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## CONSTRUCTING THE MUSLIM SCHOLAR'S ETHOS: A FRAMEWORK OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY BASED ON THE ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

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### ABSTRACT

Academic integrity constitutes a foundational pillar in the advancement of knowledge and the moral sustainability of civilisation. Within the Muslim intellectual tradition, ethical scholarship has historically been understood not merely as procedural compliance but as the cultivation of a scholarly ethos grounded in moral and spiritual responsibility. This article seeks to formulate a conceptual model of

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academic integrity rooted in the Islamic intellectual tradition by articulating the ethical foundations of the Muslim scholar's ethos. Employing qualitative content analysis, the study examines primary sources—the Qur'ān and Sunnah—alongside selected works of classical and contemporary Muslim scholars. The analysis identifies key ethical dispositions central to scholarly integrity, including *ikhlaṣ* (sincere intention), *amānah* (trustworthiness and responsibility), *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *ʿadl* (justice), *ijtihād* (intellectual diligence), *tawāḍuʿ* (humility), *taʿzīm al-ʿilm* (reverence for knowledge), and *taqwā* (God-consciousness). These virtues are shown to remain critically relevant in addressing contemporary challenges to academic integrity, including authorship misconduct, instrumentalisation of knowledge, and ethical erosion in research cultures. On this basis, the article proposes a conceptual model that integrates Islamic ethical values into scholarly practices of research, writing, and knowledge dissemination. It argues that the pursuit of knowledge in Islam is fundamentally an act of *ibādah*, requiring moral excellence alongside intellectual rigour. The study concludes that revitalising the Muslim scholar's ethos through the Islamic intellectual tradition offers a constructive civilisational framework for strengthening academic integrity and nurturing an ethically grounded knowledge-based society.

**KEYWORDS:** Academic integrity, Muslim scholar's ethos, Islamic intellectual tradition, Ethics.

## 1.0. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary academia faces a range of challenges that increasingly test the integrity of its practitioners.<sup>4</sup> Issues such as plagiarism, data

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<sup>4</sup> Jen Tindale et al., "Connecting Generic Academic Integrity Modules to Professional Integrity through Curriculum Design," in *Academic Quality and Integrity in the New Higher Education Digital Environment* (Elsevier, 2023), 55–73, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-323-95423-5.00005-3>.

falsification, conflicts of interest, and the abuse of academic authority have become more visible across global higher-education systems. This integrity crisis not only undermines the credibility of academic institutions but also threatens the reliability, continuity, and moral purpose of knowledge production itself. In this context, renewed attention to ethical and moral foundations in academic life has become both urgent and unavoidable.<sup>5</sup>

Academic integrity constitutes a core pillar of institutional credibility and scholarly excellence. It reflects a commitment to honesty, fairness, accountability, and responsibility across teaching, learning, research, and publication.<sup>6</sup> In Malaysia, the higher-education sector has expanded rapidly over recent decades, marked by a substantial increase in institutions, academic programmes, and student enrolment.<sup>7</sup> However, this quantitative growth has been accompanied by growing concern over declining academic integrity. Incidents of plagiarism, data fabrication and falsification, inadequate research supervision, assessment bias, and pedagogical misconduct have increasingly entered public and academic discourse.<sup>8</sup> Such developments not only damage institutional reputation but also raise

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<sup>5</sup> Guy J. Curtis and Joseph Clare, “Academic Integrity Scholarship: The Importance of Theory,” in *Second Handbook of Academic Integrity*, ed. Sarah Elaine Eaton, Springer International Handbooks of Education (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 1651–69, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54144-5\\_164](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54144-5_164).

<sup>6</sup> Jon M. Werner, “Academic Integrity and Human Resource Development: Being and Doing,” *Human Resource Development Review* 21, no. 2 (June 2022): 249–57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/15344843221078505>.

<sup>7</sup> Morshidi Sirat and Chang Da Wan, “Higher Education in Malaysia,” in *International Handbook on Education in South East Asia*, ed. Lorraine Pe Symaco and Martin Hayden, Springer International Handbooks of Education (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2024), 609–31, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-8136-3\\_14-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-8136-3_14-1); Nur Sheilla Saida Abdullah, Mohamad Zuber Abd. Majid, and Sheerad Shahid, “Learning of Higher Education and Economic Growth in Malaysia,” *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 12, no. 6 (June 2022): Pages 28–38, <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v12-i6/13948>.

<sup>8</sup> S. D. Sivasubramaniam et al., “Unethical Practices within Medical Research and Publication – An Exploratory Study,” *International Journal for Educational Integrity* 17, no. 1 (December 2021): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-021-00072-y>.

serious concerns regarding graduate quality and the broader project of national human-capital development.

In recognition of these concerns, Malaysia's Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) introduced the *National Code of Conduct for Research Ethics* in 2010 as a reference framework for ethical research practices across higher-education institutions.<sup>9</sup> Despite this initiative, reports of academic-integrity violations persist, suggesting that policy implementation alone has been insufficient. The absence of regular revisions to address emerging challenges—particularly those arising from technological developments such as artificial-intelligence-assisted writing, contract cheating, and predatory publishing—has further limited its effectiveness.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, existing frameworks tend to remain largely procedural, with minimal socio-cultural or religious contextualisation, despite Islam being the religion of the Federation and Islamic values being frequently invoked in public discourse.

Empirical studies and media reports continue to document widespread unethical practices, including plagiarism, falsification of findings, supervisory abuse of power, and assessment malpractice. These trends indicate that existing regulatory frameworks have struggled to cultivate internalised ethical commitment, often relying instead on compliance mechanisms and punitive deterrence. Consequently, adherence to integrity is frequently motivated by fear of sanction rather than by moral conviction or spiritual responsibility.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Wan Mohd Khairul Firdaus Wan Khairuldin et al., "Ethical Issues in Academic Authorship: A Study on Group Writing," *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 11, no. 1 (2022): 226–31, <https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2022-0020>.

<sup>10</sup> Hooi Yan See et al., "Addressing Procedural Challenges of Ethical Review System: Towards a Better Ethical Quality of Clinical Trials Review in Malaysia," *Accountability in Research* 26, no. 1 (January 2019): 49–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08989621.2018.1556646>; Md Sozon et al., "Academic Integrity Violations in Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review from 2013–2023," *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*, ahead of print, July 16 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1108/JARHE-12-2023-0559>.

