

# Faith-Driven Innovation in Practice: Investigating MBKM within Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia

Jufriadi Jufriadi\* & Wahibah Wahibah

<sup>1</sup>IAIN Palopo, Palopo, Indonesia

\* [jufriadi@iainpalopo.ac.id](mailto:jufriadi@iainpalopo.ac.id)

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 2024-12-09

Revised : 2025-03-19

Accepted : 2025-03-26

## KEYWORDS

MBKM

Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs)

Faith-based education

Curriculum integration

Value-based education



## ABSTRACT

In an era marked by rapid educational transformation, the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) initiative emerges as a critical reform in Indonesian higher education, designed to bridge academic learning with real-world competencies. However, limited research has explored how this policy aligns with the foundational philosophies and pedagogical values of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs), which prioritize ethical, spiritual, and intellectual development rooted in maqasid al-shariah. This study examines the implementation of the MBKM program in Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) in Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and institutional document analysis to explore alignment with Islamic educational philosophy. Thematic coding revealed three major findings: first, MBKM activities such as internships and community service resonate with Islamic principles of service (khidmah) and societal benefit (maslahah); second, institutional resistance and lack of resources hinder integration; and third, MBKM fosters opportunities for curriculum innovation that preserve Islamic identity while enhancing employability. The study contributes to the discourse on educational reform by offering a culturally responsive model of policy adaptation in religious institutions. It also provides actionable recommendations for aligning national policy with faith-based education. These findings have broader implications for advancing inclusive and value-driven higher education that respects religious traditions while embracing modernity.

## 1. Introduction

The global education landscape is undergoing a profound transformation driven by the increasing need to equip students with competencies that extend beyond the confines of traditional classrooms. As conventional paradigms evolve into more dynamic, inclusive, and interdisciplinary models, higher education now emphasizes autonomy, ethical awareness, and real-world readiness. Education today is not only a means of knowledge transmission but also a process of shaping individuals who can navigate complex societal and professional environments. According to Sisk (2010), global learning and awareness are essential elements in preparing students for meaningful participation in an interconnected world.

In response to these shifting educational demands, the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology launched the Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) initiative. This policy aims to improve the quality and relevance of higher education by integrating academic instruction

with practical learning experiences. MBKM includes eight core activities, such as internships, student exchanges, research projects, entrepreneurship, independent studies, teaching in underdeveloped areas, and community service. The program is designed to produce graduates who are not only academically capable but also socially engaged and professionally adaptable (Anggara, 2023; Pertiwi & Pusparini, 2021; Implementation of the “Merdeka Belajar” Curriculum, 2023; Lestiyani, 2020). This marks a shift away from passive, discipline-based instruction toward active engagement with diverse environments and real-world problem solving (Susanto & Wibowo, 2021; Putri et al., 2022).

Although MBKM has been widely recognized for its transformative potential, most research to date has focused on its application in secular higher education institutions. Many scholars highlight its capacity to enhance employability and student adaptability. For example, Putri et al. (2022) note that MBKM’s experiential learning component significantly improves graduate readiness for the workforce. Ramadhani and Herawati (2021).

However, stress that effective implementation depends on institutional preparedness, including curriculum coherence and administrative capacity. Prasetyo et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of student engagement and the transition toward self-directed learning. Nonetheless, these studies often neglect the unique context of Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs), which are guided by philosophical foundations that prioritize spiritual, ethical, and intellectual development (Chapra, 2008; Al-Attas, 1979; Rahman & Aziz, 2021).

Although a number of studies have begun to explore the relevance of MBKM in Islamic settings, the scope of inquiry remains narrow. Hasanah and Syamsuddin (2021) argue that MBKM is consistent with Islamic values such as *ta'dīb*, *khidmah*, and *maslahah*, suggesting its potential to support holistic development. On the other hand, Mansur and Rahmat (2022) highlight resistance among educators and administrators who worry that MBKM may compromise theological integrity. Concerns also arise regarding student exposure to secular or pluralistic environments, which may conflict with Islamic ethical standards (Hidayat & Rizqiyah, 2021). Additionally, challenges such as limited institutional funding, insufficient infrastructure, and inconsistent regulations further hinder implementation (Nurtjahyati & Sukisno, 2021; Kusumaningtiar & Yanti, 2022; Apriliyani et al., 2022). While Faiz and Purwati (2021) and Perdana et al. (2021) recognize these issues, they do not provide detailed strategies for IHEIs to integrate MBKM while maintaining their religious identity.

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining how MBKM aligns with Islamic educational principles in IHEIs. It focuses on the application of core concepts such as *maqasid al-shariah* and the integration of *ulum al-naqliyah* (revealed knowledge) with *ulum al-aqliyah* (rational knowledge) in shaping MBKM implementation. The study reveals a philosophical alignment between MBKM's experiential learning approach and the holistic orientation of Islamic education. Rather than viewing MBKM as a threat, the research presents it as an opportunity for enhancement when applied with ethical and contextual awareness.

The primary aim of this research is to explore how selected IHEIs interpret and implement the MBKM policy within their academic and religious frameworks. It identifies MBKM as a transformative policy that promotes autonomy, flexibility, and relevance in Indonesian higher education. The study examines both the perceived benefits, including the development of student competencies and competitiveness, and the challenges, such as resistance to change and resource limitations. These insights highlight the complex reality of adapting national policy within the Islamic education context (Yusriadi et al., 2024; Sa'diyah et al., 2022; Kuncoro et al., 2023; Sugianto et al., 2024; Walef et al., 2023;

Anggara, 2023). Key strategies explored in this study include experiential learning and character education, which are intended to foster academic achievement while nurturing the ethical and moral values central to Islamic education (Afkarina et al., 2022; Lubis et al., 2023). Through interviews with educators, administrators, and students, as well as document analysis, the study offers a detailed understanding of how stakeholders engage with the opportunities and challenges of MBKM. The findings contribute to the development of culturally grounded, responsive approaches to policy implementation in IHEIs (Gunarso et al., 2023; Sodikin et al., 2024).

In conclusion, implementing MBKM within IHEIs presents a meaningful opportunity to align national educational reforms with Islamic pedagogical values. This study contributes to ongoing discussions on how faith-based institutions can remain anchored in their traditions while embracing innovation. By providing practical recommendations and empirical insights, it supports policymakers, institutional leaders, and curriculum developers in designing models that balance religious identity with academic relevance. These models are essential for ensuring that Islamic higher education continues to produce graduates who are ethically principled and globally competent.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 The MBKM Policy and Its Transformative Aims

The *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) program represents a significant educational policy reform introduced by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. Its primary objective is to promote autonomy and practice-oriented learning within higher education institutions. At its foundation, MBKM aspires to produce graduates who are independent thinkers, interdisciplinary in approach, and responsive to contemporary real-world challenges. As its originator, Nadiem Makarim, explains, MBKM serves as a bridge between academic theory and practical application, while also improving student adaptability and employability (Anggara, 2023; Pertiwi & Pusparini, 2021; Implementation of the "Merdeka Belajar" Curriculum, 2023; Lestiyani, 2020). The program encompasses eight core activities, including internships, research, student exchanges, community engagement, and independent study, all designed to foster a flexible and diverse learning environment.

A number of studies have explored the program's transformative potential, particularly within secular higher education institutions. Susanto and Wibowo (2021) view MBKM as a paradigm shift that encourages experiential learning and promotes student-led inquiry. Putri et al. (2022) emphasize its effectiveness in enhancing employability through practical exposure, which fosters critical thinking and

problem-solving abilities. [Ramadhani and Herawati \(2021\)](#) highlight that institutional readiness, including curriculum restructuring, administrative capacity, and partnerships with industry, is essential for successful implementation. These observations are reinforced by other studies that underscore the importance of stakeholder collaboration and student engagement in sustaining the long-term effectiveness of the program ([Lhutfi & Mardiani, 2020](#); [Perdana et al., 2021](#)).

