

## Challenges and Solutions to Instilling Islamic Moral Values among Learners in Institutions of Higher Learning in Uganda: A Case Study of Islamic University in Uganda

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### Abstract

This study investigated the challenges and solutions to instilling Islamic moral values among learners in institutions of higher learning: A case study of Islamic University in Uganda. The study was qualitative and used a case study design. The population of the study consisted of 25 da'wah (call to good) committee members. A sample consisted of 13 respondents, obtained through Simple random sampling. The 13 respondents sampled were arrived at after data saturation. The methods of Data collection were interviews and documentary review. The method of data analysis is the content method. Findings revealed that the institution faced the following challenges when instilling Islamic moral values; inadequate manpower, different background, militaristic approach, administrators' value dilemma, cultural diversity, the influence of Western culture, and Technology. The suggested solutions include; dialogue, teamwork, the use of hikmah (wisdom), respect for all, and disciplinary action. The study recommended implementing the suggested solutions to improve the challenges in instilling moral values among.

**Key Words:** Islamic University, Morals, Values, Institution of higher learning, Instilling, Uganda

Islamic moral values are derived from the Qur'an and Hadith. Islam not only defines these morals but also guides mankind on how to achieve these morals. God says in the Qur'an: "*And we made them leaders, guiding (men) by our command...*" (Q 21:23). This means that Muslims should do good and right following the teachings of the prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). This is supported by the prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) hadith: "*this goodness (that I brought to you) is comparable to a treasure. There are keys to this treasure. How happy is whom Allah made a key to the good and a lock to the evil! Woe to those whom Allah made a key to the evil and a lock to the good!*" (Ibn Majah, Muqaddimah, 19). The hadith teaches us to guide good by following the teachings of the prophet (the treasure he brought to us). These morals include; justice, kindness (to people and animals), forgiveness, charity, patience, honesty, respect for parents and elders, keeping promises, and extra.

Moral values are noble characteristics that should be instilled among learners in institutions of higher learning. Without sound moral values, learning cannot take place effectively.

Besides these students are channeled to society after graduation and carry with them such character to society. Moral values are essential for national development. This is in line with the National development plans programme (NDP III) and Sustainable development goals (SDGs). NDP 15 calls for community mobilisation and mindset change, while NDP 12 calls for human capital development. On the other hand SDG 16 advocates for peace, justice, and strong institutions. These concerns can only be achieved through developing the moral values of learners through our institutions of learning.

Our country needs to nurture learners with moral values right from kindergarten up to institutions of higher learning. It is better to build strong children than to repair broken men. Frederick Douglas said, "*It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men*" (Mwesigye, 2021). This is in line with the Baganda saying that "*Akakyama Amamera, bwokagolo kamenyeka*" meaning if you try to make straight a bent grown tree it just breaks.

Whereas it is incumbent upon our institutions to instill moral values among learners from pre-school to university level, university students exhibit immoral characters such as drug abuse, theft, pornography, cheating in exams, cohabiting, and extra, Mwesigye (2021), Hassan (2021).

Hassan (2021) investigated the common types of indiscipline among students at Islamic University in Uganda. Hassan and Rehema (2021) explored an Islamic approach to nurturing learners' moral values in higher institutions in Uganda. Muweesi, Lou, and Nakonde (2019) reviewed the integration of morals into school disciplinary management based on John Dewey's philosophy. Basome and Allida (2018) evaluated moral dissipation in secondary schools in Iganga. Muwagga, Mugimu, and Ssenkusu (2016) explored the values transmitted in institutions of higher learning in Uganda. Ndagire 2012 examined the forms of indiscipline and how to manage them in private secondary schools in Entebbe Municipality Wakiso District, Uganda. However, no encountered study on challenges and solutions faced in instilling Islamic moral values among learners in institutions of higher learning in Uganda. That is why this study is pertinent.

The objective of the study was to investigate the challenges and solutions to instilling Islamic moral values in universities in Uganda. A case study of the Islamic university in Uganda.