<sup>11</sup> Asama Mukherjee, "Revisiting the Ethical Aspects in Research Publications," *International Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Scope* 1, no. 1 (January 2020):

Globally, academic integrity has become a rapidly expanding field of research. Much of the literature focuses on defining academic integrity, categorising violations, identifying contributory factors among students and staff,<sup>12</sup> and proposing prevention strategies through policy enforcement, ethics education, and institutional culture-building. However, these studies are predominantly grounded in Western secular frameworks that emphasise rule-based compliance, honour codes, or external accountability mechanisms.<sup>13</sup>

For Muslim societies, the Islamic intellectual tradition—spanning more than fourteen centuries—offers a rich and largely underutilised ethical reservoir for addressing contemporary academic challenges. Within this tradition, knowledge (*‘ilm*) is inseparable from faith (*īmān*) and action (*‘amal*), and the pursuit of knowledge is regarded as an act of worship (*‘ibādah*) requiring sincerity (*ikhhlās*), trustworthiness (*amānah*), and accountability before God.<sup>14</sup> Classical Muslim scholars upheld integrity as an essential condition of scholarly legitimacy, embedding ethical conduct within the very ontology and purpose of knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

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27–29, <https://doi.org/10.47857/irjms.2020.v01i01.005>.

<sup>12</sup> Guy J. Curtis and Joseph Clare, “Academic Integrity Scholarship: The Importance of Theory,” in *Second Handbook of Academic Integrity*, ed. Sarah Elaine Eaton, Springer International Handbooks of Education (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), 1651–69, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54144-5\\_164](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54144-5_164); Muammer Maral, “A Bibliometric Analysis on Academic Integrity,” *Journal of Academic Ethics* 22, no. 4 (December 2024): 665–87, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-024-09519-6>.

<sup>13</sup> Joy Levine and Vanessa Pazdernik, “Evaluation of a Four-Prong Anti-Plagiarism Program and the Incidence of Plagiarism: A Five-Year Retrospective Study,” *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 43, no. 7 (October 2018): 1094–105, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2018.1434127>; Antoni Cerdà-Navarro et al., “Academic Integrity Policies against Assessment Fraud in Postgraduate Studies: An Analysis of the Situation in Spanish Universities,” *Heliyon* 8, no. 3 (March 2022): e09170, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09170>.

<sup>14</sup> Abdulkadir Salaudeen, “Islam and Secularism,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, ahead of print, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5161399>.

<sup>15</sup> Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, “The ‘Ulama’: Challenges, Reforms, and New Patterns of Social Relevance,” in *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, 1st ed., ed. Armando Salvatore et al. (Wiley, 2018), 543–60, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118527719.ch26>.

Despite this rich heritage, a significant gap persists between Islamic ethical ideals and present academic realities in many Muslim-majority contexts. Phenomena such as uncritical imitation (*taqlīd*), weakened cultures of originality, and rising cases of academic misconduct within Islamic higher-education institutions point to a gradual erosion of the traditional scholarly ethos.<sup>16</sup> These challenges are further intensified by globalisation, the commercialisation of education, and rapid technological transformation. While Muslim scholars such as Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas have foregrounded *adab* as the epistemic and moral foundation of Islamic education, and Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud has articulated the culture of knowledge and the role of the university in Islam, these insights have yet to be systematically integrated into contemporary academic-integrity frameworks.<sup>17</sup> Rosnani Hashim's work on Islamic educational philosophy further reinforces this ethical tradition, yet its translation into operational models of academic integrity remains limited.<sup>18</sup> Classical works by scholars such as al-Ghazālī, al-Zarnūjī, and Ibn Jamā'ah, alongside historical studies by Makdisi and Rosenthal, provide a strong ethical and institutional foundation for Islamic scholarship. More recent studies have begun to address emerging challenges, including artificial intelligence and academic authenticity. However, most existing discussions remain fragmented, focusing on isolated virtues or general ethical exhortations without articulating a coherent, operational model of the Muslim scholar's ethos.

Furthermore, contemporary studies on Islamic ethics often do not engage directly with the academic-integrity literature, nor do they offer integrated frameworks capable of informing policy, curriculum

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<sup>16</sup> Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim, "Rethinking the Taqlīd Hegemony: A Conceptual-Historical Approach," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 136, no. 2 (December 2021), <https://doi.org/10.7817/jameroriesoci.136.2.285>.

<sup>17</sup> Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas: An Exposition of the Original Concept of Islamization*.

<sup>18</sup> Rosnani Hashim, "Intellectualism in Higher Islamic Traditional Studies: Implications for the Curriculum," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 24, no. 3 (July 2007): 92–115, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v24i3.426>.

design, and institutional culture. In particular, there is a notable absence of models that both (i) synthesise classical *adab al-‘ilm* literature with modern integrity scholarship and (ii) respond explicitly to contemporary threats such as AI-generated text, contract cheating, and predatory academic practices.

This article seeks to address these gaps by developing a conceptual framework of academic integrity grounded in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Its contribution lies in: (a) synthesising core ethical virtues from classical Islamic scholarship into a cohesive model of the Muslim scholar’s ethos; (b) situating this model in critical dialogue with dominant Western academic-integrity paradigms; and (c) drawing practical implications for policy, pedagogy, and institutional culture within higher-education systems seeking to cultivate *tarbiyyah*- and *adab*-based approaches to integrity.

Accordingly, this study aims to identify and analyse the core principles underpinning academic ethics in the Islamic intellectual tradition, while examining how these principles may respond to contemporary challenges—technological, institutional, and moral—to foster academic integrity in a holistic and sustainable manner.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, text-oriented methodology integrating thematic analysis and conceptual analysis. The data sources are divided into primary and secondary materials. The primary sources comprise the Qur’ān, interpreted with reference to selected authoritative *tafsīr* works, and the Sunnah, accessed through recognised *ḥadīth* compilations and classical commentaries. The secondary sources include seminal classical texts on *adab al-‘ilm* and scholarly conduct, such as al-Ghazālī’s *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, al-Zarnūjī’s *Ta’līm al-Muta’allim*, and Ibn Jamā’ah’s *Tadhkirat al-Sāmi’ wa al-Mutakallim*, alongside contemporary scholarship on Islamic education and professional ethics.