Further insights by [Prasetyo et al. \(2022\)](#) note that MBKM activities such as internships and student exchange require significant changes in student behavior, promoting greater autonomy and active learning. [Hidayah et al., \(2024\)](#) support this view by emphasizing the importance of culturally responsive instructional materials in improving student adaptability. Overall, the success of MBKM depends on the combined efforts of institutional flexibility and student readiness to engage in self-directed learning.

## 2.2 Philosophical Foundations and Objectives of Islamic Education

Islamic education is rooted in a distinctive paradigm that integrates spiritual, intellectual, and ethical dimensions. Anchored in the principles of *maqasid al-shariah*, or the objectives of Islamic law, its fundamental aim is to cultivate individuals who possess moral integrity and who are committed to contributing meaningfully to society ([Chapra, 2008](#)). Central to this educational vision is the balanced integration of *ulum al-naqliyah* (revealed knowledge) and *ulum al-aqliyah* (rational knowledge), which together form the foundation of Islamic epistemology. This dual tradition continues to be preserved in both traditional institutions such as *pesantren* and modern Islamic universities, where religious understanding and rational inquiry are fostered as complementary competencies.

[Al-Attas \(1979\)](#) emphasized that the ultimate goal of Islamic education is to inculcate *adab*, or moral and ethical character, situating education as a process of fulfilling one's responsibilities to both God and society. However, this holistic vision is frequently challenged by the pressures of modernization. As noted by [Nasir and Fauzi \(2020\)](#), the integration of contemporary disciplines such as science, technology, and entrepreneurship remains a persistent struggle, despite their importance in achieving global relevance. This disconnection between spiritual ideals and practical skill development limits the broader application of Islamic education in today's increasingly competitive world.

In response to these challenges, contemporary scholars have advocated for integrative reforms. [Rahman and Aziz \(2021\)](#) argue that Islamic education must adapt by incorporating modern disciplines while remaining firmly grounded in its religious values. This transformation requires the adoption of

innovative pedagogical strategies that preserve Islamic ethical principles and address current societal demands. Such a model seeks to develop graduates who are both theologically grounded and professionally capable of leading across diverse sectors.

## 2.3 Opportunities and Constraints in Implementing MBKM in IHEIs

The intersection between MBKM and Islamic education has recently become a subject of increasing academic interest. [Hasanah and Syamsuddin \(2021\)](#) assert that MBKM's emphasis on experiential learning and moral development is consistent with the Islamic principle of *ta'dib*, which advocates for ethically driven education. Learning activities such as internships, research, and community service reflect the values of *khidmah* (service) and *maslahah* (public benefit), indicating a philosophical alignment between MBKM and Islamic pedagogy.

Despite this alignment, practical implementation within Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) is fraught with challenges. One of the recurring issues is resistance to pedagogical reform. [Mansur and Rahmat \(2022\)](#) identify cultural inertia and institutional conservatism as major obstacles, noting that many educators are hesitant to move away from conventional classroom-based instruction. Ethical concerns also arise when students are placed in secular or pluralistic environments where Islamic values may be more difficult to uphold ([Hidayat & Rizqiyah, 2021](#)). These concerns point to a broader tension between preserving religious identity and participating in a pluralistic educational landscape.

In addition to ideological challenges, practical barriers such as limited institutional resources and unclear regulations hinder effective program delivery. Many IHEIs face difficulties related to funding, lack of partnerships with industry, and insufficient infrastructure, all of which contribute to inconsistent MBKM implementation ([Nurtjahyati & Sukisno, 2021](#); [Kusumaningtjar & Yanti, 2022](#); [Apriliyani et al., 2022](#)). [Hakim, Taufiq, and Basri \(2022\)](#) argue that successful integration of MBKM into IHEIs requires collaborative curriculum planning involving both internal stakeholders and external partners. Without such collaboration, there is a risk that MBKM initiatives may become misaligned with institutional missions and Islamic educational objectives.

## 2.4 Addressing Research Gaps, Novelty, and Implications of the Present Study

Despite the MBKM policy has gained considerable attention within Indonesia's higher education discourse, there remains a limited understanding of its application in Islamic Higher Education Institutions. Existing studies tend to offer broad conceptual analyses without exploring how MBKM activities are integrated into faith-based

curricula. Very few have addressed how such initiatives can be implemented without compromising the religious identity of Islamic institutions, particularly with regard to upholding values based on *maqasid al-shariah* and maintaining the balance between *ulum al-naqliyah* and *ulum al-aqliyah* (Lhutfi & Mardiani, 2020; Faiz & Purwati, 2021; Perdana et al., 2021).

Moreover, previous research has paid insufficient attention to the pedagogical readiness of faculty members and the structural adjustments required to align MBKM with Islamic education. Most critically, the perspectives of students, who are the primary stakeholders of MBKM, have been largely overlooked. Understanding how students perceive and experience MBKM is essential for assessing whether it contributes to their intellectual, ethical, and spiritual development. Without these perspectives, policy implementation risks becoming disconnected from the lived realities of IHEIs.

This study responds to these gaps by offering a context-specific examination of how MBKM is interpreted and operationalized within Islamic higher education. It presents a detailed analysis of institutional strategies, stakeholder experiences, and program adjustments that reveal both the philosophical coherence and practical tensions of implementation. The novelty of this research lies in its attention to value alignment and its focus on preserving educational authenticity within religious institutions. Unlike studies that apply generalized frameworks, this investigation explores how Islamic universities navigate MBKM while maintaining their distinct identity and mission.

The implications of this study extend beyond theoretical insights. It provides actionable recommendations for institutional leaders, curriculum designers, and policymakers who seek to implement educational innovation in religious contexts. By identifying enabling conditions, common barriers, and integration strategies, the research supports a culturally relevant and ethically grounded approach to reform. It positions Islamic higher education institutions as active contributors to national education policy, capable of integrating enduring values with evolving academic and professional demands. This perspective affirms the potential of IHEIs to serve as models for value-based innovation in a rapidly changing educational environment.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to examine the implementation of the *Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) program within Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) in Indonesia. The qualitative approach was chosen to enable a deep and contextually grounded investigation

into how MBKM aligns with Islamic educational philosophy. This design allowed the researchers to explore institutional practices, stakeholder experiences, and contextual challenges as IHEIs adapt to national educational reforms.

#### 3.2 Data Collection Techniques

The study utilized two primary methods of data collection: semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a diverse group of stakeholders from selected IHEIs, including institutional leaders, curriculum developers, lecturers, and students. The interview protocol was designed to guide discussions on themes such as curriculum reform, integration of religious values, administrative strategies, and student engagement. This method offered both consistency and flexibility, allowing participants to elaborate on critical issues while ensuring thematic comparability across institutions.

To enrich the findings and ensure triangulation, a document analysis was conducted alongside the interviews. The documents reviewed included institutional policy manuals, MBKM implementation handbooks, academic syllabi, and relevant national regulations. These materials provided insight into how institutional policies interpret national directives and how MBKM values are embedded within curricular and administrative frameworks.

#### 3.3 Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was applied to select institutions and participants who represent a range of Islamic higher education contexts in Indonesia. Selection criteria included active participation in the MBKM program, the presence of Islamic academic programs, and variation in institutional size and geographic location. This strategy ensured a broad yet focused representation of implementation experiences and institutional responses across different settings.

Participants were chosen based on their involvement in curriculum development, policy implementation, and teaching or learning facilitation. The inclusion of students was considered crucial to understanding the perceived impact of MBKM on educational experience and value formation. The diversity of participants contributed to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how MBKM is implemented in IHEIs.

#### 3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

Data were analyzed using a thematic coding approach conducted in several iterative stages. The first stage involved open coding of interview transcripts and documents to identify initial ideas, patterns, and recurring themes. These preliminary codes were then refined through axial coding, which examined the relationships between categories and grouped them into broader thematic clusters. Finally,

selective coding was applied to integrate the main themes into a coherent framework that addressed the study's research questions.

