translated into structured, consistent, and evaluable educational practices within university settings (Sanderse, 2017).



Against this backdrop, the present study undertakes a situational analysis of character-building practices at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI). It is guided by the following research questions:

1. How do teachers and students perceive character-building among BS-level students at IIUI?
2. How do teachers and students perceive the effectiveness of existing character-building initiatives?
3. In what ways do the campus environment, including co-curricular activities and peer interactions, influence the character development of BS-level students at IIUI?

Problem Statement

Despite the International Islamic University Islamabad's (IIUI) strong institutional commitment to producing morally upright graduates, character-building initiatives within the university appear to function largely in an informal and unstructured manner, with limited mechanisms for systematic monitoring or evaluation. Moreover, there is insufficient empirical evidence regarding how faculty and students perceive these initiatives, or how factors such as the campus environment and peer interactions contribute to students' moral and ethical development. This gap between institutional aspirations and practical implementation highlights the need for a focused empirical investigation.

Research Gap

A review of existing literature indicates that research on character education has predominantly concentrated on school-level settings or non-Islamic educational contexts (Sanderse, 2017; Cesel, 2019). In contrast, there is a noticeable lack of empirical studies at the university level within Islamic institutions, particularly those examining how character-building is operationalized in practice and how various institutional elements, such as faculty engagement, student experiences, curriculum design, and campus culture, interact to shape character development. Furthermore, no prior study has specifically employed a situational analysis approach to examine character education at IIUI.

Rationale of the Study

Considering this gap, the present study is both timely and necessary. It seeks to critically examine the alignment between IIUI's stated objectives of character development and their actual implementation in practice. By exploring the perceptions of key stakeholders, the study aims to identify institutional strengths as well as areas requiring improvement. Ultimately, it is expected to generate evidence-based insights and practical recommendations for developing a more structured, coherent, and effective framework for character education that remains consistent with Islamic educational principles.

Research Objectives

The present study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To explore the perceptions of teachers and students regarding character-building among BS-level students at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI).
2. To examine how teachers and students perceive the effectiveness of existing character-building initiatives within the university.
3. To analyze the extent to which the campus environment, co-curricular activities, and peer interactions influence the character development of BS-level students.

Significance of the Study

This study provides valuable insights for faculty, students, and administrators at IIUI by examining how character education is understood and practiced within a faith-based university context. For faculty and students, it enhances understanding of how institutional

practices, peer dynamics, and the campus environment contribute to character development. For administrators, it offers evidence-based recommendations to support the design of more structured and effective character-building initiatives. Beyond IIUI, the study contributes to the broader discourse on character education in Islamic higher education, offering relevant implications for similar institutions in Pakistan and comparable contexts.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework of Study

A situational Analysis of Character-Building Practices at an Islamic University in Pakistan

