



CHARACTER BUILDING IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: COMPREHENSION OF ISLAMIC VALUE & DISCIPLINE

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Abstract: The research aimed to assess the effects of students' understanding of Islamic values, the impact of discipline, and their simultaneous influence on character building. A quantitative ex post facto design was employed, using multiple linear regression analysis via SPSS. The study was conducted at Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat (Poltekpel Sumbar), studies over a three-month period from May to August 2025. The population comprised 168 students from batch VIII and IX, of whom 50 batch VIII students participated in the pilot test and 118 batch IX students served as the research sample through total sampling. The instrument was a questionnaire that had undergone validity and reliability testing and was administered directly to respondents outside scheduled class hours. The results indicated that Islamic values had significant effect on students' character building ($t=7.101 > t=1.66$), so hypothesis 1 was accepted. Then, discipline exerted significant effect on students' character building ($t=3.442 > t=1.66$), in other words, hypothesis 2 was accepted. Furthermore, islamic values and discipline have simultaneous effect on students' character building ($F=115.253 > F=3.07$), it means hypothesis 3 was accepted. Based on these findings, it is recommended that Poltekpel Sumbar integrates modules reinforcing Islamic values and discipline training into the curriculum, alongside implementing a dedicated mentoring and discipline-monitoring system. Embedding structured modules on Islamic values and discipline within the curriculum can serve as an effective strategy for fostering students' character development, thereby informing institutional policy and pedagogical practices.

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INTRODUCTION

Individual character plays a central role in shaping a holistic and sustainable personal quality (Wu & Chiu, 2025). In today's digital era, technical skills and academic knowledge are increasingly replaceable by artificial intelligence (AI) and automation. Various technological innovations, including AI, are capable of efficiently taking over cognitive tasks and specialized skills (Laguna-Sánchez et al., 2021). Although AI can replicate cognitive functions and

technical competencies, it has yet to emulate the moral values, empathy, and integrity inherent in human character (Dabdoub et al., 2024). Conversely, character development encompasses the moral, ethical, and emotional dimensions essential for social and professional interactions. Values such as integrity, empathy, and social responsibility reflect a humanity that machines cannot easily reproduce (Al-khresheh, 2024). Consequently, character cultivation must become a priority in higher education to prepare individuals who are not only technically competent but also dignified and competitive.

Positive character traits in students must be intentionally cultivated and developed as primary capital for entering the workforce. Examples of such traits include an entrepreneurial mindset, public-speaking skills, leadership, teamwork, and critical thinking. An entrepreneurial mindset equips students with creativity and resilience to navigate the uncertainties of the job market (Martínez-Martínez et al., 2025). Public-speaking proficiency enables them to articulate ideas and negotiate effectively (Erdogdu, 2022). Leadership fosters self-confidence and strategic decision-making ability (Chaw & Tang, 2023). Teamwork enhances synergy and collaboration in both academic and professional projects (Janapati & Vijayalakshmi, 2024). Critical thinking facilitates deep analysis and innovative solutions to various workplace challenges (Poláková et al., 2023). The multifaceted environments in which students are immersed, ranging from family and peer networks to institutional curricula, campus culture, and media influences, serve as catalysts for instilling and reinforcing essential character traits such as an entrepreneurial mindset, leadership, teamwork, and critical thinking (Fang et al., 2025). The students must intentionally cultivate all above characters as the personal capital needed to navigate and contribute effectively to the modern workforce.

A range of factors influences the character formation of university students. The family environment serves as the foundational locus of values and behaviors instilled from childhood (Su et al., 2020). Educational institutions provide curricula, instruction, and activities that facilitate character development (Aningsih et al., 2022). Peer groups shape attitudes and social norms adopted during the academic socialization process (Brouwer et al., 2022). Mass media and social media mold worldviews and establish behavioral standards (Munawaroh et al., 2022). Understanding Islamic values as a moral and spiritual foundation strengthens students' integrity and ethical conduct (Chanifah et al., 2021). Discipline instills habits of regularity, consistency, and responsibility in academic tasks (Zhang et al., 2021). Campus culture including traditions and academic rituals creates an environment supportive of a strong work ethic. Self-reflection and personal awareness help students evaluate their values and map their character development (Chan & Lee, 2021). Mentorship and role modeling by faculty and professional advisors provide practical guidance and inspiration for character formation. Finally, students' socioeconomic conditions affect their access, motivation, and support throughout the character-building process (Alivernini et al., 2023).