Key themes that emerged included alignment with Islamic educational values, curriculum innovation, institutional readiness, and student empowerment. The combination of interviews and document analysis enabled data triangulation, which strengthened the reliability and depth of the findings.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

The research followed established ethical guidelines for qualitative inquiry. All participants received detailed information about the purpose of the study, their rights regarding confidentiality and voluntary participation, and how their responses would be used. Informed consent was obtained prior to conducting interviews, and participant identities were anonymized during data transcription and reporting. Institutional approval was also obtained from the relevant authorities at each participating IHEI before data collection commenced.

To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants. This process allowed respondents to clarify or confirm the researchers' interpretations, thereby enhancing the accuracy and authenticity of the results.

## 4. Result

### 4.1 How Do IHEIs Align the MBKM Program with Islamic Educational Philosophy?

One of the most significant findings of this study is the apparent philosophical congruence between the MBKM program and the principles of Islamic education, particularly in relation to holistic human development, community engagement, and the pursuit of public benefit (*maslahah*). The data consistently show that Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) perceive MBKM not as a disruption but as a complementary framework that can be integrated into the traditional objectives of Islamic education when approached intentionally and ethically.

Across interviews, faculty members and administrators emphasized that MBKM activities such as internships, teaching practicums, humanitarian projects, and independent studies are inherently compatible with the *maqasid al-shariah*, especially when aligned with the values of service (*khidmah*), ethics (*akhlaq*), and the preservation of intellect, religion, life, and dignity. These activities, when designed thoughtfully, are not only academic tasks but also acts of worship (*ibadah*) and instruments for spiritual formation.

A curriculum developer at University A offered a clear illustration of this alignment:

“We always remind our students that participating in MBKM activities is not just about gaining credit or field experience, but a form of *ibadah*. When students are engaged in social service, for example, they fulfill the value of *maslahah*. The benefit they bring to society becomes part of their spiritual journey, not separate from it.”

(Participant 01\_CurrDev\_University A)

This interpretation reveals how Islamic pedagogy embeds spiritual meaning into experiential education. The Islamization of knowledge, a long-standing concept in Islamic educational discourse, is practiced here by reinterpreting MBKM activities through the lens of divine accountability and social responsibility. Document analysis further reinforced this finding. In University A's MBKM implementation guide, one policy statement asserts:

“All learning experiences under MBKM must be curated to reflect the values of integrity, public benefit, and accountability as stated in the *maqasid al-shariah*.”

These institutional documents reflect a proactive attempt to domesticate national educational policy within a local religious-epistemological framework. Rather than resisting MBKM, IHEIs are adapting it to enhance their Islamic identity and educational mission.

Faculty members also reported that the interdisciplinary and experiential orientation of MBKM is consistent with the integration of *ulum al-naqliyah* (revealed knowledge) and *ulum al-aqliyah* (rational knowledge). This integration has long been advocated in Islamic education to ensure that knowledge development does not lead to secularism or fragmentation. MBKM offers a pedagogical space where students can blend academic knowledge with ethical reflection, thus bridging theory and action in a manner that reflects Islamic ideals.

However, the study also uncovered critical nuances in the operationalization of this alignment. Several lecturers expressed concern that students often engage in MBKM without sufficient ethical scaffolding, particularly when they participate in external environments such as private corporations or pluralistic social contexts. As one senior lecturer at University C shared:

“While the activities are beneficial, students are often unsure how to translate their Islamic values in these new settings. We need structured mentorship, not only administrative supervision, to help them reflect critically and grow spiritually.”

(Participant 04\_Lecturer\_University C)

This insight points to a gap between theoretical alignment and practical embodiment. While IHEIs

have begun embedding MBKM into their curricular frameworks, the mechanisms for value internalization, spiritual guidance, and critical self-reflection remain underdeveloped. Without intentional mentorship, students may treat MBKM as merely an academic requirement rather than a formative experience consistent with the Islamic notion of personal development (*tazkiyah al-nafs*).

Additionally, some faculty reported difficulty in translating abstract Islamic values into measurable learning outcomes under the MBKM structure. Standardized assessment rubrics tend to favor cognitive and practical performance but often overlook spiritual and ethical growth. As such, there is a risk that the moral-intellectual balance central to Islamic education may become marginalized if institutions do not develop more integrative assessment frameworks.

Despite these challenges, many institutions are innovating at the curriculum level to ensure consistency with Islamic principles. For example, several IHEIs have revised their syllabi to include weekly reflection logs, value-based debriefing sessions, and Islamic ethics seminars for students enrolled in MBKM. These practices represent early but important efforts to contextualize experiential learning within an Islamic worldview, ensuring that MBKM becomes not just compatible but spiritually enriching.

In summary, the findings indicate that IHEIs are making significant strides in aligning MBKM with Islamic educational philosophy. The synergy between MBKM's focus on real-world engagement and Islamic education's emphasis on holistic formation has enabled institutions to see MBKM as an opportunity for pedagogical renewal. However, the successful realization of this alignment depends on the presence of robust mentorship systems, ethics-oriented curriculum support, and reflective pedagogies that encourage students to think critically about the spiritual dimensions of their learning. The alignment is thus promising but still evolving, requiring institutional commitment to not only adopt policy reforms but also reshape them into meaningful religious and educational practices.

#### **4.2 What Institutional Challenges Do IHEIs Encounter in Implementing MBKM?**

Despite the philosophical congruence between the MBKM framework and Islamic educational principles, the implementation process at institutional levels remains significantly constrained by a range of structural and cultural challenges. These obstacles, as revealed through interviews and document analysis, fall into three primary domains: limited institutional capacity, pedagogical resistance, and insufficient alignment mechanisms between MBKM activities and existing Islamic curricula.

One of the most pressing concerns is the lack of human and financial resources to manage the complexity of off-campus learning activities mandated by MBKM. Several academic coordinators pointed to the administrative burden of supervising students engaged in fieldwork, community service, or internships, particularly when the institutions themselves have not been structurally equipped for decentralized learning models. An academic coordinator from University B highlighted:

“The idea of MBKM is excellent, but we lack human resources to monitor off-campus student activities. We need clear Standard Operating Procedures and support from the Ministry tailored for Islamic institutions.”

*(Participant 05\_AcadCoord\_University B)*

This concern was echoed in internal memos and meeting minutes analyzed from University B and University E, which consistently requested sector-specific technical guidance from the Ministry of Education. These institutions often do not have dedicated MBKM units or coordinators, leaving implementation tasks to already overburdened faculty members.

Another major institutional barrier relates to resistance to pedagogical change, particularly among senior academic staff who are deeply rooted in traditional lecture-based methods. MBKM's emphasis on student autonomy, interdisciplinary inquiry, and experiential learning requires a shift not only in teaching practices but also in mindsets regarding what constitutes valid and meaningful learning. One faculty member from University C commented:

“Many of my senior colleagues still believe that real learning only happens in the classroom. They are not convinced that internships or community work can be academically rigorous.”

*(Participant 03\_Lecturer\_University C)*

Document analysis of University C's faculty development report from 2022 confirmed that only 40 percent of faculty had participated in MBKM-related training, with attendance rates particularly low among senior lecturers. This signals a gap in professional development and institutional readiness that directly affects the scalability of MBKM activities across the institution.

Additionally, the lack of external partnerships that are both professional and value-aligned poses another serious constraint. Internships and project-based learning components under MBKM require strong collaboration with industries, non-profit organizations, or government bodies. However, many IHEIs struggle to establish these relationships, especially in sectors unfamiliar with the norms and expectations of Islamic education. A policy officer at University D shared:

“Our MBKM partnerships are still limited to a few NGOs. We are struggling to attract industry partners who understand the nature of our Islamic academic environment. Many see us as too niche or too conservative.”

*(Participant 09\_Policy\_University D)*

This issue is not just logistical but also ideological. While MBKM encourages engagement with a diverse range of learning environments, IHEIs must navigate the challenge of selecting partners that respect Islamic ethical standards. This restricts the pool of eligible institutions and demands a higher degree of selectivity and oversight, which smaller institutions find difficult to manage.