Text selection followed a purposive sampling strategy, guided by three criteria: (i) the text explicitly addresses the ethical nature,

responsibilities, or conduct of scholars and students; (ii) it has exerted sustained influence within the mainstream Sunni educational tradition; and (iii) it is frequently cited in contemporary discussions of Islamic pedagogy and ethics. In addition, selected international literature on academic integrity—most notably Bretag’s work on academic integrity standards<sup>19</sup> and Fishman’s contributions through the International Center for Academic Integrity—was examined to provide a comparative perspective drawn from dominant Western integrity frameworks.<sup>20</sup>

The analysis proceeded in three stages. First, relevant passages addressing scholarly virtues, responsibilities, and ethical transgressions related to knowledge were identified and thematically categorised. Second, recurring ethical themes were clustered into broader conceptual domains reflecting the semantic architecture of the scholar’s ethos, namely: spiritual foundations, ethical virtues, and scholarly practices. Third, these domains were synthesised into a concentric-ring conceptual model of the Muslim scholar’s ethos, interpreted through the integrative lenses of *tawhīd* and *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*.

This methodological approach enables the formulation of a normative yet analytically grounded framework that remains faithful to the Islamic intellectual tradition while engaging meaningfully with contemporary academic-integrity discourse.

### 3.0 FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of the study in three interrelated movements. First, Academic Integrity Frameworks: Western Models and Islamic Ethos maps dominant policy-based approaches in contemporary higher education and contrasts their underlying assumptions with a theocentric Islamic vision of scholarship. Second,

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<sup>19</sup> Tracey Bretag, “An International Definition of Student Plagiarism,” *International Journal for Educational Integrity* 4, no. 2 (2008): 15–24.

<sup>20</sup> Tricia Bertram Gallant and Teddi Fishman, *Academic Integrity in the Twenty-First Century: A Teaching and Learning Imperative* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014).

The Ethical Pillars of the Muslim Scholarly Ethos distils, from the Qur'an, Sunnah, and classical works on *adab al-'ilm*, a set of core virtues that together constitute the inner moral architecture of the Muslim scholar. Third, Towards an Islamic Framework of Academic Integrity synthesises these insights into a coherent model that can inform policy, curriculum, and institutional practice within Malaysia's higher education system.

### 3.1. Academic Integrity Frameworks: Western Models and Islamic Ethos

In contemporary higher education discourse, academic integrity is predominantly conceptualised within a secular Western epistemic horizon that privileges institutional rationality, legalism, and procedural governance.<sup>21</sup> Integrity is operationalised through academic-honesty policies, honour codes, and regulatory instruments that classify and police misconduct, including plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, collusion, and contract cheating.<sup>22</sup> Bretag, for instance, advances a “whole-of-institution” paradigm in which core values—such as honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage—are institutionalised through policy architecture, quality-assurance mechanisms, and organisational culture. Likewise, the International Center for Academic Integrity frames integrity as an institutional commitment that must be made visible through explicit definitions, sanctions, and adjudicative procedures.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Rosie MacLachlan, “Academic Integrity: A ‘Threshold Value’ for Higher Education?,” in *Worldviews and Values in Higher Education: Teaching, Learning, Curricula, and Assessment*, ed. Madasu Bhaskara Rao, Abhilasha Singh, and Pulaparthi Mallika Rao (Bingley, Emerald Group Publishing Ltd., 2024), 69–80, <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-80262-897-520241005>.

<sup>22</sup> Katy Dineen and Loretta Goff, “Two Sides of the Same Coin: A Taxonomy of Academic Integrity and Impropriety Using Intellectual Virtues and Vices,” *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 49, no. 7 (2024): 935–47, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2024.2340641>.

<sup>23</sup> Tracey Bretag and Saadia Mahmud, “A Conceptual Framework for Implementing Exemplary Academic Integrity Policy in Australian Higher Education,” in *Handbook*

Underlying these formulations is a distinct philosophical and anthropological configuration. The academic subject is imagined as an autonomous individual embedded in a quasi-contractual relationship with both the institution and the scholarly community. Integrity is therefore framed as fidelity to agreed norms, where normativity is justified not by metaphysical or theological claims, but by considerations of fairness, professionalism, and the efficient functioning of the epistemic system. The moral vocabulary is intentionally thin, procedural, and deontic: it prioritises rule compliance, due process, and proportional sanction rather than substantive accounts of virtue, character, or ultimate purpose. In this sense, academic integrity in dominant Western discourse becomes a juridified construct that translates ethical concerns into administrable categories.<sup>24</sup>

The contributions of this model are nonetheless significant. It offers conceptual clarity and operational precision. By standardising categories of misconduct, it enables cross-institutional benchmarking, comparative empirical research, and the development of policy templates and training modules.<sup>25</sup> It also renders integrity “governable”, in the Foucauldian sense, by making breaches calculable, reportable, and sanctionable within bureaucratic apparatuses of quality assurance and risk management.<sup>26</sup> In many

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*of Academic Integrity*, ed. Tracey Bretag (Springer Singapore, 2016), 463–80, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-098-8\\_24](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-098-8_24).

<sup>24</sup> Annemarie Davis, “Academic Integrity in the Time of Contradictions,” *Cogent Education* 10, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2289307>; Tracey Bretag, “Defining Academic Integrity: International Perspectives — Introduction,” in *Handbook of Academic Integrity*, ed. Tracey Bretag (Springer Singapore, 2016), 3–5, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-098-8\\_76](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-098-8_76).

<sup>25</sup> Erica J. Morris and Jude Carroll, “Developing a Sustainable Holistic Institutional Approach: Dealing with Realities ‘on the Ground’ When Implementing an Academic Integrity Policy,” in *Handbook of Academic Integrity*, ed. Tracey Bretag (Springer Singapore, 2016), 449–62, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-098-8\\_23](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-098-8_23); Özgür Çelik, “Developing a Multipronged Academic Integrity Policy Writing Tool for Secondary Schools,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 100 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2023.102807>.

