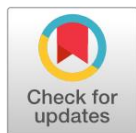


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Strengthening Academic Integrity in Online Learning through Moral Values and Spiritual Motivation among University Students

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ABSTRACT

Background. Ethical decision-making in online learning has emerged as a critical challenge in higher education. The shift to digital environments has inadvertently created greater opportunities for academic misconduct while simultaneously reducing direct supervision.

Purpose. This study aims to analyze the influence of moral values and spiritual motivation on students' ethical decision-making processes. Furthermore, it seeks to explore how these two internal drivers guide student responses when encountering ethical dilemmas within digital learning environments.

Method. The research employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were gathered from 95 university students using validated Likert-scale questionnaires and processed through multiple regression analysis. To deepen the insights, qualitative data were collected from students' written narrative responses and examined using thematic analysis.

Results. The findings indicate that both moral values and spiritual motivation significantly impact ethical decision-making in online learning, with spiritual motivation identified as the stronger predictor.

Conclusion. By focusing on these internal motivators, higher education institutions can more effectively strengthen academic integrity and foster a culture of ethical responsibility among university students in the digital age.

KEYWORDS

Academic Integrity, Spiritual Motivation, University Students

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of online learning has fundamentally transformed higher education by increasing student autonomy while simultaneously reducing direct academic supervision (Mahmudhassan et al., 2025). In digital learning environments, students are required to make independent academic decisions under conditions that often lack immediate monitoring, particularly during assessments, individual assignments, and asynchronous learning activities. This situation raises important ethical concerns related to honesty, responsibility, and academic integrity, as opportunities for academic misconduct become increasingly

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accessible in technologically mediated learning environments (Zong et al., 2022). Consequently, ethical decision-making has become an increasingly important issue in online learning contexts.

The flexibility and relative anonymity of online learning environments can weaken traditional external control mechanisms that typically regulate student behavior in face-to-face classrooms (Villarroel et al., 2020). When direct supervision is limited, ethical behavior increasingly depends on students' internal value systems, including moral awareness and spiritual consciousness. Within Islamic higher education institutions, this issue is particularly significant because education is not only oriented toward knowledge acquisition but also toward character formation and moral responsibility (Dahuri & Wantini, 2023). Therefore, strengthening internal ethical values among students becomes essential to maintain academic integrity in digital learning environments.

Previous studies on online learning have widely examined issues of academic integrity, cheating behavior, and ethical misconduct, particularly in relation to technological monitoring systems, institutional regulations, and assessment design (Ilmi et al., 2023). These studies provide valuable insights into structural and procedural mechanisms designed to prevent academic dishonesty in digital learning environments (Koivuneva & Ruokamo, 2022). However, most of these approaches emphasize external regulatory systems rather than internal psychological and ethical dimensions that guide students' academic decisions.

Recent research trends in higher education increasingly position academic integrity in online learning as a major area of concern, particularly in digitally mediated environments where student autonomy is high and direct supervision is limited. While earlier studies largely emphasized external control mechanisms, such as surveillance technologies, institutional regulations, and assessment security, more recent scholarship has shifted toward understanding the role of internal ethical and psychological factors in shaping students' academic behavior. This emerging trend highlights that ethical conduct in online learning is influenced not only by compliance with formal rules but also by students' internal value systems, including their moral awareness, personal responsibility, and deeper motivational orientations. Within this context, examining moral values and spiritual motivation becomes increasingly relevant for understanding how students make ethical decisions in digital academic settings.

From an internal perspective, moral values represent fundamental principles that enable individuals to distinguish right from wrong and regulate behavior even in the absence of external supervision (Sultana, 2021). Moral values such as honesty, responsibility, fairness, and respect for learning processes are widely recognized as core elements of academic integrity in educational contexts (Alshehri et al., 2021). Students who internalize these values are more likely to maintain ethical consistency when facing academic pressures or opportunities for misconduct in online learning environments.

In Islamic educational contexts, spiritual motivation is closely associated with sincerity of intention, awareness of divine supervision, and accountability beyond worldly evaluation (Algifahmy, 2022; Piriyeva, 2025). These spiritual orientations influence how students interpret academic activities, framing learning as a moral responsibility rather than merely an academic requirement (M. Hoosen et al., 2024). Consequently, students with strong spiritual awareness tend to demonstrate greater ethical consistency even when external monitoring is minimal.