### **Methodology**

The study used qualitative approach and case study research design. Islamic University in Uganda was the case study. The university has Da'wah (call to good) programme. The study population was 25 da'wah members. The sample size was 13 arrived at after saturation of data. The sampling technique was simple random sampling. The methods of data collection were semi-structured interviews and documentary review. The researcher carried out a pilot study on two da'wah members who were not part of the sample. The pilot study helped to improve unclear questions, remove the irrelevant ones, and add more relevant questions. Data was analysed through content method. The researcher read through the data several times to familiarise the content. Data was coded, main ideas identified and then categorised. The Research results were presented following the research objective-themes. Quotes were provided from the interviews to back up the findings. Triangulation of data from multiple respondents also ensured rigor.

### **Literature Review**

Hassan (2021) investigated the common types of indiscipline among students at Islamic University in Uganda. The study was quantitative and cross sectional survey design was used. Proportionate random sampling was used for sample size and mean score was used to analyse data. The common indiscipline found were theft, disrespect to teachers and school rules, and irregular attendance.

Muweesi, Lou, and Nakonde (2019) study reviewed integration of morals into school disciplinary management reflecting on John Dewey's philosophy. They considered three variables; interest, discipline and education values. Dewey views a school as a public good, so education should shape learners morals to suit social demands.

Basome and Allida (2018) evaluated moral dissipation in secondary schools in Iganga, Uganda. Specifically they looked at the causes, effects and what could be done about the moral dissipation in schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The study used descriptive design, data was collected through interviews and documentary review. Some of the causes include; poor parenting, Media, use of technology, and peer influence.

Muwagga, Mugimu and Ssenkusu (2016) explored the values transmitted in institutions of higher learning in Uganda. Data was collected in selected universities in Uganda from 850 respondents from faith based, public and religious based universities. The study found that economic, social and religious values were transmitted to students in selected universities in Uganda.

Ndagire 2012 examined the forms of indiscipline and how to manage them in private secondary schools in Entebbe Municipality Wakiso District, Uganda. Ndagire's study was in secondary schools while the current study focused on challenges and solutions to instilling morals in universities in Uganda.

Turgeon (2011) Suggested ways of making children think about values. He suggested theoretical and practical alternatives to build pupils morals. He suggested use of stories, pictures and games. Children can reflect and draw lessons from these by guidance of the teacher. His study addressed how issue moreover among pupils while the current study concerned challenges and solutions of instilling morals among students. The studies reviewed several literature in Uganda but did not encounter challenges and solutions to instilling moral values in institutions of higher learning in Uganda which creates a gap for the current study.

### **Findings**

#### **Challenges faced in instilling Islamic moral values in institutions of higher learning in Uganda**

A number of challenges are faced during instilling Islamic moral values among learners in institutions of higher learning in Uganda. They include; inadequate man power, different background, military approach, administrators value dilemma, cultural diversity, Western culture, and Technology. They are presented below.

### **Inadequate manpower**

Manpower is needed to instil morals among the learners. Ideally all staff are expected to take up that responsibility of building learners morals. However, we find that there is limited number of staff and students who volunteer to do the work of da'wah. This makes the work tedious and over whelming to the few individuals who volunteer to do the work. This has negative impact on the students who are supposed to benefit from the da'wah programme. Respondents said: *"When you talk of manpower, we have a committee and we have thousands of students...and the work is voluntary. You have to go onto your knees and encourage them to benefit from this kind of programme."* For example in instilling discipline it is the work of da'wah to move around and talk to students about different issues, give them psychosocial support. So in the due process you will find that very few people who move around helping students... (CM 1)

### **Negative Staff Attitude**

Some lecturers have lazy fair attitude towards building learners morals. They do not have time for that, they only come to class to teach and then go away. They leave moral issues to a particular group of people like da'wah members. So this creates heavy work for the da'wah committee.