<sup>26</sup> Jayne Bye, “Foucault and the Use of Critique: Breaching the Self-Evidence of

systems, this has had the salutary effect of shifting integrity from a marginal, ad hoc concern to a central component of institutional strategy, accreditation processes, and performance indicators.<sup>27</sup>

However, when viewed through a broader ethical and epistemological lens, the structural limits of this approach become apparent. Where integrity is primarily secured through external instruments—codes of conduct, surveillance technologies, text-matching software, reporting channels, and penalty regimes—the model tends to generate what may be described as a compliance rationality.<sup>28</sup> The operative question for many actors becomes how to avoid violation or detection, rather than how to live truthfully in relation to knowledge, others, and self. Moreover, the heavy accent on formal rules and procedures displaces more fundamental inquiries into character formation, the cultivation of intellectual virtues, and the ordering of loves and fears that underwrite any stable commitment to truth. Ethics is, in effect, flattened into governance.

The Islamic intellectual tradition approaches integrity from a qualitatively different starting point. It does not treat knowledge as a neutral commodity, nor does it imagine the educational institution as a

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Educational Practices,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 28, no. 4 (2015): 394–414, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2014.916003>.

<sup>27</sup> Hedeliza Pineda, “Stakeholders’ Perceptions of the Impact of Accreditation of Science Curricula of Higher Education Institutions,” *International Journal of Advanced and Applied Sciences* 10, no. 7 (2023): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2023.07.001>; Menard Musendekwa, “Blueprints for Excellence in Higher Education Accreditation: Frameworks and Models for Success,” in *Global Perspectives on Quality Management and Accreditation in Higher Education*, ed. Arshi Naim et al. (Hershey, IGI Global, 2025), 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-9481-6.ch001>; Miltiadis Demetrios Lytras and Andreea Claudia Șerban, eds., *Academic Accreditation and Evaluation in Higher Education: Practices, Experiences, and Quality Assurance* (Hershey, IGI Global, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-5608-1>.

<sup>28</sup> Oscar Capdeferro Villagrasa, “Anti-corruption performance of codes of ethics and conduct: The role of administrative law,” *Revista General de Derecho Administrativo* 54 (2020): 1–30; David Borsook and James L. Bernat, “Headache Professional Societies: Ethical Challenges and Suggested Solutions,” *Headache* 57, no. 8 (2017): 1273–83, <https://doi.org/10.1111/head.13147>.

value-free marketplace of ideas<sup>29</sup> Knowledge (*‘ilm*) is construed as an *amānah* that originates from God and is entrusted to the human being under conditions of accountability in this world and the next.<sup>30</sup> The pursuit, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge are therefore inscribed within an ontology of worship, obedience, and eschatological responsibility. In such a configuration, the language of rights, duties, and sanctions remains intelligible, yet it is always nested within a thicker theological and moral narrative that ties epistemic activity to *tawhīd* and to the higher objectives of the *sharī‘ah*.<sup>31</sup>

Conceptually, Western models of academic integrity and the Islamic scholarly ethos therefore constitute distinct regimes of normativity. In the former, integrity is largely engineered from the outside inwards, through architectures of regulation, detection, and deterrence designed to shape behaviour.<sup>32</sup> In the latter, integrity is envisaged as radiating from the inside outwards, beginning with a transformed heart, a settled consciousness of God, and a habituated orientation towards truth and justice, which then manifests in speech, judgement, and scholarly practice. Both regimes affirm honesty and fairness, yet they locate the ground and telos of these commitments in different places: one in an immanent social contract, the other in a transcendent covenant.

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<sup>29</sup> Amra Sabic-El-Rayess, “Epistemological Shifts in Knowledge and Education in Islam: A New Perspective on the Emergence of Radicalization amongst Muslims,” *International Journal of Educational Development* 73 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2019.102148>; Khoiruddin, Salminawati, and Usiono, “Kepribadian Pendidik Muslim Dalam Perspektif Filsafat Pendidikan Islam,” *Munaddhomah* 4, no. 1 (2023): 71–80, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v4i1.333>.

<sup>30</sup> Miftachul Huda et al., “Al-Zarnūjī’s Concept of Knowledge (‘Ilm),” *SAGE Open* 6, no. 3 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244016666885>.

<sup>31</sup> Uthman Mohammed Mustapha Kannike and Abdulgafar Olawale Fahm, “Exploring The Ethical Governance Of Artificial Intelligence From An Islamic Ethical Perspective,” *Jurnal Fiqh* 22, no. 1 (2025): 134–61, <https://doi.org/10.22452/fiqh.vol22no1.5>.

<sup>32</sup> Andrés Mejía and Maria Fernanda Garcés-Flórez, “What Do We Mean by Academic Integrity?,” *International Journal for Educational Integrity* 21, no. 1 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-024-00176-1>.

For Muslim-majority higher education systems that import Western-derived integrity frameworks, this divergence is not merely abstract. If policies and codes are transplanted without critical engagement with the theological, ethical, and epistemological resources of the Islamic tradition, dissonance may emerge between the official discourse of institutional documents and the lived moral imagination of students and staff.<sup>33</sup> Under such conditions, integrity policy risks being perceived as technocratic, external, and culturally disembedded—operating more as a compliance regime than as an expression of the community’s deepest convictions about truth, knowledge, and responsibility before God.

A more coherent trajectory, therefore, is not to abandon global best practice, but to re-situate it within a broader theocentric ethos of scholarship. The analytical strength and procedural robustness of Western frameworks can be retained, yet they must be subordinated to—and animated by—a richer moral and spiritual architecture that speaks meaningfully to *tawhīd*, *taqwā*, and *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*. In such a view, institutional rules and enforcement mechanisms are necessary instruments, but they are not sufficient foundations: they presuppose a prior work of character formation and spiritual orientation.<sup>34</sup> It is precisely this deeper level that the Islamic scholarly tradition seeks to address. The next section turns from the comparative policy plane to the inner architecture of the Muslim scholarly ethos and explicates the core ethical pillars that, taken together, constitute a substantive, virtue-centred basis for any framework of academic integrity in Muslim contexts.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibrahima Diallo, “Introduction: The Interface between Islamic and Western Pedagogies and Epistemologies: Features and Divergences,” *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning* 7, no. 3 (2012): 175–79, <https://doi.org/10.5172/ijpl.2012.7.3.175>.

<sup>34</sup> Oksana Braslavska et al., “Ensuring Research Excellence: The Indispensable Role of Academic Integrity,” *Premier Journal of Science* 14 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.70389/PJS.100128>; Tony Mayer and Nicholas Steneck, eds., *Promoting Research Integrity in a Global Environment* (Singapore, World Scientific Publishing Co., 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1142/8102>.