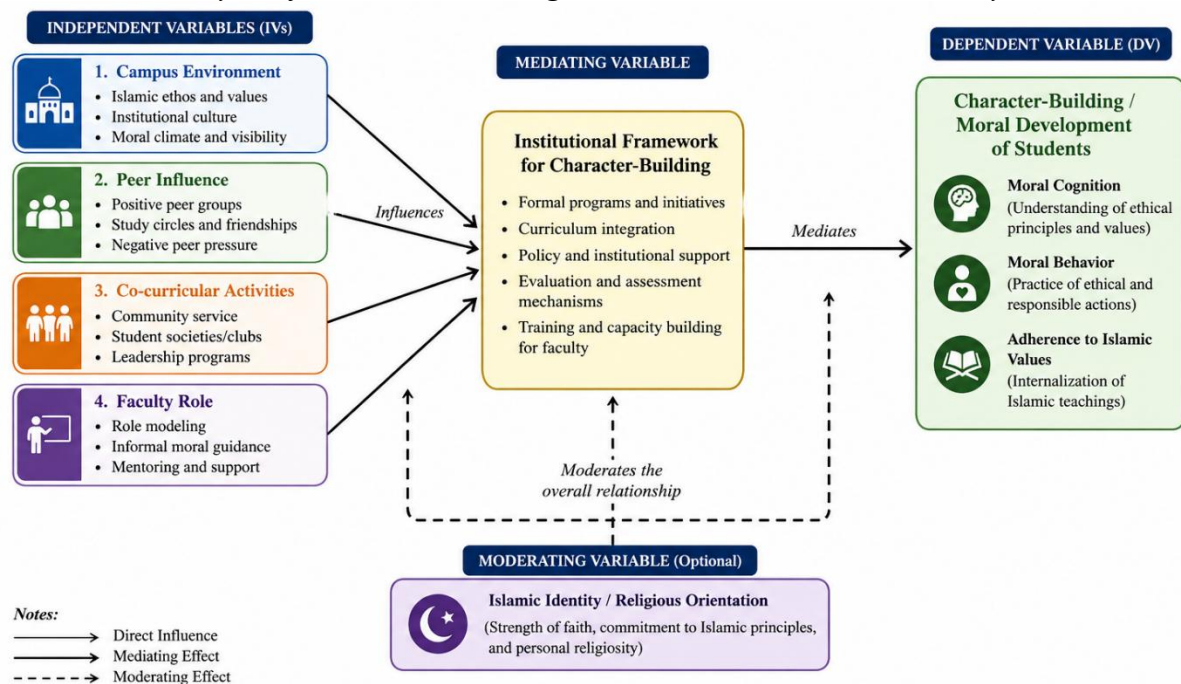


Figure 1.1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study, outlining the relationships among the independent variables, a mediating variable, a moderating factor, and the dependent variable. The independent variables: campus environment, peer influence, co-curricular activities, and faculty role, represent key institutional and social dimensions that collectively shape students' character development within the university context.

The mediating variable, the institutional framework for character-building, explains the process through which these influences are operationalized. It reflects the role of structured mechanisms such as curriculum integration, institutional policies, organized programs, and faculty support in translating environmental and interpersonal factors into meaningful developmental outcomes. The dependent variable, character-building or moral development, is conceptualized in terms of students' moral cognition, ethical behaviour, and adherence to Islamic values. These dimensions capture both the internal understanding and external expression of character among students.

The model incorporates Islamic identity as a moderating variable, which influences the strength and direction of the relationship between institutional practices and students' moral development. The framework highlights that effective character-building is not solely dependent on individual or environmental factors but emerges through the interaction of structured institutional efforts and the broader socio-religious context.

Literature Review



Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks that together provide a nuanced understanding of character development in higher education. The first framework is the Islamic concept of *tarbiyah*, which views education as a holistic process aimed at nurturing individuals in spiritual, moral, and intellectual dimensions. Within this perspective, character formation is central to education, with a strong emphasis on *akhlaq* as a foundation of human excellence (Al-Attas, 2019). Building on this tradition, Al-Ghazali further stressed that education should not be limited to intellectual development alone but must also cultivate moral virtues such as honesty, humility, patience, and compassion, ensuring a balanced development of both character and intellect (Soleh, 2022).

This study is informed by situational analysis, which focuses on examining the broader contextual factors that shape educational processes, including institutional structures, social interactions, environmental conditions, and individual experiences (Clarke, 2015). Applied in this study, it allows for a comprehensive understanding of not only the existing character-building initiatives at IUI but also the ways in which these initiatives function within the university's distinctive Islamic academic environment.

Concept and Components of Character-Building

Character-building is widely recognized as a fundamental component of holistic education, encompassing the interconnected dimensions of moral cognition, moral emotion, and moral behaviour. Moral cognition refers to understanding what is right, moral emotion involves experiencing empathy and a sense of responsibility, and moral behaviour reflects the actual enactment of ethical principles in everyday life (Nucci et al., 2014). Building on this integrated perspective, Lickona (2014) describes character education as a process of “knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good,” highlighting that ethical understanding alone is insufficient unless it is supported by emotional commitment and consistent behavioural practice.

The educational environment plays a decisive role in shaping moral development. Teachers serve as key moral role models, institutional culture helps establish shared ethical norms, and peer interactions significantly influence whether positive behavioural patterns are reinforced or undermined (Wentzel, 2016). Similarly, Johnson and Johnson (2015) demonstrate that cooperative learning environments are particularly effective in fostering values such as respect, empathy, and shared responsibility among students. Supporting these findings, Day and Kiley (2023), through a meta-analytic review, conclude that institutions that deliberately integrate character education into their structures and practices tend to achieve significantly better outcomes in student behaviour and social development.

These studies highlight an important conclusion: moral development in educational settings is not a spontaneous process but one that requires deliberate, structured, and sustained institutional design.

Character-Building in Higher Education

Universities play a significant formative role in shaping students' ethical reasoning, particularly during early adulthood, a developmental stage characterized by identity exploration and increasing personal autonomy (Arthur et al., 2017). During this period, higher education institutions have a unique opportunity to influence not only students' intellectual growth but also their moral and civic development.

