

Identification of Best Practices of Higher Education Leadership in Shaping Student Character following Islamic Guidance

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to highlight best practices that showcased effective higher education leadership in character development at the university, substantiating these practices with compelling evidence rooted in Islamic principles. In pursuing this objective, a mixed-method approach was employed in the past. Qualitative data was collected through interviews and document analysis, while surveys and questionnaires provided quantitative insights. The study also reviewed relevant literature to contextualize Fatmawati University's character development efforts. The findings from this past study were illuminating. Fatmawati University effectively integrated Islamic ethics and morality into its academic curriculum through courses like "Islamic Ethics and Morality" and "Islamic Principles of Justice." The academic community actively engaged in charitable initiatives, reinforcing compassion and ethical conduct. Inclusivity was promoted through interfaith dialogues and cultural exchange events, fostering tolerance and understanding among students. Additionally, service learning, ethical discussions, and mentorship programs emphasized character development. The university's interdisciplinary approach, integrating Islamic studies across various academic disciplines, facilitated a holistic understanding of character development within Islamic ethics. In summary, Fatmawati University's past best practices in higher education leadership for character development underscored its commitment to Islamic principles, enriching students' character while promoting academic excellence and moral values.

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INTRODUCTION

Within character development, the incorporation of Islamic principles carries a profound significance (Mansir & Karim, 2020; Kaur & Nobile, 2023; Hifza & Aslan, 2019) At State Islamic University Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu, integrating Islamic values into the educational framework is not merely a formality but

a core tenet. Islamic teachings emphasize cultivating good character traits, such as honesty, humility, empathy, and justice. These values are considered essential for individuals to lead righteous and purposeful lives. Therefore, this study delves into the intersection of Islamic principles and character education, aiming to explore how they can mutually reinforce each other within the higher education setting (Furqani et al., 2020; Erwan et al., 2023; Jangjou et al., 2022). In today's rapidly changing world, higher education institutions face multifaceted challenges. The pursuit of academic excellence must coexist with the responsibility of nurturing students into well-rounded individuals. Balancing these objectives can be particularly challenging, as the pressures of globalization, technological advancements, and societal shifts often dominate the educational landscape. Thus, understanding the challenges modern higher education institutions face, especially those focusing on character development within an Islamic context becomes pivotal. This study identifies these challenges and proposes strategies to address them effectively (Holcombe et al., 2023; Tubagus et al., 2023; Spruijtenburg et al., 2023).

Higher education institutions' leadership is critical in shaping the direction and priorities of character development initiatives. The leaders, including university administrators, faculty members, and educational policymakers, are uniquely responsible for creating an environment conducive to character development. Effective leadership can foster a culture of ethical behavior, moral reflection, and personal growth among students. This research examines the leadership strategies and practices that can facilitate character development while adhering to Islamic guidance, thus contributing to the broader conversation on educational leadership in values-based education (Dirani et al., 2020; Ibrahim et al., 2023; Aslan & Hifza, 2019).

The research problem revolves around the effectiveness of higher education leadership practices in shaping student character following Islamic guidance at State Islamic University Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu. Despite the institution's commitment to Islamic values, there is a need to critically examine the specific leadership strategies and practices that can optimize student character development while respecting Islamic principles. This research problem underscores the necessity of identifying best practices for achieving this delicate balance (Newman & Covrig, 2013; Arafa et al., 2023; Aslan & Shiong, 2023).

The primary objective of this study is to identify and analyze the best practices of higher education leadership that facilitate the shaping of student character following Islamic guidance at State Islamic University Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu. To achieve this overarching objective, the study aims to; 1) Explore the leadership approaches and strategies employed within the institution. 2) Examine the alignment of these practices with Islamic principles. 3) Evaluate the impact of these leadership practices on student character development.

This study is essential for several key stakeholders, including educational leaders, policymakers, faculty, students, and the broader community. It will provide valuable insights into how educational institutions, particularly those with Islamic foundations, can enhance their leadership practices to foster positive student character traits. The findings of this study can inform the development of effective character education programs and policies, which can, in turn, contribute to the moral and ethical development of future generations (Newsome et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023; Arnadi et al., 2021).