*"of course their attitude is a little negative towards these rules and regulations, and the Islamic core values but life goes on"* (CM 9)

The findings of this study concurs with Hassan et al (2022) who found that there are lecturers who are less efficient in guiding Technical and Vocational Education Training (TIVET) students yet lectures are crucial in ensuring quality of TVET institutions especially in application of moral values.

### **Different backgrounds**

Many students join the university and they come from different backgrounds. Some have secular backgrounds, different values, and different cultures. They come with different attitudes and different aspects of perceiving things. Therefore when it comes to instilling moral values, it is more of persuasion and requesting them.

### **Cultural Diversity**

Students come from different cultures yet each culture emphasizes its aspects to its members. When they join these institutions, they find it hard to acclimatise to the new culture (Institutional culture). They also want to socialise with members of the same culture. Respondents said:

*Now the different cultures.... and some of these students come with those cultures when they are deeply rooted into them. Such that when one is told don't do this and what you are telling them is not in consonant with their culture, somebody may be able to resist"* (CM 7).

*"The science of instilling morals is a very challenging task and this is due to cultural diversity"* (CM 2).

### **Different Religions**

Uganda is a country with diverse religions, and students join institutions of their choice. So it becomes a challenge to implement morals if students of different faith are expected to follow Islamic code of conduct in an Islamic institution like Islamic dress. Respondents said:

*"Then another challenge also being an Islamic university the non-Moslem some of them might find it difficult to adhere but still we try to make them since they are mixed. (CM 4)*

*"Then the second one is the different religious beliefs. Now we have a number of religious denominations we have Islam... we have protestants, we have catholic we have the save Dees and many of them. ... and if you intend to instill a moral that is not in agreement with one particular's religious belief, somebody may find it as being imposing it over them ... an example here, the dressing attire on the side of our female students is supposed to be used by every human being in the world regardless of the religion but because these other religions other than Islam do not encourage such to their followers. Our students find it hard here .... This is just a punishment to us"* (CM 7)

### **Military approach**

There are some young and energetic people who do things in military way. They try to change someone on the spot if they find them doing wrong. For example, if they find a male and female student socializing without a third person, they tell them to separate immediately. It is not a correct approach of Islam. Islam tells us to handle people with Hikmah (Wisdom). Respondents who said:

*“on one hand it is from some of us especially those who are still young and energetic the way they council students is very militant.....and I don't think it is Islamic as much as they believe it is Islamic, it is not Islamic, it is corrosive, it is a militant way of trying to change somebody and on the spot. For example if you see a fellow student standing next to each other or discussing but in the site of the public don't just come and separate them. No I think it is misunderstood, they are not in isolation of course...they are in public...” (CM 3)*

*“...and when a boy and a girl are discussing it does not mean they are fuelling. You come and tell them you separate ....I think it is very cruel....that is a big challenge and it brings this institution a bad image. In as much as it will be good you are discouraging something...but you may be introducing something which is worse. And I think the handling has to improve” (CM 3).*

### **Administrators value dilemma**

Another challenge comes from administrators who try to be lenient in some circumstances. There are situations where students follow the current trend, western influence, and peer influence. Some top administrators sympathise with the students for various reasons. In addition some top administrators do not fully appreciate the work done by staff in lower offices. They focus on the negative side of their work instead of supporting what they have achieved. It demoralizes the efforts of those who instil moral values to the learners. Respondents said:

*“Then there is another challenge from the top most...the top administrators...sometimes they may say we should relax this one. Don't over emphasize that....don't over emphasize this. (CM 3)*

*Then we also have a challenge of our bosses. They don't see that we are doing work for them they want 100% perfection yet it is not easy. ... (CM 2).*

In line with the above (Masanja, 2018) found that administrators face a challenge in ethics and moral values. The challenges are many, and they involve organisational versus self-interest, administration versus employee interest, performance versus people orientation, adherence to policy versus considerable lenience, and moral versus legal consideration. These situations create a puzzle for the administrator to solve

