

The Influence of Value-Based Leadership and University Culture on Students' Islamic Identity in the State Islamic Higher Education Institutions in North Sumatra

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of value-based leadership (VBL) and university culture (UC) on students' Islamic identity in selected state Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. A total of 380 students from three state Islamic higher education institutions participated in the study by completing a structured questionnaire. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics with SPSS version 24, followed by Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 24. The CFA results confirmed six distinct dimensions of value-based leadership and six dimensions of university culture, while students' Islamic identity comprised four dimensions. The SEM results revealed that university culture had a significant direct effect on students' Islamic identity, whereas value-based leadership did not demonstrate a statistically significant effect. These findings suggest that institutional culture plays a more substantial role than leadership practices in shaping students' Islamic identity within Islamic higher education settings. The six dimensions of university culture contribute meaningfully to the formation and strengthening of students' Islamic identity through the institutional environment, practices, norms, and social interactions. The study contributes theoretically by providing empirical evidence concerning the relationship between university culture and students' Islamic identity. Practically, it highlights the need for higher education policymakers and institutional leaders to strengthen a conducive Islamic campus culture through relevant policies, activities, regulations, traditions, and institutional practices. Future research should investigate potential mediating variables, including personal religiosity, value internalisation, moral reasoning, and psychological empowerment, and further refine VBL measurement instruments to better reflect the contextual characteristics of Islamic higher education institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

The formation of students' Islamic identity is an important concern in Islamic higher education because universities are responsible not only for academic achievement but also for students' moral, spiritual, and social development. Islamic identity encompasses the internalisation of Islamic values reflected in students' beliefs, attitudes, behaviour, and social interactions. The university environment plays an important role in this process because students develop their identity through formal learning as well as interactions with lecturers, leaders, peers, institutional systems, and the broader campus environment. Therefore, the institutional context needs to provide conditions that support the understanding, internalisation, and practice of Islamic values in students' academic and social lives ([Untari et al., 2024](#)).

Value-based leadership contributes to the creation of a supportive and psychologically secure educational environment that encourages students' personal and attitudinal development ([Rahman & Azzahra, 2024](#)). This leadership approach places ethical principles, integrity, justice, responsibility, and exemplary behaviour at the centre of leadership practices. In higher education, leaders are not only responsible for achieving institutional objectives but also serve as role models whose conduct can influence members of the academic community. Consistent leadership based on ethical and religious values can provide students with concrete examples of how such values are applied in institutional and social contexts. Accordingly, value-based leadership may constitute an important institutional factor in the formation of students' Islamic identity ([Untari et al., 2024](#)).

From an Islamic perspective, leadership is closely associated with trust, justice, responsibility, and exemplary conduct. The Qur'an emphasises the fulfilment of trusts and the implementation of justice (Qur'an 4:58), while justice is also presented as a fundamental principle in social and institutional relationships (Qur'an 5:8). Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad is presented as an exemplary model for human conduct (Qur'an 33:21). These principles indicate that leadership in an Islamic educational context extends beyond administrative responsibilities to include moral guidance and the modelling of values. Leadership practices that consistently demonstrate Islamic and ethical principles may therefore contribute to an institutional environment that encourages students to internalise and practise Islamic values.

University culture is another important contextual factor in the formation of students' Islamic identity. University culture encompasses shared values, norms, traditions, institutional practices, social interactions, symbols, and the academic environment that shape the experiences and behaviour of members of an institution. University culture contributes to individual development and identity formation through shared values, institutional practices, and social interactions ([Siswanto, 2022](#)). A campus culture that consistently promotes ethical and religious values can encourage students to internalise and practise Islamic principles. A supportive ethical environment can also strengthen students' sense of identification and community within the university ([Majid et al., 2025](#)). These findings indicate that students' Islamic identity is influenced not only by formal religious education but also by the cultural environment in which they study and interact.

Peer interaction further strengthens the role of university culture in students' Islamic identity formation. Positive peer interactions can strengthen students' commitment to Islamic values and practices by providing a social environment in which attitudes, values, and behaviours are continuously reinforced ([Carti et al., 2023](#)). Students' daily relationships with peers therefore constitute an important context for the development and reinforcement of Islamic attitudes and behaviour. A supportive peer environment can encourage students to practise religious and ethical values, while positive institutional norms can create consistency between formal university expectations and students' everyday experiences. Thus, university culture encompasses

both formal institutional structures and informal social relationships that may contribute to the development of students' Islamic identity ([Connor et al., 2025](#)).