Although previous studies have addressed academic integrity and misconduct in online learning, most of them focus on technological supervision and institutional regulations as mechanisms for controlling unethical behavior. Limited empirical research has explored how internal value systems particularly moral values and spiritual motivation jointly influence students' ethical decision-making in online learning environments. This limitation indicates the need for a more

comprehensive framework that integrates moral and spiritual dimensions in explaining ethical academic behavior among university students(Almutairi, 2022).

This study offers a novel contribution by integrating moral values and spiritual motivation within a single analytical framework to explain ethical decision-making in online learning environments, particularly within the context of Islamic higher education. Based on this perspective, the present study aims to examine how moral values and spiritual motivation influence students' ethical decision-making in online learning environments(Rao & Swapna, 2025; Rohova, 2024; Surbakti et al., 2024). Specifically, this study investigates the extent to which these internal factors shape students' academic decisions and how students interpret moral spiritual considerations when confronting ethical dilemmas in digital learning contexts. The study focuses on three main variables: moral values, spiritual motivation, and ethical decision-making ability among university students engaged in online learning.

To achieve these objectives, this research employs an explanatory sequential mixed-method design that integrates quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires to examine the statistical relationships among the variables, while qualitative data were obtained through narrative responses to explore students' moral spiritual reasoning when facing ethical dilemmas. By integrating these approaches, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of ethical decision-making in online learning environments and contribute to the development of character-based online learning models that strengthen academic integrity in Islamic higher education contexts.

Moral values are internalized principles that guide individuals in distinguishing right from wrong and in shaping ethical behavior across academic and social contexts(Mukhin, 2024; Primarni, 2024; Shavkatovna, 2025). These values develop through processes of socialization, reflection, and moral education, forming an internal moral compass that regulates behavior even in the absence of external supervision. In educational settings, moral values are closely associated with academic integrity, encompassing honesty, responsibility, fairness, and respect for learning processes. Within online learning environments, where flexibility and anonymity are prominent, moral values serve as essential internal controls that shape how students respond to ethical dilemmas involving cheating, plagiarism, and misuse of digital resources(Alshehri et al., 2021).

From an evaluative perspective, moral values can be understood through concepts such as moral self-regulation, moral disengagement, and moral integrity. Moral self-regulation enables individuals to align their actions with internal ethical standards. In contrast, moral disengagement allows unethical behavior to be justified under certain conditions, particularly in low-supervision digital contexts(Primarni et al., 2025; Primarni & Latifah, 2025). Moral integrity emphasizes consistency between values and actions, serving as a protective factor against unethical shortcuts during academic pressure. These perspectives suggest that moral values are not static traits but dynamic capacities shaped by learning environments, reinforcing the need for educational models that strengthen ethical reflection and character formation in online learning (Marliana, 2025).

Spiritual motivation refers to an inner drive rooted in religious beliefs and spiritual awareness that directs individuals toward ethical conduct and responsible behavior.(Cura et al., 2022; Junaedi & Suhartini, 2022) In Islamic educational contexts, spiritual motivation is closely linked to concepts such as sincerity of intention, awareness of divine supervision, and accountability beyond worldly evaluation. These spiritual orientations influence how students perceive academic activities, framing learning as a moral responsibility rather than merely a performance task. As a result, spiritual motivation encourages students to uphold honesty and responsibility even when external monitoring is minimal, particularly in online learning environments (N. Hoosen et al., 2024).

Analytically, spiritual motivation can be examined through dimensions such as spiritual self-regulation, spiritual accountability, and spiritual resilience. Spiritual self-regulation strengthens ethical consistency by aligning behavior with religious consciousness, while spiritual accountability reinforces moral restraint through awareness of transcendental consequences. Spiritual resilience enables individuals to maintain ethical behavior under stress, pressure, or temptation, conditions frequently encountered in digital learning. These dimensions highlight that spiritual motivation operates as a structured internal system that complements moral values, collectively shaping ethical decision-making and reducing vulnerability to misconduct in online academic contexts (Jeong, 2025).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to examine the influence of moral values and spiritual motivation on students' ethical decision-making in online learning environments. This design was chosen to first identify the statistical relationships among the variables and then deepen the interpretation through qualitative findings. The study focused on ethical behavior in digital learning contexts, particularly where students make academic decisions with limited direct supervision.