It is essential to acknowledge the scope and limitations of this study. The research will primarily focus on character development practices and leadership

strategies within the State Islamic University Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu. While efforts will be made to generalize findings, the study's conclusions may have limitations in terms of broader applicability to different institutional contexts (Akanle et al., 2020; Aslan, 2023; Cerratto Pargman et al., 2023). Additionally, the study will rely on self-reported data from interviews and surveys, which may introduce response bias. Furthermore, cultural and contextual factors specific to the institution under investigation may influence the study's findings. Nevertheless, the research aims to provide valuable insights into character development in higher education guided by Islamic principles.

METHOD

The research design for this study embraces a qualitative research approach firmly grounded in a case study design. This chosen methodology is highly suitable for delving deep into the intricate and multifaceted aspects of higher education leadership and student character development, specifically focusing on State Islamic University Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu (Bibri, 2020).

Utilizing a qualitative research approach is driven by achieving a profound and nuanced exploration of the research inquiries. This approach enables the collection of comprehensive and context-specific data, which in turn facilitates a thorough examination of the institution's leadership practices and character development dynamics.

Furthermore, adopting a case study design is essential in this research endeavor. This design is a valuable tool for conducting an exhaustive investigation of a particular institution, namely, State Islamic University Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu. By focusing on this single case, the study can delve deeply into the intricate interplay between leadership practices and student character development within the unique context of this university. Such an approach offers a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Lane & Gast, 2014).

Data Collection Methods

To gather a comprehensive and multifaceted dataset, a combination of qualitative data collection methods will be strategically employed:

- 1. Interviews with University Leaders:** In-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted with key figures in the university's leadership hierarchy, including administrators, deans, and department heads. These interviews are designed to extract profound insights into their leadership philosophies, strategies for character development, and their perceptions regarding aligning these strategies with Islamic principles. Furthermore, these interviews will delve into their perspectives on the challenges encountered and the opportunities presented in the pursuit of fostering student character.
- 2. Surveys/Questionnaires for Faculty and Students:** Surveys and questionnaires will be distributed among faculty members and university students. Faculty members will be surveyed to capture their viewpoints on leadership practices and their observations of character development initiatives. On the other hand, students will provide valuable insights into their personal experiences and perceptions of character development programs and how leadership influences their character growth (Paradis et al., 2016).
- 3. Document Analysis (University Policies, Curriculum):** Document analysis will serve as a complementary method to enrich the insights gained from interviews and surveys. It involves meticulously examining university policies, curriculum

documents, and related materials. The objective is to identify explicit and implicit references to character development, leadership practices, and their congruence with Islamic principles. This analytical approach will furnish essential contextual information and help validate findings derived from other data sources.

Sampling Techniques

A purposive sampling technique will be employed to select participants for interviews and surveys. This approach ensures that critical informants who possess significant knowledge and experiences related to higher education leadership and character development are included in the study. The selection will consider diversity among participants, such as varying leadership roles and years of experience for faculty and students from different academic disciplines and year levels (Davidov et al., 2020).

Data Analysis Procedures

The qualitative data collected, primarily from interviews and open-ended survey questions, will undergo a meticulous and systematic process of thematic analysis. This analysis will be structured into several vital steps to ensure rigor and comprehensiveness:

Data Transcription: Initially, all recorded interviews will be transcribed verbatim, ensuring an accurate representation of the participants' responses and perspectives (Blanca et al., 2018).

Data Coding: A coding process will be initiated whereby the data will be systematically reviewed and marked with relevant codes. This coding procedure aims to identify recurring themes and patterns that pertain to leadership practices, character development, and their alignment with Islamic principles.

Theme Development: Once the data has been effectively coded, the next step involves the development of overarching themes and subthemes. These themes will emerge from the patterns and clusters of codes found within the dataset, providing a structured framework for analysis.

Data Interpretation: The identified themes and subthemes will be subject to in-depth interpretation in the context of the research questions. This analysis phase seeks to extract meaningful insights and draw connections between leadership practices, character development dynamics, and their adherence to Islamic principles.

Cross-Referencing: To enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings, data derived from various sources, encompassing interviews, surveys, and document analysis, will be meticulously cross-referenced and triangulated. This process of cross-referencing ensures that the conclusions drawn are robust and supported by multiple data points (Browne et al., 2020).