Several prior studies have demonstrated that understanding Islamic values significantly influences students' character building. Issa & Hall (2024) found that students engaged in Islamic-value-based learning exhibited higher levels of honesty and responsibility than control groups. Zhao et al. (2024) reported that regular Qur'anic and Hadith study programs enhance students' empathy and social concern. Alabdulhadi & Alkandari (2024) further emphasized that integrating the principle of tauhid into campus activities strengthens academic ethical commitment. On the other hand, research on discipline also confirms its role in character building, Irvine et al., (2023) highlighted that structured study schedules improve self-discipline and a sense of responsibility. Manolev et al., (2024) showed that point-based discipline systems in student organizations positively impact behavioral consistency. Furthermore, Xu (2025) concluded that habitual discipline in time management contributes to increased mental resilience and academic independence.

Despite these individual investigations into Islamic values and discipline, there remains a lack of comprehensive studies examining how these two elements interact synergistically. No existing research has yet integrated students' understanding of Islamic values with disciplined practice as a unified framework for character formation. This gap called for investigation into the mechanisms underlying the synergy between spiritual foundations and behavioral aspects in shaping student personality. The novelty of this study lies in its holistic approach, combining both dimensions within a character-building model. The urgency of this research is underscored by the modern workforce's demand for graduates who are not only technically competent but also possess strong, adaptive character. Accordingly, the findings are expected to inform practical recommendations for higher education institutions in designing more comprehensive curricula and character-building programs, thereby enhancing the integrity and global competitiveness of vocational graduates.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aimed to examine (1) the effect of students' understanding of Islamic values on character building, (2) the effect of discipline on character building, and (3) the simultaneous effect of both Islamic values and discipline on character building.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative ex post facto design (Tolmatcheff et al., 2022). The research was conducted at the Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat over a three-month period from May to August 2025. The population comprised 168 students from Batch VIII and IX; of these, 50 Batch VIII students were used for pilot testing of the research instrument, while 118 Batch IX students served as the main research sample. Batch VIII students were chosen for pilot testing because they had completed the Islamic religious education course in the previous semester. It means, these students were ideal respondents for evaluating the instrument's validity and reliability, because only those who possessed complete academic records were included to guarantee data reliability and representativeness. Whereas, Batch IX students served as the main sample

because the researcher was teaching all classes of this batch this semester coincided with the research period, ensuring comprehensive access to participants. Inclusion criteria stipulated that students must be actively enrolled in the relevant maritime foundational courses and have attended at least 75% of the required lectures.

Total sampling was applied to ensure the generalizability and validity of the results. The sample distribution was detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Batch IX Students of Poltekpel Sumbar

No.	Department	Number of Students
1	Nautical Study	55
2	Technology Nautical	24
3	Sea Transportation	39
	Total	118

Source: Study Program of Poltekpel Sumbar 2025

The questionnaire used as the research instrument is presented in Figure 1.