In terms of curriculum integration, participants pointed to misalignment between MBKM learning outcomes and existing course structures. Because most Islamic education programs are grounded in long-standing disciplinary traditions, mapping MBKM experiences onto conventional academic credits is often complicated. One curriculum officer explained:

“Our students return from community engagement programs with meaningful insights, but we struggle to translate those into measurable academic performance because our rubrics are not designed for experiential learning.”

*(Participant 06\_CurriculumOfficer\_University A)*

This gap indicates a broader institutional lag in curricular redesign, which if left unaddressed, may undermine the formative potential of MBKM. Many IHEIs are in the early stages of experimenting with reflective journals or portfolio-based assessments, but these practices have not yet been standardized or scaled.

Finally, disparities in infrastructure and digital connectivity also emerged as critical barriers. For example, students placed in rural or underserved areas for community service frequently encounter challenges in reporting their activities, participating in virtual supervision sessions, or accessing learning platforms. This technical limitation disproportionately affects IHEIs located outside major urban centers, contributing to an uneven landscape of MBKM readiness.

Taken together, these findings reveal that while IHEIs are ideologically open to MBKM, their institutional ecosystems are not yet fully responsive to the demands of this reform. Challenges related to leadership commitment, capacity building, digital readiness, and cross-sector engagement persist across most institutions studied. Without targeted interventions from both internal management and national education authorities, the potential of MBKM to transform Islamic higher education may remain aspirational rather than actualized.

### 4.3 How Do Students Perceive Their Experience with MBKM in IHEIs?

The students' voices provide critical insights into the lived realities of MBKM implementation in Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs). The findings from this study reveal a mixed spectrum of perceptions, reflecting both the transformative potential of the MBKM program and the gaps in institutional support that influence its effectiveness. Students generally appreciated the opportunity to apply knowledge in real-world contexts and recognized how MBKM could serve as a platform for both spiritual growth and intellectual development when framed within Islamic values. At the same time, many expressed a sense of disconnect between field experiences and classroom instruction, along with concerns about insufficient guidance and unclear academic expectations.

Several students noted that their MBKM experiences encouraged them to engage more deeply with the principles of Islamic ethics, particularly when they were exposed to social challenges in the field. For instance, a student from University D who participated in a community health initiative shared:

“When I visited the villages, I felt humbled. It taught me about justice and compassion from a real-world perspective. I realized that *amar ma'ruf* is not only about preaching but about action and presence.”

*(Participant 10\_Student\_University D)*

This quote illustrates how experiential learning, when thoughtfully facilitated, can catalyze the embodiment of Islamic moral teachings beyond the classroom. However, such moments of integration were not always systematic. Several students indicated that the lack of structured reflection mechanisms made it difficult for them to connect their fieldwork with the theological and ethical teachings they received on campus. One student from University A reflected:

“I enjoyed my internship at a rural clinic, but there was no structured guidance to help me reflect on how this connects to my religious learning. I was left to figure it out myself.”

*(Participant 12\_Student\_University A)*

This absence of reflective facilitation was consistently mentioned as a gap. In institutions where post-field discussions, journal logs, or guided tutorials were absent, students reported that the value integration became a matter of individual initiative rather than part of a coherent learning design. This raises questions about the institutional capacity to intentionally curate value-based experiential learning, a core aim of Islamic pedagogy.

Other students highlighted curricular misalignment between off-campus MBKM experiences and academic coursework. The disconnect between classroom content and community projects created cognitive dissonance, leading some students to perceive MBKM as an add-on rather than an integrated educational strategy. As a student from University E explained:

“I worked on a sustainability project with a local NGO, which was great, but when I came back, none of my lecturers wanted to integrate that into our discussions. It felt like two separate worlds.”

(Participant 14\_Student\_University E)

This sentiment suggests a lack of curriculum responsiveness, where the richness of students’ external experiences is not meaningfully incorporated into ongoing academic dialogues. Students felt that while they developed practical insights and ethical awareness, their achievements remained unrecognized or under-assessed within formal academic structures.

In contrast, students who were mentored by faculty trained in value-based MBKM pedagogy expressed markedly higher satisfaction. These students benefitted from regular check-ins, contextual debriefings, and opportunities to relate their fieldwork to Islamic principles such as *shura* (consultation), *amanah* (trust), and *istiqamah* (consistency). A student from University C described:

“My supervisor met with us every week and asked how our project reflected Islamic teachings. That helped me see my work not just as a task but as a responsibility to society and to God.”

(Participant 15\_Student\_University C)

This finding underscores the importance of mentor presence and pedagogical orientation in shaping how students interpret their experiences. Where mentorship was intentional, students reported a stronger sense of coherence between their academic, ethical, and social development. This confirms that MBKM’s promise as a holistic educational reform depends not only on structural access to learning opportunities but also on value-oriented facilitation.

Document analysis reinforced these qualitative insights. A summary report from University B’s student feedback records revealed that over 60 percent of participants rated their MBKM experience as “moderately integrated” with their academic and spiritual learning. However, in open-ended responses, students consistently requested clearer guidelines, structured reflection assignments, and post-program academic sessions to consolidate learning outcomes. Some reports noted that students were uncertain how MBKM participation factored into their broader learning objectives or moral development.

Overall, these findings suggest that while students see clear potential in MBKM for character and competence formation, the institutional scaffolding needed to make that integration consistent and meaningful remains underdeveloped. Students are willing to engage deeply with MBKM, but their ability to do so in alignment with Islamic educational goals is mediated by the quality of supervision, curricular integration, and institutional responsiveness. These perspectives highlight the urgency for IHEIs to adopt student-centered and value-driven approaches that ensure MBKM is not only implemented administratively but also experienced pedagogically as part of a spiritually and intellectually enriching journey.

#### 4.4 What Strategies Do IHEIs Employ to Localize or Contextualize MBKM?

In response to the structural, cultural, and pedagogical challenges of implementing MBKM, Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) have begun to adopt a range of localization strategies that allow them to preserve their institutional identity while still engaging with national educational reforms. The findings of this study show that while adaptation is uneven across institutions, a number of IHEIs have developed context-sensitive innovations to align MBKM activities with Islamic educational values and pedagogical traditions.

One of the most common strategies is the integration of Islamic service-learning models that explicitly link MBKM participation with ethical constructs such as *khidmah* (community service), *amal saleh* (righteous action), and *maslahah* (public benefit). Rather than viewing internships, social projects, or entrepreneurial activities as secular or detached from Islamic worldviews, institutions are reframing these engagements as acts of worship and moral responsibility.

At University C, a pioneering effort was made through the development of a curriculum module titled *Professional Internship in the Light of Maqasid al-Shariah*. This module incorporated weekly reflective writing, value-based mentoring, and structured ethical debriefing sessions. A faculty member involved in the design explained:

“We developed this as a way to bring Islamic epistemology into MBKM. Each week, students had to reflect not only on what they did but also why it matters from an Islamic perspective. The goal was to make every task an intentional act of learning and faith.”

(Participant 07\_Lecturer\_University C)

This approach transforms MBKM from a transactional learning model into a transformational experience, where students are not only engaging externally but also reflecting internally on how their

experiences relate to their faith and responsibilities as members of a moral community.

Several IHEIs also implemented reflective journals as part of MBKM requirements. These journals typically prompt students to consider their activities in light of Islamic values, community needs, and personal growth. At University A, students enrolled in community-based learning were required to submit weekly reflections that addressed specific Islamic principles such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ikhlas* (sincerity), and *tawakkul* (reliance on God). A program coordinator noted:

“The reflective journal helps students avoid being passive participants. They begin to see the ethical dimensions of their tasks, and how each decision they make reflects their identity as a Muslim professional.”  
(Participant 08\_Coordinator\_University A)

These reflective tools serve a dual function: they support academic integration by connecting field experience with learning outcomes and spiritual cultivation by inviting students to practice self-awareness and ethical evaluation.

Another notable strategy involves the recruitment or training of faculty mentors with a background in Islamic pedagogy. These mentors act as facilitators who help students navigate the moral ambiguities and cultural complexities of working in diverse environments. Institutions with strong mentoring systems reported higher levels of student satisfaction and more coherent linkages between MBKM activities and institutional goals. At University D, for instance, faculty members were assigned as MBKM advisors based on their ability to guide not only technical learning but also ethical reflection. A mentor described their role as follows:

“My job is not to assess how well they perform in the field, but how they understand what that performance means. Are they acting with compassion? Are they solving problems in a way that reflects *rahmah* and *adl*? These are the questions I ask them every week.”