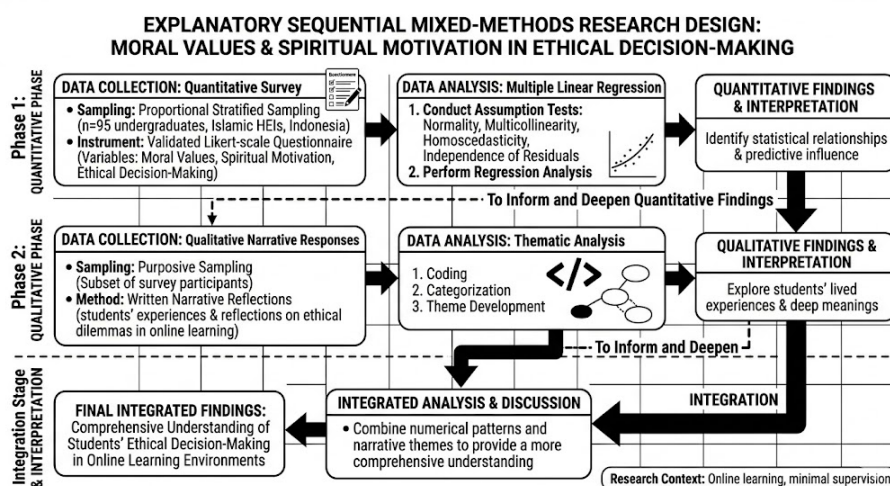


Figure 1. Explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design flowchart

The quantitative phase involved 95 undergraduate students from two Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia who were enrolled in online learning courses. Participants were selected using proportional stratified sampling. Data were collected using a validated Likert-scale questionnaire measuring moral values, spiritual motivation, and ethical decision-making. In the qualitative phase, participants were selected through purposive sampling, and data were gathered through written narrative responses describing students' experiences and reflections when facing ethical dilemmas in online learning.

Quantitative data were analyzed using multiple linear regression to determine the predictive influence of moral values and spiritual motivation on ethical decision-making. Before regression analysis, assumption tests were conducted, including normality, multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, and independence of residuals. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving coding, categorization, and theme development. Finally, the findings from both phases were integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' ethical decision-making in online learning environments.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study illustrate how internal moral and spiritual factors shape students' ethical decision-making in online learning environments under conditions of reduced supervision. Online learning contexts place students in situations where academic choices are often made independently, particularly during assessments and individual assignments. In this setting, ethical behavior emerges not merely as compliance with institutional rules but as a reflection of internalized values (Illarionova, 2025). The findings indicate that students' decisions are influenced by their moral awareness, spiritual motivation, and their ability to regulate behavior when external monitoring is limited.

These results are presented through quantitative analysis supported by qualitative descriptions to provide a comprehensive depiction of the phenomenon. The reliability analysis demonstrates that all research instruments used to measure moral values, spiritual motivation, and decision-making ability show strong internal consistency. High reliability coefficients indicate that the questionnaire items consistently captured the intended constructs and that respondents exhibited consistent response patterns. This result confirms that the data are suitable for further inferential analysis and that the constructs measured reflect coherent internal dimensions of moral and spiritual orientation in online learning contexts (Jeong, 2025). The reliability findings also strengthen the credibility of subsequent regression results by ensuring that variation in decision-making ability is not attributable to measurement error.

Table 1. Instrument reliability test (cronbach's alpha)

Yes	Variabel	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretasi
1	X1: Student Morale	10 grains	0.917	Very reliable; Internal consistency is excellent
2	X2: Spiritual Motivation	5 grains	0.899	Reliable; The internal consistency is quite strong
3	Y: Decision Making Ability	5 grains	0.863	Reliable; items show good internal consistency