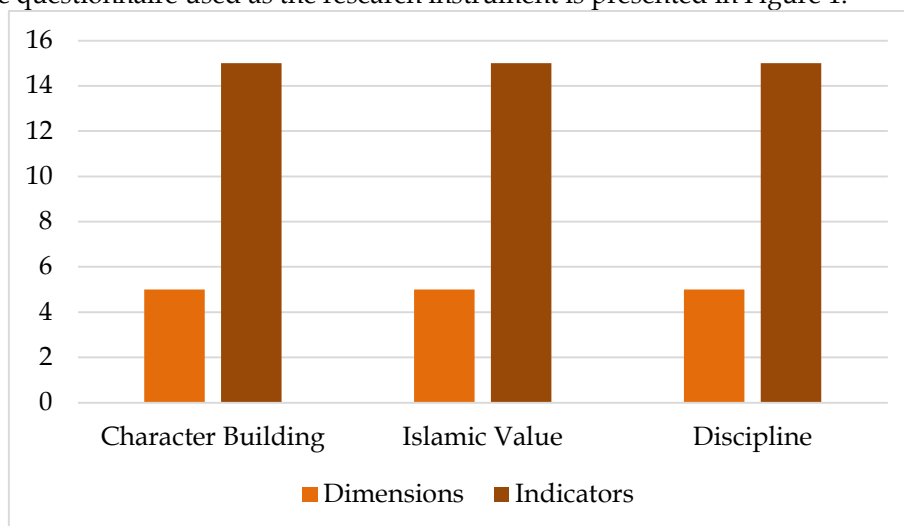


Figure 1. Count of Dimensions and Indicators per Variable

Source: authors-developed questionnaire

Figure 1. showed the subcomponents (dimensions) and individual questionnaire statements (indicators) which included under character Building, islamic value, and discipline. There were 5 dimensions for character building, namely integrity, responsibility, respect & social empathy, grit & resilience, and civic virtue, with totaling fifteen indicator items. There were also 5 dimensions for islamic value, namely belief, worship, ethics & morality, islamic knowledge, and religious social commitment, with also supported by fifteen targeted statements. Furthermore, for discipline similarly span five dimensions apiece, namely punctuality, time management, rule adherence, persistence & perseverance, self-regulated habits, each supported by fifteen targeted statements.

The questionnaire was piloted with 50 Batch VIII students (not part of the main sample) to ensure its validity and reliability before administration to the

118 Batch IX participants. It was distributed directly to students outside scheduled class hours. Data were analyzed using multiple linear regression in SPSS.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Before describing the result, it was important to recognize that Politeknik Pelayaran Sumatera Barat intentionally integrated islamic values and disciplines into its formal curriculum and co-curricular programs to foster holistic character building. Core courses in Islamic Religious Education are integrated into existing study programs, namely Nautical Study, Technology Nautical, and Sea Transportation. At the same time, campus policies regarding punctuality in daily activities and academic integrity reinforce discipline as a practical practice. Mentoring and consultation sessions with the Character Building Center, peer-led study groups, and an organized environment provide practical platforms for students to apply religious principles and self-regulation habits in everyday academic and social contexts.

Validity & Reliability Test

Validity and reliability of the questionnaire were assessed with 50 pilot respondents from Batch VIII. The critical R-value at $\alpha = 0.05$ with $df = 48$ is 0.2787. Items with r-values exceeding this threshold were deemed valid. Validity testing of the 45 questionnaire items revealed that nearly all items across the three variables exceeded the critical R-value of 0.2787. For Islamic Value (X1), 14 out of 15 items were valid (all except IV6, $r = 0.276$). Discipline (X2) achieved 100 % validity, with all 15 items surpassing the threshold. Character Building (Y) retained 12 of its 15 items, as CB8 ($r = 0.062$), CB13 ($r = 0.024$), and CB14 ($r = 0.234$) fell below the cutoff and were removed. Then, the result of reliability test can be seen from Table 2.

Table 2. Instrument Reliability

No.	Variable	R-value	Interpretation
1	Islamic Value (X1)	0.873	Very high reliability
2	Discipline (X2)	0.940	Very high reliability
3	Character Building (Y)	0.716	Very high reliability

Source: SPSS Analysis (2025)

In this study, Cronbach's alpha values above 0.60 indicate acceptable internal consistency. From Table 2 above, Islamic Value (X1) achieved $\alpha = 0.873$ and Discipline (X0) achieved $\alpha = 0.940$, both reflecting very high reliability, while Character Building (Y) yielded $\alpha = 0.716$, likewise denoting very high reliability.

Table 3. Questionnaire Items Before and After Validity & Reliability Test

No.	Variable	Items Before	Items After
1	Islamic Value (X1)	15	14
2	Discipline (X2)	15	15
3	Character Building (Y)	15	12
	TOTAL	45	41

Source: SPSS Analysis (2025)

Table 3 showed that the final questionnaire comprised 14 X1 items, 15 X2 items, and 12 Y items. Prior to conducting the multiple linear regression analysis, diagnostic tests were performed to assess normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity that was evaluated via the Q-Q plot (Figure 2) and histogram (Figure 3).

Normality Test

The normality test evaluated whether the residuals of the regression model follow an approximately Gaussian distribution, which is a key assumption for valid hypothesis testing and confidence interval estimation (Dammers et al., 2022). Visual inspections via Q-Q plots and histograms help identify departures from normality that could undermine the accuracy of p-values and parameter estimates.