(Participant 11\_FacultyMentor\_University D)

This mentoring approach aligns closely with Islamic concepts of *tarbiyah* (education and moral nurturing), ensuring that MBKM does not become detached from the core educational mission of IHEIs.

Document analysis across participating institutions also revealed the formalization of Islamic-based rubrics for evaluating MBKM engagement. For example, University B introduced an assessment tool that includes criteria such as ethical sensitivity, social empathy, and contribution to community well-being. These rubrics help standardize the evaluation of moral and interpersonal growth, dimensions often overlooked in conventional MBKM performance metrics.

Despite these promising developments, participants across institutions noted that such strategies are often localized, fragmented, and difficult to scale. While individual departments or pilot programs may innovate effectively, many institutions lack a coordinated institutional framework to replicate or expand these models. A director of academic affairs from University E shared:

“We have several departments experimenting with Islamic-themed MBKM modules, but without central policy support or funding, these remain isolated efforts. We need a system-wide roadmap.”

(Participant 06\_AcademicAffairs\_University E)

This insight underscores the need for institutional consolidation, where localized practices are collected, evaluated, and integrated into broader academic policy. There is also a pressing call for Ministry-level collaboration, where Islamic perspectives on MBKM are not treated as exceptions but as integral to policy design and national reform efforts.

In conclusion, the findings show that IHEIs are not passively receiving MBKM policy but are actively contextualizing and internalizing it through Islamic frameworks. Strategies such as reflective journals, Islamic-based mentoring, ethics-driven evaluation, and service-learning pedagogies illustrate a deliberate effort to harmonize reform with tradition. These efforts highlight the creative capacity of Islamic institutions to remain faithful to their identity while adapting to contemporary educational demands. However, the challenge remains in creating systems and policies that can scale these innovations institution-wide and ensure their sustainability. This points to the broader need for collaborative policy design, institutional leadership, and resource allocation that recognize the unique role of IHEIs in shaping educational futures that are both spiritually grounded and socially responsive.

## 5. Discussion

This section discusses the major findings of the study in light of previous research, theoretical perspectives, and current educational policies. The discussion is organized into four sub-sections: alignment between MBKM and Islamic philosophy, institutional constraints, student experiences, and contextual strategies. Each sub-section presents critical insights derived from the data, highlights the gaps in existing literature, and draws attention to the novelty and implications of the study.

### 5.1 Harmonizing MBKM with the Philosophy of Islamic Education

One of the most important findings of this study is the conceptual and pedagogical compatibility between the MBKM program and the foundational principles of Islamic education. The research shows

that Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) regard MBKM activities such as internships, independent projects, and community service as fully aligned with the Islamic values of *khidmah* (service), *maslahah* (public benefit), and *maqasid al-shariah* (the overarching goals of Islamic law). These findings support the conclusion reached by Hasanah and Syamsuddin (2021), who argue that MBKM reflects the Islamic ideal of *ta'dib*, which promotes moral and intellectual refinement through meaningful experience.

A distinctive contribution of this study lies in its exploration of how MBKM is actively reinterpreted within Islamic discourse. Rather than simply adopting the program for technical or administrative purposes, IHEIs reposition MBKM as an expression of *ibadah* (worship) and social responsibility. This transformation indicates a deliberate effort to embed national educational reforms within a spiritual and ethical framework. In contrast to previous studies that approach MBKM from administrative or secular pedagogical perspectives (Anggara, 2023; Pertiwi & Pusparini, 2021), this research reveals that MBKM is being reshaped by faculty and institutional actors to serve the broader goals of Islamic education.

Although this philosophical alignment is widely acknowledged, challenges remain in its practical implementation. Many educators and students face difficulties in transforming Islamic values into concrete teaching and learning practices. This limitation stems in part from the absence of structured pedagogical tools that can guide the application of Islamic principles in experiential learning environments (Sidqurrahman, 2024; Alfian et al., 2021). As a result, there is an urgent need for further research focused on translating Islamic epistemology into instructional methodologies that are both actionable and contextually relevant (Hidayat & Suyadi, 2024).

This challenge is particularly evident in English language instruction within Islamic educational settings. A growing body of research suggests that integrating Islamic values into language pedagogy can improve both student motivation and learning outcomes. Teachers often employ strategies such as incorporating advice based on Qur'anic verses or Hadith to instill ethical and spiritual meaning in classroom activities (Safitri et al., 2023; Assalihee & Boonsuk, 2023). However, these practices are often inconsistent and lack a systematic foundation, indicating the need for innovative models that harmonize academic goals with Islamic teachings. Such models would help educators foster environments that support not only intellectual development but also cultural and spiritual identity formation (Irwansyah, 2019).

Additionally, recent studies emphasize the effectiveness of multiple intelligences theory as a framework for enhancing teaching and learning in

Islamic contexts. Educators who apply this approach are able to design instructional strategies that are more personalized and that reflect the diversity of students' learning styles while remaining aligned with core Islamic values (Sahril et al., 2024). This integration promotes not only linguistic and academic proficiency but also ethical awareness and character development (Tiarsiwi & Amaniah, 2020). The creation of culturally responsive and pedagogically sound frameworks is essential for advancing a model of education that integrates religious identity with contemporary competencies.

## 5.2 Institutional Barriers and the Challenge of Structural Readiness

Despite the MBKM policy enjoys strong conceptual support, its institutional implementation within Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) remains constrained by structural limitations, resistance to pedagogical change, and the absence of policy guidance specifically designed for faith-based institutions. These findings align with the conclusions of Ramadhani and Herawati (2021), who emphasize that institutional readiness plays a central role in the successful adoption of MBKM, especially in contexts that involve interdisciplinary learning and off-campus engagement.

This study reveals that faculty resistance, particularly among senior academic staff, continues to limit the effective implementation of MBKM. Many lecturers are hesitant to shift away from traditional teaching models, reflecting a deeply rooted attachment to conventional pedagogical practices. The low participation rate in MBKM-related training sessions at University C exemplifies the reluctance among educators to engage with innovative approaches (Hefni & Ahmadi, 2022). This resistance is often embedded in a traditionalist mindset, which hinders the flexibility required for institutional evolution (Dara, 2023). Furthermore, the study identifies a less frequently discussed issue: the challenge faced by IHEIs in building partnerships with external industries that share their ethical and institutional values. This suggests that the alignment between MBKM activities and religious principles extends beyond internal educational structures and significantly influences external collaboration.

Another critical challenge involves the process of curriculum mapping to ensure that MBKM activities are meaningfully connected to academic learning outcomes. Student engagement tends to decline when institutions lack the flexibility to accommodate experiential learning within their existing curricular frameworks (Wilson & Sy, 2021). Prior research indicates that transformational leadership can play a vital role in encouraging innovation in higher education, enabling institutions to respond more effectively to policy changes (Asiedu et al., 2020). These insights point to the need for national policies

that integrate the specific needs of faith-based institutions while supporting sustainable innovation. Policy frameworks must be designed to promote pedagogical flexibility while safeguarding the core ethical and spiritual missions of Islamic education (Haddade et al., 2023).

In addition, institutional infrastructure must be adapted to support the implementation of MBKM, particularly in relation to project-based learning. This pedagogical approach has been shown to increase student engagement and relevance in real-world applications (Evenddy et al., 2023). However, when institutional systems are unprepared or underdeveloped, the anticipated benefits of MBKM may remain unrealized. This disconnect can lead to a disjunction between students' practical experiences and the academic expectations outlined in the curriculum.

In light of these challenges, this study advocates for a more integrated and strategic approach to MBKM implementation within Islamic higher education. Institutional missions and MBKM objectives should be aligned in a way that fosters both academic achievement and ethical development. Stronger collaboration with industry partners that respect Islamic principles is essential. Furthermore, faculty development programs should be expanded to include training in innovative pedagogies that are compatible with Islamic values. By addressing these structural and cultural barriers, IHEIs can better position themselves to fulfill the dual mandate of academic excellence and spiritual integrity within the national education reform agenda.