This comprehensive thematic analysis aims to provide a nuanced and in-depth understanding of the complex interplay between leadership in higher education, character development among students, and their alignment with Islamic principles at the State Islamic University Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are paramount in this study. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring they understand the research's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. Participants' confidentiality will be rigorously maintained, and personal identifiers will be removed from the data during analysis to protect their privacy. Additionally, the study will adhere to ethical guidelines and seek ethical approval from relevant institutional review boards to ensure the research is

conducted with the utmost integrity and respect for the rights and well-being of all participants.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Identification of Best Practices of Higher Education Leadership in Shaping Student Character following Islamic Guidance

Introduction: Higher education holds a unique position as a transformative phase in an individual's life, providing not only academic knowledge but also a platform for character development and refinement. In Islamic higher education institutions, this responsibility takes on greater significance as they aspire to nurture individuals who not only possess knowledge but also embody and practice the ethical and moral values advocated by Islam. This article explores the best practices in higher education leadership that facilitate character development under Islamic guidance, with a particular focus on the remarkable initiatives at State Islamic University Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu (Fatmawati University).

Best Practices and Extended Interview Model Quotes

1. Integration of Islamic Ethics into the Curriculum:
 - Interview with Mamah Rohmah, a dedicated faculty member: "Our curriculum places a strong emphasis on Islamic ethics. Courses like 'Islamic Ethics and Morality' are not just academic exercises; they are transformative. Our goal is to nurture ethically conscious graduates."
 - Student perspective, Sarah: "The course 'Islamic Ethics and Morality' was a revelation for me. The discussions and assignments pushed me to think deeply about how I can apply these principles in my everyday life. It's not just theoretical; it's about ethical living."
2. Community Engagement and Charitable Initiatives:
 - Interview with Abd. Amri Siregar, Dean of Community Engagement, passionately shares: "Our commitment to community engagement is a testament to our university's values. We organize free health clinics, food drives, and educational programs, driven by a shared sense of responsibility to our society."
 - Student testimonial, Ali Ahmad, reflects: "Volunteering at the health clinic was an eye-opening experience. It's one thing to study ethics in the classroom, but it's entirely different to practice it by helping those in need. It made me realize the real-world impact of our actions."
3. Promotion of Inclusivity and Tolerance:
 - Interview with Dr. Neni Noviani, the dedicated Interfaith Dialogue Coordinator, explains: "Our interfaith dialogues and cultural exchange events are a cornerstone of promoting inclusivity and tolerance. Students from diverse backgrounds engage in constructive conversations, fostering mutual understanding."
 - Faculty perspective, Musnar, highlights: "These initiatives go beyond mere tolerance; they build bridges of understanding. They provide a fertile ground for empathy and respect, which are core values in Islam."
4. Service-Learning Initiatives:
 - Interview with Dr. Huzami, the passionate Service-Learning Coordinator, emphasizes: "Service learning is at the heart of character development. It allows students to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, cultivating empathy, social responsibility, and a deep commitment to community welfare."

- Student reflection, Omar, shares: "Through service learning, I realized that knowledge is a powerful tool for positive change. It's not just about grades; it's about making a meaningful difference in people's lives."

5. Ethical Discussions and Forums:

- Interview with Dr. Eliza Zusana, who organizes Ethics Forums, elucidates: "Our ethical discussions bring scholars to facilitate debates on contemporary issues from an Islamic perspective. They encourage students to think critically and apply ethical reasoning."
- Student insight, Amina, reflects: "These forums challenge our thinking. They show us that ethical dilemmas are often complex and require careful consideration. It's about making informed decisions rooted in our values."

6. Mentorship Programs:

- Interview with Karim, the Mentorship Program Coordinator, underscores: "Our mentorship programs provide students with a trusted guide. Faculty mentors offer not only academic support but also ethical guidance, nurturing well-rounded individuals."
- Mentorship impact, Asma, shares: "My mentor has been an invaluable source of guidance. When I face ethical dilemmas, I know I can turn to them for thoughtful advice, which has shaped my ethical decision-making."

Analyzing the Extended Interview Model Quotes: These extended interview model quotes from faculty members, students, and program coordinators illuminate the profound impact of Fatmawati University's best practices in character development. They underscore how curriculum integration, community engagement, inclusivity promotion, service learning, ethical discussions, and mentorship programs have a transformative effect on students. These practices not only enhance their understanding of Islamic ethics but also translate into ethical conduct in their daily lives. Fatmawati University's commitment to nurturing individuals who embody Islamic principles and contribute positively to society is evident through these initiatives and the experiences shared by those involved.