Despite these findings, the relationship between value-based leadership, university culture, and students' Islamic identity remains insufficiently examined, particularly in the context of state Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. Previous studies have generally examined leadership or university culture separately and have often focused on broader outcomes such as academic achievement, organisational commitment, student well-being, or general character development. Further investigation is therefore needed to clarify the mechanisms through which institutional factors influence students' identity development ([Xiao et al., 2023](#)). There is consequently a need for empirical research that simultaneously examines value-based leadership and university culture as potential determinants of students' Islamic identity. This gap is particularly relevant because state Islamic higher education institutions have a distinctive mission that integrates academic, religious, and moral dimensions of education.

Based on this research gap, the present study examines the influence of value-based leadership and university culture on students' Islamic identity in selected state Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. By examining both institutional factors simultaneously, this study seeks to determine their respective contributions to students' Islamic identity and provide empirical evidence concerning the role of the institutional environment in identity formation. The findings are expected to contribute to the theoretical understanding of Islamic identity development in higher education and provide practical implications for university leaders and policymakers. In particular, the study may support the formulation of institutional policies, activities, regulations, and campus practices that foster a conducive Islamic culture and strengthen students' internalisation and practice of Islamic values.

METHODS

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was conducted in two sequential stages: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and structural model analysis. CFA was initially performed to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement model by examining standardized factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR). The measurement model was further evaluated using multiple goodness-of-fit indices, including the Chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (χ^2/df), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). The use of multiple fit indices provides a more comprehensive assessment of model adequacy ([Goretzko et al., 2024](#)). Following the assessment of the measurement model, structural model analysis was conducted to examine the hypothesised relationships among Value-Based Leadership (VBL), University Culture (UC), and students' Islamic Identity. SEM was selected because it allows multiple relationships among latent constructs to be examined simultaneously within an integrated theoretical model ([Dash & Paul, 2021](#)).

The study was conducted at three state Islamic higher education institutions in North Sumatra, Indonesia, namely State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UIN SU) in Medan, State Islamic University of Syahada Padangsidempuan (UIN SYAHADA), and State Islamic College of Mandailing Natal (STAIN Madina). These institutions were selected because they provide relevant Islamic higher education contexts for examining students' Islamic Identity, particularly within educational environments that integrate Islamic values into academic and institutional practices. The study population comprised all undergraduate students enrolled at the three institutions, with a total of 33,492 students, consisting of 22,118 students at UIN SU,

8,361 students at UIN SYAHADA, and 3,013 students at STAIN Madina. Population data were obtained from official institutional records and relevant information provided by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

A total of 380 undergraduate students were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling. The population was divided into three strata based on the students' respective institutions, and the number of respondents selected from each stratum was determined proportionally according to the size of its student population. The final sample consisted of 251 students from UIN SU, 91 from UIN SYAHADA, and 38 from STAIN Madina. Within each institutional stratum, respondents were selected through simple random sampling, giving eligible students an equal opportunity to participate and reducing potential selection bias. This procedure ensured that the sample adequately represented the distribution of the undergraduate student population across the three institutions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

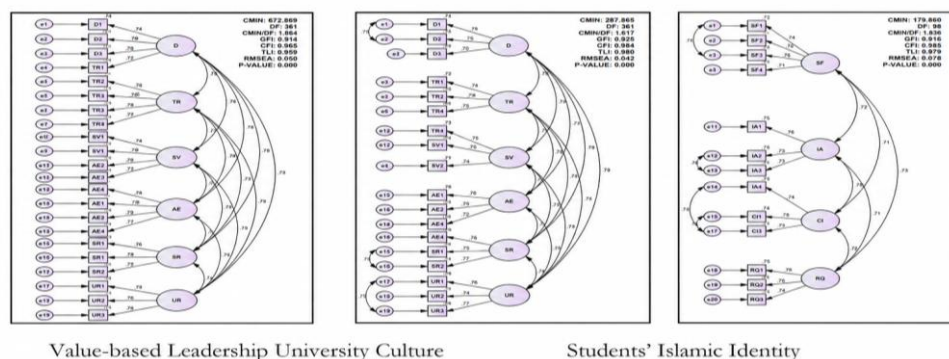
Table 1. Details of Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, Kurtosis, and Internal Reliability of Each Construct