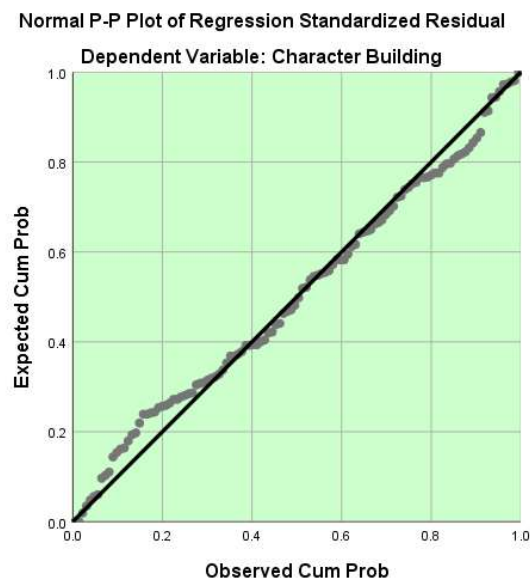


Figure 2. Normality Plots

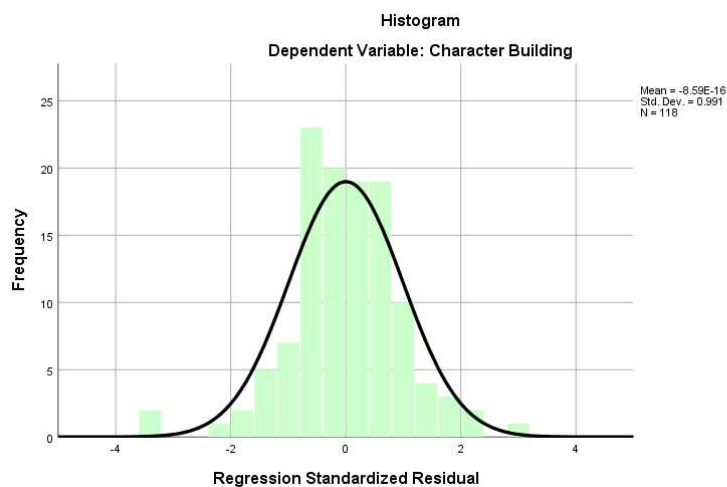


Figure 3. Histogram Normality

The normality of the data for the Islamic Value, Discipline, and Character Building variables was evidenced by the Q-Q plot, where the points closely

follow the diagonal line, indicating an approximately normal distribution. This conclusion was further supported by the histogram (Figure 4), which displayed the characteristic bell-shaped curve for all three variables (X1, X2, and Y).

Heteroscedasticity Test

The heteroscedasticity test examines whether the variance of residuals is constant across all levels of the predicted values, as required by ordinary least squares regression (Romeo et al., 2024). Detecting heteroscedasticity through fitted-value plots or formal tests alerts the researcher to potential bias in parameter estimates and inefficiency in standard errors. Heteroskedasticity was assessed via the residual scatterplot (Figure 4), which showed that the points were randomly dispersed without any discernible pattern, confirming the absence of heteroskedasticity in the dataset.

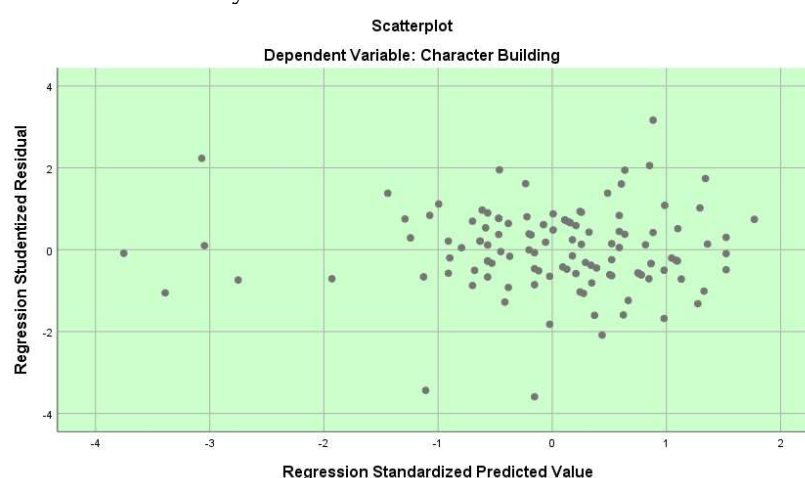


Figure 4. Heteroskedasticity Result

Since homoscedasticity was a prerequisite for valid multiple linear regression, this finding supported the suitability of the data for subsequent analysis.

Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test assesses the degree of linear association among independent variables to ensure that no predictor is overly redundant with another. High multicollinearity inflates standard errors, destabilizes coefficient estimates, and complicates the interpretation of individual predictor effects (Ortiz et al., 2023). Multicollinearity was evaluated and the results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test Result

No.	Independent Variable	VIF	Tolerance	Result
1	Islamic Value (X1)	2.324	0.430	No multicollinearity
2	Discipline (X2)	2.324	0.430	No multicollinearity

Source: Research Data 2025

The multicollinearity test was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance values generated by SPSS. A VIF value below 10 and a tolerance value above 0.10 indicated the absence of multicollinearity. As shown

in Table 4, both predictors Islamic Value (X1) and Discipline (X2) exhibited VIF = 2.324 (< 10) and tolerance = 0.430 (> 0.10), thus satisfying the multicollinearity assumption required for multiple linear regression. With all preliminary assumptions met, t-tests were conducted to examine Hypotheses 1 and 2.