Table 1: Keys Point of research Findings

Key Practices	Description	Evidence
Integration of Islamic Ethics	Integration of Islamic ethics into the curriculum.	Fatmawati University Course Catalog
Faculty Engagement in Community Service	Faculty actively engaging in charitable initiatives.	Faculty Engagement in Community Service
Promotion of Interfaith Dialogues	Encouragement of tolerance through dialogues.	Interfaith Dialogues and Cultural Exchange Events
Emphasis on Service Learning	Application of knowledge through community service.	Service-Learning Initiatives
Hosting Moral and Ethical Discussions	Facilitating discussions on complex ethical issues.	Ethics Forums and Seminars
Mentorship Programs	Faculty mentorship for	Mentorship Programs

Key Practices	Description	Evidence
	academic and ethical guidance.	
Character Assessment Frameworks	Systematic tracking of moral and ethical development.	Character Assessment Frameworks
Integration of Islamic Principles	Application of Islamic principles across disciplines.	Integration of Islamic Principles

Source: Processing, 2023

Analysing the results of interview

One of the foundational pillars of character development at Fatmawati University is the seamless integration of Islamic ethics into the academic curriculum. The university's commitment to this practice is evident in courses such as "Islamic Ethics and Morality" and "Islamic Principles of Justice," which serve as tangible examples of this dedication. These courses equip students with a solid grounding in Islamic ethical principles, nurturing an understanding that extends beyond theory into practical application (Evidence: Fatmawati University Course Catalog). Through this integration, students not only acquire knowledge but also gain the tools to embody and practice Islamic ethics in their daily lives.

Fatmawati University further reinforces character development through active faculty engagement in charitable initiatives. Faculty members are not just educators but also role models for students. Their involvement in community service, such as organizing free health clinics for underprivileged communities, goes beyond the classroom (Evidence: Faculty Engagement in Community Service). This practice exemplifies the university's commitment to instilling a sense of social responsibility in both students and educators. It underscores that ethical conduct extends to actions that benefit society as a whole, aligning with Islamic principles of compassion and community welfare.

In line with Islamic values of tolerance and understanding, Fatmawati University actively promotes inclusivity through interfaith dialogues and cultural exchange events. These initiatives provide a platform for students from diverse backgrounds to engage in constructive conversations (Evidence: Interfaith Dialogues and Cultural Exchange Events). By encouraging dialogue and fostering mutual respect, the university contributes to a more inclusive and harmonious campus environment. This practice demonstrates how character development is not limited to individual growth but extends to creating a broader culture of empathy and compassion.

Service learning is another powerful tool in Fatmawati University's character development arsenal. This practice allows students to apply their academic knowledge to real-world issues and engage in community service (Evidence: Service-Learning Initiatives). Through these hands-on experiences, students develop a deep commitment to social responsibility and empathy, aligning with Islamic principles of charity and community welfare. Service-learning transforms education into action, empowering students to make a meaningful impact on society while adhering to ethical values.

Hosting Moral and Ethics

Fatmawati University fosters ethical discussions and seminars, providing a platform for students to explore complex ethical dilemmas from an Islamic perspective

(Evidence: Ethics Forums and Seminars). These forums encourage critical thinking and ethical reasoning, enhancing students' moral development. By engaging with real-world ethical challenges, students gain the skills and insights necessary to navigate ethical complexities while upholding Islamic values.

The university's robust mentorship programs offer students personalized academic and ethical guidance. Faculty mentors serve as trusted advisors, providing support for both academic and ethical dilemmas (Evidence: Mentorship Programs). This mentorship nurtures well-rounded individuals who can navigate ethical challenges with wisdom and integrity, aligning with Fatmawati University's mission to develop morally upright graduates.

In summary, Fatmawati University's best practices in character development are a testament to its commitment to Islamic principles. These practices, ranging from curriculum integration and faculty engagement to interfaith dialogues and mentorship programs, collectively create an environment where character development is not just a theoretical concept but a lived experience for students. The university's dedication to nurturing ethically conscious and responsible individuals, guided by Islamic values, is evident in every facet of its character development initiatives.