### 3.2. The Ethical Pillars of the Muslim Scholarly Ethos

The scholarly ethos within the Islamic tradition constitutes a distinctive epistemological framework in which intellectual rigour is organically integrated with divine consciousness. Anchored in the creed of *tawhīd*—the affirmation of God’s absolute oneness—this paradigm rejects a strict sacred–profane dichotomy and positions the pursuit of knowledge, whether in the natural sciences, humanities, or religious studies, as an act of worship and devotion to God.<sup>35</sup> This integrated framework is built upon several mutually reinforcing ethical pillars that serve as both guide and safeguard for scholars in their intellectual vocation.

#### 1. *Ikhhlās*

The pulse of all Islamic scholarly activity is *ikhhlās* (sincerity of intention). It is not merely a moral prerequisite, but the ontological foundation that gives meaning and value to intellectual endeavour. This foundation is affirmed in the well-known ḥadīth narrated by al-Bukhārī: “Actions are judged by intentions”<sup>36</sup> The ḥadīth establishes sincere intention—seeking God’s pleasure alone—as a primary condition for the acceptance and blessing of an act. Al-Ghazālī, in *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, describes *ikhhlās* as *rūḥ al-‘ilm*, the “soul” and lifeblood of knowledge.<sup>37</sup> Without *ikhhlās*, knowledge becomes vulnerable to spiritual maladies such as *riyā’* (ostentation) and *‘ujb* (vanity and self-admiration). In practical terms, a sincere scholar selects a research topic not primarily for popularity or funding potential, but for its ethical urgency and its contribution to truth and public benefit. *Ikhhlās* also liberates the scholar from ego-driven attachments: when the pursuit of *al-ḥaqq* (truth) is ultimate, one is

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<sup>35</sup> Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Islamic Thought and Culture*. Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islāmic Thought, 1982.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl. *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Edited by Muḥammad Zuhayr ibn Nāṣir al-Nāṣir. Vol. 1. Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najāh, 2002.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 2009.

more prepared to acknowledge error, accept critique, and revise conclusions in light of stronger evidence.<sup>38</sup>

## 2. *Amānah*

The concept of *amānah* (trust) elevates scholarly responsibility to an ontological and moral horizon. The Qur'an describes the "Trust" as a weight from which the heavens, earth, and mountains recoiled, yet humanity undertook it.<sup>39</sup> For the scholar, this trust includes the ethical management, development, and dissemination of knowledge with integrity. Ibn Khaldūn, in *al-Muqaddimah*, links human responsibility to accountability before God as the ultimate giver of knowledge.<sup>40</sup> *Amānah* also entails intellectual honesty towards oneself: sustained self-critique, disciplined method, and openness to being wrong. Among the clearest betrayals of *amānah* is *sariqah 'ilmiyyah* (plagiarism), which classical scholars such as Ibn Jamā'ah treated as *khiyānah 'ilmiyyah*—a form of intellectual treachery that corrupts the reliability of knowledge transmission and violates scholarly trust.<sup>41</sup>

## 3. *Ṣidq*

The principle of *ṣidq* demands congruence between inner conviction, speech, and action. The Qur'an exhorts believers to "be with the truthful" (*al-ṣādiqīn*).<sup>42</sup> In a scholarly context, *ṣidq* functions as the backbone of epistemic integrity: it requires accuracy in reporting, honesty in interpretation, transparency in method, and refusal to manipulate evidence. A salient historical analogue is the discipline of

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<sup>38</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah. *Madārij al-Sālikīn bayna Manāzil Iyyāka Na'budu wa Iyyāka Nasta'īn*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Mu'taṣim billāh al-Baghdādī. Vol. 2. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1996.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Qur'an 33:72

<sup>40</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, 'Abd al-Raḥmān. *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. Trans. Franz Rosenthal. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Ibn Jamā'ah, Badr al-Dīn. *Tadhkirat al-Sāmi' wa al-Mutakallim fī Adab al-'Ālim wa al-Muta'allim*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1935.

<sup>42</sup> Al-Qur'an 9:119.

*al-jarḥ wa al-ta'dīl* in ḥadīth studies, where narrators' truthfulness (*ṣidq al-rāwī*) was treated as a non-negotiable criterion for reliability.<sup>43</sup> This demonstrates how seriously the Islamic tradition views the connection between personal character and intellectual trustworthiness. Al-Jurjānī defines *ṣidq* as *muwāfaqah bayn al-zāhir wa al-bāṭin*—harmony between outward conduct and inward reality.<sup>44</sup> A truthful scholar, therefore, cannot sustain hypocrisy whereby academic claims and lived practice diverge.

### 3. 'Adl

The principle of 'adl (justice) is enjoined in the Qur'an: "Indeed, God commands justice and excellence."<sup>45</sup> In scholarly discourse, 'adl entails fairness in evaluation, balanced representation of alternative arguments, avoidance of misquotation or straw-manning, and resistance to prejudice and ideological distortion. Al-Fārūqī, within his project on the Islamisation of knowledge, links 'adl to epistemic justice: the obligation to recognise and correct ideological biases that deform knowledge claims.<sup>46</sup> 'Adl also relates to *wasāṭiyyah* (moderation), praised as a trait of the Muslim community,<sup>47</sup> functioning in intellectual life as a guardrail against extremes of rigid literalism or relativistic dissolution.<sup>48</sup>

### 4. Ijtihād

The Islamic scholarly tradition demands *jiddiyyah* (seriousness) and sustained intellectual struggle, encapsulated in the concept of *ijtihād*.

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<sup>43</sup> Brown, Jonathan A. C. *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Jurjānī, 'Alī ibn Muḥammad. *Kitāb al-Ta'rifāt*. Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān, 1983.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Qur'an 16:90.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Faruqī, Isma'il Raji. *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principles and Work Plan*. Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982.

<sup>47</sup> Al-Qur'an 2:143.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Qaradawi, Yusuf. *Fiqh al-Wasāṭiyyah al-Islāmiyyah wa al-Tajdīd*. Kaherah: Dār al-Shurūq, 2010.

This commitment is grounded in the Qur’anic promise: “Those who strive for Us—We shall surely guide them to Our ways.”<sup>49</sup> The verse implies that intellectual illumination is not accidental but the fruit of disciplined, methodical, and ethically guided effort.