Research indicates that character development in higher education is most effective when values are systematically and coherently integrated across multiple dimensions of university life, including the formal curriculum, co-curricular activities, and the broader campus culture



(Kristjánsson, 2015; Sanderse, 2017). However, despite this understanding, many universities continue to rely heavily on informal and implicit forms of moral guidance, resulting in inconsistent implementation and largely undocumented outcomes (Cesel, 2019).

Empirical studies further highlight the importance of intentional institutional design. Brooks et al. (2019) found that character-building initiatives are particularly effective when incorporated into leadership development programs that combine experiential learning, mentorship, and structured opportunities for ethical reflection. Similarly, Colby et al. (2003) argue that universities have a clear civic responsibility to prepare students for ethically engaged lives, a responsibility that requires deliberate and systematic integration into institutional practices rather than reliance on incidental exposure.

Factors Influencing Character-Building

Character development in university settings is shaped by a complex interplay of multiple institutional, social, and cultural factors. Among these, the educational environment plays a particularly influential role. A supportive and value-oriented campus culture has been shown to reduce behavioural issues while fostering key virtues such as empathy, resilience, and honesty (Berkowitz & Bier, 2016). Within this environment, faculty members serve as central moral agents. When teachers consistently demonstrate ethical behaviour, engage students in reflective dialogue, and act as mentors, they significantly contribute to the internalization of values among students (Davidson et al., 2016; Wentzel, 2016).

Peer influence is another critical determinant of moral and behavioural development in university life. Research by Johnson and Johnson (2015) suggests that structured peer learning environments can promote mutual respect and cooperative responsibility. However, in the absence of proper guidance, peer groups may also exert negative pressure, potentially undermining ethical behaviour and decision-making (Zhao et al., 2021). This highlights the dual nature of peer influence as both a constructive and potentially disruptive force.

Character-Building in Islamic Higher Education

Islamic education fundamentally views moral excellence as inseparable from intellectual development. Within this tradition, the Qur'an and Sunnah consistently emphasize core virtues such as honesty, justice, patience, and compassion as essential foundations of ethical conduct. In this context, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is regarded as the highest moral exemplar, whose life provides a comprehensive model for ethical behaviour and character formation (Khan, 2020).

Across the global landscape, Islamic universities seek to institutionalize these values through various academic and non-academic mechanisms, including curriculum design, faculty mentorship, and the cultivation of a values-oriented campus culture. Building on this objective, Mohd Nasir et al. (2016) propose a comprehensive framework of Islamic character-building grounded in tarbiyah, emphasizing that moral development should not be confined to formal instruction but should also be reinforced through everyday interactions and co-curricular experiences within the university environment. Similarly, Asif and Zain (2019) argue that effective character education in Islamic higher education requires an interdisciplinary approach that integrates religious and secular knowledge, rather than treating them as separate or unrelated domains.

These studies suggest that while Islamic education provides a strong philosophical and spiritual foundation for character development, its effective implementation requires structured systems, institutional commitment, and meaningful collaboration beyond the university setting.

Character-Building Practices at IIUI



Character-building at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) is closely aligned with its institutional mission of integrating Islamic teachings with contemporary academic disciplines (Rafiq & Rizvi, 2020). At the academic level, foundational courses such as Qur'anic Sciences, Hadith, and Islamic Ethics are offered as compulsory components across various faculties. These courses are designed not only to transmit knowledge but also to encourage moral reflection and the application of ethical principles in students' personal and academic lives (Khalid, 2019). In addition, IIUI's broader Islamization of Knowledge initiative seeks to reinterpret and engage with modern academic disciplines through an Islamic ethical framework, ensuring that knowledge production remains value-oriented (Anwar, 2020).

Beyond formal instruction, the university also emphasizes spiritual and moral development through its campus environment. University mosques function as important centres of character formation, extending beyond their role as places of worship. They regularly host Qur'anic study circles, Seerah lectures, and Friday sermons that reinforce ethical awareness and Islamic values among students (Mahsud & Abbasi, 2021). In a similar vein, student-led organizations such as the Da'wah Society and the Character-Building Society contribute to peer-based moral engagement by organizing workshops and awareness sessions on civic responsibility, anti-corruption, and respectful interpersonal conduct, including gender ethics (Batool, 2021).

Faculty members are also expected to play a central role in character development by serving as moral exemplars within the academic environment. Many teachers incorporate Qur'anic references and ethical discussions into their classroom teaching, thereby linking subject knowledge with moral guidance and personal development (Hassan, 2021).