The multiple linear regression analysis reveals that moral values and spiritual motivation both significantly predict students' ethical decision-making ability in online learning environments. The model explains a substantial proportion of the variance in decision-making ability, indicating that internal moral spiritual factors play a decisive role in shaping ethical academic behavior (Qingyan, 2025). Among the two predictors, spiritual motivation emerges as the strongest contributor, suggesting that students' spiritual awareness and inner accountability exert greater influence on ethical choices than moral cognition alone. Moral values also make a significant positive contribution, indicating that students with stronger moral principles tend to demonstrate greater consistency in ethical decision-making (Rao & Swapna, 2025). The regression model indicates that ethical decision-making in online learning is not random or purely situational but is systematically influenced by internal value systems. Students with strong moral grounding and spiritual motivation are better able to resist unethical practices, even in environments characterized by anonymity and minimal supervision. These quantitative results directly address the first research objective by confirming that the moral and spiritual dimensions are significant predictors of students' decision-making behavior in digital academic settings (Ernawati et al., 2025)

Table 2. Multiple linear regression model results

Analysis Components	Value	Interpretation
R-squared	0.678	67.8% variation in decision-making ability is explained by the model
Adjusted R-squared	0.671	The model remains robust after independent variable adjustment
F-statistic	98.02	Statistically significant model
Prob (F-statistic)	0.000	Significance of the model at 99% confidence level
Number of Respondents (n)	95	Data was collected from students across study programs

In addition to predictive strength, diagnostic testing confirms the robustness of the regression model. Statistical indicators indicate that the independent variables are not multicollinear, and residual analysis supports the assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity, and independence of errors. These results indicate that the estimated coefficients are stable and reliable, providing confidence that the observed relationships among moral values, spiritual motivation, and decision-making ability accurately reflect the underlying patterns in the data rather than statistical artifacts (Piriyeva, 2025). Qualitative findings reveal how students articulate moral and spiritual considerations when confronting ethical dilemmas in online learning environments. Students commonly described situations involving online examinations, individual assignments, and discussion forums as requiring heightened self-control due to limited supervision.

Ethical decision-making was described as a personal process grounded in internal values rather than institutional enforcement (Aisyi et al., 2025). Across responses, students emphasized honesty and responsibility as primary moral principles guiding their academic behavior, particularly when digital conditions created opportunities for misconduct. Moral awareness emerged as a dominant theme in students' narratives. Participants frequently referred to honesty as a deliberate choice, even when unethical alternatives appeared easier or less risky. Responsibility was also highlighted by students' commitment to completing assignments independently and to participating actively in online learning activities without direct oversight (Kulberg, 2025). These narratives indicate that moral values function as internal reference points that shape academic conduct in digital environments. Students consistently framed ethical decisions as matters of personal integrity rather than compliance with external rules.

Table 3. Regression coefficients and significance

Variabel	Coeficin	Std. Error	T-Statistics	Sig. (p)	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Konstanta	0.1855	1.608	0.115	0.908	-3.007	3.378
Moral (X1)	0.2395	0.057	4.193	0.000	0.126	0.353
Spiritual (X2)	0.4882	0.106	4.607	0.000	0.278	0.699

To deepen the interpretation of the quantitative findings, the qualitative analysis explores themes of moral spiritual reasoning that shape students' ethical decision-making in online learning contexts. Spiritual motivation was another prominent theme shaping ethical decision-making. Students described their academic choices as influenced by spiritual awareness, including a desire to maintain sincerity, avoid wrongdoing, and seek meaningful outcomes from their learning activities.

Several participants reported that academic honesty was perceived as part of spiritual responsibility, particularly with respect to intention and accountability beyond institutional evaluation (Shavkatovna, 2025). This spiritual orientation influenced how students assessed the moral consequences of their actions, especially in situations where misconduct could not be easily detected. Narratives also revealed that students perceived ethical behavior as closely connected to the quality and legitimacy of knowledge acquired through online learning.

Participants indicated that completing academic tasks honestly was associated with a sense of inner satisfaction and spiritual peace, whereas unethical behavior was linked to discomfort or moral unease (Petrosyants, 2025). These accounts demonstrate that spiritual motivation operates as an internal regulatory mechanism that reinforces ethical consistency, particularly when external supervision is absent. Students further identified digital learning conditions as sources of ethical challenge. Reduced lecturer presence, psychological distance, and easy access to online information were commonly mentioned as factors that increased temptation. Despite these challenges, students emphasized that moral values and spiritual awareness helped them navigate ethical dilemmas more carefully. The qualitative findings thus illustrate how internal moral spiritual orientations shape students' interpretations of online academic situations and guide decision-making behavior under conditions of heightened ethical vulnerability (Marliana, 2025; Ozhiganova, 2023).