Classical pedagogical texts consistently emphasise diligence and perseverance. Al-Zarnūjī, in *Ta’līm al-Muta’allim*, stresses *mudāwamah* (continuity of effort) and *istiḡhrāq* (deep immersion) as essential conditions for genuine learning.<sup>50</sup> Knowledge, in this view, is not acquired through shortcuts or instrumental manipulation, but through sustained moral and cognitive discipline. Islamic intellectual history offers numerous illustrations of this ethos. Figures such as Imām al-Shāfi’ī devoted decades to mastering multiple disciplines before being recognised as authorities capable of independent reasoning. Intellectual legitimacy, therefore, was inseparable from ethical endurance.<sup>51</sup>

Within the context of academic integrity, *ijtihād* functions as a direct antidote to practices such as plagiarism, contract cheating, and superficial scholarship. It affirms that originality, effort, and intellectual honesty are moral obligations, not merely professional expectations.

## 5. *Tawāḍu’*

*Tawāḍu’* (humility) emerges naturally from an awareness of the vastness of divine knowledge and the finitude of human understanding. The Qur’an cautions against arrogance and intellectual conceit: “Do not turn your cheek in contempt towards people, nor walk arrogantly upon the earth.”<sup>52</sup>

Al-Ghazālī warns explicitly against *‘ujb al-‘ālim*—the

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<sup>49</sup> Al-Qur’an 29:69.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Zarnūjī, Burhān al-Dīn. *Ta’līm al-Muta’allim Ṭarīq al-Ta’allum*. Kaheerah: Maktabah al-Qāhirah, 1947.

<sup>51</sup> Hallaq, Wael B. *The Origins and Evolution of Islamic Law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Qur’an 31:18.

arrogance of the learned—which he regards as one of the most destructive spiritual diseases afflicting scholars.<sup>53</sup> Humility, in contrast, safeguards epistemic integrity by restraining overconfidence, dogmatism, and premature certainty.

A frequently cited embodiment of *tawāḍuʿ* is Imām Mālik ibn Anas, who reportedly answered “*lā adrī*” (“I do not know”) to the majority of questions posed to him on one occasion.<sup>54</sup> Far from signalling ignorance, this response reflected profound intellectual integrity and reverence for truth. In academic terms, *tawāḍuʿ* legitimises uncertainty, encourages methodological caution, and fosters openness to critique—qualities essential for ethical scholarship.

## 6. *Taʿzīm al-ʿIlm*

The Islamic tradition accords knowledge an inherently sacred status, viewing it as a divine light rather than a neutral instrument. The Qurʾan declares: “God will raise those who believe and those who have been given knowledge by degrees.”<sup>55</sup> This elevation is not merely social but moral and spiritual.

This veneration of knowledge, or *taʿzīm al-ʿilm*, is manifested in various practices that preserve its sanctity and dignity.

One of the clearest manifestations of *taʿzīm al-ʿilm* is the emphasis on *sanad* (chains of transmission), which preserve not only textual accuracy but ethical accountability. Makdisi has shown that institutions such as the *madrasah* cultivated rituals—most notably the granting of *ijāzah*—that certified not only mastery of content but moral fitness to teach and transmit knowledge.<sup>56</sup> The act of teaching was thus a trust conferred by persons, not merely a credential granted by

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<sup>53</sup> Al-Ghazālī, Abū Hāmid. *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*. Vol. 3. Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 2008.

<sup>54</sup> Rosenthal, Franz. *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970.

<sup>55</sup> Al- Qurʾan 58:11.

<sup>56</sup> Makdisi, George. *The Rise of Colleges: Institutions of Learning in Islam and the West*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981.

institutions.

In contemporary academic contexts, *ta'zīm al-'ilm* challenges the commodification of knowledge and resists predatory publishing practices, citation manipulation, and the reduction of scholarship to metrics and rankings. It restores dignity to learning as a moral vocation rather than a transactional enterprise.

## 7. *Taqwa*

All the preceding ethical pillars are ultimately enveloped and oriented by *taqwā*—God-consciousness and reverent awareness of divine accountability. The Qur'an states: "Only those among God's servants who possess knowledge truly fear God."<sup>57</sup> This verse establishes a direct relationship between knowledge and moral responsibility.

*Taqwā* functions as a teleological compass, aligning scholarly activity with its ultimate purpose: seeking God's pleasure and promoting human flourishing. It acts as an internal ethical regulator, ensuring that knowledge is pursued, applied, and disseminated in ways consistent with the higher objectives of the *sharī'ah*. Scholars guided by *taqwā* routinely engage in *maṣlahah–mafsadah* (benefit–harm) analysis, evaluating the social, moral, and existential implications of their work.<sup>58</sup> In emerging domains such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and data science, *taqwā* demands that innovation be tempered by ethical foresight. The question is not merely whether something can be done, but whether it should be done, and at what moral cost.

Taken together, these eight pillars form an integrated ethical architecture that the Islamic tradition describes as *ḥirāsāt al-'ilm*—the safeguarding of knowledge. As Ibn 'Abd al-Barr cautioned, "Knowledge without *adab* is like fire without fuel."<sup>59</sup> This paradigm

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<sup>57</sup> Al-Qur'an 35:28.

<sup>58</sup> Osman Bakar. *Classification of Knowledge in Islam: A Study in Islamic Philosophies of Science*. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, Yūsuf. *Jāmi' Bayān al-'Ilm wa Faḍlih*. Ed. Abū al-Ashbāl al-Zuhayrī. Vol. 1. Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1994.

reaffirms the ontological unity between the pursuit of *al-haqq* (truth) and accountability before the Ultimate Truth.

### 3.3. Towards an Islamic Framework of Academic Integrity

Building upon the preceding analysis, this study proposes an Islamic framework of academic integrity articulated through a concentric-circle model. This model foregrounds an internally driven, virtue-based approach that contrasts sharply with secular compliance-oriented paradigms.

#### 3.3.1. The Conceptual Framework for Islamic Academic Integrity

The proposed framework is structured as a series of concentric circles, each representing an interdependent dimension of integrity within an Islamic worldview (Figure 1).