Asif and Zain (2019) argue that institutions like IIUI require a more flexible and integrative pedagogical approach, one that harmonizes Islamic ethical frameworks with contemporary teaching strategies. Such an approach is essential for strengthening the practical impact of character education and ensuring its relevance in a rapidly changing social and educational context.

Moral Education in the Pakistani Context

In Pakistan's education system, character education is primarily delivered through compulsory subjects such as Islamic Studies and Pakistan Studies. However, existing scholarship suggests that these courses often prioritize rote memorization of content rather than fostering critical moral reasoning or encouraging the practical application of ethical principles in students' everyday lives (Ehsan & Raza, 2025). As a result, a gap frequently emerges between the acquisition of moral knowledge and its translation into lived ethical behaviour.

At the level of teacher preparation, Asif et al. (2020) report that many educators in Pakistan have not received formal or standardized training in character education. Consequently, the responsibility for moral development is often left to individual initiative, leading to inconsistent and uneven implementation across institutions. In addition, Ahmad et al. (2024) identify broader systemic constraints, including inadequate funding, weak pedagogical practices, and administrative inefficiencies, that collectively limit the capacity of educational institutions to produce ethically grounded graduates.

Shams and Lodhi (2025) argue that the integration of structured and well-designed character-building programs into formal education has become increasingly urgent. They link this need to growing concerns about intolerance, ethical decline, and social fragmentation among young people in Pakistan. Taken together, these national-level challenges provide an important contextual background for understanding institutional practices in higher education.



They also highlight and justify the need for the present study, which undertakes a context-specific empirical investigation of character-building at IIUI to better understand how these broader systemic issues are reflected and experienced within a single Islamic university setting.

Research Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative exploratory case study design was adopted to examine character-building practices at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI). This approach is particularly suitable for gaining an in-depth and contextually grounded understanding of a bounded phenomenon within its real-life setting (Yin, 2018). The present study, it allows for a comprehensive exploration of how character-building is both perceived and practiced within IIUI, considering the institution's complex social, religious, and organizational environment.

Population and Sample

The study population consisted of 1,834 participants, including 1,800 male BS-level students and 34 male faculty members drawn from the Faculties of Social Sciences and Education. To ensure appropriate representation across the population, proportionate stratified random sampling was employed, resulting in a sample of 360 students and 7 faculty members. From this sample, a purposive convenience subsample of 32 students (approximately four students from each department) were selected for semi-structured interviews. This selection was made to ensure both departmental representation and depth of qualitative insight. In addition, all 7 faculty members were included in the interview process to capture comprehensive faculty perspectives on character-building practices. Alongside interviews, structured observations were conducted with 100 male students across different campus settings. This allowed for a more nuanced understanding of students' behavioural patterns in real-life institutional contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Data Collection Instruments

Semi-structured interview guides were developed to explore participants' perceptions of character-building, their awareness of existing institutional initiatives, and their personal experiences related to moral and ethical development. These interviews allowed participants to express their views in depth while maintaining focus on the core research areas.

A structured observation checklist was designed to systematically assess three key dimensions: the campus environment (12 indicators), peer interactions (9 indicators), and co-curricular activities (10 indicators). Each indicator was evaluated using a three-point frequency scale to capture the observed prevalence of relevant behaviours and practices.

To ensure methodological rigor, both instruments were reviewed by subject experts for content validity and were subsequently pilot tested before full-scale data collection. This process helped refine the tools and ensured their suitability for the research context.

Fieldwork Duration

Data collection was carried out over eight weeks during the academic semester to ensure adequate exposure to routine university activities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted individually in private and comfortable settings to encourage open and honest responses. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded with the informed consent of participants to ensure accuracy and reliability of the data.

Structured observations were conducted across multiple campus locations, including classrooms, common areas, university mosques, and co-curricular activity venues. Observations were scheduled at different times of the day in order to capture variations in student behaviour and to reduce the likelihood of observational bias.

Data Analysis



For data analysis, interview transcripts were examined using Braun and Clarke’s (2021) six-phase thematic analysis approach, which includes familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. In parallel, observational data were analyzed descriptively to complement and corroborate the interview findings, thereby strengthening the overall validity of the results through methodological triangulation.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Five overarching themes emerged from thematic analysis, corroborated by structured observations. Table 1 summarizes the main themes and key findings.