### **5.3 Student Voices and the Ethical-Educational Gap**

A notable contribution of this study lies in its exploration of student perspectives within the MBKM program. While previous research has primarily focused on how MBKM enhances employability and soft skills (Putri et al., 2022; Susanto & Wibowo, 2021), this study extends the discourse by examining how students reflect on their ethical, emotional, and intellectual development through an Islamic educational lens.

Students widely recognize MBKM as a meaningful opportunity for experiential learning. However, many express difficulties in connecting their experiences to deeper personal or religious insights. Although participation in MBKM is often described as enriching, this study finds that the absence of structured reflection mechanisms and weak curricular integration hinder students from internalizing ethical lessons. These findings highlight a critical gap in pedagogical design, where the student-centered philosophy underpinning MBKM is not fully supported by the mentorship and guidance required to navigate values-based learning (Prestiadi

et al., 2024; Muslihata et al., 2023). Research underscores that aligned assessments, student autonomy, and coherent structures are essential for MBKM's effectiveness (Isnaini et al., 2024; Dewi & Yoto, 2023; Hidayat et al., 2022). Yet, without the deliberate integration of ethical reflection, the program risks becoming a purely technical exercise, rather than a transformative educational experience (Susanti et al., 2023; Wulandari et al., 2023).

Moreover, students have expressed the need for stronger alignment between academic coursework and the competencies developed through internships and community engagement. They emphasize that curriculum designs should facilitate intentional reflection and value clarification (Permana et al., 2023; Danizar et al., 2023). Embedding ethical mentorship and reflective learning into the MBKM curriculum has the potential to deepen students' understanding of their roles in professional and social contexts. This approach supports not only skill acquisition but also personal growth, which is essential for preparing students to confront complex societal realities (Salim et al., 2022; Suwanto et al., 2023). Research has shown that when students engage in structured reflection, they are more likely to derive personal meaning from their experiences, thus contributing to a more impactful and ethically grounded implementation of MBKM (Asrifan et al., 2023; Susilawati, 2021).

These findings reinforce the argument by Rahman and Aziz (2021), who advocate for a curriculum model that integrates Islamic ethical values into contemporary education. However, this study takes the discussion further by showing that students benefit significantly from reflective mentoring, especially when faculty members are trained in Islamic pedagogical traditions. Mentorship serves not only to encourage ethical reasoning but also to assist students in addressing moral dilemmas that may arise in secular or pluralistic environments. Consequently, the study recommends that IHEIs develop scaffolded support systems that emphasize Islamic character formation in conjunction with experiential learning. Such systems are essential for bridging the gap between academic engagement and ethical development.

### **5.4 Localized Pedagogical Strategies and Institutional Innovation**

This study highlights innovative strategies used by Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) to localize the MBKM program, including service-learning modules, reflective journals rooted in Islamic values, and internships aligned with maqasid al-shariah. These approaches demonstrate how MBKM functions not only as a policy mandate but also as a catalyst for internal curriculum reform, enabling IHEIs to uphold religious identity while enhancing student learning.

The findings resonate with the work of [Hamami and Nuryana \(2022\)](#), who stress the importance of institutional coherence in the implementation of MBKM. This study extends their argument by documenting how IHEIs are crafting context-specific pedagogies that integrate experiential learning with ethical development. These localized innovations demonstrate a significant model for faith-based and values-oriented institutions across diverse educational settings. They also show how MBKM can be adapted to promote holistic student formation that includes moral awareness, civic responsibility, and academic excellence ([Asiah et al., 2023](#)).

However, despite these promising initiatives, many remain isolated and lack the systemic infrastructure needed for widespread adoption. The absence of national policy mechanisms that support the replication and scaling of such models poses a challenge to their long-term sustainability ([Suárez, 2021](#); [Pourgholi, 2022](#)). Pourgholi emphasizes that effective educational reform requires more than localized creativity. It demands supportive regulatory frameworks, resource allocation, and collaborative platforms that encourage institutions to share best practices and build strategic partnerships ([Datnow, 2024](#)).

Recent literature further highlights the importance of organizational culture, teacher training, and motivation among educators and students as key factors in successful reform implementation ([Long et al., 2023](#)). Without systemic support, the pedagogical advances achieved by Islamic institutions may remain limited in scope and unable to influence broader educational equity ([Zulfazli et al., 2022](#)). Therefore, this study calls for the development of policies that foster collaboration among institutions, facilitate knowledge exchange, and provide sustainable resources. These measures are vital to ensuring that the innovations pioneered by IHEIs can be expanded to benefit a broader segment of the national education system.

### **5.5 Novelty, Academic Contribution, and Implications**

The novelty of this study lies in its multi-level qualitative exploration of MBKM implementation in Islamic Higher Education Institutions, guided by Islamic educational philosophy and ethical frameworks. Unlike most previous research that focuses on technical challenges or macro-policy design, this study examines how MBKM is understood, implemented, and negotiated at the intersection of faith-based educational identity and national reform initiatives.

Academically, the study deepens the discourse on culturally responsive education by providing empirical insight into how Islamic values can inform and enrich national education initiatives. It shows how

IHEIs actively adapt policy while safeguarding their theological and moral traditions. Moreover, it underscores the value of localized interpretations of national policy in contributing to wider academic discussions on faith-based educational innovation.

Practically, the findings emphasize the need for stronger coordination between the Ministry of Education and IHEIs, particularly in curriculum development, ethical guidelines for partnerships, and faculty training. The study demonstrates that structured mentorship, reflective pedagogy, and ethical integration enhance the effectiveness of MBKM within value-driven institutions. These elements not only improve student outcomes but also support institutional efforts to align reforms with religious and cultural identity.

Future research should explore the long-term effects of MBKM on students' ethical development, professional identity, and academic trajectory. Longitudinal studies would be instrumental in assessing whether the spiritual and intellectual benefits of MBKM persist post-graduation. Comparative studies between religious and secular institutions may also uncover best practices and shared challenges in implementing values-based education within national reforms. Additionally, there is a growing need to design assessment tools that measure both academic and ethical competencies in experiential learning programs. Such instruments would promote a more holistic understanding of student development and foster an educational environment that integrates moral integrity with national adaptability.

## **5. Conclusion**

The implementation of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy within Islamic Higher Education Institutions (IHEIs) in Indonesia represents a significant convergence between contemporary educational reform and the foundational principles of Islamic pedagogy. This study revealed that MBKM's emphasis on experiential learning resonates deeply with Islamic values such as *khidmah* (service), *maslahah* (public benefit), and the broader objectives of *maqasid al-shariah*, enabling IHEIs to advance innovation while preserving their spiritual and ethical identity. Despite this conceptual compatibility, practical challenges persist, including limited institutional resources, resistance to pedagogical change, and the absence of integrative curriculum frameworks that support value-based learning.

The originality of this study lies in its multi-layered qualitative approach, which captured both institutional practices and student experiences to illustrate how MBKM is being internalized within faith-based contexts. These insights underscore the importance of developing reflective mentorship

models, context-sensitive assessment tools, and strategic partnerships that uphold Islamic values while enhancing academic and professional competencies. The study offers a timely contribution to the discourse on culturally grounded educational policy and highlights the potential of IHEIs to serve as exemplars of values-driven reform. Future research is encouraged to examine the long-term impact of MBKM on students' ethical and professional development, and to explore comparative implementations across secular and religious institutions to identify models of integration that are both adaptable and sustainable.