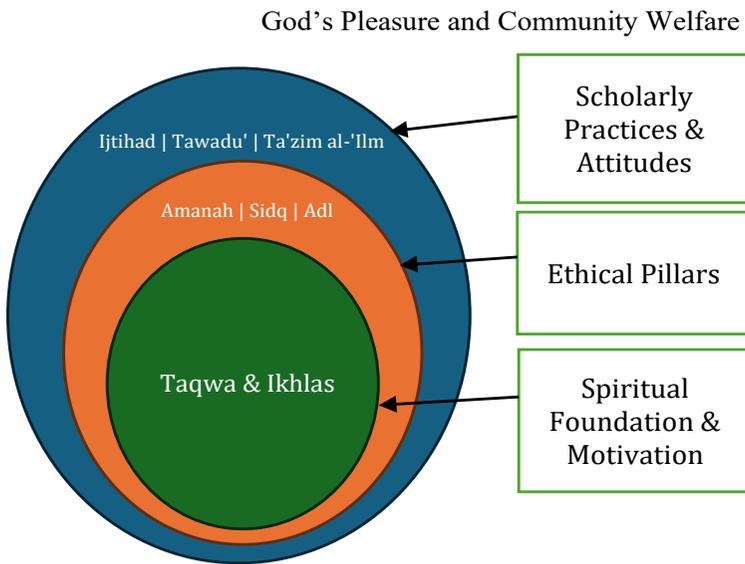


Figure 1: Islamic Model of Academic Integrity

The innermost circle—*taqwā* and *ikhhlās*—constitutes the spiritual foundation that animates all scholarly activity. It represents the internal moral motivation that answers the fundamental question of *why* knowledge is pursued. The middle ring—*amānah*, *ṣidq*, and *‘adl*—comprises the ethical pillars that translate spiritual consciousness into stable moral dispositions. The outer ring—*ijtihād*, *tawādu‘*, and *ta‘zīm al-‘ilm*—captures the visible scholarly practices through which integrity becomes socially manifest.

Integrity thus flows outward from the heart while simultaneously being reinforced through ethical action. This bidirectional movement reflects the Islamic conception of *tazkiyah al-nafs*, in which inner purification and outward conduct mutually reinforce one another.

Unlike secular models that prioritise deterrence through surveillance and sanction, this framework asserts that genuine academic integrity emerges from internal moral formation. External rules remain necessary, but they are insufficient without a cultivated ethical self. Within this model, practices such as plagiarism, data fabrication, predatory publishing, and contract cheating are not merely policy violations but moral betrayals of *amānah* and failures of *taqwā*.

*Taqwā* functions as the ultimate internal check, reminding scholars that divine knowledge encompasses intention as well as action. It instils a durable sense of accountability that transcends institutional monitoring, encouraging sincerity even in the absence of surveillance. In this way, the Islamic model offers not only a corrective to contemporary integrity crises, but a civilisational vision of scholarship grounded in worship, responsibility, and moral excellence.

At the heart of the model lie *taqwā* (God-consciousness, piety, reverential awe) and *ikhhlās* (sincerity and purity of intention for the sake of God). This inner core represents the fundamental spiritual motivation—the ultimate *why*—that animates the pursuit of knowledge and the commitment to integrity. It posits that genuine academic integrity does not originate in fear of sanction or institutional surveillance, but in an inwardly cultivated awareness of divine

omniscience and accountability. From this perspective, scholarly conduct is oriented primarily towards seeking God's pleasure rather than merely satisfying procedural requirements.

The middle circle of the model comprises the ethical principles that translate this inner spiritual consciousness into stable moral dispositions governing scholarly conduct. These include *amānah* (trustworthiness and responsibility), which underscores the scholar's obligation towards knowledge itself, as well as towards teachers, students, peers, and society; *ṣidq* (truthfulness and honesty), which demands unwavering commitment to accuracy, transparency, and intellectual sincerity in all academic endeavours, from research design to the reporting of findings; and *ʿadl* (justice and fairness), which ensures impartiality in evaluation, faithful representation of opposing arguments, and resistance to bias, favouritism, or epistemic injustice.

The outermost circle represents the visible scholarly practices and attitudes through which integrity becomes socially manifest. These include *ijtihād*, understood here not in its strictly juridical sense but as disciplined intellectual exertion and original scholarly effort; *tawāduʿ* (humility), which cultivates openness to correction, acknowledgement of limitation, and respect for the contributions of others; and *taʿzīm al-ʿilm* (reverence for knowledge), which safeguards the dignity of learning against commodification, instrumentalisation, and unethical exploitation.

Encircling the entire model is the broader Islamic intellectual culture, which ideally nurtures an environment conducive to ethical scholarship. The ultimate aspiration of this culture—and of the model itself—is the attainment of God's pleasure and the promotion of communal well-being. The concentric structure thus reflects a holistic and integrated vision of academic integrity driven primarily by *tazkiyah al-naḥs* (moral and spiritual self-purification). This orientation stands in marked contrast to dominant secular frameworks that prioritise external deterrence through punitive measures and regulatory control.

Within this framework, academic misconduct—such as

plagiarism, fabrication, predatory publishing, and unethical collaboration—is not merely a procedural violation but a moral failure rooted in the erosion of *amānah* and *taqwā*. In particular, contract cheating is categorically rejected as a grave betrayal of trust, undermining both the integrity of assessment and the formative purpose of education.

*Taqwā* thus functions as the ultimate internal check and balance, continually reminding scholars that God is All-Knowing and All-Seeing, fully aware of intentions as well as actions. This consciousness engenders a profound sense of accountability that encourages sincere effort, deters falsehood, and sustains ethical commitment even in the absence of external monitoring. In this way, the Islamic model offers a durable moral foundation for academic integrity that transcends mere compliance and anchors scholarly practice in spiritual responsibility.<sup>60</sup>

### 3.3.2. Towards a *Tarbiyyah*-Based Higher Education: Policy and Practice for Academic Integrity

The implementation of an Islamic model of academic integrity requires higher education institutions to move beyond procedural compliance and to embrace a normative framework rooted in *adab*. In the contemporary higher education context, challenges such as the *publish or perish* culture, the commercialisation of education, the rise of artificial intelligence in academic writing, and global ranking pressures have increasingly displaced the ethical considerations that should anchor the pursuit of knowledge.