Table 1: Summary of Main Themes and Key Findings

Theme	Key Findings
Perceptions of Character-Building	Valued by both groups; linked to Islamic values, discipline, and moral conduct
Effectiveness of Initiatives	Largely informal and fragmented; no structured institutional framework identified
Campus Environment	Respectful atmosphere; Islamic ethos present but lacks intentional moral programming.
Peer Influence	Dual role: structured peer groups promote values; unguided networks increase risk
Co-curricular Activities	Meaningful opportunities for moral growth; participation is inconsistent and underlinked to goals

Perceptions of Character-Building

Both students and faculty members consistently viewed character-building as an essential component of university education, closely associated with discipline, ethical conduct, and Islamic values. Faculty participants generally considered moral development to be a collective professional responsibility that extends beyond subject instruction, while students recognized its significance for their personal development as well as future professional readiness.

As one faculty member explained, *“We believe that a student who leaves this university should be not only knowledgeable but also a good human being. That is the real purpose of education here.”*

A student noted, *“Here at IIUI, everyone talks about values and Islamic character. It is part of the environment. You feel it when you enter the campus.”*

Despite this shared appreciation of character education, a considerable number of participants expressed ambiguity regarding the extent to which these values are intentionally and systematically fostered through formal institutional mechanisms.

Effectiveness of Character-Building Initiatives

Despite generally positive perceptions of character-building, participants reported that formal, structured initiatives were largely absent or implemented in an ad hoc manner. Many students indicated limited awareness of any clearly defined or systematic programs aimed at developing character. Faculty members noted that their contributions to students’ moral development were primarily based on individual effort rather than coordinated institutional planning.



As one faculty member explained, *“We try to model good behaviour, but there is no formal program to guide students systematically. It depends on the individual teacher.”*

A student remarked, *“I do not think there is any specific program for character building. It just happens naturally, or maybe it does not happen at all.”*

These responses suggest a gap between the perceived importance of character education and its structured implementation within the institution.

Campus Environment

Observations indicated that IIUI’s campus generally reflects a respectful and disciplined environment, strongly influenced by its Islamic physical and cultural setting. High levels of respectful behaviour were consistently observed among students, particularly in their interactions with peers (86.3%) and faculty members (84.9%), suggesting a positive social climate within the university.

At the same time, formal and visible character-building initiatives, such as organized moral campaigns or structured institutional programs, were relatively limited. In more than half of the observed instances (over 55%), no explicit moral messaging or structured character-development activities were evident on campus.

As one student reflected, *“The campus itself teaches you something. The reminders about prayers, it all creates a feeling that you should be a better person.”*

This indicates that while the physical and spiritual environment contributes informally to moral awareness, structured and intentional programming remains less visible in everyday campus life.

Peer Influence

Peer influence emerged as a significant and dual-dimensional factor in students’ character development. On the positive side, students engaged in Islamic study circles and leadership-oriented groups reported experiencing constructive peer reinforcement, where ethical values and religious practices were encouraged collectively. Observational data also indicated the presence of negative peer pressure in a substantial number of cases (75.3%), while instances of peers actively encouraging moral decision-making were comparatively limited (9.6%).

As one student explained, *“Your friends decide a lot about who you become here. If your friends pray, you pray. If they do not care about these things, you start to not care either.”*

This reflects the strong influence of peer groups in shaping students’ behavioural choices, highlighting both the supportive and potentially detrimental effects of peer interactions within the university context.

Co-curricular Activities

Co-curricular activities were widely acknowledged as important platforms for fostering students’ character development, particularly in relation to leadership skills, teamwork, and moral reasoning. Observational findings indicated a relatively high level of student participation in community service activities (79.5% frequently observed), suggesting active engagement in socially oriented initiatives.

Other structured opportunities aimed specifically at moral and ethical leadership, such as dedicated character or leadership clubs, were found to be underutilized. Moreover, there appeared to be no clear institutional mechanism linking students’ participation in co-curricular activities with explicit character-building outcomes.

As one faculty member noted, *“These activities are very good for building character, but they are optional and not well promoted. Many students complete their degree without ever taking part.”*



This reflects a gap between the availability of co-curricular opportunities and their systematic integration into a broader character development framework.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate a clear gap between IIUI's stated institutional mission of character-building and its actual implementation in practice. While Islamic values provide a strong ethical foundation for the university, the lack of structured frameworks, coordination, and systematic evaluation limits the consistency and overall effectiveness of character education. These results are consistent with earlier studies that have identified similar challenges within Islamic higher education contexts (Hamid, 2020; Rahayu et al., 2023) as well as in broader university settings (Cesel, 2019; Arthur et al., 2017).