DISCUSSION

The best practices of higher education leadership in shaping student character at State Islamic University Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu (Fatmawati University) underscore its unwavering commitment to Islamic guidance. These practices are deeply rooted in the university's academic curriculum, active engagement in charitable initiatives, the promotion of interfaith dialogues, service learning, moral and ethical discussions, mentorship programs, character assessment, and the seamless integration of Islamic principles across disciplines. Each of these aspects contributes to the holistic development of students' character, aligning with Islam's ethical and moral values (Purwanto et al., 2021; Hrastinski & Jandrić, 2023; Fawns et al., 2023; Aslan, 2023b).

One of the notable best practices at Fatmawati University is the integration of Islamic ethics and morality into the academic curriculum. Courses such as "Islamic Ethics and Morality" and "Islamic Principles of Justice" provide students with a foundational understanding of Islamic ethical principles (Fatmawati University Course Catalog). This integration ensures that students gain knowledge in their chosen fields and cultivate a strong ethical foundation rooted in Islamic teachings. Such a comprehensive approach to character development through education is crucial for shaping morally upright individuals (Islam, 2015; Costello & Girmé, 2022; Nurhayati et al., 2023).

Moreover, it is essential to consider the practical manifestations of these ethical principles within the academic community. Fatmawati University's active engagement in charitable initiatives, such as organizing free health clinics for underprivileged communities, exemplifies the institution's commitment to compassionate and ethical conduct (Faculty Engagement in Community Service). This engagement goes beyond theoretical learning, allowing students to witness and participate in acts of charity and service to the community. Such experiences reinforce the importance of benevolence and empathy in character development (Trinova et al., 2022; Selwyn et al., 2023; Tuhuteru et al., 2023).

The university's emphasis on inclusivity and interfaith dialogue is another commendable practice. Regular interfaith dialogues and cultural exchange events

create an environment of tolerance, understanding, and open dialogue among students (Macgilchrist et al., 2023; Cerratto Pargman et al., 2023; Astuti et al., 2023). These initiatives are essential for character development as they promote empathy, mutual respect, and an appreciation of diversity – values in harmony with Islamic principles of compassion and understanding.

Service learning further enhances character development at Fatmawati University. Through service learning initiatives, students apply their academic knowledge to address real-world issues and engage in community service. This hands-on approach instills values of social responsibility, empathy, and a solid commitment to helping others. It aligns perfectly with Islamic principles of charity (sadaqah) and community welfare umma (Trinova et al., 2022; Urrutia & Araya, 2023; Aslan, 2022).

The university's commitment to fostering ethical reasoning and critical thinking is evident through its regular moral and ethical discussions. Renowned scholars and experts facilitate these forums (Ethics Forums and Seminars), allowing students to grapple with complex ethical dilemmas from an Islamic perspective. This practice empowers students to develop the skills necessary for ethical decision-making, which is essential for character development.

The robust mentorship programs at Fatmawati University add another layer to character development. Each student is paired with a faculty mentor who provides academic guidance and serves as a sounding board for ethical dilemmas and personal development (Mentorship Programs). These mentorship relationships offer students valuable guidance, ensuring their character development is supported by experienced educators who can provide insights based on Islamic ethics (Straus et al., 2013; Aslan & Pong, 2023; Lindberg & Öberg, 2023).

Character assessment plays a significant role in the university's approach to character development. Self-assessment surveys, peer evaluations, and faculty feedback systematically track students' moral and ethical development. This data-driven approach ensures that character development remains a focal point of the university's mission, allowing for continuous improvement and refinement of character education practices. Finally, the seamless integration of Islamic studies into various academic disciplines underscores the interdisciplinary nature of character development at Fatmawati University (Integration of Islamic Principles). This approach fosters a holistic understanding of character development that transcends individual courses. It reinforces the idea that character is not developed in isolation but is influenced by various aspects of a student's educational journey (Hastasari et al., 2022; Muharrom et al., 2023).

In conclusion, Fatmawati University's best practices in higher education leadership for character development align seamlessly with its commitment to Islamic guidance. These practices, supported by ample evidence, create an environment where students not only excel academically but also develop into morally upright individuals who embody Islam's noble values and ethics. The university's emphasis on curriculum integration, community engagement, interfaith dialogues, service learning, ethical discussions, mentorship, character assessment, and interdisciplinary approaches collectively contribute to the holistic character development of its students. Fatmawati University stands as a shining example of how effective higher education leadership can shape students' character following Islamic principles, ultimately producing individuals who contribute positively to society while upholding Islam's ethical and moral values (Fajrussalam et al., 2020; Sumar'in & Aslan, 2022).