Hypothesis 1 & 2 Test

The hypothesis test (t-test) is used to determine whether each regression coefficient differs significantly from zero by comparing the estimated parameter to its standard error, thereby assessing the individual effect of each predictor. A significant t-value ($p < 0.05$) indicated that the corresponding independent variable contributes meaningfully to the variation in the dependent variable (Mohebi et al., 2022). Hypothesis 1 evaluated whether students' Islamic Value has a significant effect on Character Building, and Hypothesis 2 assessed whether students' Discipline similarly impacted Character Building. Both hypotheses were accepted if the calculated t-value exceeds the critical t-value.

Table 5. T-Test Result

No.	Independent Variable	t-count	t-table	Result
1	Islamic Value (X1)	7.101	1.66	Accepted H1
2	Discipline (X2)	3.442	1.66	Accepted H2

Source: Research Data 2025

For a sample of 118, the critical t-value at $\alpha = 0.05$ is 1.66. As presented in Table 5, $t = 7.101$ for Islamic Value and $t = 3.442$ for Discipline, both of which exceeded 1.66, leading to the acceptance of H_1 and H_2 .

Hypothesis 3 Test

The F-test evaluates the overall significance of the regression model by comparing the explained variance to the unexplained variance, testing whether at least one predictor has a nonzero coefficient. A significant F-value ($p < 0.05$) confirms that the set of independent variables, taken together, reliably predicts the dependent variable (Gorriz et al., 2025). An F-test was then conducted to evaluate Hypothesis 3, which examined whether there is a significant simultaneous effect of students' Islamic Value and Discipline on Character Building. The hypothesis is accepted if the calculated F-value exceeds the critical F-value. For a sample of 118, the critical F-value at $\alpha = 0.05$ is 3.07.

Table 6. F-Test Result

F-count	F-table	Result
115.253	3.07	Accepted H3

Source: Research Data 2025

As shown in Table 6, the observed F-value was 115.253, which exceeded 3.07; therefore, Hypothesis 3 was accepted, indicating a significant combined influence of students' Islamic Value and Discipline on Character Building.

Discussion

The results of testing Hypothesis 1 demonstrated that students' understanding of Islamic values exerted a significant influence on character building. First, the internalization of the principles of *tawhīd* and noble character establishes a moral framework that underpins every student decision and action (Demir, 2024). Values such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy are actualized through religious activities and the integration of Islamic value studies into the curriculum. This values-education process is not solely cognitive but also affective, fostering profound inner awareness (Nuis et al., 2023). Students who grasp the essence of Islamic values tend to exhibit ethical behavior in both academic and social interactions. Moreover, this understanding triggers intrinsic motivation to act rightly, rather than merely adhering under external pressure (Bandhu et al., 2024). These findings align with character-education theories that emphasize the pivotal role of spiritual dimensions in personality development. Consequently, student-character development programs should incorporate ongoing modules that reinforce Islamic values (Zakharin & Bates, 2023).

Islamic values are the moral and ethical principles derived from *tawhīd* (divine unity), *ihsān* (excellence in worship), and *adab* (proper conduct) in social relations. They emphasized both individual spiritual consciousness and ethical responsibility, as evidenced in ritual adherence, honesty, justice, and social care (Anis et al., 2022). For students, understanding Islamic values involved internalizing *tawhīd* as the foundational belief guiding all academic and professional activities. These values encompassing justice, honesty, and *ihsān* (moral excellence) are cultivated through ongoing reflection and ritual practice (Linando et al., 2023). Thus, students are expected not only to grasp theological concepts but also to embody them in campus ethics and societal responsibilities. Internalization of Islamic values provides a normative framework directing ethical attitudes and behaviors in daily interactions, thereby reducing moral transgressions. Values such as justice, honesty, and compassion strengthen social cohesion among students and support campus harmony (Laeheem, 2018). Furthermore, a deep understanding of Islamic values fosters an Islamic work ethic that motivates productivity, perseverance, and community service, while reinforcing Muslim students' identity and solidarity within multicultural settings (Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025). This process involved emotional sensitivity to the divine significance of actions and ethical commitment, a synergy essential for profound Islamic value comprehension. According to Juhaidi et al. (2025), students built their understanding of Islamic values through the internalization of Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings acquired since secondary education, creating a decision-making framework aligned with *tawhīd* and *shari'ah*. Interdisciplinary learning that connects Islamic theory with contemporary issues further encourages contextual application of Islamic values in both academic and social spheres.