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a comprehensive portrayal of how moral values and spiritual motivation jointly shape students' ethical decision-making in online learning environments (Primarni, 2024; Primarni et al., 2024). Quantitatively, moral values and spiritual motivation are significant predictors of decision-making ability, with spiritual motivation making a stronger contribution. Qualitatively, students' narratives explain how these internal dimensions operate in practice when students face ethical dilemmas in digitally mediated academic contexts. Together, these findings indicate that ethical decision-making in online learning is structured by internal moral spiritual orientations rather than being solely influenced by external controls or situational factors. Moral values function as foundational reference points that guide students in evaluating right and wrong during online academic activities. The quantitative results demonstrate that higher levels of moral values are associated with stronger decision-making ability. At the same time, qualitative accounts illustrate how honesty and responsibility are consciously applied during unsupervised assessments and independent learning tasks. These findings show that moral values provide cognitive and ethical frameworks that help students interpret academic rules and expectations, enabling them to maintain consistent ethical behavior despite reduced institutional monitoring (Primarni et al., 2025).

Spiritual motivation operates as a reinforcing internal mechanism that strengthens ethical consistency across different online learning situations. Quantitative findings reveal that spiritual motivation exerts the strongest influence on decision-making. In contrast, qualitative narratives describe how spiritual awareness shapes students' perceptions of accountability, intention, and the moral meaning of learning activities. Students consistently articulated that ethical academic behavior was connected to inner satisfaction, sincerity, and personal responsibility beyond formal evaluation. This convergence of findings demonstrates that spiritual motivation enhances self-regulation by aligning academic actions with deeper moral spiritual commitments (Nasir et al., 2024).

Table 4. Themes, subthemes, and representative quotations

Theme	Subtheme	Representative Quotation	Informant
Moral Awareness in Ethical Dilemmas	Honesty in assessments	“During online learning, the temptation to cheat is strong, but I still choose to be honest even if it results in a lower score.”	R1
	Responsibility in learning	“I try to take responsibility for completing assignments and participating in discussions even without direct supervision.”	R12
Influence of Islamic Teachings on Decision-Making	Qur’anic ethical guidance	“I remember the verse in Al-Baqarah about not taking what is not ours, so I avoid cheating during online exams.”	R4
	Hadith-based morality	“I recall a hadith about honesty. It makes me afraid to cheat even though online learning is less supervised.”	R17
Spiritual Motivation Supporting Ethical Behavior	Desire for blessed knowledge (<i>barakah</i>)	“I want the knowledge I gain to be blessed, so I complete my exams using my own effort.”	R12
	Fear of sin	“Cheating is a sin, so even though it is easy to do during online exams, I do not dare to do it.”	R5
Ethical Challenges in Digital Learning	Lack of supervision	“Online exams are tempting because there is no direct supervision. It sometimes becomes a moral dilemma.”	R7
	Digital distractions	“Social media often distracts me during online learning and makes me reluctant to join discussions.”	R22
Ideal Islamic-Based Character Education	Integration of Islamic values	“Ideally, character education should incorporate Islamic values in every learning activity so students remain aware of proper manners.”	R33
	Case-based moral learning	“Character education is more effective when it uses real-life case studies, allowing us to learn directly from actual examples.”	R4

The combined results also illustrate how online learning contexts intensify the importance of internal value systems. Reduced supervision, psychological distance, and ease of access to digital resources create conditions that increase ethical vulnerability. However, students with stronger moral and spiritual orientations demonstrate greater capacity to navigate these conditions responsibly. The findings suggest that ethical decision-making in online learning emerges from the interaction between internal moral spiritual resources and external digital environments. Rather than being passive

recipients of institutional rules, students actively interpret ethical expectations through their personal values and spiritual awareness, thereby shaping their academic conduct.