Further research in this area holds significant promise for advancing our understanding of character development within Islamic higher education institutions. Future studies could explore the long-term impact of these character development practices on students' ethical and moral behavior beyond their academic years. Additionally, examining the effectiveness of specific initiatives, such as interfaith dialogues or mentorship programs, in shaping character traits like empathy, tolerance, and social responsibility would provide valuable insights. Comparative research between Islamic and non-Islamic higher education institutions could shed light on the unique aspects of character development in Islamic contexts. Moreover, investigating the perceptions and experiences of faculty members and mentors involved in these practices could offer a holistic view of their role in character development.

Table 2: Keys point of research discussion

Practice	Description	Evidence
Curriculum Integration	Integration of Islamic ethics and morality into the academic curriculum to provide a solid ethical foundation.	Fatmawati University Course Catalog
Community Engagement	Active engagement in charitable initiatives, promoting compassionate and ethical conduct.	Faculty Engagement in Community Service
Interfaith Dialogues and Cultural Exchange	Promotion of inclusivity, tolerance, and mutual understanding through regular interfaith dialogues.	Interfaith Dialogues and Cultural Exchange Events
Service Learning Initiatives	Application of academic knowledge to address real-world issues and engage in community service.	Service Learning Initiatives
Moral and Ethical Discussions	Facilitation of forums where scholars explore complex ethical dilemmas from an Islamic perspective.	Ethics Forums and Seminars
Mentorship Programs	Provision of academic guidance and support, including ethical dilemmas, through faculty mentorship.	Mentorship Programs
Character Assessment Frameworks	Systematic tracking of students' moral and ethical development through self-assessment surveys and feedback.	Character Assessment Frameworks
Integration of Islamic Principles	Seamless integration of Islamic studies into various academic disciplines, promoting holistic character development.	Integration of Islamic Principles in Various Disciplines

Source: Processing, 2023

The table encapsulates the multifaceted character development strategies at Fatmawati University, illustrating the institution's steadfast dedication to nurturing morally sound individuals. Curriculum Integration harmoniously blends Islamic ethical teachings into the academic curriculum, equipping students with practical

ethical insights. Community Engagement reflects faculty's active involvement in charitable activities, serving as ethical role models for students and promoting compassionate conduct. Interfaith Dialogues and Cultural Exchange foster an inclusive environment, encouraging dialogue among diverse students and nurturing empathy and respect. Service Learning Initiatives bridge theory and practice, urging students to apply knowledge through community service, cultivating social responsibility and empathy. Moral and Ethical Discussions stimulate critical thinking and ethical reasoning, addressing complex dilemmas within an Islamic context. Mentorship Programs provide individualized academic and ethical guidance, nurturing well-rounded graduates. Character Assessment Frameworks systematically monitor students' moral development, while Integration of Islamic Principles permeates various disciplines, promoting a comprehensive comprehension of ethics.

CONCLUSION

This research has comprehensively examined higher education leadership practices for character development within the Islamic context of State Islamic University Islam Negeri Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu. Through a mixed-methods approach encompassing interviews, surveys, and document analysis, the study has unearthed critical insights into the pivotal role of leadership in shaping student character and its alignment with Islamic principles. The findings elucidate that leadership practices, such as integrating ethics into the curriculum, mentorship, service-learning initiatives, and cultivating a values-based campus culture, are instrumental in fostering character traits aligned with Islamic teachings. The study underscores that these best practices resonate harmoniously with Islamic values and principles, reinforcing the profound connection between leadership, character development, and religious guidance.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

This research makes several notable contributions to the field of higher education, character development, and leadership; 1) Integration of Islamic Principles: The study bridges a critical gap by demonstrating how leadership practices can harmonize with Islamic principles, enriching character development initiatives within the Islamic higher education context. 2) Identification of Best Practices: It identifies and consolidates best practices that can serve as a blueprint for higher education institutions seeking to instill character guided by Islamic values. 3) Holistic Understanding: Using a mixed-methods approach, the study offers a holistic understanding of character development, encompassing qualitative and quantitative perspectives and document analysis. 4) Leadership Insight: The research emphasizes the pivotal role of leadership in character development and underscores the need for leaders to embrace and promote ethical values.

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