Variables	Constructs Measured	No of Items	Mean	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness	Internal Reliability
Value-based Leadership (VBL)	Accountability	4	3.6125	1.32885	-.569	-.858	.958
	Integrity	4	3.5599	1.28578	-.533	-.792	.951
	Sense of Direction	4	3.5493	1.27696	-.564	-.744	.957
	Commitment	3	3.5096	1.25853	-.601	-.679	.946
	Truthfulness	4	3.5039	1.18755	-.533	-.694	.889
	Sincerity	3	3.4632	1.27584	-.709	-.582	.954
University Culture (UC)	Diversity	4	3.5303	1.27646	-.610	-.729	.960
	Tradition	4	3.5757	1.31927	-.542	-.832	.960
	Symbol	4	3.5816	1.29666	-.530	-.812	.952
	Academic Environment	4	3.5230	1.06282	-.536	-.684	.951
	Students' Engagement	3	3.5632	1.31689	-.622	-.742	.954
	University Regulation	3	3.5807	1.32060	-.603	-.780	.954
Student's Islamic Identity (II)	Spiritual Practices	6	3.7092	1.36555	-.515	-.954	.974
	Moral Values	6	3.6982	1.35109	-.532	-.910	.981
	Cultural Identity	4	3.5605	1.29145	-.617	-.727	.953
	Religious Knowledge	4	3.6300	1.28980	-.483	-.849	.956

N= 380 Notes: Level= Low (1-1.66); Medium (1.67-3.33); High (3.34-5.00)

Overall, the highest and lowest perception values of Value-based Leadership (VBL) are observed in Accountability ($M = 3.6125$) as the highest dimension and Sincerity ($M = 3.4632$) as the lowest. For University Culture (UC), the highest mean score is found in Symbol ($M = 3.5816$), while the lowest perception is reflected in Academic Environment ($M = 3.5230$). Meanwhile, Student's Islamic Identity (SII) demonstrates the highest overall perception among the four constructs, with Spiritual Practices showing the highest mean score ($M = 3.7092$) and Cultural Identity representing the lowest dimension within this construct. Therefore, based on description and discussion.

Figure 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis for all Variables; VBL, UC and SII



From the result of SEM, there are three dimensions. First, the data shows that university leaders in Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions possessed a high degree of VBL practices, which comprised Accountability (A), Integrity (I), Sense of Direction (SD), Commitment (C), Truthfulness (T) and Sincerity (S). Based on the findings from the results, the CFA also revealed that the value-based leadership (VBL) constructs persevered as hypothesised by the study. The findings also prove that these factors have indices that meet the standards that have been set with results ($\chi^2 = 385.286$, $df = 136$, $\chi^2/df = 2.83$, $CFI = .979$, $RMSEA = .069$, $TLI = .989$, $GFI = .905$) which indicates that the model is good ([Black & Babin, 2019](#)). In regard to the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the majority of students from three Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia perceive that leaders highly practice value-based leadership (VBL) in their respective institutions. The engagement of value-based leadership (VBL) among university leaders, in general, was considered high under the mean score and factor loading. Likewise, from the findings of the study, university students from three selected Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia perceived that leaders are aware and comprehend the value-based leadership in the university. They perceived that university leaders fulfil their responsibilities regarding leadership in the university. Moreover, value-based leadership (VBL) has actively promoted the core values of Islam and encourages the practice of Islamic values regarding leadership ([Kasalak et al., 2022](#)). Furthermore, the literature asserted that value-based leadership in educational contexts supports the development of students' moral behaviours, intrinsic motivation, self-concept and Islamic values dimensions that influence Students' Islamic identity ([Diana et al., 2021](#)).

This is also in line with studies by ([Majid et al., 2025](#)), ([Oemar et al., 2023](#)), and ([Huscina et al., 2022](#)). Their findings showed that value-based leadership (VBL) in universities contributes to improving the quality of education by strengthening lecturers' leadership competence, students' engagement, moral development, and the integration of Islamic values into educational practices. Moreover, Yakin et al., highlighted that the integration of Islamic values into educational leadership can strengthen students' morality, ethical awareness, social responsibility, and engagement ([Yakin et al., 2025](#)). Furthermore, Addini et al., emphasized that leadership competencies grounded in Islamic values are important for guiding, inspiring, and supporting students' academic and moral development. Studies have also examined value-based leadership from an Islamic perspective and its relationship with students' Islamic identity in educational institutions in Indonesia ([Addini et al., 2022](#)). The findings indicated that the integration of Islamic values within higher education contributes to the development of students' Islamic identity through their understanding, attitudes, and religious practices. Accordingly, value-based leadership (VBL) appears to be significant and beneficial for the effectiveness of educational institutions. In summary, this study shows that value-based leadership (VBL) has been implemented effectively in the three selected Islamic