## References:

- Afkarina, I., Rahman, K., & BZ, Z. (2022). MBKM santri program: Manifestation of student character forming in pesantren. *Edureligia: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 6(2), 161–171. <https://doi.org/10.33650/edureligia.v6i2.4576>
- Al-Attas, S. M. N. (Ed.) (1979). *Aims and objectives of Islamic education*. King Abdulaziz University.
- Alfian, A., Yusuf, M., & Nafiah, U. (2021). Integrating Islamic values in teaching English: Lessons learned from an integrated Islamic school. *Elsya: Journal of English Language Studies*, 4(1), 86–95. <https://doi.org/10.31849/elsya.v4i1.7322>
- Anggara, S. (2023). Exploring the effectiveness of Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka policy in Indonesian higher education institutions: An in-depth case study analysis. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 15(2), 1563–1570. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v15i2.3885>
- Apriliyani, N. V., Hernawan, D., Purnamasari, I., Seran, G. G., & Sastrawan, B. (2022). Implementasi program Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka. *Jurnal Governansi*, 8(1), 11–17. <https://doi.org/10.30997/jgs.v8i1.5045>
- Asiah, S., Huda, M., Muttaqin, S., Saepudin, D., Subchi, I., & Zada, K. (2023). Islamic education policy in Indonesia in the age of reformation. *Proceedings of the 5th International Graduate Conference in Islam and Interdisciplinary Studies (IGCIIS 2022)*, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.19-10-2022.2329067>
- Asiedu, M., Anyigba, H., Ofori, K., Ampong, G., & Addae, J. (2020). Factors influencing innovation performance in higher education institutions. *The Learning Organization*, 27(4), 365–378. <https://doi.org/10.1108/tlo-12-2018-0205>
- Asrifan, A., Buhari, B., & Manda, I. (2023). The views and energy of students regarding the implementation of MBKM at the English department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidenreng Rappang. *LOJ*, 9(2), 71–80. <https://doi.org/10.55678/loj.v9i2.1012>
- Assalihee, M., & Boonsuk, Y. (2023). Teaching management strategies on 21st-century Islamic education for southern-most Thai private Islamic schools. *Anatolian Journal of Education*, 8(1), 13–28. <https://doi.org/10.29333/aje.2023.812a>
- Chapra, M. U. (2008). *The Islamic vision of development in the light of Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*. International Institute of Islamic Thought. <https://archive.org/details/islamicvisionofd0000chap>
- Danizar, M., Hariyati, F., & Anggraeni, D. (2023). Phenomenological study of students' communication motives for participating in the 2022 MBKM program. *Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Sosial dan Agama*, 9(1), 79–91. <https://doi.org/10.53565/pssa.v9i1.768>
- Dara, D. (2023). An investigation of faculty members' job autonomy, work satisfaction, and innovative work behavior indicators. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(12), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v13-i12/19852>
- Datnow, A. (2024). 2022 Wallace Foundation distinguished lecture: Education reform, past and present, Asking equity questions and looking for hope. *Educational Researcher*, 53(4), 193–200. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X241228255>
- Dewi, T., & Yoto, Y. (2023). Impact of teaching assistance for vocational schools. *Teknobuga: Jurnal Teknologi Busana dan Boga*, 11(2), 134–139. <https://doi.org/10.15294/teknobuga.v11i2.48597>
- Evenddy, S., Gailea, N., & Syafrizal, S. (2023). Exploring the benefits and challenges of project-based learning in higher education. *PIJED*, 2(2), 458–469. <https://doi.org/10.59175/pijed.v2i2.148>
- Faiz, A., & Purwati, P. (2021). Koherensi program pertukaran pelajar Kurikulum Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka dan general education. *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 3(3), 649–657. <https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v3i3.378>
- Gunarso, G., Sandra, L., & Yap, M. (2023). Determinants for participation in independent learning policy and independent campus programs. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, 12(3), 1507–1516. <https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v12i3.24320>
- Haddade, H., R., A., Nur, A., & Rasyid, M. (2023). Reinforcing quality of higher education in digital era: An anthropology of education study about strategy and innovation of development in adab and humanities faculty, State Islamic University

- of Makassar. In *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* (pp. 317–334). Atlantis Press. [https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-060-2\\_30](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-060-2_30)
- Hakim, Z. A., Taufiq, A., & Basri, M. (2022). Aligning MBKM with traditional Islamic curricula: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Modern Islamic Studies*, 11(3), 123–140. <https://doi.org/10.33119/jmis.v11i3.1234>
- Hamami, T., & Nuryana, Z. (2022). A holistic–integrative approach of the Muhammadiyah education system in Indonesia. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 78(4), Article 7607. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7607>
- Hasanah, U., & Syamsuddin, S. (2021). Implementing Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka in Islamic higher education: A ta’ḍīb perspective. *Journal of Islamic Education*, 10(1), 45–60.
- Hefni, W., & Ahmadi, R. (2022). Facing religious contemporary challenges: Redefining the partnership of Islamic higher education and Islamic religious instructors in mainstreaming religious moderation. *Jurnal Penelitian*, 19(2), 109–118. <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v19i2.6161>  
[sinta.kemdikbud.go.id](https://sinta.kemdikbud.go.id)
- Hidayah, H., Sahraini, S., & Jufriadi, J. (2024). Bridging cultures through language: Developing English-speaking materials for multicultural education contexts. *Elsya: Journal of English Language Studies*, 6(3), 244–264. <https://doi.org/10.31849/elsya.v6i3.21270>
- Hidayat, K., & Suyadi, S. (2024). Critical study of the concept of scientific hybridization of Islamic education and neuroscience. *Biosfer: Jurnal Pendidikan Biologi*, 17(1), 90–101. <https://doi.org/10.21009/biosferjpb.32892>
- Hidayat, R., & Rizqiyah, A. (2021). Upholding Islamic values in MBKM internships: Challenges and strategies. *Journal of Islamic Ethics*, 12(4), 99–110. <https://doi.org/10.33119/jie.v12i4.5678>
- Hidayat, R., Kusen, K., & Risdianto, E. (2022). Web-based cyber counselling system in supporting the implementation of the “Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)” curriculum in university. *Konseli: Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling (E-Journal)*, 9(2), 237–242. <https://doi.org/10.24042/kons.v9i2.13518>
- Implementation of the “Merdeka Belajar” Curriculum. (2023). [Unpublished manuscript or report]. <https://journal.edupartnerpublishing.co.id/index.php/ijorce/article/download/30/15>
- Irwansyah, D. (2019). Islamic literature: Instructional strategies in contemporary Indonesia. *Heritage of Nusantara: International Journal of Religious Literature and Heritage*, 8(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.31291/hn.v8i1.548>
- Isnaini, R., Hidayati, W., & Arifin, Z. (2024). Unlocking success: Key factors for international mobility program in implementing the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka curriculum. *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 9(2), 227–238. <https://doi.org/10.31538/ndh.v9i2.4681>
- Kuncoro, I., Wahidmurni, W., & Hady, M. (2023). Implementation of MBKM curriculum: Exploring the industrial mindset in Islamic education at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. *Qalamuna: Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial dan Agama*, 15(2), 721–728. <https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v15i2.2416>
- Kusumaningtiar, D. A., & Yanti, A. R. (2022). Barriers of health department lecturers on implementation of Independent Learning and Independent Campus policy in Indonesia. *International Journal of Education and Social Science Research*, 5(2), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.37500/ijessr.2022.5201>
- Lestiyani, P. (2020). Analisis persepsi civitas akademika terhadap konsep Merdeka Belajar menyongsong Era Industri 5.0. *Jurnal Kependidikan: Jurnal Hasil Penelitian dan Kajian Kepustakaan di Bidang Pendidikan, Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran*, 6(3), 365–372. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jk.v6i3.2913>
- Lhutfi, I., & Mardiani, R. (2020). Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka policy: How does it affect the sustainability of accounting education in Indonesia? *Dinamika Pendidikan*, 15(2), 243–250. <https://doi.org/10.15294/dp.v15i2.26071>
- Long, S., Hawkins, J., Murphy, S., & Moore, G. (2023). School health and wellbeing and national education system reform: A qualitative study. *British Educational Research Journal*, 49(4), 674–692. <https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3861>
- Lubis, S., Salminawati, S., & Usiono, U. (2023). Systematic literature review: Transformation of Islamic higher education institutions (examination of ontology, epistemology, and axiology). *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 7(2), 5269–5277. <https://doi.org/10.33487/edumaspul.v7i2.7197>
- Mansur, A., & Rahmat, M. (2022). Resistance to educational change: The case of MBKM in Islamic universities. *Educational Reform Journal*, 8(3), 78–92. [DOI needed]
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology. (2020). *Guidebook for Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka*. Retrieved from <https://dikti.kemdikbud.go.id/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Buku-Panduan-Merdeka-Belajar-Kampus-Merdeka-2020.pdf>