One particularly important finding is that both students and faculty strongly value character development yet struggle to identify clearly defined institutional mechanisms supporting it. This suggests that character education at IIUI is largely operating through what Berkowitz and Bier (2016) describe as an implicit curriculum, shaped by campus environment, informal norms, and faculty role modelling, rather than through intentional and structured pedagogical design. In this regard, Arthur et al. (2017) emphasize that sustainable character education requires deliberate planning, institutional commitment, and continuous evaluation, all of which appear to be underdeveloped in the current context. Mohd Nasir et al. (2016) argue that Islamic universities need to move beyond broad aspirational statements and toward more organized, measurable, and systematically implemented frameworks.

The study also highlights the complex and dual nature of peer influence. While much of the existing literature tends to focus on peer interaction as a potential risk factor, the findings here suggest a more balanced picture. Structured peer environments such as Islamic study circles and student leadership groups were found to play a meaningful role in promoting ethical behaviour and personal development, aligning with Kristjánsson's (2015) concept of moral communities. At the same time, the relatively high incidence of negative peer pressure (75.3%) points to an important area of concern. This underscores the need for intentional institutional strategies to strengthen positive peer cultures, as also suggested by Johnson and Johnson (2015) and Zhao et al. (2021).

Co-curricular activities were similarly recognized as valuable spaces for character development, particularly in fostering teamwork, leadership, and civic responsibility. The high level of participation in community service activities (79.5%) reflects students' willingness to engage when opportunities are accessible and meaningful. This finding supports the work of Eccles and Barber (2018) and McMahon and Sibthorp (2021), who emphasize that co-curricular programs can significantly enhance character development when they are intentionally linked to clear moral and educational objectives. However, the lack of a formal connection between these activities and a broader character-building framework at IIUI represents a missed opportunity to fully harness their developmental potential.

Limitations

This study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample was limited to male students and faculty members, which restricts the extent to which the findings can be generalized to female participants or to the broader university population. Second, as a single-institution qualitative case study, the results are inherently context-specific and may not be directly transferable to other higher education settings.

The reliance on self-reported interview data may have introduced the possibility of social desirability bias, where participants present responses they perceive as socially or institutionally acceptable. Finally, the eight-week duration of fieldwork, while sufficient for



capturing routine practices, may not have fully reflected the complete range and variation of character-building activities across an entire academic year.

Conclusion

Character-building at IIUI is clearly recognized and valued by both students and faculty; however, it remains insufficiently institutionalized in practice. The university's strong Islamic ethos provides a meaningful and principled foundation for moral development, yet the absence of clearly defined programs, structured curricular integration, and systematic evaluation mechanisms limits the consistency and overall effectiveness of these efforts.

At present, character development appears to rely largely on informal practices and individual faculty initiative, which results in uneven and variable outcomes across the institution. This lack of coordination makes it difficult to ensure that character-building objectives are consistently achieved in line with the university's stated mission.

To address this gap, there is a need for a more coordinated, intentional, and evaluable approach to character education. Such an approach would help align institutional practices with IIUI's broader vision of producing graduates who are not only academically and professionally competent but also morally grounded and ethically responsible.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are suggested to strengthen character-building practices at IIUI in a more structured and effective manner.

- Character education may be formally integrated into undergraduate curricula across all faculties by embedding Islamic ethical values within course learning outcomes and assessment practices, in coordination with the Office of Student Affairs. This would help ensure that moral development is not treated as an informal element but as an intentional part of academic learning.
- It is also suggested that a dedicated Character Development Centre may be established to design, coordinate, and evaluate university-wide initiatives for moral development. Such a centre could ground its work in tarbiyah principles while ensuring that programs are systematic and measurable in their outcomes.
- Faculty development may be strengthened through regular training opportunities focused on moral mentoring, ethical leadership, and values-based teaching approaches. These professional development workshops could be organized within each academic year to support consistent practice across departments.
- Co-curricular activities may also be more formally aligned with character-building objectives. It is suggested that student participation in such activities be systematically recorded and linked to broader student development profiles to better recognize their contribution to moral growth.
- Structured peer mentorship programs may be promoted, including Islamic study circles and ethical leadership groups. These initiatives could help strengthen positive peer influence and create supportive moral learning communities among students.
- It is suggested that the university may establish more systematic evaluation mechanisms, such as character assessment tools, reflective student portfolios, and structured faculty feedback systems. These measures could help in continuously monitoring and improving character development outcomes in a more organized and evidence-based manner.



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