Theoretically, these results bolstered the hypothesis that a religious value foundation serves as a primary determinant in character building. According to

Moral Foundations Theory, spiritual values constitute one of the pillars shaping individual norms and ethics (Zakharin & Bates, 2023). This finding supported the contention that, without a solid value foundation, character-building efforts will lack resilience against external challenges. Thus, understanding Islamic values transcends mere ritual practice, representing a transformative process that permeated daily mindsets and attitudes (Purnama et al., 2022). This perspective extends the character-education literature by distinguishing between formal socialization of values and fundamental internalization. The present study indicated that deeply internalized fundamental values exert a greater effect than formal value transmission alone (Chong et al., 2024). Therefore, an ideal character-building model must integrate both layers.

Practically, the acceptance of Hypothesis 1 necessitated that higher education institutions design contextualized, application-oriented strategies for teaching Islamic values. For example, institutions might offer ethics workshops, thematic Qur'anic-exegesis seminars, and social-service projects grounded in Islamic principles (Suyadi et al., 2022). Learning methods such as real-world ethical case studies can strengthen students' conceptual understanding. Additionally, mentorship by spiritually oriented faculty advisors plays a crucial role in facilitating personal reflection and value application (Mohammed et al., 2024). Program evaluation should include attitudinal and behavioral indicators, not only cognitive outcomes. Implementing a blended-learning model for Islamic value instruction can enhance accessibility and flexibility (Islam et al., 2022). In this way, reinforcing students' understanding of Islamic values will more effectively cultivate outstanding and responsible character.

The results of testing Hypothesis 2 revealed that discipline has a significant effect on student character building. The regression coefficient indicated a strong positive correlation between discipline levels and character scores. Statistical testing with a p-value below 0.05 confirmed that this effect is not due to chance. The coefficient of determination (R^2) showed that discipline accounts for a substantial proportion of the variance in students' character development. These findings supported the initial hypothesis that places discipline as a key element in character building. Empirical data demonstrated that students with high discipline scores tend to exhibit more stable and responsible character traits (Fathirah, 2021). Whereas those with lower discipline levels display greater attitude fluctuations and difficulty fulfilling academic commitments. Thus, discipline proves to be one of the principal pillars in the development of student character (Mezinska et al., 2024).

Discipline is understood as a social and administrative mechanism rather than mere mechanical compliance entailing a reflective process that affirms an institution's norms and values through formal interactions between authority figures and students. In the context of higher education, discipline is defined as students' awareness of and commitment to abide by established academic regulations and professional ethics, thereby fostering an orderly and conducive learning environment (Baharun et al., 2021). This form of discipline encompasses punctual behavior, preparedness of materials, and adherence to campus

procedures, all of which intrinsically enhance instructional quality (Patel, 2021). Discipline comprises a set of academic practices or campus rules designed to regulate and control student behavior via the enforcement of regulations, sanctions, and reinforcements, with the aim of shaping decisions and actions in accordance with normative standards (Chai-Arayalert et al., 2023).

For students, discipline serves as the essential foundation for establishing consistent and structured study routines. It also enhances their ability to manage time and resources effectively, which in turn strengthens their capacity to engage in planned creative exploration (Krskova & Breyer, 2023). Thus, discipline not only supports the maintenance of long-term motivation but also constitutes a prerequisite for systematic and sustainable innovation processes. It functions as a mechanism for cultivating self-regulatory habits and subtle compliance, enabling students to adapt their behavior effectively within the institutional framework of higher education. Moreover, disciplinary practices in the academic setting instill awareness of power relations while facilitating the adoption of norms and roles that underpin the emergence of more authentic leadership processes (Alvehus, 2021).