Curriculum reform constitutes the first critical dimension. Existing academic integrity modules are often reduced to technical directives—such as “do not plagiarise” or “follow citation standards”—while neglecting the philosophical and spiritual

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<sup>60</sup> Abdullah Khan, and Abdulaziz Mohammed Al-Ahdal. "Islamic Perspectives on Academic Integrity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence." *Journal of Islamic Ethics* 7, no.1 (2023): 45–68.

dimensions of knowledge. The Islamic intellectual tradition demonstrates that integrity is inseparable from intention and purpose. Imām al-Ghazālī stressed that *ikhhlās* (sincerity) and *adab* constitute the very “soul” of knowledge, while Imām al-Shāfi‘ī exemplified *ijtihad* (intellectual diligence) and scholarly honesty by openly acknowledging his own limitations.<sup>61</sup> Accordingly, courses on academic integrity in higher education institutions should be reimagined as formative experiences that cultivate spiritual, ethical, and intellectual virtues, explicitly linking the pursuit of knowledge to responsibility before God and society.

Second, institutional policy should be restructured to incorporate the objectives of *Maqāsid al-Sharī‘ah*. Research guidelines ought to be evaluated in terms of their capacity to safeguard intellect (*hifẓ al-‘aql*) by rejecting data fabrication, protect religion (*hifẓ al-dīn*) by avoiding misleading or ethically compromised studies, preserve lineage (*hifẓ al-nasl*) through the ethical treatment of human research participants, and safeguard wealth (*hifẓ al-māl*) by ensuring the responsible and transparent use of research funding.<sup>62</sup> Classical Muslim scholars embodied these principles in practice: Ibn Khaldūn, in *al-Muqaddimah*, underscored that scholarly trust (*amānah*) is inseparable from social responsibility,<sup>63</sup> while Ibn Jamā‘ah condemned plagiarism as a form of betrayal more grievous than the theft of material property.<sup>64</sup>

Third, academic performance appraisal requires a fundamental recalibration. Contemporary systems that privilege output quantity often incentivise practices such as “salami slicing” and engagement with predatory publishing outlets. An Islamic model of

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<sup>61</sup> Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, n.d., vol. 1, Kitāb al-‘Ilm, 36–38.

<sup>62</sup> al-Shāfi‘ī, Abū Ishāq. *al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharī‘ah*. Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, n.d., vol. 2, 8–12.

<sup>63</sup> Ibn Khaldūn. *al-Muqaddimah*. Translated by Franz Rosenthal. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, 436–438.

<sup>64</sup> Ibn Jamā‘ah, Badr al-Dīn. *Tadhkirat al-Sāmi‘ wa al-Mutakallim fī Adab al-‘Ālim wa al-Muta‘allim*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, 2003, 63–65.

academic integrity, by contrast, insists on evaluative frameworks that integrate ethical considerations into scholarly assessment. Relevant indicators may include adherence to ethical standards in supervision and authorship, the societal benefit (*maṣlahah*) of research, commitment to mentorship grounded in *adab*, and demonstrable humility (*tawāḍuʿ*) in collaborative work. Imām Mālik’s well-known practice of responding *lā adrī* (“I do not know”) exemplifies integrity over vanity, reminding contemporary academia that intellectual honesty outweighs superficial productivity.<sup>65</sup>

Beyond curriculum, policy, and appraisal, successful implementation also necessitates a multifaceted ecosystem of integrity. First, ethical leadership (*qudwah ḥasanah*) is indispensable: academic leaders and mentors must embody the principles they advocate, as their conduct sets the moral tone for students and junior scholars alike. Second, holistic curriculum reform should embed ethical reflection across disciplines rather than confining integrity to isolated modules. Such integration ensures that ethical awareness permeates both teaching and research practices. Third, reward systems must be reformed. Excessive reliance on numerical metrics often undermines integrity; instead, institutional incentives should recognise honesty, ethical authorship, responsible supervision, and meaningful community contribution.<sup>66</sup> Finally, open and sustained dialogue should be institutionalised to normalise discussion of integrity challenges, ethical dilemmas, and best practices. Such dialogue not only promotes transparency but also reinforces collective responsibility for academic standards.<sup>67</sup>

Taken together, these reforms would reposition higher

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<sup>65</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr. *Jāmi‘ Bayān al-‘Ilm wa Faḍlihi*. Beirut: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1994, vol. 2, 56–57.

<sup>66</sup> Müller, Jerry Z. *The Tyranny of Metrics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018, 1–19.

<sup>67</sup> Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, n.d., vol. 1, Kitāb al-‘Ilm, 45–52; Bretag, Tracey, et al. “A Framework for Academic Integrity.” *International Journal for Educational Integrity* 7, no. 2 (2011): 3–11.

education institutions not merely as centres of knowledge dissemination, but as institutions of *tarbiyyah* committed to the cultivation of virtuous scholars. Drawing upon the intellectual and ethical legacy of the Muslim scholarly tradition, academic integrity would no longer be externally imposed but would emerge as an intrinsic moral and spiritual consciousness—one that harmonises the pursuit of truth with responsibility before the Divine and society.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

The Islamic intellectual tradition offers a profound and enduring repository for articulating a Muslim scholar's ethos grounded in integrity, responsibility, and moral purpose. By re-centring academic integrity within the spiritual foundations of *taqwā* and *ikhlas*, this study advances a holistic framework that moves beyond procedural compliance and addresses the deeper moral, epistemological, and civilisational dimensions of scholarly life. The proposed model demonstrates that integrity in knowledge production is not merely a regulatory concern but a manifestation of the scholar's covenantal responsibility before God, society, and future generations.

In an era marked by technological disruption, metric-driven academic cultures, and the instrumentalisation of knowledge, the Islamic scholarly ethos offers a critical corrective. It reframes academic integrity as an inwardly cultivated disposition that radiates outward into ethical research practices, just governance of institutions, and responsible engagement with emerging technologies. By anchoring scholarly conduct in *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and the unity of knowledge and action, this model responds not only to contemporary integrity crises but also to the broader erosion of meaning and trust in modern higher education.

At the civilisational level, reviving this ethos contributes to the reconstruction of an ethical knowledge order in Muslim societies—one in which universities function not merely as sites of credential production but as institutions of *tarbiyyah* committed to the formation of virtuous scholars and the cultivation of public good. Re-embedding

academic integrity within the Islamic worldview thus represents a strategic intervention in civilisational renewal, aligning intellectual excellence with moral accountability and positioning higher education as a cornerstone of ethical civilisation-building in the twenty-first century.

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