universities in Indonesia. It contributes to the strengthening of higher education institutions, particularly by reinforcing the expression of students' Islamic identity, which is manifested through Islamic behaviours. This study enriches the existing literature and contributes to knowledge by highlighting the importance of value-based leadership practices in Islamic higher education institutions for strengthening students' Islamic identity and supporting the quality of education.

University Culture

Second, for the University Culture (UC) results, it can be concluded that the majority of students from the three Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia perceived that university culture (UC) was practised well, as indicated by the high mean scores and factor loadings across their respective institutions. This is reflected in the perceived level of university culture practices across six dimensions, namely Social Diversity (SD), Tradition (T), Symbols (S), Academic Environment (AE), Students' Engagement (SE), and University Regulations (UR). The findings are in line with research conducted by [\(Majid et al., 2025\)](#), which suggested that university culture plays an important role in shaping behaviour, institutional practices, and the overall educational environment within Islamic higher education institutions. Furthermore, recent studies have asserted that a positive and inclusive university culture contributes significantly to students' experiences, engagement, sense of belonging, and perceptions of their educational environment [\(Kultsum et al., 2023\)](#). A supportive academic culture also encourages students to participate actively in academic and social activities and strengthens the internalisation of institutional and Islamic values. In addition, research on Islamic higher education has demonstrated that institutional culture and value-based educational practices influence students' religious attitudes, character formation, and expression of Islamic identity [\(Huseina et al., 2022\)](#). Thus, the present findings reinforce the view that a strong, inclusive, and consistently practised university culture contributes not only to a positive educational experience but also to the formation of students' character, values, religious practices, and Islamic identity.

Moreover, recent studies have shown that university culture and the campus environment play an important role in supporting students' academic, social, and religious development. This positive perception is reflected in a sense of community, structured religious activities, and campus practices that respect moral and ethical values. Supportive institutional policies and religious activities can also strengthen students' experiences of Islamic identity in campus life. These findings confirm that students' Islamic identity is not solely shaped by family background or previous religious education but is also dynamically formed through their experiences and interactions within the university environment [\(Diana et al., 2021\)](#). Furthermore, [\(Halid et al., 2025\)](#), highlighted the importance of the campus environment and institutional practices in shaping students' religious understanding and experiences. The findings of this research therefore contribute to the literature by emphasising the role of university culture in supporting educational quality and strengthening students' Islamic identity.

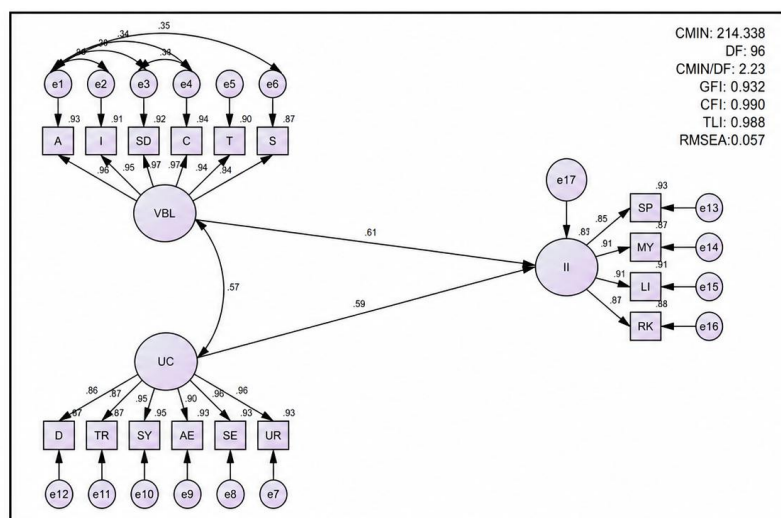
Third, for the Students' Islamic Identity (SII) results, the majority of respondents