Table 5. Integration of quantitative and qualitative research findings

Aspects	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings	Integration
Variable Morality (x1)	Coefficient = 0.2395, p < 0.001 shows a significant influence on Y	Students recognize the importance of honesty and responsibility when facing ethical dilemmas	Moral values are the foundation in student academic decision-making
Spiritual Motivation Variables (X2)	Coefficient = 0.4882, p < 0.001 shows significant and dominant influence	Students are encouraged to be honest because of the rewards, fear of sin, and the value of blessings	Spiritual motivation is a strong internal factor in maintaining the ethics of online learning
Decision Making Ability (Y)	Significantly influenced by both variables (R ² = 0.678)	Students show reflection in determining attitudes during dilemmas, even without direct supervision	The quality of student decisions is strengthened by internal values, not just external control
Contextual Factors	Not directly reflected in the numbers	Digital ethical challenges, social pressures, and awareness of divine surveillance	The context of online learning reinforces the importance of integrating moral and spiritual values
Educational Model	Not studied in regression	Students propose the integration of Islamic values in online learning explicitly	Quantitative findings are expanded by students' aspirations about Islamic character education

Overall, the integrated results indicate that ethical behavior in online learning is a multidimensional phenomenon grounded in moral cognition, spiritual motivation, and contextual challenges. The findings establish a clear empirical foundation for understanding ethical decision-making as an internally regulated process that becomes increasingly salient in digital learning environments. This integrated presentation of results fulfills the research objectives by demonstrating how moral values and spiritual motivation interact to shape students' academic decision-making under conditions of limited supervision.

The findings of this study indicate that ethical decision-making in online learning environments is significantly influenced by internal moral values and spiritual motivation, with spiritual motivation emerging as the strongest predictor of students' ethical behavior. Quantitative analysis shows that both variables explain a substantial proportion of variation in students' ability to make ethical academic decisions under conditions of reduced supervision. Qualitative responses further reinforce this pattern, as students frequently described honesty and responsibility as deliberate choices even when monitoring was minimal. These findings suggest that ethical behavior in online learning is not solely situational but is largely guided by internal moral spiritual orientations that shape how students evaluate academic dilemmas.

The prominence of moral values and spiritual motivation can be understood in relation to the structural characteristics of online learning environments. Digital learning systems reduce face-to-face interaction and direct supervision, transferring greater responsibility to students to regulate their own academic conduct (Abidin & Prananta, 2023; Huynh & Tran, n.d.). In such conditions, external controls such as lecturer monitoring and peer visibility become less effective. Moral values provide a cognitive framework that helps students evaluate whether an action is ethically acceptable. However, when students experience academic pressure, moral reasoning alone may not always be sufficient to prevent unethical choices. Spiritual motivation appears to strengthen this framework by introducing a sense of inner accountability that goes beyond institutional rules, making unethical behavior less acceptable even when external sanctions are unlikely.

These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that online learning environments may heighten ethical vulnerability due to reduced supervision and psychological distance between students and instructors. Earlier research has often emphasized technological solutions or institutional regulations as mechanisms for maintaining academic integrity. While these structural approaches remain important, the present study suggests that internal value systems also play a critical role in guiding ethical academic behavior. Studies on moral development highlight that moral cognition influences ethical reasoning but may weaken under situational pressure. Conversely, research on spirituality suggests that spiritual awareness can reinforce ethical commitment by strengthening internal accountability (Jeniawaty & Mairo, n.d.; Ramli et al., 2024). The findings of this study support this perspective, demonstrating that spiritual motivation can function as an internal regulatory mechanism that stabilizes ethical behavior in digital learning environments.

An alternative interpretation of these findings may relate to the cultural and institutional context in which the study was conducted. The participants were drawn from Islamic higher education institutions where moral and spiritual values are integrated into the educational environment. Exposure to religious teachings, character education, and institutional expectations may strengthen students' awareness of ethical responsibility in academic activities. Therefore, the influence of spiritual motivation observed in this study may partly reflect the educational culture of Islamic institutions, which emphasizes moral accountability and ethical conduct as part of the learning process.

The findings of this study have several important implications for higher education practice. First, they suggest that efforts to promote academic integrity in online learning should not rely solely on surveillance technologies or institutional regulations. Instead, educational institutions may benefit from strengthening internal ethical development among students. Integrating moral reflection, ethical discussion, and value-based learning activities into online courses may help cultivate students' capacity to make responsible academic decisions. For Islamic higher education institutions in particular, incorporating spiritual reflection and character-based mentoring into digital learning environments may further reinforce ethical resilience among students.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study involved a relatively limited sample of students from two Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational contexts. In addition, ethical decision-making was examined primarily through self-reported responses, which may be influenced by social desirability bias. Future studies may benefit from employing larger samples, longitudinal designs, or behavioral measures of academic integrity to further explore how moral and spiritual factors influence ethical behavior in online learning environments over time.