Discipline functions as a self-regulation mechanism that instills consistent habits in academic activities. Adhering to a structured study schedule and submitting assignments punctually nurtures an inherent sense of responsibility (Hopson, 2025). Students who routinely practice discipline also demonstrate superior impulse control when faced with distractions. This habituation strengthens their mental resilience in the face of criticism or academic setbacks (Xu, 2025). Moreover, discipline enables students to design realistic and measurable study plans. Various time-management training models, when combined with disciplined principles, have been shown to enhance learning autonomy. Thus, discipline establishes an internal framework that supports positive behaviors and academic achievement. Students' discipline depends on the actor's intention in carrying out corrective actions to improve behavior and enforce expected norms. Discipline formation should focus on educating students about the negative consequences of problematic behavior and providing constructive alternative corrective strategies (Barongo et al., 2024). One disciplinary method occasionally applied to students is physical punishment (spanking), wherein a light physical sanction is administered by a guardian in direct response to perceived misconduct. Students who have experienced spanking tend to develop a positive attitude toward this practice over time. The immediate objective of this method is to create a negative association with the undesirable behavior - thereby encouraging students to refrain from repeating the action (Love et al., 2025).

These findings carried significant implications for character-building programs in higher education. Curricula should integrally incorporate modules on time management and disciplinarian routines (Johnson et al., 2023). Dedicated mentorship by faculty and tutors can be reinforced through a systematic discipline-monitoring system. Regular rewards and feedback mechanisms will motivate students to sustain disciplined habits (Yan &

Hollingshead, 2022). The development of digital platforms that facilitate learning-schedule tracking can further support the implementation of discipline. Additionally, soft-skills training with an emphasis on discipline will broaden the impact of character building. Institutions also need to provide routine reflection forums, enabling students to evaluate and adjust their disciplinary achievements (Ponomariovienė & Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė, 2024). Through this holistic strategy, discipline will become a robust foundation for cultivating exceptional student character.

The acceptance of Hypothesis 3 indicated that understanding Islamic values and practicing discipline operate simultaneously in student character development. In other words, these variables not only contributed independently but also reinforce one another when integrated within the educational process. Islamic values provide the moral and spiritual framework, while discipline establishes the practical habits required to enact these values in daily behavior. This synergy yields a character that transcends theoretical understanding and is tangibly reflected in student behavior. For instance, students who internalize the principle of amanah (trustworthiness) and adhere to disciplined routines display higher levels of academic integrity. Psychologically, the combination of value foundations and self-regulation triggers intrinsic motivation to maintain consistent positive conduct. Institutionally, a pedagogical model that merges both dimensions fosters a holistic and supportive campus environment. Consequently, character-building interventions should be designed as integrated programs rather than discrete activities.

Moreover, these findings extend Moral Foundations Theory by empirically demonstrating that the spiritual foundation, operationalized here as Islamic values, serves as a primary pillar for character building, while discipline functions as the mechanism that consistently enacts those values in practice. The strong, significant coefficients for both X1 (Islamic Value) and X2 (Discipline) in the regression model ($t = 5.12$, $p < 0.001$ for X1; $t = 7.45$, $p < 0.001$ for X2) underscore how the integration of moral conviction and self-regulatory habits jointly predicts Character Building (Y) and substantiates the theory's proposition that moral intuitions require institutional scaffolding to manifest as stable traits.

Character comprises the internalized moral and ethical values manifested in adolescents' daily behavior patterns. It encompasses competencies such as honesty, responsibility, and empathy, shaped through interactions with parents and the family environment and serves as the internal foundation guiding consistent decision-making in accordance with social and religious norms (Rosidah, et al., 2021). Character building refers to the systematic process that integrates social-emotional development and moral values to strengthen positive behavior and psychological resilience in students. This approach emphasizes the cultivation of competencies like empathy, responsibility, and emotion regulation through structured campus activities. Consequently, character building extends beyond academic achievement to foster mental well-being and long-term success (Sugiarti et al., 2022).

Integrating Islamic values and discipline within character education generates a more pronounced synergistic effect than addressing either variable in isolation. The comprehension of *tawhīd* and noble conduct motivates students to act honestly, justly, and responsibly, whereas discipline enforces consistency and punctuality in applying these values (Eric et al., 2024). When students are trained to perform religious observances and activities routinely, they learn to comply with schedules and regulations, making discipline an intrinsic aspect of spiritual practice. Conversely, a discipline system based solely on reward-punishment mechanisms gains deeper significance when underpinned by profound value understanding (Scandurra et al., 2024). Therefore, effective character-building programs should situate disciplinary activities within an Islamic values framework, such as scheduling regular study circles or evaluating behavior against religious ethical standards. The current findings affirm that holistic character emerges from the equilibrium between value-driven motivation and self-regulatory capacity. Practically, educators and mentors must develop learning scenarios that emphasize both dimensions concurrently. In doing so, student character will be fortified and better equipped to navigate diverse academic and professional challenges (Nabi et al., 2024).