from the three Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia perceived that their Islamic identity practices were established at a high level, as indicated by the high mean scores obtained. This finding is consistent with recent research showing that students' Islamic identity is shaped through religious understanding, religious practices, and interactions within the educational environment (Taja et al., 2024). Religious activities in the campus environment can serve as an important medium for internalising moral and spiritual values, while religious education strengthens the cognitive foundation of students' Islamic identity. (Taja et al., 2024) Found that Islamic education and religious experiences contribute to the formation and expression of students' Islamic identity. Similarly, (Dwipangesti, 2026), highlighted the role of religious literacy and educational experiences in shaping students' Islamic identity. Therefore, the high level of SII found in this study indicates that Islamic identity is reflected not only in religious practices but also in students' understanding, values, and everyday behaviour.

Furthermore, the low cultural identity score suggests that Islamic cultural aspects are less prominent in students' campus experiences. This finding indicates that the expression of Islamic identity in higher education should not be limited to formal religious practices but should also incorporate cultural, moral, and contextual dimensions. (Taja et al., 2024), emphasised that students' Islamic identity is expressed through diverse religious understandings, practices, and social experiences. Similarly, (Halid et al., 2025), highlighted the importance of the campus environment and institutional practices in shaping students' religious understanding and experiences. Therefore, strengthening Islamic identity among university students requires a holistic educational approach that integrates religious knowledge, spiritual practices, moral values, and Islamic cultural traditions into classroom learning and campus activities. Islamic identity is consequently not merely a ritual-based identity but also an identity reflected through students' understanding, attitudes, values, and everyday behaviour, which can ultimately contribute to improving the quality of Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia.

Result of Structural Equation Modelling

Figure 2. Structural Model of the Study



From the data, the SEM results indicate that Value-Based Leadership (VBL) does not have a significant effect on students' Islamic Identity (SII), with a small effect value of 0.01. Meanwhile, the CFA results met the recommended model fit criteria, with the following values: ($\chi^2 = 214.338$, $\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.23$, CFI = .990, RMSEA = .057, TLI = .988, and GFI = .932). These results indicate that although Value-Based Leadership (VBL), reflected in Accountability, Integrity, Sense of Direction, Commitment, Truthfulness, and Sincerity, was perceived by students to be highly practised across the three selected state Islamic higher education institutions, its direct influence on students' Islamic Identity remains limited. This finding differs from recent studies suggesting that value-oriented leadership and Islamic institutional practices can contribute to students' religious and character development ([Majid et al., 2025](#)), highlighted the relevance of VBL in shaping leadership practices within Islamic higher education. Similarly, ([Akhyar et al., 2024](#)), demonstrated that value-based leadership can contribute to students' religious practices and character formation. The different finding in the present study suggests that high perceptions of VBL do not necessarily translate directly into stronger students' Islamic Identity, indicating that other factors, such as university culture, religious engagement, peer interaction, and students' personal religious experiences, may play a more substantial role in shaping Islamic identity.

In addition, university leadership plays an important role in this dynamic. Recent research indicates that leadership practices in higher education can influence lecturers' and students' academic experiences and performance. ([Akhyar et al., 2024](#)) found that shared instructional leadership among university administrators and lecturers contributes to improved performance among both lecturers and students. However, the findings of this study differ from previous research suggesting that value-based leadership has a significant influence on students' Islamic identity. In the context of the three selected state Islamic higher education institutions, several factors may explain the limited influence of VBL on students' Islamic identity. First, students have relatively limited direct interaction with university leaders and administrators. Bureaucratic procedures, institutional structures, and the demanding responsibilities of university officials can restrict opportunities for students to interact intensively with leaders and directly experience their leadership values. Second, many leadership roles are exercised indirectly through policy formulation, institutional management, and the organisation of university programmes. Consequently, students may not directly perceive how leaders' values are translated into their daily campus experiences. Third, students' Islamic identity is also shaped by social and educational experiences beyond university leadership, including peer relationships, student organisations, religious activities, and the broader campus environment. This finding is consistent with ([Taja et al., 2024](#)), who demonstrated that students' Islamic identity is formed through diverse religious, social, and educational experiences within and beyond the university environment. Therefore, although value-based leadership is highly perceived by students, its direct influence on Students' Islamic Identity in the present study remains limited, with an effect value of 0.01. These findings

indicate that strengthening students' Islamic identity requires not only value-based leadership but also supportive university culture, meaningful student engagement, and sustained religious and social experiences.