### **Contempt**

Some students feel that they are mature so they should do what they want. When the concerned authorities try to correct them, they feel it is none of their business. Other students do not welcome any advice. Students disrespect the authorities and they feel challenged which may affect their work. This is supported by respondents who said:

*“the challenges I face is that some students feel they are mature so they do what they want. You may want to correct him or her and she will think or feel that it is none of your business. Some students given the background they came from they don't welcome any advice. So some are disrespectful” (CM 8).*

*“...someone easily minimize you. When you try to talk to a fellow student, she wonders that this is a fellow student, what is she going to do to me, so you get difficulty when you are talking to the person...may be the person is higher than you e.g. you are in year two and the person is in year three something like that. (CM 6) ....many of them do not know the core values of IUIU and because of that it has created to us some kind of problems, once you try to instil or reach out to staff or students on morals or core values, you are always looked at as an ugly” (MC 1)*

This finding concurs with (Muwagga, Mugimu, Ssenkusu, and Wafula, 2016) who found that some students feel they have the freedom to do whatever they want and no one should talk to or guide them. They think a university is a place of freedom just like what we see in public universities in Uganda. This state can be referred to as “freedomism” where they misuse the word freedom. Actually, freedom is not free. That is why we should have values to guide us.



## **Influence of Western Culture**

Due to colonialism, the world has been influenced by western culture. Students admire the way things are done by the western world in all walks of life. Social, economic, political, and extra. And they think that is the way to go. Yet the Western culture contradicts the Islamic culture. So it becomes a challenge to instil Islamic morals. One respondent said:

*“They look at what happens in the Western countries and they pick it on wholesomely without asking themselves why for example go the forms of dressing like we have what is called sleeveless dressing. Now not bearing in mind that may be because these people come from a very cool environment and once they reach in Africa it becomes too hot to them. They just pick it up like that” (CM 7)*

## **Technology**

The world has embraced various information communication technologies. Among them, we have the internet, and social media like Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, and extra. A lot of information can be accessed from these platforms good or bad. The youth have been misled by the immoral information they access from these technologies. One respondent said:

*“Lastly, the technology has also come in with so many ways of distorting the moral way of life that could be taken on so the young just to go the social media go to the internet and whichever dirt they find there, they just pick it on. And when one talks about it they say this one is out dated, So in brief what they call the dot com world has also come with its own challenges. (CM 7)*

## **Solutions**

Various solutions to address the challenges to instil Islamic morals among learners in Islamic University in Uganda include: use of hikmah (wisdom), teamwork, dialogue, respect, and disciplinary action. The solutions were generated through literature review, interviews, and hadith of the prophet and Qur’an verses.

## **Exercise Hikmah (Wisdom)**

There is need to improve the way they approach students. They should exercise hikmah (Wisdom) when approaching learners. The students are mature people who understand when you have good approach. Respondents said:

*“But some times you do not have to tell the students all the time do this or that. You have to use hikmah to tell them that although you have grown up, this is the way you have to behave”. (CM 5)*

*“And the da’wah committee should change .The students used to fear it so much. They have a very bad negative attitude towards da’wah secretariat and da’wah members, so if they change their approach then it will be good because the students fear them .so whatever they say may not be taken in good faith”. (CM 8)*

*“Then the students also need to be respected because they know they are university students they are mature, although maturity doesn't mean that they should contradict the Islamic principles”. (CM 3)*

The prophet was taught the Holly Qur’an, Hikmah (Wisdom) and Tazkia (inner-self-purification) as foundations of character to make him a true Muslim. Therefore, Hikmah (wisdom) is paramount for success in instilling Islamic moral values. God says in the Qur’an: *“Our Lord! Send among them an apostle of their own, who shall rehearse your signs to them and instruct them in the Holly Qur’an (al-Kitab), and Wisdom (al-Hikmah), and sanctify them (yuzakeehim), for you are exalted in might, the wise”.* (Q 2: 129)

Islam does not allow extremism in doing things. Islam tells us to approach people with care and love. When we look at the prophet’s history, he did not force people into Islam, but the approach he used made people to accept Islam. For example the Bedouin (villager) who came and urinated in the corner of a masjid, the Muslims wanted to show him a lesson, but the prophet asked them to cool down. After the man urinating, the prophet called him and explained that this is a masjid. As a result, the man accepted Islam.