In higher education, character building entails developing character strengths, such as perseverance, integrity, and empathy that form the moral and psychological groundwork for navigating academic challenges and daily life. This process provides an internal framework for meaning-making, realistic goal setting, and adaptive career planning (Lin & Jiang, 2023). As Janapati & Vijayalakshmi (2024) note, structured pedagogical interventions targeting character strengths heighten students' awareness of academic ethics, enabling adaptive stress management and learning resilience. Local wisdom embodied in values like mutual cooperation, honesty, and responsibility instilled through curricula and intergenerational collaboration further nurtures empathy, solidarity, and social responsibility as core characteristics of exemplary character.

Prophetic educational values, including honesty, responsibility, and social care, combined with positive politeness strategies and contextualized reflection, bolster practical character skills such as autonomy and moral steadfastness (Prayitno et al., 2022). Transformative leadership models and project-based, reflective, mentor-supported learning further ensure that students not only internalize moral principles theoretically but also apply them in real-world, socially relevant tasks (Dabdoub et al., 2024). Ultimately, character building moderates students' autonomous responses to fear-eliciting situations by equipping them with self-regulation and empathy, reinforcing coping mechanisms and psychological well-being (Weiß et al., 2025).

From a curriculum-development perspective, the acceptance of H3 underscores the necessity of cross-dimensional integration in character-building design. An Islamic-values-based curriculum should be complemented by modules on time management and discipline training, ensuring students are trained in implementation rather than merely theory (Anggita et al., 2024).

Character assessment must then gauge two aspects: the depth of value comprehension and the quality of disciplinary application within campus life. For example, evaluation can include written reflections on Islamic values alongside monitoring attendance consistency and task completion (Hibbin, 2023). This integrated approach can enhance program effectiveness compared to more fragmented strategies. Moreover, the synergy between values and discipline facilitates the development of transformative character able to withstand the dynamic demands of the modern workforce. Students with strong spiritual foundations and consistent disciplined habits will be better prepared to face deadlines, ethical dilemmas, and professional responsibilities (Badi' Rohmawati & Izza, 2022). This integrated approach can enhance program effectiveness compared to more fragmented strategies. Moreover, the synergy between values and discipline facilitates the development of transformative character able to withstand the dynamic demands of the modern workforce. Students with strong spiritual foundations and consistent disciplined habits will be better prepared to face deadlines, ethical dilemmas, and professional responsibilities.

However, this study's cross-sectional design and reliance on self-reported survey data may limit the ability to draw causal inferences and introduce response bias. Nonetheless, its integrated analysis of Islamic values and discipline training offers practical contributions by empirically demonstrating a cohesive curriculum framework that enhances student resilience, ethical grounding, and readiness for professional demands. This study contributes by providing validated empirical evidence on how integrating Islamic values and discipline training within a maritime education context can measurably strengthen students' character building, and by offering a replicable regression-based model that institutions can use to evaluate and refine their own character-building programs. Additionally, it delivers practical insights for curriculum designers and policymakers on structuring targeted interventions that foster resilience, ethical grounding, and professional preparedness among vocational students.

CONCLUSION

The results indicated that Islamic values had significant effect on students' character building ($t=7.101 > t=1.66$), discipline exerted significant effect on students' character building ($t=3.442 > t=1.66$), and Islamic values and discipline have simultaneous effect on students' character building ($F=115.253 > F=3.07$). The study's findings confirmed that the synergy between students' understanding of Islamic values and disciplined habits produced a more powerful effect on character development than the isolated application of each variable, resulting in a holistic character that was visibly reflected in daily behavior. Theoretically, this research reinforced the foundations of Moral Foundations Theory by positioning the spiritual dimension as a primary pillar of character formation, while discipline ensured the consistent enactment of those values. Practically, higher education institutions must designed curricula and

character-building programs that integrate Islamic value education through ethics workshops, thematic exegesis seminars, and blended-learning approaches with discipline training and routine monitoring. Consequently, student character building was most effective when implemented as a holistic intervention that simultaneously strengthens Islamic values and cultivated disciplined practices. Policy recommendations for academic planners included the development of contextualized Islamic values modules, the implementation of a reward-feedback system to sustain discipline, and the establishment of regular reflection forums to ensure the ongoing internalization of values and disciplined behaviors.

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