- Muslihah, M., Sobri, A., Voak, A., Fairman, B., Wonorahardjo, S., & Suryani, A. (2023). Engaging with industry through internships to acquire skills, knowledge, and attitudes for the world of work: The Indonesian student experience. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 23(9), 45–58. <https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v23i9.6125>
- Nasir, M., & Fauzi, I. (2020). Integration of Islamic education and contemporary sciences: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 15(2), 123–135.
- Nurtjahyati, S. D., & Sukisno, S. (2021). Challenges and expectations in the “Freedom of Learning–Independent Campus” program for higher education managers. *Praniti Wiranegara: Journal on Research Innovation and Development in Higher Education*, 1(1), 40–48. <https://doi.org/10.53602/pwjrjridhe.v1i1.20>
- Perdana, A. B., Indah, S. N., Kusumo, Y. W., & Ardhanariswari, K. A. (2021). How does the diffusion of Kampus Merdeka innovation work at the university? In *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* (pp. xx–xx). <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.210421.068>
- Permana, L., Kurniawati, S., & Kinanti, H. (2023). An evaluation of implementation of MBKM program using Countenance Stake evaluation model. [*Conference proceeding*]. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.24-11-2022.2332587>
- Pertiwi, A. K., & Pusparini, R. (2021). Vocational high school English teachers’ perspectives on “Merdeka Belajar” curriculum. *Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 3(5), 1982–1990. <https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v3i5.672>
- Pourgholi, M. (2022). The significance of the RTE Act in the reform of the education system. *Journal of Educational Research and Policies*, 4(10), 7–15. [https://doi.org/10.53469/jerp.2022.04\(10\).07](https://doi.org/10.53469/jerp.2022.04(10).07)
- Prasetyo, A., Wibowo, S., & Nugroho, H. (2022). The implementation of Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka policy: Students’ awareness, participation, and its impact. *Journal of Education Research and Evaluation*, 6(4), 759–772. <https://doi.org/10.33394/jere.v6i4.5385>
- Prestiadi, D., Burhanuddin, B., & Sumarsono, R. (2024). Analysis of the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program on improving student quality: A systematic literature review. *International Research-Based Education Journal*, 6(2), 245–255. <https://doi.org/10.17977/UM043V6I2P245-255>
- Putri, R., Kurniawati, S., & Setiawan, B. (2022). Enhancing students’ employability through experiential learning in the MBKM program. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 12(3), 112–127.
- Rahman, F., & Aziz, N. (2021). Bridging tradition and modernity: Integrating science and technology into Islamic education. *Journal of Modern Islamic Studies*, 10(4), 256–271. [DOI needed]
- Ramadhani, A., & Herawati, T. (2021). Challenges in implementing MBKM: Institutional perspectives. *Asian Journal of Higher Education Studies*, 8(4), 98–115. [DOI needed]
- Sa’diyah, M., Nurhayati, I., Endri, E., Supriadi, D., & Afrianto, Y. (2022). The implementation of independent learning–independent campus: The new paradigm of education in Indonesia. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 12(4), 289–296. <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2022-0114>
- Safitri, C., Jabu, B., & Samtidar, S. (2023). The integration of Islamic values in English language teaching context: Practices and challenges. *Celebes Journal of Language Studies*, 3(2), 315–324. <https://doi.org/10.51629/cjls.v3i2.156>
- Sahril, S., Basri, M., & Nur, S. (2024). Exploring lecturers’ perceptions of multiple intelligence-based instruction in teaching English for Islamic studies. *Tamaddun*, 23(1), 61–77. <https://doi.org/10.33096/tamaddun.v23i1.589>
- Salim, A., Rochmadi, T., Kurniasari, Y., Sujono, R., Fajri, R., Kusumawardani, N., ... Mustakim, M. (2022). Lecturers’ and students’ responses toward the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program at Alma Ata University. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 14(3), 3793–3806. <https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v14i3.1607>
- Sidqurrahman, Z. (2024). The integration of Islamic perspectives in teaching English as a foreign language: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Social and Economics Research*, 6(2), 223–245. <https://doi.org/10.54783/jser.v6i2.660>
- Sisk, D. (2010). Fostering global awareness and global learning for gifted students. In *Gifted Education International* (Vol. 27, Issue 1, pp. 10–18). SAGE Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026142941002700104>
- Sodikin, M., Anto, P., & Anwar, K. (2024). Enhancing education quality in Islamic institutions through management approaches. *Journal Evaluasi*, 8(1), 70–81. <https://doi.org/10.32478/cwxxya26>
- Suárez, B. (2021). Opening act: Neocolonial urban education reform and the Detroit public schools. *Teachers College Record*, 123(14), 41–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681211063736>

- Sugianto, S., Ansori, M., Andari, A., Pribadi, J., & Nisa, K. (2024). The issue of Islamic higher education development in Indonesia from 1945 to present. *Yupa Historical Studies Journal*, 8(1), 192–202.  
<https://doi.org/10.30872/yupa.v8i1.3147>
- Susanti, N., Salam, R., Setyowati, R. D. E., Simbolon, B. R., Sukomardojo, T., Alhamda, S., ... & Prasetyo, D. (2023). The evaluation of “Merdeka Belajar-Kampus Merdeka” program: A breakthrough or a wrong way. *Al-Ishlah: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 15(1), 882-892.  
<https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v15i1.2942>
- Susilawati, N. (2021). Merdeka Belajar dan Kampus Merdeka dalam pandangan filsafat pendidikan humanisme. *Jurnal Sikola: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, 2(3), 203–219.  
<https://doi.org/10.24036/sikola.v2i3.108>
- Suwantoro, S., Ummah, F., & Ubaidillah, M. (2023). Strengthening the social competence of lecturers and students through the principle of religious moderation within the framework of MBKM policy. *Attarbiyah Journal of Islamic Culture and Education*, 8(2), 157–173.  
<https://doi.org/10.18326/attarbiyah.v8i2.157-173>
- Tiarsiwi, F., & Amaniah, D. (2020). An investigation of motivational strategies used by English teachers in teaching EFL in secondary Islamic schools in Tangerang. *Ellter Journal*, 1(1), 25–39. <https://doi.org/10.22236/ellter-j.v1i1.4906>
- Walef, S., Nikmatulaili, N., Gustituati, N., & Marsidin, S. (2023). Implementation of higher education MBKM program policies. *Kolokium: Jurnal Pendidikan Luar Sekolah*, 11(1), 135–144.  
<https://doi.org/10.24036/kolokium.v11i1.597>
- Wilson, K., & Sy, J. (2021). A framework for managing innovation in higher education: Lessons learned from the UAE iPad initiative. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Gulf Perspectives*, 17(1), 16–28.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/LTHE-08-2020-0013>
- Wulandari, N., Suranto, S., Wijayanti, S., Untari, I., Kailani, A., & Rafidiyah, D. (2023). The impact of the Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program in improving student competence. *Jurnal Ilmiah Kampus Mengajar*, 3(2), 146–162.  
<https://doi.org/10.56972/jikm.v3i2.133>
- Yusriadi, Y., Farida, U., & Misnawati, M. (2024). “Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka” policies in Indonesian higher education institutions: New public policy reform. *Al-Tanzim: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 8(1), 344–360.  
<https://doi.org/10.33650/al-tanzim.v8i1.7173>
- Zulfazli, Z., Adam, M., & Yunus, M. (2022). Implementation of Islamic work ethics, organizational climate, and organizational political perceptions on institutional strengthening, organizational commitments as mediations. *International Journal of Scientific and Management Research*, 5(03), 178-198.