## **Teamwork**

Members suggested teamwork for success in instilling Islamic moral values in the institutions. All stake holders should be involved other than leaving it to particular group of people like da’wah and students coordinator. Respondent said:

*“We shouldn't leave this work to the da’wah committee and the coordinator. It should be emphasized more also in the lecture rooms so that students really know what they are supposed to do”. (CM 8)*

In Islam, teamwork has always been crucial since it is next to impossible to survive on one's own. Team members should respect, trust and care for each other. Benefits of working as a team include success in what the team is doing. God says in the holy Qur'an: *"And hold fast, all together, by the Rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you;"* (Q 3:103). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) urged Muslims to work together as a team. Abu Musa reported: The messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"Verily, the believers are like bricks of a building, each part strengthening the other,"* and the prophet clasped his fingers together. (Sahih al-Bukhari, No. 481)

*There is a popular saying that: "United we stand, Divided we fall"*

### **Reconciliation**

Members suggested that there is need for round table meeting (dialogue) for all the stake holders since all of them are pertinent in the institutions. They should respect each other's role and find the best approach to instill moral values among learners. Respondents said:

*"I think it is better to go on around table and say how we can .....Department like da'wah, sharia or...Faculties, coordinator's department and the top administration to agree on some issues not to just put the money issue forward and do away with core values. The issue is needs balancing".* (CM 12)

The Qur'an and hadith implore Muslims to resolve issues among them amicably in order to make peace among themselves. God calls upon them to be fair and just in their reconciliation. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

*"If two parties among the believers fall into a fight, make ye peace between them...with justice and be fare. For God loves those who are fair. The believers are but a single brotherhood; so make peace between your two (contending) brothers, and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy"* (Q 49: 9-10)

*In another verse Allah said: "...So fear Allah, and keep straight the relations between yourselves: Obey Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe".* (Q 8:1). Abdullah ibn Amr reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: *"The best act of charity is to reconcile between people"* (At-Tabarani in Al-Mujam Al-Kabir No. 13/32).

### **Peaceful co-existence**

We need to consider the diverse culture in our institutions when instilling Islamic moral values. This will help us design better approach to cater for such cultures. Respondent said:

*"So one of the challenges is that one ought to understand or to have a tip or a clue about the different cultures and when you are approaching a student of a specific culture then it becomes easy for one to instill what he/she needs to do.* (CM 13)

Co-existence between different peoples, races, religious groups, clans, tribes within a spectrum of identities is the great challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Co-existence between people has become an imperative in the next phase of evolution of civilization.

The Constitution of Madinah and life in the Madinah society at the time of the Prophet Muhammad are prime examples of intercultural understanding and peaceful co-existence among different ethnicity, race, religion and cultures.

### **Disciplinary Action**

We recommend disciplinary action as the last resort if all peaceful measures have failed to work. That should not be the first step.

*"And there are those that need suspension or expulsion. So at times there are students who really come up to reach an extent or even hating staff going after them.*

*Because they are following them, they feel they are really making their lives difficult but still we try to handle"* (CM 11)

Every child has a right to be disciplined by wise and reasonable parent or guardian. This is because man by nature is attracted towards evil. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: *"Yet I do not absolve myself (of blame): (the human) soul certainly incites evil, unless my Lord is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful".* (Q 12: 53). Therefore every human being needs discipline otherwise he/she can easily go astray.

## Conclusion

The study concludes that institutions of higher learning instil Islamic moral values amidst challenges like inadequate personnel, military approach, diverse culture, contempt, the influence of Western civilisation, and technology. To overcome the challenges, they should employ teamwork, exercise hikmah (wisdom), dialogue, respect, and disciplinary action.

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