The Influence of UC on SII

The analysis results of this study show that University Culture (UC) has a significant influence on students' Islamic Identity (SII), with an effect value of 0.93, indicating a strong influence. The CFA results also met the recommended threshold criteria, with the following values: ($\chi^2 = 214.338$, $\chi^2/df = 2.23$, CFI = .990, RMSEA = .057, TLI = .988, and GFI = .932). These findings indicate that the university environment, including social diversity, traditions, symbols, academic environment, students' engagement, and university regulations, plays a direct role in shaping and strengthening students' Islamic identity. This finding is consistent with [\(Rahman & Azzahra, 2024\)](#), who found that university culture can significantly contribute to students' Islamic identity through institutional traditions, respect for diverse religious beliefs, the expression of Islamic symbols, and the presence of Islamic dress and cultural practices among students. Furthermore, institutional regulations and student engagement provide opportunities for students to experience and internalise Islamic values in their daily campus life. Therefore, the strong influence of University Culture found in this study confirms that a supportive and value-oriented university environment is an important factor in strengthening students' Islamic identity.

According to [\(Rahman & Azzahra, 2024\)](#), there are several reasons why University Culture (UC) has such a significant influence on students' Islamic Identity (SII), including: (a) The Function of University Culture as a Habitual System: University activities such as religious activities, worship habits, religious social interactions, and Islamic campus rules will consistently form positive habits, which will lead to the formation of an Islamic identity for each student.

This is in line with the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ «الرَّجُلُ عَلَى دِينِ خَلِيلِهِ، فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَحَدُكُمْ مِنْ يَحَالِلٍ [رواه أبو داود والترمذي وأحمد] - [حسن سنن أبي داود: حديث رقم ٤٨٣٣]

The high intensity of students' interaction with university culture makes the campus environment an important source of value socialisation in shaping students' Islamic character and identity. Students' direct experiences through daily activities, campus regulations, religious activities, and the overall campus atmosphere create a continuous process of value internalisation. Furthermore, the continuity of these experiences strengthens Islamic identity because students do not merely learn Islamic values but also apply them in their academic, social, and religious activities within the university environment. This finding is consistent with [\(Dwipangesti, 2026\)](#), which found that Islamic identity formation among university students is influenced by religious learning experiences and campus environments.

In summary, both theoretical and real-world evidence show that there is a direct correlation between UC and SII of its educational institutions. Thus, culture is important

in higher education institutions as it encourages students to internalise the rules of civility, ethics, and spirituality. Therefore, with the research findings in this study, it is hoped that the existing Islamic higher education in Indonesia, specifically, could take into account that university culture is one of the imperative factors in producing excellent students with strong Islamic identity.

CONCLUSION

The findings demonstrate that university culture is the primary determinant of students' Islamic identity formation. Among its dimensions, social diversity, traditions, symbols, student engagement, and institutional regulations play important roles in shaping students' Islamic beliefs, attitudes, and practices throughout their academic experience. In contrast, the six core values of value-based leadership accountability, integrity, sense of direction, truthfulness, sincerity, and commitment did not have a significant direct effect on students' Islamic identity. This finding indicates that students are more directly exposed to institutional practices, social interactions, campus traditions, regulations, and learning environments than to the personal values demonstrated by university leaders. The stronger influence of university culture suggests that the institutional environment serves as a more immediate context through which students experience and internalise Islamic values during their academic life.

The findings further indicate that value-based leadership may contribute to students' Islamic identity indirectly through the establishment of a supportive university culture. Institutional policies, norms, traditions, religious practices, student interactions, and academic environments can translate organisational values into everyday experiences that strengthen students' Islamic identity. Therefore, strengthening students' Islamic identity requires not only value-oriented leadership but also the development of a university culture that consistently reflects Islamic values in institutional practices and student life. Future research should further examine university culture as a potential mediating mechanism between value-based leadership and students' Islamic identity and investigate contextual factors that may strengthen or weaken this relationship.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contribution

Ikhwanuddin Abdul Majid: Writing-Preparation of original manuscript, Conceptualization Data accuracy, **Nik Md. Saiful Azizi Bin Nik Abdullah:** Visualization, Methodology, Improve Language, Investigation.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that this research was conducted without any conflict of interest in the research.

Ethical Clearance

The place or location studied has agreed to conduct research and is willing if the results of this study are published.

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