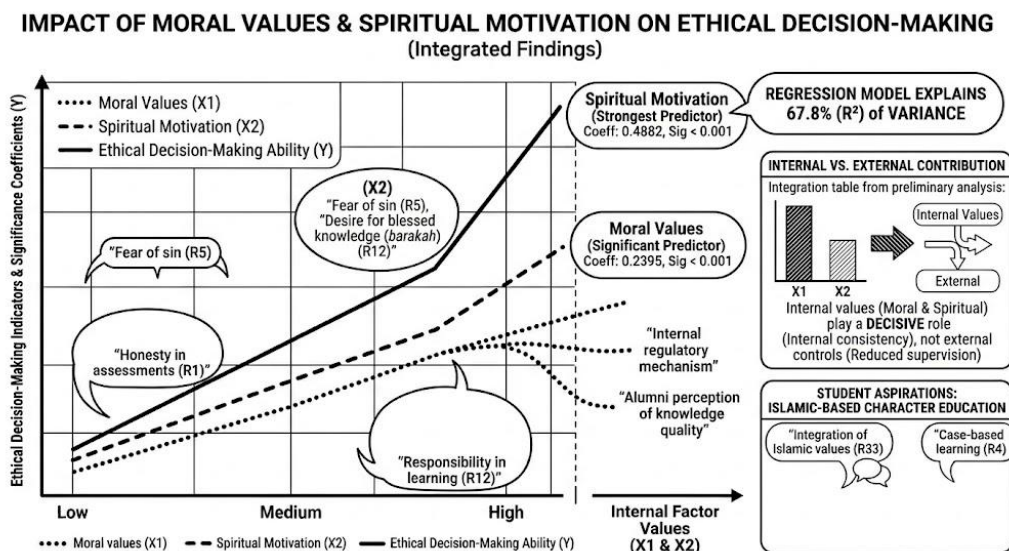


Figure 2. Integrated model of moral values and spiritual motivation on ethical decision-making

This figure illustrates a comprehensive integrated model demonstrating how internal moral and spiritual frameworks significantly predict students' ethical decision-making abilities within unsupervised digital learning environments. The quantitative regression analysis shows that the model explains 67.8% of the variance, with spiritual motivation (X2) emerging as the more dominant predictor (Coeff: 0.4882) compared to moral values (X1) (Coeff: 0.2395). Qualitatively, these findings are reinforced by student narratives which emphasize that ethical choices, such as maintaining honesty during assessments and taking responsibility for learning, are driven by an "internal regulatory mechanism" involving a fear of sin and a desire for blessed knowledge (*barakah*). Ultimately, the data suggests that in the face of reduced external supervision, internal values play a decisive role in shaping academic integrity, leading to a strong student aspiration for character education that integrates Islamic values and case-based learning.

CONCLUSION

Students' internal value systems strongly shape ethical decision-making in online learning environments. The findings indicate that moral values and spiritual motivation function as key internal regulators guiding academic behavior when external supervision is limited. Moral values provide the ethical framework through which students evaluate right and wrong, while spiritual motivation reinforces this framework by strengthening inner accountability and sincerity in academic conduct. As digital learning environments increasingly rely on student autonomy, ethical behavior cannot be sustained through institutional regulations alone. Instead, the cultivation of internal moral and spiritual awareness becomes essential for maintaining academic integrity in digitally mediated education.

These findings highlight the importance of integrating moral and spiritual development into online learning practices, particularly within Islamic higher education contexts that emphasize character formation as a central educational goal. By demonstrating the central role of spiritual motivation in strengthening ethical self-regulation, this study contributes to the growing discourse on character-based digital education. Aligning online learning systems with moral reflection, ethical awareness, and spiritually grounded responsibility may help foster students who are not only academically competent but also ethically resilient in navigating the challenges of digital learning environments.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used Google Gemini to assist in improving grammar, language quality, and overall readability of the text. After using this tool, the author(s) carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

Author 5: Supervision; Validation.

Author 6: Other contribution; Resources; Visualization; Writing - original draft.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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